

John Neilson House(Saratoga National Historic Park)
Bemis Heights
Stillwater
Saratoga County
New York

HABS No. NY-3317

HABS
NY,
46-BEMHI,
1A.

PHOTOGRAPHS

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

ADDENDUM
FOLLOWS.

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS
NY,
46-752141,
1A-
(Page 1)

JOHN NEILSON HOUSE HABS No. NY-3317
(SARATOGA NATIONAL HISTORIC PARK)

Street Address or Location: Bemis Heights, Stillwater, Saratoga County, New York

Present Owner: National Park Service, U.S. Department of Interior, Saratoga National Historical Park, Stillwater, N. Y.

Present Occupant: Saratoga National Historical Park

Present Use: Interpretive Exhibit

Brief Statement of Significance: (architectural and historical)
The John Neilson House is an important landmark for its historical association and as a type of house now very rare. Situated within the American entrenchments on the Saratoga battlefield, it served as the headquarters for the Generals Poor and Arnold during the Saratoga campaign. As a building it is representative of the early frontier settlements of the upper Hudson valley.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners: John Neilson built and owned the house. By inheritance it passed to Charles Neilson, his son; William Neilson, grandson; Charles Neilson, great grandson, who sold the house to the State of New York in 1926.

2. Date of erection: Between 1775 and 1777.

3. Architect: Unknown

Builder, Suppliers, etc.: The house was presumably built by the owner, and the building material came from the neighborhood.

4. Original plans, construction etc.: There are no known plans of the house and considering its modest size presumably there never were any.

5. Notes on alterations and additions: An addition was made to the Neilson House adjoining the west wall sometime before 1830. A window was added to the east wall after the

addition and before 1848 and the interior was refinished during the same period. At an unknown date before 1880 the original fireplace was demolished. In 1895 the house was moved 24 feet north and the chimney and front porch was demolished. All the exterior finishes were replaced. In 1926 the house was moved 160 feet south to its present location and turned 90° from south to west; and once more all exterior finishes were replaced, a new fireplace and chimney was built and the interior finishes were repaired.

6. Important old views and references: The earliest view of the house known to exist is a field sketch made by Benson J. Lossing in 1848. The sketch is illustrated in Lossing's Book "Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution", Harper Brothers, New York, 1851. Photograph by unknown author 1889. Illustrated in "The Old Saratoga and Burgoyne Campaign" by William Ostrander, Schuylerville, N. Y. 1897, Library of Dorothy Webster, Schuylerville, N. Y. Photograph by Jessie F. Wheeler, Mechanicsville, N. Y. 1893 in Saratoga National Historical Park files. Photograph by E. V. Doubleday, Saratoga Springs in library of Saratoga County Historian, Saratoga Springs, N. Y.

Prepared by *F. C. Gjessing* October 1958
F. C. Gjessing

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION (from direct observation)

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character (original design, how much changed etc.): The house has retained the essential features of its original appearance except for a 7' wide porch which extended across the front of the house. It stands on a higher foundation and was originally about 1'-6" lower than the present building.

2. Condition of fabric (structural stability etc.):
Well maintained by the National Park Service and open to visitors.

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: One story - Frame with lean-to in the rear - overall - 18 X 24.

2. Foundations: Fieldstone, dating from 1926 and higher than original foundation.

3. Wall construction: Frame nogged with baked and sundried brick in a clay mortar.

4. Porches: None. As previously mentioned, the house had a front porch.

5. Chimneys: Fieldstone chimney inside and against south wall, added in 1927.

6. Openings

- a. Doorways and doors: Doors and door trim are original. They have no ornamentation.
- b. Windows and shutters: Small pane, double-hung, old style sash, probably replacements. Two windows out of five have original frame and trim. Simple board shutters with exposed cleats.

7. Roof

- a. Shape, covering: Gable roof framed without ridgepole or ties. Sheathed with horizontal boards and shingled.
- b. Cornice, eaves: Box cornice across front and rear, added in 1927.
- c. Dormers, cupolas: None

C. Technical Description of Interiors

1. Floor Plans: First floor - Main room 17 X 16-6" is entered directly from the outside. A 12' X 6' room in leanto is entered from main room. Attic above main room.

2. Stairways: Stair to attic in southwest corner, not original.

3. Flooring: Wide unpainted pine floor boards throughout.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: Main room has plastered wall, and ceiling beams were originally exposed. Room in leanto has pine board sheathing on walls and ceiling.

