



015

→ N



024

→ N



→ N



020

DR. BURRITT
MUSEUM, c. 1940

Dr. Burritt House Museum
 completed c. 1940
 (1st. version burned near completion)
 Insulated w/ hay-bales (walls + ceilings)
 photos 1990 A.P. Jones BATH

1 of 11



Rail added c. 1970
 to meet bldg. code for
 public use (museum)
 Millberry = arch
 N ←



← "1935" is date of
 beginning the 1st house
 that burned.
 Completed c. 1940

All trim is core.
 throughout the ent.

Sidley = com. - asbes. shingles



← Acroterion (core)
 S.W. corner

Sagebo built
c. 1986
(Millberger, arch)

N
4



Sagebo →

N ←



Conroy added
c. 1980(?)

Rear

N ←

circle is a stage
over the cistern





014

E. Side

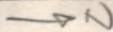


landscaping ramp added 1980's
Millberger, Arch.
(reg'd by code)



23

Original p.c. core stairs up
to roof, at
Conservatory west end





Huntsville, AL

Burritt Museum and Park

1994 card



06

SE. Rm ↗

N ←



05

front entry



west parlor ↗

N. ←



5. 11

ENTRY

May be from early 1800's ↗
 Burnett Hse on Eves Ave, torn down
 about 1940



016 East door in S. Entry N ←



017 West door (to Parlor) in S. entry W ←

↙ All this is probably
 c. 1938 "Colonial
 Revival" machine
 decor. Probably
 from demol.
 bldg. in St. Louis
 per museum records.



East door from Parlor to entry
 N ←




08
010



08



011



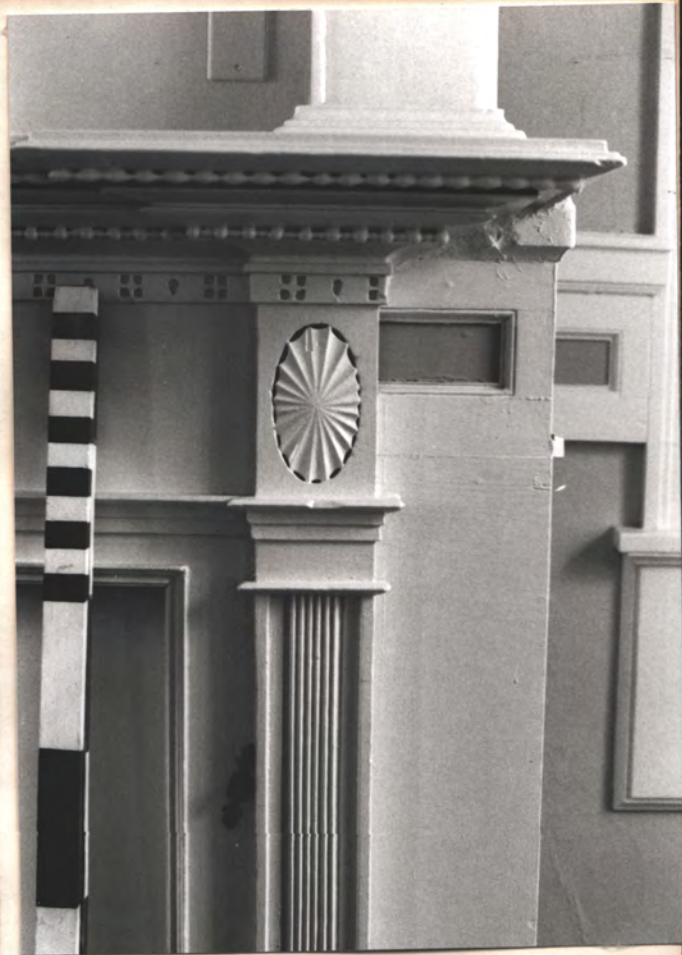
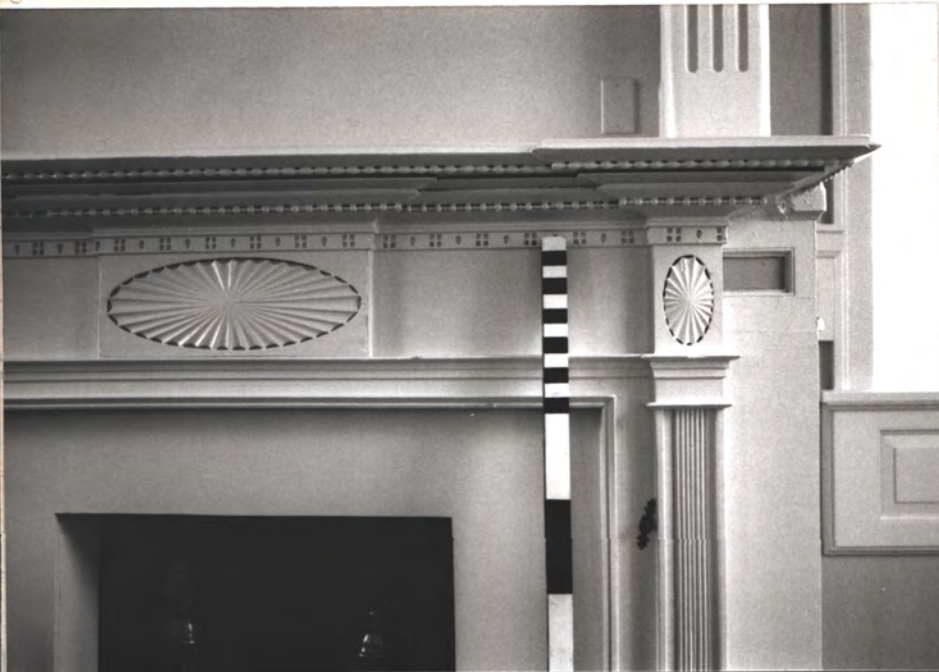
See photo on p. 6 for carrying on this door-frame facing

