In the previous chapter, the process of development on the Lower East Side was broadly discussed, as was the process of social change. The purpose of this large scale exploration was to provide a context for further exploration at a finer scale. This context could then be seen as having focused on a scale that might be considered the District. As the case study continues in this chapter, the largest complete component of the urban fabric that will be considered is the Block. Since the block can conceptually be considered a finer scale component of the District, it becomes evident that the Block also has several components nested at even finer scales within it. These components include a system of Lots, Buildings and a collection of elements that will be collected under the rubric of “Smaller than Buildings.” With the addition of one larger scale element, the Street, a component closely tied to the larger District, this conceptual hierarchy of components can be used to analyze the fixed, semi-fixed and non-fixed features of a representative portion of the urban environment for signs of change and diversity.

Before utilizing this hierarchy to continue the analysis of a small portion of the Lower East Side, the concept of Block needs to be further refined. There are two generally acknowledged conceptions of a block. One is related to a plan-based view of the environment that identifies a block as a module of potentially buildable land, isolated on all sides by public thoroughfares (e.g., Streets). This can visualized by considering that Roman planners deemed such modules as “insulae,” or islands within a larger public realm.

The second conception of a block is characterized by the term “face block.” Sidney Brower coined this term to indicate that a block can also be the space between, and defined by, two “insulae.” This conception incorporates, and internalizes, the Street, whereas in the former conception the Street is at the periphery and is the defining element, as opposed to the “insulae.” In addition to the street, a face block includes the private property fronting on that street, which means that both definitions of the Block share the same elements but concentrate attention on different relationships between them.

Both concepts of the Block are useful and accordingly, both will be used in the analysis when appropriate. Hereafter, the term “block” will denote the former conception (of insulae,) and “face block” will be used to indicate the latter conception.
LOOKING FOR CHANGE IN NEW YORK’S BLOCKS 236, 237 AND 238

In refining the scale of analysis, two face blocks have been selected that are in many ways similar to one another and representative of the larger context. As Figure 2-2 (on pg. 18) has shown, these face blocks lie adjacent, and parallel, to one another, and they share a block (no. 237) between them. This places the face blocks literally “around the block” from one another.

The first face block occupies a roughly 400-foot length of Mott Street that is defined by Blocks 237 and 238 (these numbers are how the City identifies them) and lies between Grand and Hester Streets. The second face block is a similar length of Mulberry Street that is defined by Blocks 236 and 237. A completely defined Mott Street face block and a partially defined Mulberry Street face block appear in the earliest remaining plans of the platting of the Bayard Estate. (see Figure 3-1 - The Montressor Plan, or Figure 2-3 – The Ratzen Plan on pg. 20)

Streets and Blocks

In looking at the two face blocks, it becomes apparent that the defining blocks are not purely rectangular in plan. About two hundred feet north of Hester Street each of the three blocks is bent about four degrees to the northwest, giving both Mott and Mulberry Streets the appearance of a slight curve along the length of the face blocks. This bend is more like a change in axis, or a fold, than an actual curve and it appears to be a legacy of the Bayard Estate’s similarly “bent” property boundary at the Bowery, just to the east. Maerschalck (the plat designer) and Bayard may have been concerned with maintaining more uninterrupted frontage on the Bowery, by keeping the adjacent streets parallel to the dominant thoroughfare even as it turned northward. Correcting the bend, by maintaining straight streets in the blocks immediately adjacent to the Bowery, would have introduced numerous intersections and triangular blocks on the Bowery. While their intent is known only through plans and the existing fabric, it might be safe to assume that since this was a private subdivision, that profitable frontage and regular lots were regarded highly. (This is in contrast to the City’s Commissioners’ Plan of 1811, which was drafted by the government and which did not generally conform to individual property boundaries. (33. Reps 1965))

The bend in the blocks does however, disappear and re-appear in early plans. There might be several explanations for this, including that there was some intent to keep the streets straight anyway, but the most convincing is that the adjacent streets were only nominally open late in the 18th century and surveyors were often speculating as to actual or planned conditions. (Recall also that about

Figure 3-1 -- A portion of The Montressor Plan of 1766
(Plan from: 33. Kouwenhoven 1953)
this time, DeLancey and Rutgers had to resolve their uncertainty regarding the common boundary of their estates.) The Montressor Plan of 1766, (Figure 3-1) a plan made for the British Military in case of a local uprising, presumably depicts existing conditions as opposed to planned conditions, a distinction that can be seen by comparing the Montressor Plan with the Ratzen Plan of 1767 (Figure 2-3). The Montressor Plan clearly shows the bend in a completely defined Block 238 and a partially defined Block 237.

Once the streets had been fully opened, which has been demonstrated to have occurred in the years around 1812, the bend became an enduring and subtle characteristic of the two face blocks. Aside from this bend, Mott and Mulberry Streets appear to have changed dimensionally very little, if at all, and both have maintained a right-of-way width of fifty-feet throughout their existence.

Since blocks and streets have a zero-sum relationship in an urban grid, a change in one effects a change in the other. Accordingly, Blocks 236, 237 and 238 have not changed their boundaries on Mott or Mulberry Street, with one possible exception. This exception is the movement twenty-five feet to the north of the point at which the change in axis, or the bend, occurs on the east side of Block 236 (from the southern limit of 139 Mulberry to the southern limit of 141 Mulberry) after 1855. However, the movement of this point could just be a result of an error in recording the block’s boundaries on the tax plans (33. Amerman 1855) used in the analysis, since a contemporary (33. Perris 1855) fire insurance map depicts a building already conforming to the post-1855 location of the bend.

In summary, the two largest scale elements of the case study site, Streets and Blocks, have remained virtually unchanged dimensionally.

Lots and Buildings

In contrast to Streets and Blocks, over the past 166 years (a span of time determined by the earliest plan (33. Ludlam 1828) located for the study that depicts lots) the lots, as a group, fronting on these two face blocks have undergone considerable change. (see Figure 3-2 - Lot Configuration Through Time) In fact, if one assumes that the original platting of these face blocks consisted of sixty-four, roughly 25 by 100-foot lots, with their long dimension oriented east-west and one short side fronting on Mott or Mulberry, only eleven lots remain unmodified in 1995. This great degree of deviation from the original design can be understood by observing two trends, corner reconfiguration and lot consolidation.

Corner Reconfiguration

The first example of corner lot reconfiguration, at the north-west side of Mulberry Street at Grand, (see Figure 3-3 - Corner Lot Reconfiguration) appears to disclose several important facts, both about the blocks’ original lot configuration and about most of the site’s lots that fall within 75 to 100-feet of the corners. The first obser-
Figure 3-2 -- Lot Configuration through Time
(Sources: 33. Ludlam 1828; Amerman 1855; Perris 1855; Bromley 1891; Bromley 1914; Sanborn 1994)
vation is that in 1828, this corner was comprised of an array of approximately 25 by 100-foot (the corner lot was 30 by 100-foot) lots, all oriented roughly east-west and all with approximately 25-foot frontages on Mulberry Street. This orientation might appear to be simply the most convenient configuration but recall that in 1752, when these blocks were platted, that the "developed" city lay entirely to the south. With that in mind, the more valuable frontage, the more trafficked, would have been on the north-south thoroughfares, like the Bowery, Mott or Mulberry. However, as development enveloped these blocks, Grand and Hester Streets became major commercial thoroughfares, and this likely led to this corner's deviation from the original lot configuration.

