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Mott House: Portsmouth Rhode Island

Dell Upton

THE MOTT HOUSE

PORTSMOUTH, RHODE ISLAND

Dell Upton
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AWS

Just as the careful excavation of the earth can lead to the understanding of a complex archaeological site, so may a building be made to yield up many aspects of its history through a similar process. The Mott House was a farm dwelling which a cursory inspection showed to have been built in several stages between the seventeenth and the twentieth centuries. In the fall of 1973, during the time that the grounds were being excavated, the owner of the house ordered it dismantled and moved. This nine-week process provided an opportunity for the careful scrutiny of the building in a manner closely akin to that used by archaeologists--the building was disassembled part by part, after each had been numbered and recorded through drawings and photographs. As the successive strata of the fabric were removed, it became clear that the history of the building was even more complex than was apparent at first. The house had achieved its present form in four major builds between the third quarter of the 17C and the middle of the 18C, and through innumberable minor alterations which continued until its abandonment in the mid-1960s. It spoke eloquently of vernacular building in Rhode Island during a crucial period of its history, and it revealed much about the Motts and their changing material world ~~lifestyle~~. What I intend to do in this brief talk is to summarize the growth of the house and to offer a few ideas about what it tells us ~~of the Motts and their immaterial world~~.

The house which stood until November, 1973, began as a single-cell story-and-a-half building about 16-by-16 or 16-by-20 feet. The slide

shows a probable plan. The ell was demolished early in the eighteenth century and replaced by a two-story structure, but enough evidence remained to suggest its former appearance. When plaster was removed from the former north ex~~interior~~ wall of the earliest surviving structure, original[7] riven clapboards were discovered. In these could clearly be read the roof pitch of the original ell. The house was apparently[8] a stone-ender, a type peculiar to Rhode Island. After the removal of its replacement, a[9] piece of sill embedded in the stonework of the chimney base could be seen, suggesting that the base is the only surviving portion of the original house, which[10] may have looked something like this.

Fig. 3a-2

Fig. 4

Fig. 5

A larger single[11]-unit structure was appended about 1680. It was a two-story, ~~framed~~ framed with studs. There was building[12] ~~with~~ a single large room in each story, and an enormous stone end chimney. Careful measurement of the spacing of the[12] studs and rafter trusses revealed that there had once been a jetty about 21 inches deep on the east end. This was an unusual, though not unknown,[13] feature in early New England; most houses which had jetties had them along the long side, or on both the long side and the gable end.

Fig 6

Fig. 7

Despite hard use and drastic alterations in the course of 300 years, a very[14] large portion of the original structure and decoration survived, enabling us to make an accurate estimate of the house's earliest form. Each[15] large room was decorated with vertical shadow-molded sheathing, and with elaborate[15] cyma or S-shaped moldings along the leading edges of the major exposed structural members. A single[16] summer beam ran the length of the ground-floor hall, and a pair of studs supported shelves along the north wall which hid the stonework of the ell chimney. The stairs probably wound up in the southwest corner of the chimney bay. In the second story,

?!

the tie beams which supported the roof structure were exposed to the room below.

Only one possible window location could be determined, under the eaves in the center of the south facade, as evidenced by a patch in the sheathing. The studding and fenestration had otherwise been altered too often to allow the discovery of other openings. However, pieces of window frames and sash bars were reused frequently as nailers in the reworked walls of the house, and many fragments of diamond-shaped glass panes and of lead cames were recovered, particularly in the debris around the chimney.

In the attic, original unattached floor boards remained, with evidence of the pit-sawing process clearly visible. In addition, it was discovered to the delight of everyone involved that, in the alteration of the roof in the mid-18C, significant portions of the original roof framing were left intact as rafters and bracing of the new covering. There were originally four principal rafter trusses and thirteen closely spaced purlins, or horizontal members, let into channels in the backs of each rafter. One entire truss, most of a second, and parts of a third survived. The absence of the fourth, and the fact that the east bay was 21 inches shorter than the others, were among the clues to the former existence of a jetty. All of the purlins survived on the south plane of the roof. Apparently, 36-inch shingles, of which one was found in the house, were nailed directly to these purlins without the use of sheathing boards, in a manner similar to that used in the South into the present century. (In this slide, one can see both an 18C and a later shingle roof attached to light boards similar to the Mott House purlins.)

During the time that the house stood in this form, part[23] of its clapboards were renewed, revealing that a leanto[24] had been added to the ell during its brief existence.

Around 1720-25, the second Jacob Mott (1661-1736/7) undertook drastic alterations to the family house. A mature man when he inherited the farm in 1711/12 (Upton 1973), he had to accomodate several of his eight children and probably his mother in the small building. Ultimately, he demolished the ell and replaced it with a two-story, single-pile building, with a kitchen leanto[25] at the rear.

This new section was very different from the earlier portions of the house. Where they had been stud-framed[26], that is, with the interior and exterior cladding attached to light vertical members set between the major posts, the new wing was plank framed.[27] In this type of construction, closely set vertical planks about 1½ inches this and 12 to 18 inches wide, extending from the sill to the uppermost horizontal member were pegged[28] at intervals to the major structural members, ~~in this form of construction~~. No studs[29] were used, and the interior and exterior covering were attached directly to the planks. The planks of the new section of the Mott House were covered with riven[30] clapboards; a section of these survived, reused as lath in a later addition.

Though more commodious, the interior of the new house was, if anything, less elaborate than its predecessor. The surviving trim was mid- and late-18C. The only earlier decorative treatment more refined than plaster walls and a plastered cove or trimmer arch over the fireplace was a set of fine two-panel, raised-panel doors hung on foliated hinges. In addition, in the entrance of the new wing was installed a winder[31] stair to replace the one in the 1680 chimney bay. It was a closed-string stair with flat sawn balusters, an

Fig 18b

imitation peculiar to Rhode Island of the turned[32] balusters of the so-called 'Jacobean' stair popular in the late 17th and early 18C in colonial America.

When they ~~made~~ built this addition, the Motts made extensive changes to the older portion of the house, as well. The massive stone chimney was taken down, but the hearth[33] remained (the large stones in the upper right corner of the slide), and the chimney bay was set off as a separate room, with timbers[34] from the demolished ell used as joists. The ell's stone chimney base[35] was reworked, its flues rerouted, and brick second-floor fireplaces and a stack were added. A large brick fireplace was built in the kitchen, with the lintel also made from a reused timber probably derived from the demolished structure. A doorway[36] was cut from the kitchen into the new chimney bay rooms of the 1680 house, and a three-batten door hung in it. This was[37] found plastered over but intact during the disassembly.

It was probably at this time that the jetty was removed, and the new wing tied to the old by two 21-inch long, inch-and-a-half diameter iron spikes, driven through the adjacent posts of the two buildings at second-floor[38] level.

The house existed in this form only for about 20 or 25 years. The next owner, the third Jacob Mott, enlarged it still further. He removed the kitchen leanto and its adjacent shed, and put a two-story[39], full length addition across the rear. (mention line in planks) Evidently to retain the former ~~old~~ size of the kitchen, an original leanto just feet deep was built on the ld footings. A flooring[40] system was constructed fro the new rooms, but the old crude joists were retained for the old kitchen. A new[41] roof with a hip at the south end covered the whole, and the house, after many

changes, achieved the form it was to have until the end of its existence, except for minor changes and for the addition of a kitchen ell in the mid-19C.

Fig. 14

Few houses have had so complex or rapidly changing a structural history; few have incorporated such different plan forms and structural systems into a single building. We are fortunate in this house to be able to see the response of one family to the changes around them.

The history of building in 17C New England is one of a transition from a heterogeneous assemblage of provincial English building types and technologies, originating primarily but not exclusively in the southeast of England to a group of relatively homogeneous provincial American architectures, based more firmly in southeastern traditions but imitating neither them nor each other exactly. (relevant are Deetz 1972 and Garvan 1951) Building even within Rhode Island showed regional differences, reflecting the origin of the colony in two separate settlements--Rhode Island in the south and Providence Plantations in the north--and reflecting in addition the colony's ties to Connecticut and to Plymouth Colony, respectively.

This process of localization within Rhode Island was at its peak by the late 17th and early 18C, when the convergence of regional house types and structural systems created a group of houses distinctly Rhode Island throughout the colony. When the no-longer-extant ell and the 1680 wing of the Mott House were built, the process was well underway, but it was not complete. The framing of the earliest sections of the house showed strong affinities to Connecticut, and by extension Massachusetts Bay, building practices in its use of a studded frame, downbraced from the posts to the sills, in a manner similar to the framing of many contemporary

Fig. 15 Connecticut[44] houses (Isham and Brown 1900: 25) and in contrast[45] to the vertical-planked, upbraced frame which spread from Plymouth to northern Rhode Island. Similarly, the Mott[46] House had a principal rafter roof Fig. 8 Fig. 16 with many small purlins, also found on occasion in southern[47] Connecticut (Kelly 1924: 10, 47, 48).

Fig. 17 (also 23 a) The early[48] plan of the house was the roughly square, single-cell variety especially popular in southeastern New England well into the 18C. At Fig. 5 a-c the Mott House, both of the early sections were stone-enders[49], a house type peculiar to Rhode Island, especially the northern part of the present state, where they were usually plank-framed. So called because of their usual massive exposed stone end chimneys, which used to advantage some of the few deposits of usable building stone in southern New England, they did not always have stone ends[50] or use a one-room plan, but they were all permutations of a single-cell concept.

The evolution from single room to five-room plan postulated by early students of New England building like Isham and Brown (1900) or J. F. Kelly (1924), although now rejected in that form, nevertheless continues to obscure the existence of the single-cell house in the late 17th and early 18th centuries as an independent building ~~form~~ type, not a Fig. 26A portion of a larger[51] building, possibly to be completed later, as were many 18C variations of the five-room plan. Raymond Wood-Jones, in his study of the Banbury region of England (1963: 165 and ch. viii passim), draws 19, 20 attention to the large number of architecturally[52] sophisticated, well-built one-cell houses in his area. They seem not to be poor people's residences, or surviving fragments of a larger building, but the dwellings of middling people with limited spatial needs. This ~~seems to~~ hold true, at least in 46 part, for New England as well. Most surviving[53] single-cell houses are well-

built and often, as in the Mott House, well-appointed.

Stone-end houses in Rhode Island, when they were enlarged before about 1725, were not added to in such a way as to suggest the completion of a two-room central chimney house.[54] The latter was, in fact, a relatively modern abbreviation of the three-unit peasant house of lowland England.[55] (J. T. Smith 1970:). Rather individual cells were added[56] to the far end or to the rear of the stone-ender, usually forming a cluster with the plan of a square divided into four compartments.[57] Each of these houses has grown in that manner.[58]

The single-cell[59] model predominated in Rhode Island until the end of the first quarter of the 18C, though the overall size and the size of the exposed end chimney were often diminished. At the same time, the plank-framed form of building moved southward and became common throughout the state. The struggle between Providence and Newport for economic and political dominance which was to be most intense at mid-century, and which ended only with the virtual destruction of Newport during the Revolution, was presaged and symbolized by the infiltration of the Plymouth/Providence structural system into the southern[60] parts of the colony beginning late in the 17C. Finally, planked houses were not unusual even in Newport proper. The eastern Massachusetts roofing system, consisting of principal rafters and[61] 3 to 5 common purlins, which dominated that area by the end of the third quarter of the 17C also moved into Rhode Island as an adjunct of planked framing.

By the early 18C, then, there existed in Rhode Island the maximum degree of local distinctiveness in a vernacular architecture based upon plank framing, a principal-rafter-and-purlins roofing system, and a single-cell additive house model. The equilibrium was not a stable one, however, and

and near the end of the first quarter of the century, new planning ideas from Connecticut and Massachusetts were affecting Rhode Island builders. Specifically, the notion of a central chimney, double-pile house was taking hold. The Mott[62] House in its 1725 form represents a curious mixture of old and new features. Jacob Mott II's new house was still well within 17C Rhode Island tradition. It was plank framed and had the eastern Massachusetts roof. It probably had casement windows, to judge from the form of a later patch in the sheathing of the new wing. It is a cluster of square cells, but with a difference. They are grouped around a central stack; Mott was adding the old cells in a new way. He might, after all, have[63] extended the old chimney and added to the house in the fashion of the earlier Arnold House. Instead, a great amount of work was undertaken to demolish the great chimney and to rework the smaller one, in order to group the rooms clumsily around a central stack. The new ~~ideas for~~ fashions in house building interested the Motts, though they didn't really understand them yet.

Jacob Mott III did. By the time he rebuilt the house, the symmetrical, five-opening Georgian facade scheme (see Glassie 1972) had transformed the central chimney house elsewhere in New England into the familiar five-room-plan[64], two-story building which marks the landscape throughout present-day New England. It only reached Rhode Island in any numberss at mid-century; most[65] of the earlier houses which now have that ~~aspect~~ appearance were reworked at mid-century. Jacob Mott III was well-aware of this new fashion, and he, too, went to great lengths to modernize his house. But he was not a rich man, and it is obvious that he did most of the work himself. The workmanship is crude, and it betrays an inexperienced hand. The roof is haphazardly rigged; no two joints are alike. Everything is

Fig 1

hacked and patched. In the end, he had created a more or less stylish and modern house. It had five bays of windows, a central chimney, and even a hipped roof. He ~~tried for~~ conceived it as a five-room-type plan, with two front rooms, an entrance lobby, and a rear kitchen flanked by smaller rooms, ~~He achieved it.~~ and he came up with this. Mott had with his own hands transformed his Rhode Island vernacular house into the new New England Georgian building, with a ~~novel~~ up-to-date plan, a fashionable facade, and filled with painted canvas in imitation of the finest 'turkey' carpets.

