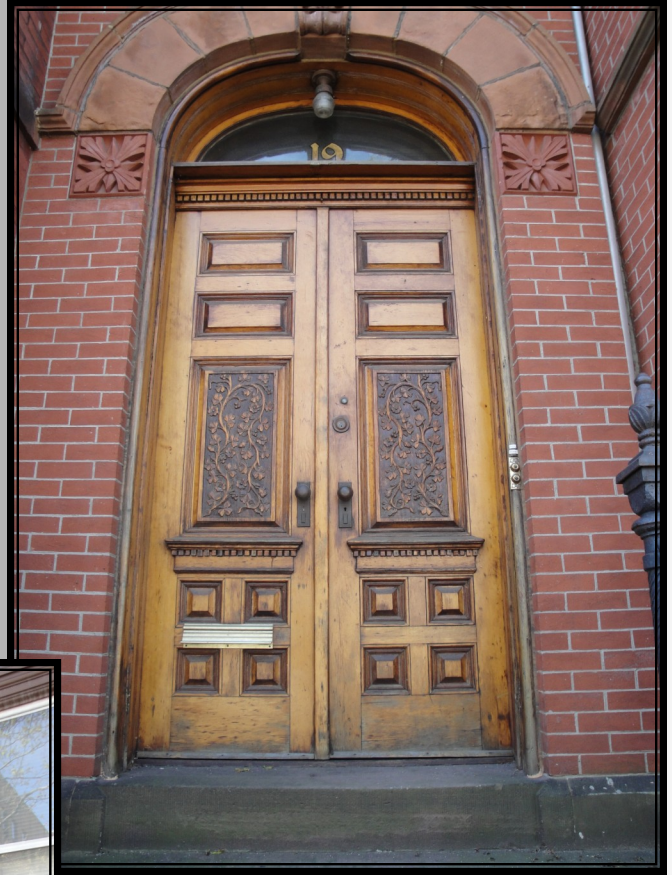


## **Nineteen Bentley Avenue—a classic “Gay Nineties” Townhouse**

**Year built: approximately 1892**



**View from the street**



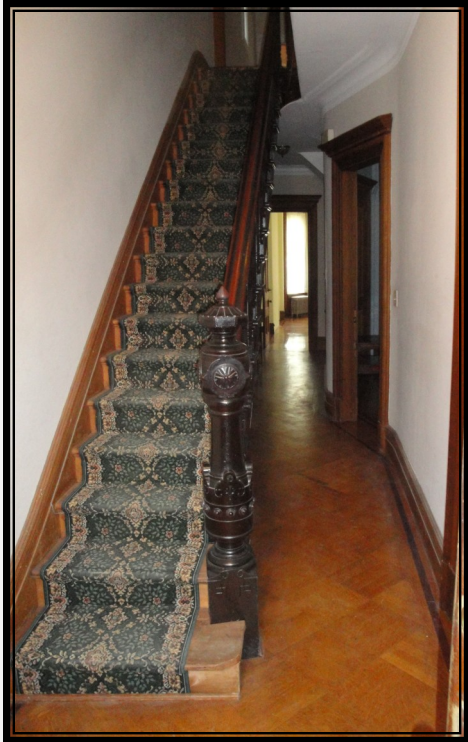
**Detail of front entrance**

**Stonework detail over a carpet of periwinkle ground cover (blue blossoms in April).**

**C'mon inside!**



## Welcome to gracious living



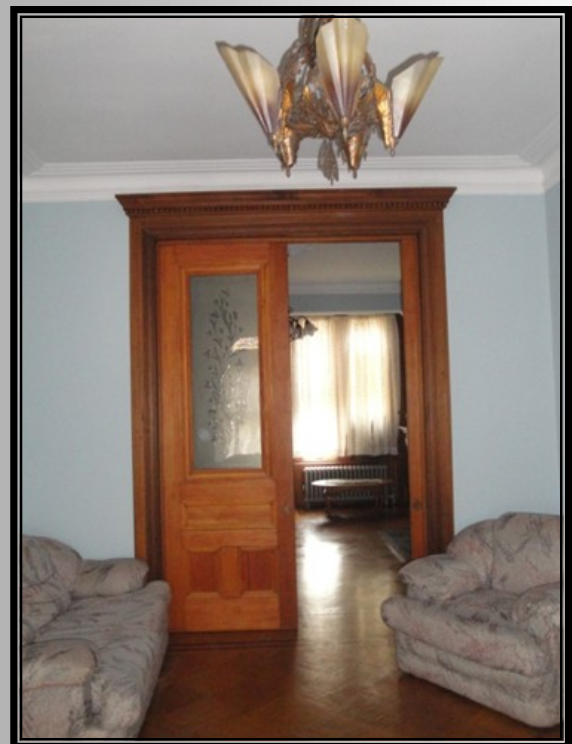
Grand staircase graces serpentine corridor upon entry to main floor, 19 Bentley Avenue.



Interior double doors (as you face towards street).



Another view of front parlor



Pocket doors with vine-decorated frosted glass separate the parlor and drawing rooms. Light fixture dates from the 1920's.

## Fireplaces and stained glass windows.



Mahogany and tile fireplaces, front parlor.....