As the diagram depicts, the five lots near the corner (147 to 155 Mulberry) were affected and the three lots that were closest to the corner were replaced by five approximately 20 by 75-foot lots, oriented north-south. The two lots to the south (147 and 149 Mulberry) of these five new lots retained their east-west orientation but the lot lines along two of their long sides were modified. These modified lot lines were replatted with a bend for an unknown reason and one of these bent lot lines is shared with the back of the five new lots on Grand.

On the same diagrams, looking just west, actually off of the project's site but still on Block 236, the results of another reconfiguration can be seen. Like the corner of Mulberry and Grand, idiosyncratic lot boundaries are depicted where the original five, east-west lots would have been. The lots just to the south remain regular with those on Mulberry as indicated by a continuous lot line running through the width of the block.

A second example that had apparently, prior to 1828, already undergone at least one reconfiguration is the southwest corner of Mott Street, at Hester. (see Figure 3-4 - Corner Lot Reconfiguration 2) In 1828, five lots of varying frontage, are oriented north-south. Two of these lots have depths of 100-feet, but the three closest to the corner have had a wide and shallow, east-west lot created out of the "back" of their lots. This wide lot takes advantage of the frontage on Mott Street by utilizing what had been formerly less valuable, and largely isolated, back lot space.

The reconfigurations then involve the subdivision of the wide and shallow lot on Mott Street in 1855 and then the consolidation of five of the seven lots into one corner lot. After 1891, the consolidated, 62 by 100-foot corner lot was again subdivided by being divided into two lots of equal frontage on Mott Street. However, this last occurrence, the late-19th century subdivision of a large consolidated lot, is unusual. The typical sequence of events that can be observed on six of the eight corners of the site involves: first, reorientation and the addition of idiosyncratic small lots, followed by consolidation and removal of the idiosyncratic lots.

TOWARDS URBAN FRAMEWORKS
Figure 3-3 -- Corner Lot Reconfiguration
(Sources: 33. Ludlam 1828; Amerman 1855; Perris 1855; Bromley 1891; Bromley 1914)

* The heights of the buildings at 145 & 147 Mulberry in 1855 are based upon speculation.
**Figure 3-4 -- Corner Lot Reconfiguration 2**
(Sources: 33. Ludlam 1828; Anserman 1855; Perris 1855; Bromley 1891; Bromley 1914)

* The heights of all but two buildings in 1855 are based upon speculation as is the height of 121 Mott in 1891.
Figure 3-5 -- Mid-Block Coarsening
(Sources: Amerman 1855; Perris 1855; Sanborn 1994)
Lot Consolidation

Lot consolidation is not unique to the corners of the site. As indicated in Figure 3-5 (Mid-Block Coarsening) over the period beginning in 1855 and ending in 1994, lot consolidation occurred on an even greater scale in the middle of the facer blocks. This is particularly evident on the east sides of Mott and Mulberry Streets, where collectively eighteen, 25 by 100-foot lots were consolidated into eight. Of these eight, the two largest on the east side of Mott are only nominally independent as they contain two halves of the “Meitz Building.” Another, on the north-west corner of Mulberry, has become part of an L-shaped, corner lot consolidation.

Buildings

Lot consolidation proceeded hand-in-hand with a change in scale of buildings and the likelihood of an attendant simplification of activities occurring on large portions of the face blocks. As Blackmar (32. 1989) has suggested, the residence was, in the early 19th century, commonly a site of work as well. The consolidation of lots was typically preparing the way for the construction of a comparatively massive, “loft” manufacturing buildings, like the Meitz Building or the G.L. Jaeger Building (see Figure 3-6). These two buildings, and their resident large manufacturing concerns, replaced 16 buildings (counting front-lot buildings and unattached back-lot buildings, but not attached additions to the front buildings) that had 29 listed residents in 1851. (31. Doggett’s 1851) The listed occupations of some of these residents includes shoemakers and tailors, who along with similarly employed neighbors, apparently formed a “trade neighborhood,” a concentration of people who shared a common trade/industry that was typical in the Lower East Side at the time. (32. Blackmar 1989)

The introduction of large-scale manufacturing concerns in lieu of small proprietorships is indicative of both a coarsening of the scale of buildings fronting on the face blocks and possibly, a coarsening of activities. The small buildings that housed multi-tenant residential, crafts-production and retail facilities were replaced by buildings including: a furniture factory (121-125 Mott, constructed before 1891, demolished prior to 1914), a tobacco factory (133-135 Mulberry, constructed before 1891), a paper box manufacturer (142-144 Mulberry; constructed prior to 1891, demolished after 1914) a straw board and lining factory (G.L. Jaeger, 132-138 Mulberry, first portion constructed in 1880) and the Meitz Building, an “iron factory” (Mott St. Senior Center, personal communication 1994) (128-138 Mott, constructed before 1914). (33. Bromley 1891; Bromley 1914; G.L. Jaeger Co. circa 1880’s)

The loft buildings were not the only structures replacing the buildings found on the fire insurance plans of 1855 (33. Perris 1855). Many of the buildings lying on
Shaded portions indicate new, or significantly modified, buildings.

As in most drawings created specifically for this document, only buildings on lots fronting on the Mott & Mulberry Street face blocks are depicted here.

Figure 3-7 -- Face Block Buildings Over Time
(Sources: Ludlam 1828; Amerman 1855; Perris 1855; Bromley 1891; Bromley 1914; Sanborn 1994)
the street frontage of the lots, with their outbuildings and attached additions, were replaced after 1855, with "Pre-Law" tenements. (see Figure 4-2 on pg. 83) These buildings were typically 5-stories tall, occupied a larger portion of the lot and often retained the 3 and 4-story back-lot tenements that existing prior to 1855. Later, two "Old Law" tenements were constructed at 139 and 141 Mulberry Street and sometime after 1901, several "New Law" tenement buildings were constructed.

The "New Law" buildings often differed from the "Pre-law" and "Old Law" tenements in their massing, which required that they occupy a lot derived from consolidation and several of these New Law buildings occupy corner sites.

The common features of the tenements and the loft buildings, include: the prevalence of brick on the upper portions of their street elevations, their sitting directly on the front lot line, increasing lot coverage in the newer buildings, their occupancy of 100% of the street frontage and a sectional (functional) organization that might be considered Basement-Base-Top. This sectional organization will be considered in more depth in the Smaller than Buildings section later in this chapter, but to briefly introduce these three components (see Figure 3-8) their characteristics include:

**Basement**
- Below grade
- Often accessed via entries embedded in the sidewalk in front of the building

**Base**
- At grade, or with a few steps up to the first floor
- Enclosure treatment generally different than that of the Top
- Characteristically, more transparent - an appearance of columns and infill would be a typical enclosure system versus the Top's continuous plane of brick with "punched" window openings.

**Location of public entries to (often independent) functions in the Base, the Top, and sometimes, to the rear yard.**

*Note: Some of the later, post-1891, buildings (e.g. the Meitz Building, 150 Mulberry/191 Grand, 121 and 125 Mott) adopted a more ornate, Neo-classical, tripartite elevational vocabulary (base-middle-top) that extended some of the base treatment over the second floor (using motifs like rustication, cornices and pilasters) and emphasized "top" by treating the upper floor elevation differently as well. These compositional changes however do not reflect apparent changes in the usage of the 2nd or top floors and they can still be considered to have used an "infill" strategy on the ground floor in contrast to the upper floors. The older buildings (e.g. G.L. Jaeger) while also compositionally/visually having a tripar-
tite elevation, were more austere in its implementation and the ornamentation more closely paralleled the functional categories of "Base" and "Top."

