

BEN & BARBARA WILSON
 8333 Hamilton St.
 Courtland, AL 35618
 657-2137

Al. Hist. Comm. gave
 list to Ben Wilson
 RTA Box 342
 Killersville 35845
 1-767-5238
 fall of 1987 - They
 are to renovate/rebuild

"Common bond"
 brick on front is
 very unusual.
 Usually Flemish
 bond on front (only)

Not

Chimney tops "eroded"
 off ± 1'

1994

BEN & BARBARA WILSON
 833 Hamilton Street
 Courtland, Alabama 35618

Telephone: 637-2137



SOUTH FRONT
 (LATER PORCH)

→ N

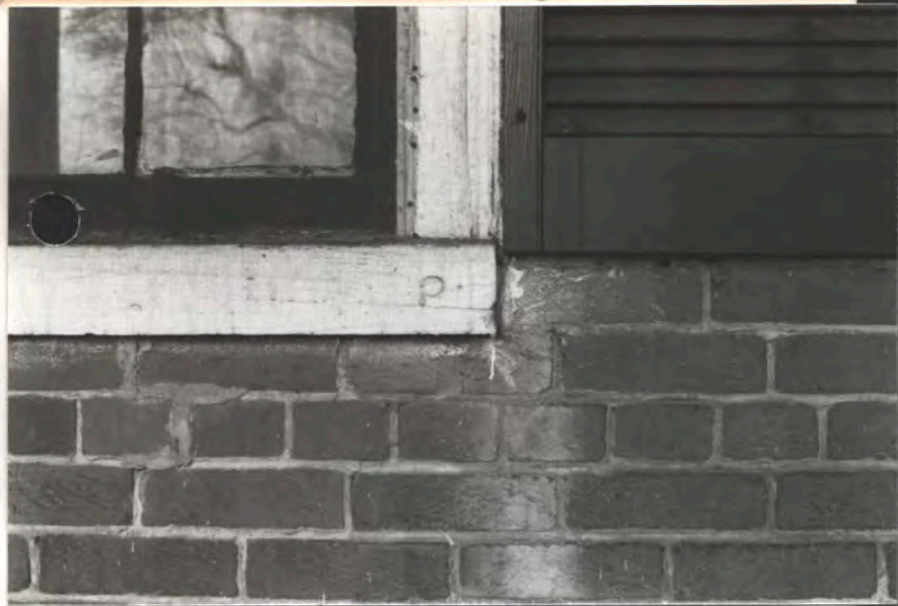
↑ ADDN
 (VIC.?)

← numerous
 settlement
 cracks

S.E.
 cor.

1 of 7

c. 1828 Shackelford-McMahon Hse
 Courtland, Al. photos Jan. 1987
 NARVIE P. JONES, FWA



NOTE "PENCILLED" JTS. MODERN BLIND & 19TH C. BLIND



S. Front door
 - has no glass topl't or sidel'ts. = unusual (dark entry)
 Lock = 20th c.
 See orig. keyhole below the lock
 trace orig. col. ↓



ORIG. SHUTTER - DIB (SIM. TO 1438 BELLEFONT)

Blinds nailed to wall backwards, perhaps in 20th. c., "Rat-tail" holdback, + blinds look orig., except "nail-on" applic.

Said to be a piece, betw. 19th cent

Who might be "Louise"?
 (Front wall, E. side.)





NORTH REAR

COLLAPSED

N



makeshift
col. caps

porch
looks
OK is.

P.S. - No
col. caps
hollow, x
see report sheet
above

makeshift
repair at
col. bases

N

N



SETTLEMENT



→ N

N.E. COR.



SETTLED

N.W. COR.



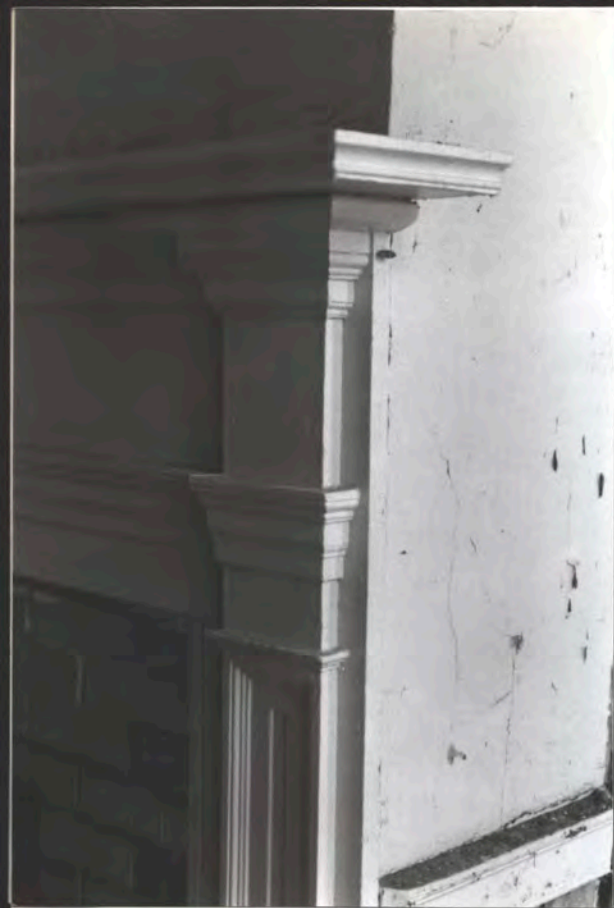
N →

COLLAPSED N.W. COR., AT 2ND FL.

4

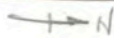
N →





1st Fl., W. Rm.,

later brick
surround + grate



hearth pattern is early 19thc.
design, although bricks look
too precise for that period - ?

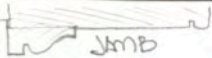
NA



door panels are beveled on "ym" side (less prominent side) = unusual



NA



1ST FL, W. RM., E. DOOR TO HALL



NA

"QUADRANT LATCH" -
LOOKS LIKE NOT ORIG. TO THIS DOOR
-SEE TRACE OF "KEEPER" ON SAME

NA





NW

S. window jamb/sill, 1st fl. w. rm



Sash looks
orig., per
mould shape

Brick = "common" bond all walls = unusual (Usually Flemish bond on front only)

No transom at entry
= UNUSUAL for Fed.

← both chimney tops
short by ± 2'
(caps typically erode off)

windows
later
made
on door
(here
replaced)

All sashes
= Fed.



Mrs Wilson →

S. Front

↑ Ben Wilson
owner

↑ steel braces
to nudge wall
back vertical

Vic. Kit. add.



note 2 porch braces
(small = 1828
large = c. 1900 (?))

c. 1828 Shackleford - McMahon Hse
Courtland, AL.
photos May 1988 Harvie P. Jones, F.A.I.A.

32 pgs. taken early May 1988

1 of 32

7

Chim. tops shortened

Fascia patched
w/ metal

↳ Fed. Penal Ell Add. ↲



↳ Vic. Kit
Scr. porch ↗

↗ N
↳
into
Fed. Add.
Ell
(Vic. door)



↳ Vic. Kit

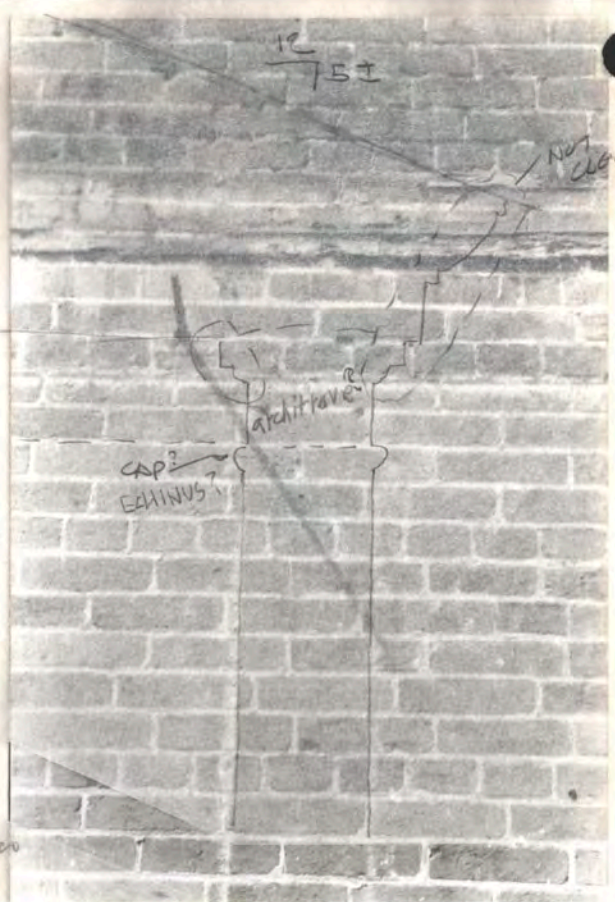
↗ N



McMahon 1828 Court Street

3 of 32

South Front
Orig. Porch Traces
+ c. Turn-of-Cent. large porch trace
(w/ deck+rail)



McNahan 1828 Cornfield Ave

3 of 32

← ORIGINAL PORTICO TRACE (see photo)
 → South front
 Orig. Portico Traces
 + c. Turn-of-Cent. large porch trace (w/ deck+rail)



↳ steel braces 1988

S. Front w/ 2 porch trees
(strut = orig.)
large - looked early 20th c. (1920's?)
+ later makeshift repairs. See
1987 photos by HJ



(see photo)
1987
HJ



ORIG. PORTICO
TRACES
(SEE PHOTO)

← Vic.
Kit

↳ steel braces 1968

S. Front w/ 2 porch trees

(str. M = orig.)

large - looked early 20th c. (1920's?)

+ later makeshift repairs. See

1987 photos by HJ

A



Fed Ell Add. - bowed + cracked wall

→ N

Minimum 1928 Construction (1928)

→ N



Wall bowed out several inches

→ N

N. WALL

Ell E. WALL = rebuilt w/ mid 20th c. brick

→ N



Brick Fed's Ell Add.

VI Vic. Kft. - c. 1870(?) + later porch





c1828
McNabhan - Courtland - May 1988

14



old photo (mid 20th c.?) of front (N.) side
showing 20th c. brick porch (probably built 1920's)
+ heavy ivy growth contributing
to mortar deterioration.
Orig. portico was narrower. See photo paint traces on sh 3032



patch
Fascias

N ↗

↑
crack +
bowed

REAR
(NORTH)
fascias present
road

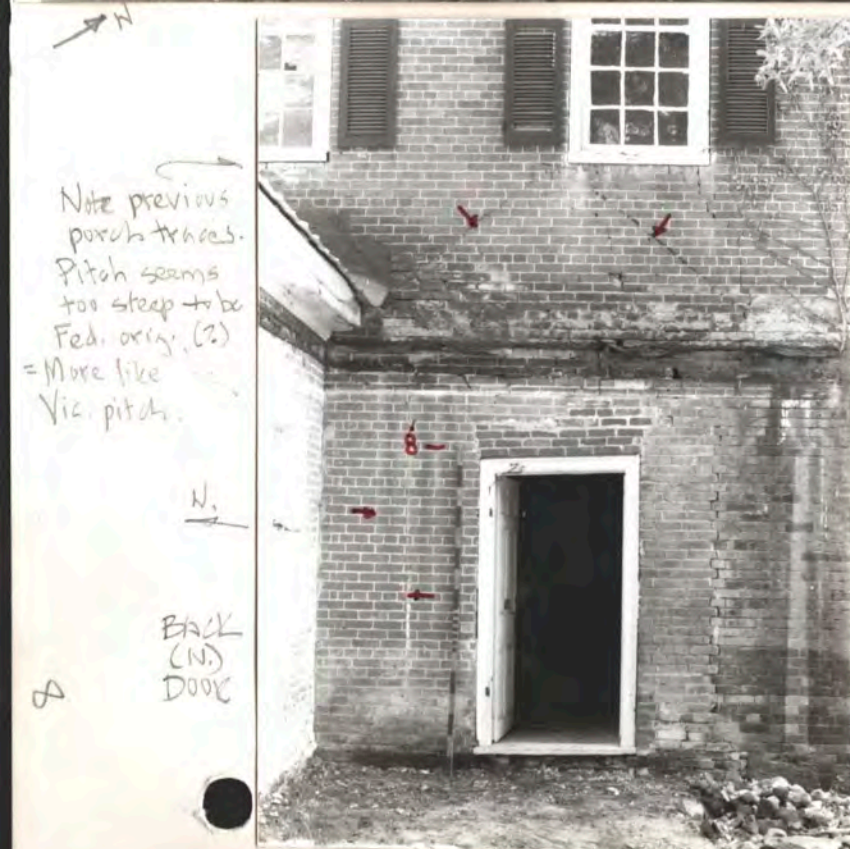
← 1988 →
traces of removed
modern porch
(cols = machine made
hollow, staved)
collapsed wall
dismantled,
ply. enclosure (temp.) installed 1988

Apparently no porch originally, or unclear if so. Note steep pitch roof trace(?)

7032

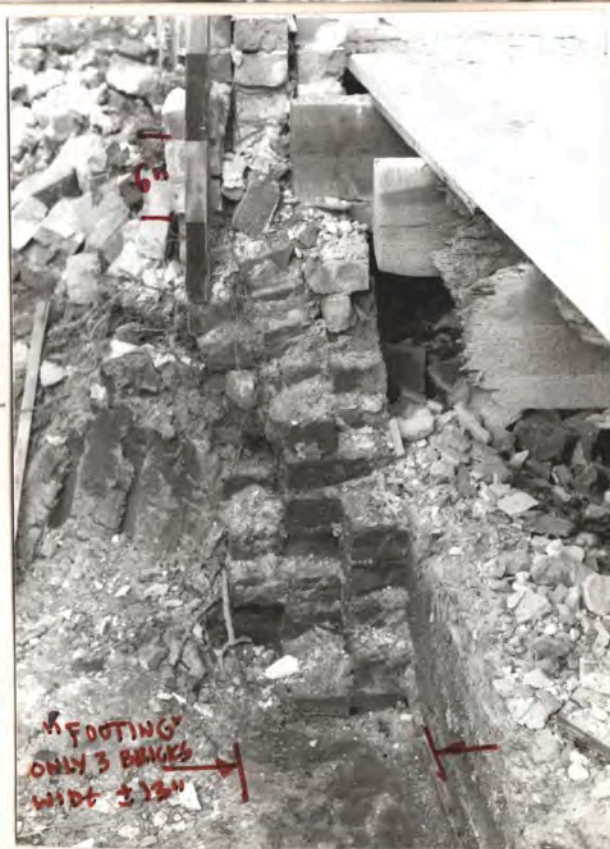


MOD. BLINDS nailed to wall



Note previous porch traces. Pitch seems too steep to be Fed. orig. (?) = More like Vic. pitch.

BACK (N) DOOR



FOOTING ONLY 3 BRICKS WIDT 3' 12"

Per samples sent to HJ labeled "North Wing" (Kite)

Cause of wall bulges: No corbel spread at "Footings" (soil tested good)

9432

N



ply. at collapsed wall

N



N



mod. 3/4" Rotary saw replacement pine. in this rm only

1st Fl. WEST 2nd Fl. WEST

orig. 5/4 pine sash - sawn fl.

Pit Sawn Orig. Joints





N ←

patch end



0

N ←

Orig blind holdback
S. wall



N ←



N ←

note
Common
bond on
front
also
surround

8-

c. 1828 N. C. M. Whom - Court Street
May 1988 ADJ

mod. lt.

later knob & tube wiring
(only 20th c.?)



Back S
(H.) door

P.S. note 20 July 89

owner discovered evidence
of earlier stairs

metal
1st fl.
west

2nd
(present)
stairs

straight
run up to
2nd fl.

ENTRY
HALL

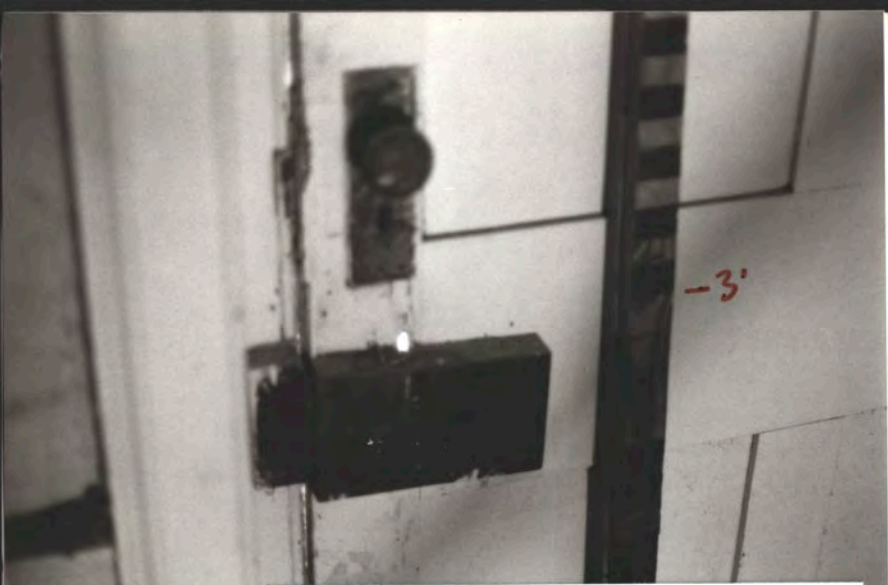
Turned balusters
most unusual for
Fed. Period.

Apparent original
P.S. - see note above;
are probably 1850's
(also paneling)



c.1920 McMahon

11 of 32



Iron rimlock
probably orig.
ENTRY DOOR
(SOUTH)



↖

clo. under
stair
shlvs. look
orig.

ENTRY
HALL
1st fl.



↖

↖ see left for
clo. under
stair

12



STAIR HALL - 2ND FL

2ND FL. E. RM.



N →

Closets are orig. (not unusual in Fed. period)

iron rimlock probably orig.

N ←

N ←



N ←



8



3



2ND FL. E. RM.
original closets
later Vic. coal-grate

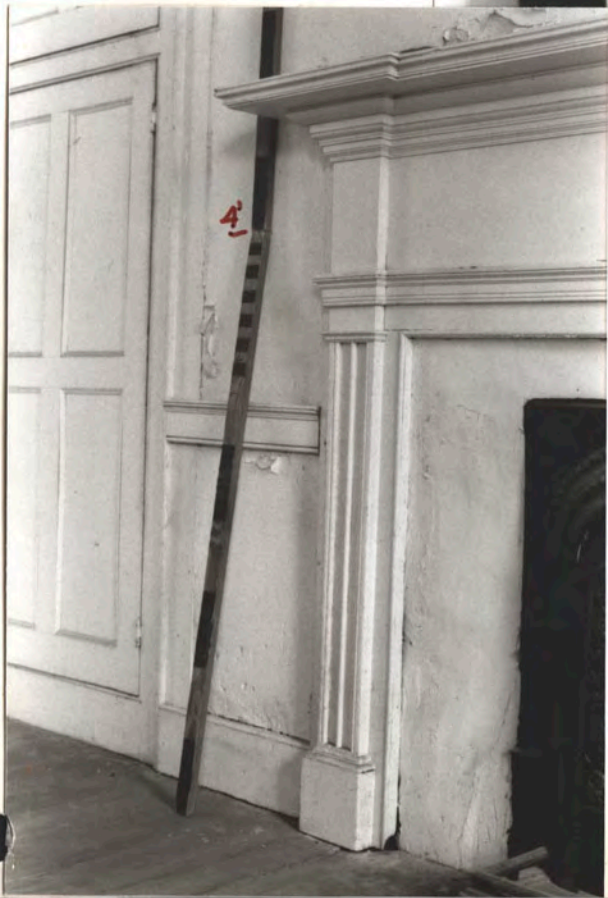
5'-



2ND FL. E. RM



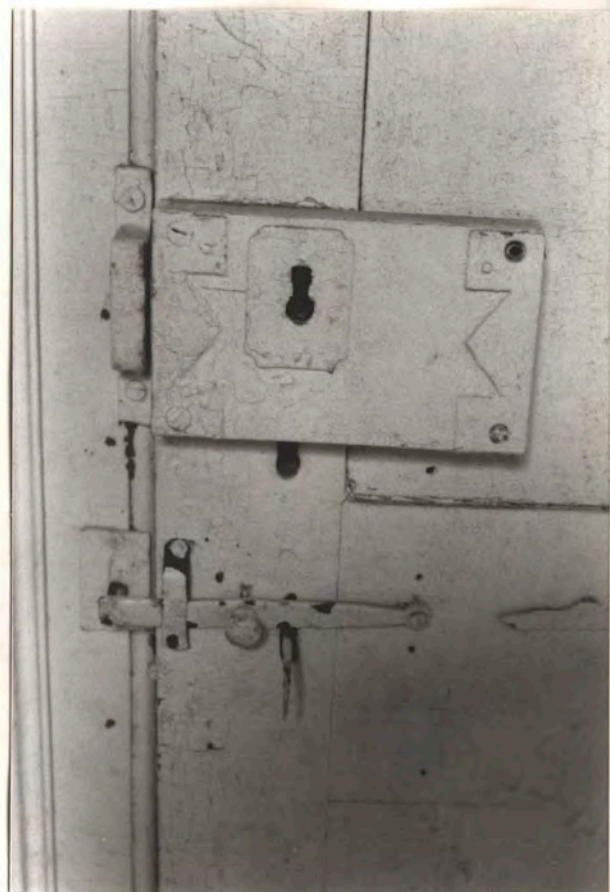
4'-



later cem.
over hearth
bricks
(or sub. for (?))



← backband (most typical Fed. design) 5



N ←

N ←

orig. latch (iron) AN

2ND FL. SOUTH CENTER "TRUNK RM"

↑ top = old wood
 "stock-locks",
 perhaps 2nd lock,
 per old keyhole.
 Date? perhaps
 mid 1800's



← temporary ply. at collapsed wall

2ND FL. WEST RM.

→ N
← later cement at hearth (see 1st fl. west brick hearth)

CS828 M^cMahan. Courtland - May '88 - 19 of 32

2ND FL. W. RM.

this type of east rms

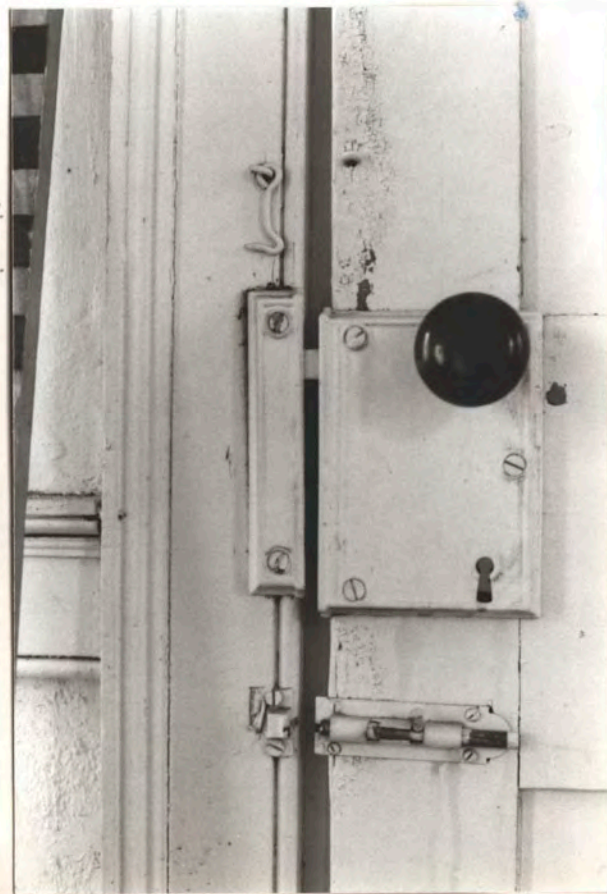


note
pegs

1/2
1"
1/8

note
faceted
panels

N ←



lock is of
mid-1800's
design
(vert. proportion,
moulded edge,
brown cer. knob)

N ←

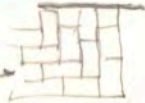


4'



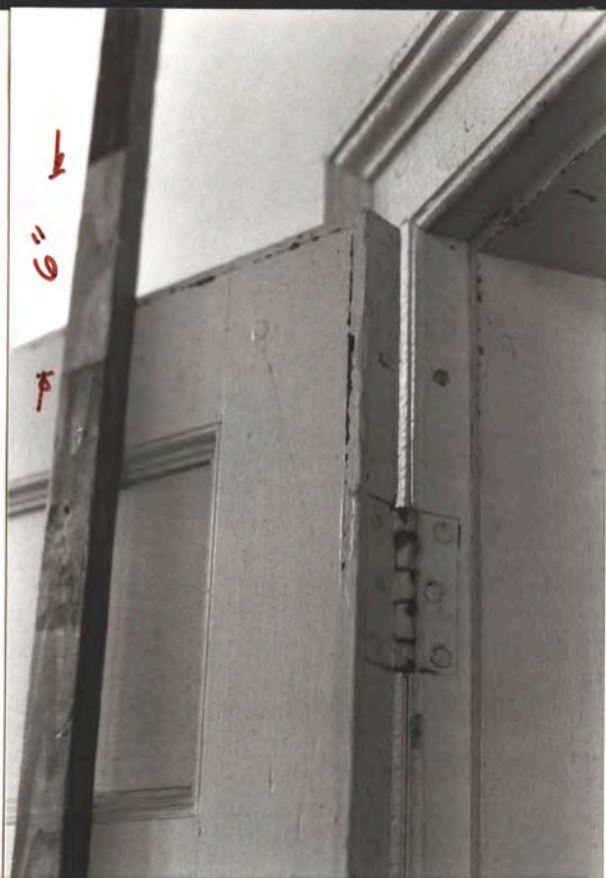
- "Surround" bricks = 20th c. temp. ply. at collapsed wall
 + Grate looks c. 1900 (?) installed 1948
 ← gas line, 20th c. (butane)

FIRST FL. WEST RM.

