TENEMENT MUSEUM

Tuesday, June 14, 2011

A Building With a Past: the Many Lives of 103 Orchard

If you've been following the construction of our new visitor and education center at 103 Orchard Street, then you know the interesting history of the building and some of its past tenants. It seems like everything in the Lower East Side has a back story, and 103 Orchard is no exception!

With this in mind, it comes as no surprise that the building has significantly changed over time, evolving from 3 independent old law tenement buildings positioned in the middle of the block into one corner building. Through it all, 103 Orchard Street has witnessed the ongoing transformation of the neighborhood for well over a century, through cycles of boom and bust, expansion and contraction.

What is now 103 Orchard was originally built in 1888 as 103, 105, and 107 Orchard Street. These buildings were located in the center of block, sandwiched between others on each side.

103, 105 and 107 Orchard circa 1888

When Delancey Street was widened in 1903 to create a larger thoroughfare for traffic to the new Williamsburg Bridge, 109, 111, and 113 Orchard Street were demolished, making 107 Orchard Street the corner building.

103, 105 and 107 Orchard circa 1903

The most significant change came between 1913 and 1916 when the front halves of 103, 105, and 107 Orchard Street were combined to create one tenement

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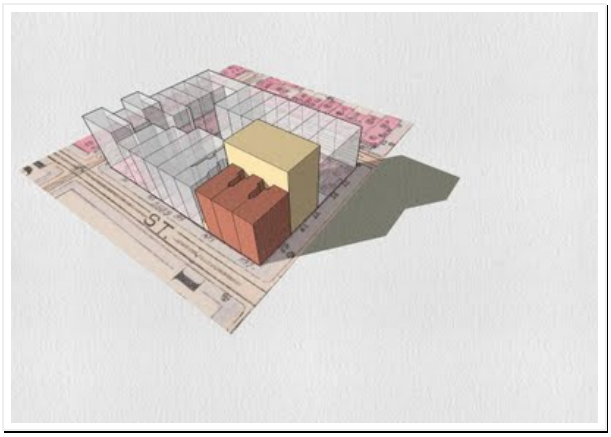
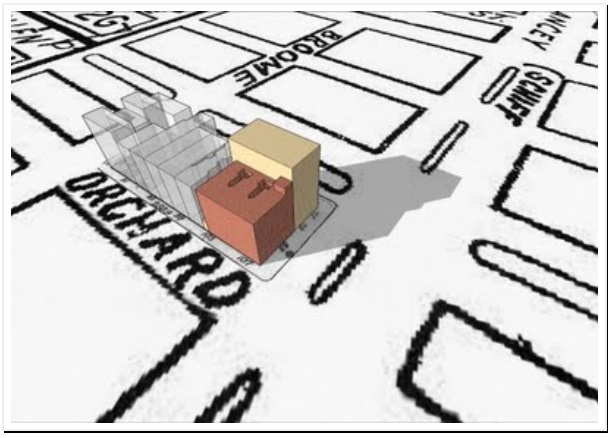
building. At the same time, the rear halves of all three were demolished, clearing space for a new building to house a branch of the Bank of the United States facing Delancey Street at the rear of the merged lots.



103, 105 and 107 Orchard circa 1913-1916

When Allen Street was widened between 1930 and 1934, the tenements on the other side of the bank were removed, exposing the side wall of the bank and effectively changing the entire neighborhood.



103, 105 and 107 Orchard circa 1930-1934

Once again, 103 Orchard Street is changing, and so is the neighborhood. In July the Tenement Museum's new Visitor and Education Center will officially open to the public, representing the historical memory of 103 Orchard Street and the ongoing evolution that makes the Lower East Side such an exciting place to be.

A Rendering of the new Visitor Center at 103 Orchard

Posted by Tenement Museum at 2:03 PM
Labels: 103 Orchard Street, architecture
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