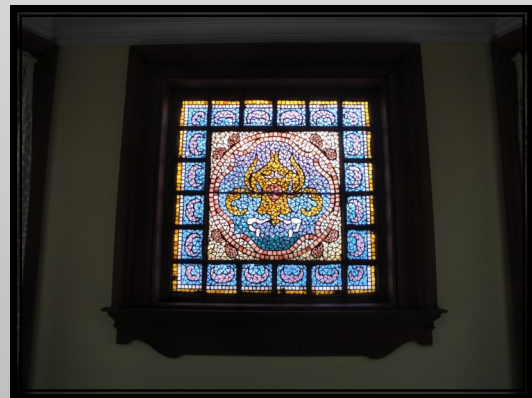
....and drawing room



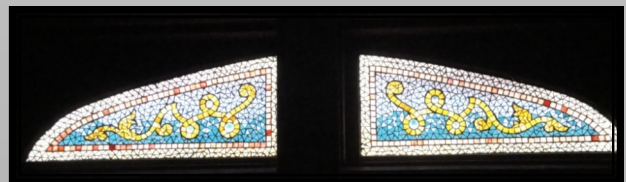
.....and master bedroom



Entrance to dining room



Detail of stain glass window, dining room



Detail of stain glass over front window

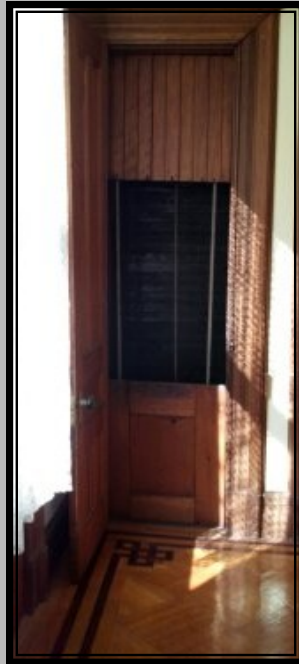


## Unique features:

**a working dumb-waiter and**

***off-street parking!***

Dumbwaiter is located in the northwest corner of the dining room.



Dumbwaiter shaft as seen from above.

And here is the downstairs part of the dumbwaiter; car can be seen behind the ropes. It serves the kitchen (downstairs) and the dining room (upstairs).



Backyard (on Welsh Lane) affords off-street parking for two vehicles.

Enter from Bergen Avenue at Welsh Lane.

Sacks Realty 201 798 3500  
ask for Saul or Alice

## **Meet the Maker, 19 Bentley Ave**

The titles of many properties in the West Bergen section of Jersey City trace back to George W. Helme, a captain of American industry in the 19th century. His company made snuff and had a major connection to Jersey City.

Urban legend says one of the houses in the row of 11 through 19 Bentley Avenue was built as a wedding present for Helme's daughter. With special features such as a serpentine hallway and a working dumbwaiter, we're tempted to think it was number nineteen. There is no record of Helmes ever living in these houses; the family basically lived in Helmetta, NJ after its founding in 1884. Read on.



George Washington Helme 1822-1893, founder of Helmetta NJ and the George W. Helme (Tobacco) Co., purchaser of major chunks of real estate in Jersey City, and purported to be the builder of the 11-19 row of Bentley Ave.

Born in Kingston, Pa. in 1822, George Washington Helme grew up in Shreveport, La. when his father, a lawyer, moved there to start a plantation. Young George studied law and passed the Louisiana bar in 1851 and practiced law there until the outbreak of the Civil War, where he served as Captain of the Crescent City Guards, a New Orleans regiment, until Lee's surrender. He left the Confederate army as a major-general. Stripped of his property and in ill health, and with no recovery in sight in the south, **he relocated north and acquired significant tracts of real estate in both New York City and Jersey City.** In 1858 he had married Margaret Appleby, whose father Leonard Appleby had acquired a snuff industry 2 miles south of Spotswood, NJ in about 1825 on a site later known as Railroad Mills. This snuff industry was originally the Lorillard Company, and traceable back to 1760. In 1866 Helme partnered with his brother-in-law Jacob Appleby until about 1878 when Helme became full owner of Railroad Mills. Helme purchased land between Spotswood and Jamesburg and built his mill and homes for 105 workers. The George W. Helme Company was incorporated in 1884. This was also the start of the town of Helmetta, the name a contraction of his youngest daughter's name, Olivia Antoinette, nicknamed "Etta."

At the time of his death in 1893, Helme was the second wealthiest man in New Jersey. Thanks to savvy descendants, his corporation lived on.

The company's mission was to manufacture snuff for 50 years until 1934, but in 1900 the original corporation was dissolved and/or merged, along with several other major snuff manufacturers, into the American Snuff Company, a subsidiary of the American Tobacco Company. But the George W. Helme Company ran under its own name. The conglomeration was dissolved in 1907 under Teddy Roosevelt's trust-busting administration, and reorganized as separate, competitive tobacco and snuff-producing entities. In 1911 it appears the Helme company was reincorporated to buy and sell leaf tobacco and manufacture snuff. Its principle office was at **15 Exchange Place, Jersey City** and its main operations were out of Helmetta. The Helme Company donated about 250 pounds of snuff to Richard E. Byrd's second Antarctic Expedition to Little America in 1933. Up until 1961 the snuff industry in Helmetta thrived and expanded.

Credit: Early Snuff Mills of New Jersey, NJ Agricultural Society of Trenton, 1962  
Authors: Harry B. and Grace M. Weiss

### ***From "Snuff" to "Snuffed-out."***

More recently, wikipedia reports that in 1988 the Helmetta industry was the world's largest producer of sweet snuff. Swisher International acquired the company and in 1993 moved the operation to Wheeling, West Virginia and closed the Helmetta snuff mill complex, leaving 16 abandoned buildings on 32 acres. Alas, in 2005 the industrial site in Helmetta faced demolition to make way for senior housing. [Link to demolition video.](#)