- ← brick hearth is in most-typ. Fed. Period pattern → 
 ← this pine floor is 3/4" ± rotary-sawn replacement fl.
 See pg. 9



↓
6"
↓



1ST FL. W. RM

← 20th c. lock plate

← Iron "quadrant" latch probably original

↓
1"
↓





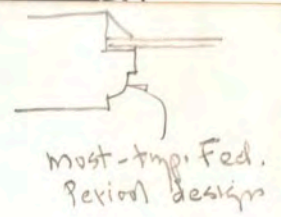
skmb

Iron lock, Darts?
Looks Vic.

note pegged ft.
(type)



1ST FL. W. RM
South window



most-imp. Fed.
Period design

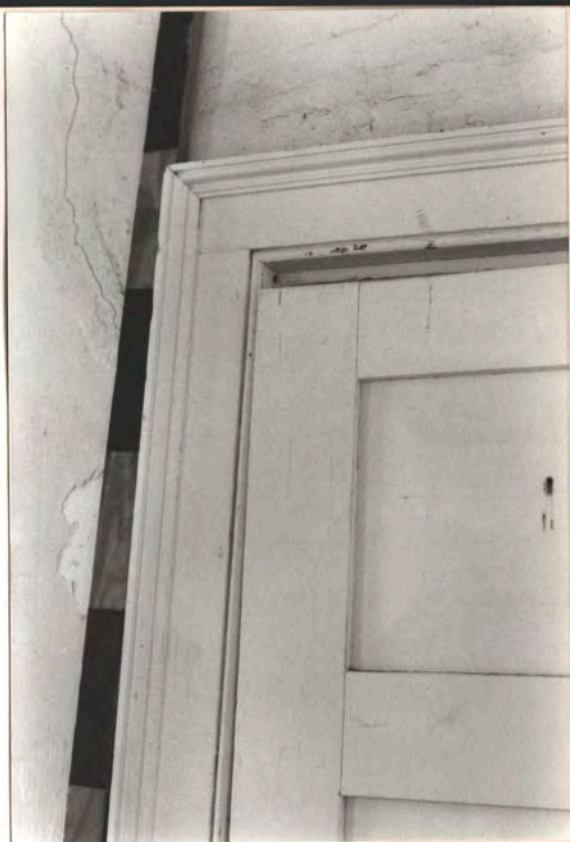


H ←

→ bowed
brick
s. wall

1st FL. EAST RM
original closets, later vic. coal-grate

McMahon - c. 1828 - Courtland, Al. - HD 11/88-25 of 32



W. DOOR



1ST FL. E. RM.

→ later com.
at hearth



This is a
pre-1850
hand-wrought
"Norfolk"
English latch →

latch probably
original ↘

OPEN ↘

WEST
DOOR SHUT
→ N ↓



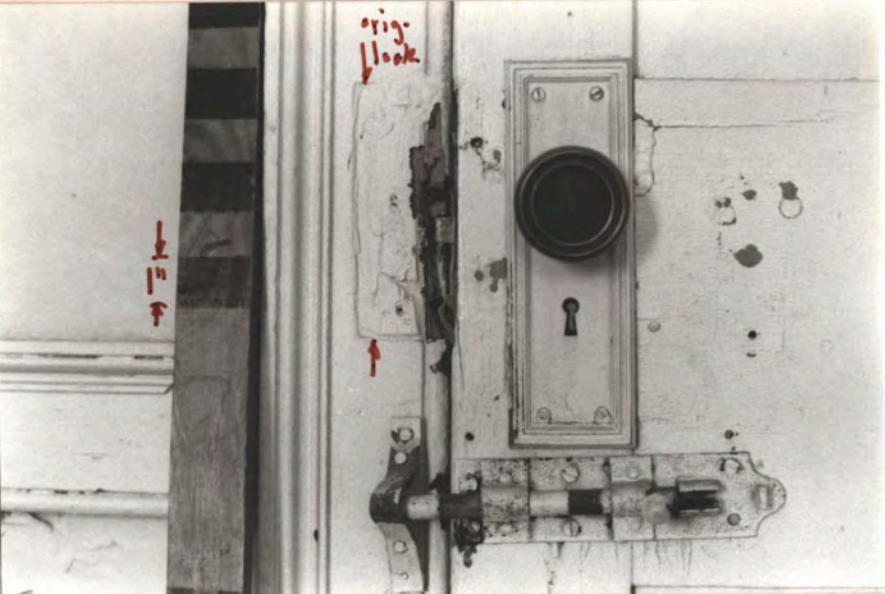
↙
1ST FL. E. RM ↘

S. WIND.



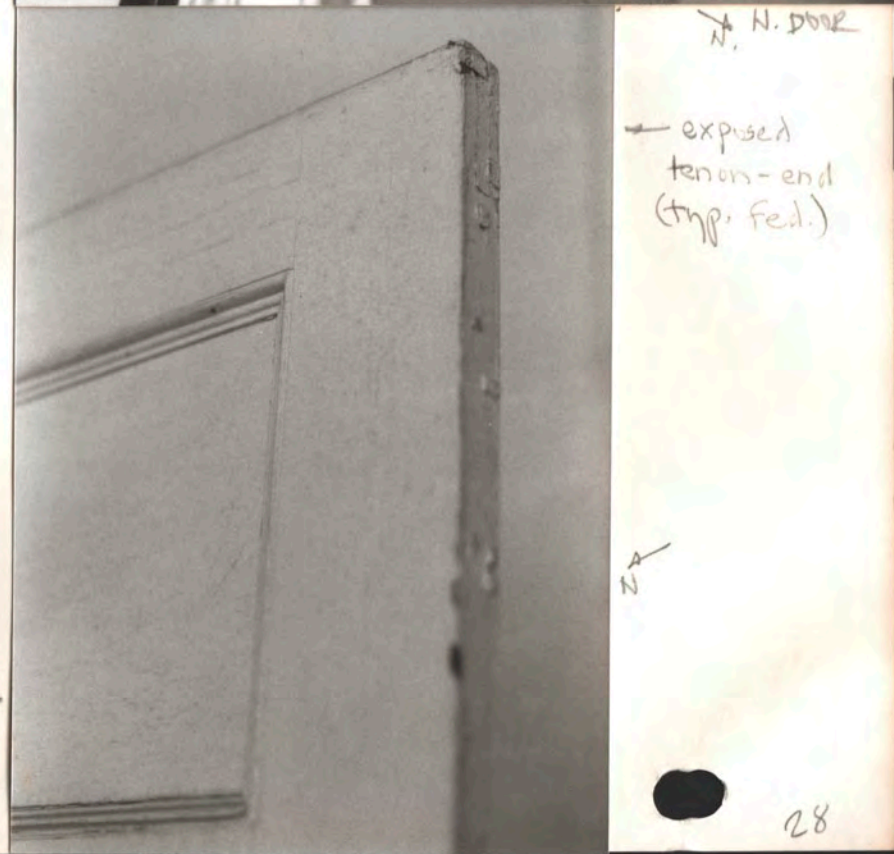
owner has this missing part.
↓ 1"





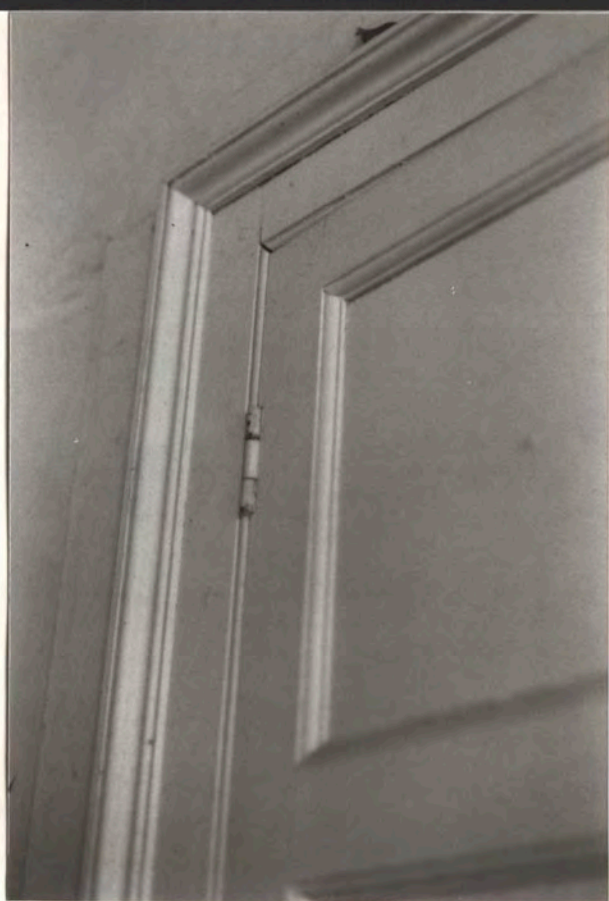
N. DOOR (SHUT)
 lock = 20th c.
 (see trace of
 orig. rimlock)
 Slide bolt may
 be orig. (?)

(peg jt. (thp. fed.) → N



1ST
 FL.
 E.
 RM

WEST DOOR
 N. DOOR

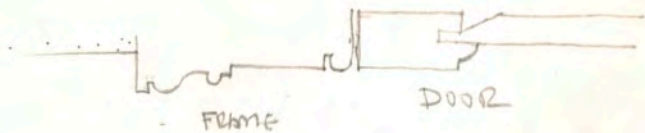


N ← N.E. CLOS. DOOR (SHUT)



N.E. CLOS. (OPEN)

Mo

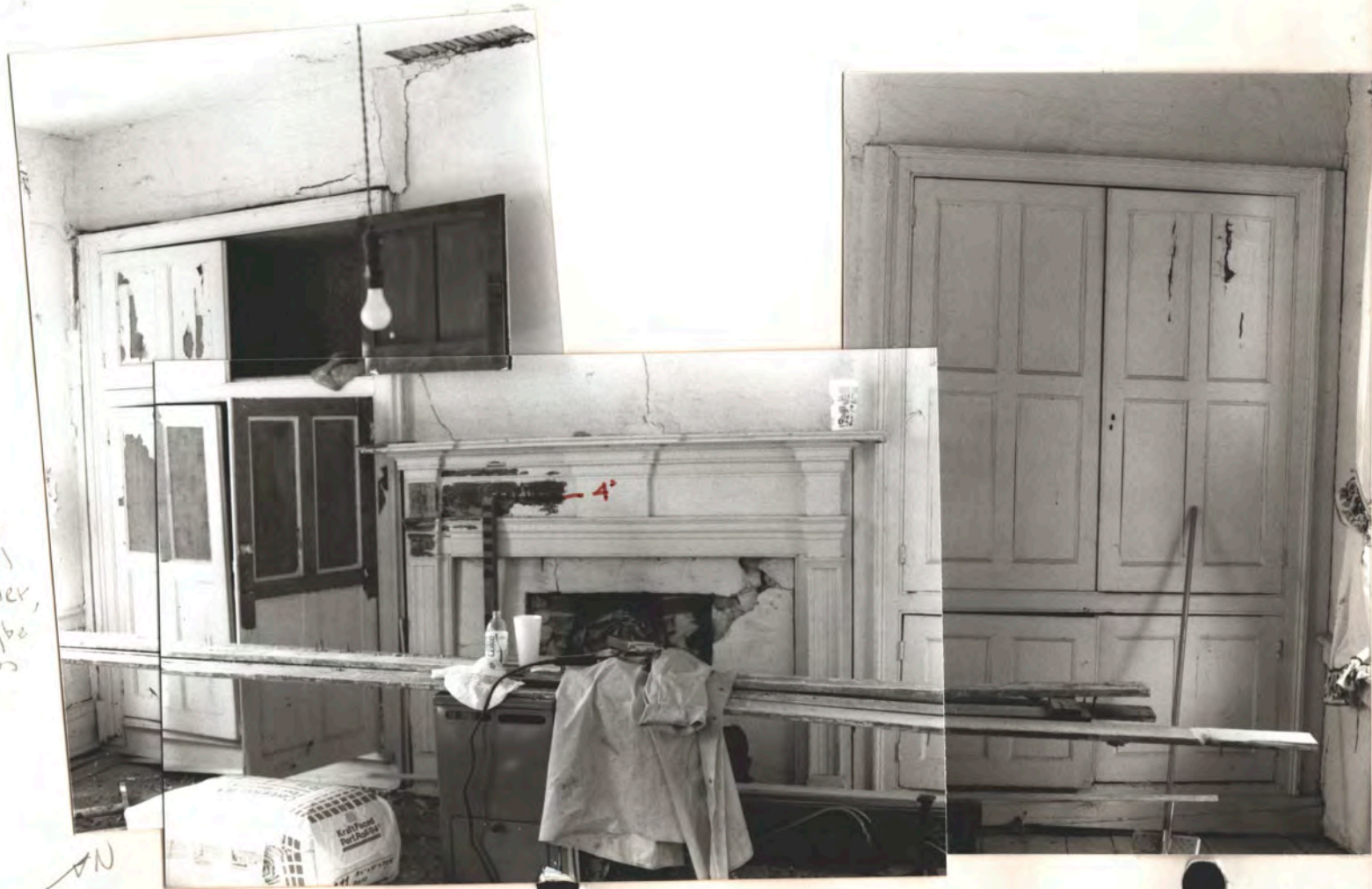


KST FL. EAST RM

McMahon

1st FL. N. E. "ELL" RM (FED. ADDN)

Orig. closets



owner is
stripping
wood.
Much pencil
grafitti under,
indicates maybe
no paint when
1st. used (?)

DN

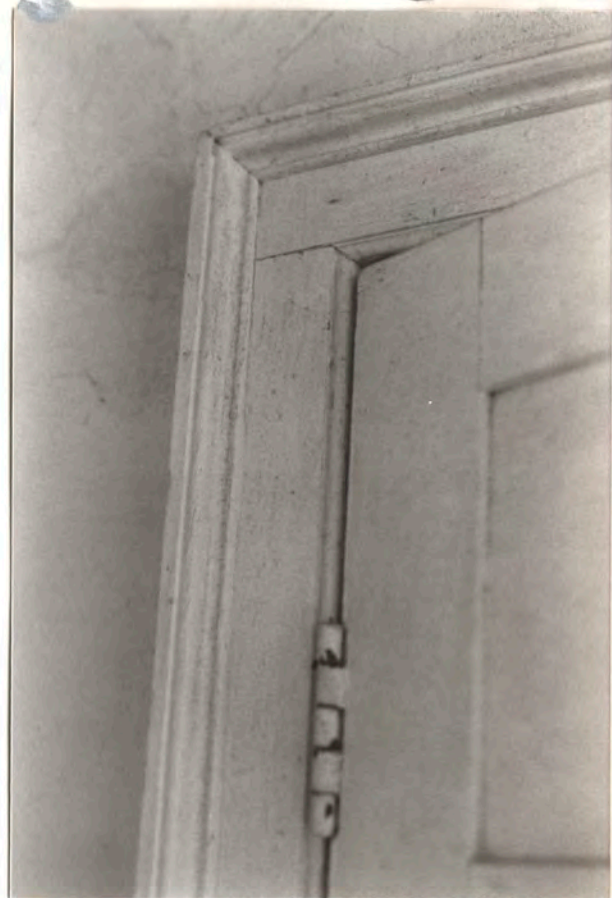


N

owner is
stripping paint



N



N
S. DOOR

1ST FL. N.E. "ELL" RM (FED ADD.)



Typ. Fed. design



J6MB
(typ. fed.)



KST FL. N.E. "ELL" FED. ADD.

4'

Restoration progress
April 1990 L. Jones photos



mediscare brick
rebuilding job
(was called previously per
earlier photos
June 89





2 photos Oct. 17 1992 A Jones



Restoration by James Milmark
 by Florence. Design based on
 1820's photo. Portico based on
 original model at main x of house (+ paint project).



See previous 1978 portico details & evidence



"Progress" photos. Portico details dictated by Florence. Design based on 1820's photo. Portico based on surviving original model at main x of house (+ paint project).





poor job of rebuilding
collapsed brick walls

Federal Period Shackleford - McMahon Hse
c. 1828

Courtland, Al.

Restored from partial collapse by
Don & Barbara Wilson, c. 1966-92

All arch. work donated by H.P. Jones, Falls



S. FRONT

Portico reconstructed per paint outlines on brick
+ existing original profiles at roof

S. FRONT

Photos April 1974 H.P. Jones





Fed.
Period
rear
rm.
(not a
kit)
N



↳ stop roof 187 by HJ

Reconstructed
parties per
traces on bricks.

Note
"common bond"
brick coursing on
front wall
= unusual.
(Usual is
Flemish bond on
front only,
common elsewhere)

Typical
Swindler

N



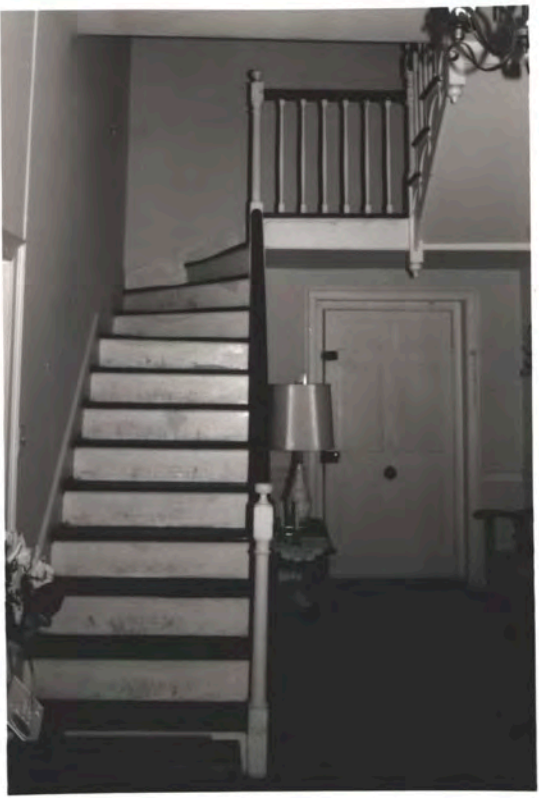
blinds = c. 1920 by James Millwork, Florence
Patton = 1928 Ball & Mont, ±



Fed. period rear rm



PN

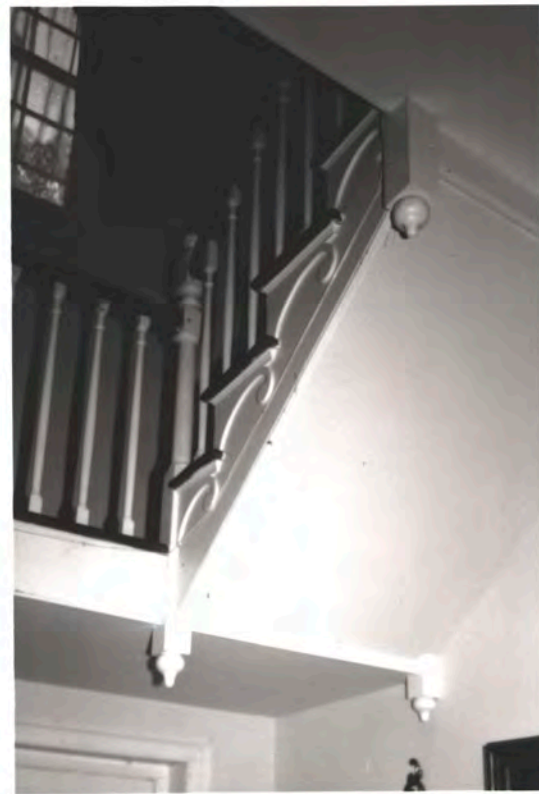


PN

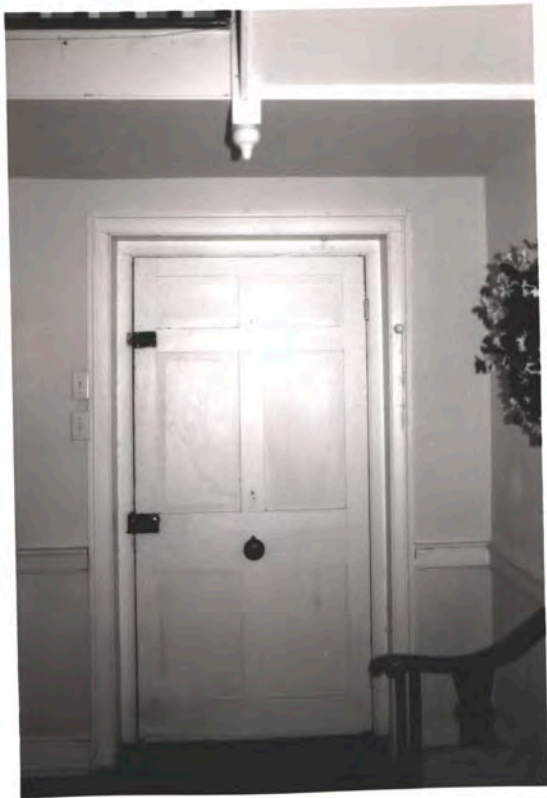
Entry



3 of 10 → PN



No



Entry from door to ext. pth



Stairs pth

During restoration the owners found
evidence of an earlier stair configuration



H2



H2

F1.1, E. Dining Rm

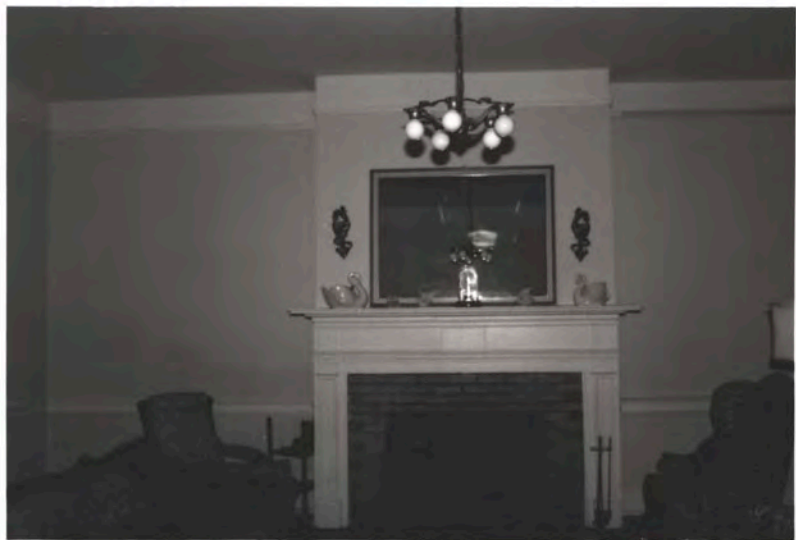


H2

H2

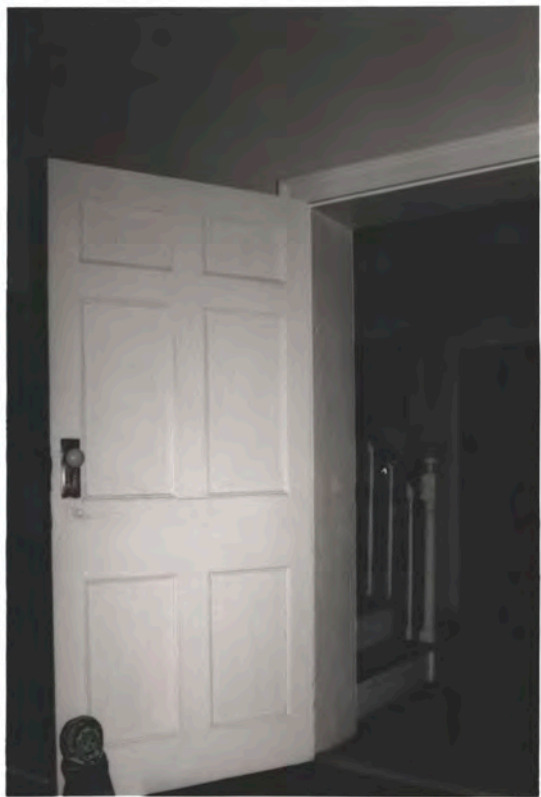


Closets are original



↑
 ← H
 brick is perhaps 1950,
 not yet covered w/ photos
 as would be proper

← H
 Fl. 1, West Parlor



heart pine fl. ↑ N

↑ N



Rear N.E. Rm (Federal) - Fl. 1
 Brick should be covered w/ photos,
 Brass/Al not yet put back here.



