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RESTORATION OF THE VAN ALLEN HOUSE

for

THE BOROUGH OF OAKLAND, NEW JERSEY

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Architect

April 1977

A. Plan

There is adequate physical evidence that the earliest portion of the Van Allen House was the 27' square rectangle at the western end of the present building. Each subsequent increment was added in an easterly direction. The plan of the original house was probably similar to the present partitions; the main room of the house, used for cooking and living was in the southwest corner, with a long narrow "borning" room to the north, and a wide hall running north from the front door along the east side of the rectangle to a rear door in the north wall, past a stair probably in the northeast corner (Fig.1). On the second floor there were two large bedrooms, used also for storage and industrial household tasks such as spinning and weaving, probably under a gambrel roof (Fig.2). The plan was common in the middle eighteenth century in New Jersey, and is probably of Dutch or Scandinavian origin, since it is not found in New England or the South. In southern and central New Jersey it is often found with two similar rooms with corner fireplaces, which is probably the earlier form. The Van Allen house plan has elements of the early eighteenth century two-room farmhouse of Scots-English origin, such as the older part of the Wallace house in Somerville, and the Craig house in Monmouth County. Dimensionally, the house is relatively spacious for a mid-eighteenth century farmhouse, and the masonry, with contrasting color band courses at sill and head of the windows is sophisticated (Photograph 1 and 2). It

IN CONFLICT
WITH MONMOUTH
REPORT.

(MEANING THE
TWO STORY)



Photograph 1 South Elevation
Original increment showing later Page alterations.



Photograph 2 West Elevation
Original increment showing Page alterations to
gable end and modern concrete chimney.

was not built by a pioneer in the wilderness but by a prosperous farmer, probably of Dutch tradition, but one who knew many other New Jersey houses, and felt able to choose and incorporate such design elements as pleased him (Figs. 3 and 4). In all probability there was an earlier structure, built by the original settler, in the vicinity. There have been substantial changes. The chimney has been entirely rebuilt above the first floor, and the present fireplace bears no resemblance to the original cooking fireplace, although the chimney foundation in the basement is not changed.



The first addition to the east, a kitchen at a lower floor level, was built soon after the original increment (Fig.5; Photographs 3 and 4). The building techniques used in the addition, particularly in masonry and plaster, are similar to those employed in the first increment. The joint of the exterior walls shows clearly that the western rectangle existed for a time as an independent building (Photograph 5). The first addition had a gable roof and an independent stair or ladder at one side of the cooking fireplace on the east wall (Photograph 6). There is no trace of an opening between the second floors of the first addition and the original increment. The trace of the original gable roof is visible against the common wall (Photograph 7). The second addition, east of the first, was built much later, probably in the second half of the nineteenth century (Fig.8). A curious combination of masonry and frame walls, this addition formed the east end of the house for some years, as shown by

THIS SHOULD
BE VERIFIED
BY OTHERS



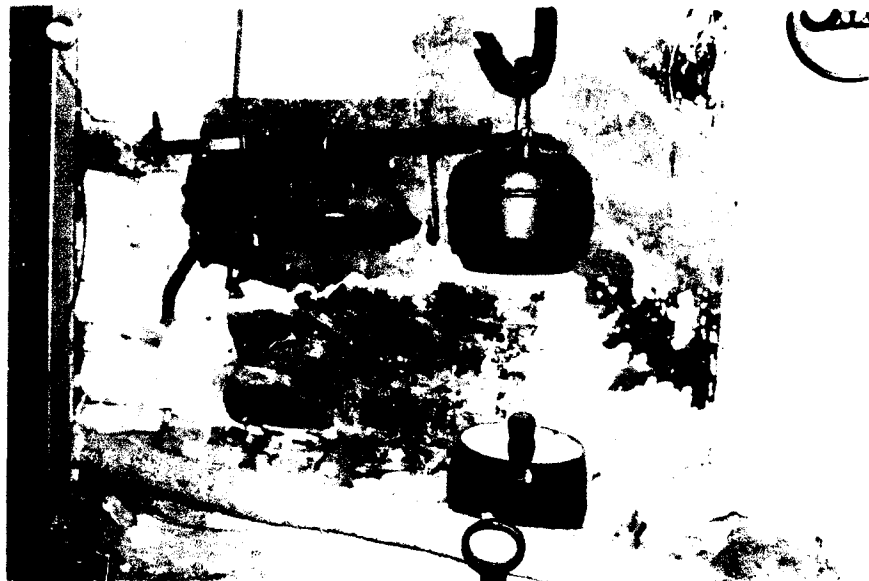
Photograph 3 South Elevation
Original increment, first and second additions
FRONT



Photograph 4 North Elevation
Original increment, first and second additions
REAR

Photograph 5

Joint between stone walls of original increment and the first addition, south elevation, clearly demonstrating that the wall of the original increment is independent and earlier than the addition.



Photograph 6

Location of kitchen fireplace in the first addition. The soot and scorch marks on the stone clearly define the width of the original fire box.

THIS LINE IS
THE ORIGINAL
PLASTER OUTLINE



THIS IS THE
ORIGINAL GABLE
TRUSS

Lee G West

Photograph 7

East gable end of original increment now concealed by first addition. The pitch of the original gable roof is clearly evident, as is the exposure of the earlier clapboards which were held in place with cut nails. The exposed plaster lath is modern and was installed when Page re-worked the house.

the hipped end of the hidden porch roof (Fig.9), it was soon followed by a series of further additions to the east, which appear in the early photographs, but which have since been removed. ^{THIS IS CORRECT →} A new chimney on the east wall without a fireplace indicate this addition was also built for kitchen purposes, this time with a cook stove.

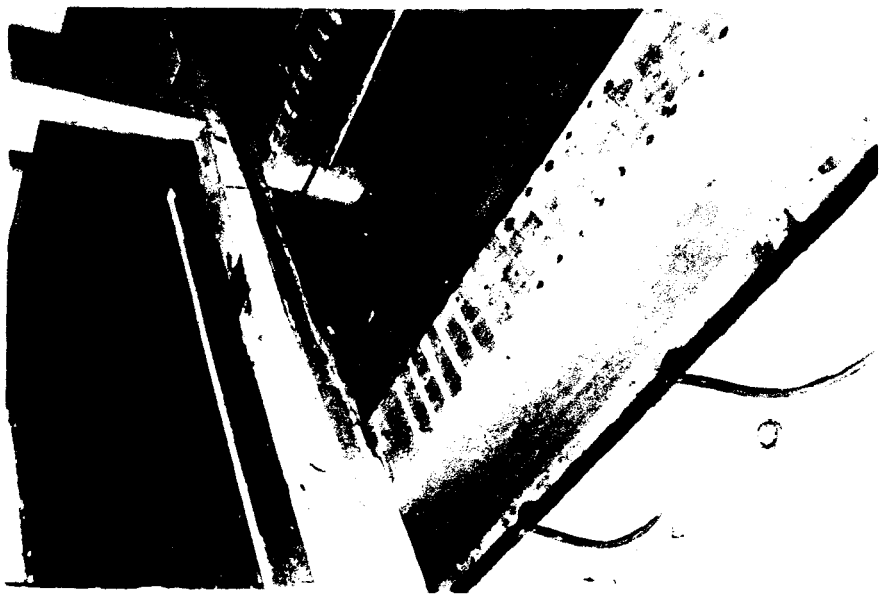
B. Framing

Probably the most puzzling question in the history of the fabric of the Van Allen house is the presence of a series of ill-fitting chamfered 8" x 8" joists supporting the second floor over the earliest increment (Fig.19). Because of their large size; their random length; and their chamfer, which indicates fabrication for exposed location rather than over plaster, it appears certain that they were not part of the original construction. On the other hand, they are secured by wrought spikes, ^{ARE THEY?} ~~WHERE?~~ and they obviously did support a plaster ceiling until its removal some years ago (Photographs 8 and 9) Their ends fit into pockets in the exterior masonry. Although the first floor joists are not as consistent, they are similarly ill-fitting, and more obviously replacements than those of the second floor. There is a section of one of these chamfered joists at the sill of the door into the first addition. Because the boards of both floors have been re-used or moved, it is impossible to prove that their location is or is not original. Their scale and spacing is not typical for a mid-eighteenth century house in this size and location.

In our opinion they were not part of the original fabric, which more probably had joists similar in size and spacing to those in the first addition. We suggest that the original framing was destroyed by some catastrophe early in the history of the house, after construction of the first addition but long before the second addition. There is no visible evidence of a fire, so

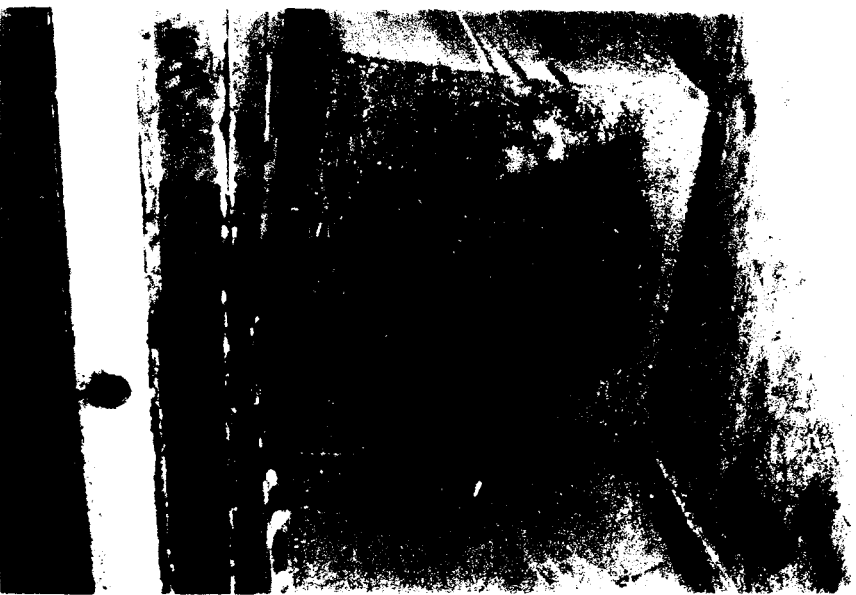
Photograph 8

Chamfered second floor floor joists at former Borning Room partition. The studs in this partition were mortised and pinned in place. The joists have only one set of lath nails in them which is from sawn lath installed with cut nails.



Photograph 9

End view of chamfered second floor joist at Borning Room partition. Note the wrought spike which held the joists together.



we suggest that during a long period of abandonment the entire interior of the original increment was destroyed or so seriously damaged by weather that the interior structure had to be entirely replaced.

The roof framing over the original increment is also uncertain in date and sequence. The double plates on top of the stone wall are hewn, and probably original (Photograph 10). The purlins at the change in angle of the gambrel are also hewn, but the ties between them are sawn! The three ties are tenoned into the purlins some distance back from either end (Photograph 11), and the ends of the purlins supported by vertical posts (Photograph 12), which is a most unusual method of construction, and appears to have been designed by an amateur. The pitch of the lower rafters is also less steep than the original gable roof of the first addition, and less than buildings of similar date, e.g. the Demarest House in Oakland. The pitch may have been lowered during the remodeling of the house by Edward Page around 1915, but the members appear much older, and cut nails are used. It is suggested that the roof framing was also entirely re-built at the same time the floors were reframed, probably in the first half of the nineteenth century.

The framing of the first addition, on the other hand, shows little evidence of change. In this room the joists are 3" x 9"s at 2' centers, and were apparently always exposed in the kitchen below. This framing is typical of late eighteenth century practice, and is believed to be original. The rafters over the second floor space in this increment have been removed and re-

ONE TIE
HAS BEEN
CUT OUT
SO AS TO
MAKE
ROOM FOR
TRAP
DOOR
IN
CEILING
AT UPPER
HALL
AREA



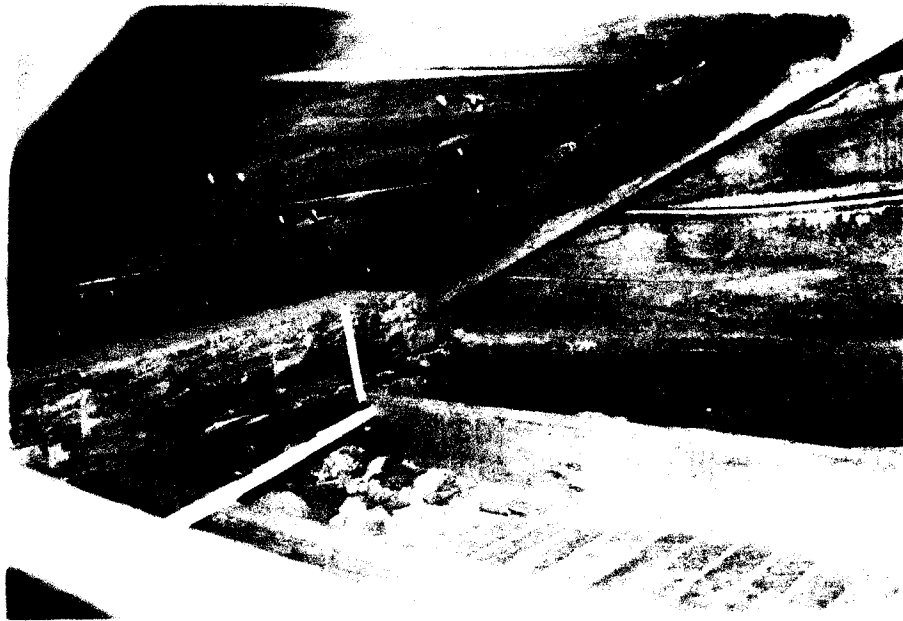
Photograph 10

Plate on second floor knee wall at southeast corner. This plate made out of two hewn members pinned in place.



Photograph 11

A typical tie between roof purlins is mortised and tenoned.



Photograph 12

Purlin at break in gambrel roof, southwest corner. Note notches in roof rafter for shingle lath.



Photograph 13

Interior view of west end of first addition, second floor (attic). The rafter (beyond) and tie member at the plate are framing members of original gable roof.

placed, but the heavy hewn plates remain and the trace of the original rafter is clear where it joined the first increment (Photograph 13). The change to a gambrel is unquestionably early twentieth century, since the nineteenth century porch roof still exists under the new porch roof.

The second floor framing of the second addition appears to date from the nineteenth century. The second floor framing is grossly inadequate for even the lightest domestic usage, and the second floor area should be restricted or reinforced.

