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THE PHYSICAL HISTORY OF THE MOORE HOUSE

1930-1934



CHARLES E. PETERSON

1935

THE PHYSICAL HISTORY

OF THE

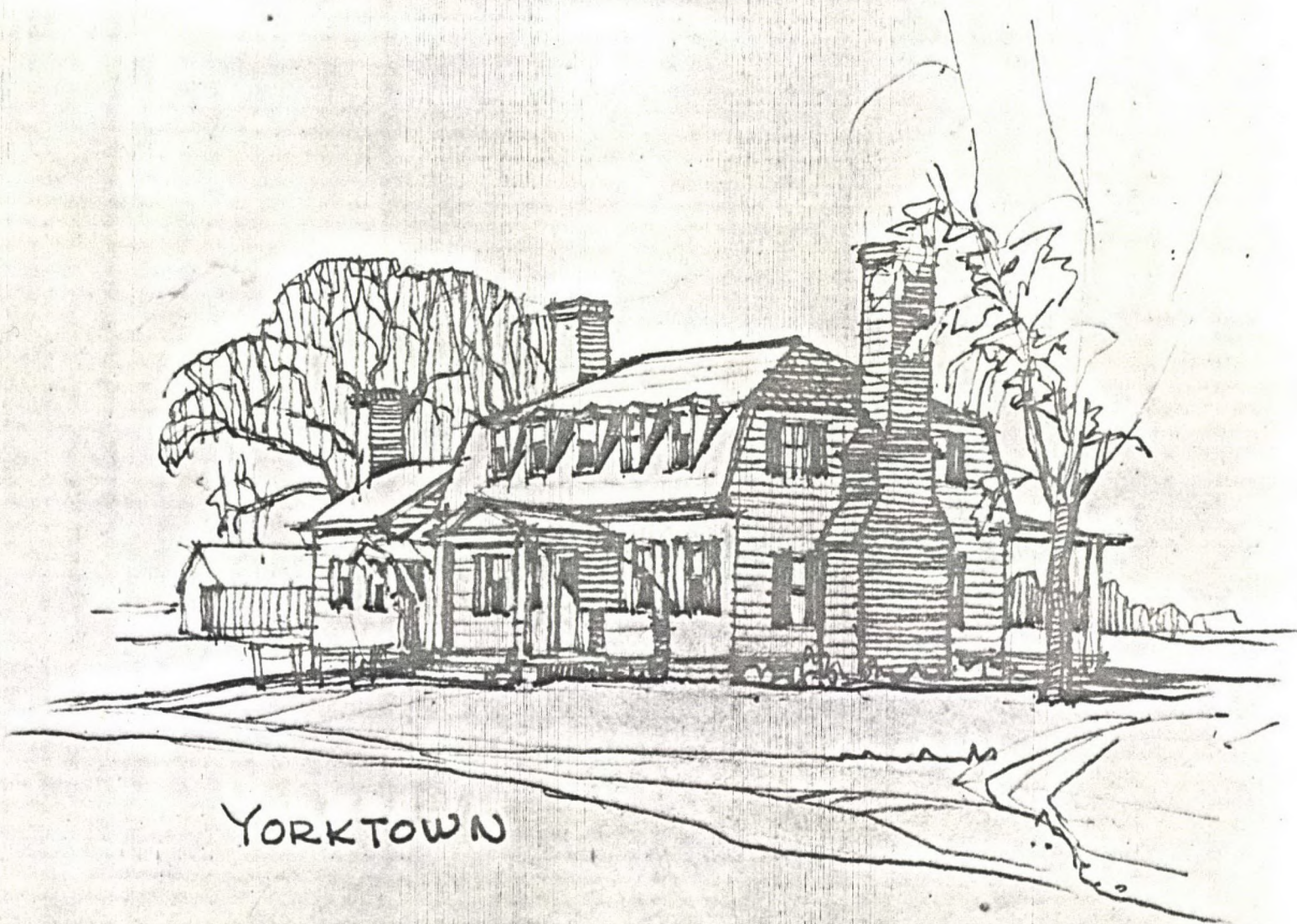
MOORE HOUSE

1930-1934

FRONTISPIECE

Commissioners of the American, French, and British Armies met in the Moore House on October 18, 1781, and drew up the formal articles of Cornwallis' capitulation. The Surrender of the British Army took place the following day.

Sketch by the writer, 1931.



YORKTOWN

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Blank pages for noting additional informa-
tion as discovered.

PREFACE

During the last few years I have had the pleasure of visiting many important and interesting Early American Buildings between California, Florida, and Maine. Some of these buildings have come down to the present time more or less unchanged from their original design while others have been "done over" to suit the habits and tastes of the occupants. Quite a number have been "restored" with or without professional advice.

Curiously enough architects agree that the most interesting ancient buildings are those which have not been tampered with by other architects. In a good piece of restoration work the new parts are so skillfully blended with the old that it is difficult or impossible to separate them. The antiquarian is thus unable to give most carefully restored structures a complete and intelligent examination. The architect who planned and supervised the work had all the details in the back of his mind at the time. In a relatively few years most of the factual matter was lost or forgotten.

It is my opinion that any architect who undertakes the responsibility of working over a fine old building should feel obligated to prepare a detailed report of his findings for the information of those who will come to study it in future years. Such a volume should become a permanent part of the building - a payment by the architect for the privilege of learning and using facts which no other man may ever have. How else can we conserve the source material for the study of antique architecture?

In looking back over my five years' acquaintance with the Moore House, I have come to realize that a more or less comprehensive statement about this structure should be compiled in order that the abundant data now available will not be scattered and lost. This report is being prepared to be placed in the House so that each visitor to this historic place can know what changes have been made since it came into the hands of the Federal Government. This

report is compiled from the writings, drawings, and photographs now in the possession of the National Park Service, particularly in the Branch of Plans and Design. A set of drawings in the Historic American Buildings Survey, the originals of which will be found in the Library of Congress, supplement the written material.

The Introduction contains miscellaneous notes on the Moore House before 1930. The Appendixes exhibit important papers too long to be quoted in the text. Some of the material was located by the historical staff.

Several blank pages have been included at the end of each copy in order that new discoveries of important data may be noted down. I believe that a considerable body of material is yet to be found.

Charles E. Peterson,
Deputy Chief Architect.

October 15, 1938,
Washington, D. C.

PLATE NO. 1

Portion of the "PLAN OF YORKTOWN IN VIRGINIA AND ADJACENT COUNTRY, Exhibiting the operations of the American, French, and English armies during the Siege of that place in October 1781. Surveyed from the 22nd to the 28th Octr....Drawn by Jn. F. Renault with a Crow-pen and presented to the MARQUIS DE LA FAYETTE."

This map is one of a considerable number prepared about this time. All of them vary in details such as the number and grouping of the buildings at the Moore House.

The Revolutionary maps carry the first graphic representations of the Moore House.



PLATE NO. 2

A photostat (enlarged) of the illustration (V 2 p. 530) in Henry Howe's "Historical Collections of Virginia," (1849).

This is the earliest published view of the Moore House, brought to our attention by a loan of the volume from Mrs. A.Y. Burcher of Newport News, Virginia.

This is the only information we have on the step arrangement at the rear door.



The Moore House, Yorktown.

PLATE NO. 3

A photostat (enlarged) of the illustration in Vol. II, (p. 324) Benson Lossing's "Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution," (1850). Lossing made a tour of the places associated with the Revolutionary War, visiting Yorktown in 1848.

This is the second earliest known pictorial representation of the Moore House. Brought to our attention by Mr. Thomas T. Waterman, then of the Williamsburg Restoration.



MOORE'S HOUSE.

PLATE NO. 4

Enlargement of the photograph taken by Matthew Brady in 1862, located by the writer in the Library of Congress.

The decision to restore a front porch was based on a study of this photograph. There have been at least four front porches on the House, (1) an 8' by 8' porch from which the brick pier bases survive; (2) the porch shown in this photograph; (3) the porch removed in 1931 which was built probably in 1881; (4) the present porch which is a conjectural restoration of (1).

This view shows the chaos of the grounds during the War which may account for the disappearance of the outbuildings. The Civil War photographs show the East Wing for the first time.

This is reproduced in Miller's Photographic History of the Civil War, Vol. I, p. 269.



BA1992

PLATE NO. 5

The Gardner print from a negative by Wood and Gibson, May 1862. Brought to our attention by Mr. Louis R. Fiske of Upper Darby, Pennsylvania, who sold it to the writer.

This view shows beyond a doubt that the building was whitewashed at the time. It also shows the interesting "swirl" of the shingles on the hips of the roof and the dormers. The size and shape of the shutter hinges is clearly indicated.

Unfortunately this hitherto unknown photograph did not show up until October 8, 1931, after the roof had been reshingled according to our plans. The first opportunity to correct the effect came with the Public Works program.



Negative by WOOD & CLARK.

Entered according to act of Congress in the year 1864, by A. GARDNER, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the District of Columbia.

Positive by A. GARDNER, 511 10th St., Washington.

Incidents of the War.

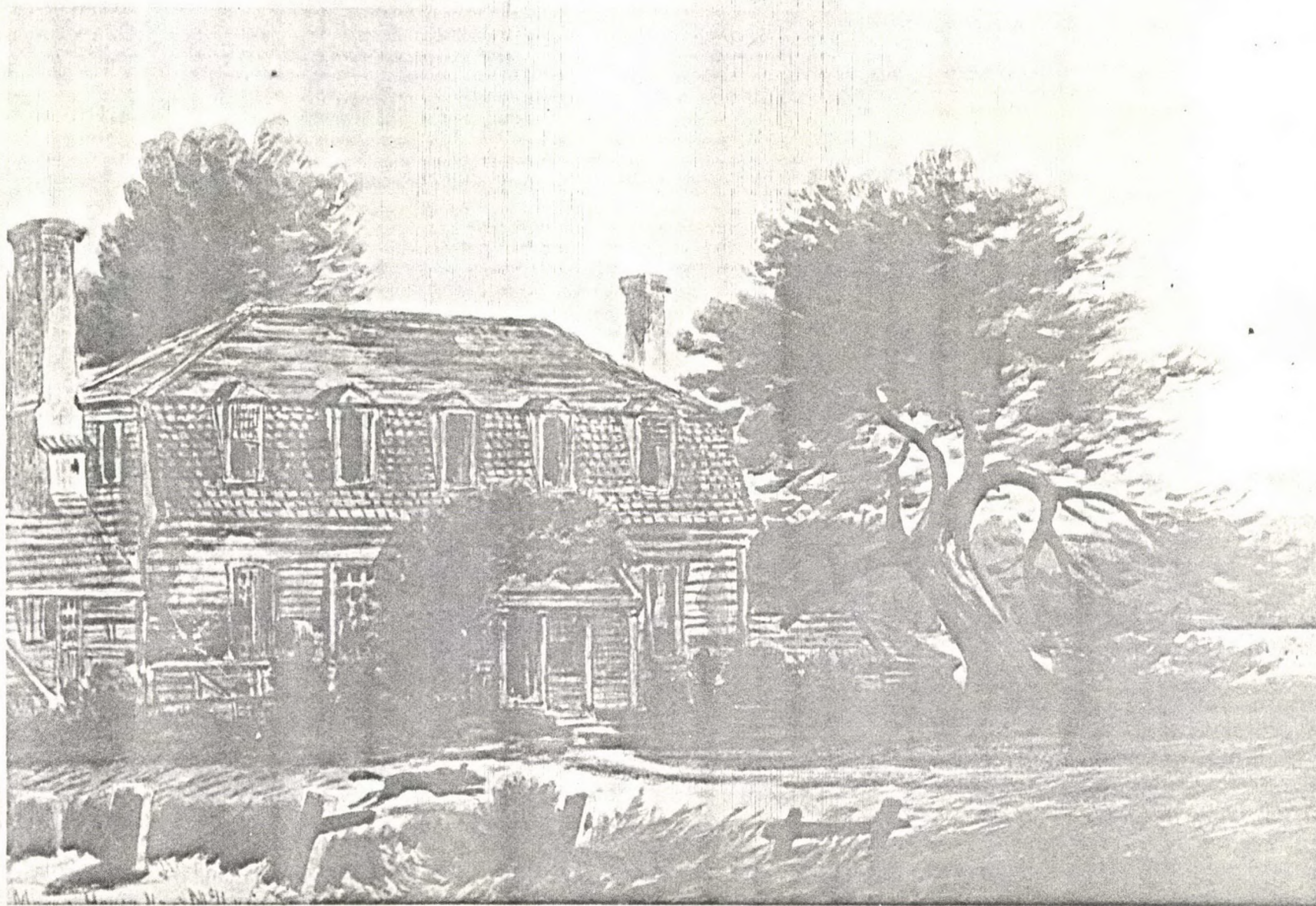
PLATE NO. 6

Photograph (original size) of the McIlvaine water color painted in 1855-. This painting and the one following were secured through Mr. Charles Hall, Assistant Superintendent of Mt. Vernon. They are part of a set given to President Everett of Harvard.

This photograph shows a tree very similar to the gnarled old catalpa just west of the House. Just beyond is an unidentified outbuilding, possibly an ice house covering a depression in the earth which has existed for years.

The desolate appearance of the building indicates (as does the Sankey water color, Plate No. 5) that the building stood in an abandoned state between the Civil War and the Centennial Celebration.

Obtained through the Branch of Research and Education, Historical Division.



Moore House Va.

PLATE NO. 7

The second Hellwaine water color shows the rear of the House. A first glance at the original suggested red brick nogging between the framing members. Since the examination of the structure revealed no evidences of this it seems more likely to assume that it is just lath and plaster.

Obtained through the Branch of
Research and Education, Historical Division.



Moore House York River.

Water Front.

PLATE NO. 8

Photostat of the water color painted in 1874 by Mr. S. H. Sankey. The original is owned by Mr. Thomas J. Smith, 153 East 32nd Street, New York City. This was brought to our attention through Mr. Harold Shurcliff of the Williamsburg Restoration.