Fl 1
 WEST
 PARLOR



Kitchen in Vic. Dept 11
 Km. to N.E.

1920's gas stove from
 Nishinaka salvage co.
 - Is used for regular cooking
 (only stove in kitchen)



Fl. 2 W. Rm





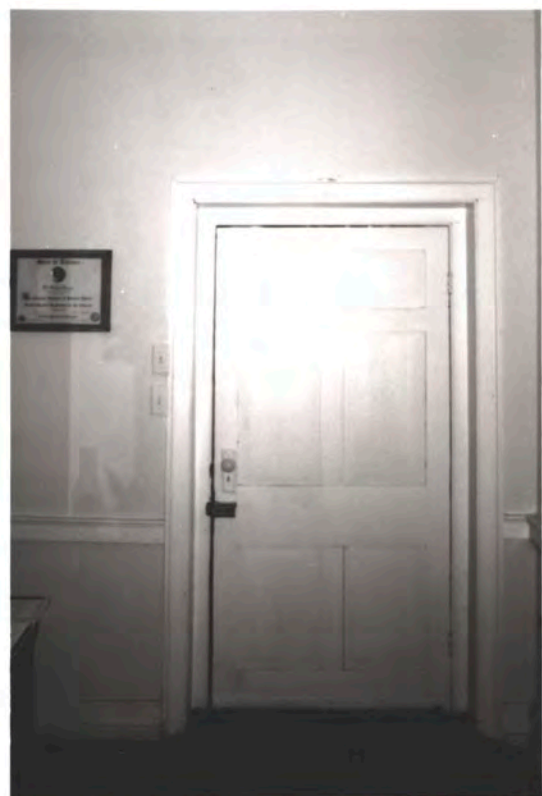
→ H

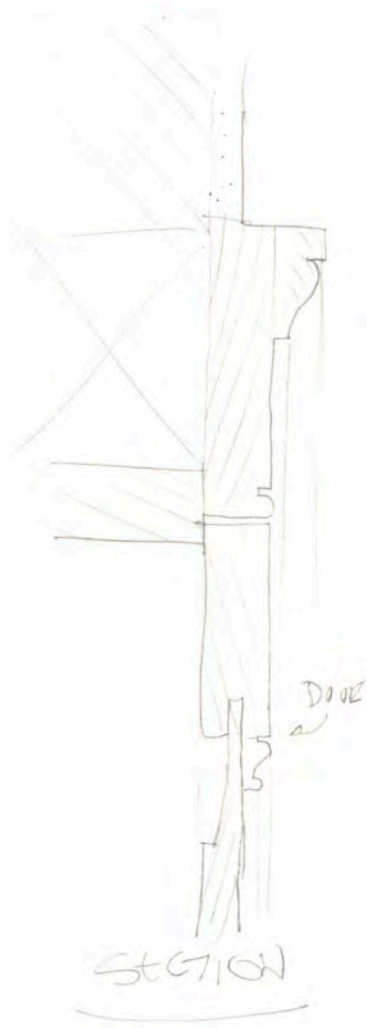


→ W

Fl. 2 West B.R.

SI





N

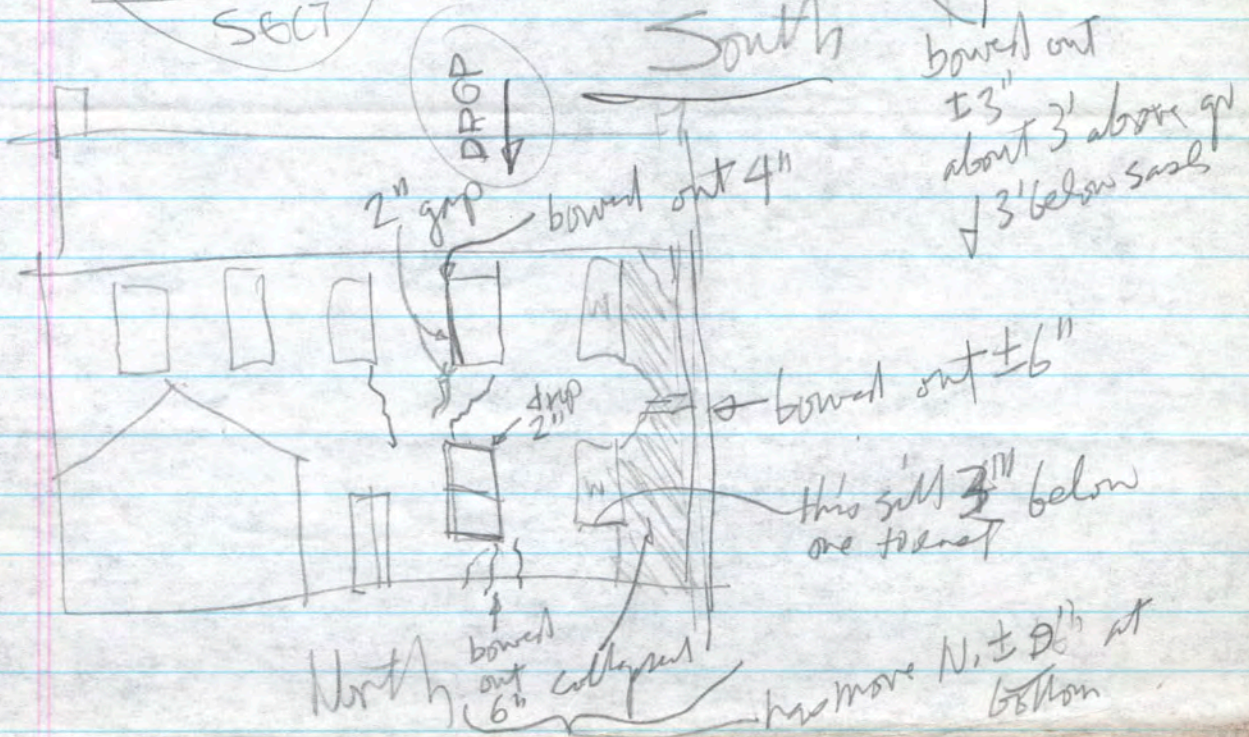
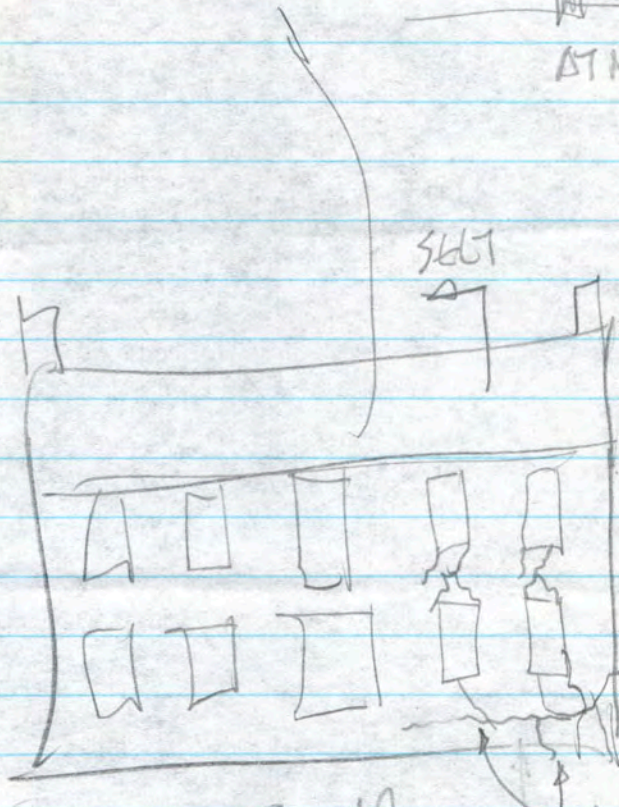
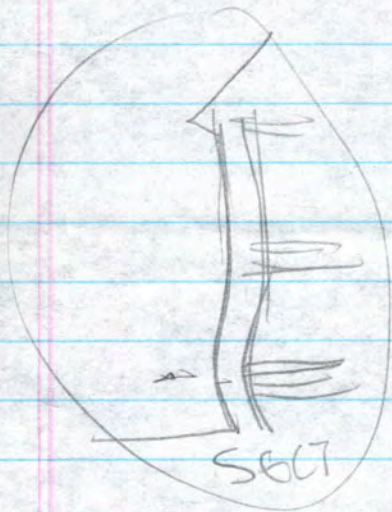
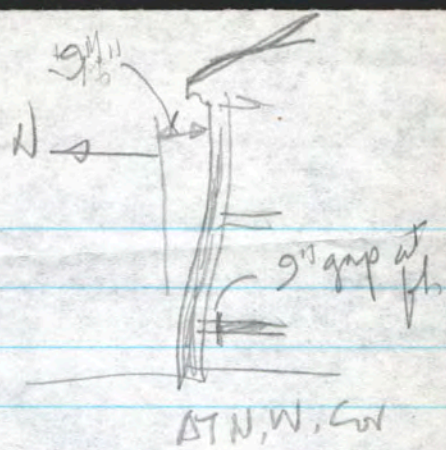


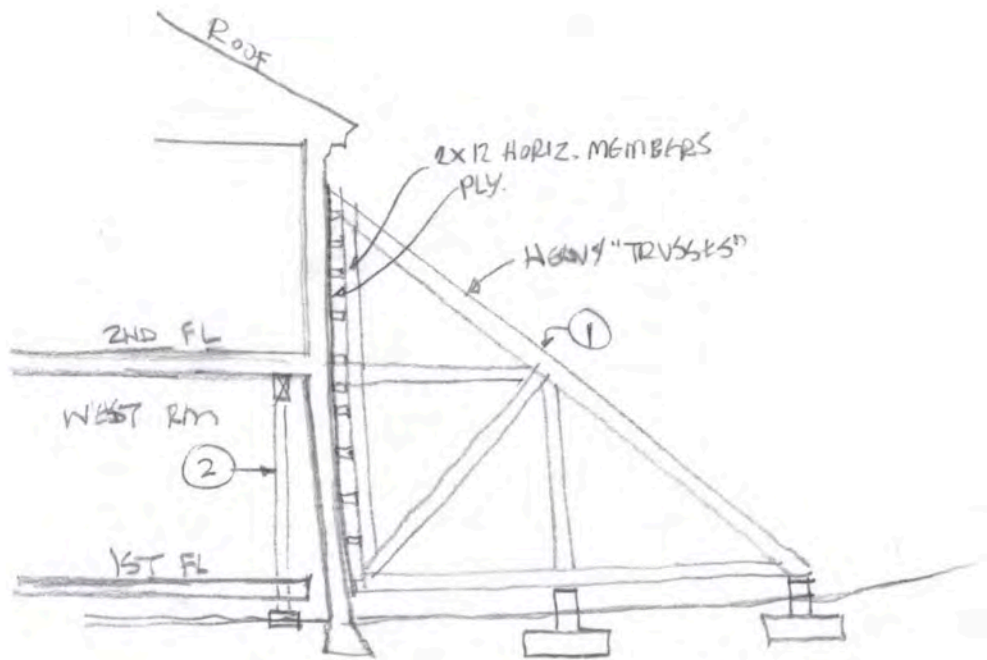
Fl. 2 W. B.R.,
door to upper stair hall

Mrs Gilchrist
(E. of old hse)
Stabil. Cost?

Shackelford - McMahon
hse 1828-30
Courtland

CAMERA

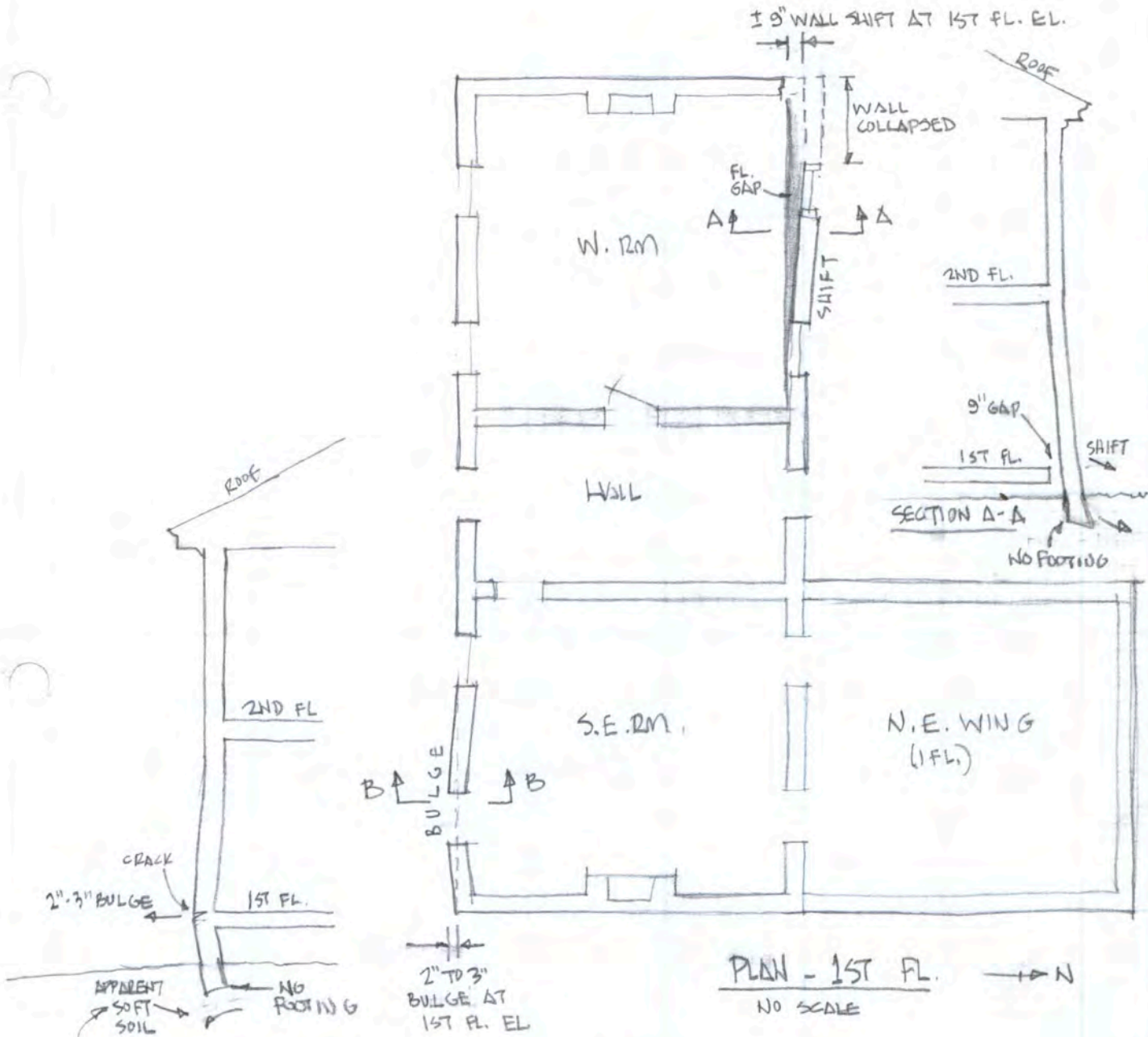




N.W. CORNER: STEP

- ① GENERAL TYPE OF BRACING TO RESIST OUTWARD SHIFT OF WALL. PERHAPS 3 BRACES + HORIZ. "JOISTS" + PLY.
- ② VERT. SUPPORT OF 2ND FL.

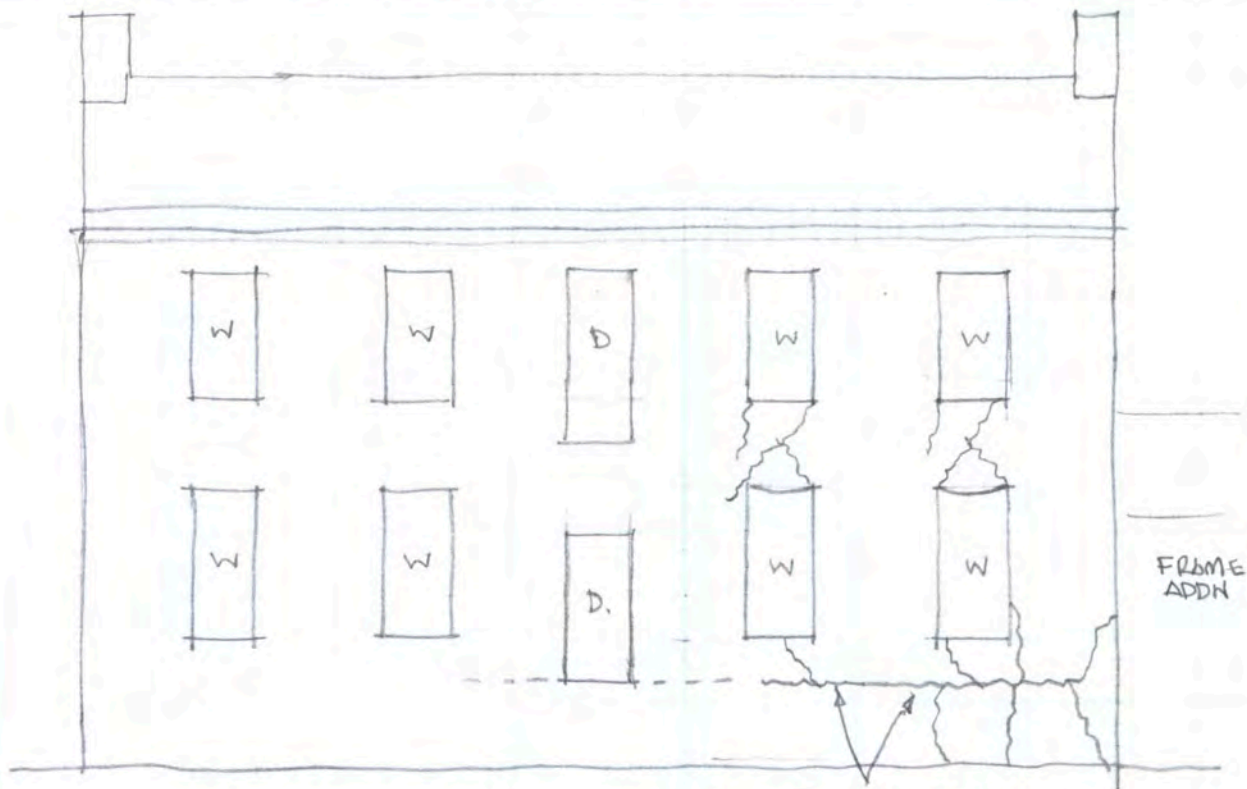
NOTE S.E. CORNER IS FAIRLY SIMPLE TO STABILIZE



SECTION B-B
 Soil was ok.
 Problem was no corbel footing at the wall

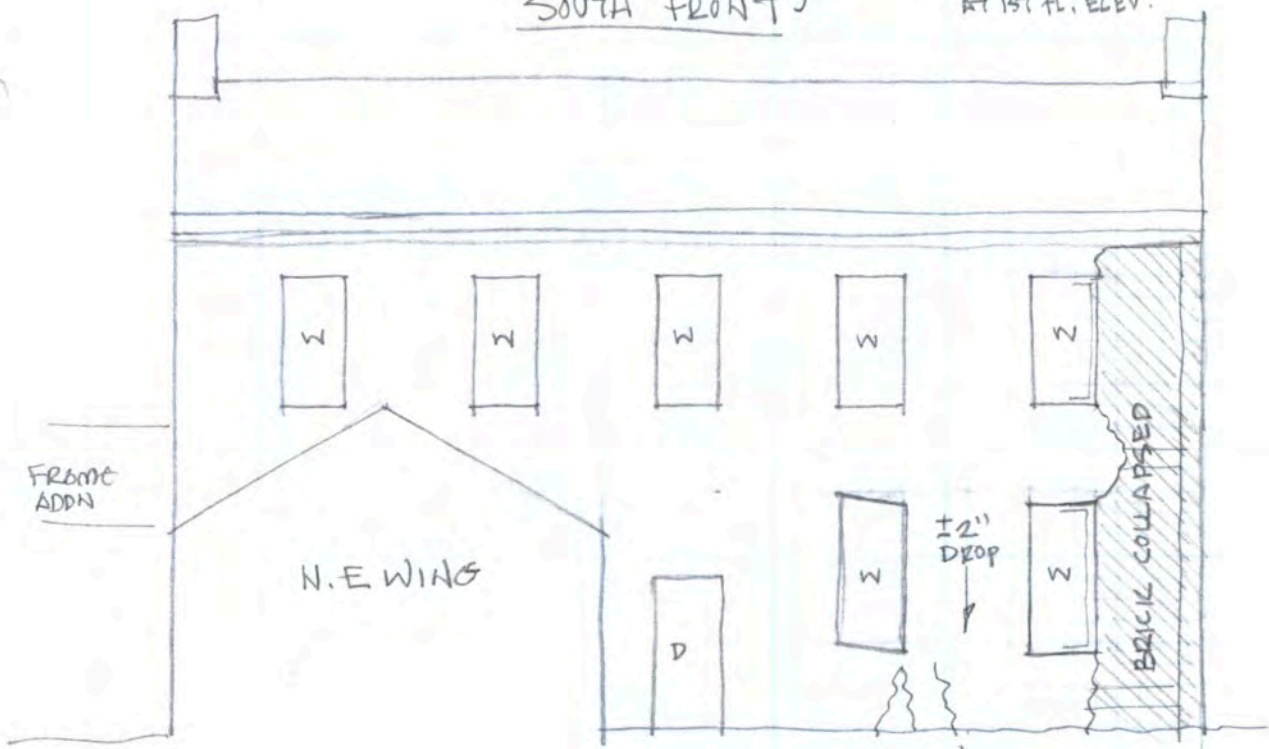
SKETCH OF SOIL SETTLEMENT DAMAGE TO
 1828-30 SHACKLEFORD-McMILLON HOUSE
 COURTLAND, AL. 23 JAN. 1987
 BRIEF SITE-VISIT - HARVIE P. JONES, FAIA
 (NOT A DETAILED, FINAL SURVEY)

Jones & Herrin
 Architects, A.I.A.
 104 Jefferson Street
 Huntsville, AL 35801



SOUTH FRONT

±2"-3" BULGE
AT 1ST FL. ELEV.



N.E. WING

FRAME
ADDN

BRICK
COLLAPSED

±2"
DROP

6" BULGE

9" SHIFT OUTWARD
AT GROUND ELEV.

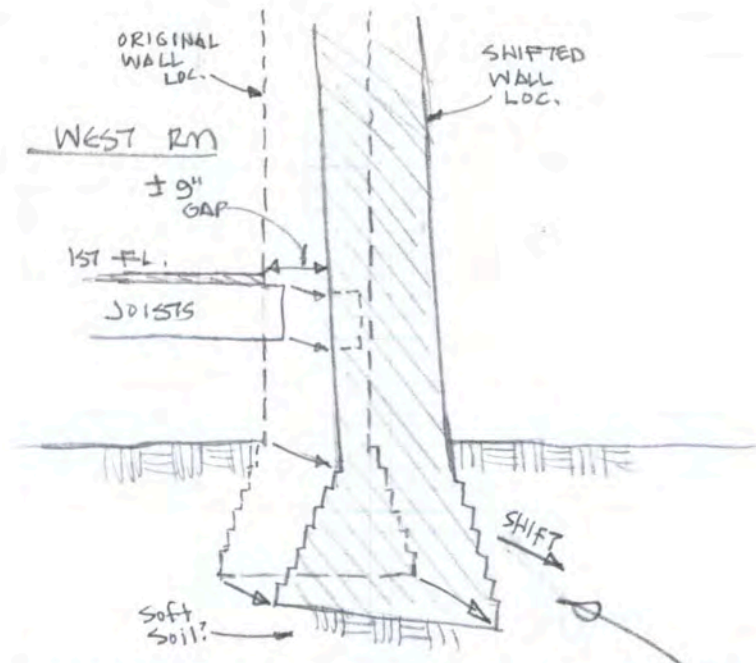
NORTH REAR

Jones & Herrin
Architects, A.I.A.