Fig 29

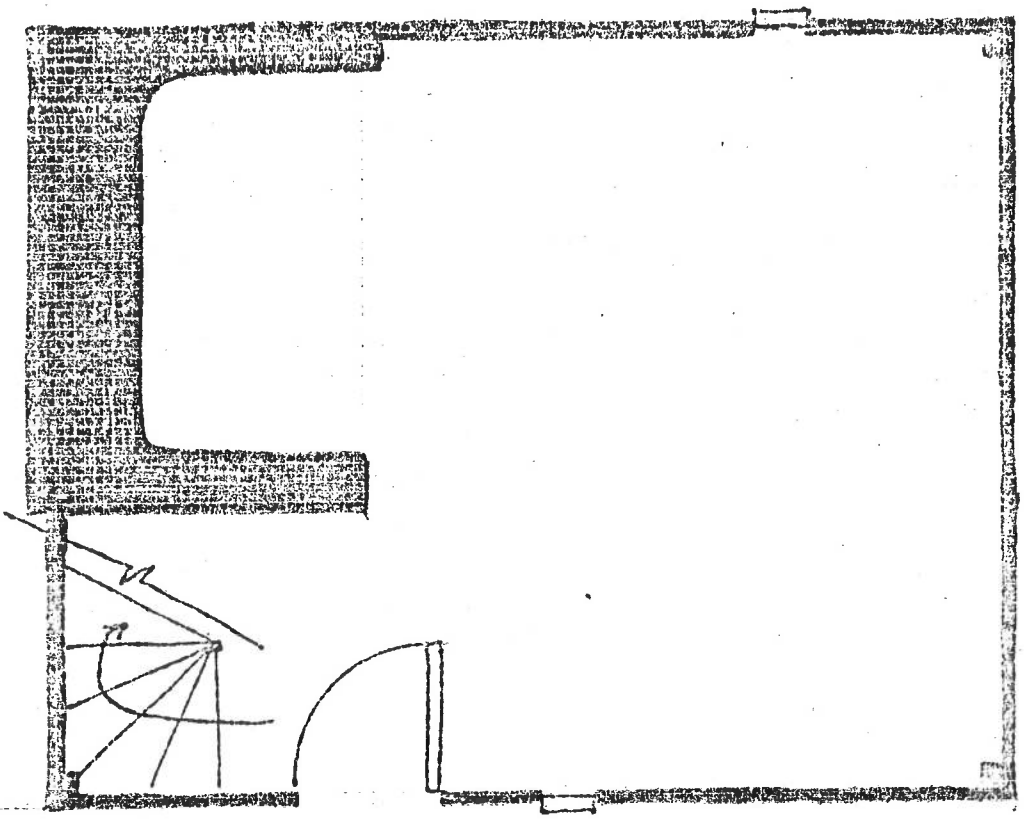
Fig 1

We have in the Mott House a paradox of sorts. The Motts of the fifty years after 1675 lived in a material world which, if their house and those of their contemporaries are clues, was highly localized. It most resembled that of Plymouth, but there were important differences. Though provincial in the most restricted sense, their house was architecturally a fine one, well-built, well-designed and handsomely decorated. This coincided with the period of consolidation of the Motts' land holdings (Upton 1973). Growing throughout the 17C, by the time the first Jacob Mott died in 1711/2, the Mott Farm comprised about 130 acres, the same acreage it had in 1909, when it was first divided. Also in the early 18C, Portsmouth distributed the last of its common lands. With the town settled and the farm complete, the world of Portsmouth--or Warwick, or Providence--must no longer have seemed sufficient to the Motts and their contemporaries. They reached out for new models and new styles, and for new means of establishing their status in the community. They found them in part in the Georgian facade and the larger houses of their more cosmopolitan countrymen in eastern Massachusetts. The paradox is that the Motts, relatively important people in their own milieu

Their house reflects this.

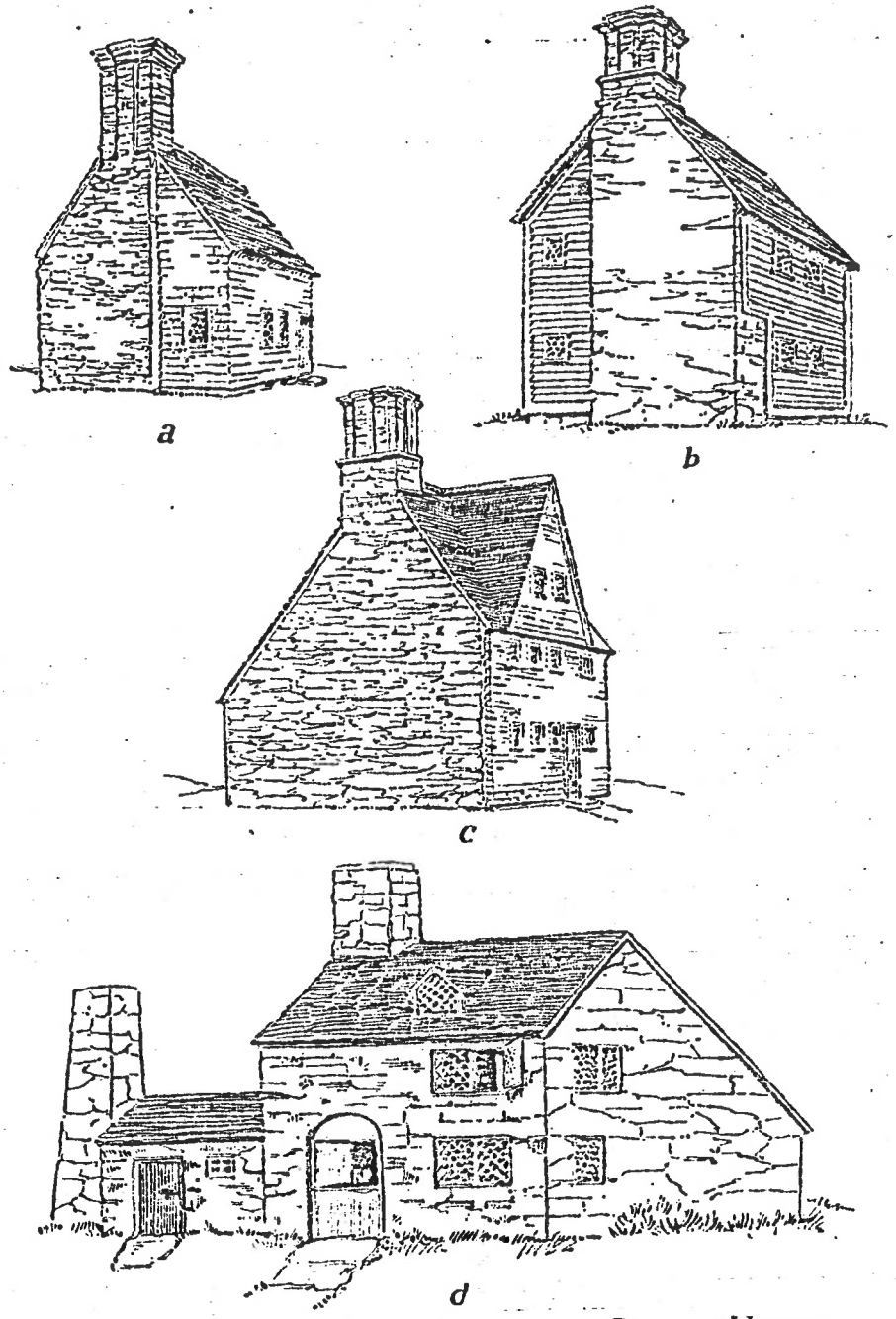
were not so in the broader society. In seeking after the strange new fashions, they traded a handsome Rhode Island vernacular house for a tract-house-Colonial version of the style which was replacing it. The Motts were part of a ~~movement~~ change which was substituting for local modes a New England version of one more widely distributed throughout the Anglo-American world. A provincial vernacular locally focused outlook succumbed to a newer, popular regionally focused one.

AWB



MOTT HOUSE
DEMOLISHED 17C ELL

fig. 2



DRAWING 1. RHODE ISLAND SEVENTEENTH CENTURY HOUSES.

a. Restored drawing of the Thomas Clemence House, Manton, c. 1680.
b. Restored drawing of the Thomas Fenner House, Plainfield Pike, 1677.
c. Restored drawing of the Eleazer Arnold House, Lincoln, 1687.
d. Drawing from memory of John Smith's Stone Castle, Old Warwick, 1641-1795.

Fig 3

[Documents 1937]

ably near the mid-century, which pushes the earliest date of vertical plank-frame building back to the period of early settlement. This corresponds to Isham's date for the earliest house in Providence still standing when he began his published studies near the end of the nineteenth century. Although Isham's date of 1653 for the Roger Mowry house may be questioned on the basis of his method of dating on form and other imprecise characteristics, he does provide a partially measured drawing which indicates the manner in which the single-cell vertical plank-frame story-and-a-half house was built (Figs. 2, 3).

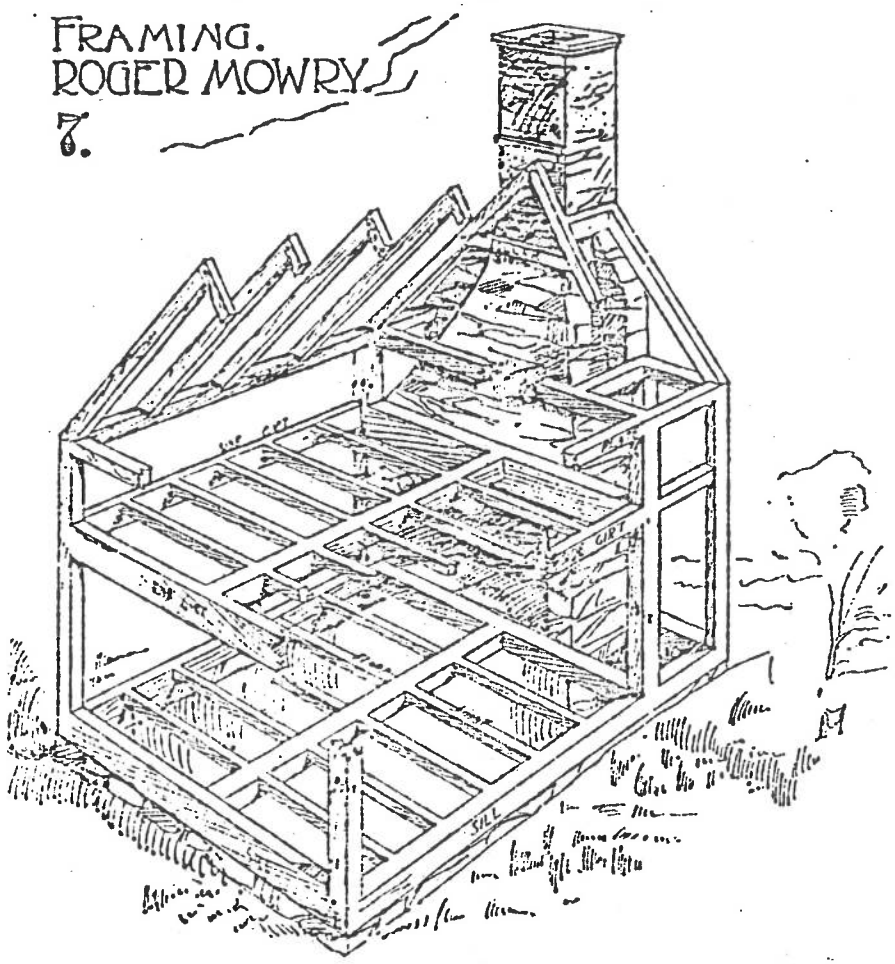


FIG. 3. FRAMING OF THE ROGER MOWRY HOUSE (CA. 1653), PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND
From Isham and Brown's *Early Rhode Island Houses*, Plate 7.

MOTT HOUSE

DEMOLISHED 17C. ELL

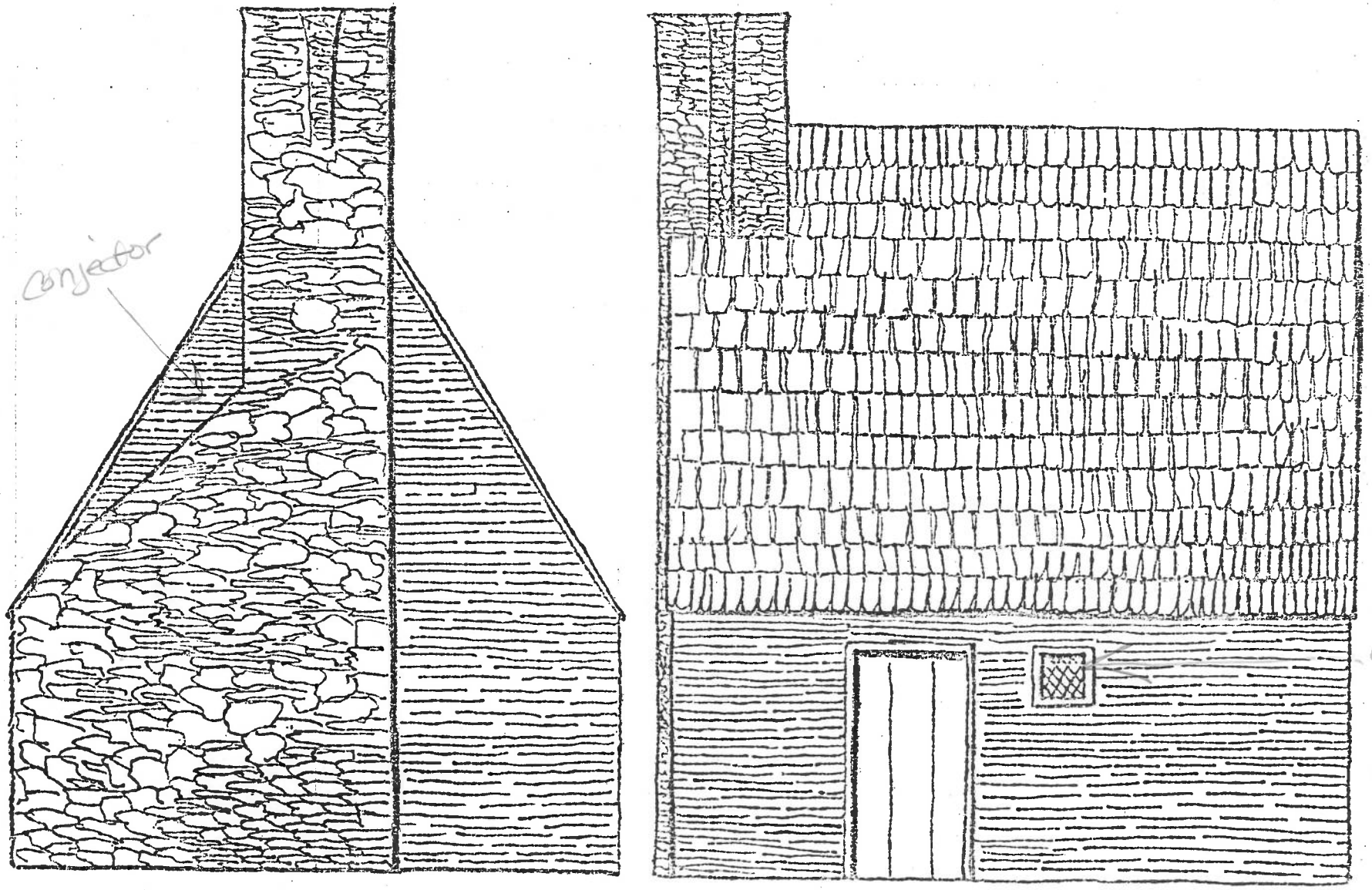


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Fig 4

1"=5'-0"