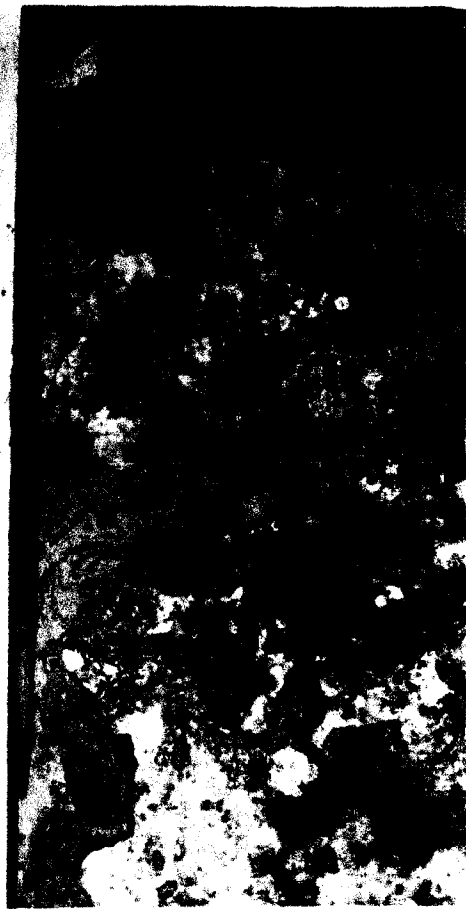
C. Finishes

As noted above, the ceiling of the original increment was plastered. The plaster removed from the second floor joists was not the original coat, however, since the lath was sawn and was held with cut nails. The original plaster almost certainly came up to the same line on the walls as the later plaster did, however.

Both the original plaster and the nineteenth century coat are clearly visible on the walls of the first addition, where the earlier coat is essentially a build-up of the mortar used between the stones. The second coat is a more conventional base coat and finish coat, with a proliferation of approximately fifteen recognizable coats of whitewash and paint. There are several layers of wallpaper over the final paint coat in the vicinity of the fireplace and former stair (Photographs 14 and 15), which do not occur on the east surface of the stone wall of the first increment, indicating that the first addition may have been subdivided by partitions at some time during the later nineteenth century, although they cannot be clearly located. There is no color correlation between the first increment and the first addition during their early history, and the list of recognizable finish coats is much longer in the addition.

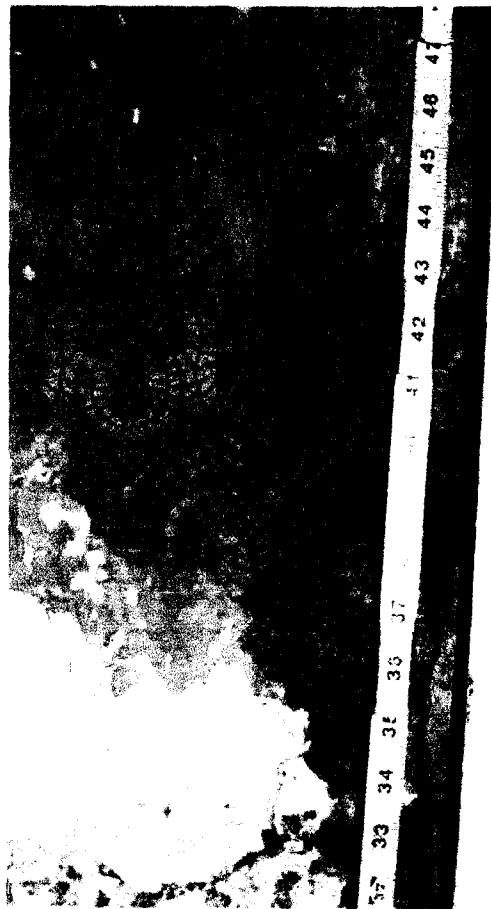
Photograph 11

Kitchen, first addition, southeast corner at former fireplace. Two layers of nineteenth century wallpaper uncovered under beaded board siding.



Photograph 15

Kitchen, first addition, southeast corner at former fireplace. Uppermost layer of nineteenth century wallpaper.



D. Conjectural History

The physical evidence in the building fabric of the Van Allen house is unusually diverse, and lacking any documentary assistance at this time provides a confusing picture. It appears that the (MAIN HOUSE - WEST) first increment and the (KEEPING ROOM) first addition (Fig. 5) were built in the mid-eighteenth century, probably not more than a generation apart, and undoubtedly both increments existed at the time of the Revolutionary War. After the war, perhaps as early as 1800, the two increments were divided and inhabited by separate families for many years. Toward the middle of the nineteenth century the (MAIN HOUSE - WEST) original house was allowed to deteriorate over many years, until its roof and second floor structure was at a point of collapse. In all probability the original chimney failed first and brought the rest of the structure down with it. During this period the (KEEPING ROOM) first addition was inhabited, refinished periodically, and kept intact structurally.

OTHERS FEEL THAT THE KEEPING ROOM CAME FIRST!

18th CENTURY HOUSE INTACT

DETERIORATION OF ORIGINAL HOUSE IN TO MID-19th CENTURY

It appears that during the middle of the nineteenth century the first increment was re-built using timber from a larger house which had also been built in the eighteenth century.

1850?

This salvaged material includes the first and second floor joists, the purlins and ties at the break in the gambrel roof, and the entire frame of the east-west partition on the first floor. The chimney was re-built to include only a parlor fireplace, on the original foundation which remained in the cellar. The work was done by men with little experience in building, who took little care in fitting the frame together, using some mortise and tenon joints and some

MAIN HOUSE RE-BUILT IN MID-19th CENTURY? ALL TIMBERS ARE SECOND HAND!

IT IS DOUBTED THAT FACE & FIRE BRICK PRESENT FIRE PLACE DATES BACK TO THIS PERIOD NEITHER THE CAST IRON FRAME OF DAMPER

* THIS CHIMNEY, OF RATHER LARGE PROPORTION, RAN INSIDE OF THE HOUSE. VIEWING IT FROM THE ATTIC, IT IS OF HAND MADE BRICK & SET IN A MUDDY LOOKING SOFT CLAY. NO FLUE LINER IS USED. INSIDE - 13" X 19".

wrought iron spikes. The fact that they framed a gambrel roof may well indicate that such a roof type existed originally, although there is no physical evidence of this. They omitted the usual wind-bracing of the purlins, and followed neither the eighteenth or nineteenth century traditions in building, but combined elements of both. It may be surmised that they were farmers who learned how to frame a roof by disassembling an old house, and who then fitted the elements back together as well as they could.

The conjectural date of this work as being in the mid-nineteenth century can be assumed from the sawn lath and cut nails they used. The re-building cannot possibly have been part of the later re-building by Page in the first decade of the ^{*}twentieth century, which was done by sophisticated carpenters probably under the direction of the architect who designed Page's own house.

Although the ^(EASTERN MOST ROOM. ADJACENT TO KEEPING ROOM) second addition was also obviously erected prior to the Page remodeling, there is no evidence that the second addition is contemporary with the re-building of the original increment. There is no general use of salvaged material here. The second addition probably dates from the ownership of William Muller, in the last decade of the nineteenth century.

The remodeling of all three parts of the present structure by Edward Page probably did not take place until after ^{*}1915. It bears a strong stylistic resemblance to Page's own house, and was certainly influenced by the popular Dutch Colonial fashion that was popular during the first two decades of this century. This

REMODELING MUST
HAVE INCLUDED THE
INSTALLATION OF BATH
ROOM ON SECOND FLOOR -
STEAM HEAT &
ELECTRICITY.

EAVES - IF REMODELED - IT WAS AN EXCELLENT 10.

PIECE OF WORK - QUALITY WISE - & PROTECTED THE JOINTS OF

remodeling includes the overhang of the roof on the original
(EAVES)
increment, the construction of the gambrel roof on the addition,
the front porch, the second floor partitions, and the construc-
tion of a long range of buildings connected to the east end of
the second addition (Figs. 11, 12, and 14).
STONE WORK FROM THE WEATHER

During the twentieth century modifications included removal
of the frame wall on the south elevation of the second addition
to permit the extension of the room, ^{BY MEANS OF CONCRETE WALL THAT IS EXPOSED} the enclosure of the
remaining porch in front of the first addition, and the construc-
tion of a concrete chimney on the west end of the original
increment (Photograph 2).

During the past three years the members of the Oakland His-
torical Society have removed some of the twentieth century addi-
tions including the enclosed porch on the south side of the
first addition.

*
*
*

SOMETIME PRIOR TO 1974, THE
OHS REMOVED SOME INTERIOR FALLING
PLASTER & WOOD SUB-WALL & DUTCH
SHELF IN KEEPING ROOM. THEY ALSO
REMOVED THE PLASTER CEILING & LATHS
IN THE PARLOR & BROOMY CLEANED THE
HOUSE. SOME BOOK SHELVES & LIGHTING
FIXTURES WERE ALSO REMOVED FROM PARL.

A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF INTERIOR
PAINTING WAS DONE & FLOORS REFINISHED
SOON AFTER 1974 OR THEREABOUTS.

PROBABLY MEANT HISTORIC OF SITE, NOT HOUSE

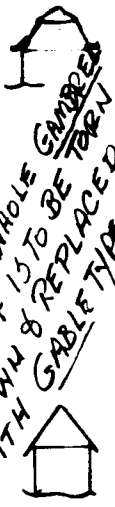
E. Recommendations

Like most very old houses, the Van Allen House is an agglomeration of many changes and repairs. Its long history and associations with General Washington give it unusual interest and importance. Its appearance is attractive and its small size makes its restoration a feasible project for a town like Oakland. The only questions concern the amount of restoration and a choice of alternate values. The fact that little eighteenth century fabric remains, and that little is known about its eighteenth century appearance, precludes the possibility of restoring the building to its state in 1777 when Washington used it. But as one of the oldest houses in the Ramapo Valley it is truly an historic landmark worthy of preservation and restoration. The present fabric is in poor repair and will require substantial funds merely to keep it from further deterioration and make it usable to the community.

THE HOUSE, AS WE SEE IT TODAY, PROBABLY DID NOT EXIST IN 1777
 PRESERVATION VERSUS RESTORATION?

The superficial "colonialization" by Edward Page is deleterious in several respects. It greatly increases the periodic maintenance cost, by adding such elements as the deep wells of the dormers and the curved overhangs of the eaves. But worse, it effectively disguises the fact that it really is an old Dutch house. The Page additions make it appear to be wholly an imitation. The second addition also obscures the authentic fabric and will be expensive to restore and maintain.

IF WHOLE GAMBLED DOWN & REPLACED WITH GABLE TYPE



In general, we believe the restoration should work toward the elimination of these obscuring additions, and toward the emphasis of those elements which are old, making them useful for

the Historical Society and the Community in an honest and unpretentious way. To do this, we suggest a series of phases of work, to be undertaken as funding becomes available, starting with the essential stabilization of the existing fabric, and ending with the closest possible representation of the eighteenth century house. It should be kept in mind that our architectural research has been limited in scope and many questions remain unanswered. During the work on the house much evidence will be uncovered which will answer those questions, and perhaps show that our assumptions were mistaken. Continuing study during a deliberate restoration will result in the most useful and authentic re-creation of this historic and meaningful project.

F. Proposed Restoration

The proposed restoration of the Van Allen House will be completed in four phases:

Phase I - Exterior Restoration

Phase I - Exterior Restoration ✓

1. Restore Original Roof

A) Roof on the original increment

- 1) Remove all dormer windows
- 2) Remove the overhanging eaves on the front and rear as well as the gable ends of the building
- 3) Provide new wood shingle roof
- 4) Provide new cornices

Handwritten notes on the left margin, partially obscured.

B) Roof on the First and Second Additions

- 1) Remove the existing dormer windows
- 2) Reframe the roof to the original gable configuration
- 3) Construct three dormer windows on the rear slope of the gable roof
- 4) Provide new wood shingle roof
- 5) Provide new cornices

Handwritten notes: SAW FLOOR, STAIRS, PORCH, etc.

C) Repair 19th Century Tin Porch Roof presently concealed by the Gambrel Roof

- 1) Furnish new porch columns

2. Restore Exterior of the Second Addition

A) New Frame Wall on South Elevation

- 1) Demolish existing concrete wall
- 2) Remove casement windows

- B) Provide New Double Hung Windows and Shutters
- C) Provide New Batten Door and Frame
- 3. Remove Existing Front Porch, Provide New Wood Stoop - *white*

Phase II - Interior Restoration/Mechanical, Plumbing, and
Electrical Systems

1. Plumbing

- A) Check Septic Tank - repair as required
- B) Rework Second Floor Bathroom
- C) Remove First Floor Bathroom

2. Electrical

- A) Provide New Electrical Service
- B) Provide Burglar and Fire Alarms

3. Mechanical

- A) Provide New Furnace Chimney
- B) Rework Existing Heating System

4. Interior Restoration

- A) Rebuild Fireplace in Keeping Room
- B) Repair Floor Structure in Keeping Room, Patch Floor
as Required
- C) Restore Center Hall
 - 1) Remove bathroom partitions
 - 2) Remove box beam ceiling
 - 3) Restore floor
 - 4) Enclose staircase
 - 5) Restore door opening at rear of hall

D) Repairs to Assembly Room

- 1) Remove lighting cornice
- 2) Restore plaster ceiling at Borning Room area to conceal plumbing

WAS REMOVED WINTER OF 1978/79

Phase III

1. Repairs to the Second Addition

- CEILING?
- A) Reinforce Floor Structure
 - B) Provide New Stairway to Second Floor

2. Exterior Restoration

- A) Remove concrete chimney on west end of the building
- B) Repoint Exterior
- C) Replace Rotted Miscellaneous Millwork
- D) New Clapboards on Gable Ends

Phase IV

1. Complete Apartment

- A) Extend Existing Mechanical, Plumbing, and Electrical Systems
- B) Install New Kitchen and Bath
- C) Interior Carpentry, Millwork, and Drywall