The accuracy of certain details is remarkable. Compare, for instance, the muntins in the north-west first floor end window with those in the Brady photograph. The southwest second floor end window may have had a total of 18 lights as suggested. The thinness of the muntins shown in the Civil War photographs may indicate that they were replacements of the original 18th Century sash.

shuntlett

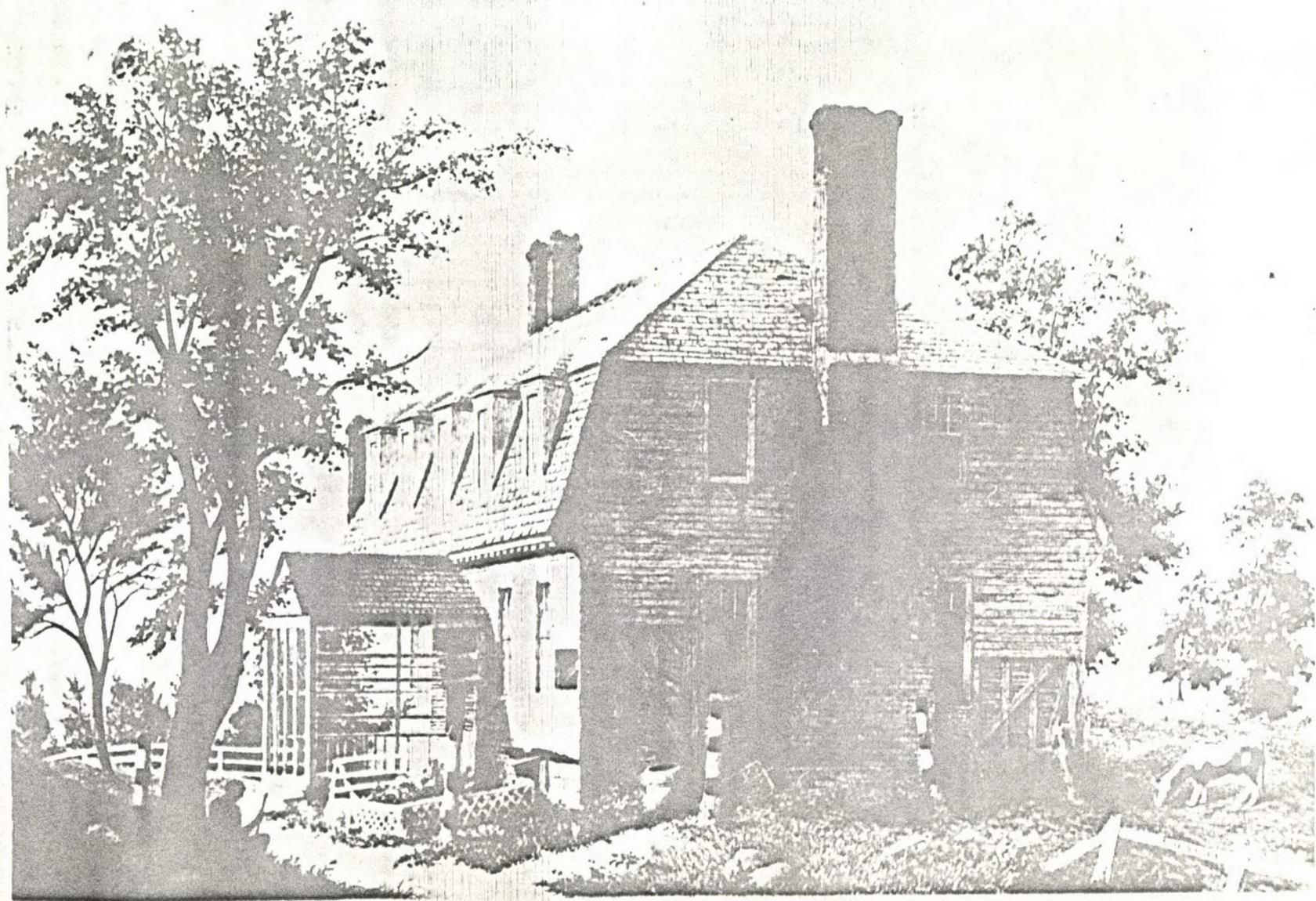


PLATE NO. 9.

Drawing of the Moore House from a group including views of Williamsburg. These were mounted on a small sheet of cardboard said to have been the cover of a Yorktown Centennial program. It was loaned by Mrs. Catharine Shield.

This view from the northwest shows solid panel shutters, and if these were not supplied from the artist's imagination, the sketch must have been drawn prior to the Civil War photograph.

The building shown behind has not been identified. It may be the same one that appears in the Brady photograph.

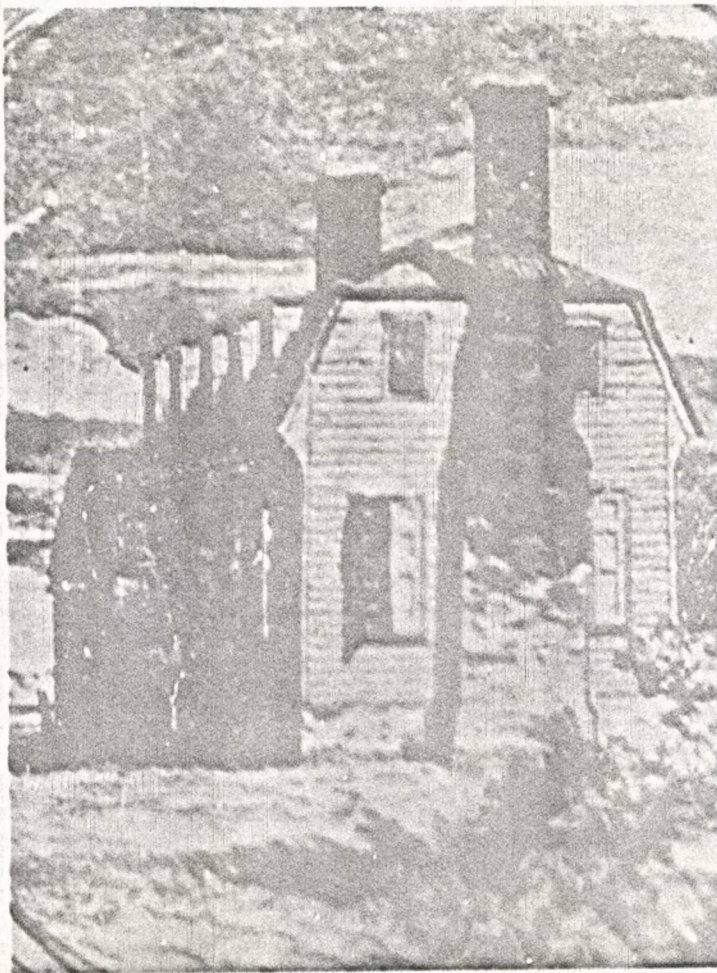


PLATE NO. 10

A photostat of a photograph inlaid between pages 22 and 23 in "A History of the Monument at Yorktown, erected by the United States Government to commemorate the close of the Revolutionary War, at Yorktown, October 19, 1781", Philadelphia, 1890.

This was taken probably on the occasion of the Centennial in 1881.



MOORE HOUSE

PLATE NO. 11

Photograph of the House (date unknown)
some time after the Centennial, contributed
to us by Mr. Walter Maconber of the Williams-
burg Restoration.

The cornices seem to be painted dark and
it is believed that this is the olive green
color found on the rear cornice when it was
opened up in 1931.



PLATE NO. 11-A

Photograph copyright 1906, reproduced from
print in the Library of Congress.



PLATE NO. 11-B

Photograph, somewhat enlarged, of a photographic print in the possession of Mr. Fayton Nelson of Williamsburg. Kindly loaned for reproduction by the owner.

The exact date of this photograph is unknown. It seems to have been taken about the same time as 11-A. (Note the stacked rifles.)

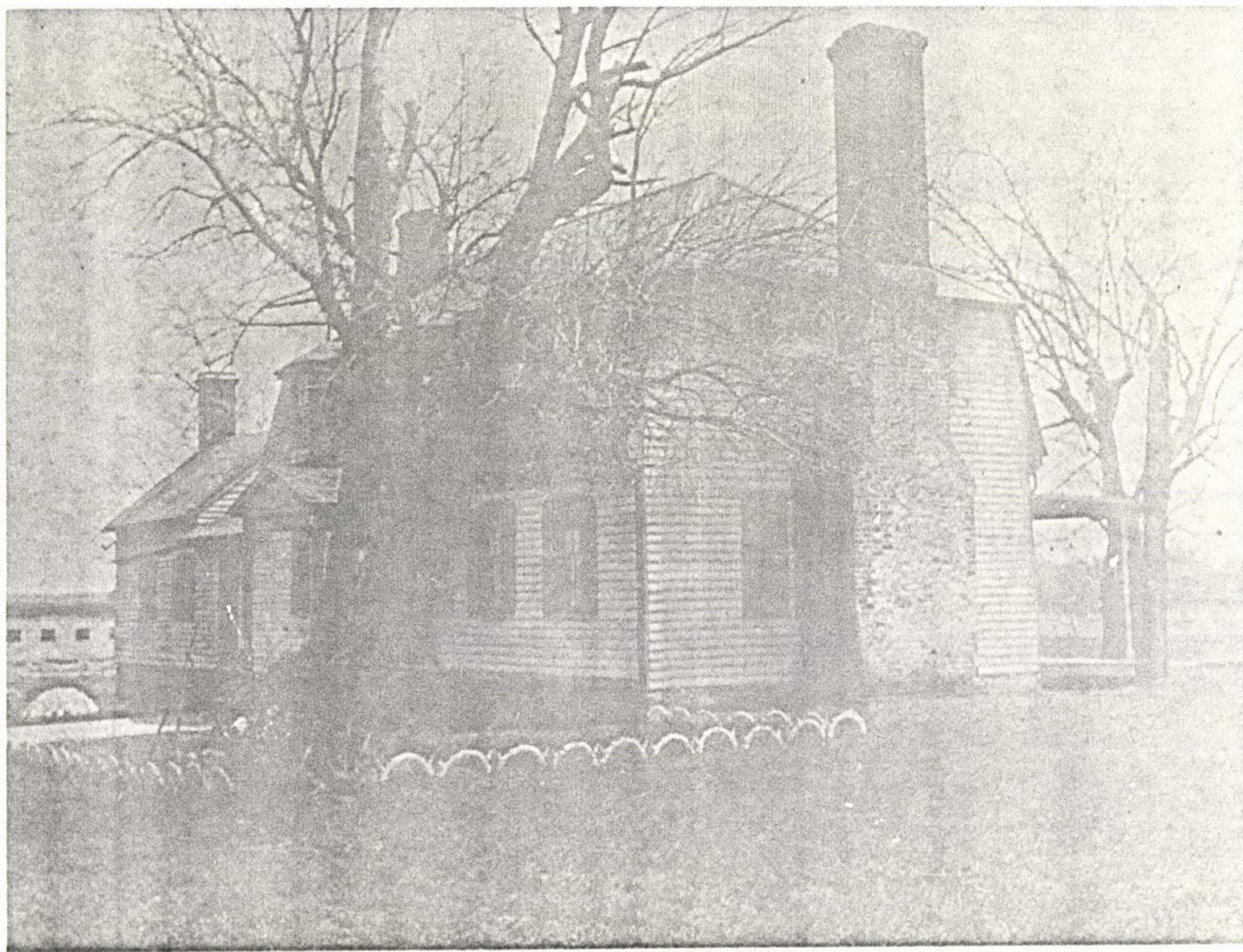


PLATE NO. 11-C

Photograph copyright 1911 by E. L. Owens,
reproduced from print in the Library of Congress.



PLATE NO. 11-D

Apparently taken same day as No. 11-C (note seated figures). Reproduced from print in the Library of Congress.



PLATE NO. 11-3

This view seems to belong to the 1911 copyright group (note paint tones) represented in 11-C and D. Reproduced from print in the Library of Congress.



PLATE NO. 11-F

View of the interior of the "Surrender Room."
Copyright 1911 by E. L. Owens. Reproduced from
print in the Library of Congress.



© ELOWENS
#2-1911



© E. LOWENS
#2-1911

INTRODUCTION

The Moore House is a frame farmhouse situated on the south bank of the York River a little over a mile below Yorktown, Virginia. The surrounding lands have been known for many years as "Temple Farm" and are a part of the original patent secured by John Harvey about 1631.

The date and builder of the present structure are not known. It was standing in 1781, and was owned by Augustine Moore at that time. Mr. V. M. Cruikshank of Shamokin, Pennsylvania, who was born in the Moore House, and lived there until 1895,

"...stated that his father, though a Pennsylvanian, had been greatly interested in Virginia history, and was habitually a very accurate man. His father told him that the present Moore House was built in 1713." (1)

No one has been able to dispute this date though the source of the information is not known. It is quite possible, judging by Colonial houses of known date in nearby Yorktown. The Sinclair home "Thorplands", farther down the Peninsula, has some striking similarities. The excavations of 1932 revealed the remains of probably one and pos-

(1) Sup't. Robinson, Aug. 6, 1932, "Memorandum for File."

sibly two earlier structures within a few feet of the present house. The first graphic representations of the Moore House appear on the military maps of 1781, et seq. (1).

William H. Shield, owner of the Moore House from 1835 to 1840, in writing to Bishop Meade, said:

"The house at Temple Farm is built of wood and is in rather a dilapidated condition at present. The original building was very large and consisted of a centre building with two large wings, either one of which was as large as the present house, which in fact was originally the centre building." (2).

This is a puzzling statement. A study of the existing structure in 1931, and the excavations of 1932, prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the present house was never joined by two large wings. Within the extensive area searched there were no positive evidences of detached wings. By "original building" Shield may have referred to some other structure, or his statement may simply have been an error of hearsay.

However obscure may be its history before 1781, it was an object of interest ever after. Henry Howe published the first view in 1849. (3). In Lossing's "Pictorial Handbook of the Revolution" can be seen the earliest published front view known. (4).

(1) See Plate No. 1.

(2) Meade, "Old Churches, Ministers, and Families of Virginia" (1857).

(3) See Plate No. 2.

(4) See Plate No. 3.

It is our belief that the one-story east wing (removed 1931) was built about the time of Shield's ownership. Physical evidence showed that it was an addition to the original structure and its brickwork indicated a date subsequent to 1800. (1). This wing is first shown in the Civil War photographs.

The House was, fortunately, photographed twice during the Civil War - by Matthew Brady (2) and Wood and Gibson (the "Gardner photograph"). (3). These two photographs show a remarkable amount of detail and were invaluable aids to accuracy. The text under the Gardner photograph says:

"When the Army of the Potomac invested Yorktown, the Moore House was in excellent preservation. It was far from a safe habitation, the rebel shells striking it several times; one in particular entered through the wall, and exploding inside, did considerable damage."

Two excellent watercolors by Kellvaine were painted in 186-, one showing the front (4) and one the rear (5) of the building. The next picture known of the Moore House is a watercolor made by a Mr. S. H. Sankey in 1874. (6). The building is shown at large size as viewed from the northwest. At the time the picture was painted, apparently no appreciable

(1) See Plates Nos. 14 and 15.

