National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 15A) Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

   Historic name  L. C. Adam Mercantile Building
   Other name/site number  Cedar Vale Historical Museum; 019-0850-0003

2. Location

   Street & number  618 Cedar Street  □ not for publication
   City or town  Cedar Vale  □ vicinity
   State Kansas  Code KS  County Chautauqua  Code 019  Zip code 67024

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

   As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this □ nomination □ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property □ meets □ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant □ nationally □ statewide □ locally. (□ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

   Signature of certifying official/Title  Date
   Kansas State Historical Society

4. National Park Service Certification

   I hereby certify that the property is

   □ entered in the National Register.
   □ See continuation sheet.
   □ determined eligible for the National Register
     □ See continuation sheet.
   □ determined not eligible for the National Register
   □ removed from the National Register
   □ other, (explain:)

   Signature of the Keeper  Date of Action
5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

☑ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

☑ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing
1

Noncontributing

buildings

sites

structures

objects

1

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter Categories from Instructions)

COMMERCIAL / TRADE: department store

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE: museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Commercial Style

Materials
(Enter categories from Instructions)

Foundation: STONE: Sandstone
Walls: BRICK

STONE: Sandstone

Roof: METAL: TIN

Other:

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)
L. C. Adam Mercantile Building
Name of Property
Chautauqua County, Kansas
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark “X” in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register)

☑ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history

☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

☐ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

☐ D Property has yielded, or likely to yield, information important to prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark “X” in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

☐ B removed from its original location.

☐ C a birthplace or grave.

☐ D a cemetery.

☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

☐ F a commemorative property.

☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMERCE

Period of Significance
1904-1953

Significant Dates
1904, 1953

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Adam, Lewis C.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography
(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):
☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 57) has been requested.
☐ previously listed in the National Register.
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register.
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark.
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Primary location of additional data:
☐ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other

Name of repository:

Cedar Vale Historical Society
L. C. Adam Mercantile Building
Name of Property

Chautauqua County, Kansas
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property  Less than one acre

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

<table>
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<th>Easting</th>
<th>Northing</th>
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<td>1 4</td>
<td>7 2 2 3 0 0 4 1 0 9 3 0 0</td>
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Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundary of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title  Heather Ferguson; KSHS Staff edits
Organization
Date  15 July 2006
Street & number  1321 South G Street
Telephone  (620) 441-7241
City or town  Arkansas City
State  Kansas
Zip code  67005

Additional Documentation
Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets
Maps
A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs
Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items
(Check with SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

Name  Cedar Vale Historical Society
Street & number  306 Plymouth
City or town  Cedar Vale
State  Kansas
Zip code  67024

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.
The L. C. Adam Mercantile Building (c. 1904) is located at 618 Cedar Street in downtown Cedar Vale (population 723). The two-story brick and stone building faces southwest and dominates the downtown. The rectangular plan is approximately 50’ wide by 140’ deep. The building’s commercial architectural features reflect the transition between the Victorian era of the late nineteenth century and the more restrained Revival styles of the early twentieth century. For instance, the tall wood windows with stone lintels and arch detailing coupled with the large storefront configuration and the dominant column at the corner entrance reflect the Italianate and Romanesque Revival styles of the Victorian era, while the corbeled brick along the front cornice reflect commercial architectural trends popular during the early twentieth century. The building retains its integrity of location and setting and has a high degree of architectural integrity.

Setting
Cedar Vale is located in southeast Kansas less than 10 miles from the Kansas-Oklahoma border at the eastern edge of Chautauqua County. U. S. Route 166 passes along the northern edge of Cedar Vale leading travelers east to nearby Sedan and west to Arkansas City. The L. C. Adam Mercantile Building is situated in the heart of downtown Cedar Vale at the northeast corner of Lawrence and Cedar and served as the center of activities for the Adam Mercantile business from 1904 to 1953. In 1970, the Cedar Vale Historical Society acquired the building, which currently serves as a community museum.