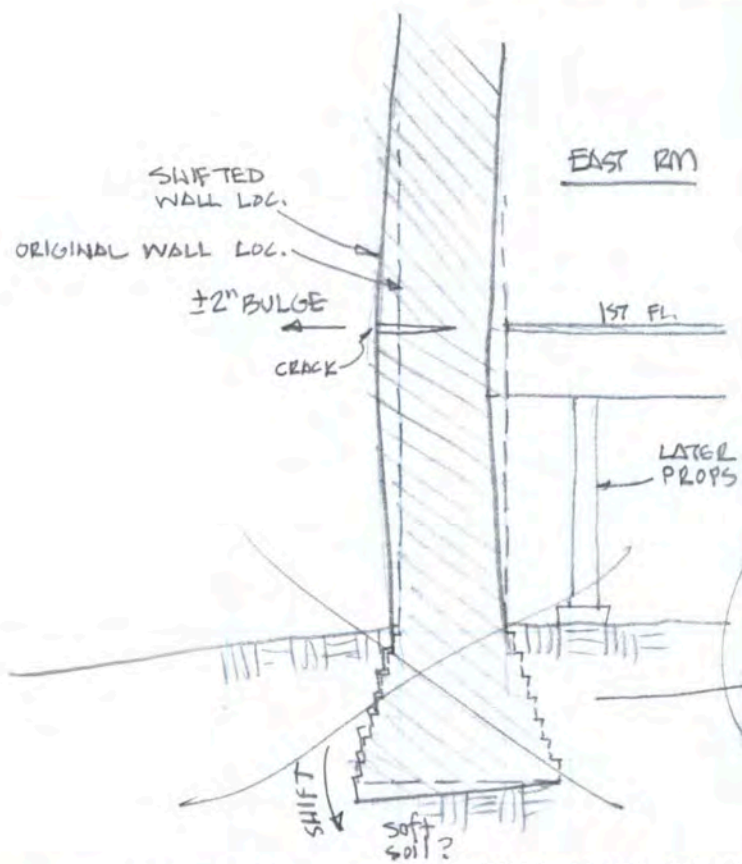
104 Jefferson Street
Huntsville, AL 35801

1828-30 SHACKLEFORD-McMAHON
COURTLAND, AL. JAN. 23 '87 H J

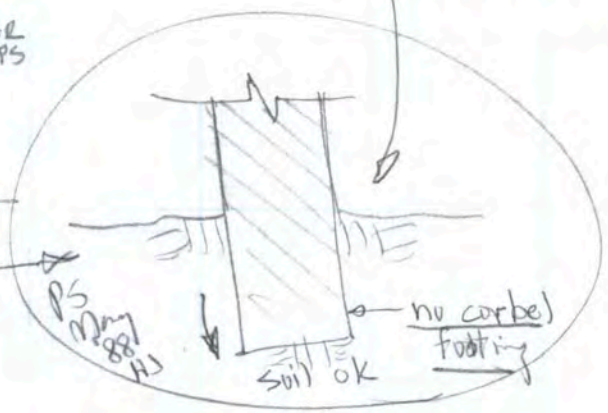
② of 3



WALL SHIFT AT N.N. CORNER OF N. WALL AT SECT. A-A



SEE PHOTO PG. 8

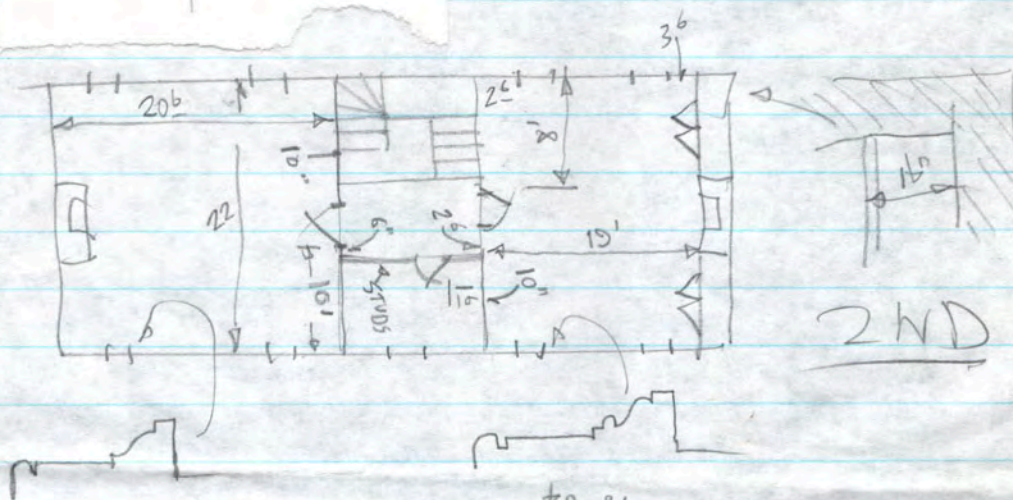
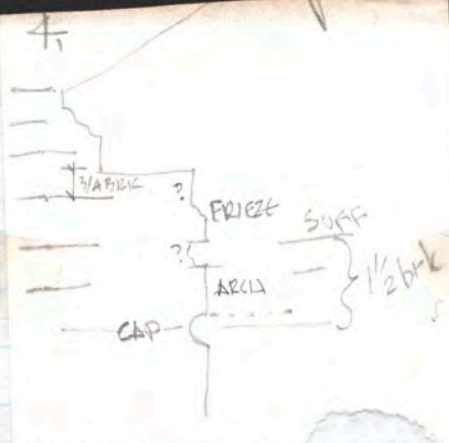


WALL SHIFT AT S.E. CORNER OF S. WALL AT SECT. B-B

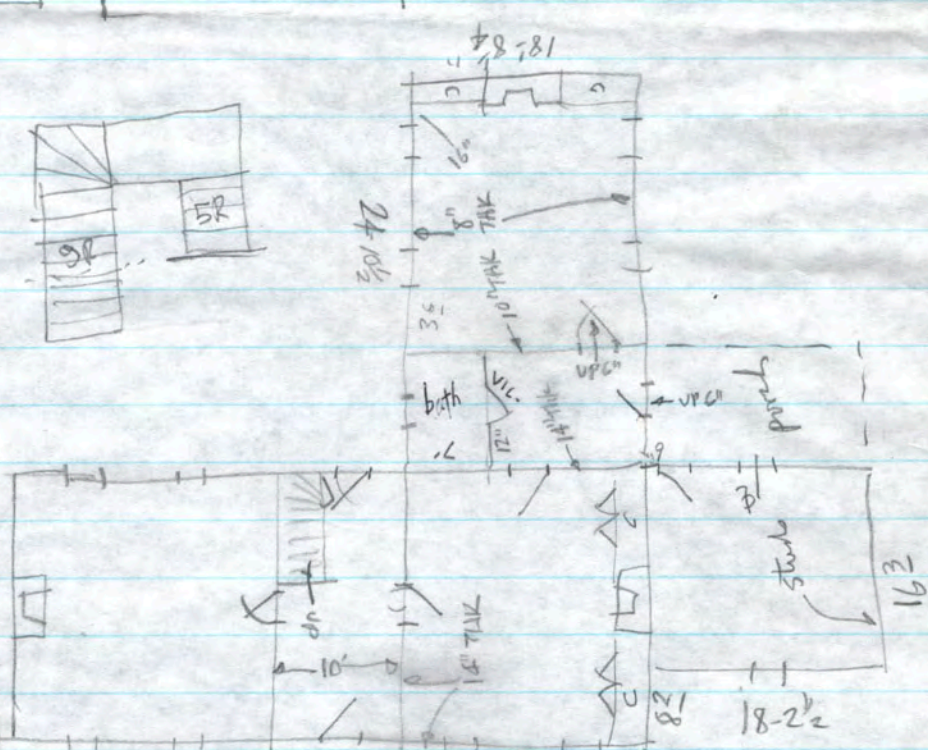
ones & Herrin
 Architects, A.I.A.
 104 Jefferson Street
 Huntsville, AL 35801

1828-30 SHACKLEFORD-MEMPHIS HSE
 COURTLAND, AL. 23 JAN. '87 HPYNGS

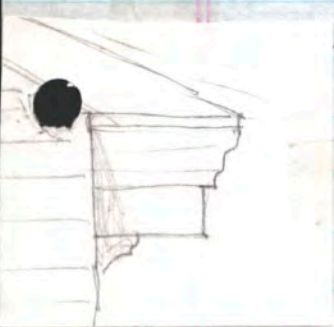
McMahon Ids - Courtland
 30 April '88 1stP
 (Ben Wilson)



2ND

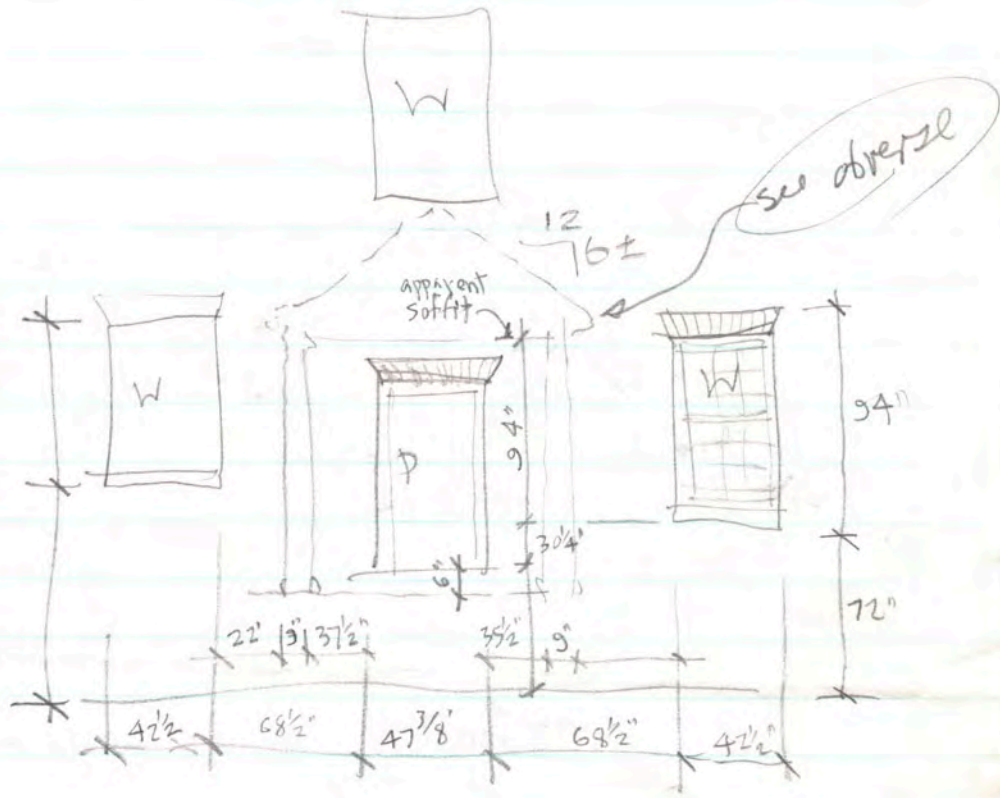
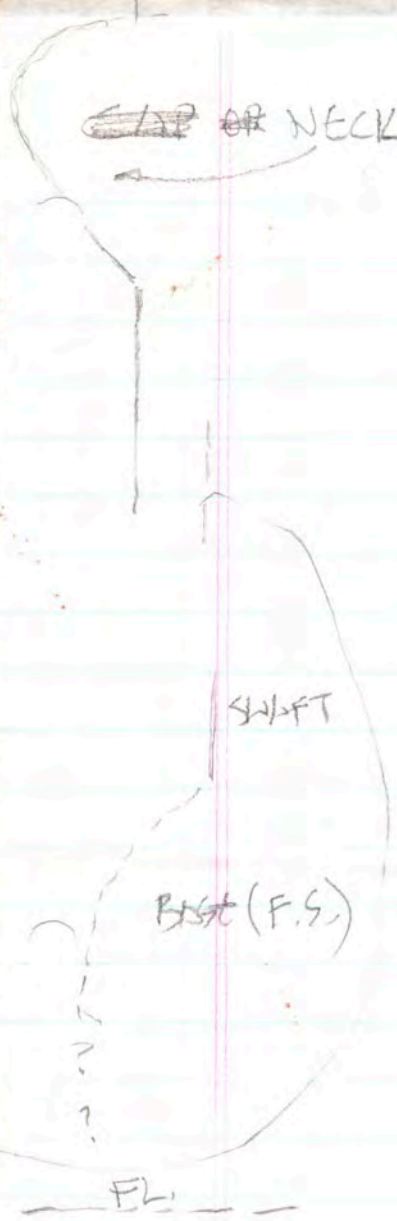


1ST



~~NECK~~ NECK (F.S.)

McMahon Hse - Condo Unit
31 April '88 HD

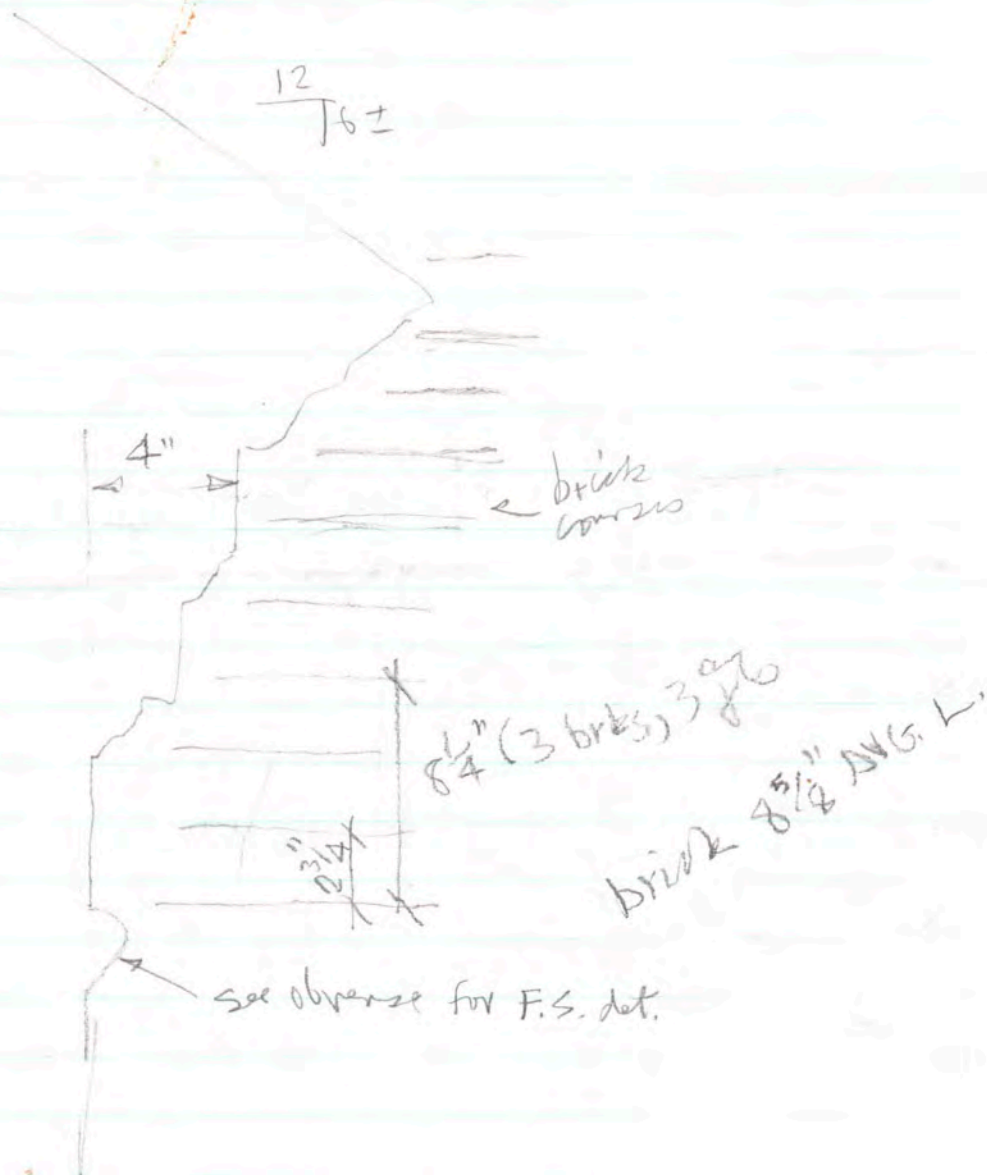


OVER

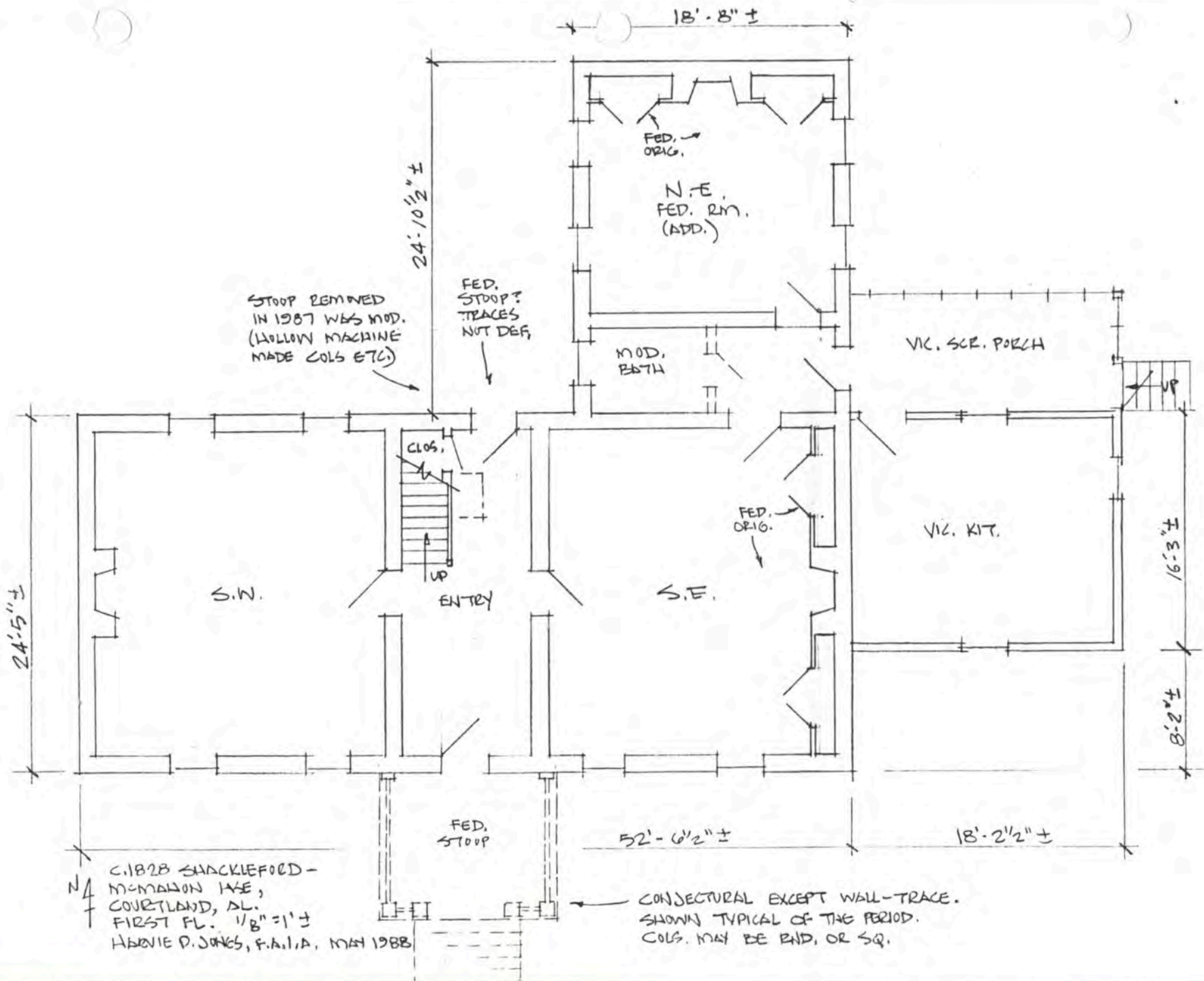
1824 McMahan (Dise-Courtland)

Positive cornice trace

31 April '88 HRP



OVER



STOOP REMOVED
IN 1987 WAS MOD.
(HOLLOW MACHINE
MADE COLS ETC)

FED. STOOP?
TRACES
NOT DEF.

FED. ORIG.

N.E.
FED. RM.
(ADD.)

MOD.
BATH

VIC. SCR. PORCH

CLOS.

FED. ORIG.

VIC. KIT.

S.W.

ENTRY

S.E.

FED.
STOOP

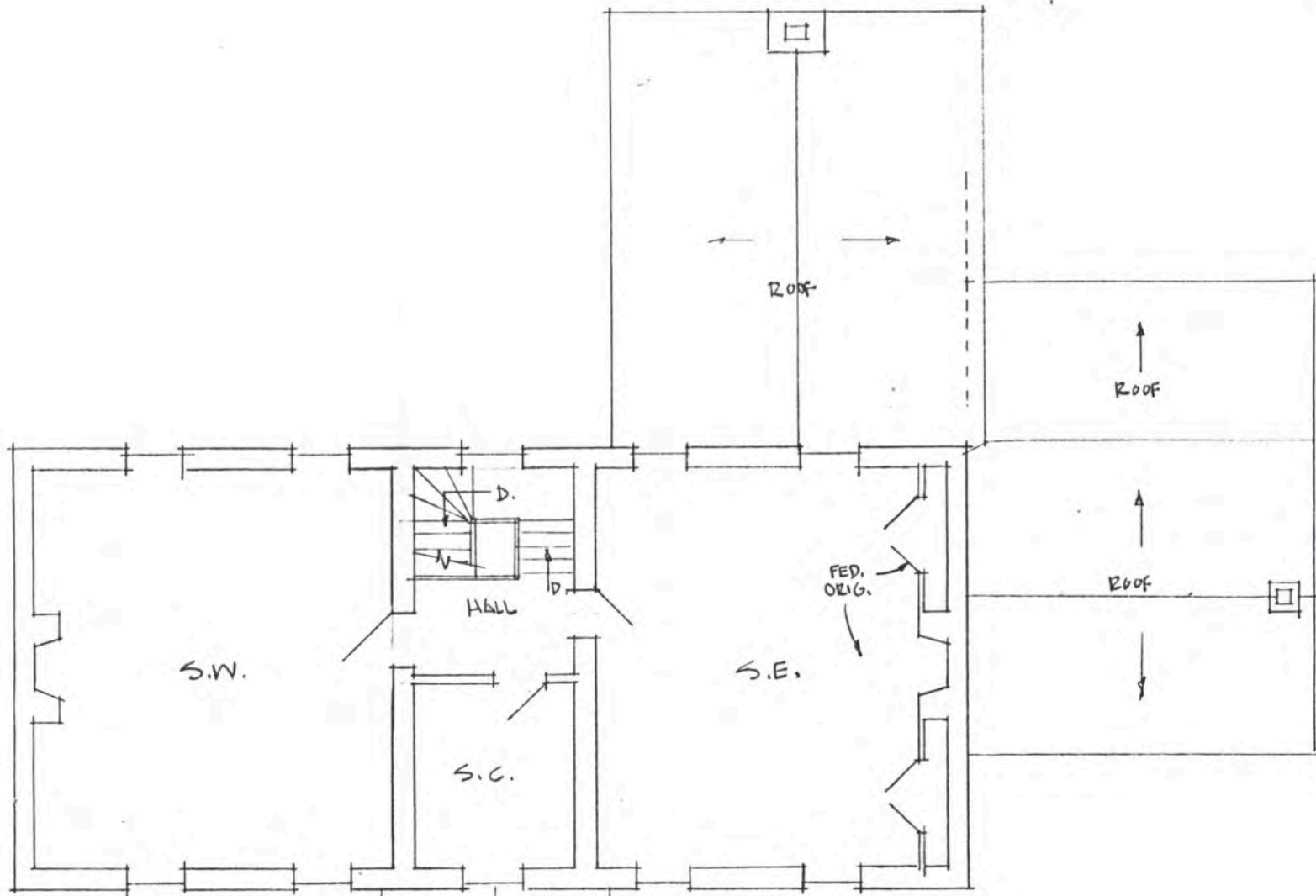
52'-6 1/2"±

18'-2 1/2"±



C. 1828 SHACKLEFORD -
MCMANON HSE,
COURTLAND, AL.
FIRST FL. 1/8" = 1'±
HARVEY P. JONES, F.A.I.A., MAY 1988

CONJECTURAL EXCEPT WALL-TRACE.
SHOWN TYPICAL OF THE PERIOD.
COLS. MAY BE RND, OR SQ.