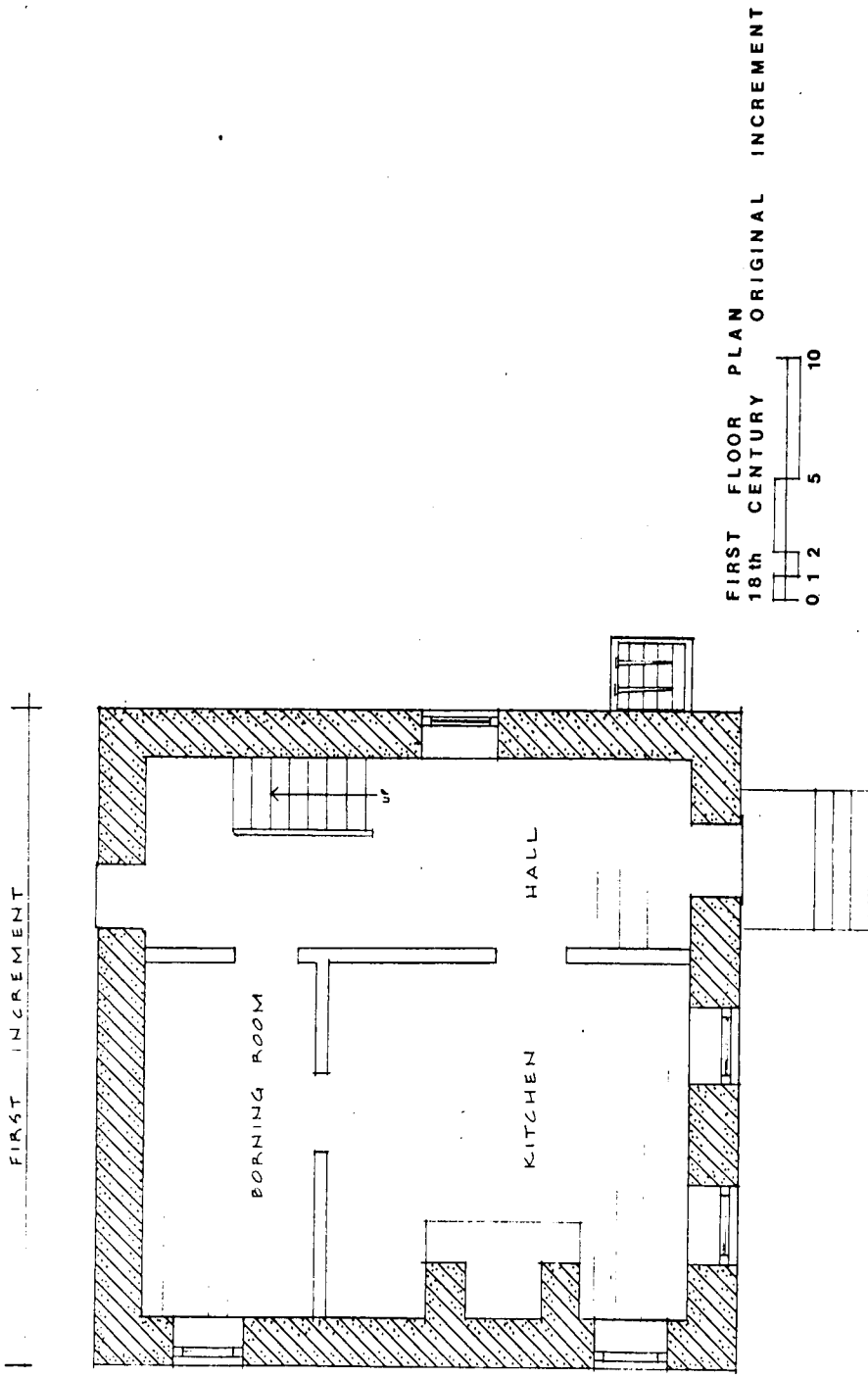
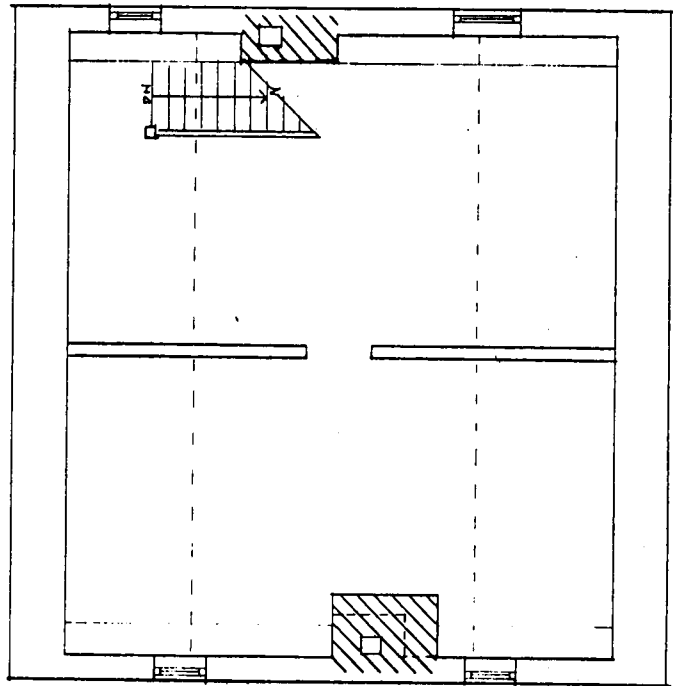


FIG. 1



SECOND FLOOR PLAN
 18th CENTURY ORIGINAL INCREMENT

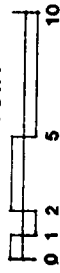
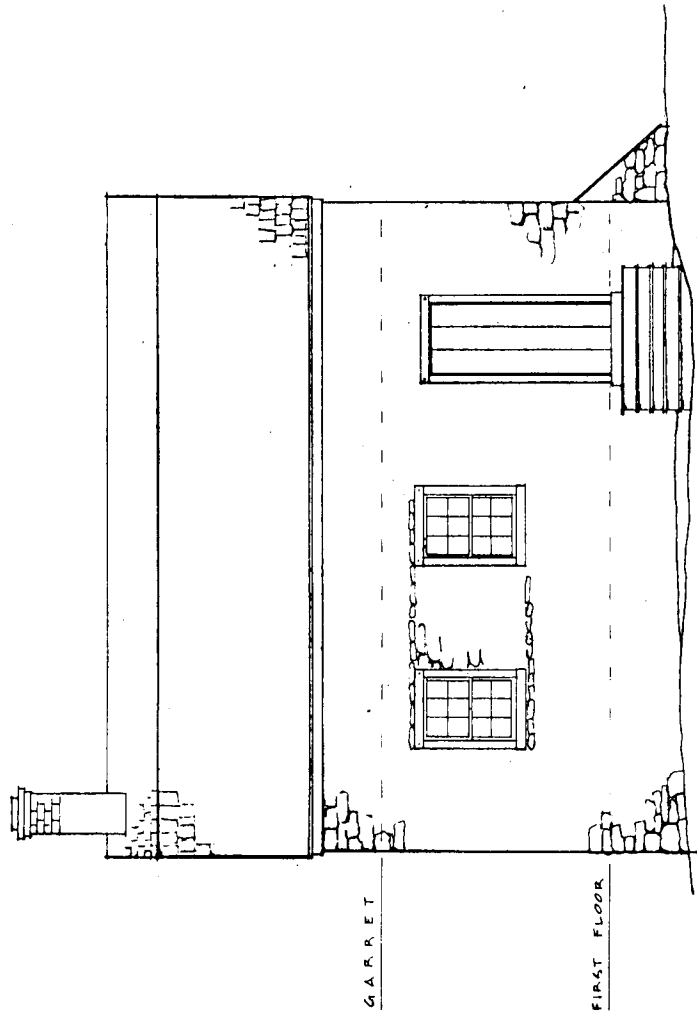


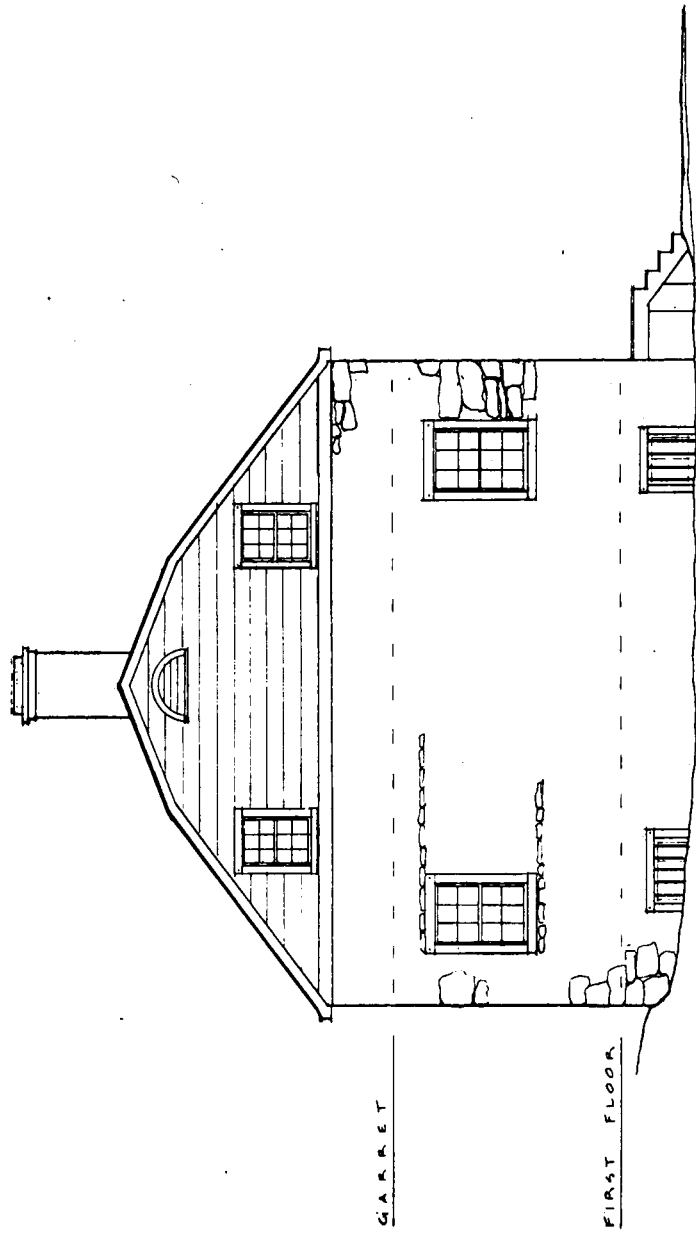
FIG. 2



SOUTH ELEVATION
18th CENTURY ORIGINAL INCREMENT

0 1 2 5 10

FIG. 3



WEST ELEVATION ORIGINAL INCREMENT
18th CENTURY
0 1 2 5 10

FIG. 4

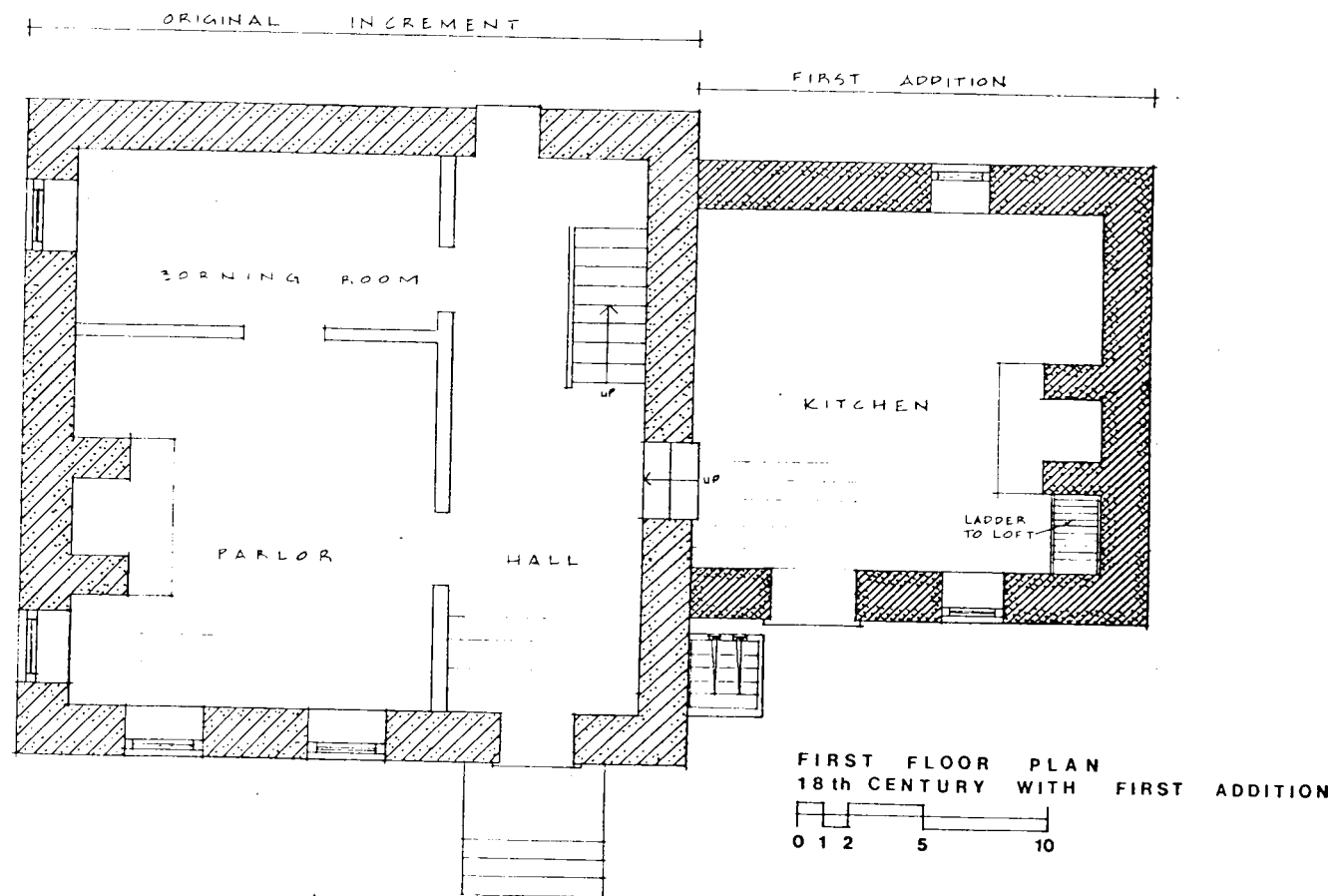
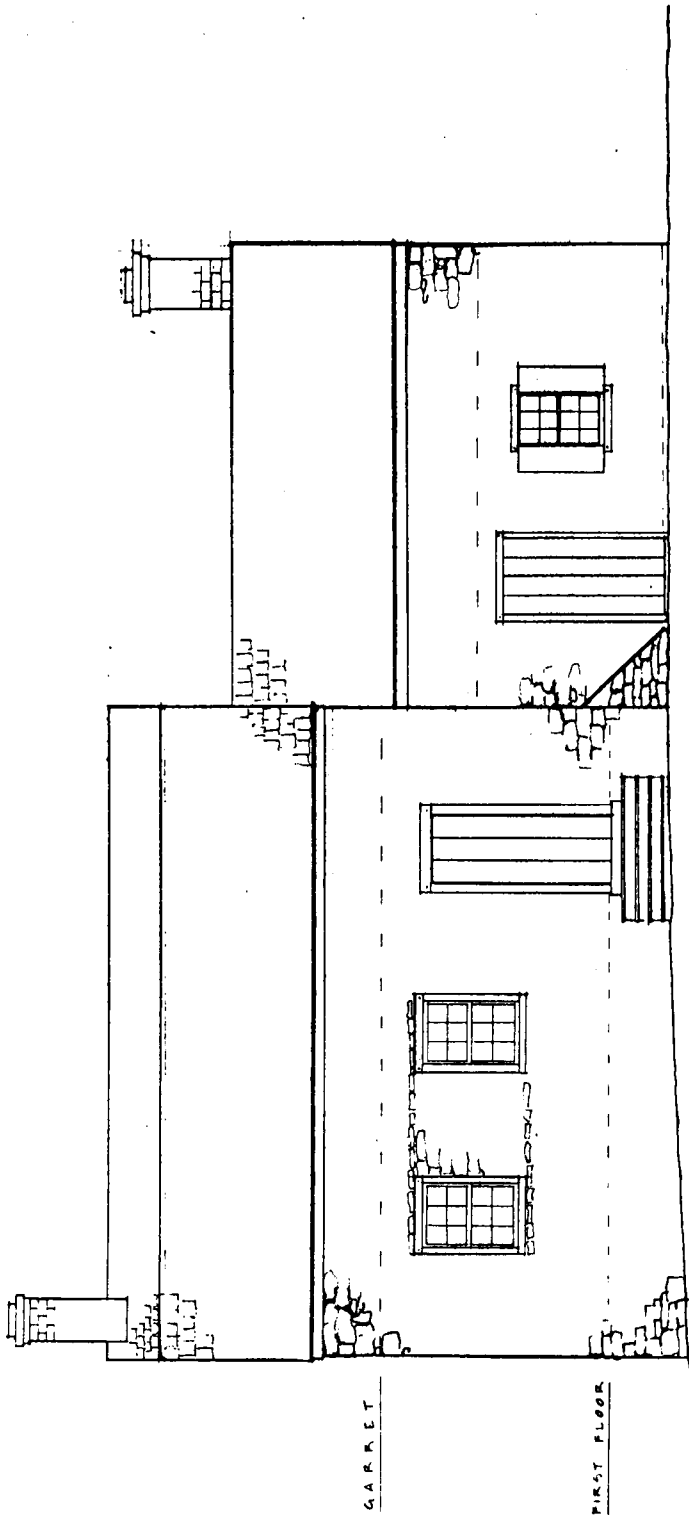