MOTT HOUSE

c. 1680

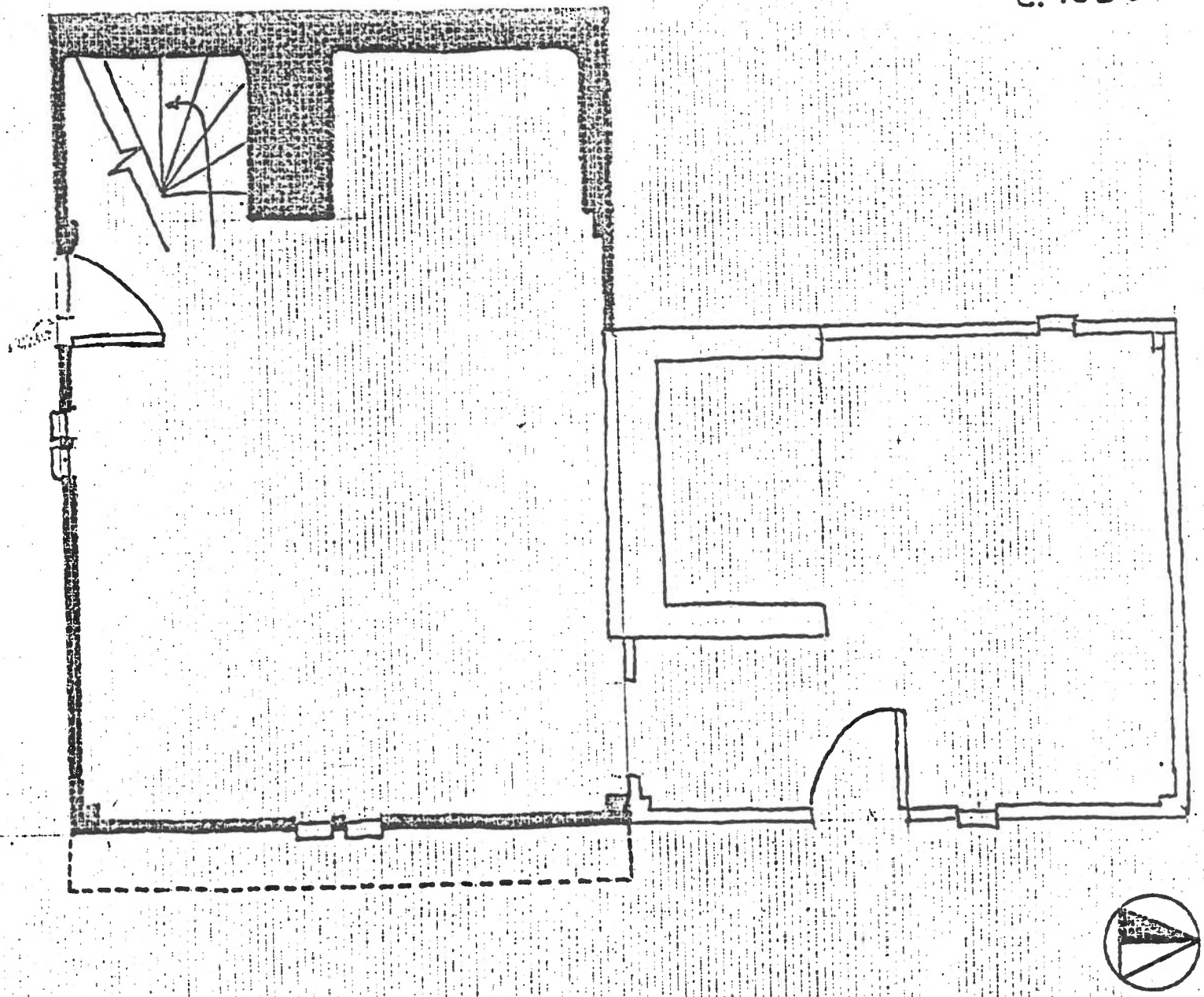
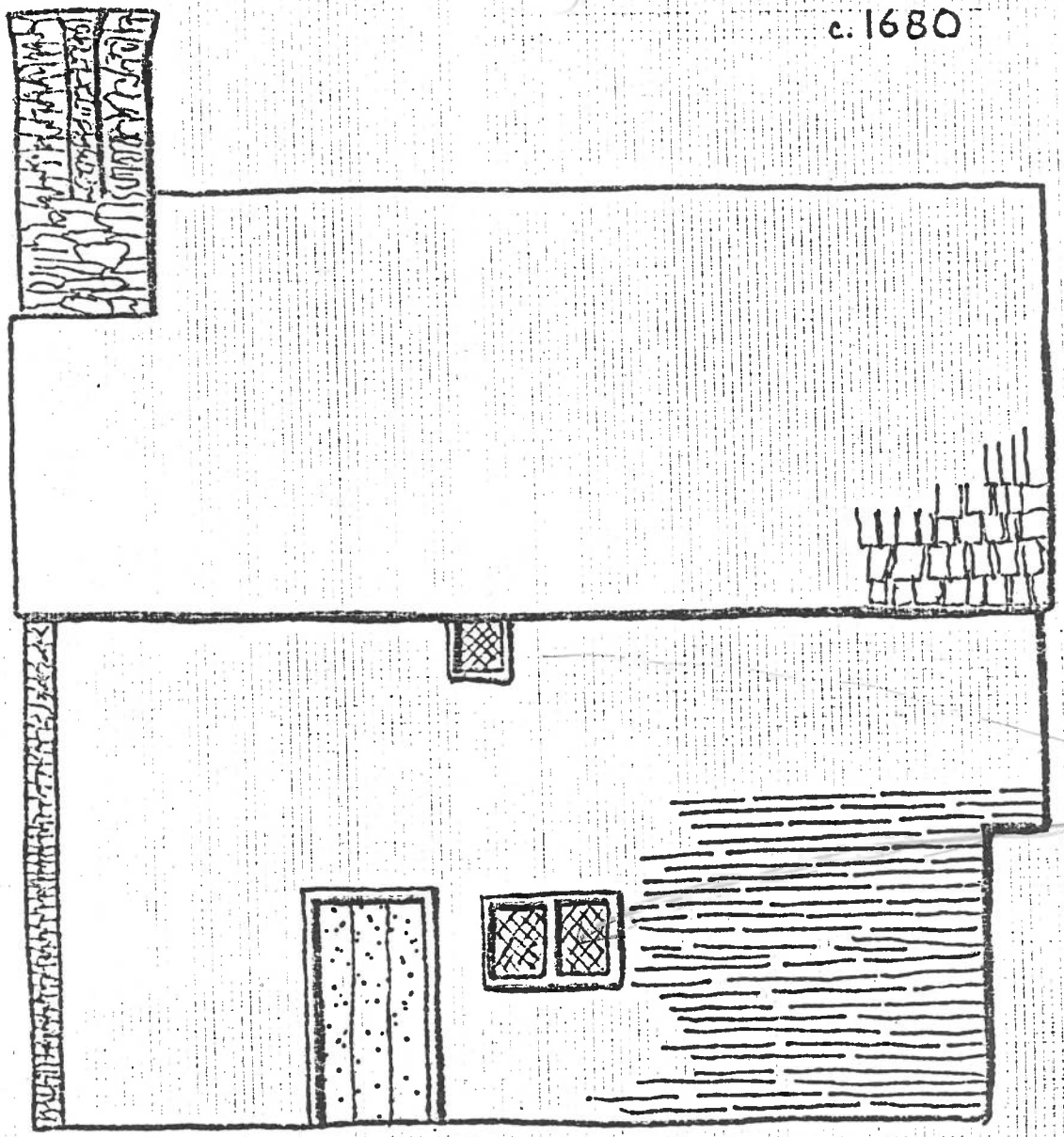


Fig 5

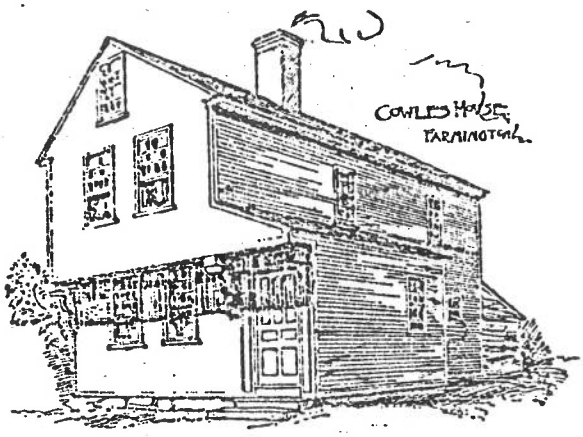
MOTT HOUSE
c. 1680



SOUTH ELEVATION

fig 6

dtu



IV. The Cowles House.

FARMINGTON CT

This house, or rather one half of it, stands on the western side f the main street on the little rising ground just north of a brook t the extreme southern end of the village. As our drawing shows, t is a house of the class which includes the Porter and Gleason ouses—that is, it has a bracket at each post under the overhang. Two only of these brackets now exist, the third is not in its place, nd the fourth was, of course, on the northern half of the house vhich was cut away many years ago and moved a few feet further orth, where it now stands as a separate tenement—a rather xaggerated reminder of the colonial fashion of bequeathing the lifferent halves of a house to different persons. The entry still emains on the southern house, but the chimney and stairs dis- ppeared when the building was cut in two. The present chimney n each of the houses is new.

Fig 7

Hahn + Brown 1900

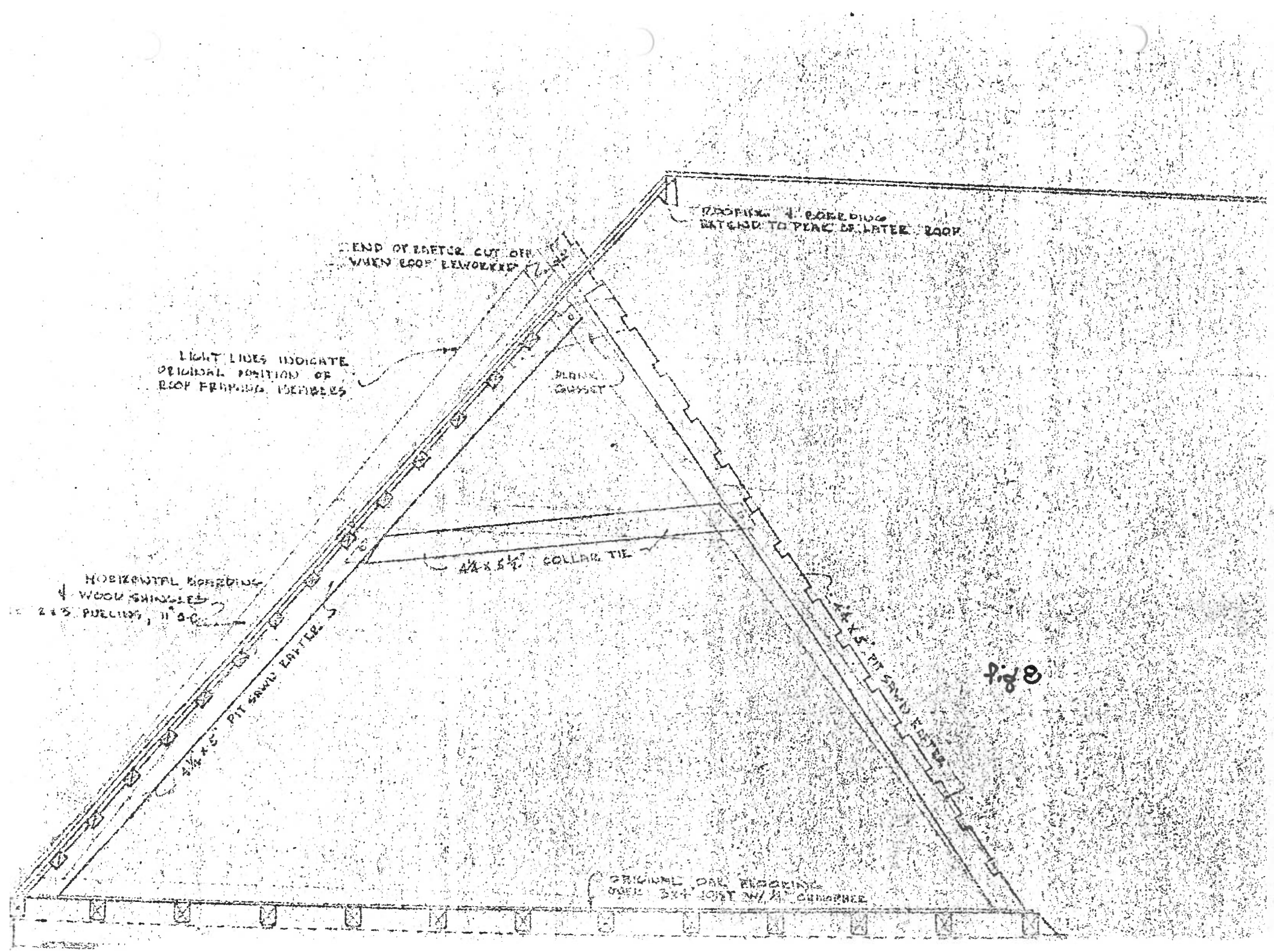

ROOFING & BOARDING EXTEND TO PEAK OF LATER ROOF
END OF RAFTER CUT OFF WHEN ROOF REWORKED
LIGHT LINES INDICATE ORIGINAL POSITION OF ROOF FRAMING MEMBERS
PLATE GUSSET
4¼ x 5½" COLLAR TIE
HORIZONTAL BOARDING
WOOD SHINGLES
2 x 5" PURLINS, 11" O.C.
4¼ x 5" PIT SAWN RAFTER
4¼ x 5" PIT SAWN RAFTER
ORIGINAL OAK FLOORING OVER 3x4" JOIST W/ ¼" CHAMFER