Top
- functionally, occupies the 2nd through the upper floors (usually the 5th, 6th or 7th).
- Often houses a different activity than that occupying the base (e.g., housing vs. a shop), or a different component of that activity (e.g., actual manufacturing vs. front-office, as was apparently the case in G.L. Jaeger’s building.)

To summarize change at the Building scale, two generations of buildings can be considered to have been constructed on the face blocks. The first were smaller structures that most likely functioned as both residences and places of business. As the housing demand grew, separate buildings were constructed in the back portions of many of these original buildings’ lots and ultimately most of these buildings were replaced. This new generation of buildings was constructed over a period of approximately 40 years and the buildings were generally larger than their predecessors. Initially, these buildings either mixed upper floor residential and ground floor retail uses or they were exclusively used for manufacturing. The structures existing from this second generation were all constructed prior to 1914, with the exception of 116-120 Mott Street and 142-144 Mulberry, which were apparently built shortly thereafter, and 122 Mott Street, a one-story, through-block, utility company building.

Smaller Than Buildings

Unlike the previous categories, this one is not exclusively about large-scale artifacts, like buildings, or about legally documented boundaries. It begins to treat all of the aforementioned categories – streets, blocks, lots and buildings – more as the context for human occupation and action. Accordingly, it begins to describe a search for who was doing what and where, and how that is affected by, and how it has affected, the environment provided by this context. Following the addition of the last building to the face blocks, it logically follows that much of the human action in the environment fits into a finer-scale category, even activities that transcend the boundaries of the physical and legal artifacts found in the larger-scale categories.

To help identify and analyze the site at the Smaller Than Building scale, a simple model has been developed to locate semi-fixed and non-fixed features in the public domain. The model is based on a series of conceptual (and flexible) zones that were observed, and used to record data, during the project’s field work. Seven zones have been identified and Figure 3-9 illustrates their location in a plan view of a Pre-Law tenement building's street frontage. These zones overlap the lot line and are

Figure 3-9 -- The 7 Zones (in plan view)
Legend:
A - Building Interior
B - Inner Sidewalk
C - Middle Sidewalk
D - Outer Sidewalk
E - Parking Strip
F - Thoroughfare (the diagram only depicts part of this zone)
G - Upper Floor Entry
centered on three sidewalk zones. These sidewalk zones are the most commonly referred to in this document and they can be defined as:

The Inner Sidewalk - an area that runs parallel, and adjacent to, the building elevation. In the study area it is frequently occupied by semi-fixed features and it may extend 2-3 feet away from the building.

The Middle Sidewalk - a band of space that runs parallel to the Inner Sidewalk and which occupies the "middle" of the sidewalk. This zone ranges from 2-6 feet and is often where people walk.

The Outer Sidewalk - another parallel band that lies outside of the previous two zones and which extends to the curb. It may be 2-3 feet wide and semi-fixed features are often left there for short periods of time. Parking meters are commonly found in this zone too.

*Mott and Mulberry Streets: At the Height of Little Italy*

In the 1930's, both Mott and Mulberry Streets, between Hester and Grand Streets, were located well within the boundaries of Little Italy. (98% of the population, living within the 31-block area north of Canal Street considered to comprise Little Italy, was reported as being Italian in 1932 (19. Levanthes 1979)). As noted before, immigrant Italians had initially settled into differing blocks of the enclave according to the Italian region of their origin. Calabrians had settled on Mott Street and Neapolitans on Mulberry. (41. Mott St. Senior's Center personal communication 1994; 19. Mangione & Morreale 1992; Gabbaccia 1984; 38. Ramati 1981) This segregation by region most evidently manifested itself in the annual feasts honoring the particular region's patron saint. Crowds would gather in the relevant streets and large, architectural constructions would house altars to the saint. (see Figure 3-10 - Festa SS Immacolata - 1937) Aside from the visual clues provided by these special occasions, the children of some of the immigrants recall that you could identify the regional dialect spoken among the residents of each street. (41. Mott St. Senior's Center personal communication 1994)

**Mott Street**

One 79-year-old woman - who was born, and grew up, on Elizabeth Street, around the block from Mott Street - also recalled the more mundane activities on the face block. In the 1930's, on an ordinary day, the street was part of an important neighborhood marketplace, as she stated:

"...they (the pushcart peddlers) would sell mostly vegetables... The fish was never outside, always in the store... They (the peddlers) would be on the street... (for) two blocks, just from Broome (south) to Hester Street, that's it... We had the butcher there. We had the bakery in those two blocks... We had the pork store there. In those two blocks we had everything. We didn't have to go out of the..."
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MOTT STREET</th>
<th>ZONES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feast of S.S. Immacolata</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on Mott Street - 1937</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Photo from the Collections of the New York Public Library)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fixed Features</th>
<th>Building Wall</th>
<th>Inner Sidewalk</th>
<th>Middle Sidewalk</th>
<th>Outer Sidewalk</th>
<th>Parking</th>
<th>Thoroughfare</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CORNICE on Building Base</td>
<td>None Apparent</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood &amp; Glass STOREFRONT with recessed entry</td>
<td>None Apparent</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIRE ESCAPE</td>
<td>None Apparent</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semi-Fixed Features</th>
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<th>Inner Sidewalk</th>
<th>Middle Sidewalk</th>
<th>Outer Sidewalk</th>
<th>Parking</th>
<th>Thoroughfare</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retracted Canvas AWNING advertising florist</td>
<td>None Apparent</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Four-story, but relatively two-dimensional, ALTAR of Baroque, Neo-Classical design - with statue, many electric lights and candles.</td>
<td>PUSHCART located on street corner</td>
<td>PUSHCARTS on Mott, near corner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canvas AWNING extended over entire sidewalk</td>
<td>None Apparent</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIGN for corner store reading &quot;Public Market&quot;</td>
<td>None Apparent</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-Fixed Features</th>
<th>Building Wall</th>
<th>Inner Sidewalk</th>
<th>Middle Sidewalk</th>
<th>Outer Sidewalk</th>
<th>Parking</th>
<th>Thoroughfare</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PEOPLE STANDING behind the altar, on left of photo</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MANY PEOPLE STANDING around the altar, posing for the photo. Including a MARCHING BAND and many CHILDREN in the foreground.</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Figure 3-11 – View North Along the West Side of Mott Street - 1936**

(From the Collections of the New York Public Library)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MOTT STREET 1936</th>
<th>ZONES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Street View</td>
<td>Building Wall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inner Sidewalk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Middle Sidewalk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outer Sidewalk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thoroughfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixed Features</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-Fixed Features</td>
<td>FIRE HYDRANT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Fixed Features</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **A**: Wood Frame, Bayed Display Window
- **B**: Perpendicular SIGN reading: "E II Miglione Caffe"
- **C**: Retractable Canvas Awning reading: "Jersey Pork"
- **D**: Canvas Awning further down street reading: "Groceries"
- **E**: Person standing in shadow of near awning
- **F**: Woman walking in background
- **G**: Woman looking at boxes

*Figure 3-11 – View North Along the West Side of Mott Street - 1936*
neighborhood to shop. We even had a store where we used to buy macaroni, homemade - they would keep it in drawers... That was on that (the west) side of the street.” (Mott Street Senior Center personal communication 1994)

In a photograph (Figure 3-11) taken of the west side of the street in 1936 (and incidentally, found after the interview) Mott appears much as it was described. Two men stand near the curb, looking at the camera, one in a fedora and jacket and the other in a peak hat and a sweater, while a woman with her back turned, looks down toward boxes on the outer portion of the sidewalk, near the curb. Parked at the curb, and apparently along the length of the block, is a row of small pushcarts, the closest of which has a scale hanging from a wooden boom. On the far side of the pushcarts a truck is moving through the center of the street.