FIG. 5



SOUTH ELEVATION
18th CENTURY WITH FIRST ADDITION

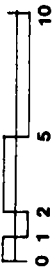
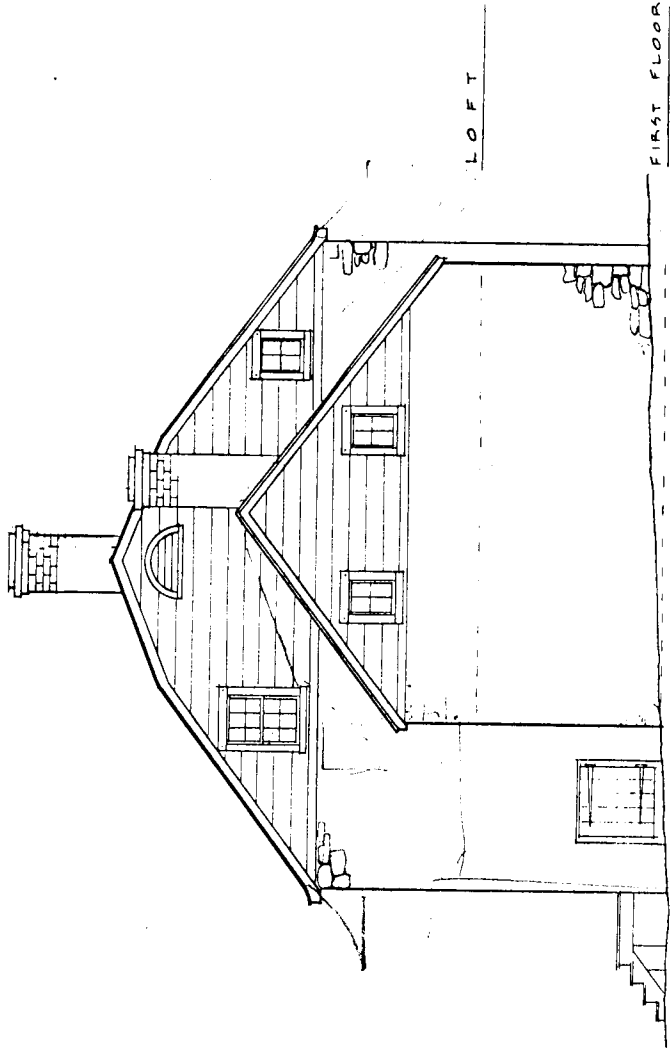


FIG. 6



EAST ELEVATION
18th CENTURY WITH FIRST ADDITION

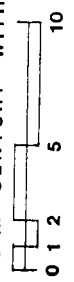


FIG. 7

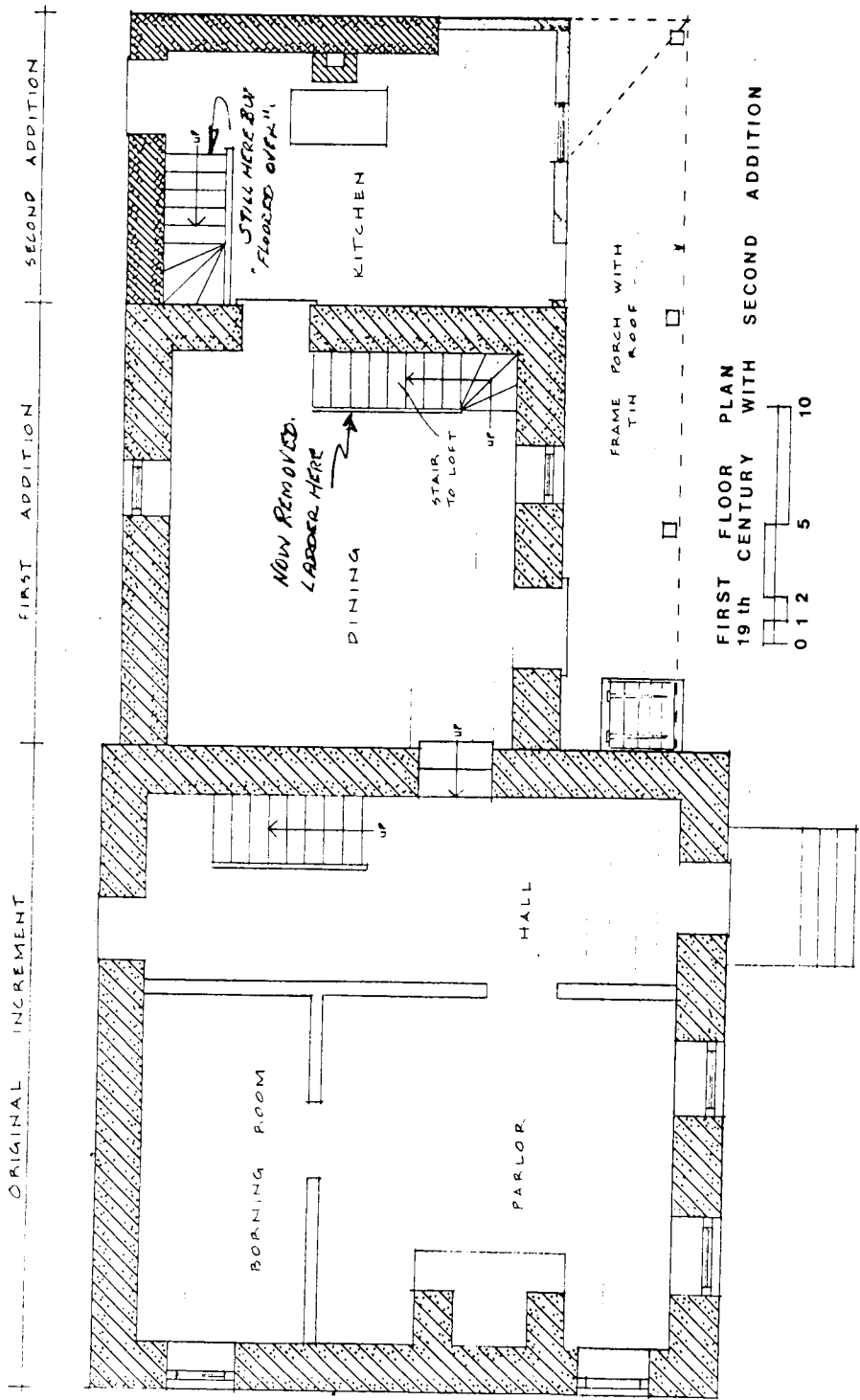
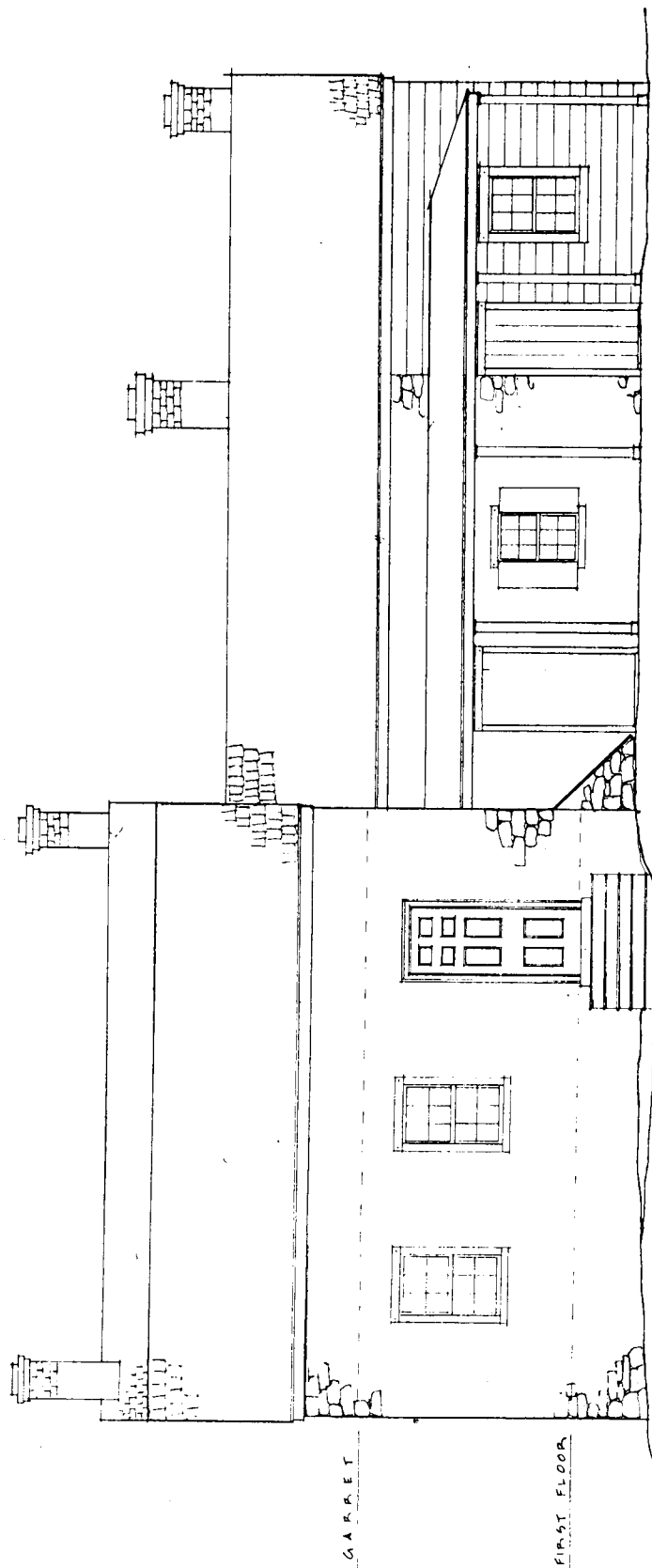