Fig 8

MOTT HOUSE
c.1680-1710

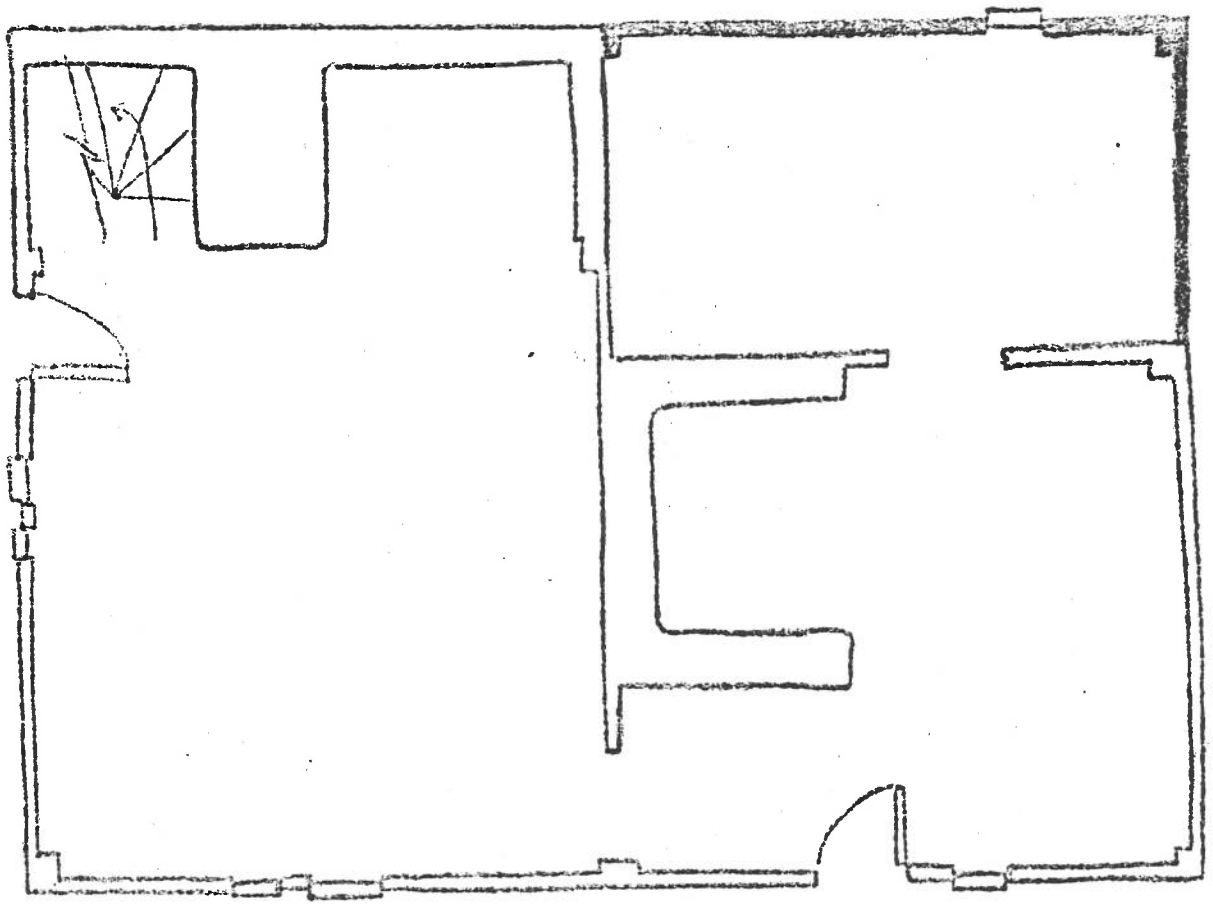


fig 9

MOTT HOUSE
c. 1720

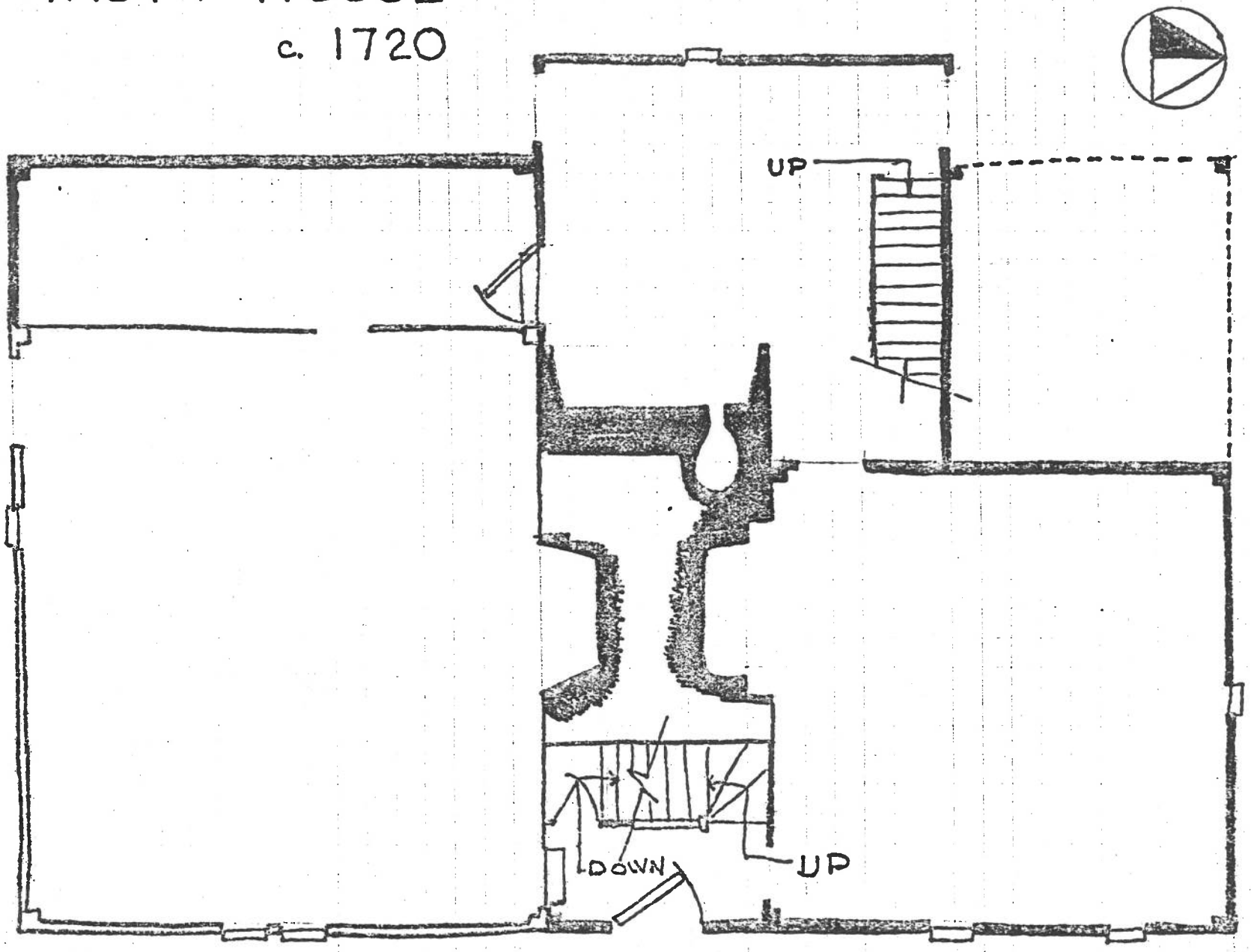


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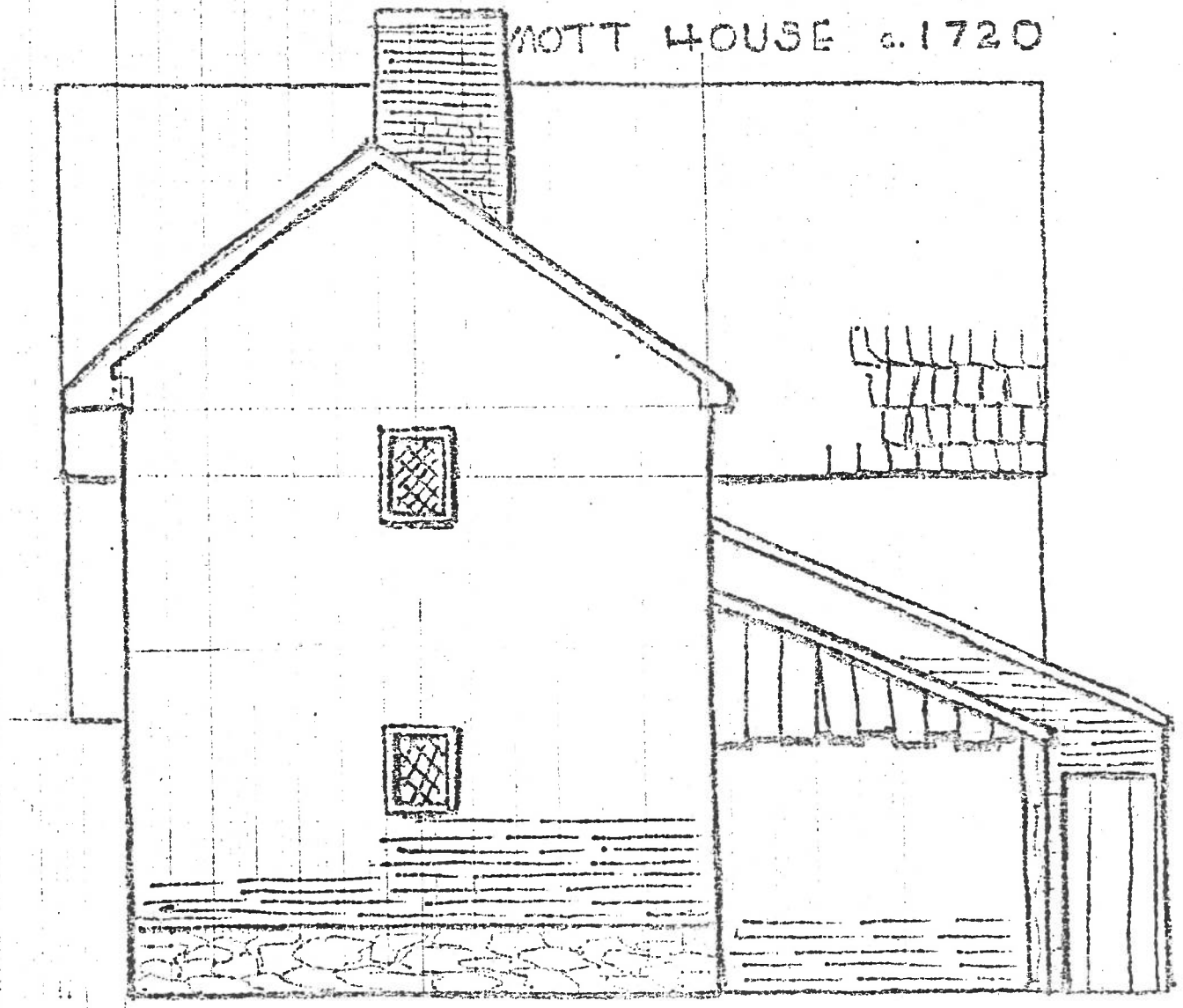
Fig 10

NOT TO SCALE

Fig 13



looking South

Co 12

Fig 14

We urge the reader to study carefully the plans and sections this house and especially the perspective of its framing, which e give in Figure 10. The names of the rooms, which occur conantly in the old inventories, and the terms "summer," "girt," plate," "rafter," and so on, which will often appear in these ages, are there clearly indicated; so that by a little study the ader will obtain a clearer idea of the typical house and of the onstruction of it than he could gain from many pages of text id from much repetition.

The present appearance of the house is given in Figure 6. It cks its chimney and is rather dilapidated, but is still picturesque. t has an overhang on the front and one in each gable, but none t either end in the first story as has the Clark house. In the nderside of the plate, which projects to receive a barge-board

Fig. 15
[Isham & Brown 1900]

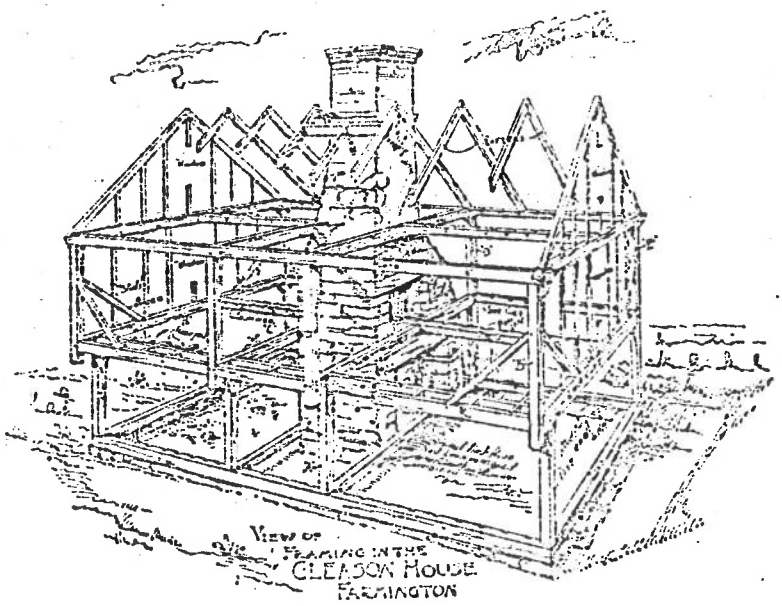
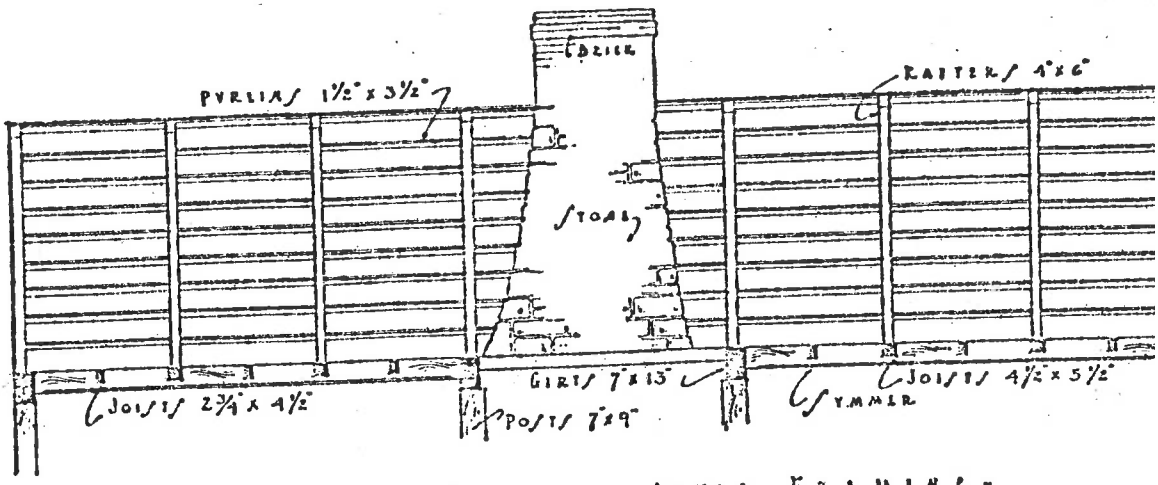


FIGURE 10.