(2) See Plate No. 4.

(3) See Plate No. 5.

(4) See Plate No. 6.

(5) See Plate No. 7.

(6) See Plate No. 8.

change had occurred in the condition of the building since Brady's photograph was taken. The chief value of the picture is that it indicates that probably nothing in the way of improvements was done to the building between the Civil War and the 1881 rebuilding - seventeen years later. Apparently the building remained unoccupied during this time. Mr. John C. Wade of Yorktown, who worked on the building in 1881 said that it had been vandalized by negroes.

In 1881, preparatory to the Yorktown Centennial, the structure was "restored" in a typical 19th Century manner. A photograph (1), taken at that time, reveals the extent of the work. The freedom with which this was carried out may be surmised from a contemporary account (Appendix No. 3). Mr. Wade, who was one of the carpenters during the 1881 work, recalls that a man named Thomas Hill from Haddonfield, New Jersey, was the Foreman on the work which was done under the auspices of the Centennial Association and was financed largely by contributions from the North. He also recalls that there were no doors, window sash, or shutters in the house when they began work there. The balustrade and some of the treads of the stairway were missing at the time and none of the old outbuildings remained.

(1) See Plate No. 10.

The first floor of the rear wing is said to have been added at that time for the entertainment of distinguished Centennial visitors. It is believed that somewhere will be found 1881 notes which are not at present available. These may provide clues to the few details which we have had to design from our knowledge of contemporary work in other houses. The "improvements" of 1881 probably saved the house from disappearing entirely, but they give rise to some baffling questions. Why, for instance, were all of the first floor windows lowered four and one half inches?

The Centennial Association had acquired the property in connection with the 1881 celebration, but released it afterwards. From that time until 1931, the building was used as a residence. Mr. Cruikshank stated that his father had "added a considerable portion of the wings (1) - - in 1883." This seems to have been the second story of the rear wing. A protective layer of roll roofing was added by the Williamsburg Holding Corporation which acquired the property February 26, 1929. The last tenants of the house were Mr. J. W. Shaffer and family, dairy farmers, who held a lease from the Holding Corporation.

The preceding account brings us up to the ownership by the United States and the restoration undertaken by the National

(1) See Plate No. 16.

6.

Park Service. A description of the changes effected in the years 1931, 1932, 1933, and 1934, forms the body of the report following.

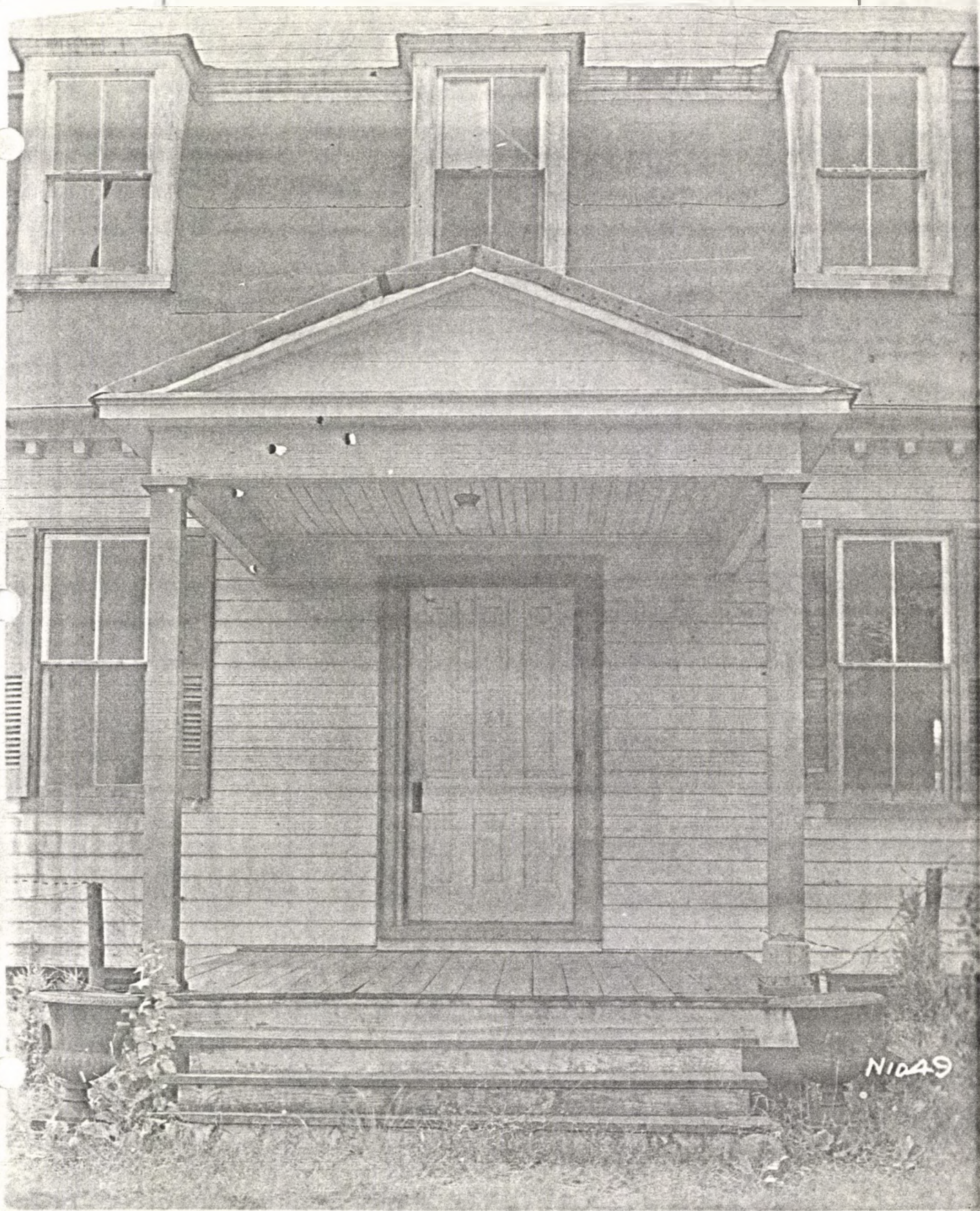
PLATE NO. 12

Front view of the House, July 1931, before the 1931 restoration work. Note the Victorian window sash, shutters, door and porch. The roll roofing was a protective measure supplied by the Williamsburg Holding Corporation. The hose connection, provided by some thoughtful agency, was connected with the Navy Mine Depot water supply.



PLATE NO. 13

Porch detail, July 1931, This we believe to have been at least the third porch on this house. It was subsequently removed.



N1049

PLATE NO. 14

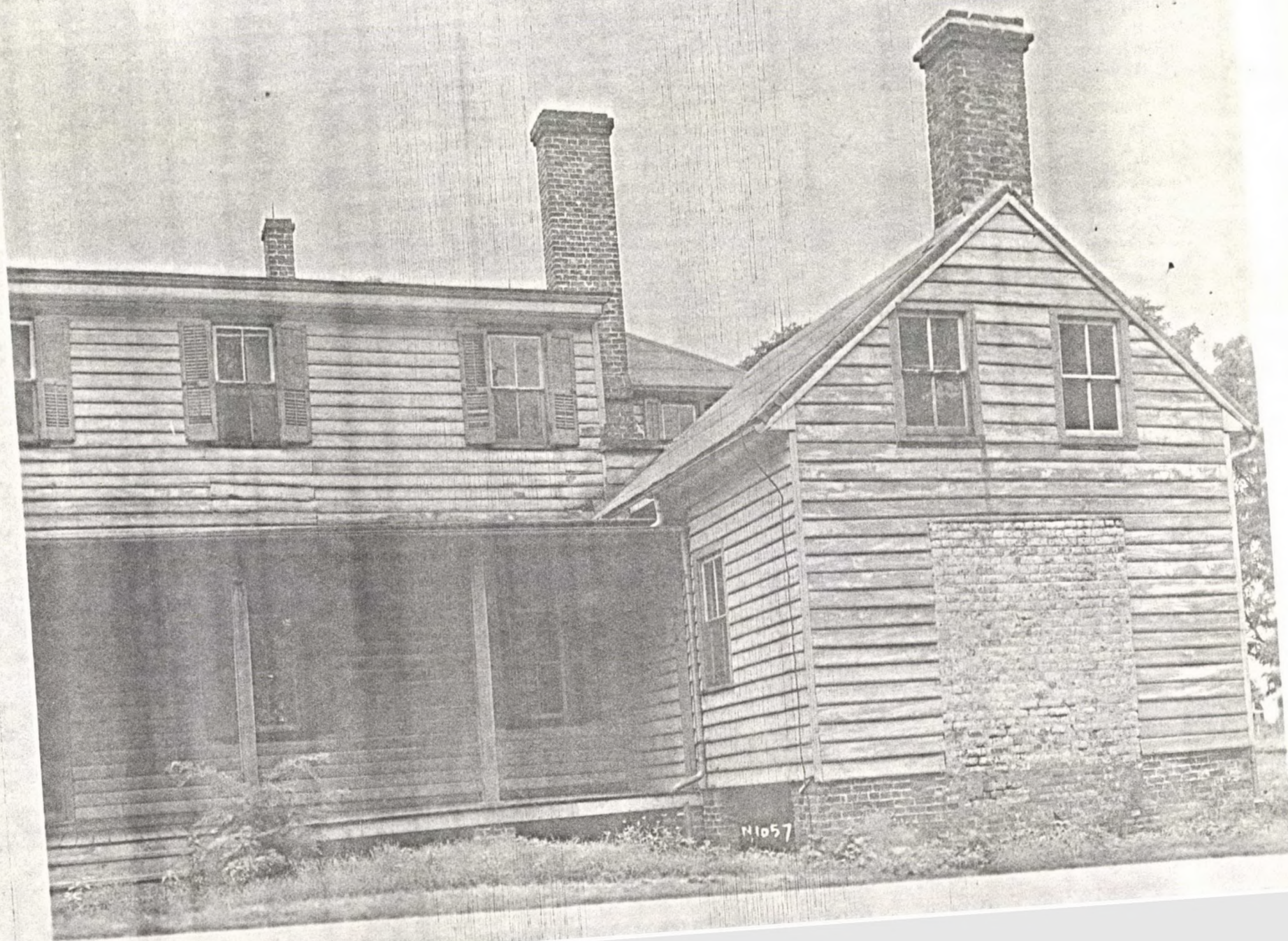
East wing detail, July 1931. This wing is thought to have been added somewhere between 1800 and the Civil War. Its foundations are of common bond, whereas those of the main structure are of Flemish.



N1046

PLATE NO. 15

Details of East and Rear Wings, July 1931.
Certain doorways had to be cut in the original
framing of the house to allow access to the
wings.



M1057

PLATE NO. 16

Rear View, July 1931. The rear wing was built at two different times: the lower floor was added for "the entertainment of distinguished visitors" in 1881, and the upper floor by John Cruikshank about 1886.

A third dormer was torn away during the Cruikshank additions, but part of the framing remained in the walls.



N1056

PLATE NO. 17

Southwest corner detail, July 1931.

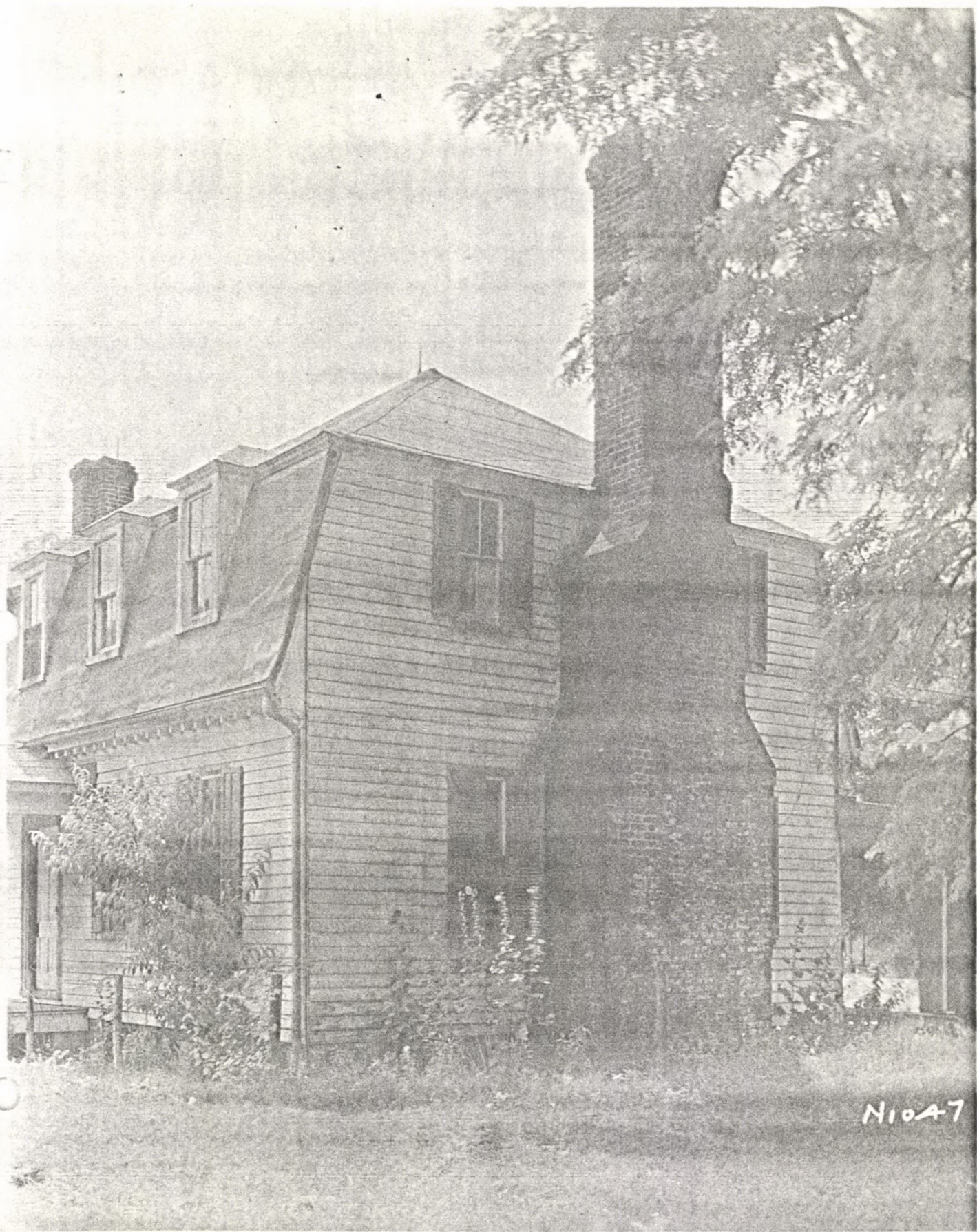
The rear cornice was largely buried under the Victorian porch roof. Original modillion blocks, when removed were found to be of poplar fixed in place with wrought nails.