"Flame" design at panel tops, using machined fluted trim. Design undoubtedly by Dr. B. (Also above windows)

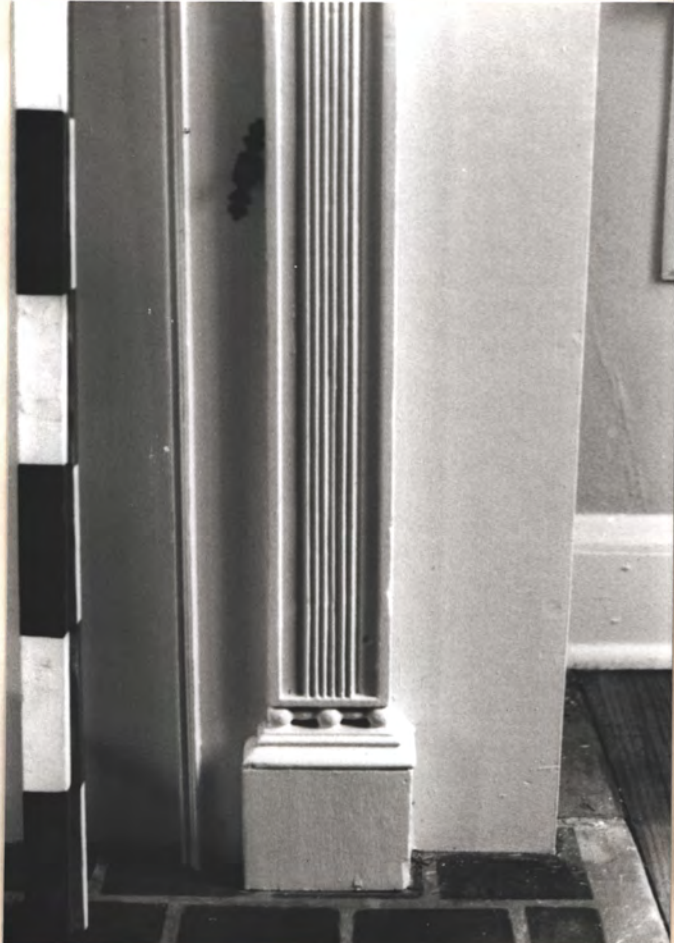
S.W. Parlor

7 of 11

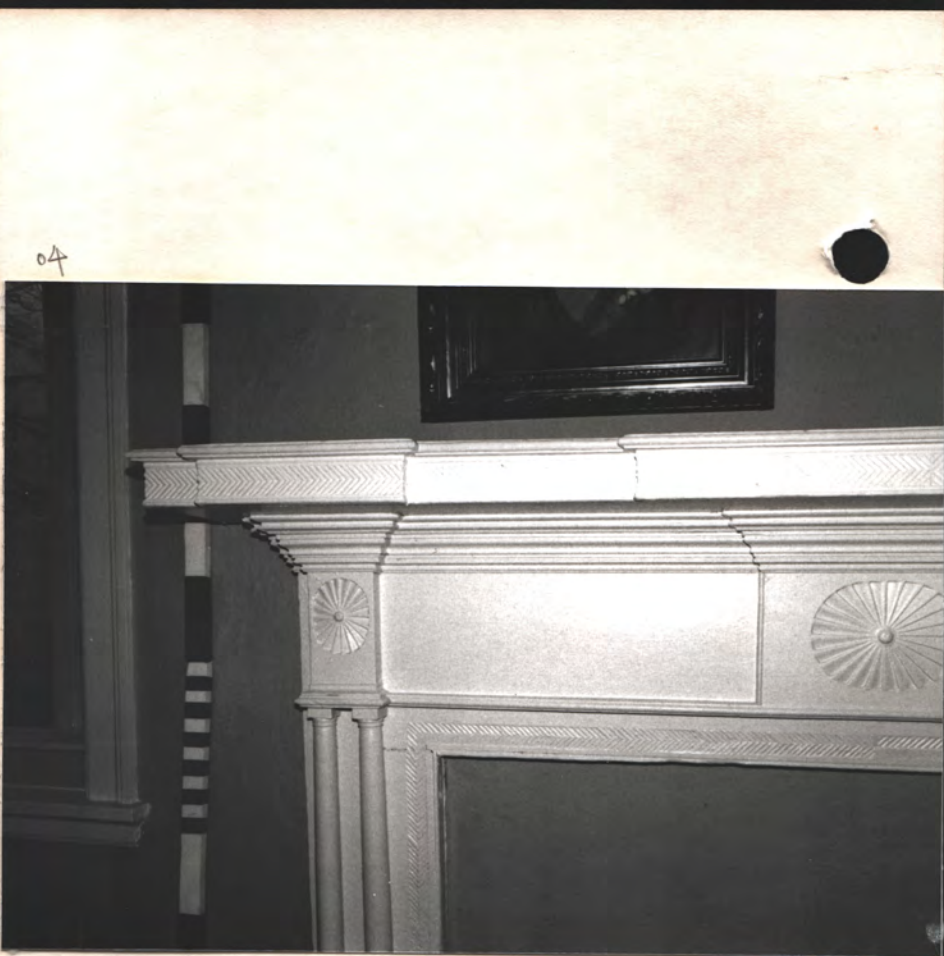
Melinda Herzog, Museum Director
 says Dr. Burnett saved 2 mantels from the
 early 1800's Burnett Hse on Eustis Ave (demol).