C.1828 SHACKLEFORD -
 MONTALON AVE.
 COVETLAND, AL.
 SECOND FL. 1/8" = 1' ±
 HARVIE P. JONES, F.D.I.A. MAY 1988

← N.S. DIM = CONJECTURAL.
 E.W. DIM. + SLOPE = PER WALL TRACKS

11/15/88

Jones & Herrin
104 Jefferson St.
Huntsville, AL 35801

TO: Bob Gamble ()
Alabama Historical Commission
725 Monroe Street
Montgomery, Alabama 36130

Jack Stell ()
Alabama Historical Comm.
725 Monroe Street
Montgomery, Alabama 36130

Ben Wilson ()
Rt. 4, Box 348
Killen, Alabama 35645

Re: c.1828 Shackelford-McMahon House, Couftland

Harvie P. Jones, FAIA..... *Harvie P. Jones*

Attached is a set of details on the portico reconstruction for your review. The profiles and dimensions are based on the paint traces on the walls, as best we can tell by tracing the profile directly off the wall onto mylar. The mouldings are indistinct except for vague size and general shape and are therefore almost entirely conjectural. The west cornice profile appeared to have a wider eave than the east, although the traces are too vague to be sure, and there have been at least 3 different porches on the house. The clearest, and I think most likely profile is at the east, and these drawings are based on it.

Ben, please take the mylar tracing of the cornice profile and put it up on the wall to see if it reasonably matches. If not, trace the significant differences onto the mylar and send it back to me.

If you have not already done so, look carefully in the dirt for soil or brick evidence of the piers, and measure any you find as to location and size.

Scribe the crown mould at the main roof cornice, north edge, east part, and send the profile to me. I think it may be original.

For longevity, all wood exposed to rain should be either heart pine or heart redwood (columns, cornice, flooring, steps, all moulds, all 1x fascias and skirts). Framing at the floor, steps, and column internal boxing should be pressure-treated.

The "Tek Dek" step treads are a rubber composition board that is gray like wood and does not warp, rot, etc. Unless you have good heart pine, I recommend it over modern wood. It looks like weathered wood without imitating it.

The roofing is a heavy composition shingle that has the flavor of wood without imitating it. I've given up on wood shingles - the best grade lasts only 12-14 years, with frequent patching.

Please let me know of any questions.

1828 Mc Mahon Hse - Courtland

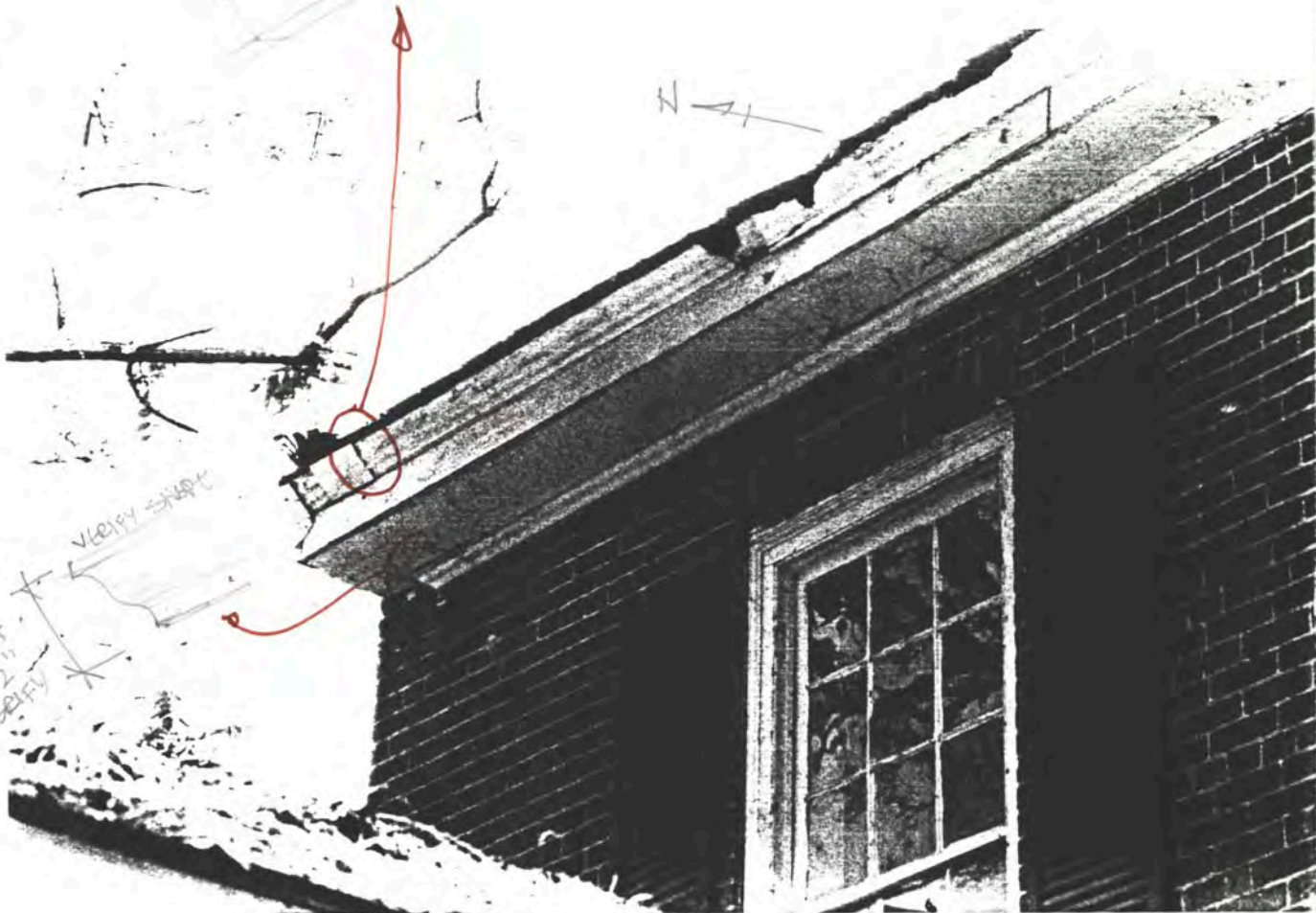
2ND FL. - N.E. CORNER

These 2 mouldings appear to be original, based on size & proportions. Verify at 5th

Nov. 14 '88 HJ

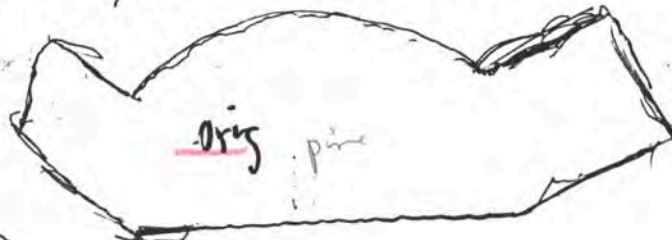


Scribed set. sent by Ben Wilson
5 Dec '88



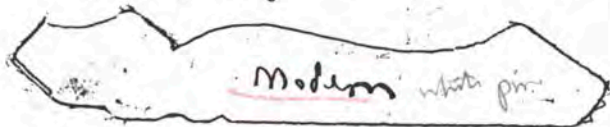
Verify spot
About $3\frac{1}{2}''$ verify

North wing next to brick



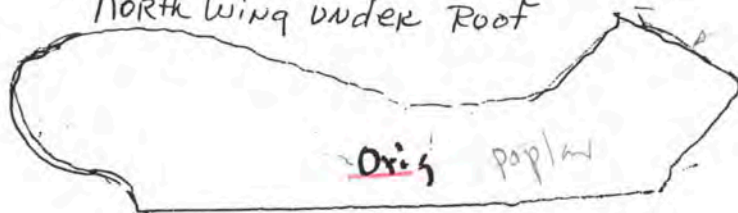
orig pine

South East Front corner
under roof



Modern white pine

North wing under Roof

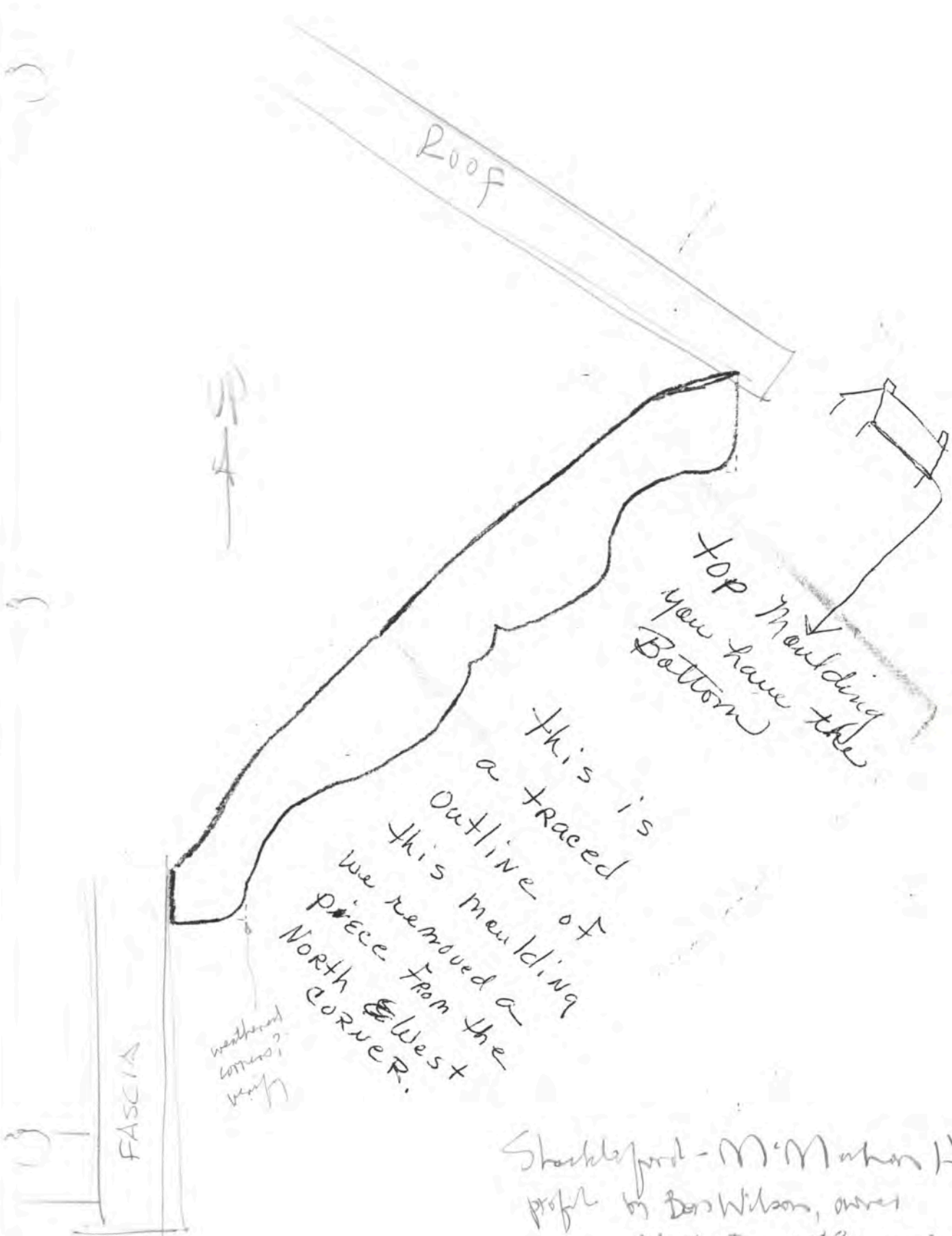


Orig poplar

— not the same at
2nd fl. corner (may be modern)

McMahon H&S
map trim.

Roger McNeese - 21 Jun 88 H3



Roof

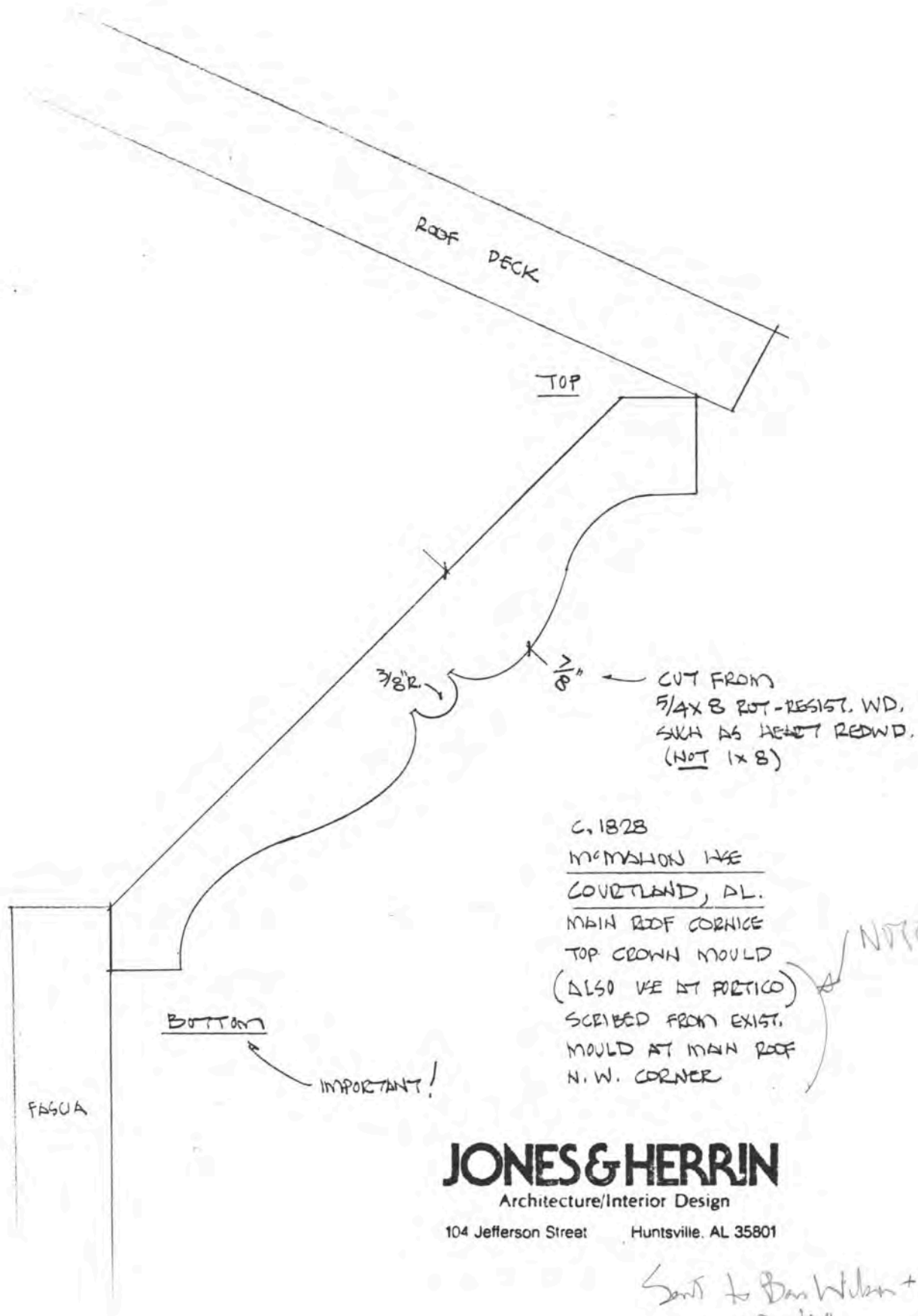
TOP Maulding
you have the
Bottom

this is
a traced
outline of
this maulding
we removed a
piece from the
North & West
corner.

FASCIA

weathered
corners?
very

Shackelford - McMahon Hse
profil by Ben Wilson, owner
reid 5 Dec. 1988 HBJ



CUT FROM
 5/4 X 8 ROT-RESIST. WD.
 SUCH AS HEMET REDWD.
 (NOT 1 X 8)

C. 1828
 INFORMATION WRE
 COURTLAND, AL.
 MAIN ROOF CORNICE
 TOP CROWN MOULD
 (ALSO USE AT PORCH)
 SCRIBED FROM EXIST.
 MOULD AT MAIN ROOF
 N.W. CORNER

NOTE!

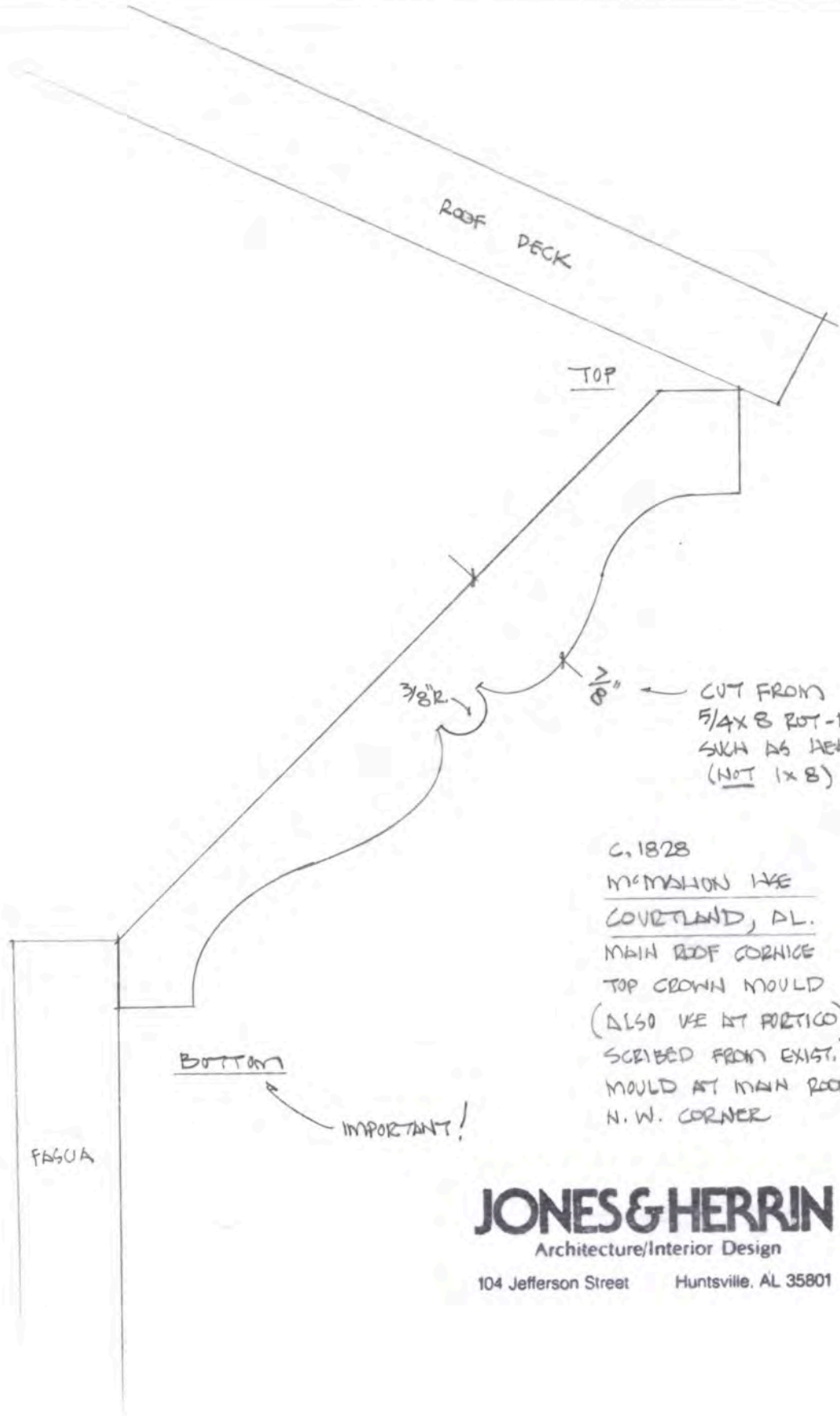
IMPORTANT!

JONES & HERRIN

Architecture/Interior Design

104 Jefferson Street Huntsville, AL 35801

Sent to Dan Wilson + AHC
 6 Dec '88



CUT FROM
5/4 X 8 ROT-RESIST. WD.
SUCH AS HEMET REDWD.
(NOT 1 X 8)

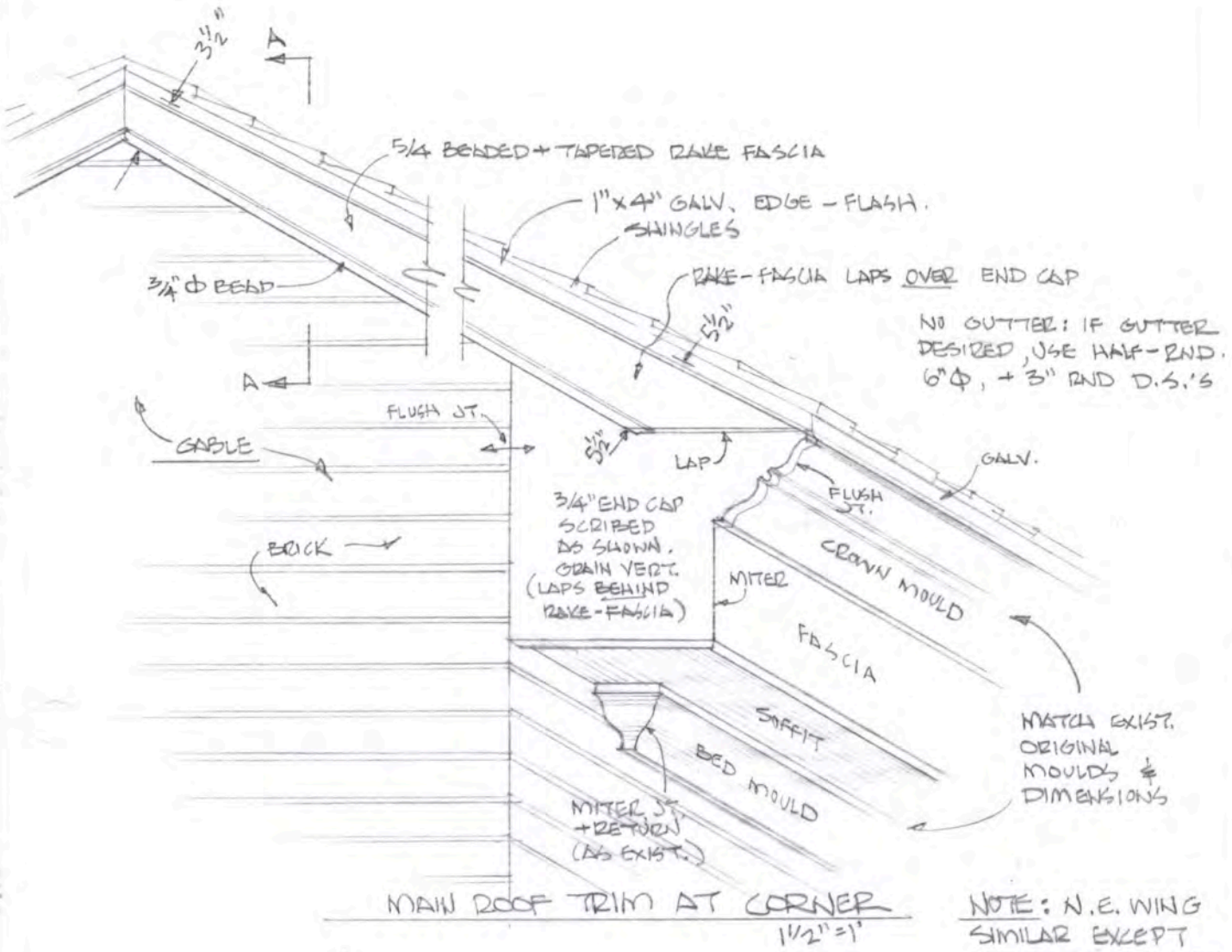
C. 1828
MORNING WEE
COURTLAND, AL.
MAIN ROOF CORNICE
TOP CROWN MOULD
(ALSO USE AT PORTICO)
SCRIBED FROM EXIST.
MOULD AT MAIN ROOF
N. W. CORNER

BOTTOM
IMPORTANT!