N1059

PLATE NO. 18

Northwest corner detail, July 1931. The tin flashing, patchy mortar and whitewash were subsequently removed from the brickwork.



N1047

PLATE NO. 19

Largest of the outbuildings found on the property. Demolished just after photograph was taken in July 1931.

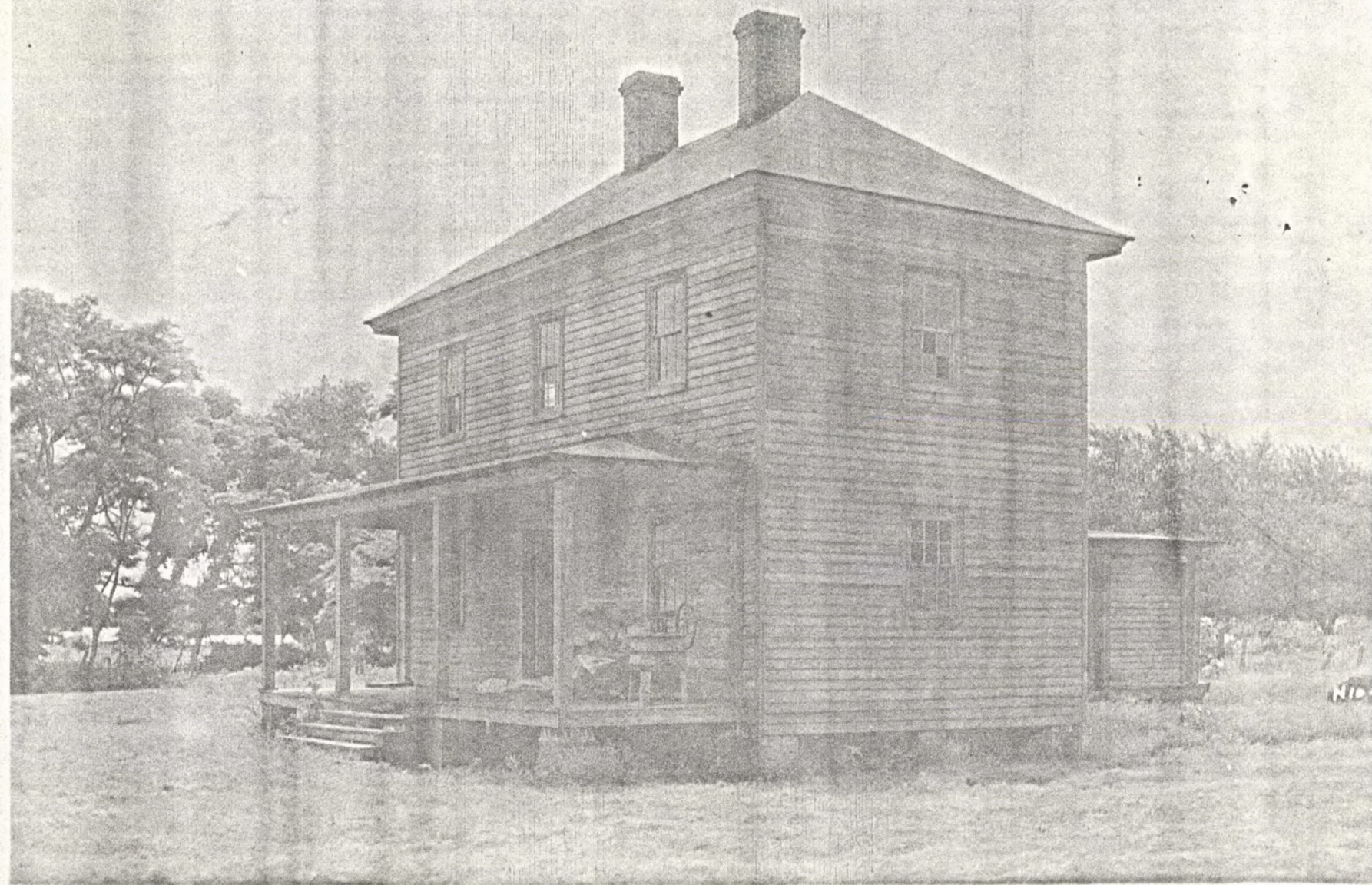


PLATE NO. 20

More outbuildings, July 1931. One not
shown in these plates was a double maple
bowling alley in the orchard.



N1044

PLATE NO. 21

Central hall, July 1931. Note modern door
and lighting fixture. Both were removed in 1931
and 1932.

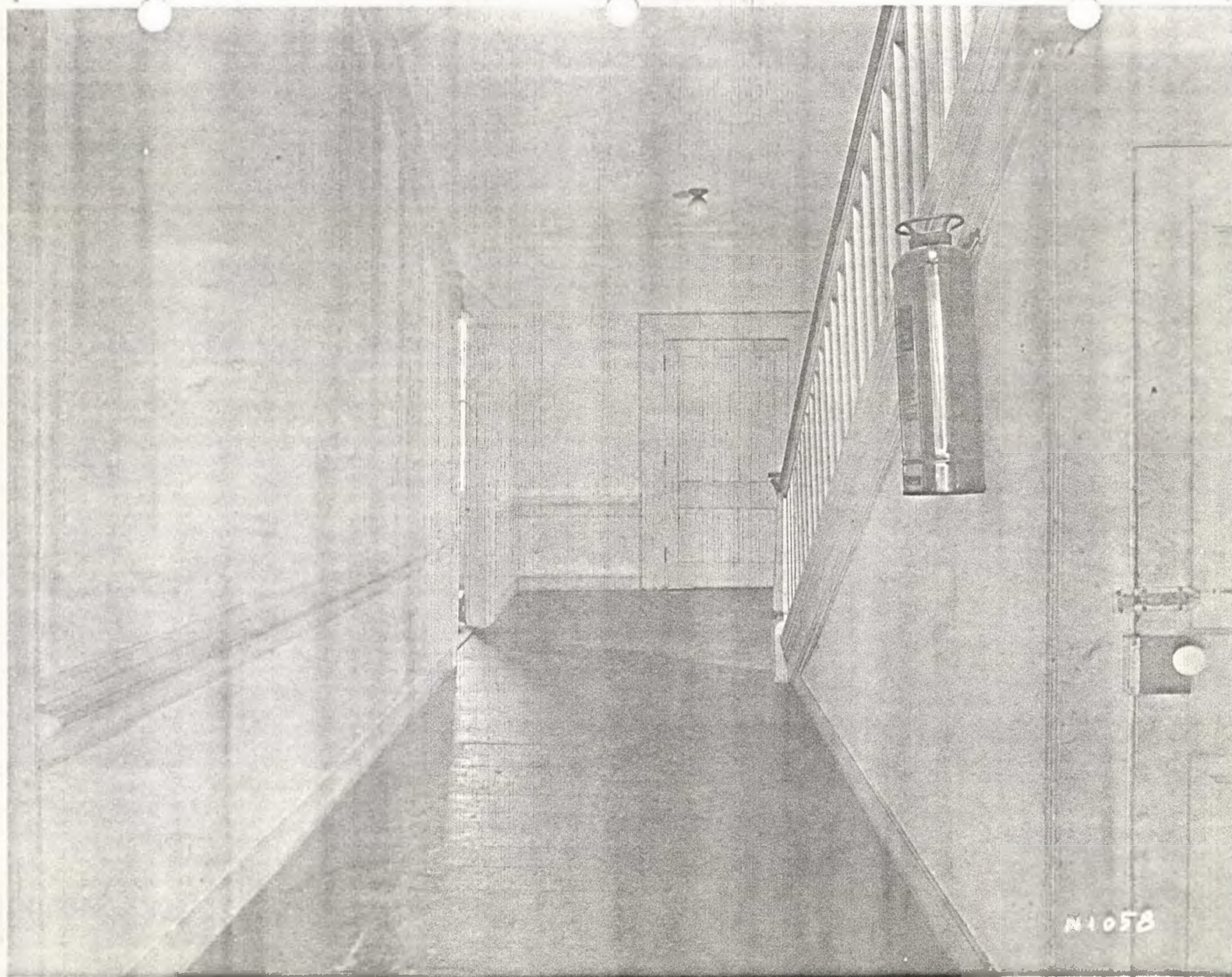
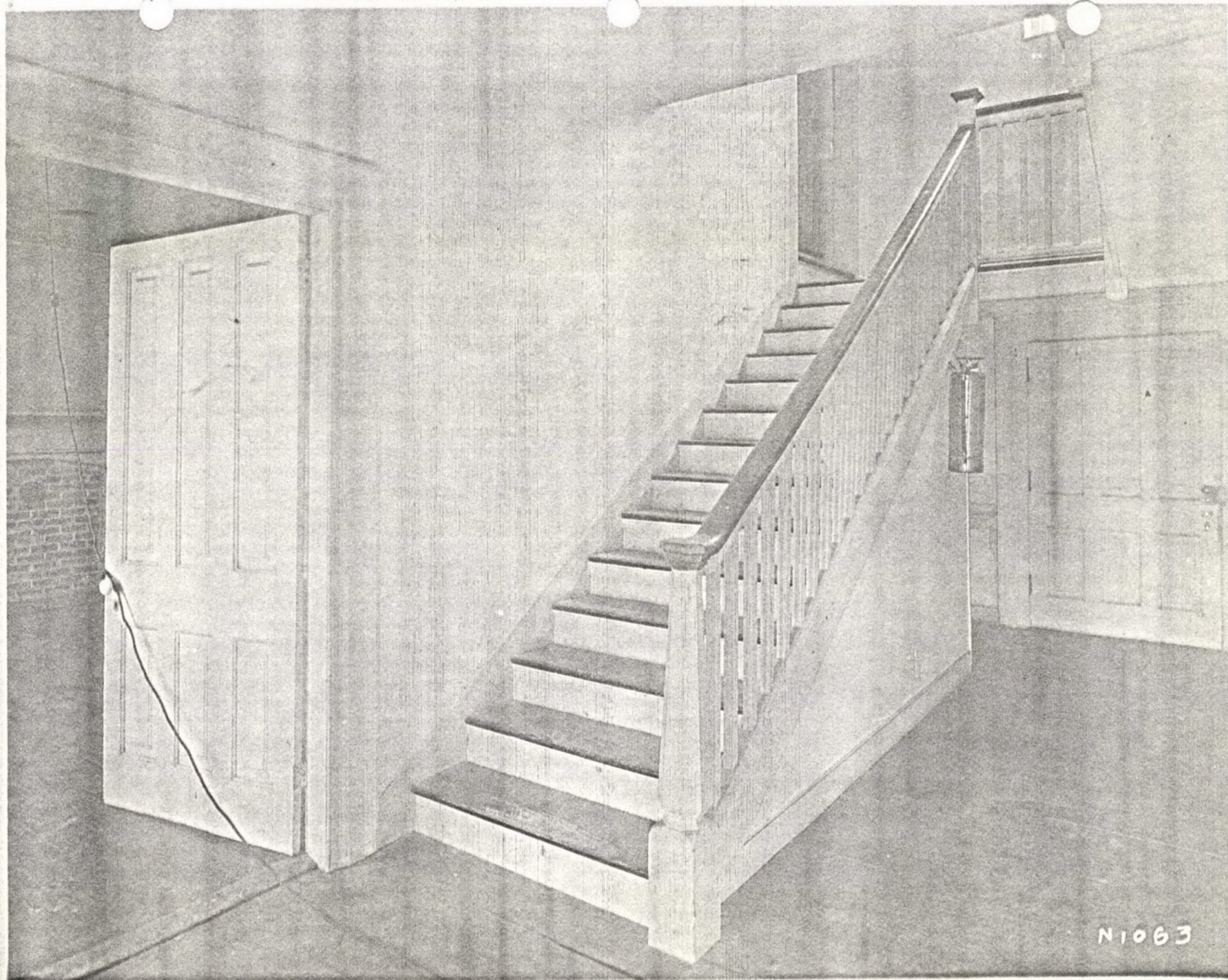


PLATE NO. 22

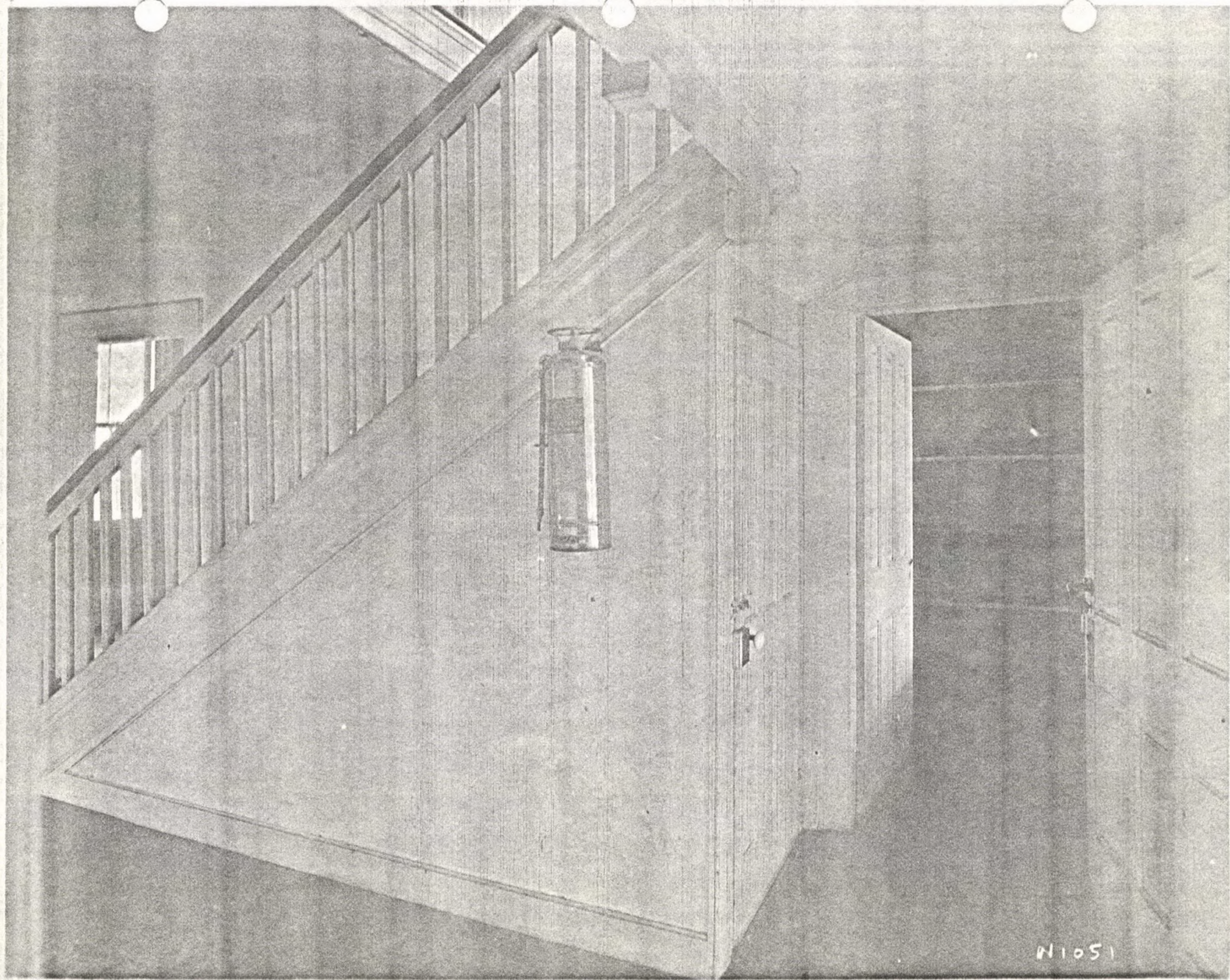
Main stairway, July 1931. The typical
19th Century balustrade was removed in
1933-34.