Exterior
The two-story brick and stone building has experienced few changes in its 103 years. The building faces Cedar Street to the southwest and features a corner entrance dominated by a single stone column with an Ionic capital. Concrete steps lead up to the historic wooden double doors of the inset entrance. Large storefront windows encased in an iron framework make up most of the first story of the front elevation. The transom windows along the front façade have been boarded over and a flat-roof awning installed. At the center of transom window section is a rosette within the iron storefront frame. There is a second inset entrance at the other end of the storefront windows.

The second story of the front elevation is three bays wide and features a brick façade with sandstone detailing. The center bay has a tripartite window configuration with a sandstone lintel. The larger one-over-one center window is topped by a stone arch with keystone and is flanked by two smaller one-over-one wood windows. The side bays each feature a single pair of one-over-one wood windows with stone lintels. A stone arch with keystone tops each pair of windows. A slightly projecting column of square rough-cut sandstone blocks separates each bay. The corbeled brick cornice is also divided into three bays and is topped by a row of smooth-cut sandstone that mimics the window lintels.

The northwest (side) elevation faces Lawrence Street. Unlike the front facade, this elevation is faced entirely with rough-cut sandstone blocks. The elevation is divided into 4 bays. The parapet wall steps down at each bay (from front to back) creating a stair step appearance. The first story of the rear bay has two windows, each with double entrances and a garage door. There are no windows on the first story, but there
are eight window openings on the second story that are boarded from the inside. There are two horizontal rows of structural wall ties – one row is above the windows and one is below.

The northeast (rear) elevation faces an alley that splits the block. Once faced with rough-cut sandstone much like the side elevations, the rear has been stuccoed. The rear first story includes 3 window openings that are boarded from the inside. There are 4 window openings that are boarded from the inside on the second story. There are also two iron hitching rings attached to the rear wall.

A one-story brick building adjoins the L.C. Adam Mercantile Building on its southeast elevation. This leaves exposed the mercantile building’s second story. This side elevation’s second story is faced with brick and there are is a horizontal row of structural wall ties extending from the front of the building to the rear. The adjoining building does not extend back on its lot as far as the mercantile building; therefore part of the first story of this side elevation is exposed. It is faced with sandstone. The parapet wall steps down at each bay (from front to back) creating a stair step appearance.

The building’s roof is covered with tin and has been well maintained. There have been few leaks into the top story, which has helped keep the interior in such good condition.

**Interior**

As one enters the building through the main corner entrance, its like walking back in time. The striking tin ceiling and large open spaces first draw the visitor’s attention. The interior retains many of its historic features including the large front display windows, plaster walls, tin ceilings, woodwork, wood floors, open floor plan, and rear service elevator shaft. The first floor is made up of two large spaces. Originally, this space was completely open, but a wall was constructed many years ago splitting the space. There is a large walk-through opening in the wall, which gives one an idea of how large the original space was. The tin ceiling provides clues that reveal the building’s one major change in the mid-1950s: the central staircase to the second floor was removed and the ceiling enclosed. The staircase was moved to the rear of the building. At the rear northeast corner of the building is a partially enclosed half-story storage space next to the service elevator shaft, which retains many of its working parts. The elevator is an enclosed platform that operated on a pulley system. Beneath the half-story section is a modern kitchen and bathroom. At the rear center of the building is a small enclosed chapel that was constructed in 1977 by Cedar Vale Historical Society member Joel Haden out of salvage materials from a nearby demolished church.

Access to the second story is through an exterior door on the northwest side elevation and up an enclosed staircase at the rear of the building. The staircase opens into one large open space that was most recently used as a roller skating rink. Two rows of wooden columns support the roof and also outline the area where the staircase from below once entered through the floor. Windows line the front (southwest) and side (northwest) walls providing ample daylight. Some of the historic light fixtures remain, as do the plaster walls, tin ceiling, and wood baseboards and trim. The wood floor underwent some changes to accommodate a roller skating rink and the removal of the center staircase. The rear of the second story was used for roller skate rental and storage. This area is defined by a wooden banister that probably once
enclosed the original staircase. This rear space remains open except for an enclosed bathroom at the northeast corner.