5. Doorways and doors: Very simple board doors with exposed cleats.

Addendum to:
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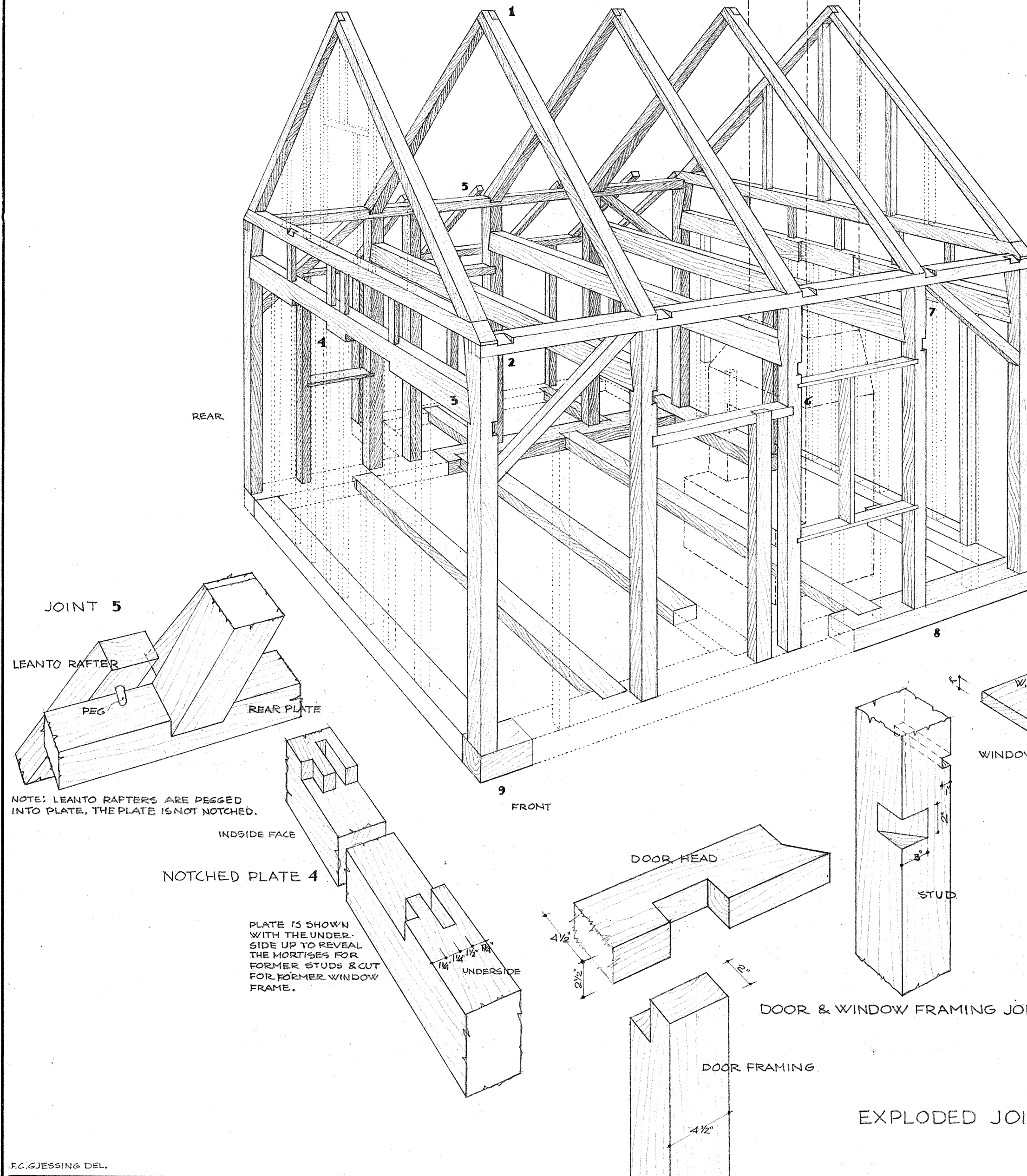
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PHOTOGRAPHS

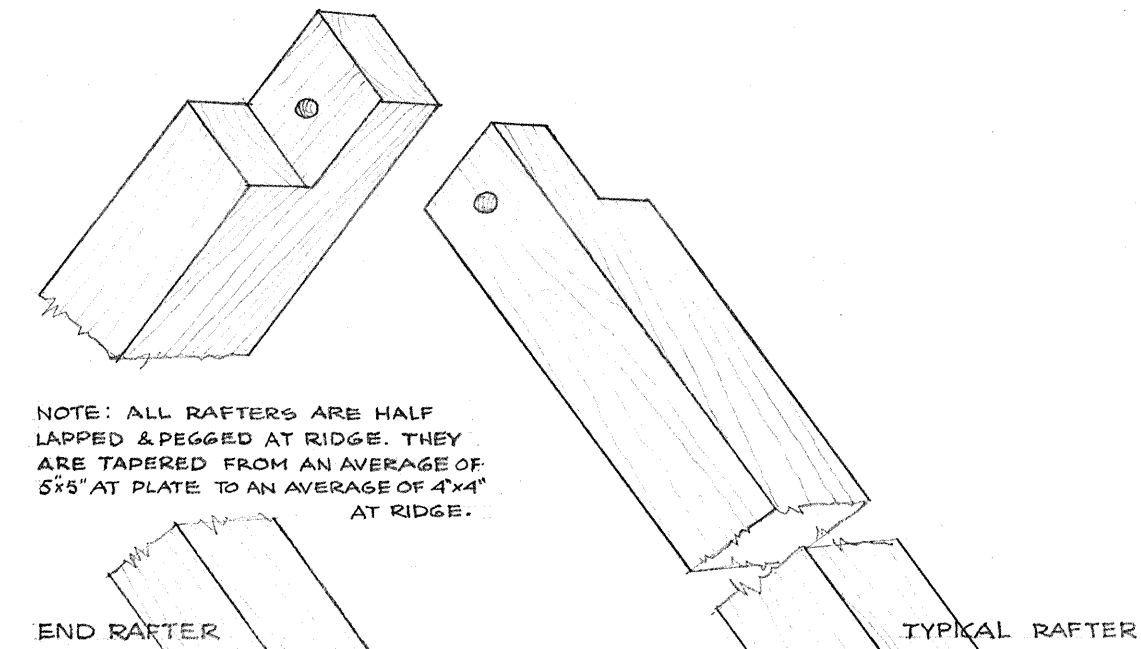
Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

PERSPECTIVE FRAMING DIAGRAM

ORIGINAL FRAMING SHOWN IN FULL LINE AND WITH WOOD INDICATION. FRAME PIECES OF OLD WOOD NOT PART OF THE ORIGINAL FRAME OR IN THEIR ORIGINAL POSITION ARE SHOWN IN FULL LINE ONLY. NEWER FRAMING IS INDICATED WITH A DOT LINE. CHIMNEY & FIREPLACE IN A DOT-DASH LINE.



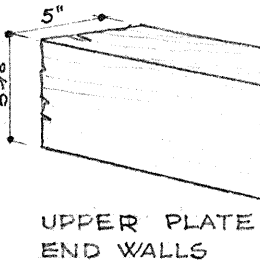
RIDGE JOINT 1



NOTE: ALL RAFTERS ARE HALF LAPPED & PEGGED AT RIDGE. THEY ARE TAPERED FROM AN AVERAGE OF 5"x5" AT PLATE TO AN AVERAGE OF 4"x4" AT RIDGE.