Haven Colony, he says: "From the mention of thatchers, and the precautions tak
against fire, it may be inferred that these humble tenements (log houses) were roof
with thatch." His inference is further strengthened by the existence of the office
chimney-viewer and by the frequent mention, in the early records of the colony, of t
men who held it. According to the Hartford records it was the duty of the chimne
viewers to examine the chimneys every six weeks in winter, and every quarter in summe



SECTION SHOWING ATTIC FRAMING
ALLEN SMITH HOUSE - MILFORD

FIGURE 67.

and it is probable that the office very closely corresponds with that of the present
fire-warden. It was, therefore, a post of importance and no mean responsibility, for
way the safety of the community depended upon the vigilance of these men. "Chim
viewers" were elected in Hartford until 1706.

The use of many small purlins, which may originally have been thatch poles, in
structing the roof of the Moulthrop house is also significant. Possibly this house
originally a thatched roof.

The drawing of the Governor Treat house, Milford, copied from one of Lamb
illustrations, shows a roof of extremely steep pitch. (Figure 68.) Even making allow
for exaggeration or faulty draftsmanship, the angle of the roof must have been
sharp. The Hempstead house of New London, the western part of which was bui
1643, is one of the earliest wooden houses standing to-day in the state of Connect
The pitch of the original roof of this house, as may be seen in the attic, where the old
rafters are still in place, was fifteen inches to the foot, a very steep pitch. (Figure
Mr. Ralph D. Smith, in information furnished Mr. Palfrey for his history, states

Fig 17
[Condee 1969]

which he had seen or gathered reli- descriptions of shortly after their de- ction.[18] Although Otis also mentions dental building in stone and hewn log, ical plank was the most common hod used on the Cape. This is borne for a later period (*ca.* 1650-*ca.* 1850) Ernest Connally's study of the Cape house.[19] The dates from 1639 to 5 which Otis mentions in relation to structures with which he was familiar e never been closely analyzed. Al- gh his study of land titles may have cated buildings of extremely early , he presents little corroborative evi- ce that the buildings standing on that perty in the nineteenth century were ssarily the same. However, in a few s where further description is given where he notes his method of dating lings on construction evidence it may id that he showed considerable wledge of his locality. He tended to p houses built prior to *ca.* 1680 with ain features not met with in dwellings tructed after that date. Although out- dly similar, "Both had heavy cornices, front roof was shorter and sharper the rear," yet:

> ancient houses were lower in the walls, ially in the chambers, and the sleepers of wer floors were laid on the ground, leav- he large sills used in those days, project- nto the room.[20]

where Otis describes the story-and- lf house of the earlier period as hav- osts five and one-half feet in the rear n-to) with nearly twelve-inch pro- ng sills adding to the headroom. He contrasts the lower height of front in the houses he considered earlier those of later buildings.[21] While cer- characteristics such as projecting sills not necessarily an index of an early nteenth-century date, this feature having been found in dwellings built toward the end of the century, Otis' differentiation by ceiling or post heights was probably a good comparative index. Without studying either the buildings or the land titles on which Otis based his dating, his internal evidence suggests that his earliest buildings may have actually been built in the third quarter of the century at the latest, and those dated after 1680 may actually have been built slightly later.

Nevertheless, even after up-dating Otis' earliest structures, one realizes that he recorded some buildings built prob-

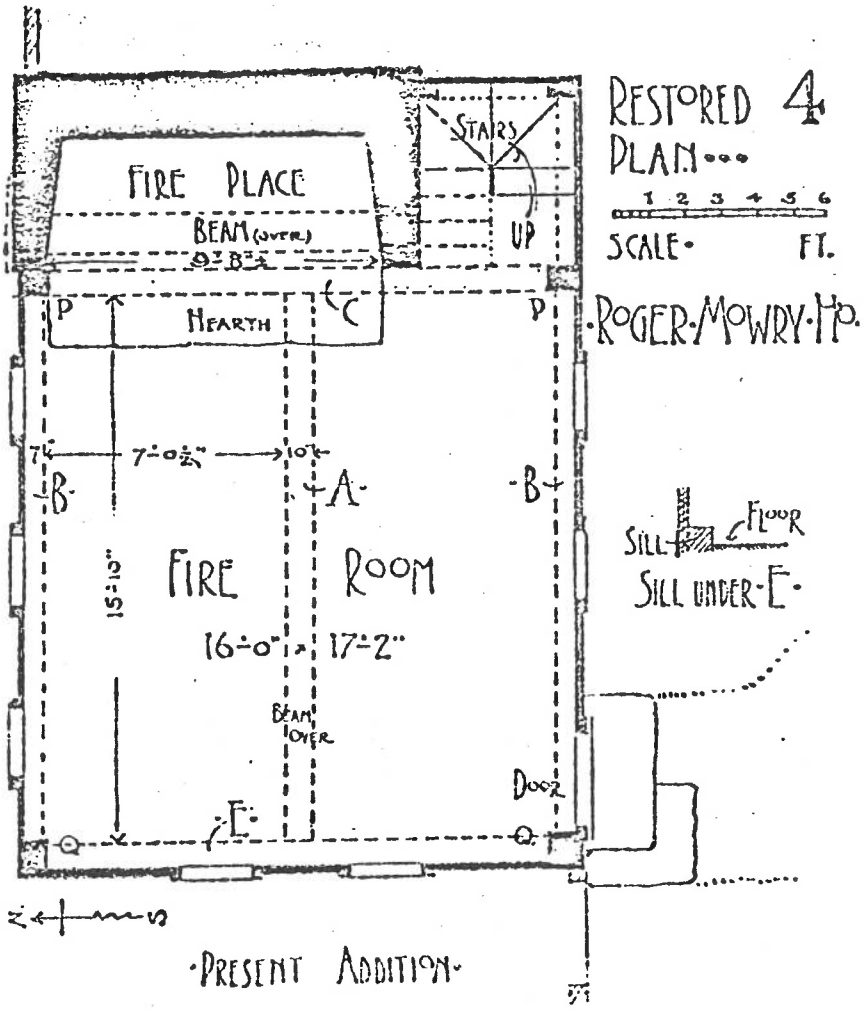


FIG. 2. FLOOR PLAN OF THE ROGER MOWRY HOUSE (CA. 1653), PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

From Isham and Brown's *Early Rhode Island Houses*, Plate 4.

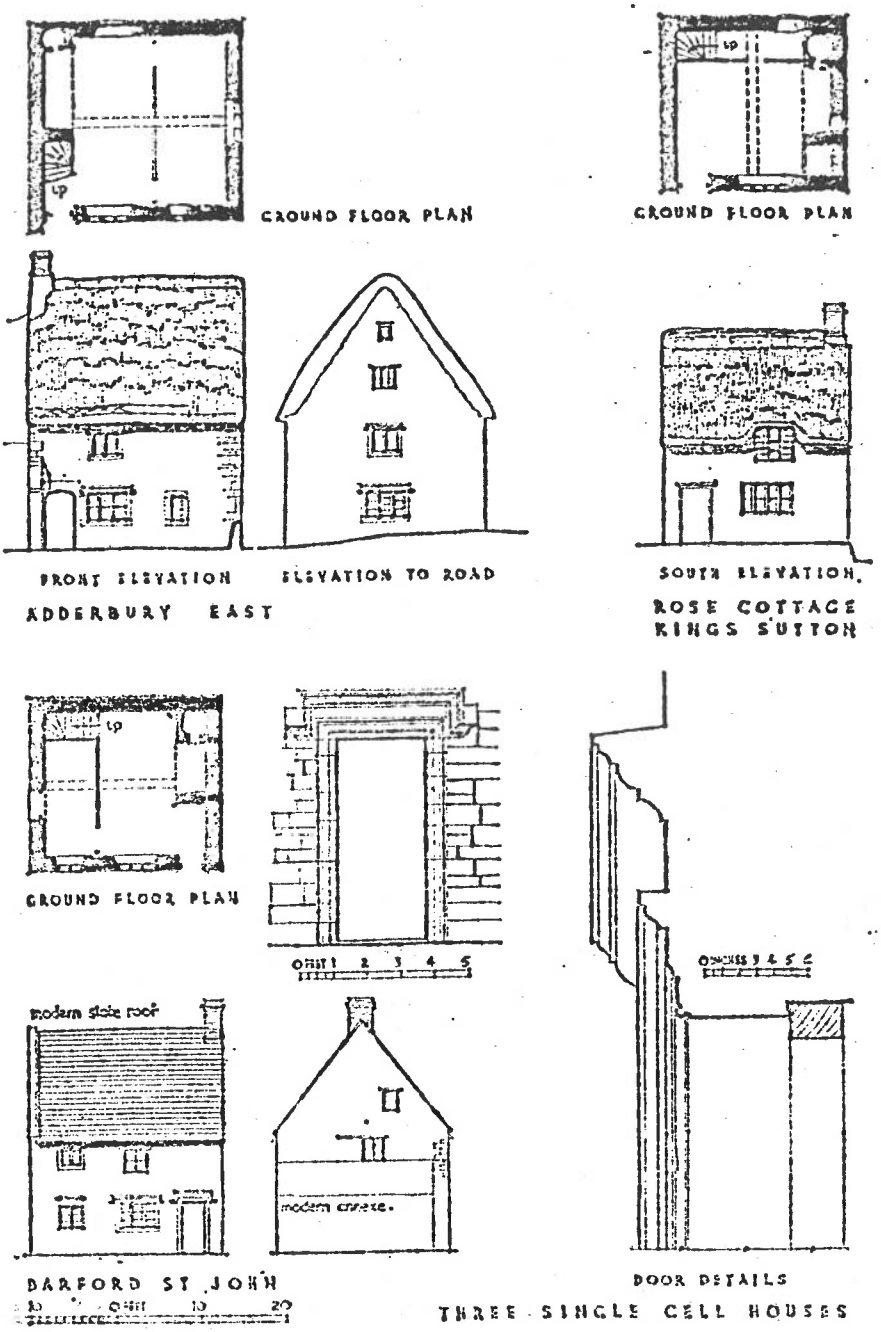
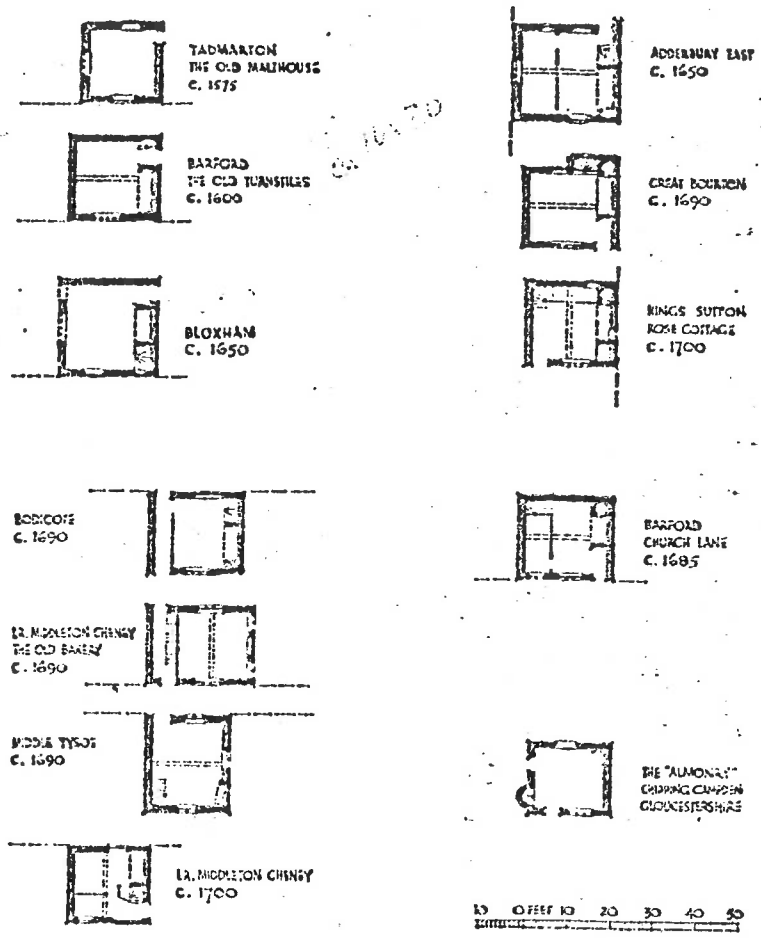
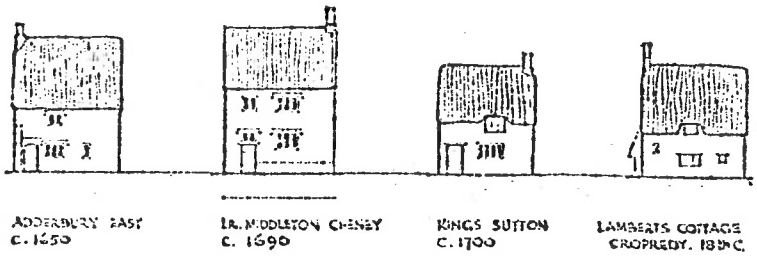


FIG. 51.

Fig 19 [Wood-Jones (1905)]



NOTE : All plans are shown with ridge line horizontal.
The road frontage is shown by an extended broken line.



COMPARATIVE PLANS OF SINGLE UNIT HOUSES

FIG. 46.