N1063

PLATE NO. 23

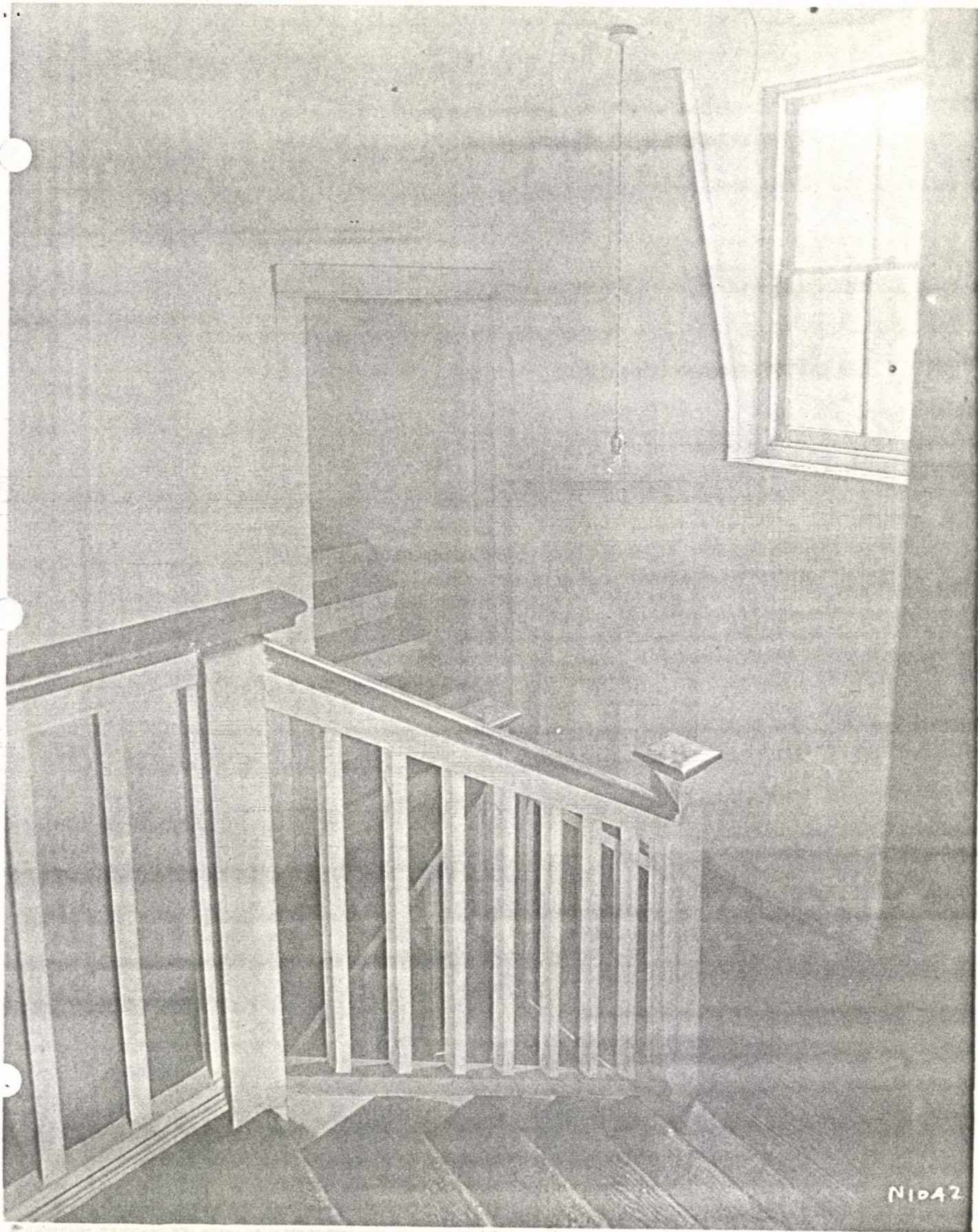
Door to cellar stairs, July 1931. The stairway had been cut through early floor joists showing that this space had been a closet originally. The room beyond seems to have been a closet for some time. Its partition walls are of uncertain date.



W1051

PLATE NO. 24

Stairway detail, July 1931. The left branch of the stairway was found to be of modern construction cut through old joists and was removed and sealed up in 1932.



N1042

PLATE NO. 25

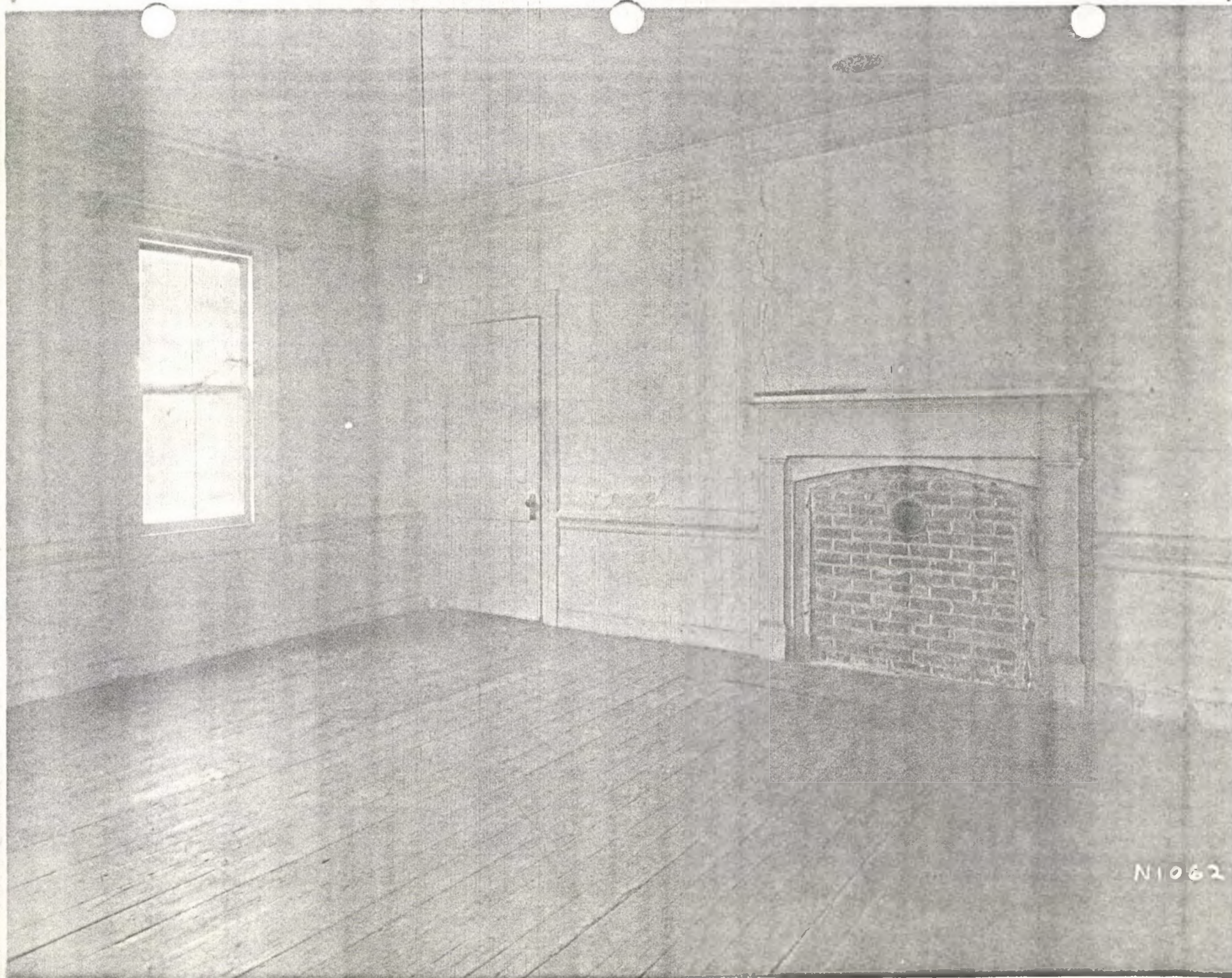
Stairway detail, July 1931. The modern stringer, rail, and balusters continued across the well. They were thought to have been 1881 construction.



PLATE NO. 26

East Room view, July 1931. The mantel was obviously Victorian and replaced in 1932. The corner door led into the East wing. The cornice was replaced by one of simple Colonial design in 1933-4.

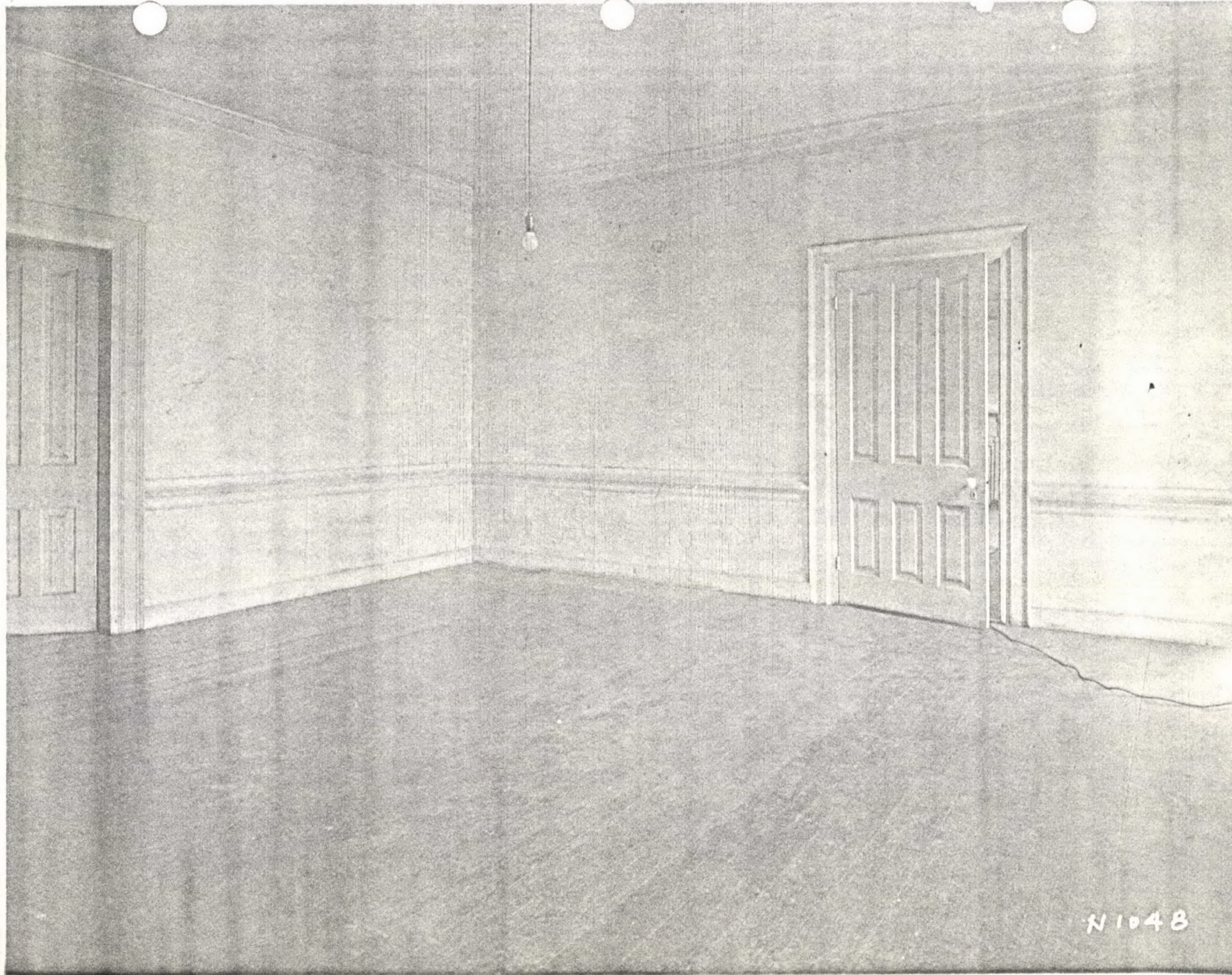
On the back of one of the first floor mantels was found the pencil notation "Col. Peyton, Yorktown." This man was probably an officer in charge during the 1881 work.



N1062

PLATE NO. 27

. East Room view, July 1931. The interior doors throughout the house with their Victorian panels, mortise locks, and china knobs were replaced in 1932.



N104B

PLATE NO. 28

First floor room in the East wing, July
1931. Just before the removal of the entire
wing.