On the left are several storefronts. Several of these storefronts have wood and glass bay (display) windows, supported by large brackets and protruding a short distance over the sidewalk. In front of the closest window is a low, “crudely” constructed wood bench and some baskets - possibly the location of an ancillary display of the shop’s goods. Next door, a large, low-hanging, retractable canvas awning hangs, and advertises, Jersey Pork.

Just beyond the awning, a rectangular sign, hung perpendicularly from the building advertises the presence of ‘E Il Migliore Caffe and another canvas awning is seen further down the street.

A photograph (Figure 3-12) taken in 1933, shows a similar scene at the southwest corner of Mott Street. Several men stand in the street, and a boy on the curb, around an umbrella-covered pushcart that is being used to vend hotdogs. Another pushcart stands at the curb, a few feet to the north (to the right). There is also an array of goods displayed on the sidewalk in front of the corner storefront and an umbrella shades a portion of them. Nearby, two people stand in apparent conversation. Over the storefront, a canvas awning hangs retracted.

Looking back at the photo (Figure 3-10) taken during the feast, depicting the opposite corner, the most apparent features are semi-fixed and non-fixed as a large group of people poses for the camera in front of the three-story, Neo-classical altar and beneath a small temporary sign lettered in Italian and suspended above the roadway. (The sign indicates that this group is associated with the region around the southeastern Italian city of Bari.) More mundane features include two storefronts, a “Public Market” and a florist. The latter is notable for its wooden storefront, and the former for its large, extended awning. Also of note is the continuous, Neo-classical cornice capping the Base of the building.

Mulberry Street

Mulberry Street at this time appears to have had a different ambience. First of all, the pushcarts were apparently confined to Mott Street (41. Mott St. Senior Center, personal communication 1994) and due to the presence of several large loft buildings, it didn’t have the continuous
Figure 3-12 — Southwest Corner of Mott Street 1933
(Photo from the Collections of the New York Public Library)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fixed Features</th>
<th>Building Wall</th>
<th>Inner Sidewalk</th>
<th>Middle Sidewalk</th>
<th>Outer Sidewalk</th>
<th>Parking</th>
<th>Thoroughfare</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>164 Mulberry</td>
<td>164 Mulberry has an ELEVATED FIRST FLOOR several feet above the sidewalk.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Obscured&quot; ENTRY door at 164 Mulberry.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-story STOREFRONT with 2 glass and wood frame DISPLAY WINDOWS &amp; corner ENTRY.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Two STAIRCASES with iron balusters and handrails, one at the entry to 164 and one next door to 161, leading to elevated first floors.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STAIRCASE descending to 164's basement (behind the iron railing).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>None</td>
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<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semi-Fixed Features</th>
<th>Building Wall</th>
<th>Inner Sidewalk</th>
<th>Middle Sidewalk</th>
<th>Outer Sidewalk</th>
<th>Parking</th>
<th>Thoroughfare</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SIGN for the &quot;Villa Nova Restaurant&quot; perpendicular to the wall at 164 Mulberry.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIGN reading &quot;Restaurant&quot; below 164's 1st floor windows.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIGN reading &quot;Store for Rent&quot; in window at 169.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canopy AWNING at 169 reading &quot;Caffe Bella Napoli&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LETTERING (&quot;Caffe,&quot; &quot;Pasticcereia&quot; &amp; &quot;Dolceria&quot;) in window of 161.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LARGE SIGN/ BILLBOARD in Italian, for neighboring Banca Stabile.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>One CAR parked in front of 161.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>One CAR parked one east side of street, close to photographer.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-Fixed Features</th>
<th>Building Wall</th>
<th>Inner Sidewalk</th>
<th>Middle Sidewalk</th>
<th>Outer Sidewalk</th>
<th>Parking</th>
<th>Thoroughfare</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Three MEN STANDING</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Two MEN CONVERSING</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3-13 -- View of the West Side of Mulberry Street -- 1932
(Photo from the Collections of the New York Public Library)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MULBERRY STREET</th>
<th>ZONES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking northeast at 130 Mulberry, during the Feast of San Gennaro.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fixed Features</th>
<th>Building Wall</th>
<th>Inner Sidewalk</th>
<th>Middle Sidewalk</th>
<th>Outer Sidewalk</th>
<th>Parking</th>
<th>Thoroughfare</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A CORNICE at base of building</td>
<td>None Apparent</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIRE ESCAPE</td>
<td></td>
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<th>Semi-Fixed Features</th>
<th>Building Wall</th>
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<th>Middle Sidewalk</th>
<th>Outer Sidewalk</th>
<th>Parking</th>
<th>Thoroughfare</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canvast AWMING extended at 130</td>
<td></td>
<td>None Apparent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American FLAG hanging from fire escape.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIGN (in foreground) reading &quot;La Parisian Tailors and Cleaners&quot; at 129.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Middle Sidewalk</th>
<th>Outer Sidewalk</th>
<th>Parking</th>
<th>Thoroughfare</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>None Apparent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEOPLE WALKING separately toward the corner in front of 130.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GROUP OF PEOPLE WALKING on West Side.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3-14 -- Southeast Corner of Mulberry Street During San Gennaro - 1930**

(Photo from the Collections of the New York Public Library)
stretch of stores that the west side of Mott did.

However, the street was not without some stores as a photo (Figure 3-13) taken in 1932 displays. In the oldest building on the site (originally constructed as a residence in 1816 at 153 Mulberry and moved during the corner reconfiguration to 149 Mulberry (35. NYC Landmarks Commission 1969)) a sign for the Villa Nova Restaurant (note the use of the English “restaurant” versus “ristorante”) hangs perpendicular to the wall and another spans the base of the building. The restaurant, if still open when the photo was taken, apparently occupies the basement of the building, since the upstairs windows indicate that the ground floor is for rent and was previously occupied by a billiards parlor.

Next door at 151 Mulberry, the Caffe Bella Napoli, a “pasticceria” and “dolceria” occupies a one-story extension in the backyard of the second oldest building on the site. Bay display windows, similar to those found on Mott Street, straddle the cafe’s recessed entrance and a retracted canvas awning hangs above the storefront. On the roof of this extension, a very large sign, a billboard in essence, advertises in Italian, the Banca Stabile, which occupies the corner storefront (out of view to the right).

The street is noticeably less crowded than Mott with only two cars parked at the curbs in lieu of the many pushcarts found along Mott. Several hatted men stand next to one car and two other men stand further down the sidewalk, in front of the restaurant. Just beyond the Villa Nova Restaurant is one of the loft buildings.

Catholic Feasts also occurred on Mulberry Street (and in 1995, they are the most vital of the feasts that still occur – see Figure 4-10 on pg. 94). Figure 3-14 shows an altar that was constructed on the southeast corner of the face block for the Feast of San Gennaro in 1930. The placement of the altar on the east side of the street, like the altar for SS Immacolata, permits the congregants to face east towards Jerusalem, as they would in a typical Catholic church. No explanation is readily apparent as to why both were located on a southern corner of the block versus a northern one though.