Fig 20 : Wood-Jones 1963

4/15/75 BLAKE HOUSE DORCHESTER, MASS

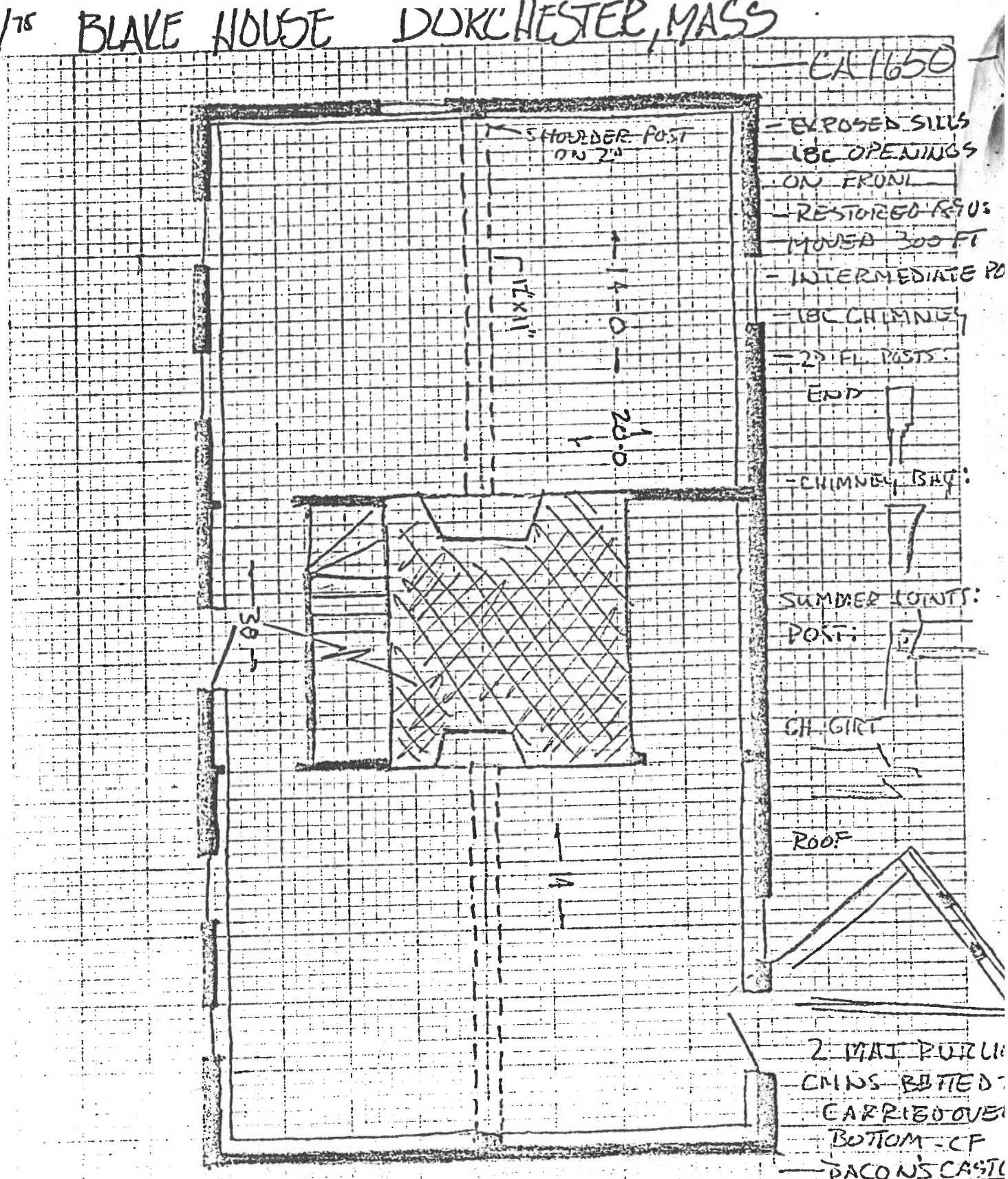


FIG 21

dhm 11/25/75

specialist craftsmen; the day when a peasant built his own house
. Long before the new method had been adopted everywhere by
asants able to afford them—and it was presumably a rise in
ncomes gradually extending throughout the country which pre-
d made possible the change in buildings—there began a second
house improvement which was marked by the abandonment of
pen to the roof in favour of a house of two storeys throughout. By
nd quarter of the sixteenth century there appears in south-east
a new house-type which had a three-cell plan providing more or
ame amount of floor space as a Wealden house, allowing for the
ent of the open hearth by a chimney stack, but having an upper
tied along the front (Fig. 7*a*); and that this type represents the
ment and bringing up-to-date of a Wealden house or its equivalent
t from the fact that the upper storey is no mere attic but a storey
eight.[1] How far it was influenced by town buildings, in which
us jetties on the street front were common at an earlier date, is
n, and it can be argued that the continuous jetty was a logical step
ving earlier rural houses; logical in the sense of being the culmina-
he gradual process of providing an upper floor throughout.[2] In
this particular structural type was relatively short-lived, for by
s in Essex, and doubtless in Kent too, houses providing the same
of rooms were being built with flush walls, not jettied, and with a
rance against the chimney stack instead of a through passage
).[3] The plan thus comprised three rooms, two of them, the hall
ower, being heated by a single chimney stack, on one side of which
front door opening into a lobby and on the other side a winding
; the third room was a service room, not apparently divided into
and pantry but perhaps for a time serving both functions. This type
e one storey and attics or two storeys in the late sixteenth century,
the 1630s examples with two storeys and attics can be found.
atural to look for some considerable change in the peasants' mode
o explain this complete transformation of their houses. Unfortun-
e structures themselves tell us very little about how they were used,
the very important question of how many people, and what sort
le, made up the household we know practically nothing. One
long-term approach may be through the demographers' recon-
of families, which in favourable circumstances might reach back
iddle of the sixteenth century. Until then probate inventories offer
hues about how the chamber over the hall, which was the most
nt single innovation of the century, was used. When the fourteenth
aisled hall of Stanton's Farm, Black Notley (Essex), had a chimney-
nd a first floor built into it the large upper chamber was used then,
ways has been, for storing farm gear, while inventories suggest that
age of corn and other produce was an important use for the upper

[1] Mason, *Framed Buildings of the Weald*, pp. 41–3. H. Forrester, *The Timber Framed Houses* Ipsford, 1959; privately printed), pp. 7–8, citing examples from R.C.H.M., *Essex*.
gradual this process was has been shown by E. R. Swain, 'Divided and Galleried Hall *Medieval Archaeology*, 12 (1968), pp. 127–45.
[2] ...ised type combining passage and lobby see E. M. Jope, 'Priory House, Marcham, ...*Arch. Journ.*, 57 (1950), pp. 1–6. The house called Townland Cottages, Billingshurst, ...ld not may have had a true lobby entrance: R.C.H.M., *Monuments Threatened* . . .

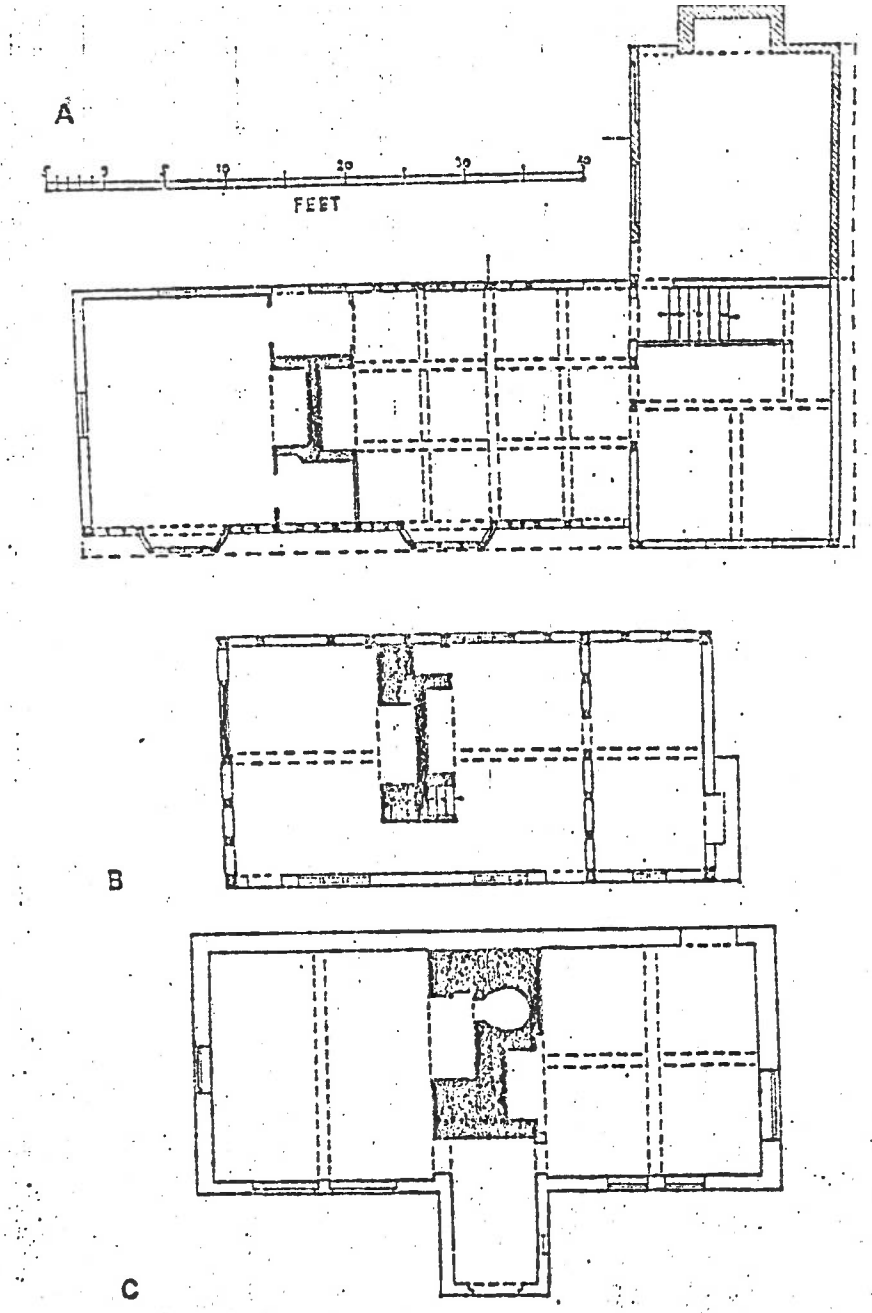
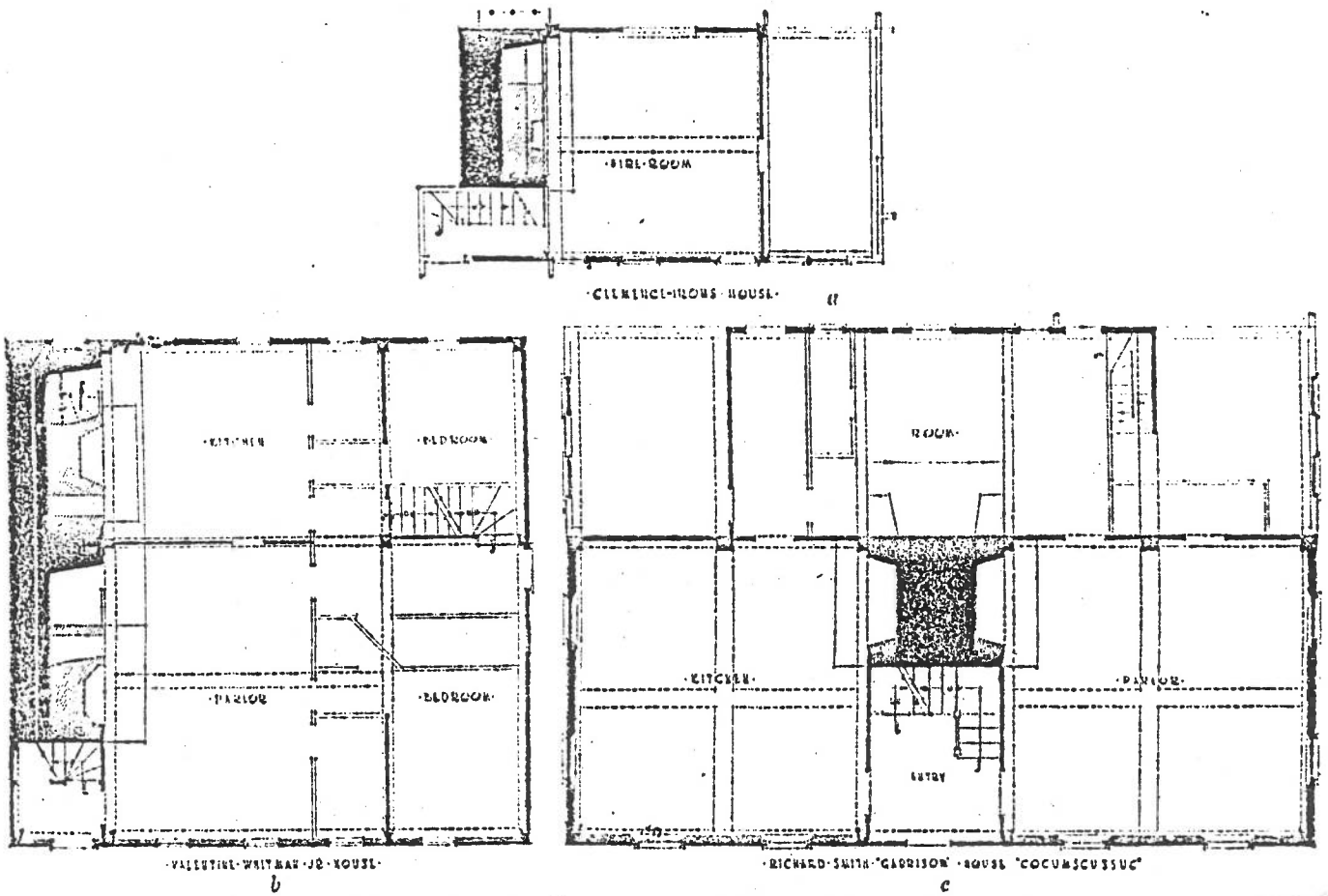


Fig 22
[Smith 1970]

FIG. 7. Three internal-chimney houses.
a. The Cott, Bidden.den, Kent. Of two storeys throughout; all of on ebuild, but service wing apparently not jettied at front. Entrance at lower end of hall, by opposite doors. Early sixteenth century. After H. S. Cowper, 'Some Timber Framed Houses . . .', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, XXIX (1911), pp. 180–2.
b. Townland Cottages, Billingshurst, Sussex. Two storeys, no jetty. The plan suggests an original lobby entrance. After R.C.H.M., *Monuments Threatened* . . ., p. 62.
c. Pilfolds, Tower Hill, Horsham Rural. A late (1673) and perhaps a large example; cf. Fig. 7*b*. The lack of a service room is puzzling. After R.C.H.M., ibid., p. 62.