END RAFTER

TYPICAL RAFTER

UPPER PLATE
END WALLS

CORNER JOINT 2

LOWER PLATE

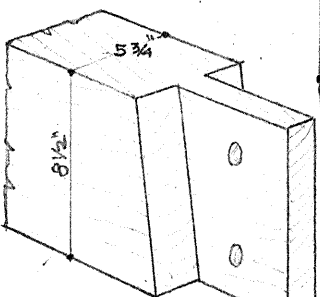


PLATE JOINT 3

W. HEAD

WINDOW FRAMING

END WALL SILL

CORNER POST

CROSS BRACE

STUD

STUD JOINT 8

FRONT SILL

SILL JOINT 9

DOOR & WINDOW FRAMING JOINT 6

DOOR FRAMING

DOOR HEAD

NOTCHED PLATE 4

INSIDE FACE

UNDERSIDE

LEANTO RAFTER

REAR PLATE

PEG

JOINT 5

FRONT

REAR

TRIM LINE

FIELD OFFICE

SARATOGA NATIONAL HISTORIC PARK

UNDER DIRECTION OF UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, BRANCH OF PLANS AND DESIGN

F.C. GLESSING DEL.

NAME OF STRUCTURE

JOHN NEILSON HOUSE

BEMIS HEIGHTS, SARATOGA NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK, STILLWATER, SARATOGA COUNTY, NY

SURVEY NO.

NY-3317

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EXPLODED JOINTS

NOTE: JOINTS ARE DIAGRAMMATIC AND ARE NOT TO SCALE. ALL DIMENSIONS INDICATED ARE AVERAGE SIZES. ORIGINAL FRAME PIECES ARE OF CHESTNUT. OLD FRAMING NOT PART OF THE ORIGINAL FRAME ARE ALSO CHESTNUT. NEW FRAMING PIECES ARE GENERALLY PINE.

F.C. GLESSING DEL.