JONES & HERRIN

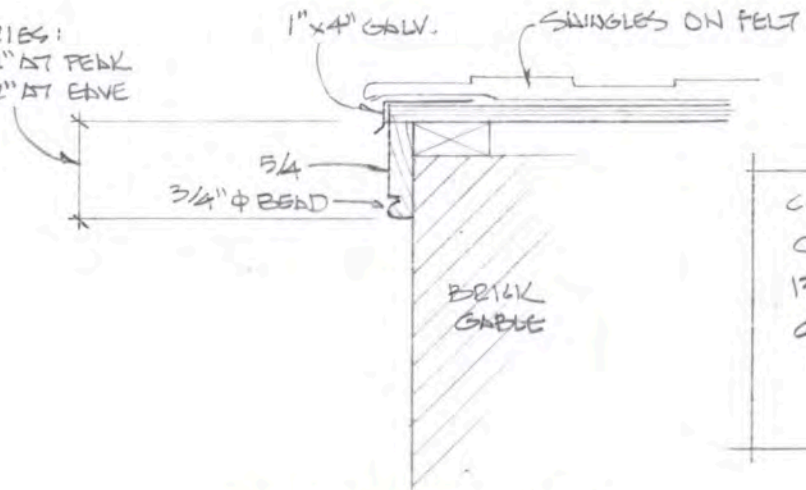
Architecture/Interior Design

104 Jefferson Street Huntsville, AL 35801



NOTE: N.E. WING SIMILAR EXCEPT FOR MOULD SHAPES. MATCH EXIST. MOULD SHAPES ON N.E. WING.

VARIES:
3 1/2" AT PEAK
5 1/2" AT EAVE



C.1828 McMAHON HSE
COURTLAND AL.
13 JUNE '89 H.P. JONES, F.A.I.A.
COPIES: BEN WILSON (2)
BOB GAMBLE (1)
H.P. (1)

JONES & HERRIN

Architecture/Interior Design

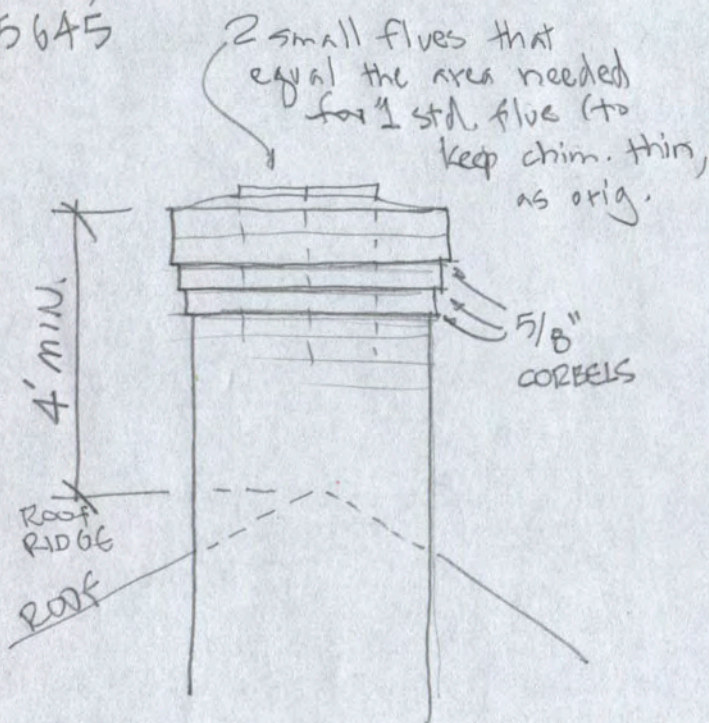
Jan 19-'90 Harvie P. Jones, F.A.I.A.

Mrs Ben Wilson

Rt. 4, Box 344

Killers, AL

35645



This is a common
Fed. Period pattern.

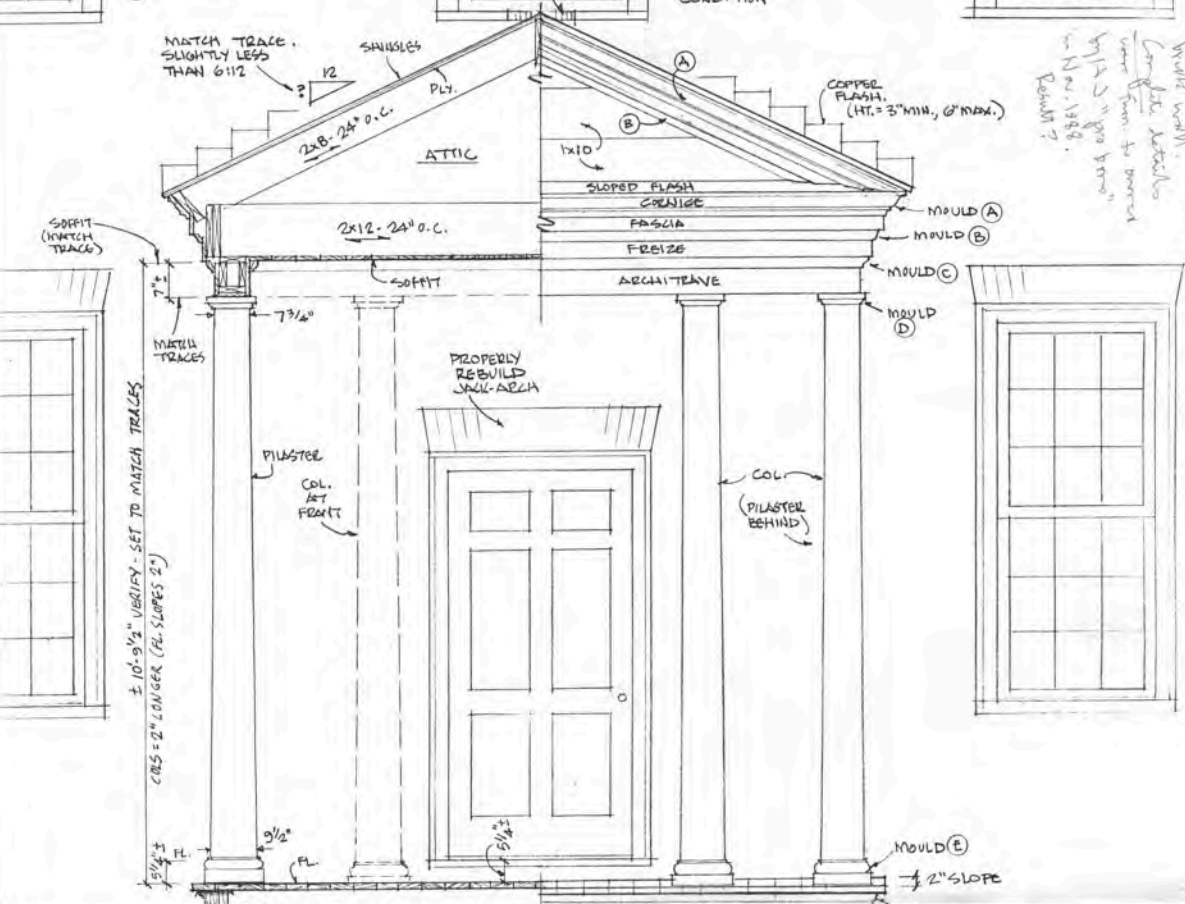
Herrin

104 Jefferson Street
Huntsville, Alabama 35801
Telephone 205/539-0764

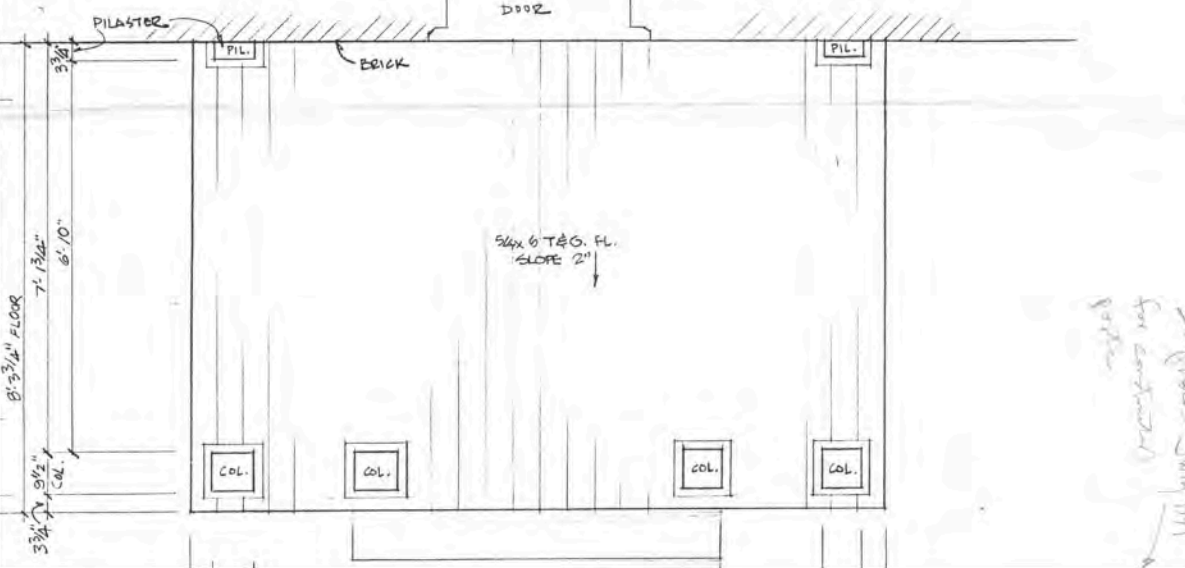
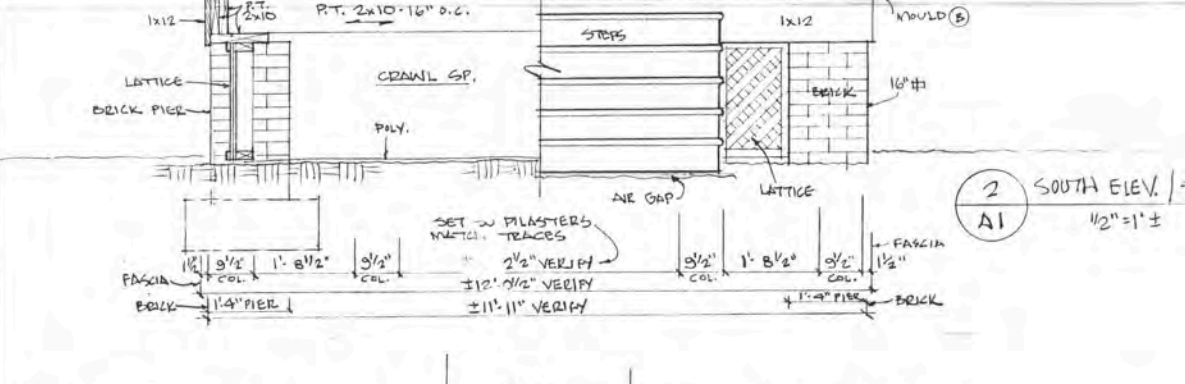
COP. FLASH OVER SILL TO FIT TRACE CONDITION

MATCH TRACE. SLIGHTLY LESS THAN 6/12

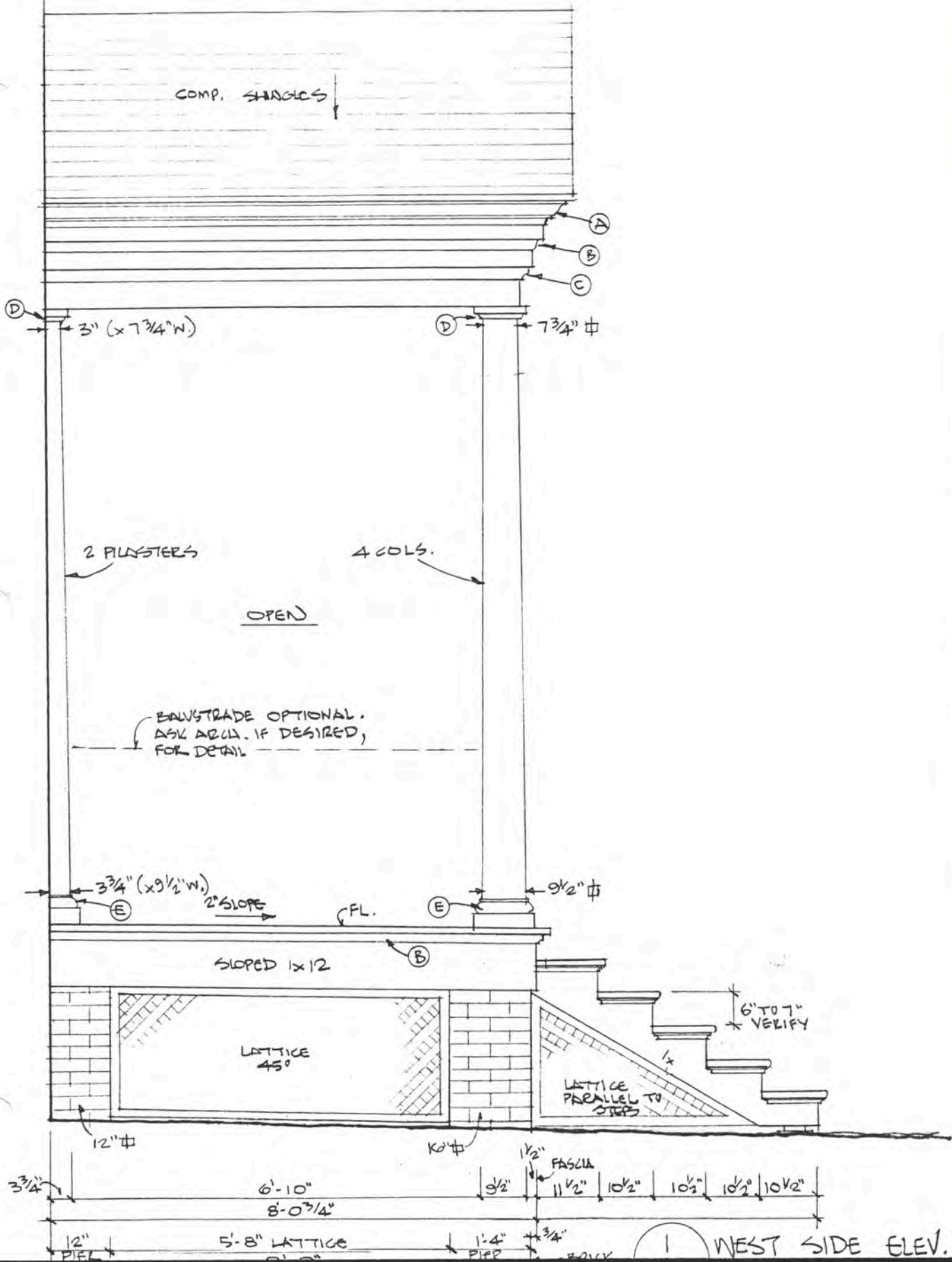
Drawn on project folder on white wall.
Complete details were from: to correct by 1/2" 3" per beam in Nov. 1988.
Revised?



2 SOUTH ELEV. / 30.7
A1 1/2" = 1" ±



See Section 2/10/1991 for comparison notes





F. LAWRENCE OAKS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STATE OF ALABAMA
ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

725 MONROE STREET
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA 36130-5101



TELEPHONE NUMBER
261-3184

November 29, 1988

Mr. Harvie P. Jones, FAIA
Jones and Herrin, Architects
104 Jefferson Street
Huntsville, Alabama 35801

Dear Harvie:

We have reviewed your proposal for the reconstructed entrance portico of the McMahon house in Courtland. Both the general design and the materials you have proposed are fine from our standpoint. Since the stoop is so high, the Wilsons may want to include a wooden balustrade. One similar to that at Cedarhurst or Belle Mont--with a slender round handrail, plain rectangular balusters, etc.--would of course be appropriate. The cornice design, too, is just fine, and should be relatively easy to execute.

When I think back on how the old house looked this time last year, some real progress has been made. I just hope there will be enough original brick to re-face the northeast corner of the house.

Thanks for your ongoing interest in the rescue of this landmark residence.

As ever,

Robert Gamble
Architectural Historian

RSG/rf

cc: Mr. and Mrs. Ben W. Wilson

JONES & HERRIN

Architecture/Interior Design

Aug 3 '92 Harvie P. Jones, F.A.I.A

Ben & Barbara Wilson
Rt. 4, Box 348
Killers, Al. 35645

Dear Ben & Barbara —

We appreciate the wedding invitation & the
pleasure to see your
progress. When you finish,
I'd like to come take
some "after" photos to go
w/ my "before ones. Please
let me know.

To help the off-color
mortar joints, you can
do the following: (over)

104 Jefferson Street
Huntsville, Alabama 35801
Telephone 205/539-0764
Fax 205/534-2289

Get a quart of "Olympic"
oil-base brown stain
no. 709 of a small "cutting
brush" that can do
1/4" wide stripes. Stain
the off-color joints, but
not the brick surface.
Don't thin the stain, for it
fades about 80% in 4-5 yrs
(but never fades completely).
If you thin it, it will
disappear in 2 or 3 years.

Please build back the
shortened chimneys. Attached
is a model. The chim-
neys should be 4 ft. or
more above the ridge of
the roof.

Best wishes on your
good work!
H. Jones

nc

Precedent-setting Strategy—

McMahon House Saved

Through a precedent-setting strategy, the Alabama Historical Commission has apparently assured the preservation of an important Federal-period residence. And in a time of shrinking budgets, it didn't cost the state a penny. If the current preservation effort is successful, it could have positive implications for other endangered landmarks throughout Alabama.

The building involved is the historic John McMahon house at Courtland. Dating from the 1820s, the two-story brick dwelling has been described by preservation architect Harvie Jones of Huntsville as "too good to lose."

But a little more than a year ago, in October 1986, the future of the McMahon house looked dim. That's when Jim Harris of Alva, Colorado, first called AHC senior architectural historian Bob Gamble. Harris — himself a writer and historian — was a great-great-grandson of John Jordan McMahon, who purchased the house in the 1830s and whose descendants still owned it. On behalf of the entire family, Harris wanted to know if something could be done to save the house before it was too late.

Briefly, he explained. With the family scattered across America, the house had not been occupied for several years. Maintenance had become an ever-increasing burden. Now a serious foundation defect had caused the sudden collapse of a corner wall. Family members in Birmingham had hastily rallied to move from harm's way the four-poster beds, armoires, and gilt mirrors that had been in the house since before the Civil War. But the days of the old place seemed numbered. "A clap of thunder will bring it down," declared one pessimist.

Harris wanted to know if any restoration funding might be available through the AHC. If not, was there some local group who might be willing to take on the house for restoration as a museum? Gamble was sympathetic, but the answers to Harris' questions were negative. The AHC had very limited resources and the struggling county historical society even less.

Fortunately, the matter did not end

there. Gamble decided that the situation presented an opportunity to test a concept that he and AHC Executive Director Larry Oaks had casually discussed on several occasions. "You could call it a sort of adopt-a-landmark strategy," says Gamble.

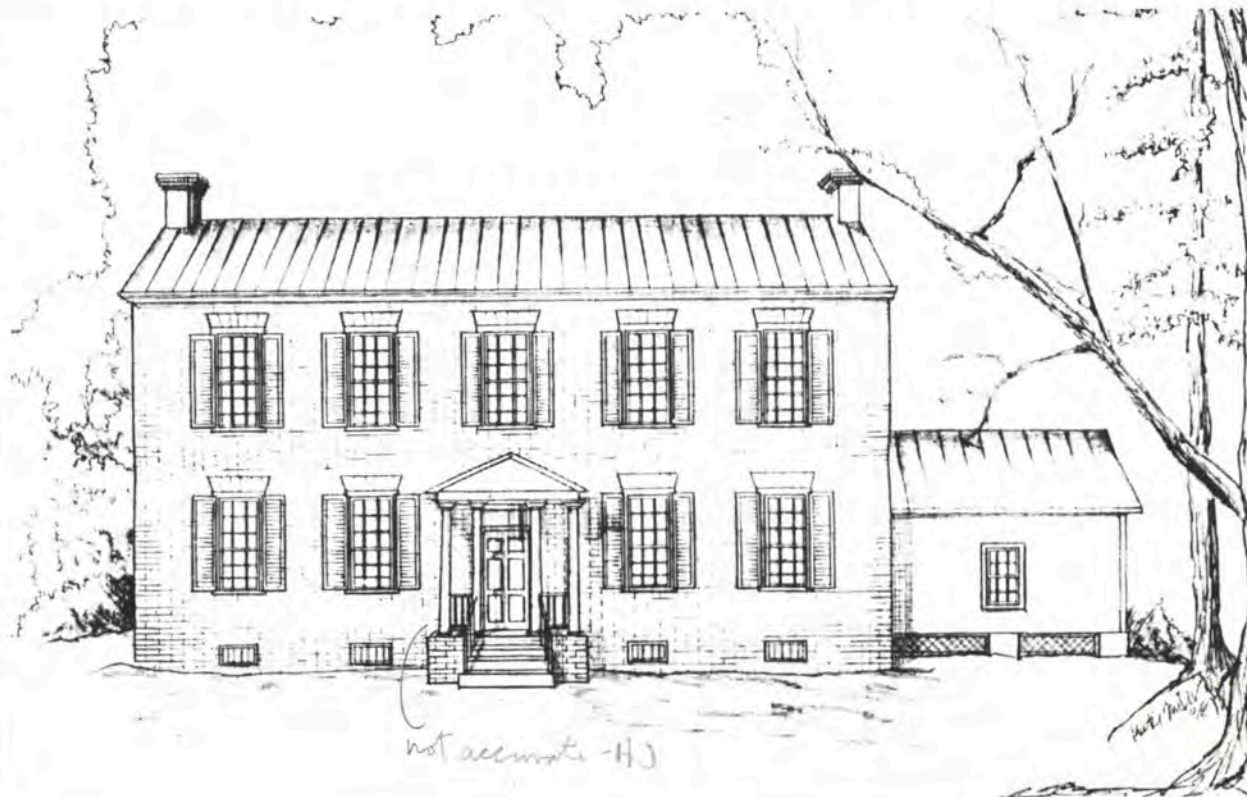
Roughly it would work like this. The AHC (or some equivalent group) could accept a conditional donation of the prop-

(Continued to Page 2)



ABOVE: Current view of Courtland's McMahon House.

BELOW: Artist's rendering of how the house can look after restoration by new owners Ben and Barbara Wilson.



tracted intellectuals and reformers; the availability of free land drew people of mod jeans; and the mild and healthful climate brought seasonal visitors.

Among the intellectuals who arrived to see George's ideas made reality was Marietta Johnson, an educational reformer strongly influenced by the progressive educational philosophy of John Dewey. Her approach emphasized the growth of the whole child and eschewed competition for grades and prizes, substituting an "organic" approach that would nurture a spirit of cooperation. Johnson's "School of Organic Education" received national acclaim and generated at least nine satellite schools across the nation.

The main buildings of the Organic School, the offices of the Single-Tax Col-

The district derives much of its distinctive character from its setting on the bay. Both submissions were prepared

now Searcy Hospital, has had a long and complex history serving as an early national arsenal from 1830-1870, as a bar-

ing cotton with nitrogen-restoring legumes, like cow peas, cowpeas, actually improve yields of cotton in Alabama soils.

Strategy saves McMahan house (From Page 1)

erty with the understanding that a suitable new owner/restorer be sought. A minimal up-front requirement was that the property have National Register merit. Rehabilitation easements and protective covenants would be placed on the property and it would be advertised. If a satisfactory recipient was found, then the property would be deeded to them for restoration at little or no cost, with future monitoring by the AHC.

Gamble presented the idea to Harris

and other members of the family. Thus began a chain of events that culminated in December with transfer of one of the Tennessee Valley's oldest brick houses to Ben and Barbara Wilson, who plan to restore it as a family residence.

Events since that October telephone conversation have shown how the public and private sectors can work together on a preservation job. Attorney Fred Harris Jr. of Tallahassee — Jim's brother — provided hours of free legal work to effect the deeding over of the property to the AHC last April. At the AHC's request, architect Harvie Jones contributed an assessment of the structural condition of the house as well as needed emergency work. Then Decatur preservationist and developer/architect Wally Inscho pulled his crew off another job to temporarily shore up the collapsed corner of the house — at less than cost to the AHC.