DRAWING 2. FLOOR PLANS OF SEVENTEENTH CENTURY RHODE ISLAND HOUSES.

over, the original houses began to be enlarged by doubling the unit or by extending the main roof at the rear to provide a lean-to behind the main house (Fig. 1).

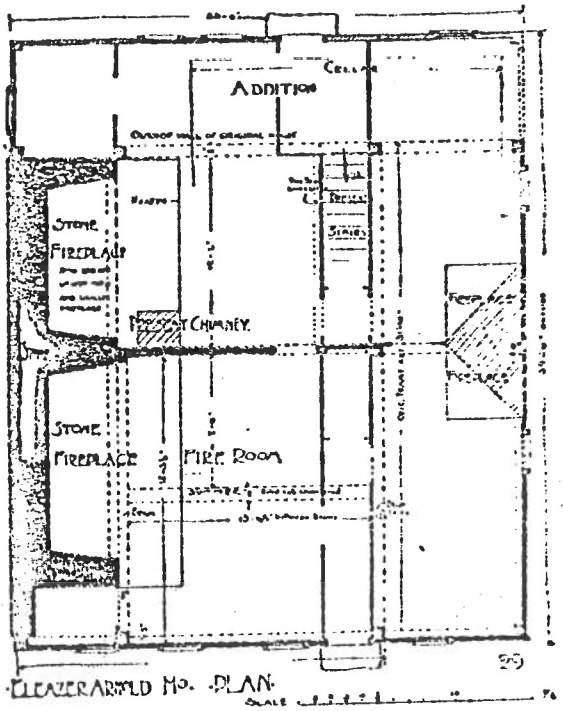


Figure 3. Eleazar Arnold House, Great Road, Lincoln, 1687.
Ground storey plan. From Isham and Brown, EARLY RHODE ISLAND HOUSES, *1895.*

Such a building type has to be understood organically in terms of its particular structure and its various domestic uses. It has no "design" which can be considered separately from its organism. It can therefore be properly emulated only in idea and not in visual appearance in a later age when methods of construction have quite changed and the requirements of domestic life have been not so much complicated perhaps — although that is what ordinarily strikes one — as wholly reorganized. Perhaps if we could grasp the real essentials of our own way of living as clearly as the settlers grasped their we could achieve a comparable schematic simplicity. But quite as much we need to reestablish an equal directness of organic expression in terms of whatever structural methods are for us most economical. But we are put off — the layman perhaps more than the architect — by concepts of "style," of capitalized Architecture. As a result we are largely incapable of conceiving visual quality in a building in any other terms than those of surface design; indeed usually of types of surface design borrowed from the past and ill adapted to our own needs and our methods of building.

Yet it is a mistake to consider seventeenth century houses in any dogmatic sense as "functional" architecture. Because their builders were in general Puritans in religion does not mean that they were conciously Puritans in their aesthetics, as many men of taste in the twentieth century undoubtedly are. Their aesthetic delight, however, — if we may hypothesize in them a faculty which we recognize but that they did not — came first of all from essentials, from the quality of the materials they used: the solid oak of the skeleton, visible within; the sturdy rubble of the chimneys; the neat regularity of the clapboard sheathing; and the warm feather-like covering of the shingled roofs. They admired the solid, the heavy, the well-worked, which in terms of the materials they used were the qualities most likely to give good service. We may more appropriately admire the thin, the light, the highly finished, which in terms of our newest materials are most economical and represent the best craftsmanship. But their admiration, their hypothetical aesthetic delight, was not limited to those things any more than their taste in clothes, which actually ran to strong and autumnal colours, was limited to those grim garments of grey and black in which nineteenth century artists, influenced by a later

Fig 25 [Connally 1960]

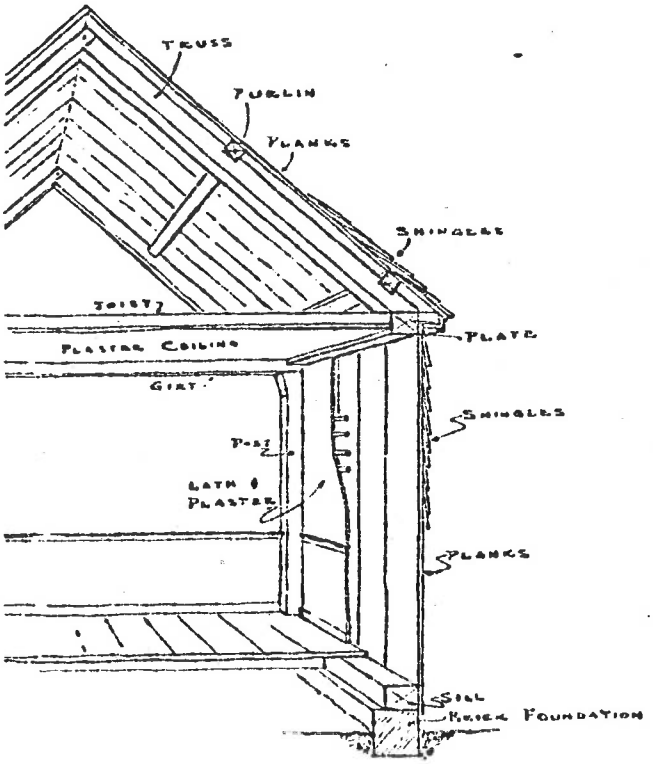


Fig. 12. Sketch of typical plank construction observed in the traditional houses of Lower Cape Cod (author).

hewn sills, corner posts, plates, and girts (no studs). Sawn planks twelve to eighteen inches wide are nailed vertically to the outside face of sill and plate, and shingles, or sometimes clapboards, are nailed directly to the planks; inside, riven lath and plaster are applied directly to the planks, making a wall about three inches thick. Window frames thus protrude on the exterior, visually announcing the character of wall construction. Posts, plates, and girts are exposed on the interior, also usually a 'summer' for intermediate support of the garret floor. The roof consists of a series of simple hewn trusses with purlins (no rafters or ridgepole). Solid planking is nailed at right angles to purlins and plate, and to this sheathing the shingles are nailed. This system was gradually replaced by conventional frame construction. About 1850 Thoreau notes, 'The modern houses are built of what is called "dimension timber", imported from Maine, all ready to be set up, so that commonly they do not touch it again with an axe.'[29] Timber for the older houses was also probably imported, the Lower Cape having been stripped of any tall forests before the end of the eighteenth century. Thoreau reports the same: '. . . they will tell you that large schooners were once built of timber which grew in Wellfleet. The old houses, also, are built of the timber of the Cape; but instead of the forests in the midst of which they originally stood, barren heaths . . . now stretch away on every side.'

29. Thoreau, *Cape Cod*, II, 4, this and the following.

Masonry construction on the Lower Cape is restricted to chimneys, cellars, and foundations:[30] all of brick (imported). Stones, brought in as ballast, may have been used in the earliest buildings; but as Thoreau reminds us 'Stones are very rare on Cape Cod', and in his time 'vessels had been forbidden to take them from the beach for ballast.' He saw one instance of a house being underpinned with 'rocks', which had been collected with great pains over many years. Bricks, on the other hand, were in standard use by 1800 according to Dwight, who describes cellars exactly as you will find them today: small and circular to prevent the sand from caving in the walls. Thoreau accurately adds that they 'are only from nine to twelve feet in diameter, and are said to be very cheap, since a tier of brick will suffice for a cellar of even larger dimensions. Of course, if you live in the sand, you will not require a large cellar to hold your roots.'

A few building contracts survive from the flourishing decades. The following may be regarded as fairly typical. It is an agreement between Andrew Cobb, mariner, and Thomas Paine II, housewright of Truro, in 1843, for the construction of a house-and-a-half (now disappeared) on Old County Road in South Truro.[31] The closest surviving approximation is the Cole-Wheeler House (fig. 6), which was built about the same time nearby on Prince Valley Road.[32] For $450.00 Paine bound himself, 'in good and workmanlike manner and according to the best of his art and skill', to:

. . . build and set up and finish all below the chamber floor, one house or messuage of the dimensions and particular description following. Viz: Twenty-three feet square on the ground floor, ten feet posts, hemlock timber and boarding boards, the roof and front side to be shingled with pine shingles, the two ends and back side with cedar shingles, finish the lower part of the house into one front room, one kitchen, two bedrooms, one butry, front and end entry two flights of stairs if needed and plain [sic] the boards for a chamber floor, the front room and kitchen to be ceiled up to the windows glass closet door in the front room, iron latches for all the doors seven by nine glass for all the windows, a common cellar under the house with a cellar house outside.

There is a stylistic development evident in the houses of the Lower Cape, although progressive differences are slight. The best indicator is the placement of windows in the south wall. In the oldest examples (fig. 4) the window frames come directly under the box cornice; the wall height is gradually raised, with the windows relatively lower; by the 1830s the wall is normally about ten feet

30. Thoreau, *Cape Cod*, II, 134–135. Dwight, *Travels*, III, 95.

31. Deed Book 33, 261. The carpenter may have been the Thomas Paine (1779–1860) who is buried, beside his wife Priscilla, in the Methodist Cemetery, Truro. No likelier candidate was available in the other cemeteries or in the *Vital Records of the Town of Truro, Massachusetts to the End of the Year 1849* (Boston, 1933).

32. This house was standing in 1850 when it was owned by Joseph Cole, who bought more property 'upland under and around where his dwelling house now stands'. Deed Book 48, 52.

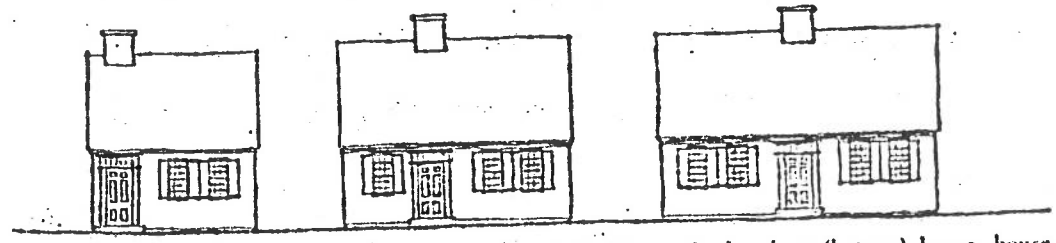


Fig. 8. Standard variations of the Cape Cod house as revealed in the south elevation: (l. to r.) house, house-and-a-half, double-house (author).

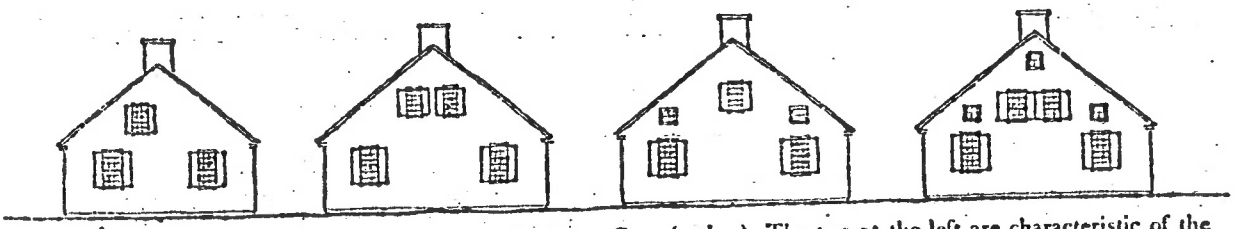
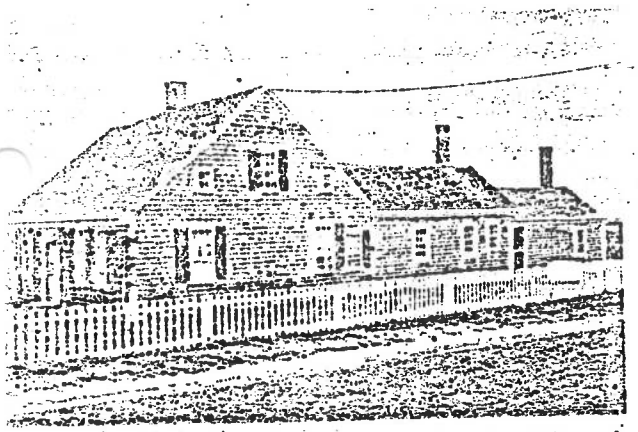


Fig. 9. Standard variations of the gable observed on the Lower Cape (author). The two at the left are characteristic of the house and house-and-a-half; the two at the right of the double-house.



g. 10. Cook House, King's Highway, North Truro, late eighteenth ntury (photo: Cervin Robinson for HABS). Reputedly occupied workmen during construction of the Cape Cod lighthouse (High-d Light) in 1797. A double-house successively enlarged with ells; w owned by Professor Roy J. Cook.

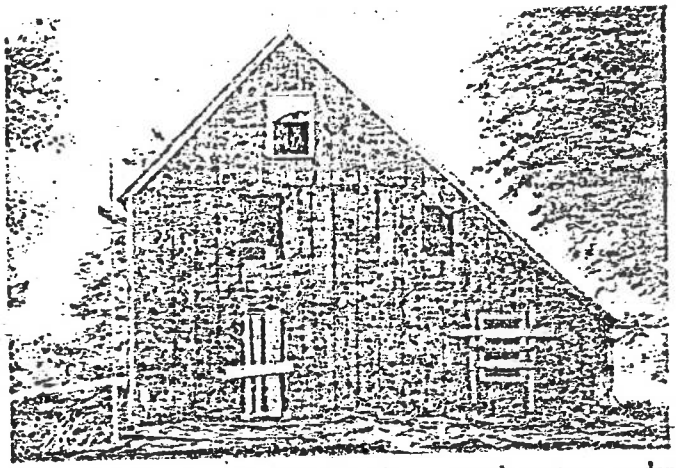


Fig. 11. Hoxie House, Sandwich, mid-seventeenth century, under restoration in 1959, revealing plank construction (photo: Cervin Robinson for HABS).