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UNDER DIRECTION OF UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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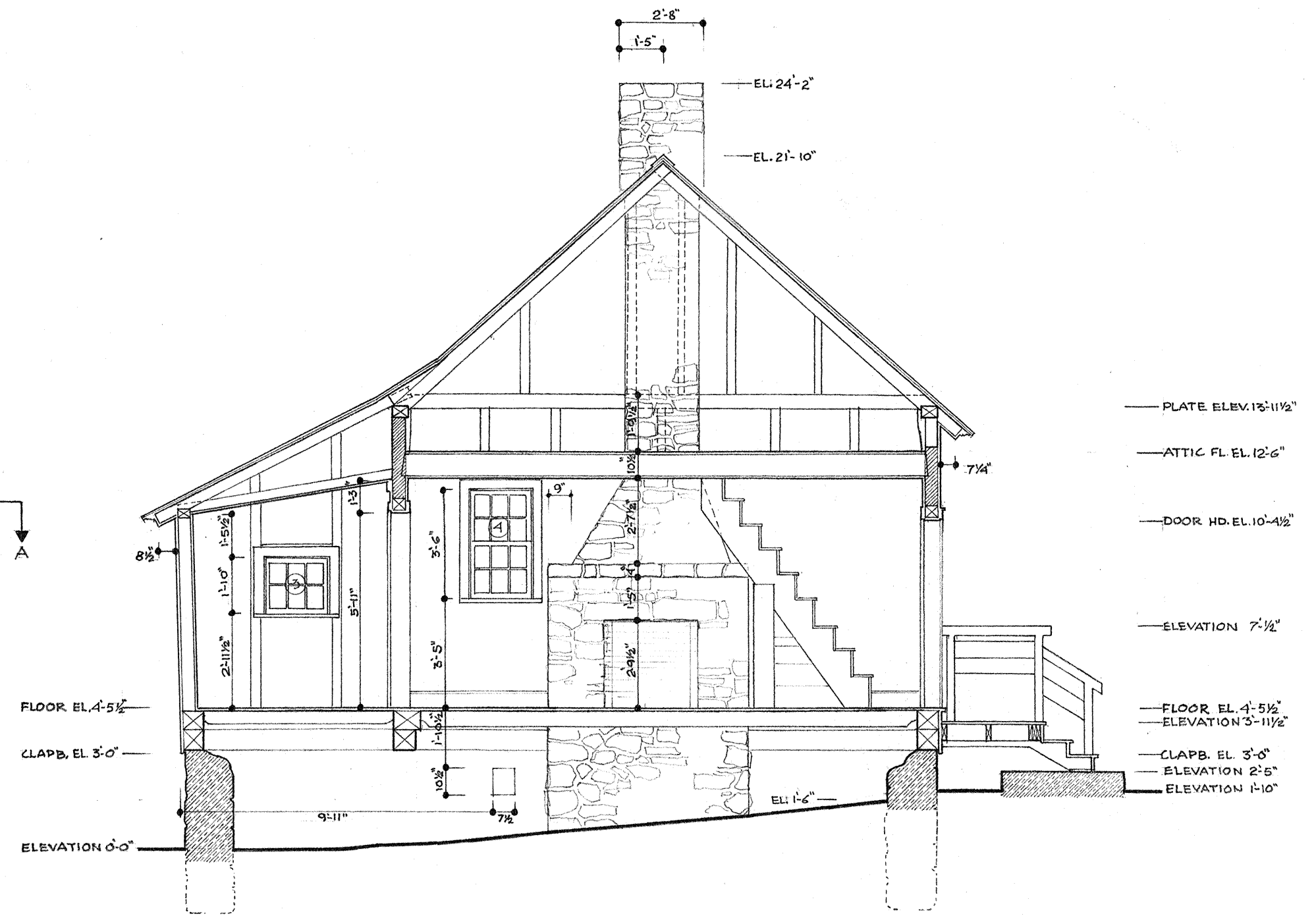
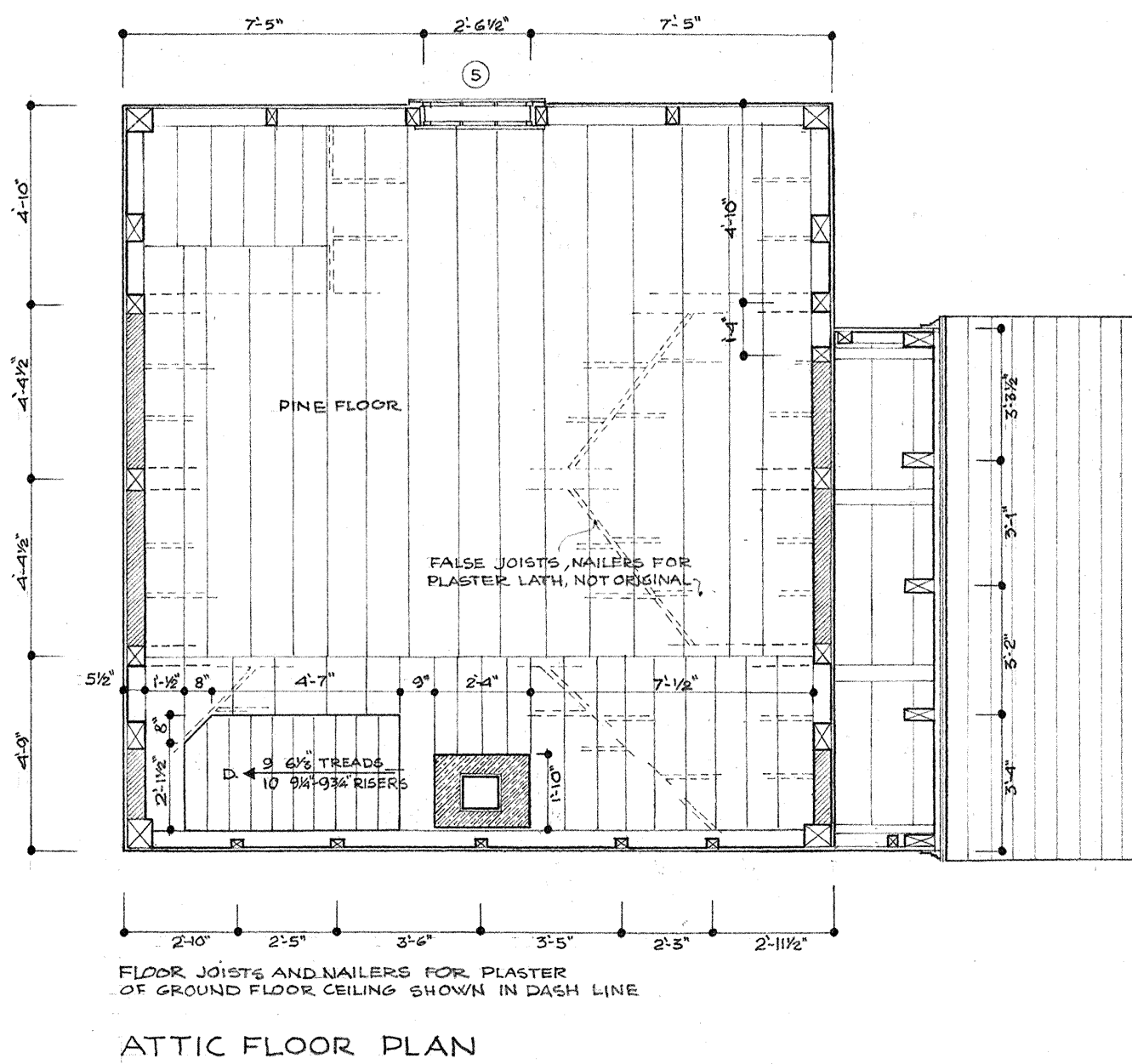
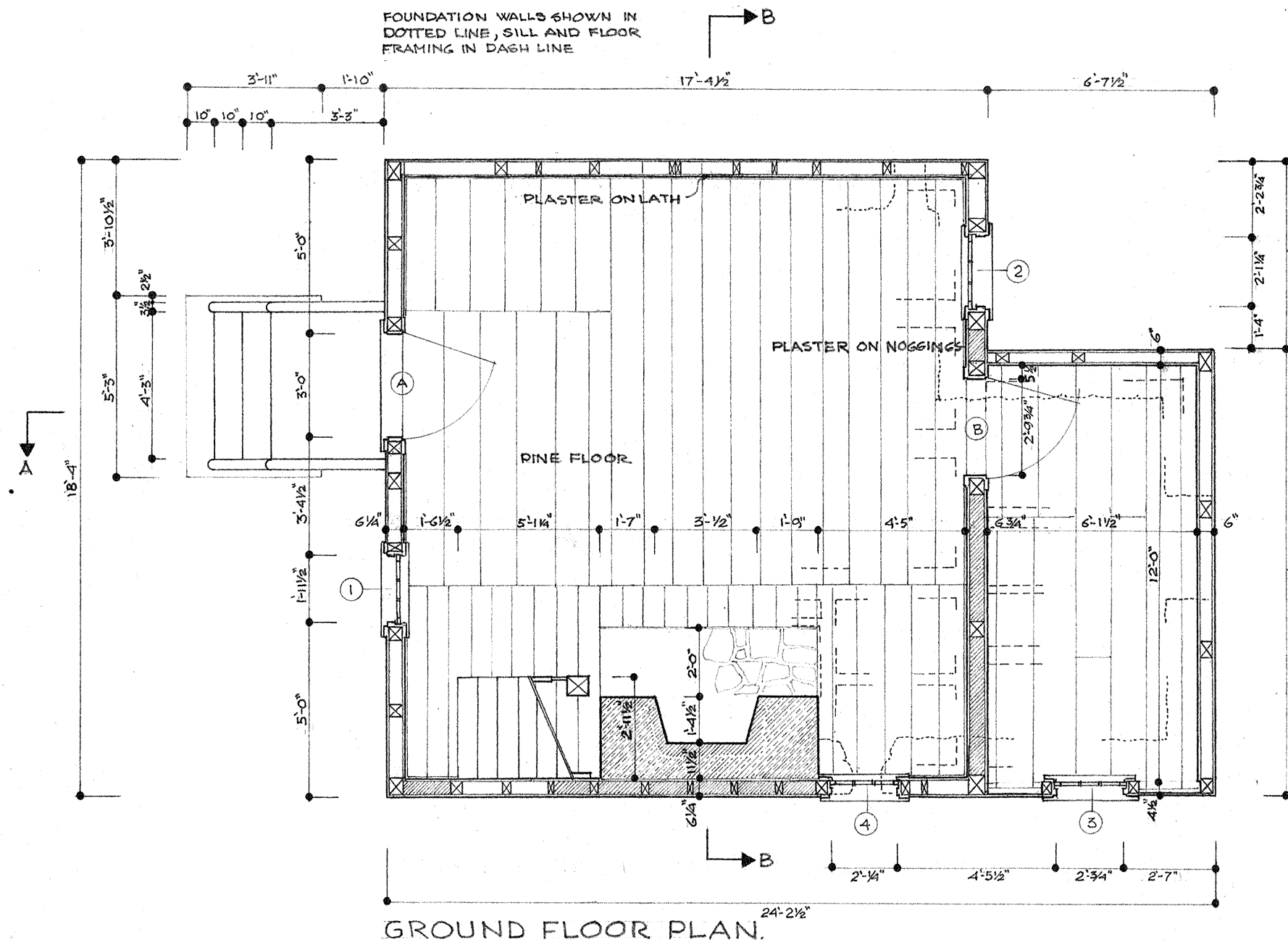
NAME OF STRUCTURE
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BEMIS HEIGHTS, SARATOGA NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK, STILLWATER, SARATOGA COUNTY, NY