Also depicted by the photo are decorations strung across Hester and Mulberry, a sign for a tailor at 129 Mulberry and a canvas awning hanging above the store at 130 Mulberry/191 Hester. Also, several people are walking alone on the corner near the altar as is a group on the closer corner.

Mott and Mulberry: After the Little Italy
Special District

We never had the restaurants; it’s been just (these past) few years now . . . there was a few, one or two . . . not as many as they have today. Mulberry Street full of restaurants! We never had that . . . We had pastry stores . . . that we had . . .

This quote, from the same woman who described Mott Street above, succinctly describes the changes that have occurred on Mulberry Street from the 1930’s to 1994.
The tailor, the pasticceria and even the Villa Nova Restaurant shown in the previous subsection, are gone. As Chapter Two described, Little Italy began a gradual decline in the 1950’s and by the 1970’s, the Chinese community to the south had made substantial inroads above Canal Street and both Mott and Mulberry Streets were changing in character. Then the City intervened and in 1977, the Little Italy Special District was created.

Change continued even after the District was implemented as Figure 3-15 (New Ground Floor Stores) indicates. Each dot on the plans represents a new/changed telephone listing for the ground floor occupants from the previous period. The diagram’s base year is 1971, several years before the Special District was implemented, and the analysis proceeds in ten year increments. The third plan shows the latest, mid-decade situation and the squares indicate new storefronts that opened too recently to have made the 1994 directory, but were observed during this project’s field work.

Figure 3-15 shows several things about the face blocks in the last 24 years. The first is that the stores on the west side of Mott have turned over more rapidly than those on Mulberry. The second is the impact of the transformation of the ground floors of the loft buildings. When the Jaeger Building’s ground floor was converted, five new storefronts appear in a short period of time on Mulberry Street – as shown on the 1991 plan. The Meitz Building on Mott Street is presently undergoing a similar transformation with a similar street-level impact. Even before the ground floor conversion is complete, four new stores have opened. As the following sections will describe, these two conversions have partially reversed the effects of the lot coarsening discussed earlier in the chapter.

Mott Street in the 1990’s

The Mott Street face block is now generally recognized as part of Chinatown. As of 1994, all of the Italian-owned storefronts had closed and most have been reconstructed and reopened. The first photo (Figure 3-16 – 133-135 Mott Street) appears to show the same stretch of stores and sidewalk (note the fire hydrant) that appeared in the 1936, mid-block photo of Mott Street (Figure 3-11).

In comparing the two photos, one of the most striking observations is that the wooden bay window in the foreground of Figure 3-11 has been completely removed. This storefront, 133 Mott, in the photo taken in the summer of 1994, is completely open to the sidewalk. Low tables and boxes of goods are set up in the inner sidewalk and the interior of the store is also open to shoppers. 135 Mott, apparently occupied by Jersey Pork in the 1930’s, now has a common variation on the open storefront with a window and door assembly set back several feet (in this case 6-feet) behind the building’s main elevation. This provides for ample display space adjacent to the area provided by the inner sidewalk. (see Figure 4-5 on pg. 87 for a diagram of a “setback” storefront elevation versus a completely enclosed storefront.)
* Indicates a change has occurred in a ground-floor tenant during the previous period (Change is determined by a different listing in the Reverse Phone Directory for that year)

- Indicates a change has occurred in a ground-floor tenant since the previous 10-year interval but was too recent to be listed in the current directory. These changes were observed during site visits instead.

* The G.L. Jaeger Building

Figure 3-15 -- New Storefronts 1971-1994
Other notable features of the new storefronts include the fixed metal or plastic awnings that have replaced the retractable canvas canopies found here in the 1930's; the large horizontal signage, in both Chinese and English; the temporary sign tied onto the bollard next to the fire hydrant; the table and boxes of goods at the inner sidewalk/building transitional space; the small, portable lights attached to the awnings and walls to illuminate the goods; the bags and scales; and the small signs on the tables and taped to the walls.

Also important to note are the colors used, red and yellow being the most prominent on the block with some green and white here too. Red, yellow and green are "auspicious" colors in Chinese culture. White has negative connotations and its presence, according to Feng Shui practice, should be mitigated somehow, e.g. by the addition of an auspicious color. (3. Rosbach 1983)

There are also many more people on the sidewalk in the 1994 picture (Figure 3-16) than in the view from the 1930's (Figure 3-11). The importance of this is however, difficult to determine, since the circumstances surrounding the earlier photo are unknown. For example, one can guess that it is morning in the early photo since the sun is in the east, and possibly that it is spring or fall from the somewhat heavy dress of the people in the foreground. The more recent photo was taken in the afternoon on a weekday in early August of last year. The people are mostly lightly and casually dressed, except for the employees of the store at the left who have on white "lab" coats and baseball hats.

In the next set of photos (Figure 3-17) the change is more recent. The first photo, the one with the piles of snow, was taken in March of 1993 and the other was taken in August of 1994. In the first photo, 143a Mott is occupied by open-fronted produce stand that has all of its goods displayed on two tables in the inner sidewalk area. An employee stands between the tables as a woman looks at the fruit. Two other people talk inside the store and an older woman walks by with a red plastic bag typical of those used to hold purchases made on the block. Bags also hang from the left table and from the column in the opening. A tall wooden partition is
also located to the left of the leftmost table. These appear often between adjacent sidewalk displays to apparently distinguish the goods of one store from the other’s. (It also occurs at similar displays in San Francisco’s Chinatown.)

In the back of the store a painting and a small red sign hang and further back, a shrine to a Buddha can be identified by the two orange electric lights. The store has no exterior signage other than those stating the prices of the produce. (The projecting sign on the second floor appears to be from a previous tenant, Hoi TAT Photo, Inc., that was listed in a 1991 reverse directory, but not in 1994’s. (31. Cole’s 1991 & 1994)) Also, two white struts hang loosely from the fire escape, suggesting that an awning like the one over the storefront to the right has been removed. The lack of this awning, has exposed the rolling security door assembly, above the store opening, that is used to close-up the store and which is a common feature on the block.

In the 1994 photo, the produce stand has been replaced by the Wen Wah Fashion Co., one of the only dry-goods shops on the face block. A red and yellow metal canopy has been put up, using the struts noted above, and from its underside, many pieces of clothing hang above the inner sidewalk. So much clothing is hanging in fact that it’s very difficult to see into the open storefront. Clothing has also been hung from the now black partition between this store and the neighboring one to the left. The entry into the store has moved as a result of one large table being used to display clothing out front instead of the previous two. Two mats, one red and one green lie on the ground before the entry. The meaning of these is unclear however.

The tenant in 143b, the Sam Yick Food Market to the right, has a similar 9-foot frontage, and in the earlier photo it apparently has a partial window assembly set back several feet from the building’s front elevation. The rolling security door is partially down and the store has a green and yellow metal awning with red lettering very similar to Wen Wah Fashion’s. Unlike the 1993 tenant in 143a, Sam Yick’s has refrigerated display cases in the interior of the store. So, in addition to the sidewalk display, customers can move into the storefront too. In the 1994 photo, Sam Yick’s is still present and the most evident change is that a complete window and door assembly has replaced the previous partial enclosure but this assembly is still set back from the building’s main elevation (note the position of the slender column).