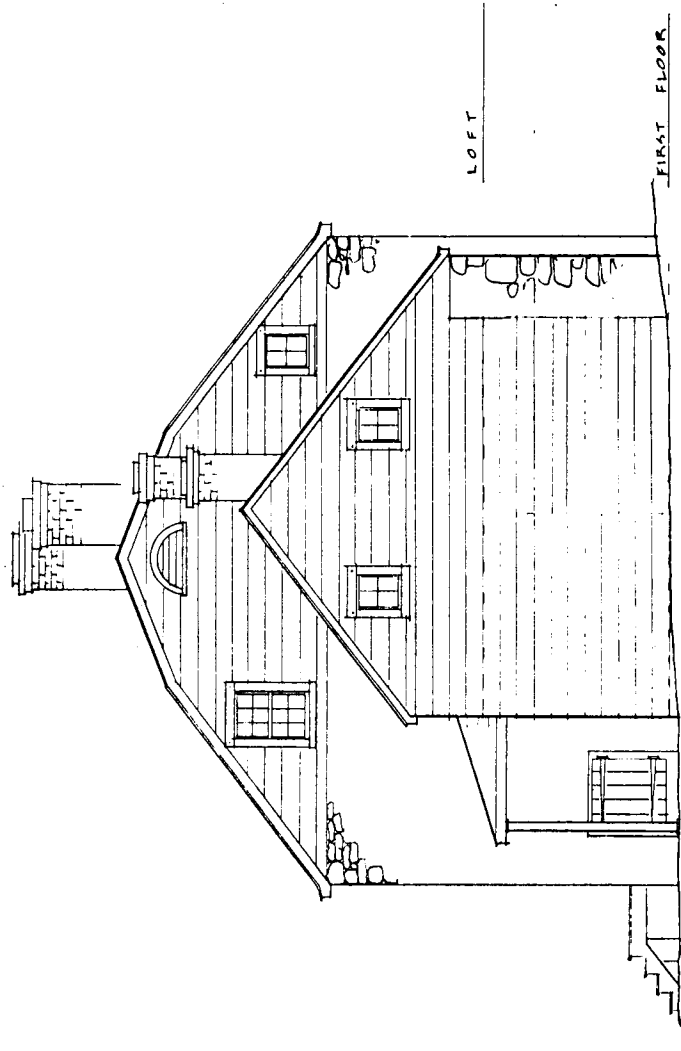
FIG. 8



SOUTH ELEVATION
19th CENTURY WITH SECOND ADDITION



FIG. 9



EAST ELEVATION SECOND. ADDITION
19th CENTURY WITH SECOND. ADDITION



FIG. 10

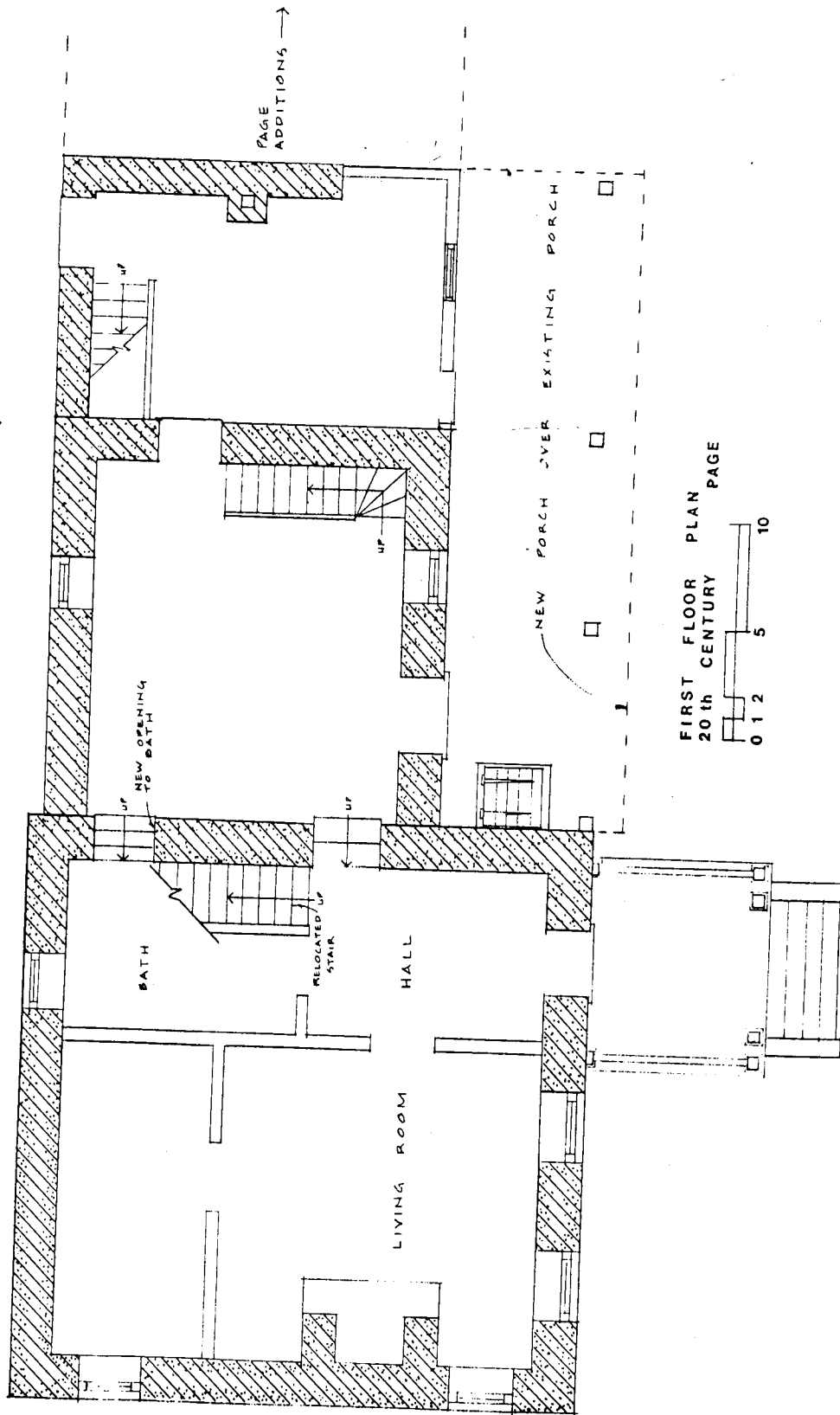
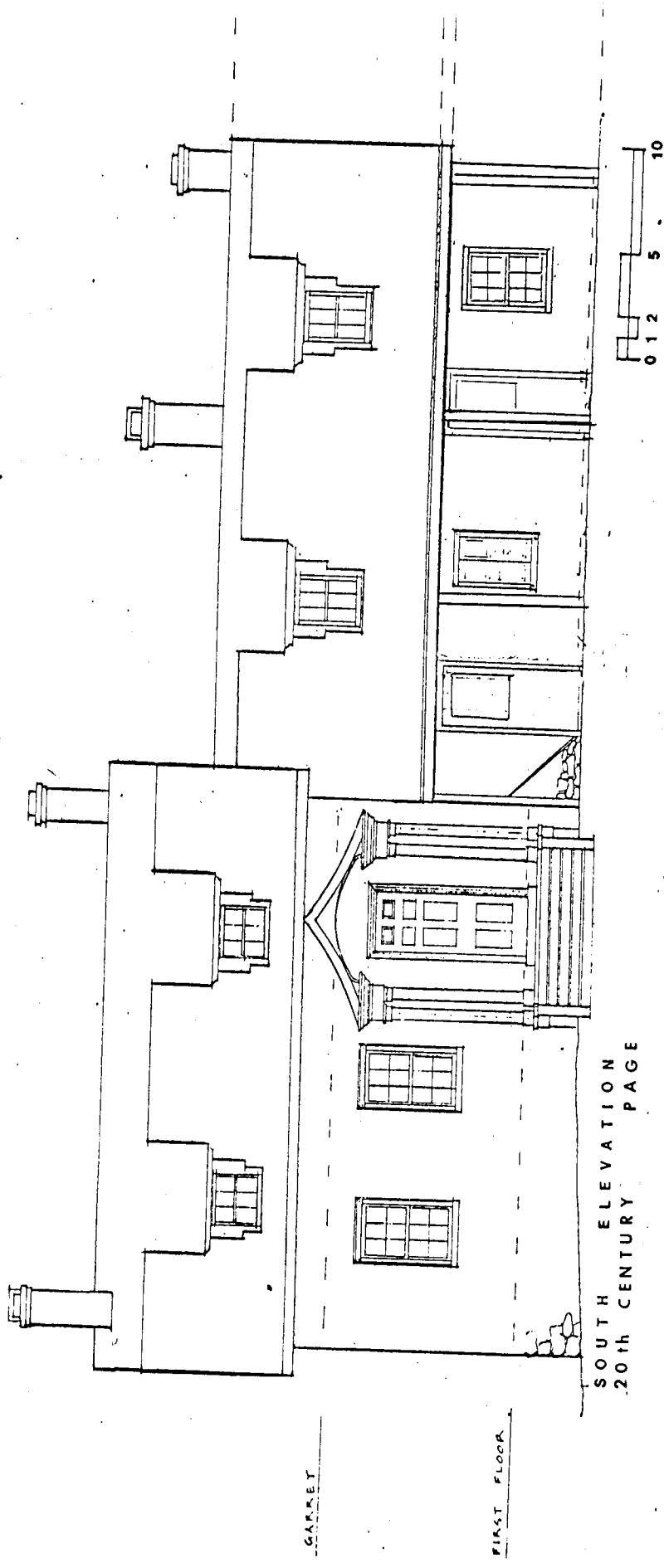


FIG. 11



SOUTH ELEVATION
20th CENTURY PAGE

FIG. 12

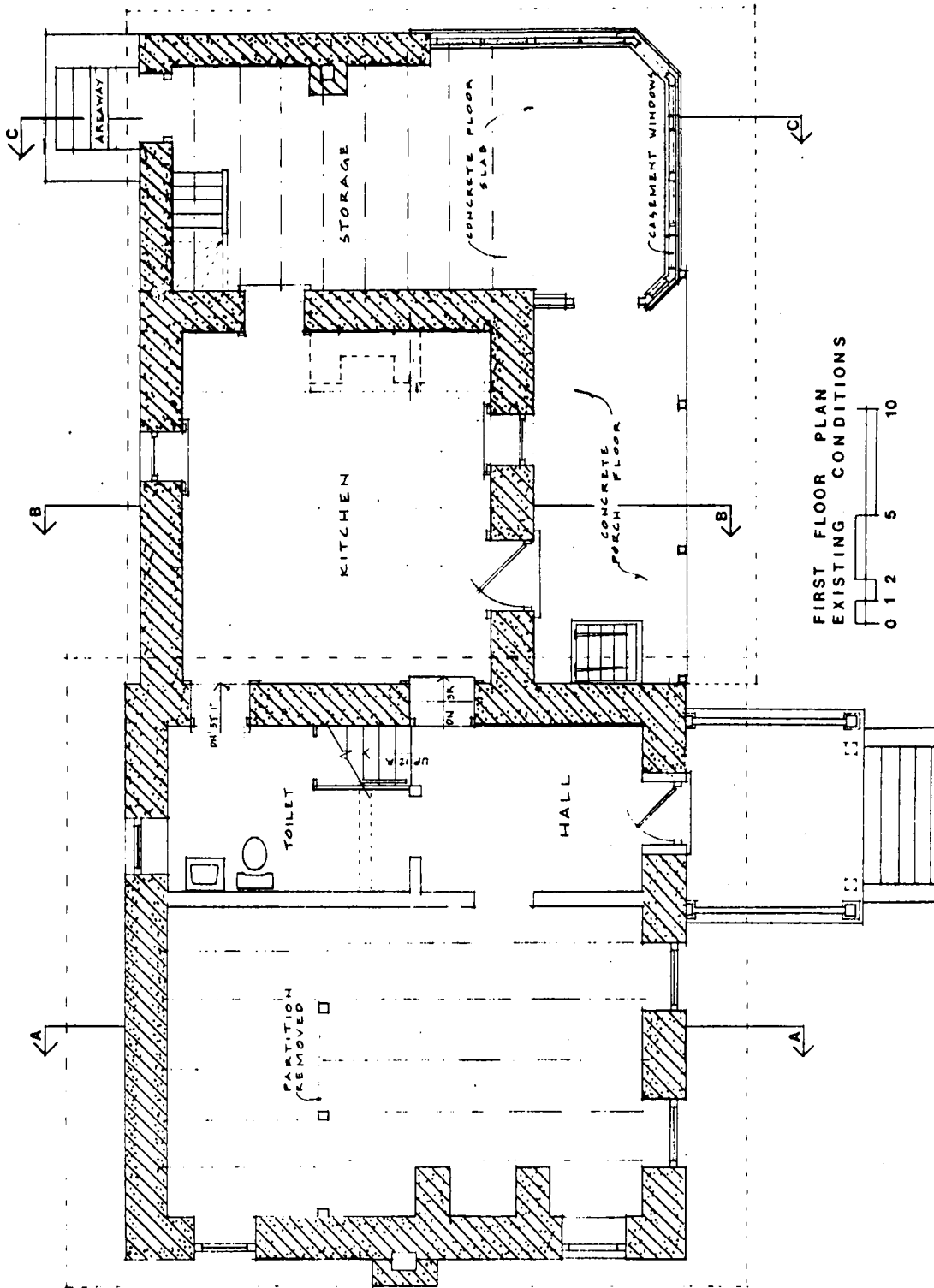
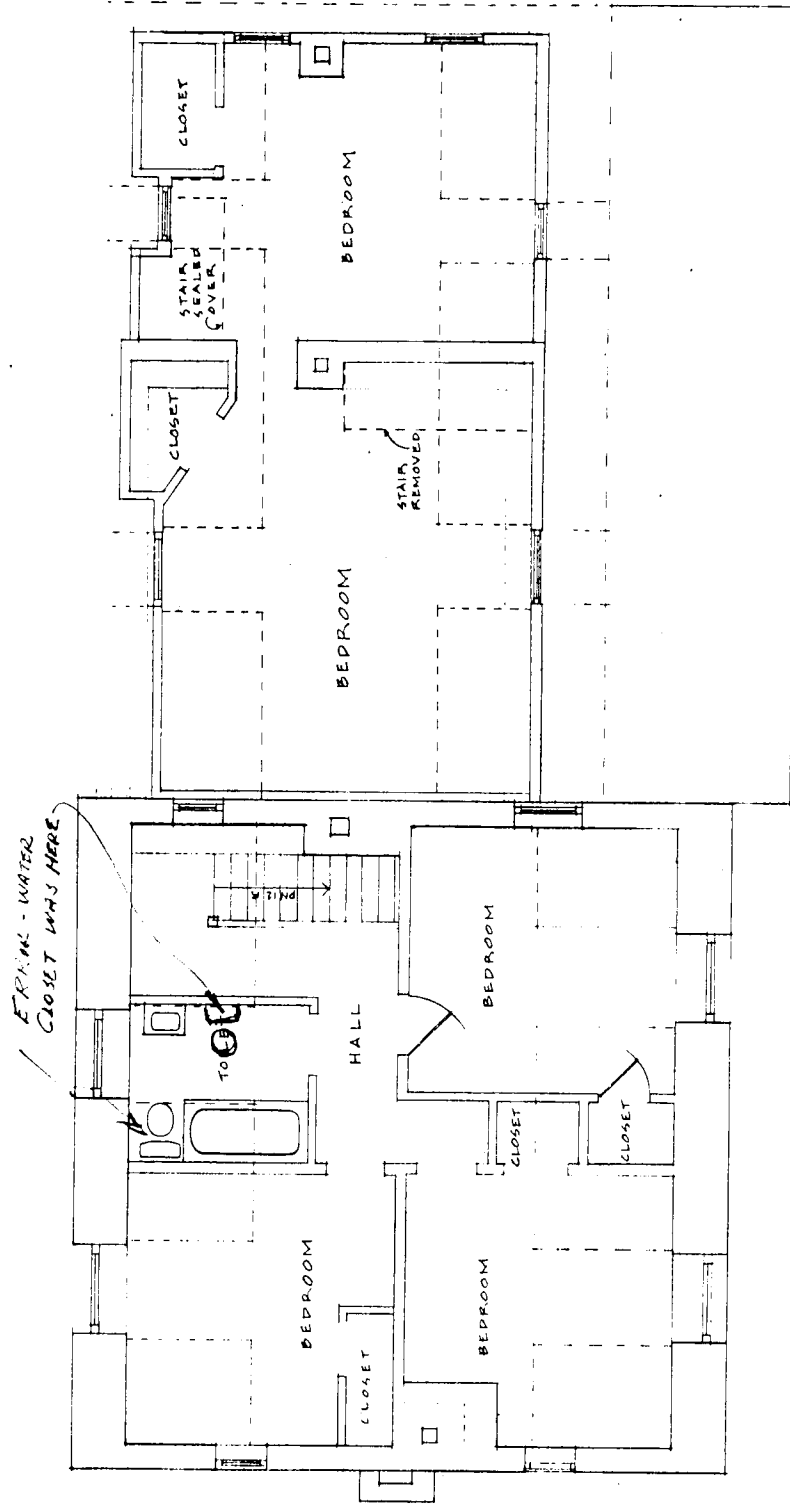