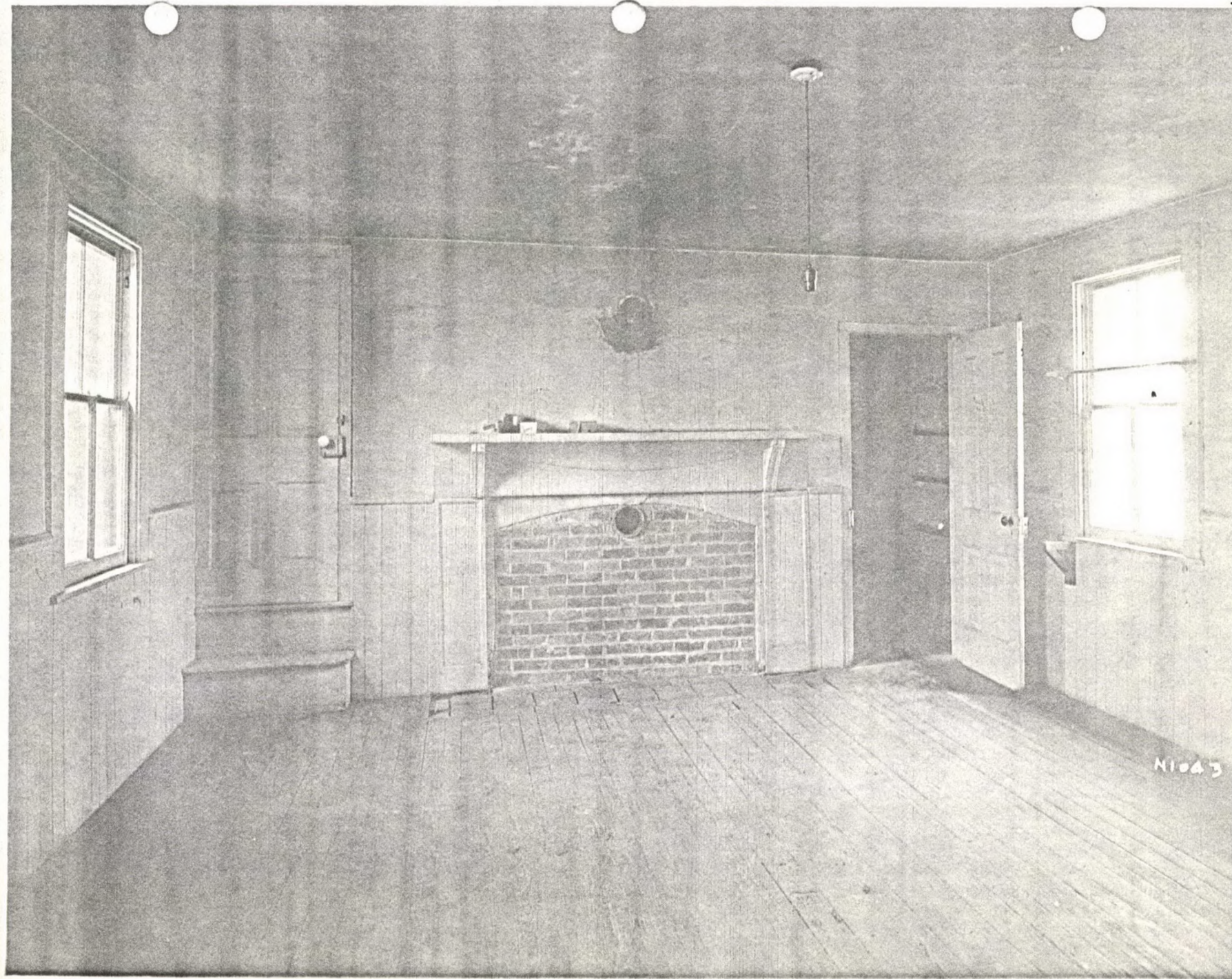
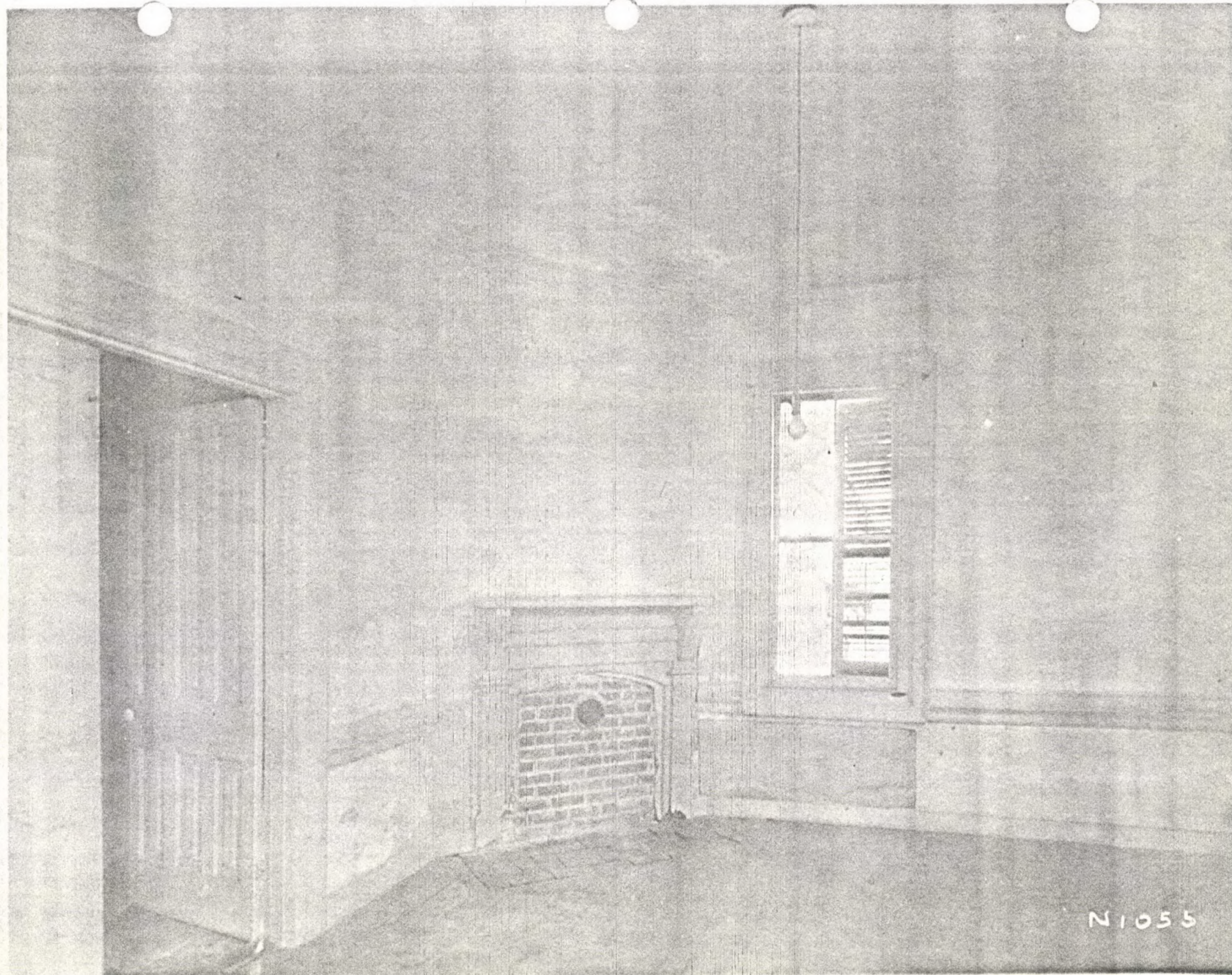


PLATE NO. 29

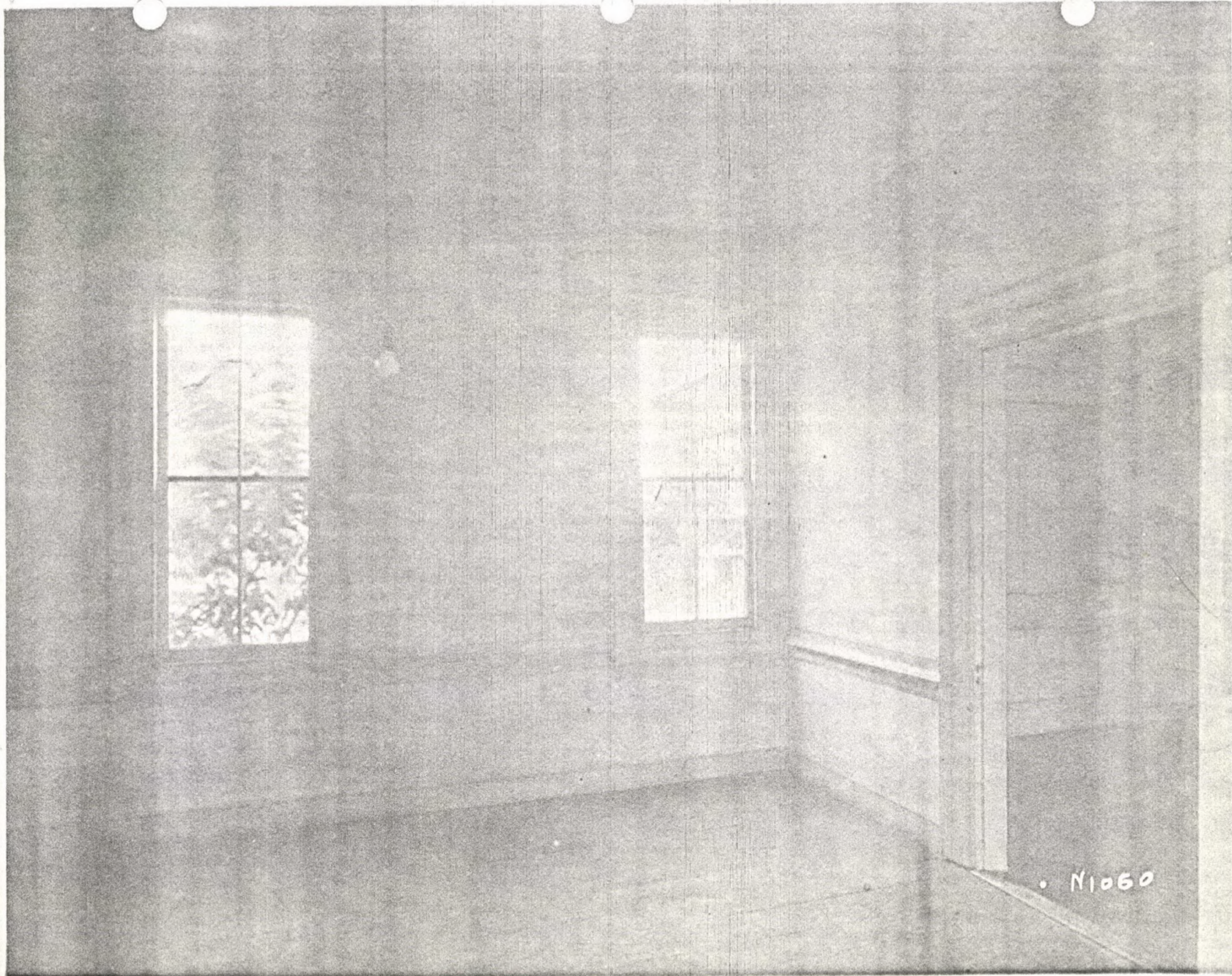
The "Surrender Room" fireplace, July 1931.
The double door on the left was replaced by a
single door in 1932 in accordance with the
evidence in the framing and local precedent.



N1055

PLATE NO. 30

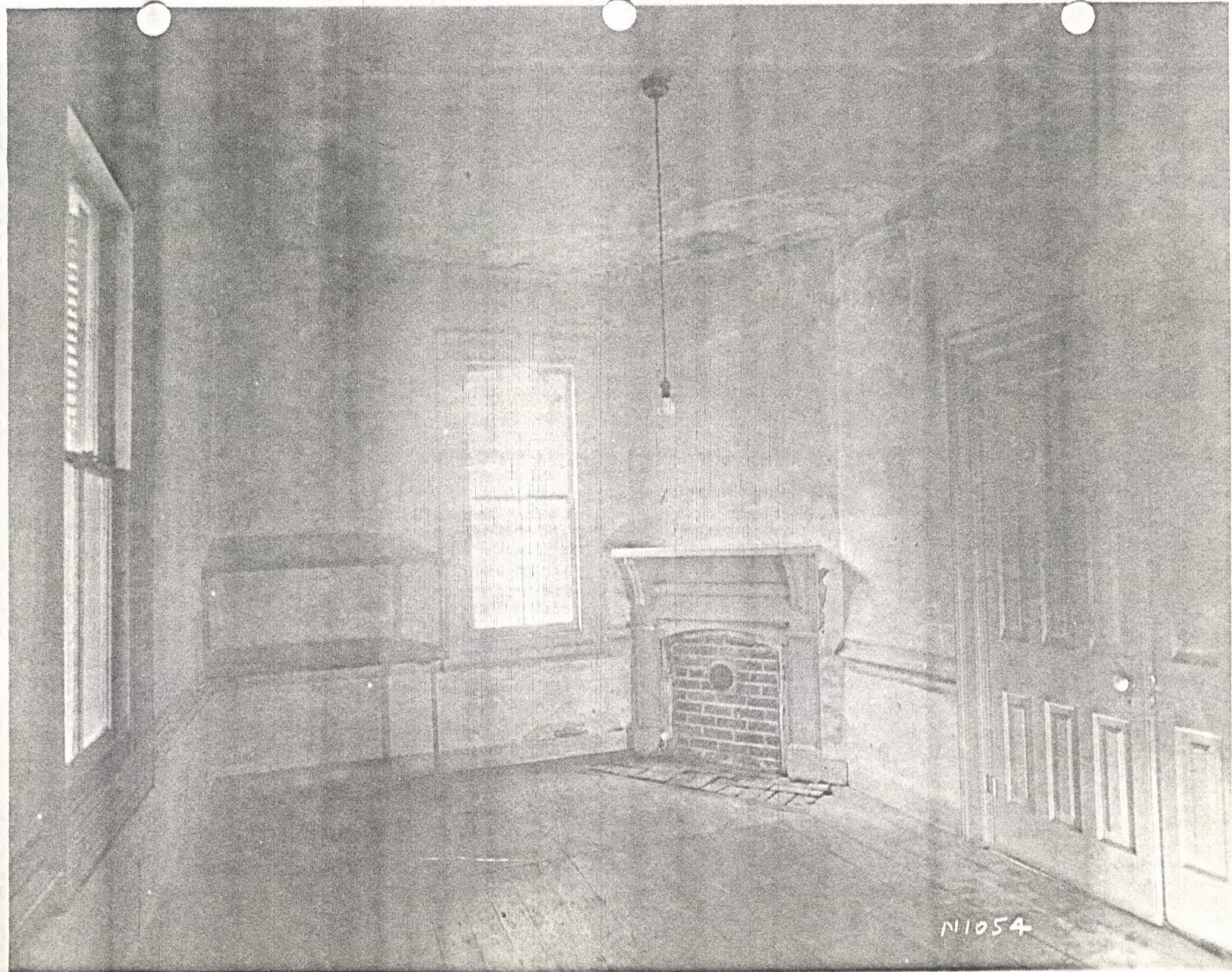
The "Surrender Room" in July 1951. The use of this room in Colonial times is not known. The writer suspects that the Committee of officers preparing the terms would have looked for a dining room table.