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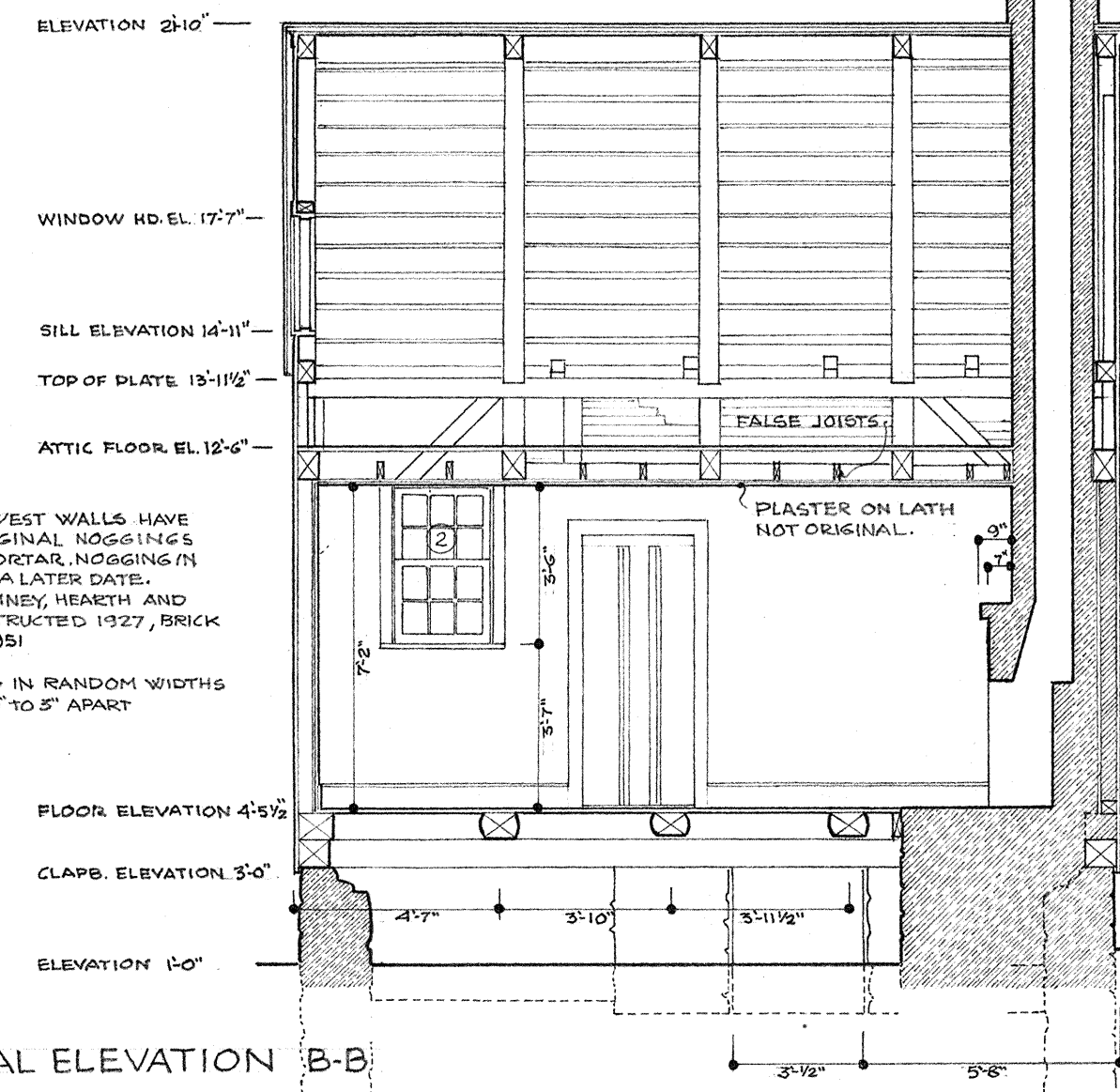
SECTIONAL ELEVATION A-A

NOTE: DATUM LINE SELECTED AS GROUND LEVEL OF SOUTHEAST CORNER

NOTE: EAST & WEST WALLS HAVE REMAINS OF ORIGINAL NOGGINGS SET IN CLAY MORTAR, NOGGINGS IN SOUTH WALL OF A LATER DATE. FIELD STONE CHIMNEY, HEARTH AND FIRE PLACE CONSTRUCTED 1927, BRICK LINING ADDED 1951

ROOF SHEATHING IN RANDOM WIDTHS SPACED FROM 0" TO 5" APART

SECTIONAL ELEVATION B-B



1 FOOT 0 5 FEET 15 FEET
SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0"

F.C. GIBBING DEL.