Meanwhile, the Lawrence County Historical Society headed by Spencer Waters of Moulton, along with Mayor Rudy McCarley of Courtland, got behind the project. Historical Society member Roger McNeese and retired town councilman Price Terry agreed to show the house on the AHC's behalf and to keep an eye on the place. Mayor McCarley kept the lawn cut and the trees trimmed. In June, an area National Guard unit cleared away some of the dense undergrowth, and cleaned and stacked brick from the collapsed corner wall. When further legal counsel was needed, it was provided gratis by Moulton lawyer Harold Speake. "I have been tremendously impressed at the civic spirit of people in the area," says Bob Gamble.

Modeling its own rehabilitation easements and protective covenants after those developed by the Preservation Fund of North Carolina, the AHC went on to establish formal conditions for transfer of the property to a third-party restorationist. In this, the AHC has been ably assisted by Jim Goodwyn and David Dean of a sister state agency, the Department of Conservation.

Ironically, one of the most difficult jobs proved to be setting up a mechanism within the state bureaucracy itself to facilitate the transfer process. But persistence paid off and in October the AHC advertised for restoration proposals on the McMahan house. A base bid was established to allow the AHC to recover its costs on the house.

Ben Wilson, an employee of Champion Paper's Courtland plant, had already fallen in love with the McMahan house. So had his wife Barbara. They and their children made repeated visits to the place, and when it was formally advertised the Wilsons were ready with their proposal—the one chosen by the AHC. Despite the awesome amount of work involved, they speak enthusiastically about their forthcoming restoration.

Now that a mechanism has been proven, perhaps other properties can be preserved in the same manner. "To my knowledge," says Gamble, "we're the only state preservation office in the country attempting anything of this kind." Both he and Executive Director Oaks hope that eventually a private-sector organization like the new Alabama Preservation Alliance can lead such an effort, perhaps cooperatively with the AHC.

Enabling legislation up again

Legislation that would enable municipalities to establish local historic preservation commissions will be introduced during the upcoming regular session of the Alabama Legislature. A similar bill was almost enacted last year before debate over controversial bills delayed action and time ran out.

Currently a separate, specific act of the Alabama Legislature is required for the creation of a local commission. This can be a difficult task for many of the smaller communities where a large percentage of the state's historic resources are located.

The proposed legislation drafted by Mobile attorney Bobby Allen would empower the local preservation commission to identify and designate historic structures and sites and further protect them by requiring that all demolition, alteration and new con-

struction be reviewed by the commission or its appointed review board.

The Alabama Historical Commission has spearheaded efforts to enact this needed legislation and is once again calling upon its Board of Advisors for assistance.

"We've come so close the past two years," said AHC Director Larry Oaks. "It's frustrating to start all over, but that is exactly what we are doing."

"We are asking our Board of Advisors to contact their representatives and urge their support for statewide enabling legislation."

Copies of the proposed bill, fact sheets and a directory of state lawmakers are available from the Commission and can be obtained by writing the Alabama Historical Commission, 725 Monroe St., Montgomery, AL 36130, or calling (205) 261-3184.



McMAHON HOUSE
ca 1830 • Lawrence County

Tall and grave, relying for effect upon good proportions and an air of dignified repose, the McMahon house is one of those architectural transplants that link the Deep South with an older Atlantic culture, and ultimately with English building traditions. Prototypes may be seen at least as far north as Connecticut, but closer "relatives" are similar houses dating back to the early 18th century from coastal Maryland southward into eastern North Carolina, and again, thickly through the Valley of Virginia on down into East Tennessee and across into the Nashville Basin.

With a compact main body two stories high, chimneyed, and invariably but one room deep, this type of dwelling has been dubbed the "I" house by architectural historians because of its high, slender profile. Wings variously positioned at the side or rear usually supplement the main block. And in a more distinctive variation found in the lower South, a shed or lean-to extension may crouch low across the back, sometimes even countered by another at the front (see the Moore house, page 186).

The McMahon house is an aristocratic version of the "I": its original south-facing facade formal and primly symmetrical, more akin to Georgian precedent than to the easygoing farmhouses at the other end of the "I" spectrum. Oddly, neither the paneled front door nor the corresponding back entrance have so much as a transom to admit light into the wide hallway — a situation that must have made for gloomy midwinter days, despite a tall window positioned above the stair landing. Yet rooms are light and in ^{the} _{the}, enhanced by paneled cupboards, gracefully proportioned mantelpieces, and molded chairrails.



MELTON HOLLOW
mid-to-late 19th C • Lauderdale County

Dwelling in isolation among the hills, or deep in the "piney woods" of the coastal plain, were countless rural southerners whose stake in the larger agrarian society around them was marginal. Quietly independent, cultivating small parcels of cleared land, they developed remarkable self-sufficiency — owing allegiance to no group more than their extended family, and paying as little heed as possible to the fiat of distant government.

Melton Hollow's collection of rough log domestic structures is a vivid reminder of the daily existence of these folk. A footpath which could easily double as a bridle trace winds along a rushing stream into the hollow, formed and guarded by low-crouching hills thick with oak and poplar, sweetgum and ash. Near the stream stands the abandoned homestead, developed over several generations. There are two extant dwellings: a rough log "dog-trot" house with characteristic open central passage, and a porch-fronted cabin well built of hewn logs and enclosing a single large room with a spacious sleeping loft overhead. Later, the logs were partially sheathed with boarding and a frame lean-to was built across the rear.

Several outbuildings — a separate "cookhouse," a corncrib, stables and barns — lie scattered nearby. One of these is a rare four-crib barn, composed of a quartet of log "pens" arranged in a square under a single roof, so as to form criss-cross passages between.

Inhabited well into this century, the Melton Hollow complex is today owned by the Champion International Paper Corporation.

Historic structures saved

• **Koger House, Florence.** The Koger House, an 1830 Virginia-type plantation house, is being restored through a process developed by H.E.L.P., the AHC's Historic Endangered Landmark Program, and Heritage Preservation, Inc.

After the Koger House was donated by Elizabeth Dabney Gerber and her children, the house's preservation was undertaken by Nancy O'Neal, formerly of New York. A great-granddaughter of Alabama Gov. Edward Asbury O'Neal, Nancy persevered, undaunted by the collapse of an end wall and the need for massive structural rebuilding of large portions of the other walls. Late this fall, she was able to move in.

Florence architect Bob Whitten developed the house's architectural plans



AFTER: Koger House — October 1992

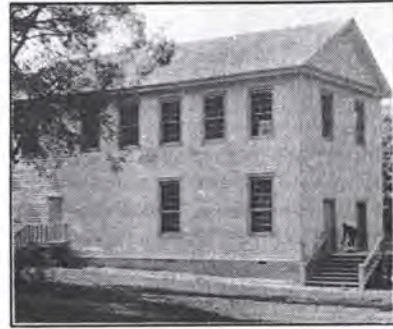
in conjunction with H.E.L.P. The approximate cost to date is \$100,000.

• **McMahon House, Courtland.** The McMahon House, a Federal-style house built in 1929-30 by Joseph Trotter, was purchased in 1838 by John Jordan McMahon, a cotton merchant who divided his time between Courtland and New Orleans. In 1987

McMahon's descendants gave the house, through H.E.L.P.'s efforts, to the Alabama Historical Commission.

Restoration of the house has been completed by Ben and Barbara Wilson. Despite structural problems, the Wilsons were able to accomplish the restoration for about \$120,000 by undertaking much of the work themselves.

• **Update given on Ashville Masonic Lodge.** Saved by the assistance of the H.E.L.P., restoration is nearing completion on the Ashville Masonic Lodge. One of only four pre-Civil War Masonic Lodges left standing in Alabama, the circa 1850 building was saved from demolition in 1990 by local preservationists who raised \$12,000 in funds to have it moved to a donated site.



ABOVE LEFT: The Koger House before restoration.

ABOVE RIGHT: A view of the Ashville Masonic Lodge in mid-restoration.

MIDDLE: The McMahon House before its restoration by Barbara and Ben Wilson.



BOTTOM: The McMahon House after restoration.

Handwritten note: HJ donated portico details based on drawings of masonry also.

Criteria for HPF and monies coming in Restoration Report

Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) grant or the recently established Alabama Fund will be contained in the May/June Report.

Historic Preservation Fund grants is contingent on monies from the United States Department of the Interior is normally available by late April; however, it has been as late as April 15th have been made available.

Resources Trust Fund is the result of a Federal Energy Regulatory Commission gas pipeline corporation after the corporation ducted a pipeline through southwest Alabama caused environmental damage and lawsuits. The first grants available are expected to be awarded in October during the AHC's strategic planning and the selection criteria for Historic Landmark and registration grants.

In the future, the AHC will focus on entering into a computerized data base of resources and archaeological sites. This will make results from earlier surveys available to historians, planners, CLG coordinators.

Handwritten note: Al. Hist. Commission

15 Dec '93 AY. 11MKS

Christmas buffet adds to round of holiday parties

The Yuletide is party time and all the trappings of the season are popping up everywhere. Addie and Jimmy Wilson lost no time in getting a move on with their Christmas buffet inviting Huntsville and Athens friends for some cheer on Sunday afternoon on Governors Bend.

A 10-foot tree banked by red poinsettias in the foyer was the first of many decorative settings carrying out a gold and white party motif. Gold magnolias mixed with white orchids, roses and Shasta daisies formed the table arrangement where guests mingled to enjoy the food.

The best of holiday music filled the air as Dianne Williams and Wilton Fowler played during the afternoon hours to set the mood for Christmas. Athens friends lending a hand in serving were Shannon Booco, Lerline Milligan, Fran McFarland, Mark Booco, Sanders Woodroof and Tommy Woodroof. Huntsville friends showing hospitality were Margaret Yarbrough, Mary Kate DeYoung, Franca Rutter, Al Adams, Warren Sockwell and Jewel Moody. Addie also put grandchildren Alan Booco and Will Woodroof to work tending the ta-

Life writer Margaret Lindberg's column appears on Sundays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays in Life. Her office telephone number is 532-4440.



Taking Note

Margaret Lindberg

bles.

Open house

Barbara and Ben Wilson, owners of the McMahon house in Courtland, opened their historic home to the public during a holiday open house last weekend with Courtland residents and employees of Champion International, where Ben is employed, as the attendees.

The McMahon House, built about 1829-30 by Joseph Trotter, was purchased in 1838 by John Jordan McMahon, a cotton merchant who divided his time between Courtland and New Orleans. The two-story brick house was donated in 1987 by the McMahon descendants under the Historic Endangered Landmarks Program (HELP) to the Alabama Historical Commission, the state agency responsible for preserving Alabama's historic resources.

When the Wilsons acquired the house under a protective covenant for its restoration it was

determined by architects and engineers as too far gone for rehabilitation. Inspired by restoration efforts they had seen in Europe, the Wilsons began restoration doing virtually all the initial and difficult structural stabilization work themselves. Working with the Historical Commission staff, Huntsville preservation architect Harvie Jones, and the U. S. Secretary of the Interior's guidelines, the Wilsons have in the last five years brought the house back as a local showplace.

During the open house on Sunday, Barbara and Ben received the Alabama Historical Commission's Swayze Award for saving one of North Alabama's Federal-period houses.

Covered dish

Sue and Roy Nichols and the Board of Directors of Hospice of Huntsville hosted a covered dish supper at the Nichols home to welcome Susan and Jim Higgins and their two children to Huntsville. Jim has just recently accepted the position of executive director for Hospice of Huntsville. Susan is a counselor in the Madison Country school system.

The Higginses have moved here from Michigan and are enjoying being in the deep South once again. Susan is a Texan by birth.

1993 John McMahon House
Ben & Barbara Wilson

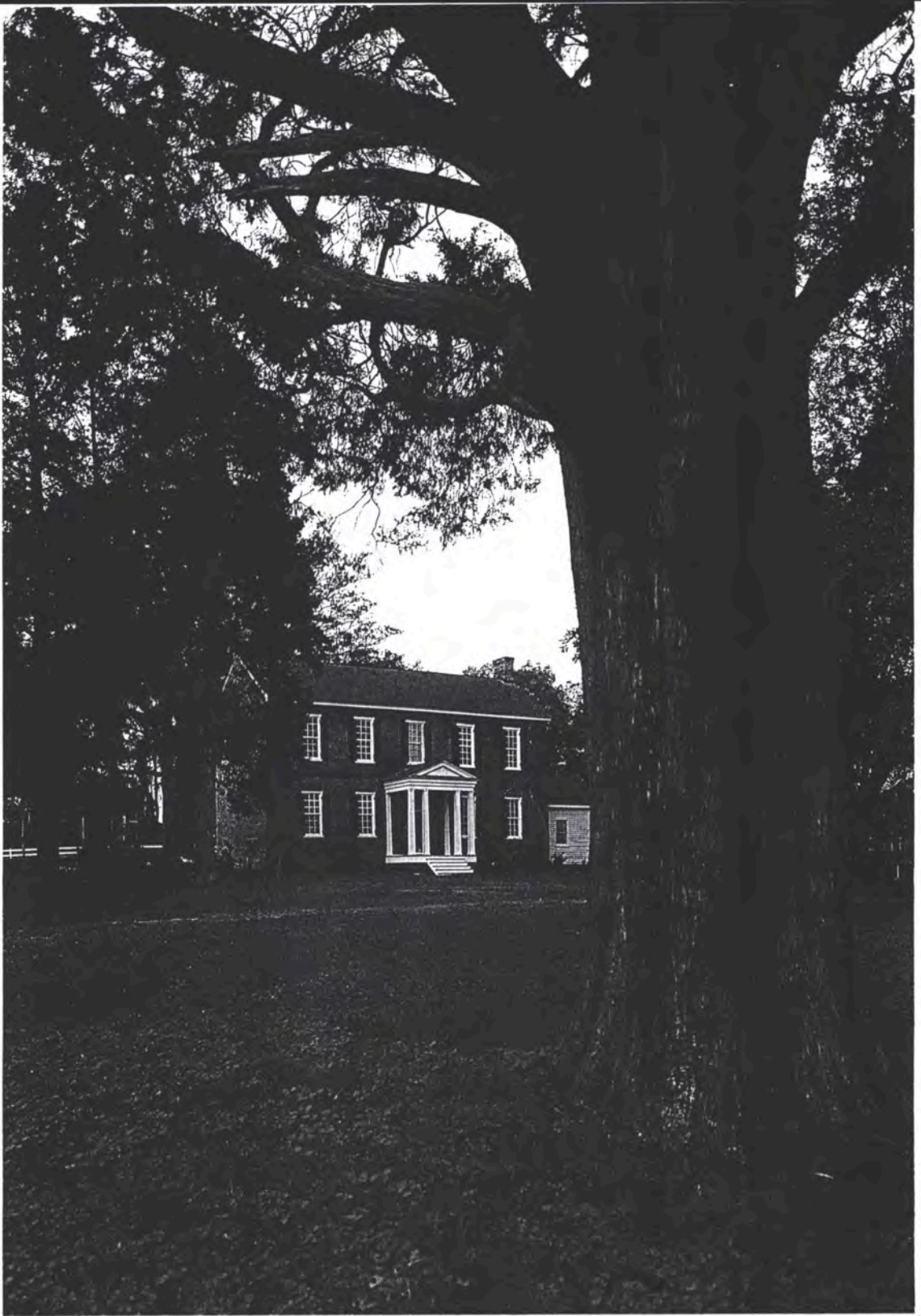
M cMAHON HOUSE

In 1987, Ben and Barbara Wilson convened a family circle to hold a discussion with their children that would have ramifications for every member present. Should the family acquire a vacant, deteriorating 1831 house, one wall of which had already collapsed? Should they venture to rehabilitate it? What could each family member - two grown sons and daughter - bring to the undertaking? Owned by the same family since 1838, Courtland's John McMahon house had been donated to the Alabama Historical Commission by concerned heirs in hopes that the Commission could find a means to save the historic structure. Lacking the funds itself, the state agency had been seeking a private purchaser who would be willing to take on the formidable restoration task under a long range protective covenant. But time was running out. The house was fissured with structural cracks, and temporary shoring could stave off further collapse only so long. But the Wilson's family circle discussion yielded a decision important to all: knowing full well what they were getting into, they accepted the challenge. One of their major challenges during the restoration process was working with the bricks of the outer walls, from locating enough to restore the walls, to cleaning them, to stabilizing them in their place. Because all of their past restoration experiences had been in wood, it took awhile



to understand brick and mortar, how the two materials come together, and the care required to restore walls made of these materials. By the time they were ready to begin their restoration work, more walls were threatening to collapse. So the first item of business was to reinforce teetering expanses of brick, pulling walls back together with long metal tie rods and then underpinning them. Some stretches of wall had to be pulled down and rebuilt, along with those that had already fallen. By the time they were ready to begin their restoration work one corner of the house had fallen away completely. The Wilsons and their children, whom they found to be both "inspirational and handy," scrounged around to find enough brick to complete each of the walls. Newer brick could not be substituted because of the unique, porous nature of the brick

used in the original construction of the house. The brick is so porous, indeed, that one can still take a water hose and spray the house at its midway point and find the water absorbed into the brick below before it touches the ground. Because of the porosity, each brick had to be damp to just to be cleaned. The bricks also had to be damp in order for the mortar to set properly; if not, the mortar would dry almost instantly, and the process would have to begin again. The brick work was a very slow, gradual process. Even with the help from a local brick mason, who was able to devote his mornings to the project, the Wilsons were able to lay only from six to ten rows a day. The Wilsons have been living in the John McMahon House since mid-March of 1993, six years since their decisive family circle discussion. Now they can relax and take pride in their accomplishment. The rescue of the John McMahon house was a serendipitous collaboration between the private and public sector: between generous-spirited heirs, a state agency, and one intrepid family. Now the Wilsons are at home there, looking forward to their retirement years, secure in the knowledge their children will maintain the house in the future and keep it an integral part of their family.



EXPRESS TREES AND DWELLING



subject in the opening pages of their ancestors," she said in a cover endorsement.

Robert Gamble, Alabama Historical Commission architectural historian, provided architectural interpretation for the houses photographed by University of Alabama chief photographer Chip Cooper. Dr. Harry Knopke, vice president of student affairs at the University of Alabama, is the book's essayist.

Governor and Mrs. Jim Folsom Jr. were given a copy of the book during the October 18 ceremony as were Dr. Mike Mahan, chairman of the Alabama Historical Commission, and Dr. Roger K. Sayers, president of the University of Alabama. Following the presentation in the house chamber, the crowd moved to the Supreme Court Library

Silent in the Land Calendar Proceeds Benefit the APA

Alabama Heritage magazine's 1994 wall calendar features 13 color photographs by Chip Cooper, many of which appear in *Silent in the Land*. Through a special arrangement with Alabama Heritage, the Alabama Preservation Alliance will receive a portion of the calendars' proceeds.

To order, send \$11.95 for each calendar and \$2 shipping to Alabama Heritage, Box 870342, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0342. Make checks payable to the University of Alabama.

County; Shep and Archie Sims, owners of Faunsdale near Demopolis; and Evelyn Richter, owner of the Richter house in Cullman.

"We're trying to show that there is a rich array of 19th-century rural domestic architecture out there," said Gamble. "This book features houses

is not to be lost," said Gamble.

The book features 60 houses in 150 color photographs, including full views, as well as fine details captured by Cooper—from weathered molding to the stained glass in a foyer. Houses featured hail from Madison County in north Alabama to Baldwin County

Affairs.

The *Silent in the Land* photo exhibit will be on display in the Capitol's Supreme Court Library for several more months. The Capitol is open to visitors from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Saturday, excluding state holidays.

Ben and Barbara Wilson Receive Swayze Award

Ben and Barbara Wilson, owners of the McMahon house in Courtland, received the Alabama Historical Commission's Swayze Award on Sunday, December 12, during a holiday open house. The Wilsons are honored for saving one of North Alabama's distinguished Federal-period houses.

The two-story brick house was donated to the Historical Commission in 1987 under the Historic Endangered Landmark Program (HELP). The Wilsons then acquired the house under protective covenants for its restoration.

"The condition of the house at the time makes its restoration all the more remarkable," said Robert Gamble, AHC architectural historian. "Almost everyone had dismissed the house as too far gone for rehabilitation. One entire corner of the house had collapsed while the rest of the structure was plagued by cracks and dangerous settling."

Inspired by restoration efforts they had seen in Europe, the Wilsons began restoration doing virtually all the difficult structural stabilization work themselves. Working with Historical Commission staff, Huntsville preservation architect Harvie Jones, and the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's guidelines, the Wilsons have in the last five years brought the house back as a local showplace.

"The Wilsons have become hands-on experts and have shared their knowledge with other old house restorers in the state," said Gamble. "Their work has given impetus to other historic preservation efforts in their area."

Created to recognize outstanding achievement by a private



Following the Swayze Award presentation ... (Front row, left to right) Elizabeth Brown, AHC preservation architect; Linda Wilson; Barbara Wilson; and Robert Gamble, AHC architectural historian. (Back row) Robert Wilson and Ben Wilson

owner in the restoration of a major Alabama landmark, the Swayze Award commemorates the accomplishments of Roy Swayze. Swayze, a successful Washington, D.C., attorney spent the last 15 years of his life restoring and maintaining Kirkwood, a grand antebellum mansion located in Eutaw in Greene County.

The McMahon house, built about 1829-30 by Joseph Trotter, was purchased in 1838 by John Jordan McMahon, a cotton merchant who divided his time between Courtland and New Orleans. In 1987, McMahon's descendants gave the house to the Alabama Historical Commission, the state agency responsible for preserving Alabama's historic resources.

All donated

Al. Hist. Comm. newsletter, Feb. 94

HAPPENINGS AROUND THE STATE

Demopolis

A marker for the historic Foscue House near Demopolis will be dedicated at 3 p.m. on May 14th as part of Preservation Week. The legend approved by the Alabama Historical Association reads partly: "Built in 1840 for Augustus Foscue (1799-1861) ... Daughter Mary Alice (1838-1899) married in 1855 to Dr. Bryan Watkins Whitfield (1828-1908), son off Gen. Nathan Bryan Whitfield of nearby Gaineswood plantation."

Foscue House was enlarged to the front nine years after the original construction. It has remained in the family and was virtually untouched until James Whitfield Bird obtained it. Only one upstairs bedroom had ever been painted. The original "feathered" wainscoting remains. Earlier on the dedication day, descendants of Gaineswood's builder will be honored by the Alabama Historical Commission at Gaineswood.

Marion

The Board of Directors of Judson College hosted a luncheon for the dedication of the old Carnegie Library on campus as Howard Bean Hall. Following the luncheon, the hundred or so guests adjourned to the Library for the dedication ceremony. The building, which had declined through the years, was restored by the college as part of an overall effort to restore a number of the historic buildings on campus. The architect for the project was Harvie Jones, perhaps the state's most sensitive restoration architect. The building now houses the Alabama Women's Hall of Fame on the first floor and the history and political science department on the second.

Courtland

Ben and Barbara Wilson, owners of the McMahon House in Courtland, received the Alabama Historical



The northwest corner of the McMahon House had collapsed, making restoration extremely difficult. (Photo by Chip Cooper.)

Commission's prestigious Swayze Award on Sunday, December 12, during a holiday open house at the property. The Wilsons are honored for saving one of north Alabama's most distinguished Federal-period houses.

The two-story brick house was donated to the Historical Commission in 1987 under the Historic Endangered Landmarks Program (HELP). The Wilsons then acquired the house under protective covenants for its restoration.

"The condition of the house at the time makes its restoration all the more remarkable," said Robert Gamble, Alabama Historical Commission architectural historian. "Almost everyone had dismissed the house as too far gone for rehabilitation. One entire corner of the house had collapsed while the rest of the structure was plagued by cracks and dangerous settling."

The Wilsons began five years ago, inspired by restoration efforts they had seen in Europe. They did most of the difficult stabilization work themselves, seeking advice from the Historical Commission staff, working with Huntsville preservation architect Harvie Jones, and following guidelines

from the United States Department of the Interior.

The entire family, including the Wilson's grown children, worked on the house. Asked how they had the courage to undertake such a daunting task, Mrs. Wilson says, "We decided we could do it because our children encouraged us, and because we could see how the work could be broken down into phases."

"The Wilsons have become hands-on experts and have shared their knowledge with other old-house restorers in the state," said Gamble. "Their work has given impetus to other historic preservation efforts in their area."