To further describe these stores, one other view is presented of them. This one (Figure 3-18) presents a view closer to that of a person shopping on the west side of the street and it was taken in the early afternoon in August 1994. It shows how close the produce (or clothing) is to the pedestrian and several people in the foreground are apparently looking at the merchandise as they walk, even though they are already carrying bags. Several people have stopped and are looking over merchandise at Sam Yick’s store (just beyond the plywood separator) and Wen Wah’s clothing display is also evident. Also of note are the parked cars, vans and trucks. This view is typical of
Figure 3-17 – 143 Mott Street in 1993 (top) and 1994 (bottom)
the street midday when most spots are taken. A handtruck also sits further down, in the outer sidewalk, an area now defined partly by parking meters.

Each of these four storefronts has been located in one of two Pre-Law tenements (see the next chapter for more about this designation). Both of these tenements have upper floor entries centered in their ground floors. In a building constructed on a lot with 25-feet of frontage, when the upper floor access also has to continue through the building to access the rear of the lot, a center entry divides the ground floor in two. This division creates two isolated storefronts on the ground floor with approximately 9-feet of frontage. An exception to this is the Cheong Charn Meat Co. (Figure 3-19 - also partly seen in Figure 3-16) which has cut through a party wall (or taken advantage of an existing opening) to occupy two 9-foot wide storefronts in two adjacent Pre-Law tenements. The buildings are quite similar, possibly built at the same time, but the division between the two buildings can be discerned above the center of the plastic awning.

However, not all Pre-Law tenements have a center entry. On the west side of Mott in fact, there are four Pre-Law tenements with center entries and five with side entries. Figure 3-20 shows a building (with similar but not the same upper floor window details as those in Figure 3-19) that has an upper floor entry located next to the party wall, on the left. The Bip Po Meat Co.'s open storefront has accordingly occupied most of the ground floor. (A portion of this store also appears in Fig. 3-16.) At the beginning of this subsection, mention was made of the transformation of the Meitz Building, an industrial loft building that occupies at least a third of the east side of Mott Street. Figure 3-21 shows a series of photos (taken in August and November 1994 and January 1995) that trace the reconstruction of the northernmost bays of this building's ground floor. In the first photo, the original wood infill doors can still be seen behind the frames of the newly installed rolling security gates. In the next, the infill has been demolished and several new stores have been constructed and opened.

The two stores on the left are more enclosed than many on the west side of the block. They use common materials, including a masonry tile used to completely obscure the original rusticated brick columns of the building and anodized aluminum door and window frames. Shortly after opening, neither store had actively setup on the sidewalk.

The storefront just to the south, partly seen in the photos of Figure 3-21 and completely in Figure 3-22, has selected a different elevational design. This store, like the Kam Lee Meat Market in Figure 3-21 occupies a storefront of about 20-feet in frontage, but it operates partly as an open storefront. No additional masonry has been used and anodized aluminum window and door frames have been

Figure 3-18 -- View South past 143 Mott Street in August 1994
infilled between the original brick columns, leaving the columns visible. Aside from selling seafood inside, the store also sells fish at the sidewalk through the doors at the left of the second picture, where the employee is setting up.

In the southern most bay of the building, a third elevational strategy, and the most traditional, has been used. Here, in half of a bay, a completely open storefront is selling fish from a display oriented toward the sidewalk. The interior of the store is used for preparation and several employees, in baseball hats, can be seen working.

The semi-fixed features of each of these new stores include, banners and signs celebrating their grand opening and many small red signs tacked to the windows and walls. The latter two stores have the standard array of scales and red plastic bags near their display tables and the last store has several potted plants out front and a prominently displayed Buddhist shrine, with two red electric lights, high on the back wall of the store.

Other changes have also occurred on Mott since 1993. Each of the corner buildings has had at least one new storefront constructed, and in some case several have been built. (see Figure 4-23). As the before-and-after views show, the last of the Italian storefronts had held onto the corner storefronts, most likely due to their frontage on Grand and Hester Streets. Fretta Brothers meat shop also had the last of the "traditional," retractable canvas awnings noted on the face block.
New Metal Awning Spans the Entire Base

Only Some Signage Currently in Place. More has been added in Photo Below.

New Rolling Security Gates

Old Wood Infill Doors

All of the photos of Figure 3-21 are of these bays

Both of the photos of Figure 3-22 are of these bays

Figure 3-21 -- Transformation of the Meitz Building's Base -- 1993-1994

Location of Photo in Figure 3-23

Ground Floor Plan of Meitz Building before Reconstruction

New Masonry Elevational Finish
Figure 3-22 (near & far right) -- Two views of a New Storefront in Meitz Building's Base - 1994

Employee Setting up a Sidewalk Display

Temporary Signage

Figure 3-23 (near right) -- New Open Storefront in Meitz Building's Base - 1994

Shrine on Back Wall

Woman Sitting

Figure 3-24 (far right) -- Woman Sitting & Listening to Radio on West Side of Mott Street
As of 1994, the only vestige of the Italian community on the Mott Street face block appears to be the occasional presence of some of the older Italian residents (an annual Feast of Saint Anthony also occurs one block further south). However, their presence appears to be very infrequent and it was noted only once in the behavioral mapping process. This instance is recorded in Figure 3-24 which shows an older woman sitting in a folding chair and listening to a portable radio. On a day that was hazy and about 90 degrees according to the field notes, she had located her chair in front of an upper floor entry and in the shade of a Chinese storefront’s awning.

Mulberry Street in the 1990’s

Figure 3-15 (New Ground Floor Stores) has shown that change in occupancy on the ground floor of Mulberry Street has not been as volatile as it has on Mott Street over the past two years. After the conversion of the ground floor of the Jaeger Building in the mid-1980’s, only three new stores have been added to the block and none have closed. The three new stores that have opened since the beginning of the study opened in spaces that had apparently been vacant for sometime. These storefronts are also different from the others on the face block and may indicate a new trend, but this will be discussed a bit later.

The first building to be discussed is the G.L. Jaeger loft building. In the middle 1980’s, the Jaeger building underwent the same transformation that the Meitz Building is currently undergoing and Figure 3-26 shows the entire Base of the Jaeger as of August 1995. Compared with the rendering of the building from the late 1800’s, (Figure 3-25) the recent photo shows a significantly modified ground floor. The Neo-classical cornice has been removed and in many cases the cast-iron columns have been covered up, removed or painted. In any case, the “infill” between the exterior columns has been changed. In some places, elevator shafts have been inserted just behind the elevation, and there the infill has changed to brick surrounding the ground floor elevator door. The restaurants have generally infilled between the original columns with large pieces of plate glass. Both types of infill can be seen in Figure 3-27, (taken in December 1994) where an elevator shaft is on the left and Il Fornaio restaurant is on the right. Il Fornaio has retained the cast-iron columns, but the neighboring Costa Azzura and Paesano restaurants have covered the columns with wood. (Figure 3-28 – taken in March 1993)

These three photos of the Base of the Jaeger Building also show the use of awnings by the restaurants. Figure 4-26 shows that each restaurant has also chosen a different design strategy than the others. Four of the five have an awning that projects outward over their entry and of those, one (Pellegrino’s) also has a small awning that runs horizontal to the elevation. Sorrento, in the middle of the group, has chosen a design that seems to emulate the

Figure 3-25 -- The G.L. Jaeger Building - circa 1880
(Source: The New York Historical Society)
Figure 3-26 -- The G.L. Jaeger Building in August 1994
form of the old retractable canvas awnings.