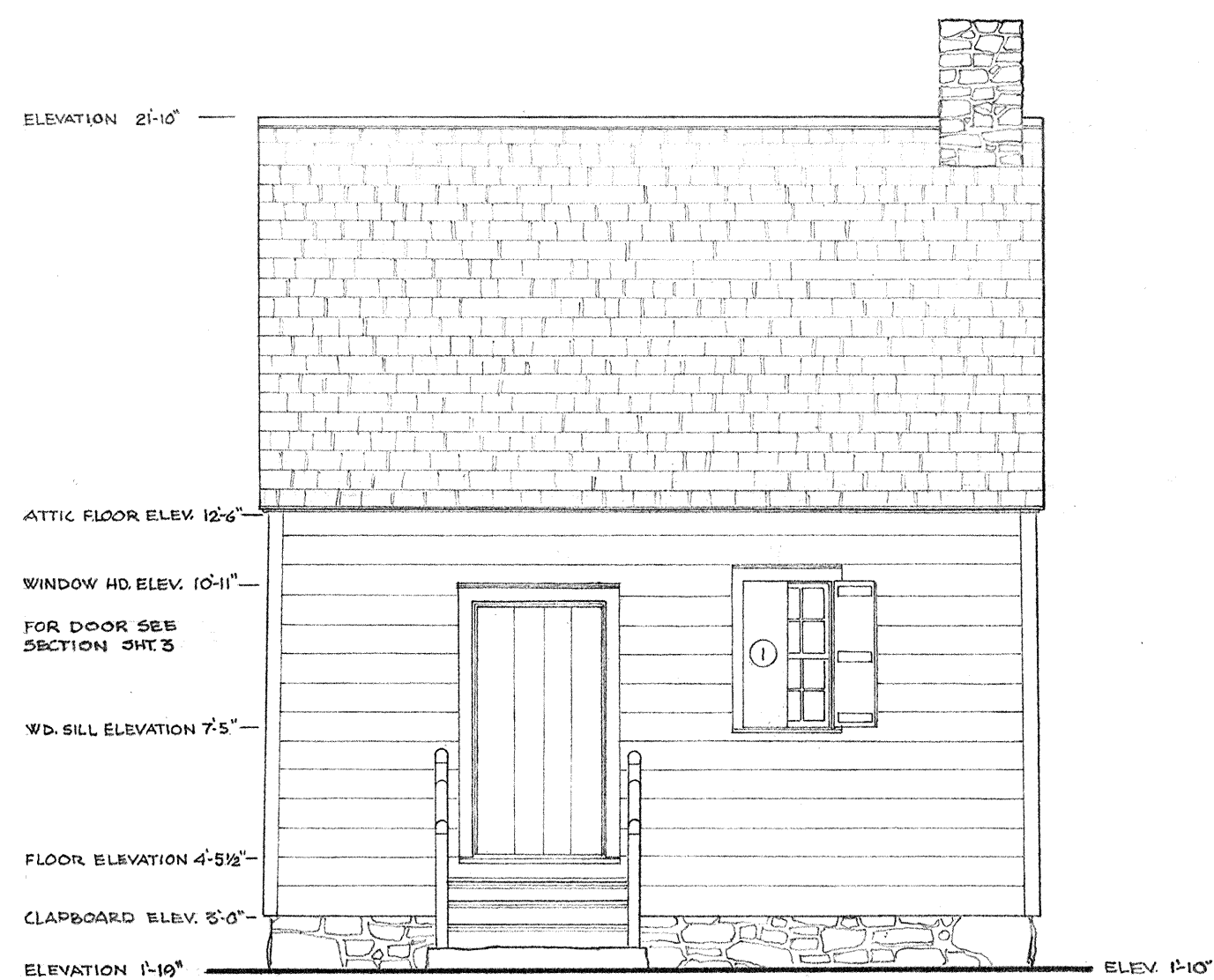
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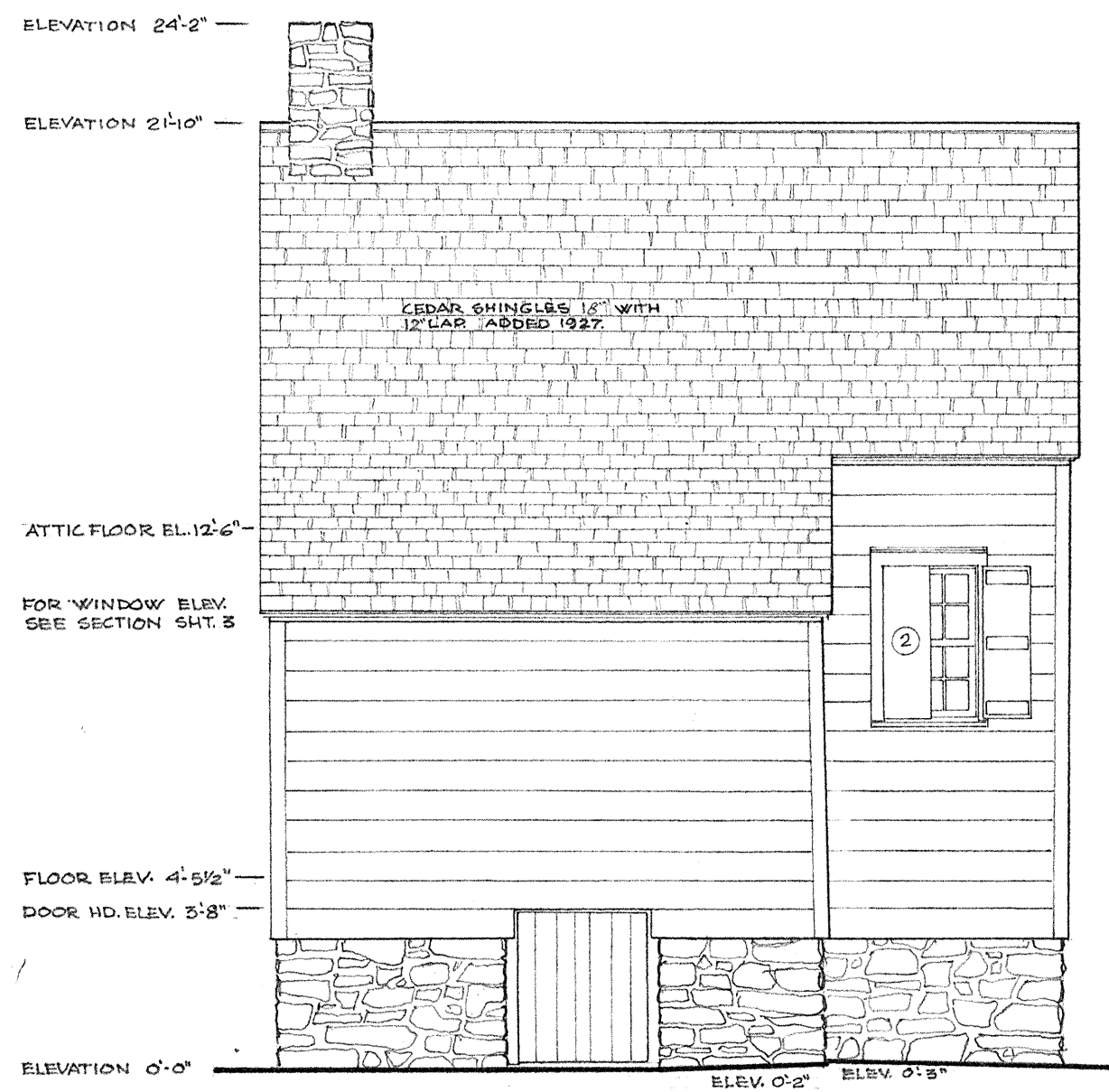
HISTORIC AMERICAN
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NOTE: DATUM LINE SELECTED AT GROUND LEVEL OF SOUTHEAST CORNER.