• N1060

PLATE NO. 31

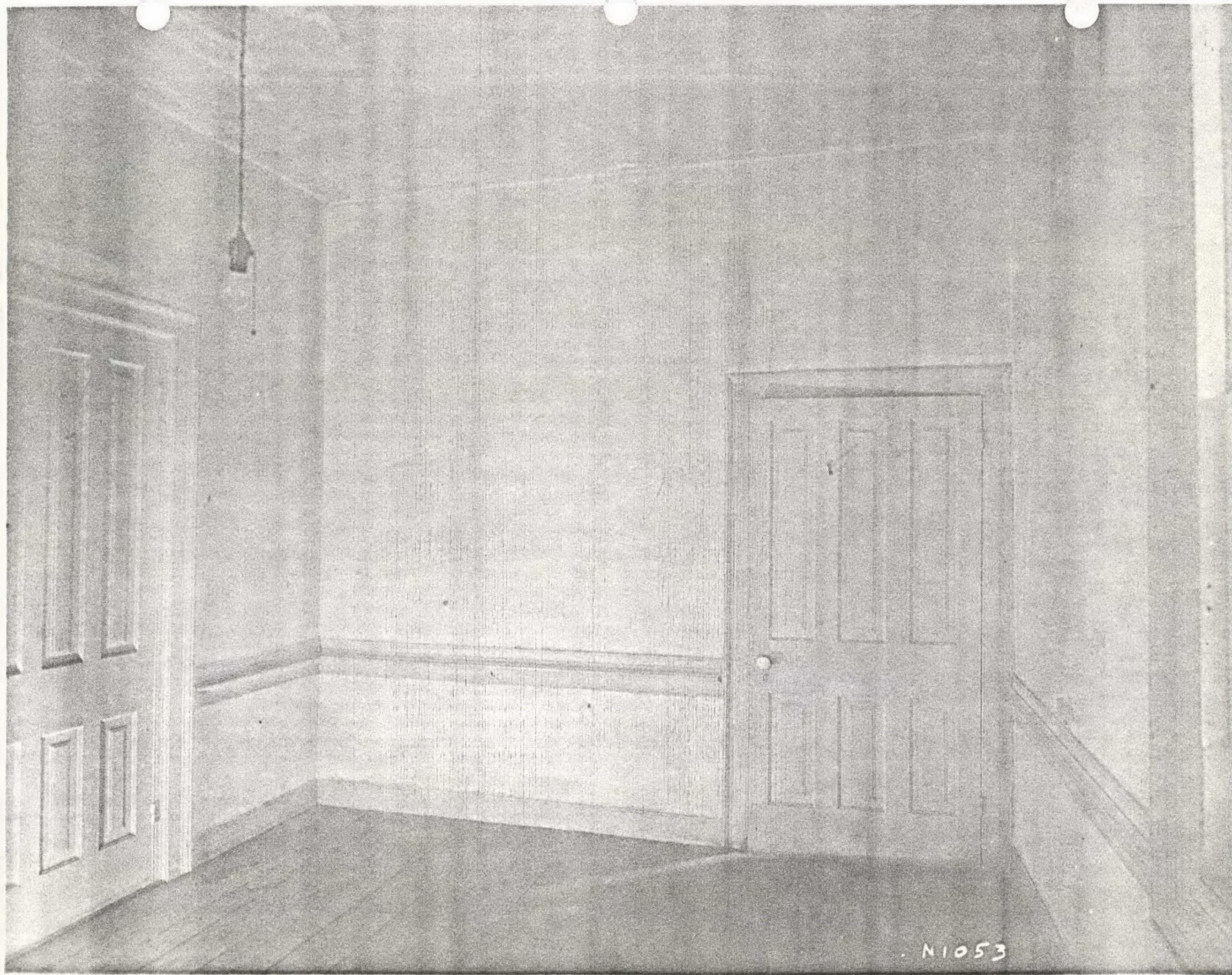
The room behind the "Surrender Room", July 1931. The interior door and window trim throughout the house are typical 18th Century in design and it is not known how much was replaced and added in 1891.



N11054

PLATE NO. 32

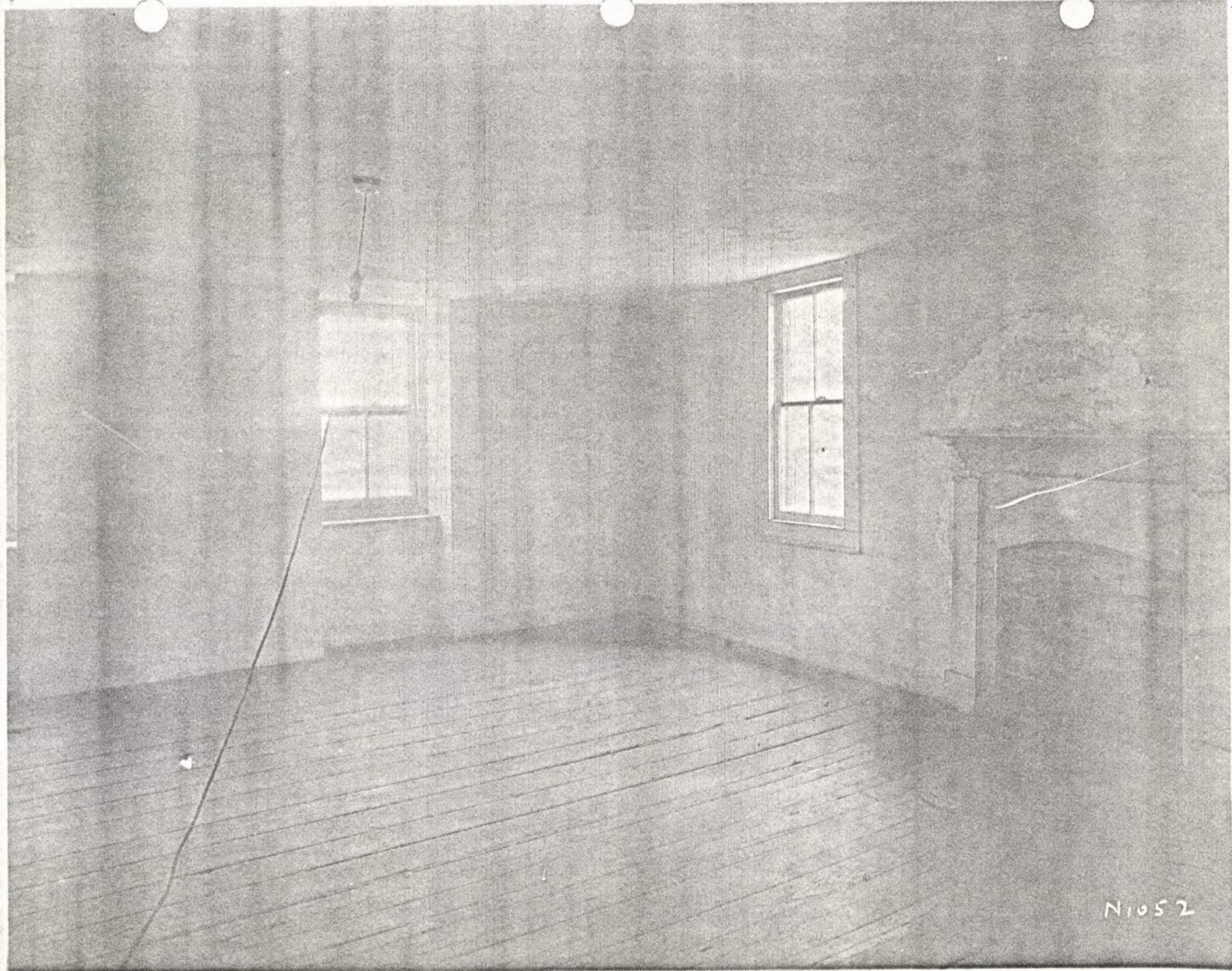
Room behind the "Surrender Room" July 1931.
The chair rail shown in the picture ran throughout
the three principal rooms of the first floor. The
chair rail found in the building was not a typical
Colonial detail and its age is uncertain.



N1053

PLATE NO. 33

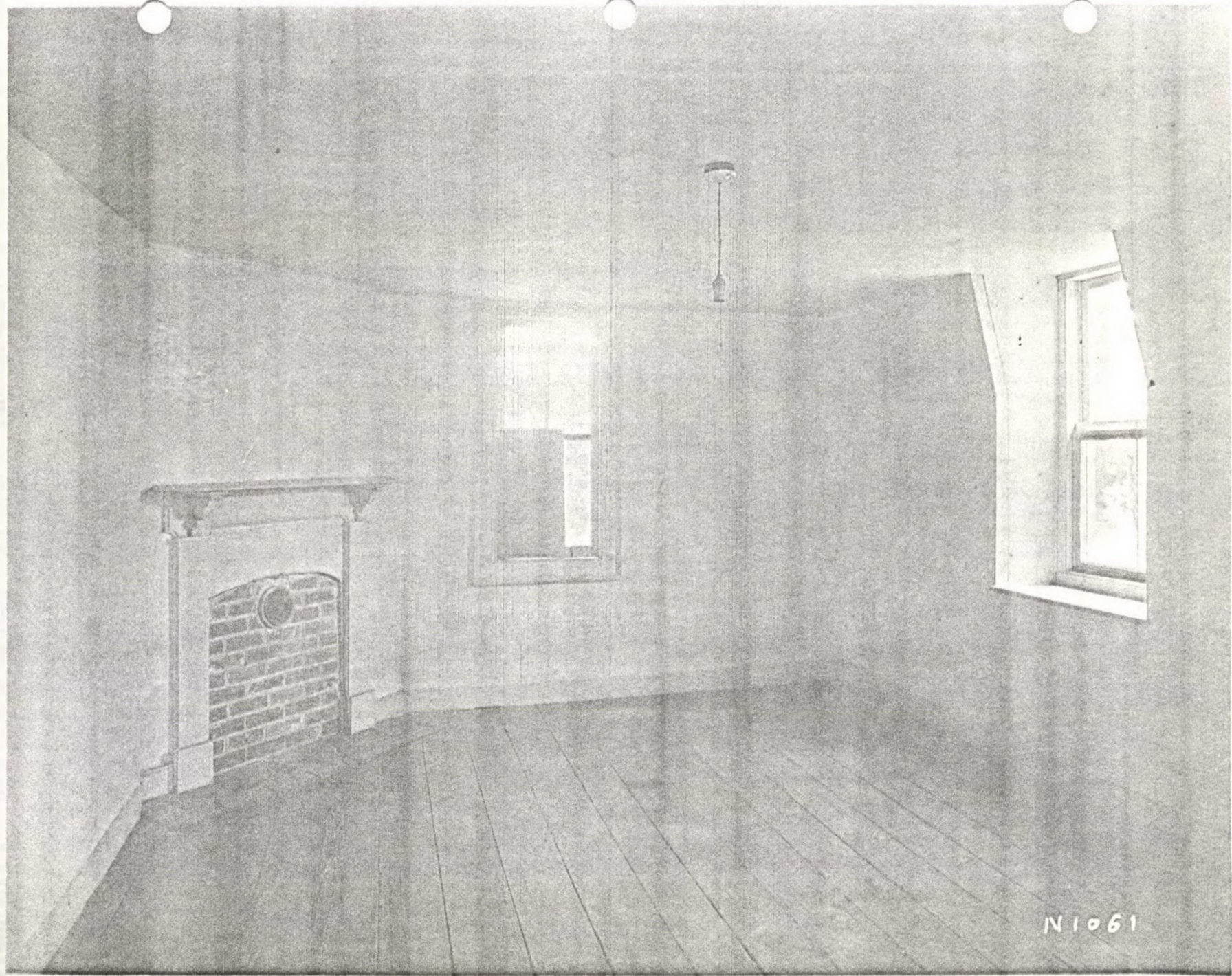
East Room, second floor, July 1931. All of the fireplaces were bricked up when the United States acquired the House. When the openings were cleared of the brick, detailed drawings were made of each condition in order to better approximate the proper size and shape of each.