FIG. 13



SECOND FLOOR PLAN
EXISTING CONDITIONS



FIG. 14

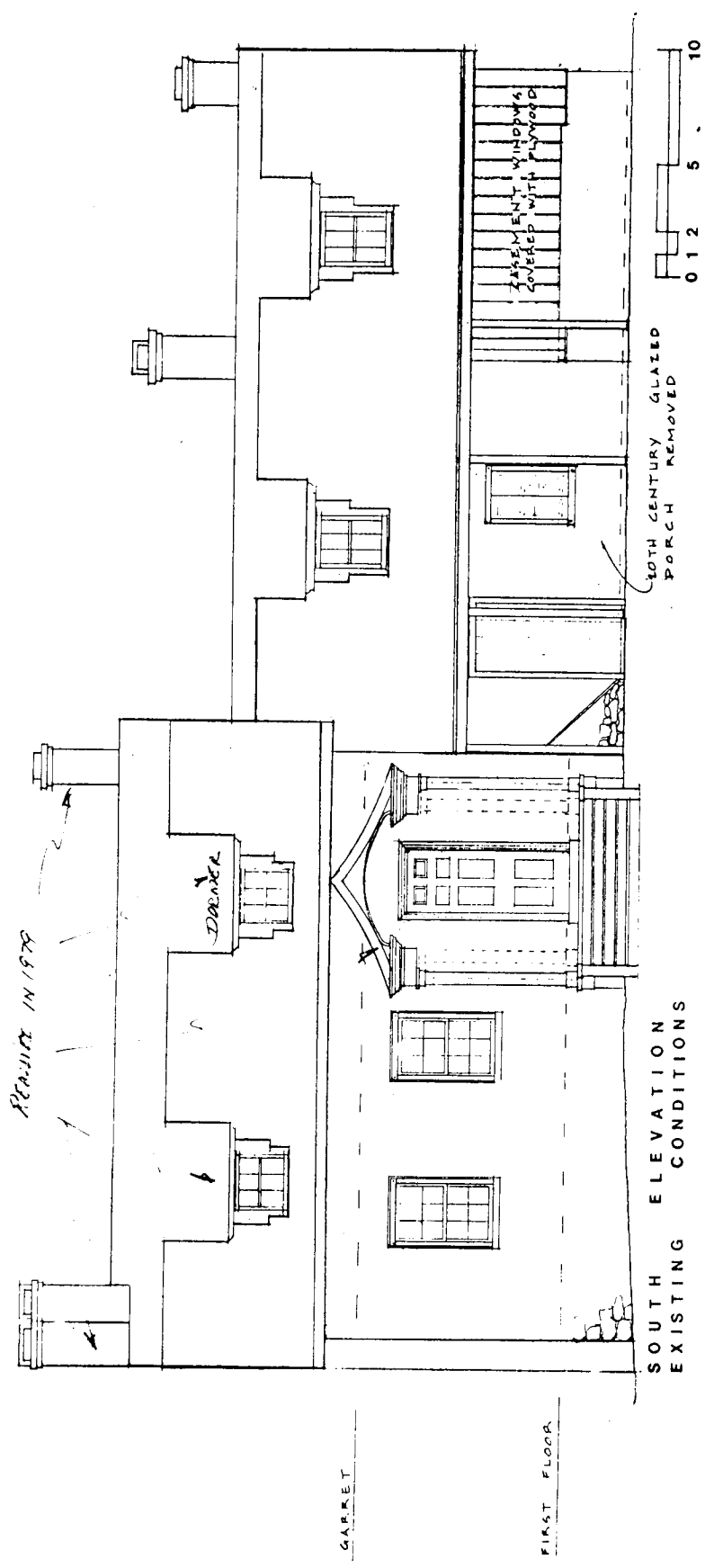


FIG. 15

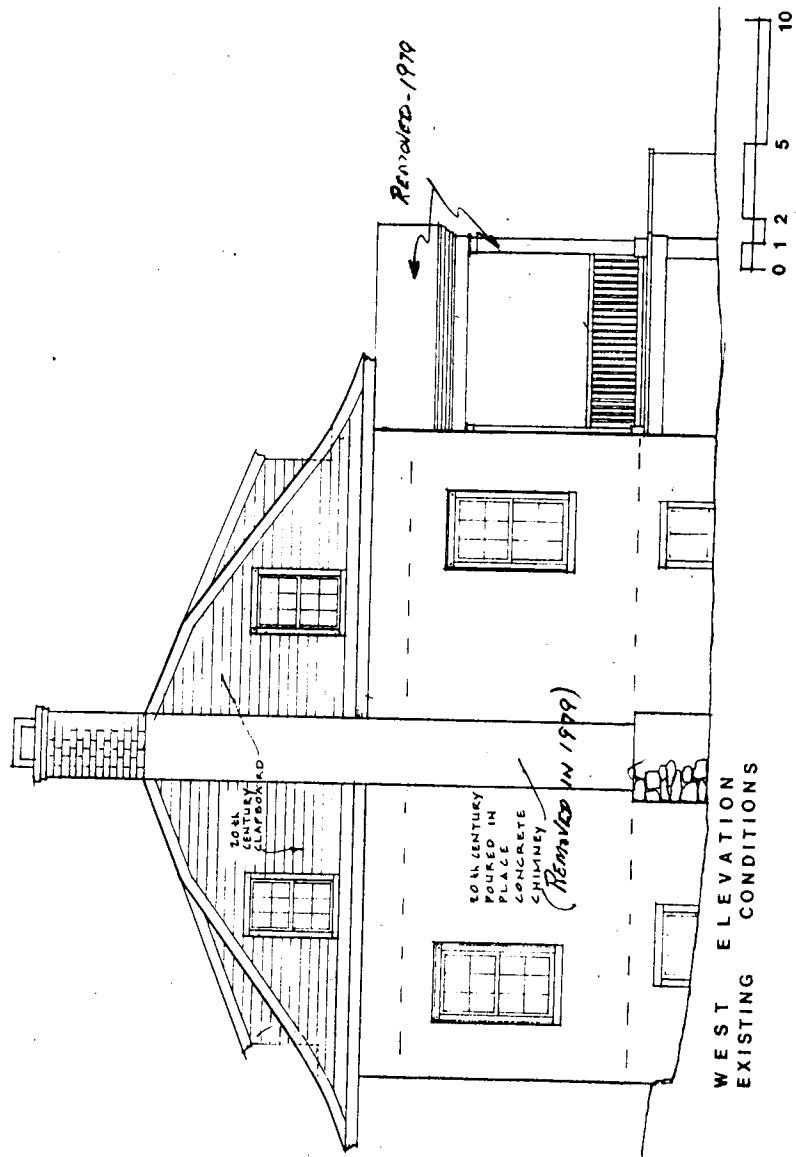
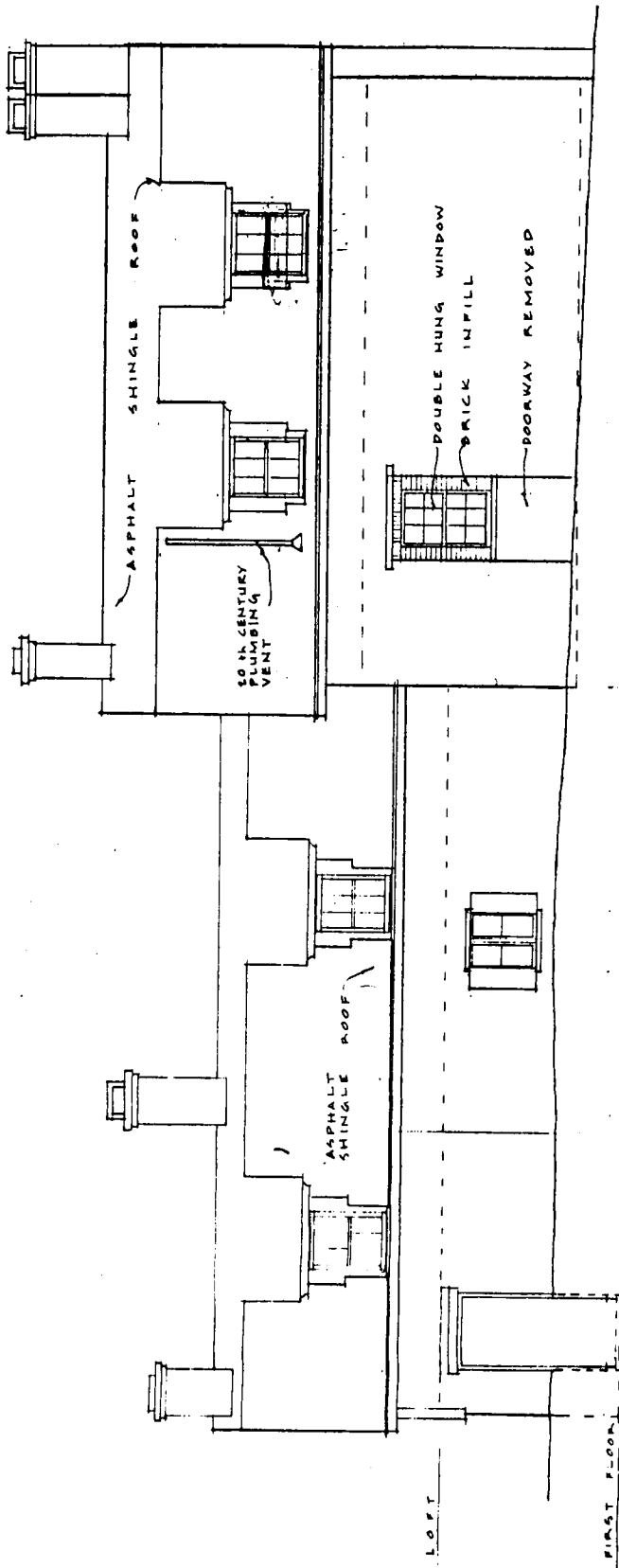