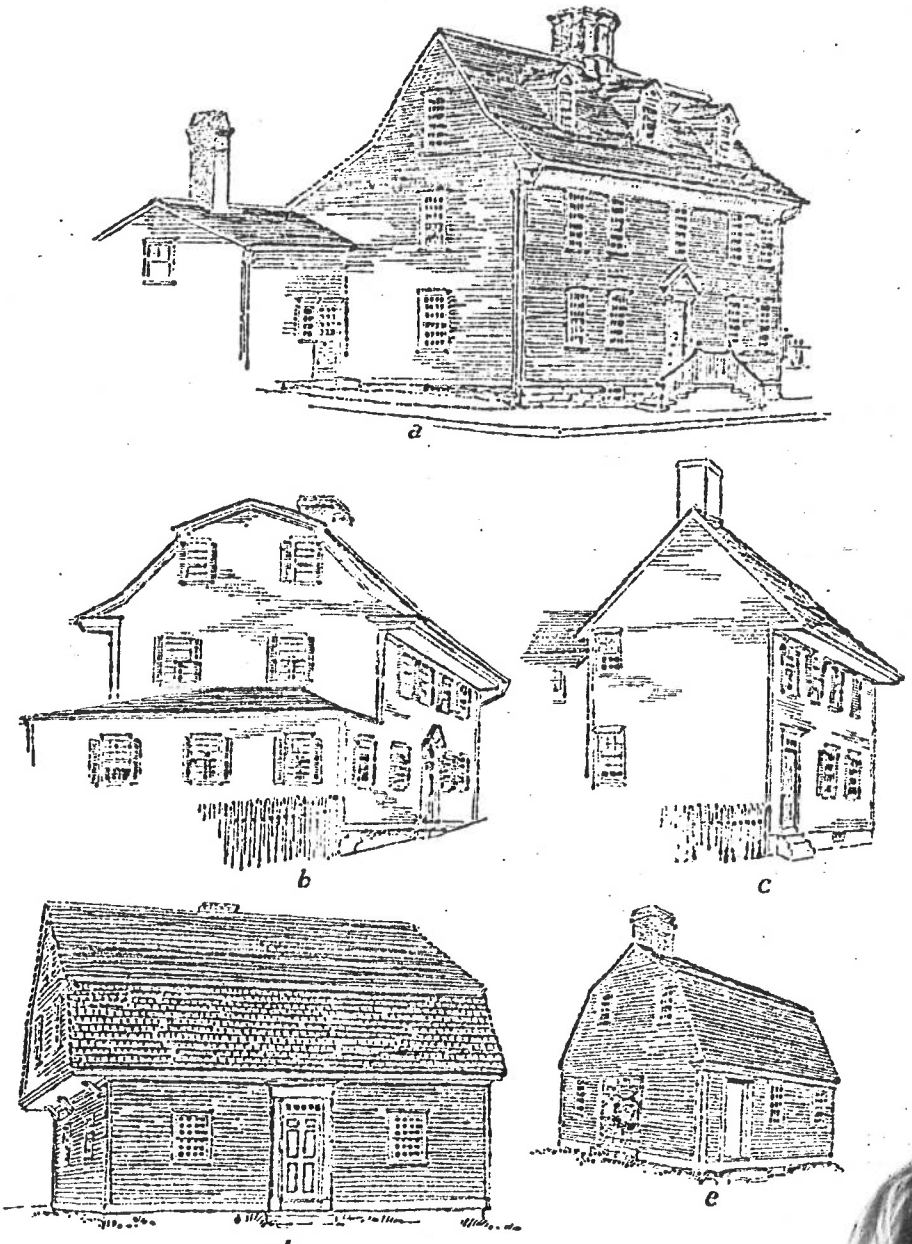
awn right through the middle. In 1805 Thomas Hol-ook and Solomon Higgins, both yeomen, conveyed to homas Atwood, mariner, 'All the Land that we now own . . . Wellfleet on Bound Brook Island with all the wood n said land, and half the Dwellinghouse now standing on id Island where said Higgins now lives and dwells, . . .'[27] here are also verbal accounts of houses being 'flaked own', namely, sawn apart and moved, from one place to nother; and Rich mentions the frequent 'removal' of ouses in the 1870s.

27. Re-recorded in Deed Book 2, 289 et seq. Courtesy of Mr. eorge K. Higgins.

Structurally, the Cape Cod house is characterized by 'plank construction',[28] a seventeenth-century practice probably introduced on the Cape by early settlers from Essex County, particularly from the vicinity of Lynn. It can be seen in the Cape's oldest building, the Hoxie House at Sandwich (fig. 11), and it persisted beyond the middle of the nineteenth century. Typically, the Cape Cod house has a box-like frame (fig. 12) consisting of

28. More research is needed on this subject. A similar kind known as 'box construction' has persisted in the South, for the cheapest buildings, well into the twentieth century. Doubtless a common origin could be found in late Tudor building practice.

Fig 26 [Connolly 1960]



DRAWING 19. LATE SEVENTEENTH AND EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY RHODE ISLAND HOUSES.

a. Wanton-Lyman-Hazard House, 17 Broadway, Newport, before 1700.
b. House at 36 Church Street, Newport, with kicked-out roof line and overhanging boxed cornice.
c. House on Division Street, Newport, with overhanging boxed cornice.
d. Old Croade Tavern, c. 1700, from Pawtucket, now caretaker's lodge for the Eleazer Arnold House, Great Road, Saylesville, Lincoln.
e. Tripp House, Manton Avenue, c. 1725, with beehive oven.

first two generations after the settlement were like.

The most satisfying in its present state is undoubtedly the Eleazar Arnold house of 1687 on the Great Road in Lincoln (Plate 1). Even there the rear slope of the roof has been raised, the great front gable is gone, and an eighteenth century portal and double-hung sash windows replace the plain battened door and the small leaded panes of the original casements. But the magnificent stone chimney extending the full width and height of the end wall, and the general mass as defined by this chimney and by the front slope of the roof remain unaltered. Thus the impression the building itself gives is not so very different from that we get from the carefully restored model prepared by Brown University students under the supervision of Professor Taylor. (Fig. 2). Of the

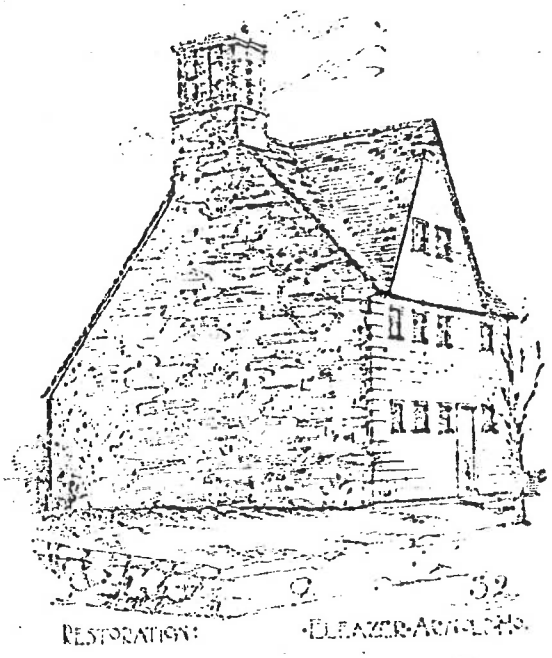
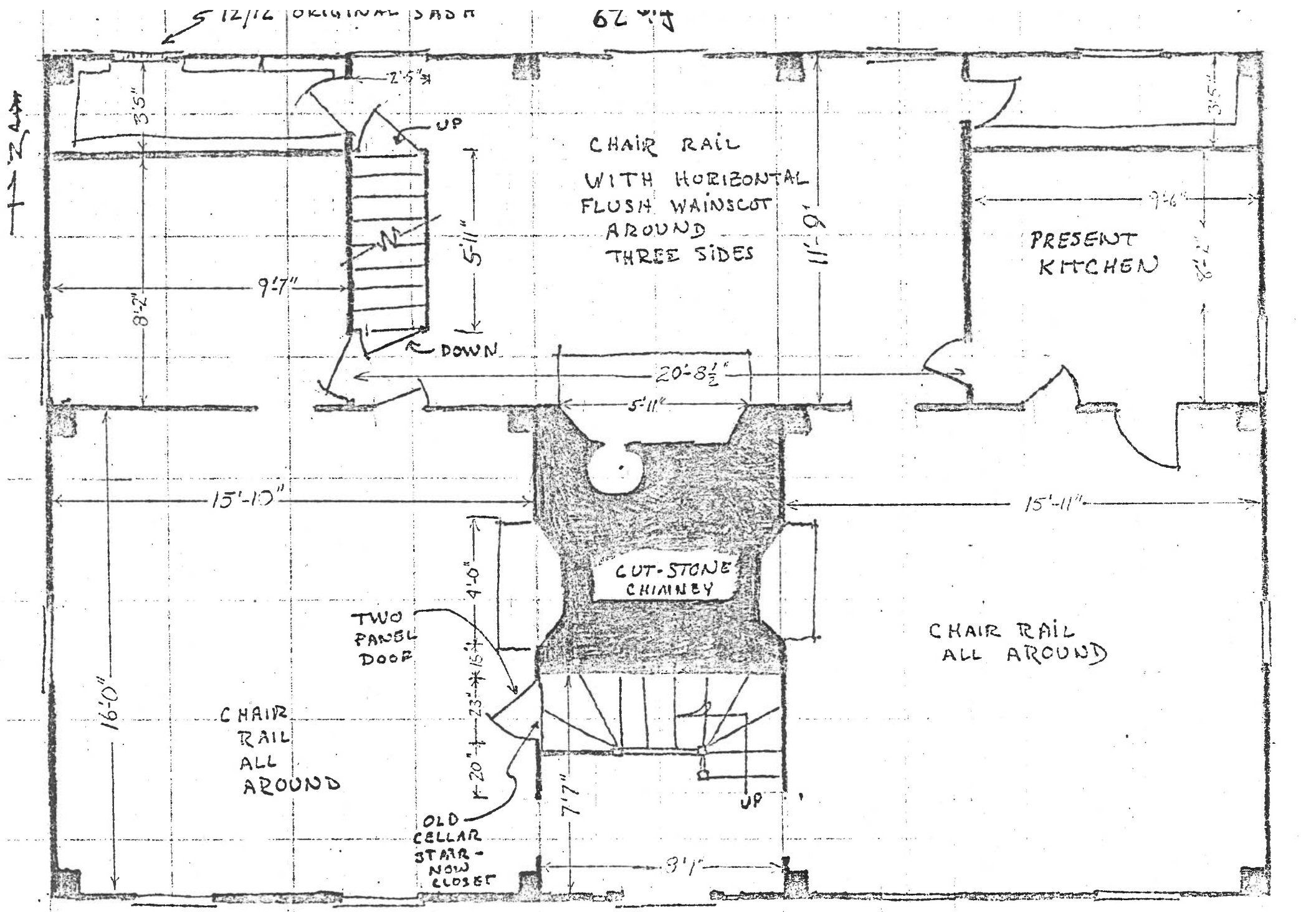


Figure 2. Eleazar Arnold House, Great Road, Lincoln, 1687.
Perspective restoration. From Isham and Brown, EARLY RHODE ISLAND HOUSES, *1895*

early interiors we can obtain a somewh better image from the great ground stor of the same Arnold house (Plate 2), or fro the smaller restored room in the Cleme Weaver house on Howland Road in E Greenwich of 1679.

In general, however, to visualize the fi stage of architecture in Rhode Island it necessary to turn to modern books and the various restored examples of the peri in Massachusetts. *Early Rhode Isla Houses,* published by Norman M. Isham a Albert F. Brown in 1895, a pioneer work the serious archaeological study of Americ Colonial remains, is still today a classic the field and full of information for the se ous student. In it were brought together t vital data of most of the early houses whi still exist (although rarely even yet restor to plausible seventeenth century conditio as well as those of many other edifices whi have since been destroyed. The apprec tion of this early stage is not easy for tho who must see architecture in a reasonab authentic state in order to comprehend But to those already familiar with the stored seventeenth century houses in Es County, Massachusetts, who will turn to t admirable first chapter of Mrs. Antoine Downing's *Early Homes of Rhode Isla* published in 1937, the general picture as is known today should be clear enough: t details need not be filled in again here. is more important to stress the particu significance of these structures and t wholly different cultural climate in whi they existed from anything the eighteer and nineteenth century knew. It is perha not wholly an illusion to believe that t cultural climate in architecture is becomi once more sympathetic and comprehensi to us in the twentieth century. With t understanding may come intelligent emu tion.



1ST FLOOR PLAN

USQUEPAUGH

12-16-73

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SLIDES

1- Black out

2- Mott House, Feb. 73

3- Mott H. rear, Sept. 73

4- Tyson and Upton

5- Crane dismantling 17C portion (EHT)

6- Original ell--plan

7- Stair hall clapboards

8- Irons H., Manton, RI

9- Chimney base

10- Original ell--elevation

11- 1680 plan

12- 1680 elevation

13- Wyllys H., Farmington, Ct.

14- EHT standing alone

15- Sheathing

16- EHT--1st floor lintel

17- EHT--hall

18- EHT--chamber

19- Window glass

20- Attic floor boards

21- Original roof--interior view

22- Landsdowne, Middlesex Co., Va.--18C roof

23- old clapboards

24- 1680-1720 plan

25- 1720 plan

26- EHT frame

27- plank frame

28- interior corner, 1720 parlor ~~corner~~

29- Mowry H., Providence, RI, frame (Isham and Brown)

30- 1720 clapboards

31- stairs being removed

32- Elisha Smith H., Stillwater, RI, stair

33- EHT hearth

34- ell joists

35- chimney base

36- kitchen fireplace

37- batten door

38- 1720 north elevation

39- planked north end

40- buttery floor

41- mid-18C isometric view (Long)

42- mid-19C isometric view (Long)

43- 17C chamber

44- Gleason H., Farmington, CT, frame (Isham and Brown)

45- Elisha Smith H., Stillwater, RI, frame

46- Mott EHT roof exposed

47- CT roofing (Kelly)

48- Roger Mowry H., Providence, plan (Isham and Brown)

49- Arthur Fenner H., Cranston, RI

50- James Green H., Warwick, RI

51- H., Warren, RI

52- 3 single-cell Hs., Banbury region, Eng. (Wood-Jones)

53- Mott H., 1680 elevation

54- Blake H., Dorchester, MA, plan

55- St. John's, St. Mary's City, MD

56- Eleazar Arnold H., Lincoln, RI

57- James Green H.

58- Valentine Whitman H., Limerock, RI

59- Tripp H., Manton, RI (now Newport)

60- 36 Gidley St., Newport RI

61- Winslow H., Marshfield, MA

62- 1720 plan, Mott H.

63- E. Arnold H.

64- H., Hingham MA

65- A. Fenner H.

66- Mott H.

67- Usquepaug, RI, H.

68- Mott H., final plan

69- Mott H., painted canvas

70- Mott H.