Each restaurant has chosen a different color scheme, possibly to consciously differentiate themselves. For example, Paesano’s color scheme is directly related to the Italian flag and neighboring Pellegrino’s is probably the furthest from an identifiably ethnic scheme. These awnings also often take the place of large signs having lettering on both their fronts and sides (the next chapter will discuss constraints on signage on this block). However, Sorrento and Il Fornaio both have horizontal signs on the old cornice line and Costa Azzura and Paesano have projecting signs. Paesano’s sign is actually a large canvas banner.

In comparing Figure 3-26 to Figure 3-27 some change is apparent in the design of one of the restaurants. Il Fornaio has added a retractable canvas awning (and lights), beneath its horizontal sign. This appears to be part of a trend on the block since two other restaurants have installed similar retractable canvas awnings. Figure 3-29 shows Angelo’s restaurant, further north on the block, with the old aqua-blue, plastic and metal frame awning and just after the installation of the new red, retractable canvas awning. Across the street, Sal Anthony’s SPQR restaurant, which occupies a very large frontage, has also installed green canvas, retractable awnings along the length of the elevation.

These new awnings might simply represent a change in fashion, but the might also represent a movement toward a more “ethnically Italian” (or traditional NYC Little Italy-Italian) appearance. As was noted on Mott Street, the Chinese storefronts are typically made of sheet metal or plastic stretched over a metal frame. The latter are the kind that are being replaced on Mulberry Street. This idea might also be supported by the colors that are being selected for the new canvas awnings. These colors can be identified with the colors of the Italian flag. Angelo’s old awnings were aqua-colored and SPQR’s old, and small, entry awning was grey/black.

If the desire for a more coherent, traditional Italian identity is partly underlying the changes, the causes of this intention might be the continuing change over of storefronts in the area to Chinese use. The recent closing of Dom’s Quality Meats and Fretta Brothers, (see Figure 4-7 on pgs 90-91) the last identifiably Italian stores on the Mott Street face block, is indicative of this change. Also, three new storefronts were noted as having been established on Mulberry Street recently. All of these stores are gift/novelty shops with little apparent connection to Little Italy, aside their efforts to tap into the area’s tourist trade.

One of these stores is the Happy Together Gifts Shopping Center next door to Angelo’s restaurant (see Figure 3-29). This store has taken over the ground floor of a two-story, industrial/car storage building. Aside from the use of the color red, the graphics on its awning are unusual for Mulberry Street and its name is not evocative of an Italian heritage like the other stores, as for example, the long established E. Rossi Co. gift shop (see the corner storefront in Figure 4-10 – San Gennaro on
Figure 3-27 (near right) -- Il Fornaio Restaurant in December of 1994

Figure 3-28 (far right) -- Paesano Restaurant in March 1993

Elevator to Upper Floor Factory

Original Cast-iron Columns (Painted Green)

Wood Elevational Finishes

New Canvas Awnings

Happy Together Gifts

Table Setting Advertising The Day's Specials

Figure 3-29 -- Angelo's with old awning (left) and with new canvas (right)
Figure 3.30 -- West Side of Mulberry - August 1994

New Gift Shops

SPQR with new canvas awning
The other new gift shops are located in the building next door to SPQR and can be seen in Figure 3-30.

These two stores only modestly changed the previously empty storefronts, but one significant change has been made. These two storefronts now have rolling security gates above their display windows and entries. While these gates are routinely used on Mott Street, they are virtually never found on a storefront in Little Italy. As well, these shops sell merchandise that is not obviously related to Little Italy. In Figure 3-30, for example, straw hats, costume jewelry and T-shirts with the logos of Broadway Shows are evident.

Moving across the street to the restaurants in the Base of the Jaeger Building again, the semi-fixed features more commonly found on the block are evident, as is the seasonal use of the sidewalk. Figures 3-26 and 3-31 were taken on the same August day and show two different views of the sidewalk, one from across the street and one taken from a table in front of Pellegrino’s restaurant.

In either view two rows of tables are apparent, one at the outer sidewalk and another in the inner sidewalk, against the building wall. The tables in the outer sidewalk zone are usually small with round or square tops and two to four chairs. In the inner sidewalk zone, two more tables are often located side-by-side which can be abutted to accommodate larger groups. The tables in the outer sidewalk zone often run continuously down the street, without interruption. Each table is easily identified with a particular restaurant however, through table settings and ancillary elements unique to each establishment.

In Figure 3-31, for example, the table in the left-center foreground is the last table belonging to Pellegrino’s, but the tables a few feet down the sidewalk are Paesano’s. Pellegrino’s has a colorful flowered print tablecloth, flowers and a candle on the table and the chairs are white plastic. Paesano’s tables have a mono-colored pink tablecloth with a relatively spare table setting. Paesano uses several different types of chairs including: black metal folding, stained wood and white wire frame chairs. Note that there is a gap between the two restaurants’ tables in the inner sidewalk. This is the location of an upper floor elevator and a useful boundary. Other indicators of ownership are the large umbrellas on the tables in the outer sidewalk zone. Each restaurant uses one design consistently, often with colors that suit the storefront’s color scheme, and the umbrellas sometimes have the establishment’s name printed on the valances (Sorrento, Costa Azzurra and Il Fornaio’s do not).

Other frequently used semi-fixed features are plants. Pellegrino’s and Paesano have hung potted plants from the underside of their awnings. Costa Azzura, on the other hand, has used two large potted plants, in concrete planters, to define its territory. These plants can be seen best in Figure 3-26, where all of the outer sidewalk is filled with tables except between these planters. (Costa Azzura later set up tables in this zone.)

Temporary signage is also important. In Figure 3-31,
several signs have been hung advertising the specials and the prices. Pellegrino’s has hung one flat against a cast-iron column (on the left of the photo). Paesano has also hung several on the columns and has, like Costa Azzurra, hung similar, but smaller, signs from their awning.

The waiters often linger in the doorways of their respective restaurants, watching the tables and often engaging people who stop to read the menus. They also act as hosts for seating inside of the restaurant where many people choose to dine because it’s air-conditioned. Even when they’re inside though, people prefer to sit by the windows. (41. Restaurant Staff, personal communication 1994)

In the winter, with the absence of the sidewalk cafes, the ambience of the street is very different. Even in the winter months, not all of the semi-fixed features are removed as Figure 3-28 and especially Figure 3-27 show. Aside from the wreath hanging in front of the window at Il Fornaio, a table has been set near the door with a menu and small sign. This is a common practice for the other restaurants too. Figure 3-28 shows the streets before the restaurants open in the late morning, when deliveries are made to both the restaurants and to the garment factories in the upper floors of the buildings. In the Jaeger Building, the restaurants’ only basement access is shared with the garment factories, via the elevators. (41. Restaurant Staff, personal communication 1994)

Similar Settings in Different Cities

To broaden the basis for comparison, several storefronts and “streetscapes” from other cities will be discussed within this section. The most frequently referred to will be San Francisco where Chinatown has grown to occupy much of the area of North Beach, which was previously occupied by an Italian community.

San Francisco’s Chinatown - Stockton Street

Stockton Street, in San Francisco’s Chinatown, is currently a commercial street that serves both the local community and people from outside of the area looking for ethnic goods unavailable elsewhere. In this way, it is much like Mott Street in New York. Along Stockton’s length are a variety of stores, including several produce stands, bakeries and food stores. It also has many dry-goods and general merchandise stores.