**Summary**

As the largest building in downtown Cedar Vale, its commanding architecture reflects the importance of its longtime tenants to the community. The L. C. Adam Mercantile Building retains a high degree of its architectural integrity and is an important reflection of an important era in Cedar Vale history.
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

L. C. Adam Mercantile Building
Cedar Vale, Chautauqua County, KS

Section Number 8 Page 4

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The L. C. Adam Mercantile Building (c. 1904) is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its historic significance as a center of commerce in Cedar Vale, Kansas, from 1904 to 1953, and Criterion C for its architectural significance as a good example of a turn-of-the-century downtown commercial structure. It retains its exterior and interior character-defining architectural elements, including its storefront, double-door entrances, wood frame windows, brick and stone facades, interior woodwork, plaster, tin ceilings, and wood floors.

Historic Context

Euro-Americans began settling the territory that would become Chautauqua County in the late 1860s. In early 1870, a group of settlers organized a town company, and they soon named a favored spot Cedar Vale, "being so named from the presence of a few cedar trees which grew not far away." The first building in Cedar Vale was erected in November 1870 and served as a storeroom and post office. The erection of houses and other businesses followed in the spring and summer of 1871. A school district for the town of Cedar Vale and the immediate vicinity was organized May 30, 1871, and a building was erected and dedicated to the school board on April 30, 1872.

Chautauqua County was officially organized in 1875 with Sedan serving as the county seat. The county was named for Chautauqua County, New York, which was the birthplace of Edward Jaquins, a member of the Kansas House who in 1875 introduced the bill dividing Howard County into Elk and Chautauqua. Kansas, in general, experienced a rapid increase in population in the years after the Civil War. According to the U. S. Census, by 1880 there were 11,072 people residing in Chautauqua County. The county population would peak in 1890 at 12,297 before steadily declining through the 20th century.

L. C. Adam Mercantile Company History

Two Cedar Vale Messenger newspaper articles – one published in 1935 marking the company’s “Golden Jubilee” and the other in 1953 at the store’s closing – provide a detailed history of the nominated property. A broader search of the local newspaper from the late 1800s to the mid-1900s truly illustrates the community’s participation with L.C. Adam and his business and the disturbing effects on the local economy and collective morale when it closed in 1953. What would become a large operation encompassing nearly every type of local commercial endeavor – from grocery and hardware sales to radio sales and repair to funeral home services – began with the sale of general merchandise in a small frame building in 1885.

Upon arriving in Cedar Vale in 1885 from Monmouth, Crawford County, Kansas, Lewis Cass Adam purchased the small general stock of merchandise of a company owned by Frank G. Kenesson, Albert I. Adam, and Neal Shaver. This store operated out of a 25' by 60' frame building in downtown Cedar Vale

2 “Historical Census Browser,” University of Virginia Library. Accessible online at
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

**Section Number** 8  
**Page** 5

L. C. Adam Mercantile Building  
Cedar Vale, Chautauqua County, KS

"about two doors north of The Citizen’s State Bank." This was L.C. Adam’s first business venture in Cedar Vale.

Soon thereafter in 1888, L.C.’s brother, Albert I. Adam, bought an interest in the company and its name became Adam Brothers. G. Rollin Dale became a company partner in 1890, and the name changed to Adam Brothers and Dale. This company built a 25' by 120' stone building in downtown Cedar Vale. The *Cedar Vale Messenger* reported that this stone building served as Adam’s Grocery / Meat Department and Office in 1935.

Dale sold his interest in the company in 1896 and the firm became L. C. Adam and Company, which consisted of L.C. Adam, Albert Adam, Rose Burdette Jones, and H. L. Cox. At about this time, the company bought the "P.P. Hohler building", a 25' by 75' building that adjoined their stone building on the south. They apparently cut an arch doorway to connect the two buildings and moved the Clothing and Furnishings Departments and Office into the new space.

In 1904, the company traded J. B. Whartenby an interest in the business for his corner lot in downtown Cedar Vale. Upon this parcel, they erected the nominated building. No mention has been found of the architect or builder of this building. The company also absorbed the Lewellen and Jones stock of hardware, furniture, implements, and undertaking, and became incorporated. The records listed L.C. Adam as president, H.L. Cox as vice president, W.M. Jones as secretary, and Reece Lewellen as treasurer. Soon after incorporating, they erected the two story stone and brick building (50' by 140') at the corner of Lawrence and Cedar. It was stocked with dry goods, shoes, clothing, and furnishings.