N1052

PLATE NO. 34

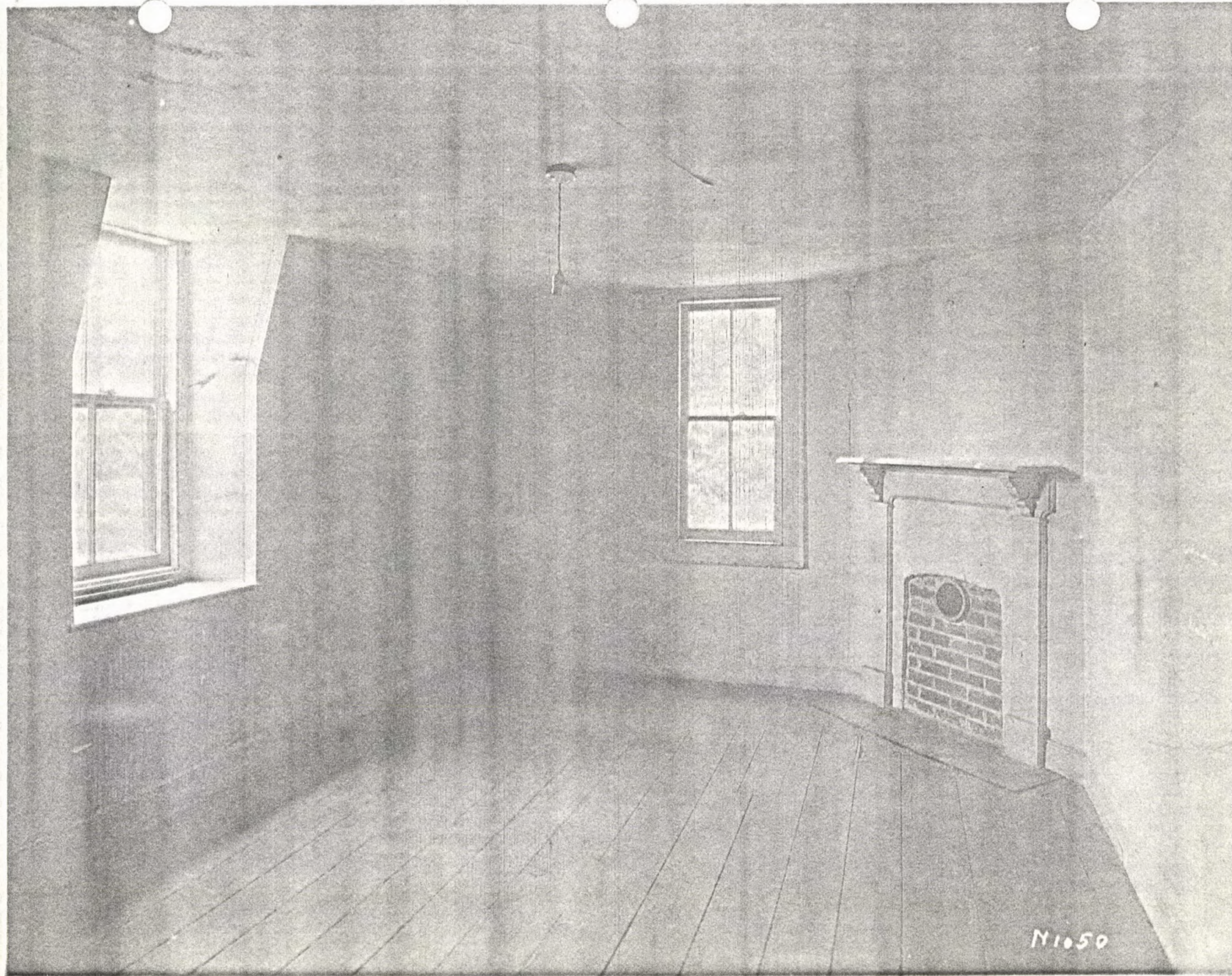
Northwest room, second floor, 1931. This room shares the end chimney with the room behind. Diagonal fireplaces like this are a common arrangement in early Virginia buildings.



N1061

PLATE NO. 33

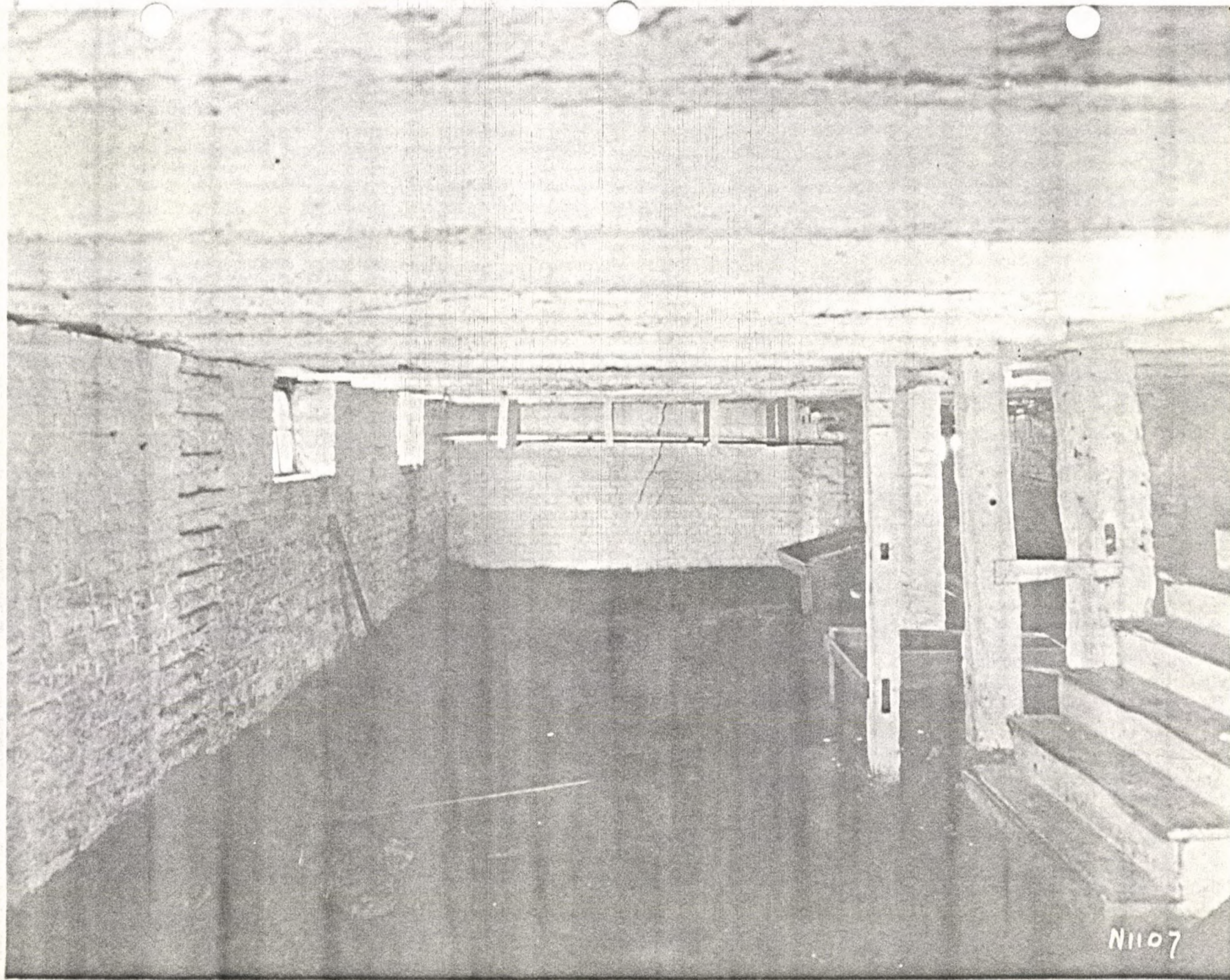
Southwest room, second floor, July 1931.
While much of the original flooring remained
in the building, it was patched with modern
boards in many places. Antique flooring was
used to correct the effect during the 1933-4
work.



N1050

PLATE NO. 36

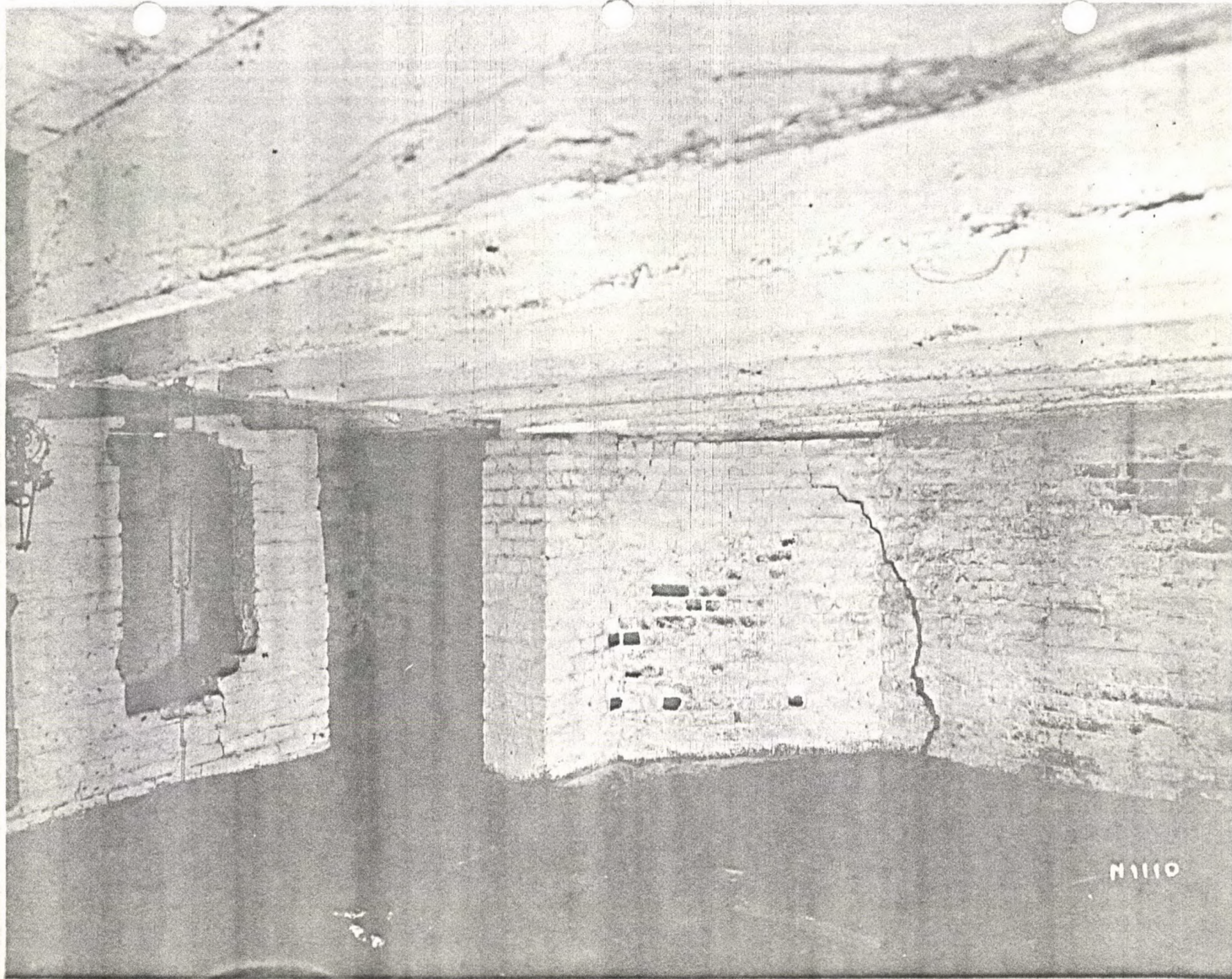
View looking east in the cellar. July, 1931.
The stair shown on the right was modern and has
been removed. Access was originally had through
an outside entrance which has been restored.



N1107

PLATE NO. 37

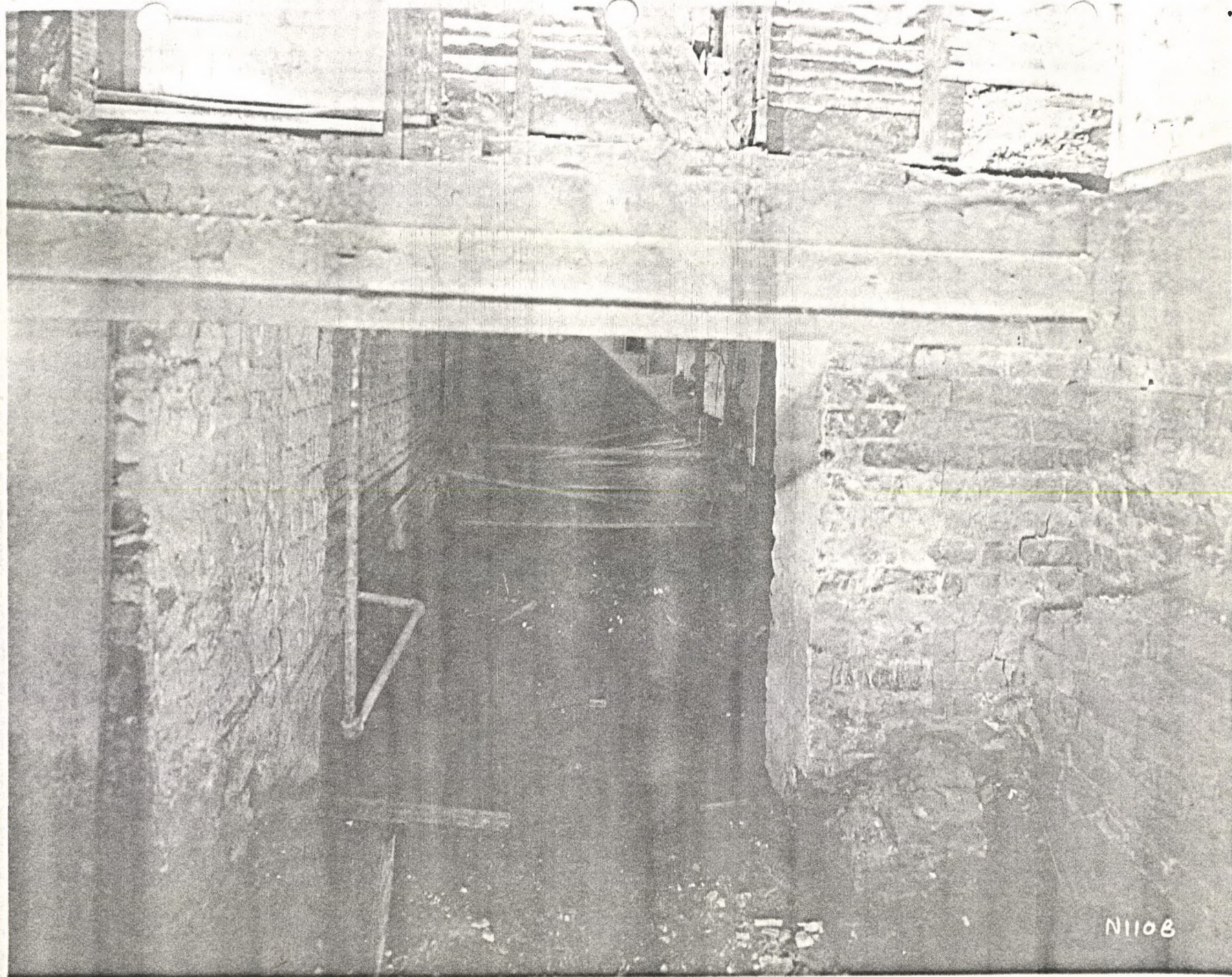
West chimney foundation, July 1935. The brick partitions on the left were modern and were removed after the first floor framing was repaired.



11110

PLATE NO. 33

Remains of the original cellar entrance, July, 1931. On the right side can be seen the broken surfaces where the sidewall was torn away. On the left the wall had been largely rebuilt to meet new conditions in the rear wing. The oak nosing of the lowest brick step was sunk into the square holes to be seen on either side.



N1108

PLATE NO. 39

Detail of framing, southeast corner of the first floor, July 1931. The corner post and cross-brace were badly rotted and had been patched.



PLATE NO. 40

Framing detail, July 1931. When some of the weatherboarding was removed it was discovered that the tenons of the framing of the first floor windows had been cut and the frames dropped between four and five inches. We do not know the reason for this.