Figure 3-32 (taken in August 1994) shows a large produce store, the Wo Soon Produce Co., which has a completely open storefront. Merchandise is displayed both in the inner sidewalk zone and throughout the ground floor of the store. A large green canvas awning spans the

Temporary Signage

Paesano’s Tables in Both Inner & Outer Sidewalk

Pellegrino’s Table in Inner Sidewalk

Figure 3-31 - View South of Sidewalk Cafe on Mulberry Street
- Aug. of 1994
Figure 3.32 -- Wo Soon Produce Co., Stockton Street, San Francisco -- August 1994
entire storefront and large Chinese characters have been painted onto the store's clerestory. A great number of boxes have been stacked in the outer sidewalk zone and in the parking strip. These boxes and the number of shoppers have made the sidewalk crowded enough that a pedestrian (possibly a tourist) has opted to walk in the street past the storefront.

Just to the left of the Wo Soon Produce Co. is another open storefront, the Little Saigon Coffee Shop. Figure 3-33 shows this shop from the other side. This store has a red awning similar to the plastic and metal frame awnings in New York and large displays of produce are set up in the inner sidewalk zone. Customers can also walk into the storefront, as a number of people appear to have done. Boxes are also stacked on the curb and in the parking strip here and some are being used to "hold" a parking space.

An example of a dry-goods store can be seen in Figure 3-34. Here again the store has a completely open storefront and merchandise is displayed both in the inner sidewalk and in the interior of the shop. The store has a blue cloth and frame awning and a red and white temporary sign hangs from it. In lieu of rolling security gates, the store has a sliding metal gate (seen folded up at the left of the storefront).

The Wing Sun Co. produce market has a setback enclosure (see Figure 3-35) similar to some of those found on Mott Street. This setback presents several "layers" of merchandise. The first being accessible directly from the sidewalk, the second being within the building's footprint but outside of the store's enclosure and the third being within the store's enclosure (corresponding to: the right, center and left of the photo). Several corner storefronts on Stockton have similarly setback enclosures.

As these pictures are endeavoring to display, the open storefront and the setback variation of it, are commonly used in San Francisco. In the course of the project, they have also been seen in the newer Chinatowns in San Francisco's Richmond District, Oakland, CA and Flushing, NY. Interestingly, two people who were interviewed for this project observed that the use of open storefronts in San Francisco has only recently been revived. Apparently not uncommon in the turn-of-the century, pre-fire Chinatown, (34. Tchen 1984) the practice faded until after the post-1965 immigration influx. The new immigrants then resumed the use of them. (41. Lau; Choy, personal communication 1994)

San Francisco's North Beach (Little Italy)

San Francisco's Italian community began to dwindle about the same time as Little Italy in New York and the adjacent Chinatown expanded into North Beach in a simi-
Figures 3-34 & 35 -- (near right) Open Storefront Selling Dry Goods; (far right) Between the sidewalk and the Enclosure of a Setback Storefront.
Both Photos taken on Stockton Street, San Francisco - August 1994

Figures 3-36 & 37 -- Two Views of Italian Restaurants on Grant Avenue, San Francisco. 
Near right - Elevation with large openings. 
Far right - Interior with Sliding Windows
lar fashion. However, in a quick survey of the area, there doesn't appear to be a close analog to Mulberry Street. The area hasn't really assumed the role of "ethnic marketplace" as much as it has of a fashionable, downtown residential and bar district. Considering North Beach's association with the "Bohemian" Beat movement of the 1950 and 1960's, the area could probably be considered more closely analogous to New York City's Greenwich Village, which was also the location of an old Italian community. Like Greenwich Village, North Beach's Italian community has largely been assimilated and their cultural landscape is gone - with the exception of the buildings that they built following the fire of 1906.

However, like New York there are Italian restaurants in the area that cater to downtown office workers, tourists, college students, etc., but they are not nearly as concent

trated as on Mulberry Street and the sidewalk café is not a major feature of these restaurants. Figure 3-36 shows a portion of one of these restaurants on Grant Avenue, a street that runs parallel to Stockton and that was once a major Italian retail street. (41. North Beach Resident, personal communication 1994) This restaurant shows a common feature of the restaurants in North Beach, large windows that permit the restaurant to open up partially to the sidewalk. In this view, the two windows on the left, beneath the red, white and green cornice-like element, are completely open. Other restaurants, like the Viva Caffe (Figure 3-37), have sliding windows that do not entirely provide a clear opening.

The open storefront is a relatively old method of setting

Figures 3-38 & 39 -- Two Views of 19th Century Open Storefronts in Southern China.
Left - Painting of Artificial Flower Shop in Canton (Source: J. Crosby 1979)
Right - Pottery Shop (Source: J. Beers 1978)
up a store in southern China. Figures 3-38 and 3-39 show two 19th century open storefronts. The first is one of numerous paintings produced by Chinese artists for English merchants in Canton between 1825 and 1830. (3. Forbes 1979) It shows the interior of an artificial flower shop but it is the exterior that is most relevant. Here a small awning extends along the length of the completely open storefront and a sign hangs from the awning’s left support. Another sign is propped up against the wall. The second figure (3-39) is a photo of several open storefronts in southern China. These storefronts are similar to the one in the painting except that goods appear to be oriented more toward the street than the interior and a large sign appears above the awning (another sign appears below the awning further to the left, and has a large quantity of English text.)

Figure 3-40 shows a more recent view of a street in eastern China (the location was not precisely identified in the source). Here a produce market operates out of an open storefront and it appears that most of the merchandise is displayed on the sidewalk only. The inner sidewalk has large piles of fruit displayed on a table top and baskets beneath. Another display sits in the parking strip near a large tricycle. Temporary signs are stuck in the fruit, hung from the display table and hung on the tree. Within the store, what seem to be bags hang next to a light bulb and a retractable awning extends over the store.

Summary - Chapter Three

In this chapter, 230 years of change was analyzed on Mott and Mulberry Streets. In looking at change through the five-scale model of the environment, several general observations become apparent. These observations, by scale are:

**Streets** - The Streets have remained virtually unchanged dimensionally throughout their history.

**Blocks** - Since they are involved with the Streets in a zero-sum relationship, the Blocks have also not changed dimensionally through their history.

**Lots** - This is the first (and largest) of the five scales to have exhibited considerable change. Only eleven of the roughly 25 by 100-foot original lots appear to remain in their original configuration. The other 53 original lots have undergone a series of lot reconfigurations and consolidations. These reconfigurations and consolidations have resulted in a markedly coarser array of lots on the face blocks.

**Buildings** - Two generations of buildings have been constructed on the face blocks. The first were small, often wood structures that housed residences and businesses. After a period of additions and construction of buildings in the backyards of these buildings, a new generation of large buildings replaced the majority of the original structures. The new buildings generally occupied a greater percentage of the lot, were taller and
were either occupied by ground-floor retail and upper-
floor residential uses or they were exclusively industrial.
Building-scale construction on the face blocks ended
around the turn of this century.

**Smaller Than Buildings** - Change on these two face
blocks was concentrated in this scale during the 20th
century. The Base of the buildings was the locus of change
in the public domain and numerous modifications have
been, and are currently being, made to ground floor uses,
elevations and floor plans. Change has also occurred in
the usage of the space in front of the buildings. These
changes have often been related to the changes within
the Base of the buildings.