The business continued to expand as it prospered during the early twentieth century. In 1925 the company erected a one-story brick building across the alley behind the nominated property. This 80' by 96' structure faced Lawrence Street and served as the Produce and Seed House. This building is still extant.

When the *Cedar Vale Messenger* article was published in 1935, the L.C. Adam Mercantile Company (with 40 stockholders) owned and operated a 10,000-bushel grain elevator and feed mill in Cedar Vale and another of the same capacity at Grainola, Oklahoma. In addition, they owned roughly 4,000 acres in Cowley County and Osage County, and farmed about 900 acres near Grainola under the management of J. T. Bowen. The article also suggested that in 1935, this was "the largest business institution in Chautauqua County and also employ[ed] more people than any other business in the county."

The company celebrated 50 years of business in Cedar Vale in 1935. In a double-page advertisement in the *Cedar Vale Messenger*, the Adam Mercantile Company invited the public to “the Biggest Party you ever attended” set to take place on Wednesday, November 27, 1935, at 9:00 PM. The 17-member Bus

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3 *Cedar Vale Messenger*. 22 November 1935.
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 6

L. C. Adam Mercantile Building
Cedar Vale, Chautauqua County, KS

Morgan Orchestra of Arkansas City entertained an estimated 1,800 visitors who enjoyed free sweet cider, doughnuts, and coffee. The newspaper advertisement also featured a testimonial from loyal customer Mrs. N. L. Moore:

> I have lived in Cedar Vale forty years, coming here in 1894. We have made The L. C. Adam Mercantile Co.'s store our trading place all these years. While living in Crawford County in the Eighties we traded at the L. C. Adam store at Monmouth. I do not remember my first purchase from the L. C. Adam store but it was surely satisfactory as we are still buying from the L. C. Adam Mercantile Co. I buy there because I consider it the best place to trade.

Over the years, the Adam Mercantile Company included such departments as dry goods, men's and women's clothing, beauty shop, shoes, variety department, grocery, hardware, implements, appliances, radio and television service, plumbing and tin shop, funeral home, wholesale and resale seeds with complete cleaning plant, grain elevator and feed mill, the Grainola (Oklahoma) farm and cattle business and grain elevator, the Hooser (Cowley County, Kansas) hay land, and an operating partnership in the Shrader elevator at Dexter (Cowley County, Kansas). Nearly everyone in this small town likely did business with the Adam Mercantile Company at one time or another. Adam's familiar slogan “Buy and Sell Everything” was obviously true.

L.C. Adam died in 1911 and H. L. Cox became president of the company. He completed 50 years of service with the company in 1939. As certain departments became less profitable, the company shifted focus to more productive activities, such as seed grain and livestock. The collapse of the economy in 1929 and the subsequent depression and drought of the 1930s were especially hard for the company. The company weathered the 1930s, but was dealt “another severe blow by losses from fluctuating grain markets during the war year of 1940.” The declining population after the war also hurt business and the store closed on August 19, 1953. A public auction to sell the remaining merchandise was held the following September 4th.

The closing of this local institution was difficult for many area residents. The Cedar Vale Messenger and other local histories are full of recollections of the store and its employees. One account recalls a company promotional gimmick remembered by many “old-timers” – the giving of a prize to the farmer who brought in the largest hayrack load of women to the store. “From all reports a hilarious time was had by all.” Another remembrance involves an

...exciting attempted robbery in 1913 when Wils McCoy, night watchman, was knocked unconscious in a scuffle with an intruder. A late Saturday night crowd, still remaining on the streets, joined in the search and the would-be robber was captured and identified

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6 Cedar Vale Messenger. 22 November 1935; 3 September 1953.
7 Cedar Vale Messenger. 22 November 1935.
8 Cedar Vale Messenger. 3 September 1953.
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet  

L. C. Adam Mercantile Building  
Cedar Vale, Chautauqua County, KS  

Section Number  8  Page  7  

because of his brine-soaked socks. His socks were soaked when he overturned a pickle jar at the store.