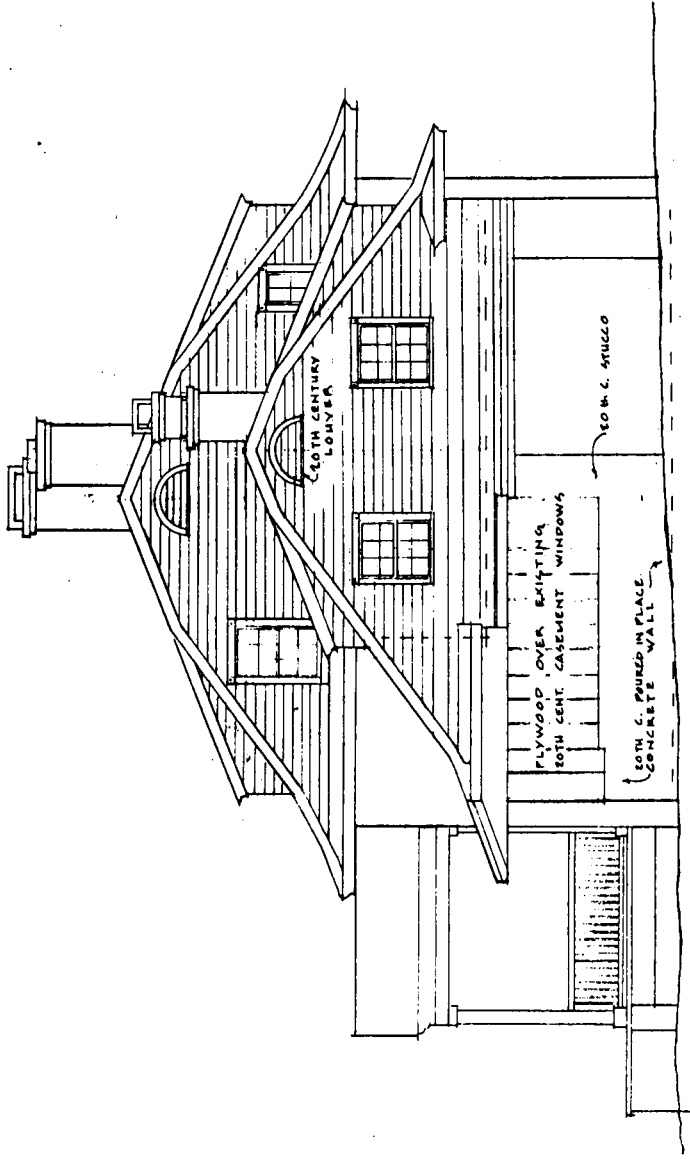
FIG. 16



NORTH ELEVATION
EXISTING CONDITIONS



FIG. 17



EAST ELEVATION
EXISTING CONDITIONS

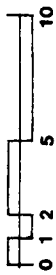


FIG. 18

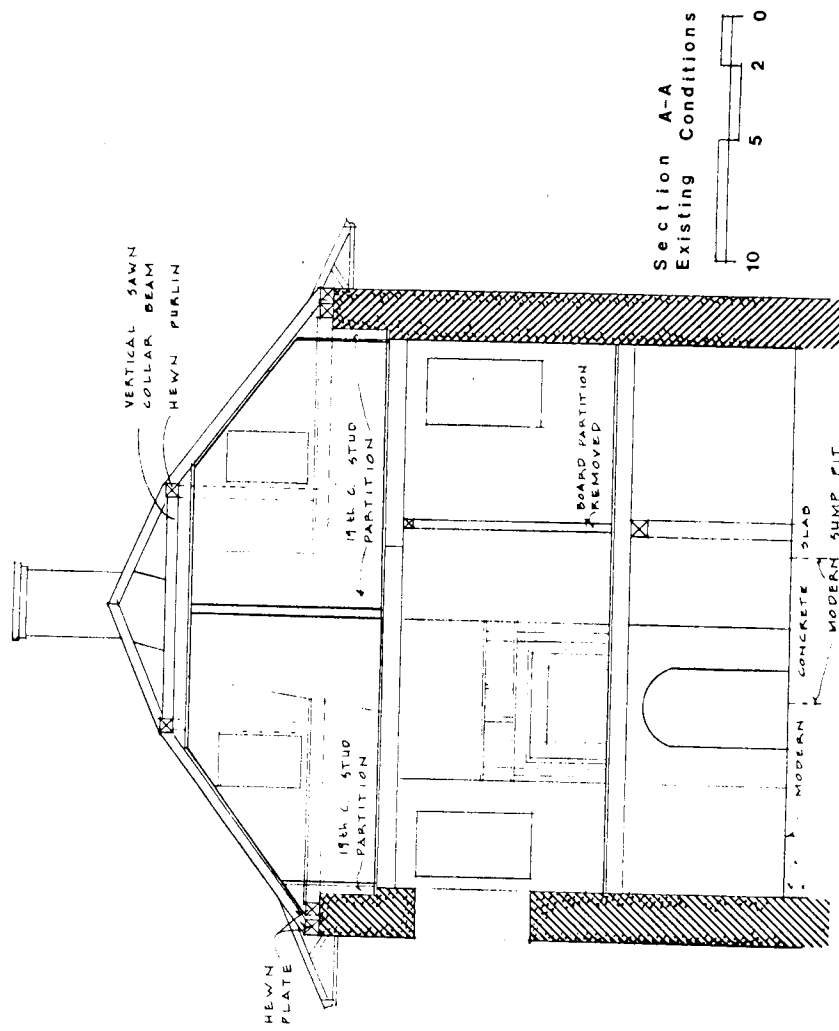


FIG. 20

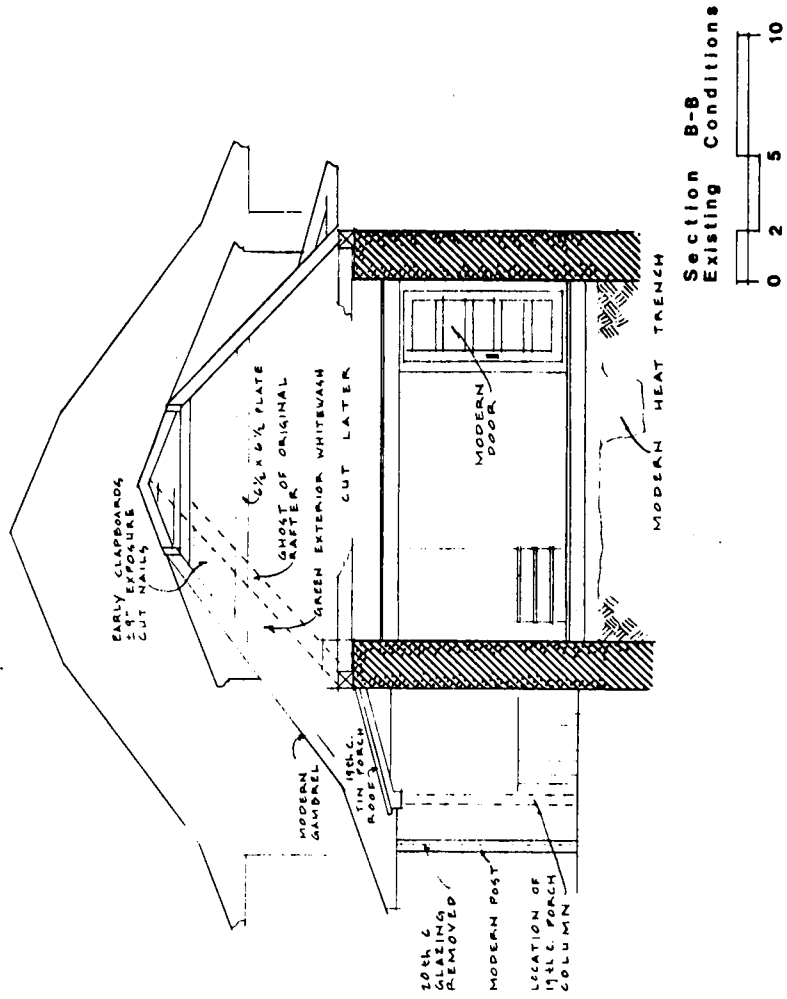


FIG. 21

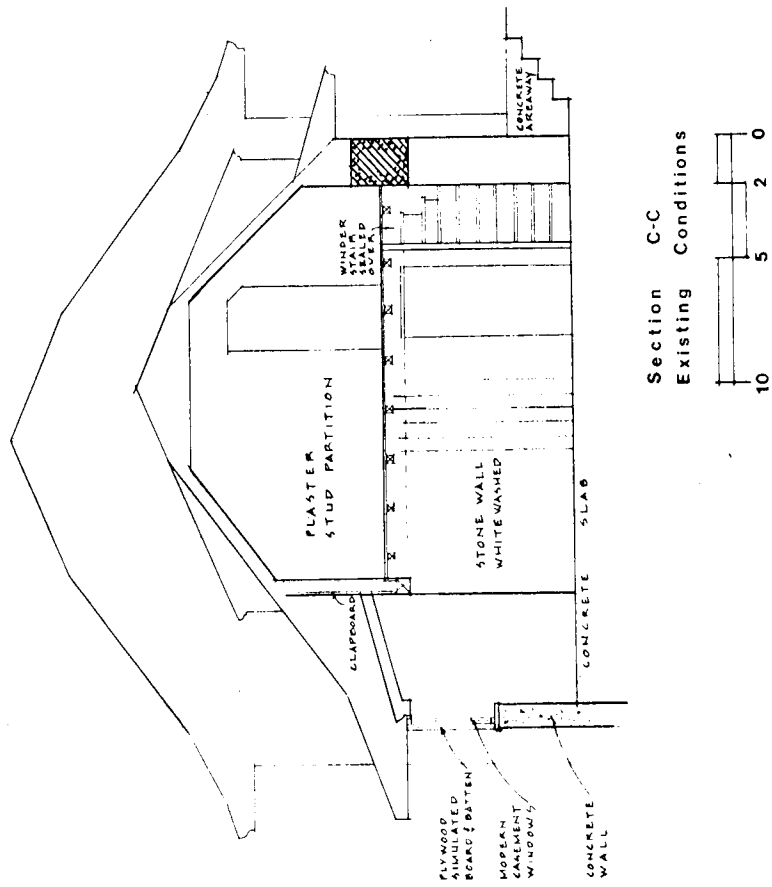
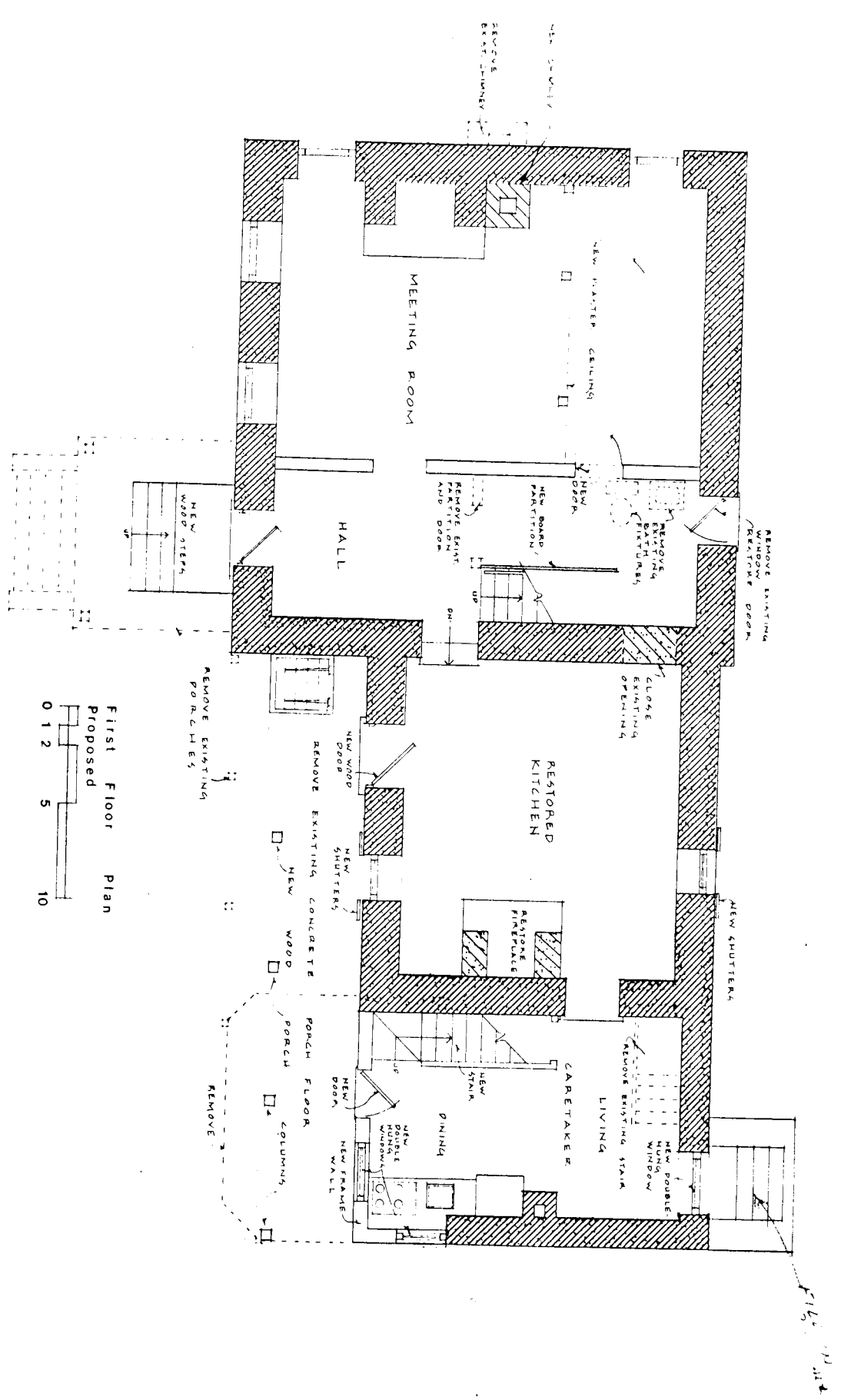
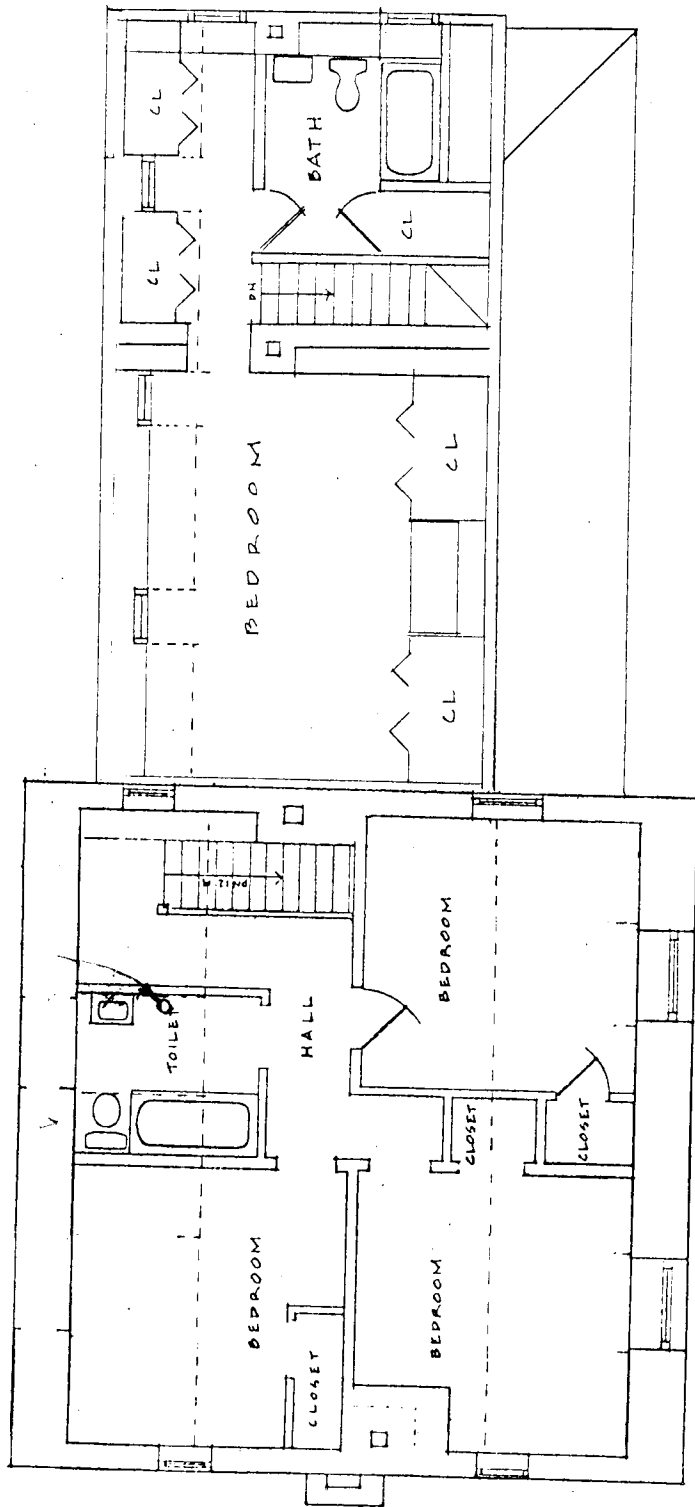