WEST ELEVATION



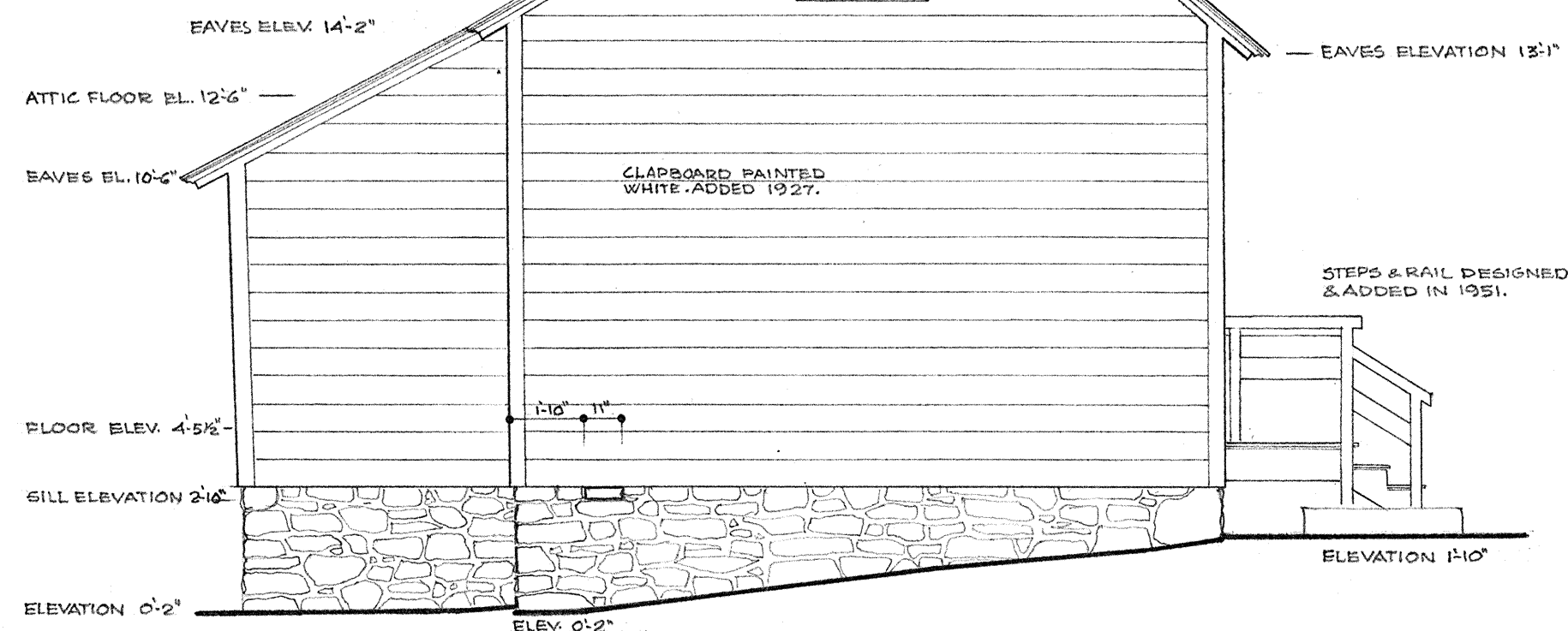
EAST ELEVATION



FIELDSTONE FOUNDATION WALLS CONSTRUCTED WHEN HOUSE WAS MOVED FROM PREVIOUS LOCATION IN 1926.

SOUTH ELEVATION

NOTE: CORNICE MOULDING & TRIM AND 4" CORNER BOARDS ADDED IN 1927 IN RESTORATION BY NEW YORK STATE. ALL EXTERIOR WOODWORK, EXCEPT FOR SHINGLES & STEPS, IS PAINTED WHITE. ALL EXISTING WINDOW SASH ARE REPLACEMENT. WINDOWS 1 & 2 HAVE THEIR ORIGINAL FRAMING. WINDOW 3 IS PRESUMEDLY ORIG. WINDOW 4 ADDED BEFORE 1848. WINDOW 5 ADDED AFTER 1926. FOR WINDOW ELEV. SEE SECTION SH. 3



NORTH ELEVATION

1 FOOT 0 5 FEET 15 FEET
SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0"

FC/GJESSING, DEL.