Many reasons are offered for the store’s closing — including a declining local population and better roads and cars allowing residents easier travel to the bigger shopping centers of Arkansas City and Independence. An unattributed front-page editorial column in the July 2, 1953 edition of the local newspaper perhaps best summarized the sentiments:

It is difficult sometimes to accept the inevitable and so it is when we are forced to realize that this community will soon lose one of its most valuable assets that has been practically a trademark for Cedar Vale since its establishment in 1885 and that is the L. C. Adam Mercantile Company...The loss of such a concern in our town will be deeply felt by the community as a whole in more ways than can hardly be enumerated here...All business in the community will suffer.

Post-1953 Building History
The L.C. Adam Mercantile Company served Cedar Vale for 68 years. After the store’s closing, R.E. and Floyd Mills purchased the building in 1953 and operated another store out of the building. In 1961, O.B. and Helen Wise acquired the store and the building. Max Ferguson purchased the building in 1970 and transferred it to the Cedar Vale Historical Society to house their museum collections. The main first floor has housed the displays and collections of the local museum since the early 1970s. The second floor has remained unused since a roller skating rink operated out of the upstairs during the 1950s and 1960s.

Architecture
The L.C. Adam Mercantile Building is the largest structure in Cedar Vale’s small downtown. Its imposing presence and impressive architecture reflect the historic significance of the mercantile business. The building retains its many historic architectural elements that reveal the shift between the Victorian era of the late nineteenth and the more muted Revival styles of the early twentieth century. Its tall wood windows with stone lintels and arch detailing coupled with the large storefront configuration and the dominant column at the corner entrance reflect the Italianate and Romanesque Revival styles of the Victorian era. The corbelled brick along the front cornice reflect commercial architectural trends popular during the early twentieth century that are evident in other later downtown buildings. Additionally, the building retains its large front display windows, plaster walls, tin ceilings, woodwork, wood floors, open floor plan, and rear service elevator shaft.

Summary
Many generations of people remember shopping at this location and later visiting the museum that displays artifacts and photographs of local importance. This building is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places both for its historic and architectural significance.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abstract for the building.


*Cedar Vale Messenger*. 22 November 1935; 3 September 1953.


“Historical Census Browser.” University of Virginia Library. Accessible online at [http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/](http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/).

Jones, W. M. *Dawn of the Twentieth Century – Cedar Vale, Kansas*. Cedar Vale, KS: Jones and Bartlett Publishing Company, 1901. (K978.1/-C39/Pam.v.1/no. 3)
L. C. Adam Mercantile Building
Cedar Vale, Chautauqua County, KS

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION
The L.C. Adam Mercantile Building is located on Lots 17 and 18 in Block 37 in Cedar Vale, Chautauqua County, Kansas.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION
The nominated property includes the corner two lots in Block 37 that are historically associated with the L.C. Adam Mercantile Building.

PHOTOGRAPHIC INFORMATION
Property Name: L. C. Adam Mercantile Building
Location: 618 Cedar Street, Cedar Vale, Chautauqua County, KS
Photographer: Kristen Lonard
Date: 4 January 2007
Digital images filed at the Kansas State Historical Society

Photo 1: Southwest (front) Elevation and Southeast (side) Elevation, facing N
Photo 2: Southwest (front) Elevation and Northwest (side) Elevation, facing E
Photo 3: Northwest (side) Elevation and Northeast (rear) Elevation, facing S
Photo 4: Northeast (rear) Elevation and Southeast (side) Elevation, facing W
Photo 5: Northwest (side) Elevation, window close-up, facing SE
Photo 6: Corner Entrance, facing E
Photo 7: Southwest (front) Elevation, secondary front entrance, facing NE
Photo 8: Interior, corner entrance, facing W
Photo 9: Interior, first floor, front room, tin ceiling
Photo 10: Interior, second floor, tripartite window, facing SW
Photo 11: Interior, second floor, northwest wall, facing W