FIG. 22



First Floor Plan
Proposed
0 1 2 5 10

FIG. 23



SECOND FLOOR PLAN
PROPOSED RESTORATION

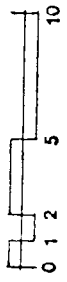
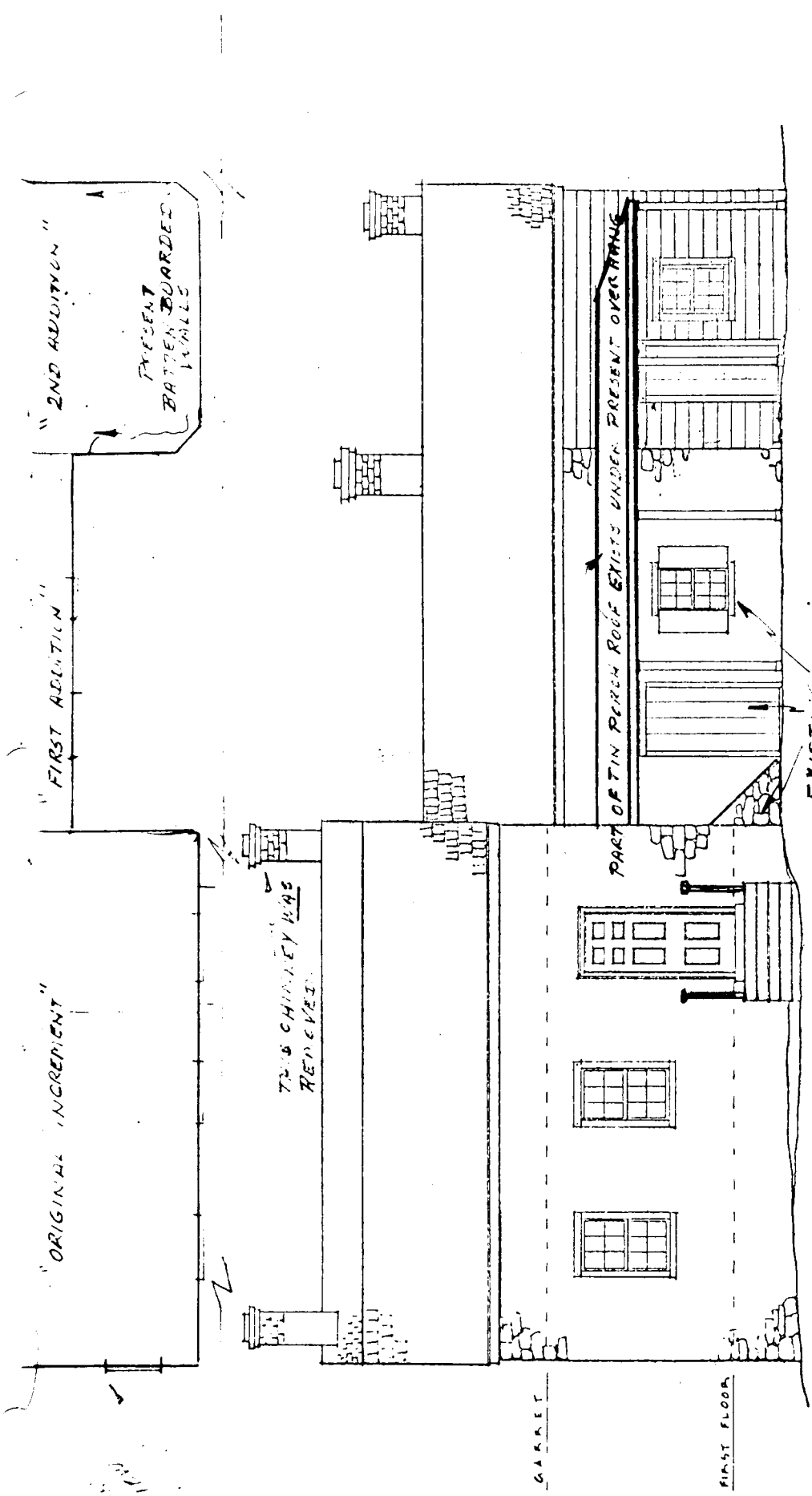


FIG. 24



SOUTH ELEVATION
PROPOSED RESTORATION



"MAIN STRUCTURE, ORIGINAL INCREMENT" (WORK ACCOMPLISHED IN 1979)

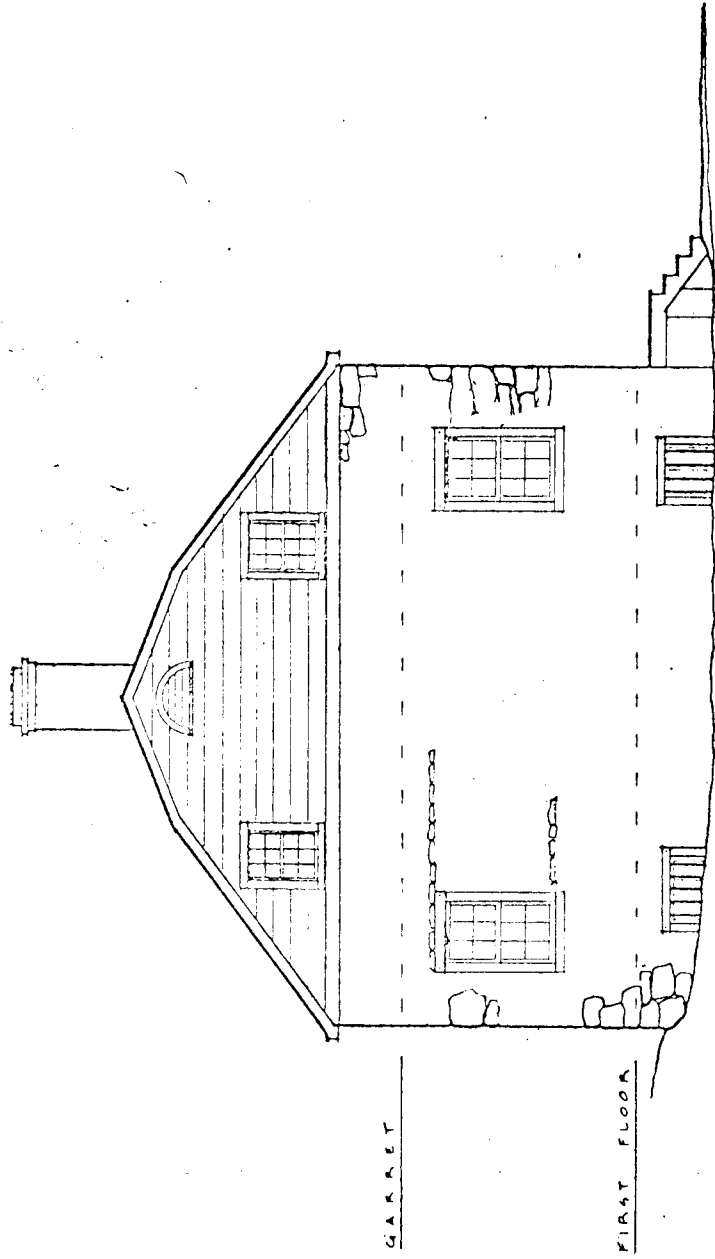
"FIRST ADDITION, KEEPING RUM" (Note: "RUM" is likely a typo for "RUN")

"2ND ADDITION" PRESENTLY BATTEN BOARDED & WALLS PROJECTING FORWARD TO FRONT WALL LINE OF MAIN STRUCTURE.

FIG. 25

"FIRST & SECOND ADDITION" FOR WHICH 1980 GRANT IS REQUESTED.

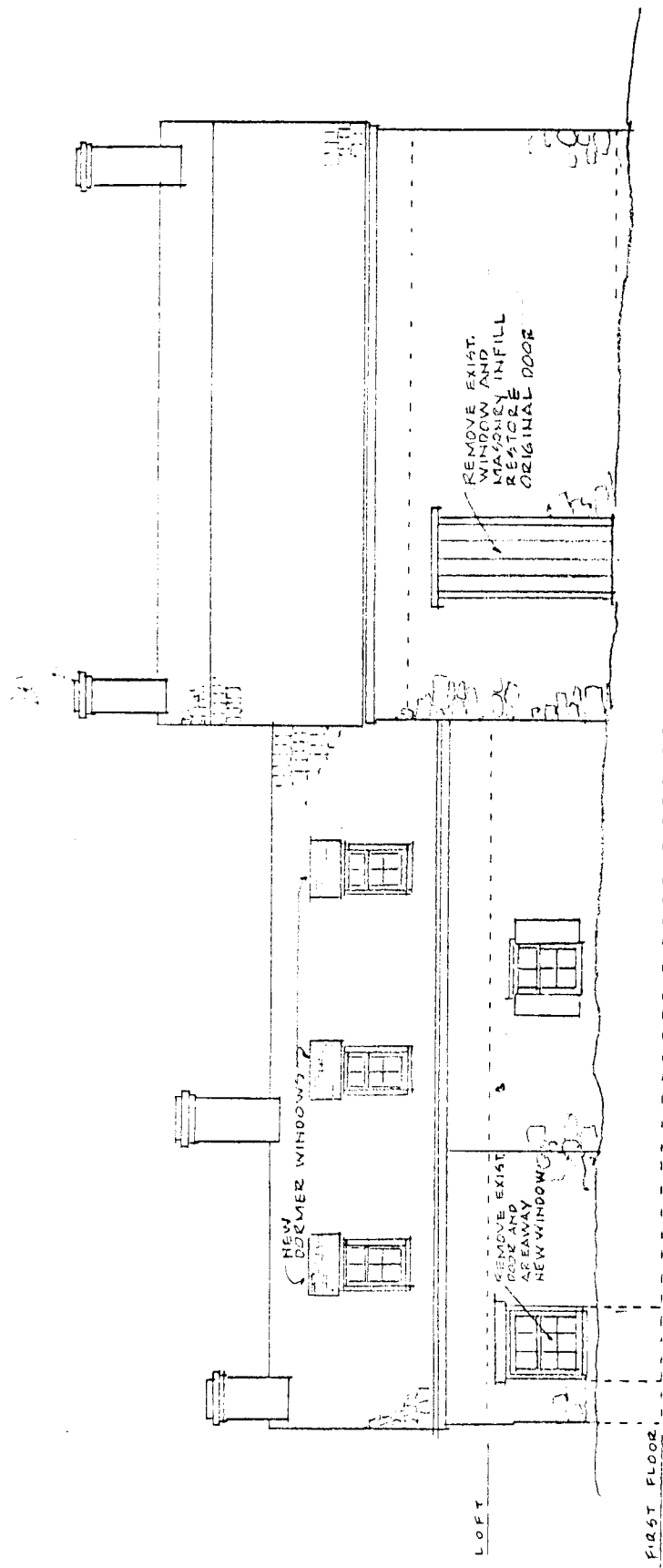
NOTE: SUPER-IMPOSED NOTES COVERED IN REPORT OF JOHN M. DICKEY OF APR. 1977.



WEST ELEVATION
PROPOSED RESTORATION



FIG. 26



NORTH ELEVATION
PROPOSED RESTORATION

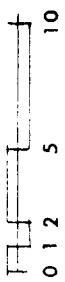


FIG. 27

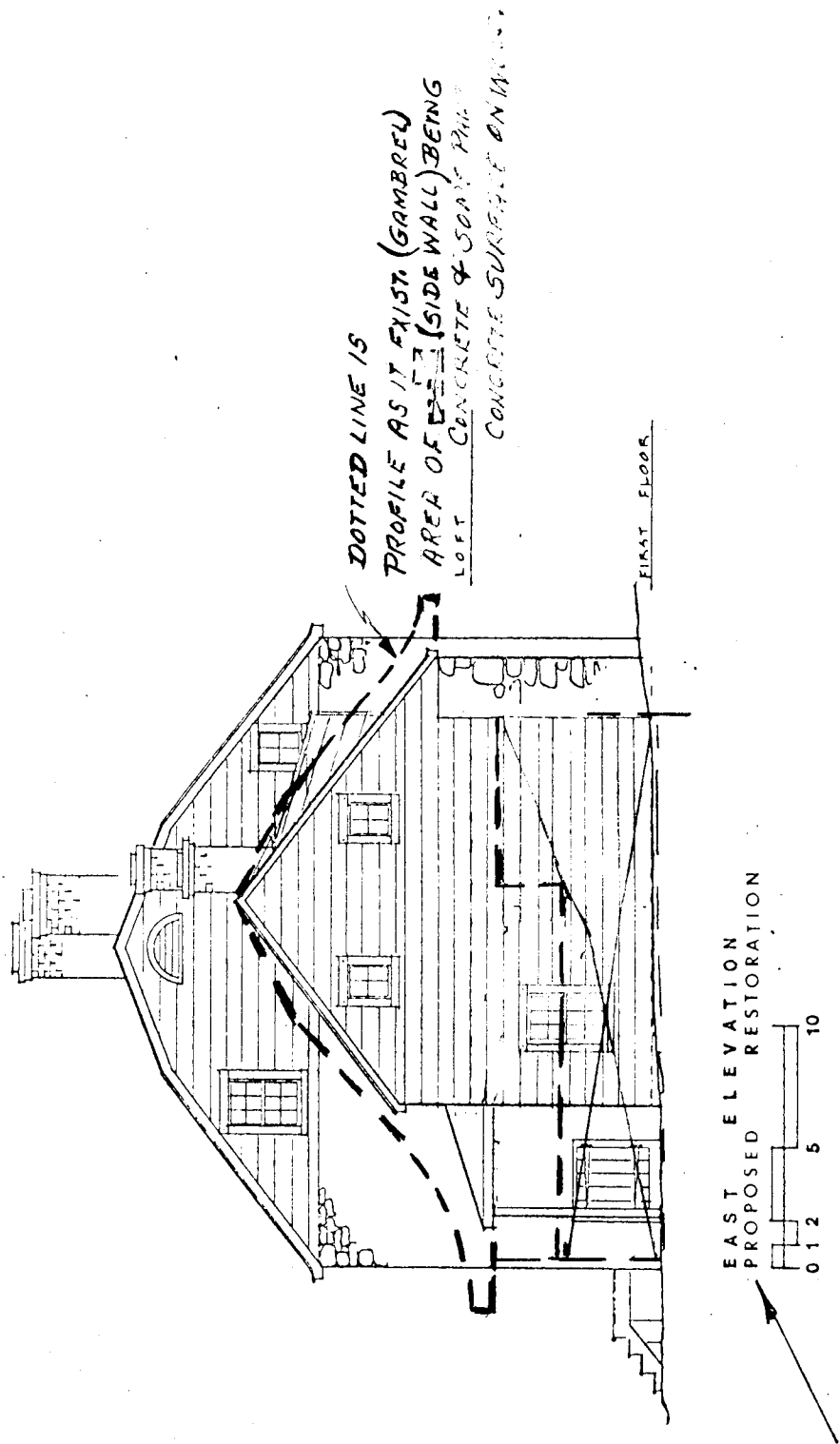


FIG. 28