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SURVEY NO.
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HISTORIC AMERICAN
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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John Neilson House
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Saratoga County

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Charles Hutchins, Photographer September 10, 1958

NY-3317-1 GENERAL VIEW FROM SOUTHWEST

F. C. Gjessing, Photographer July 22, 1958

NY-3317-2 VIEW FROM NORTHEAST

F. C. Gjessing, Photographer July 21, 1958

NY-3317-3 FIRST FLOOR, SOUTH WALL, EAST SIDE

NY-3317-4 FIRST FLOOR, EAST WALL, NORTH SIDE

NY-3317-5 Photocopy of print (original in Benson Lossing's Pictorial Field
Book of the Revolution, p. 48)
1851

VIEW OF HOUSE IN 1848 (ILLUSTRATIONS AT TOP AND LOWER RIGHT)

NY-3317-6 Photocopy of photograph (Original in collection of Saratoga
County Historical Office, Saratoga Springs)
E. V. Doubleday, Photographer 1893
VIEW FROM THE SOUTH

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NY-3317-1 through NY-3317-6 were formerly transmitted to the Library of Congress. The following photographs were transmitted as part of the 1992 EODC summer project.

Jack E. Boucher, Photographer, November 1959

NY-3317-7 PERSPECTIVE VIEW OF WEST (FRONT) AND SOUTH SIDE

Unknown, Photographer, Date Unknown

NY-3317-8 PERSPECTIVE VIEW OF NORTH (FRONT) AND EAST SIDE
BEFORE RESTORATION

Jack E. Boucher, Photographer, 1961

NY-3317-9 PERSPECTIVE VIEW OF WEST (FRONT) AND SOUTH SIDE

Frank Gjessing, Photographer, August 6, 1958

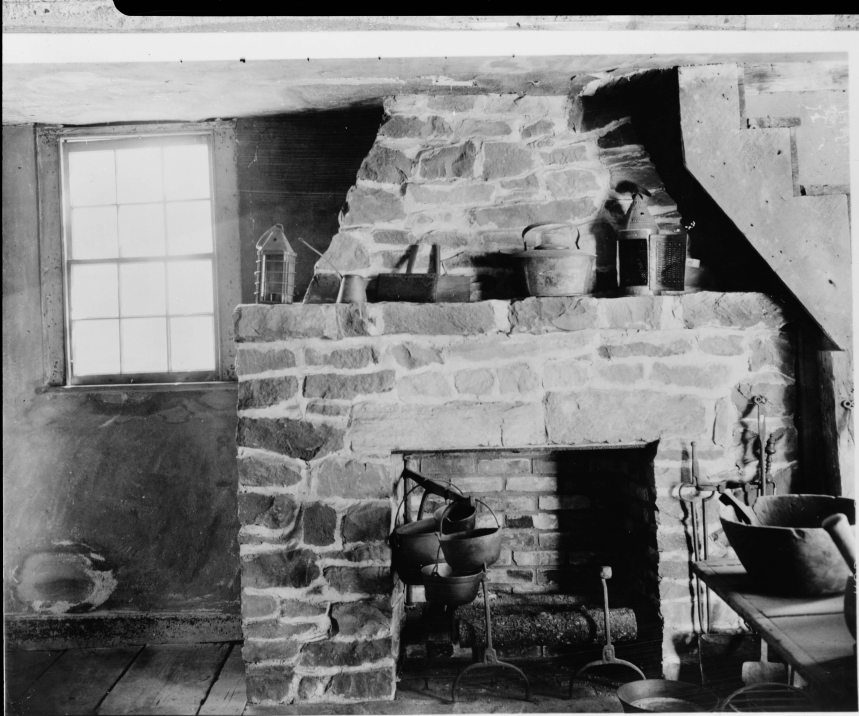
NY-3317-10 STAIR ELEVATION ON SOUTH WALL WEST OF FIREPLACE



HAAS NO. 10 19-337-1



14985 No. 19-33/7-2





HABS No. 29.317-4

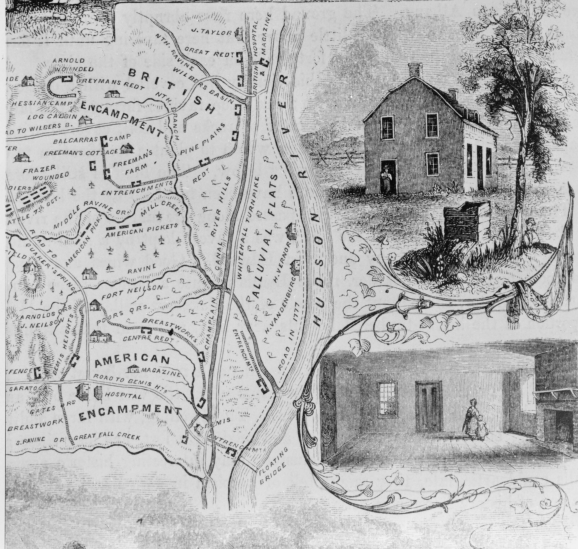
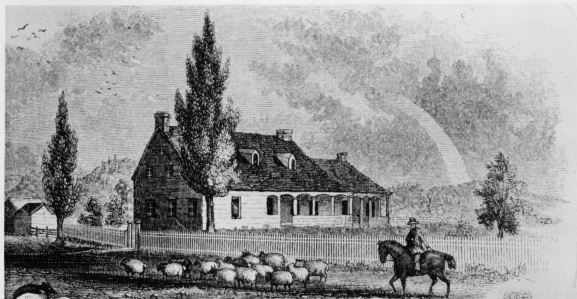




Photo by E. N. Doubleday,

Col. Poor & Gen. Morano's

Saratoga Springs, N. Y.



HAAS NY-3317-7



HAS NY - 3317-8



HAGS N.Y. - 3317 - 9

NY 100-111111 HABS NY-3317-10