The Swayze Award was established to recognize outstanding achievement by a private owner in the restoration of a major Alabama landmark. It commemorates the accomplishments of Roy Swayze, a successful Washington D.C. lawyer who spent the last 15 years of his life in the restoration and maintenance of Kirkwood, the grand antebellum mansion in Greene County's Eutaw.

The McMahon house, built about 1829-30 by Joseph Trotter, was purchased in 1838 by John Jordan McMahon, a cotton merchant who divided his time between Courtland and New Orleans. In 1987, McMahon's descendants gave the house to the Alabama Historical Commission. Photographs of it restored appear on pages 70-71 of *Silent in the Land*.

Montgomery

Union Station and its adjoining train shed, both extremely important as local, state, and national historic landmarks, were purchased in October 1993 by Tisdale Family Properties of Andalusia. John Tisdale, president, is on the Board of the Alabama Preservation Alliance and has been involved in historic preservation efforts in Alabama since 1980. He has purchased and restored a number of historic buildings in south Alabama (including the L&N station in Andalusia), and he was instrumental in preparing the National Register District nomination for Andalusia in 1988.

"Our family is extremely proud to be involved with what we feel is one of the most significant historic properties in the state of Alabama. We understand adaptive reuse of older buildings for

ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION
HISTORIC PROPERTIES TRANSFER PROGRAM

ALABAMA
HISTORICAL COMMISSION

OCT 14 1987

APPLICATION FORM
(PART ONE)

RECEIVED

NAME OF PROPERTY Shackleford -
McMahon - French Home

LOCATION Lawence County, Courtland, Alabama

The Historic Properties Transfer Program of the Alabama Historical Commission seeks to preserve Alabama's diverse architectural heritage by placing landmark properties into the hands of individuals who are willing and able to adequately preserve and restore them for their own use and pleasure. In return for assuming this responsibility, the property recipient may get such a property at substantially below the market value. The recipient party is then expected to restore the property in accordance with the terms set forth in a formal agreement with the Historical Commission, which reviews the restoration/rehabilitation plans and, later on, provides counsel and assistance as appropriate.

Restoration proposals made to the Historical Commission by individuals wishing to secure a landmark property under this program are not judged on the basis of a monetary offer or fiscal ability alone. Equally as important is the appropriateness of the proposed use of the property, the merit of the rehabilitation plans themselves as outlined in the application, demonstrated past performance in projects of a similar nature, and willingness to make a long-term commitment to the restoration. Such factors will be seriously considered along with a base monetary offer and the required financial disclosure statement.

Bearing this in mind, you are asked to provide the following information. Supporting documents such as photographs of previous projects and letters of recommendation may accompany the application form itself. You may also be asked to meet with a representative of the Historical Commission as part of the application review process.

APPLICANT NAME Ben William Wilson/Barbara Ann Wilson

HOME ADDRESS Route Four Box 348 Killen, Alabama 35645

(city, state, zip code) Killen Alabama 35645 (East Ridge Estates)

HOW LONG HAVE YOU LIVED AT THIS ADDRESS? 1 year, 8 months

PREVIOUS RESIDENCE 15 years 1 month

(address) Route 1 Box 425 Lexington, Alabama 35648

BUSINESS ADDRESS Champion Papers Courtland, Alabama

(city, state, zip code) County Rd. 29 Courtland, Alabama

TELEPHONE: (home) 205-757-5238 (work) 205-637-6754

Please explain briefly why you are interested in acquiring and restoring the subject historic property.

Ourselfs and our grown Children (3) Feel very strongly about
our heritage. We love the area we live in. We appreciate the
old building structures. We want the home for our future generations
It is very important that we never lose sight of where we have been.
It will be our family home. We will all be restoring it. We have a lot
to give to the house, in the way of love and appreciation.

Use to which you wish to put the property, once restored. It will be lived in.
We don't know at this time if it will be full time or not.

We do know it will be use for speical ocasions. We want it to be
a important part of Courtland and open for the people of Courtland.

Please outline your general ideas for restoration, including stabilization work, systems to be introduced, interior and exterior changes or additions that you feel necessary, and grounds work such as grading, planting, new construction, etc. that you anticipate. (Use additional paper if necessary.)

Northwest Corner- Remove part of wall, pour concrete footing rebuild wall to as near original as possible. Southeast wall will need about the same. Level and install support under floors on ground level. Replace wall plaster
Rework wiring with new wire and switches. Install Heat Pump.
New plumbing. All this if it is with keeping with the guidelines.
Drain North yard- will get Civil Engineer to recommend what is needed to correct problem. our plans are to put the house back to as near the original as possible. We will be investigating all facts about the house before any landscaping is done. The interior is fine just like it is, except to clean and restore. The kitchen will be the only thing that will need updating. We had thought of glass in the back porch, to make it more comfortable for access to kitchen for house. Th front porch will be removed and the original look put back. There will not be any interior or exterior additions. The only changes out side will be the electricity line from power pole will be buried and a new power box installed. Th driveway will be graded and improved in the future. No trees will be removed only grown-up underbrush.

What would be your projected timetable for accomplishing the renovation?

1. Initial stabilization work Within six months - 1 year.
2. Introduction of systems, etc. Within 1 year
3. Final refurbishing work Over the next three years
4. Grounds work within 1 year

Amount of monetary resources you are willing to commit to this project:

1. Purchase offer \$ 3100.00
2. Initial stabilization/basic work \$ COST
3. Subsequent work \$ COST

Other resources such as special skills and support which you can bring to this project (for example construction, repair, and building skills and previous work experience; also landscaping, grading work, etc.). Please describe these briefly.

My wife and I grewup learning to do our own repair work at home. We have continued this throughout our thirty-one years of marriage. We have taught our children to do the same. Our daughter-in-law grew up learning to restore antiques with her mother. Our Son-in-law grewup with his Father work Mobile Home Manfatories. He himself worked at the same for some time. Our Daughter and Husband has just completed building their home themselves with very little help. We are in the final stages of completion on a house we bought and are remodeling. We would be most happy to show anyone the before and after pictures. We have owned Four homes. Have Done all our own work and Landscaping ourselves. We have helped Family members with their work. As well as Community building Projects. I work with a group of men that have come all types of occupations. I can have that resource at any time. I have acquired all the tools I will need.

When I informed my men of my plans they were very excited. as most live in

Check one:

Are you (X) employed full time

() employed part time

() retired

On the average, how many days per month do you feel you would be able to devote to supervision and/or working on the house?

Supervision everyday Actual working Days - 7 days a month

Are you willing to work with the Alabama Historical Commission in developing appropriate plans and allowing periodic checks on the progress of the work by a representative of the Historical Commission as per a formal rehabilitation agreement? Yes

If you have reservations about working with the Historical Commission or wish to outline certain conditions, please state them below:

A detailed guideline on the restoring techniques.

All information they have on the McMahan- French House.

or any house of that period.

Please list two associates, business or personal, whom we may contact as references (Include address and telephone number).

Mary Merlewski Rt 4 Box 309-3 Killen, Alabama 35645/205-757-9271

Jack Stephens P.O. Box 116 Elmore, Alabama 36025/205-567-6848

call after 3 - 3:30

COMPLETE THE ATTACHED FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE STATEMENT (PAGES 4 AND 5) SHOULD BE COMPLETED AS PART TWO OF THIS APPLICATION FORM. THANK YOU.

Your signature(s)

Barbara Ann Wilson
Ben William Wilson

Please type or print name(s) Ben William Wilson here.

Barbara Ann Wilson

Date 10-13-87

Date received by AHC 10-14-87
(office use only)

Please return this Part One application, together with Part Two (confidential Financial Statement), to Alabama Historical Commission, 725 Monroe Street, Montgomery, Alabama 36130-5101, Attention: Pat Roach. If questions, please call Bob Gamble at (205) 261-3184.

ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION
HISTORIC PROPERTIES TRANSFER PROGRAM
APPLICATION FORM
(PART TWO)

CONFIDENTIAL FINANCIAL STATEMENT

NAME Ben William WilsonADDRESS Rt 4 Box 348 Killen, Alabama 35645CHARACTER AND NAME OF BUSINESS Woodyard Foreman Champion Papers Courtland, Al.

For the purpose of my acquisition and rehabilitation proposal with regard to the McMahon-French in Courtland, Alabama, being considered by the Alabama Historical Commission under its Endangered Properties Program, I submit the following statement of my financial condition as of October 7, 1987, 1987.

ASSETS

Cash on hand-\$	500.00
Cash in Bank (identify bank or banks)	1,500.00 Colonial Bank Lexington, Al.
Notes Receivable-Mortgage Loans-\$	her-\$
Accounts Receivable	
Stocks and Bonds (See Reverse)	Cash value
Cash Loan Value-Life Insurance	50,000.00 wife 30,000.00 Don't Know
Real Estate (See Reverse) Homestead-\$	110,000 other-\$
Personal Property (Autos, Furniture, etc.)	75,000.00 Furniture 13,000.00 Autos
Other Assets (See Reverse)	\$17,000.00
Speical Savings Acc.	2,056.64 Colinal Bank Lexington, Alabama
TOTAL ASSETS 332,482.97	

LIABILITIES

Notes Payable to Banks	15,177.12 Home improvement Loan (garage) Colinal Bank Lex, Al.
Notes Payable to Others-Describe	
Real Estate Mortgages	17,996.21
Taxes-Describe	253.00 per year Homestead
Accounts Payable	
Other Liabilities (See Reverse)	
TOTAL LIABILITIES 33,426.33	

NET WORTH 298,056.64

SOURCES OF INCOME	PERSONAL INFORMATION
Salary	\$54,000.00 Have you executed a will? yes If so,
Bonus and Commission	\$ Name of Executor Jack Stephens
Dividends	\$ Are you a partner in any firm? No
Rental Income	\$
Other Income - Itemize	\$ Amount of Life Insurance Carried?-\$150,000.00 Beneficiary? Wife and Children
Other Income - Itemize	\$

CONTINGENT LIABILITIES	GENERAL INFORMATION
As endorser, co-maker or guarantor	\$ -0- Are any assets pledged? no See Schedule
On Lease or Contracts	\$ -0- Are you defendant in any legal actions no
Legal Claims	\$ -0- Have you ever taken bankruptcy? Explain no
Other Special Debt	\$ -0-

SCHEDULE OF REAL ESTATE OWNED

Description of Property and Improvements	Date Acquired	Title in Name of	Cost	Market Value	Mortgage Amount	Maturity
Home 3,200 Sq. Ft. 2 Acres, in restricted Subdivision with 24x32 ft. finished garage. Total landscaped.	1/19/1986	Ben and Barbara Wilson	60,000	110,000.00	1996	

LIST OF STOCKS AND BONDS OWNED

Name and Description	In Name of	Value
Champion Common Stock	Ben William Wilson	Mrkt.

OTHER ASSETS

Description	Value
Camper	1,000.00
Lawnmower	1,500.00
Shop Equipment	4,000.00
Antiques	5,000.00
Camera Equipment	1,000.00
T.V. Satellite System	3,000.00
Computer	1,500.00

OTHER LIABILITIES

Description	Amount

SCHEDULE OF ASSETS PLEDGED

Description	Value	To Whom Pledged
None		

The foregoing has been carefully read by me and is submitted to the Alabama Historical Commission for the purpose above stated. I hereby certify that it is a true and correct exhibit of my financial condition and may be treated by you as a continuing statement thereof until replaced by a new statement, or until I specifically notify you of a change therein. I agree that if at any time during restoration of the subject property this statement shall prove incorrect, in your judgement, as a statement of my then condition, or if at any time by reason of insolvency, application for receiver, or any act or omission on my part, in your judgement, the sale and rehabilitation agreements entered into with the Alabama Historical Commission shall be prejudiced or impaired, then the said Alabama Historical Commission shall have the right to intervene as necessary, including rendering invalid any sale or transferral agreements entered into with regard to the McMason Church in Cowland, Alabama.

Witness my hand and seal this 13th day of October, 1987.

Ben William Wilson (SEAL)

Barbara Ann Wilson (SEAL)

WITNESS:

Connie Jennings
Notary Public
2/29/88

Confidential Financial Statement, return this together with Part One of the application, to:
Alabama Historical Commission
725 Monroe Street
Montgomery, Alabama 36130-5101
Attention: Pat Roach
If questions, please contact Bob Gamble at

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property SHACKLEFORD
 historic name McMahon, John, House c.1828
 other names/site number _____

2. Location
 street & number Corner South Lane and Jefferson Street NA not for publication
 city, town Courtland NA vicinity
 state Alabama code AL county Lawrence code 079 zip code 35618

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	_____ objects
			<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: NA
 Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register NA

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official _____ Date _____
 State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____
 State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic - single dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic - single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Federal

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Brick

roof Tin

other Weatherboard addition

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

DESCRIPTION

The McMahon House is a two-story, five-bay, I-house with a one-story ell projecting from the northeast corner. The house is constructed in brick laid in common bond and has an end gable roof flanked on either side by an interior chimney. Built c. 1828, the house has maintained its integrity remarkably well. A framed kitchen wing was added to the east side of the house in the late 1880s. Some time before the turn-of-the-century, the orientation of the main entrance was changed from the south to the north and in c. 1945 a 3/4 length porch was added to the south elevation. The interior plan and interior woodwork are virtually unchanged since it was constructed.

* * * * *

The main mass of the McMahon House measures 52 feet wide by 24 feet deep. Both the north and south elevations have five bays with the low, paneled entrance doors centrally located. The narrow, 9/9 double-hung sash windows are placed singly in symmetrical rows and topped by flat brick lintels. The windows are flanked by louver shutters with original hardware.

Originally, the main orientation of the house faced south across an expansive lawn with a dining room ell extending to the rear (or north). A small pedimented portico once sheltered the original front (or south) entrance. Ghost marks of the Tuscan-order pilasters, with astragal moldings that once flanked this doorway can still be discerned. Some time in the late 1800s, the house was reoriented to the north to face the present Highway 20, and the present small entrance porch was constructed. In c. 1940, a one-story, 3/4 length porch with a railed upstairs deck was added to the south elevation and a second-story central door with transom replaced the original central window to provide access to the deck.

Extending from the north elevation is an original one-story, gabled roof dining room wing. It measures approximately 25-feet long and 19-feet wide with two narrow, 9/9 double-hung sash windows on the east and west elevations. There is a flush end chimney on the north elevation. Extending from the east elevation of the main house is an 18-foot by 16-foot, one-story frame addition. Built in c. 1880, this kitchen wing has a steep gabled roof and a screened porch with a shed roof on its north elevation. The main mass of the house as well as its extensions are covered with a standing seam metal roof.

The house has a single-pile linear plan featuring a central hall and flanking rooms. The hall features an open string, reversed flight of stairs with a landing. The fine detailing includes slender turned balustrades and newels, decorative running brackets under the return nosing of the threads, and decorative knobs under the stair return.

The two main first-story rooms, dining room and second-story bedrooms feature finely executed Federal mantelpieces from standard patternbook designs. In the dining room and both upstairs and downstairs east rooms, the mantelpieces are flanked by handsomely paneled chimney cupboards. Other notable elements in the house include original floorboards, narrow baseboards, molded chairrails, and six-paneled doors with original hardware. The only interior modification to the house is an early twentieth-century bathroom located in the south half of the second-story hall.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture
Exploration/Settlement

Period of Significance

c. 1828 - 1857

Significant Dates

c. 1828

Cultural Affiliation

NA

Significant Person

McMahon, John

Architect/Builder

NA

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

See continuation sheet

INTEGRITY

The McMahon House has retained its integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. The exterior of the house has undergone minor changes which include an 1880s addition and a 1940s porch. The interior has undergone little change to plan and architectural details. None of the outbuildings remain which were located to the northeast of the house.

The house has suffered from constant drainage problems induced several years ago by the regrading of Highway 20 which passes by the north of the house. A portion of the northwest corner wall subsequently collapsed in the fall of 1986. Efforts have been made to stabilize the structure.

CRITERION C - ARCHITECTURE

The McMahon House is architecturally significant as a surviving example of an early Alabama Federal-style domestic structure that reflects the carryover of 18th- and early 19th-century Atlantic Seaboard architectural forms introduced to Alabama by native Virginia settlers. The characteristic form includes the tall, symmetrical original facade with the prominent chimneys at each end of the gable roof. The McMahon is one of the oldest brick dwellings still surviving in North Alabama, and is one of only six two-story brick dwellings south of the Tennessee River believed to pre-date 1830. It is estimated that less than 50 Federal-style brick dwellings survive throughout the state. The significance of the McMahon House is seen in the sophisticated Federal-style interior woodwork which is virtually unchanged since its construction. This includes the staircase, six mantelpieces and built-in cupboards.

CRITERIA A & B - EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT

The McMahon House is significant for its association with John McMahon and his wife, Harriet Shackelford McMahon. McMahon was included in the first wave of Virginia immigrants to settle in Courtland, Alabama. McMahon was a native of Harrisonburg, Virginia and settled in Courtland in the 1820s to open a branch of a Huntsville mercantile firm. It was common in the early 19th century for native Virginians to settle in the Tennessee Valley area of Alabama.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY

John Jordan McMahon is the earliest documented owner of the McMahon house. Family tradition says that the structure, which occupies lot #292 on the original (1818) town plot, was completed by 1828, though its original owner is not altogether clear.

Born on October 22, 1805, in Harrisonburg, Virginia, McMahon migrated to the Tennessee Valley of Alabama in the 1820s. He settled in Courtland to manage a branch of a Huntsville mercantile firm owned by fellow Virginian Andrew Bierne. He quickly prospered and was soon joined by his parents who came to Alabama to be near their son and settled on a plantation not far from Courtland.

On August 20, 1835, McMahon married Harriet Catherine Shackelford (born November 16, 1812), daughter of local physician, Dr. Jack Shackelford. Dr. Shackelford was a native of Richmond, Virginia and was an early settler of Courtland. In 1835, Dr. Shackelford organized the legendary "Red Rovers," a company of military volunteers who joined the struggle against Mexico for Texas independence. The company was captured near Goliad and executed. Dr. Shackelford's life was spared in order to aid the Mexican wounded. "Remember the Goliad" became a rallying cry for the Mexican war. John and Harriet McMahon had four children: Fortunatus Shackelford (Nate), (b. 1836); William Jackson (b. 1839); Robert B. (b. 1845); and Lillie (b. 1850). John McMahon spent many years in New Orleans as a cotton broker, leaving his family in Courtland. McMahon died on June 3, 1857.

During the Civil War, both Fortunatus and William Jackson served as surgeons in the Confederate Army. Their younger brother, Robert, was in the Confederate cavalry and rode with an outfit known as "Roddy's Bull Pups," a group of young men who acted as bodyguards for General Roddy.

After the war, Dr. Fortunatus McMahon returned to Courtland and set up practice. A nameplate inscribed "Doctor McMahon" is still on the north door of the McMahon House. Dr. McMahon moved to New Orleans, leaving the house to be occupied by his spinster sister, Miss Lillie McMahon. It was Miss McMahon who added the frame kitchen addition in the 1880s.

At Miss McMahon's death in 1941, the house and property were inherited by her niece, Mrs. Louise French of New Orleans. Louise was married in c. 1898 to Terrance Evans French, a cotton broker from Seacombs, Cheshire, England. The Frenches used the Courtland home as a summer retreat away from hot and humid New Orleans.

Mrs. French died in 1972 leaving the house to her daughter, Louise French Harris, and son, Terrance (Ted) French, Jr. The house was used only as an occasional retreat by their heirs until donated to the Alabama Historical Commission in 1987.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Alabama Records Vol. 89

Alabama Department of Archives and History, May 1947.

Gentry, Dorothy. Life and Legend of Lawrence County, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, 1962.

Interview with Jim Harris, descendant of John McMahon (graduate student University of Colorado, editing family papers) April 1987.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings
Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering
Record # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property less than 2 acres

UTM References

A

1	6	4	7	1	9	8	0	3	8	3	6	1	3	0
Zone				Easting				Northing						

C

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B

Zone				Easting				Northing						

D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

A portion of Lot 292, Town of Courtland, Lawrence County. Begin at the point of the intersection of the South lane of Jefferson Street with the East lane of Van Buren Street in Courtland, Alabama, (the Point of Beginning) then run South 335 feet, then run East 250 feet, then run North 140 feet, then run West 15 feet, then run North 190 feet, then run West 225 feet to the Point of Beginning. Also known as the McMahon property with the Lawrence County tax number 42-07-09-30-04-002-04.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the house and the city lot that historically has always been associated with this property.

See continuation sheet

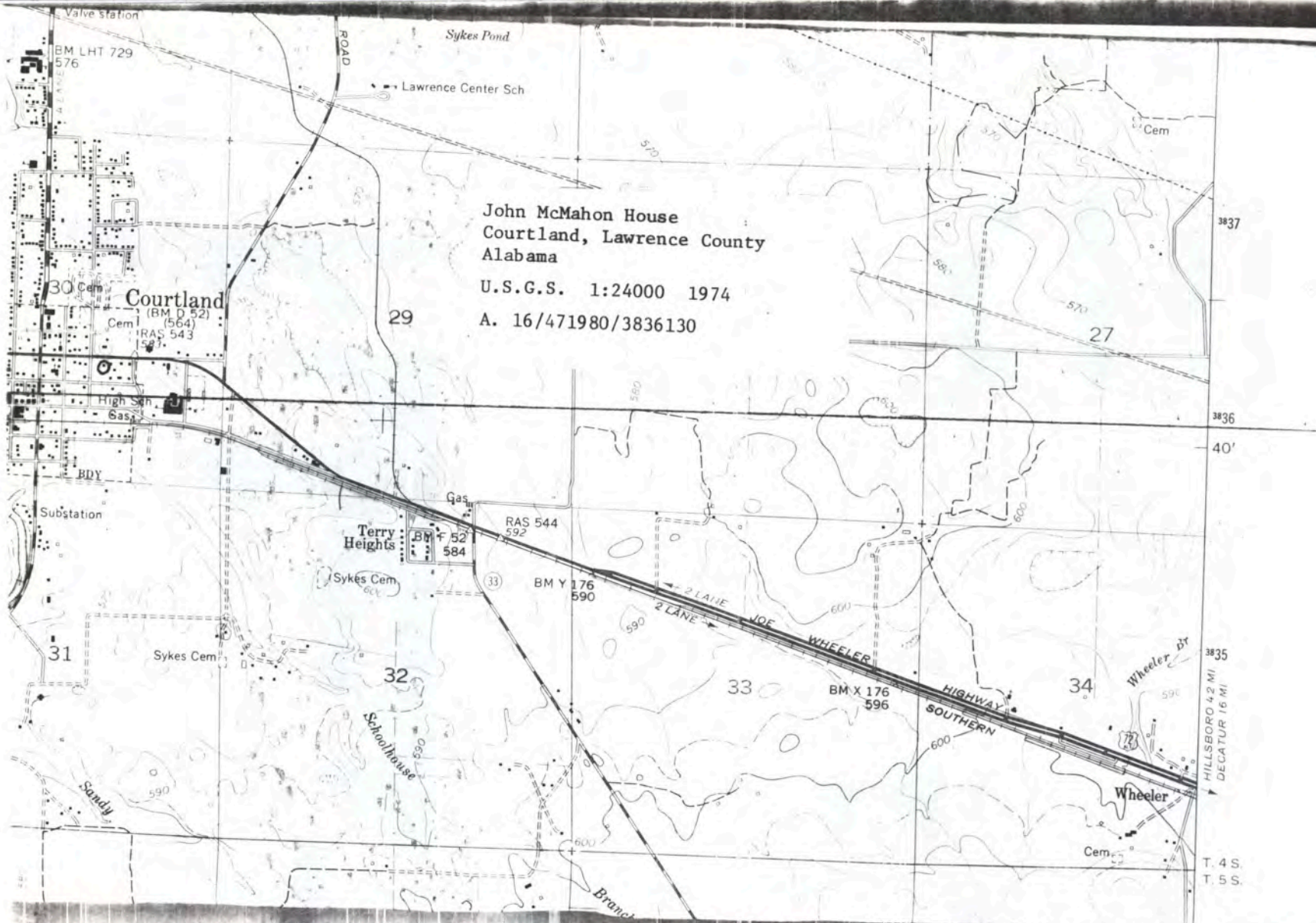
11. Form Prepared By

name/title Steven M. Kay/Cultural Resources Coordinator

organization Alabama Historical Commission date June 1987

street & number 725 Monroe Street telephone 205 261-3184

city or town Montgomery state Alabama zip code 36130



John McMahon House
Courtland, Lawrence County
Alabama

U.S.G.S. 1:24000 1974

A. 16/471980/3836130