 c. 1940 for the Health Dept Bldg. & intended to
 mount them here. In ± 1960 or so, the
 Burnett Museum Board mounted them here.



The original eccentric sandstone-slab mantel
 were torn out (a shame) for these
 mantels. Two survive - see p. 10 of 1



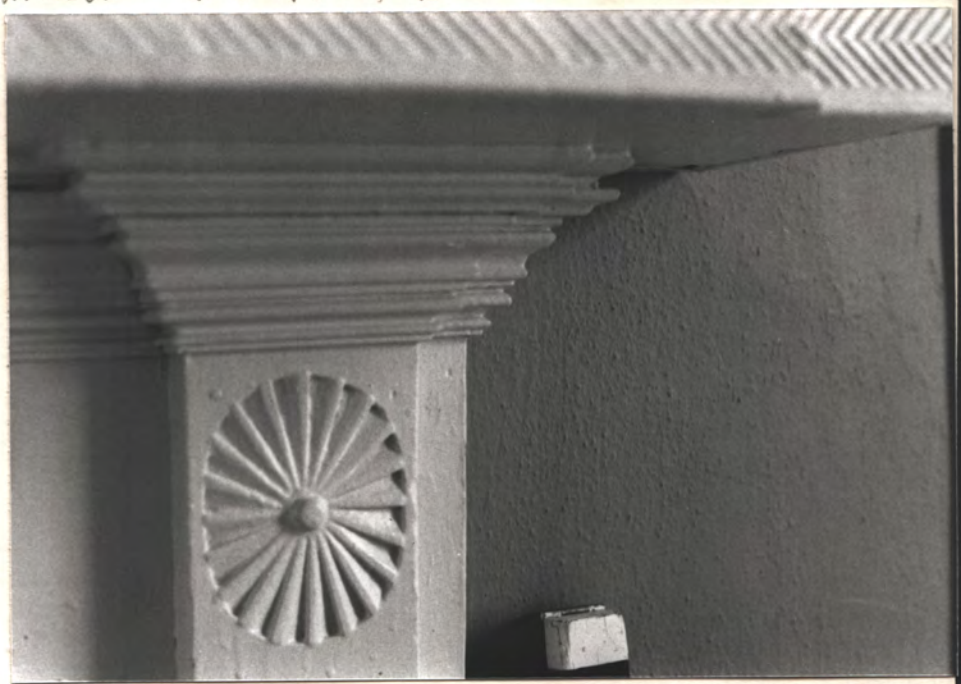
PORCH MANTEL (early 1800's, from orig. BURNETT Hse (HABS) on EUSTIS AVE.



N ←

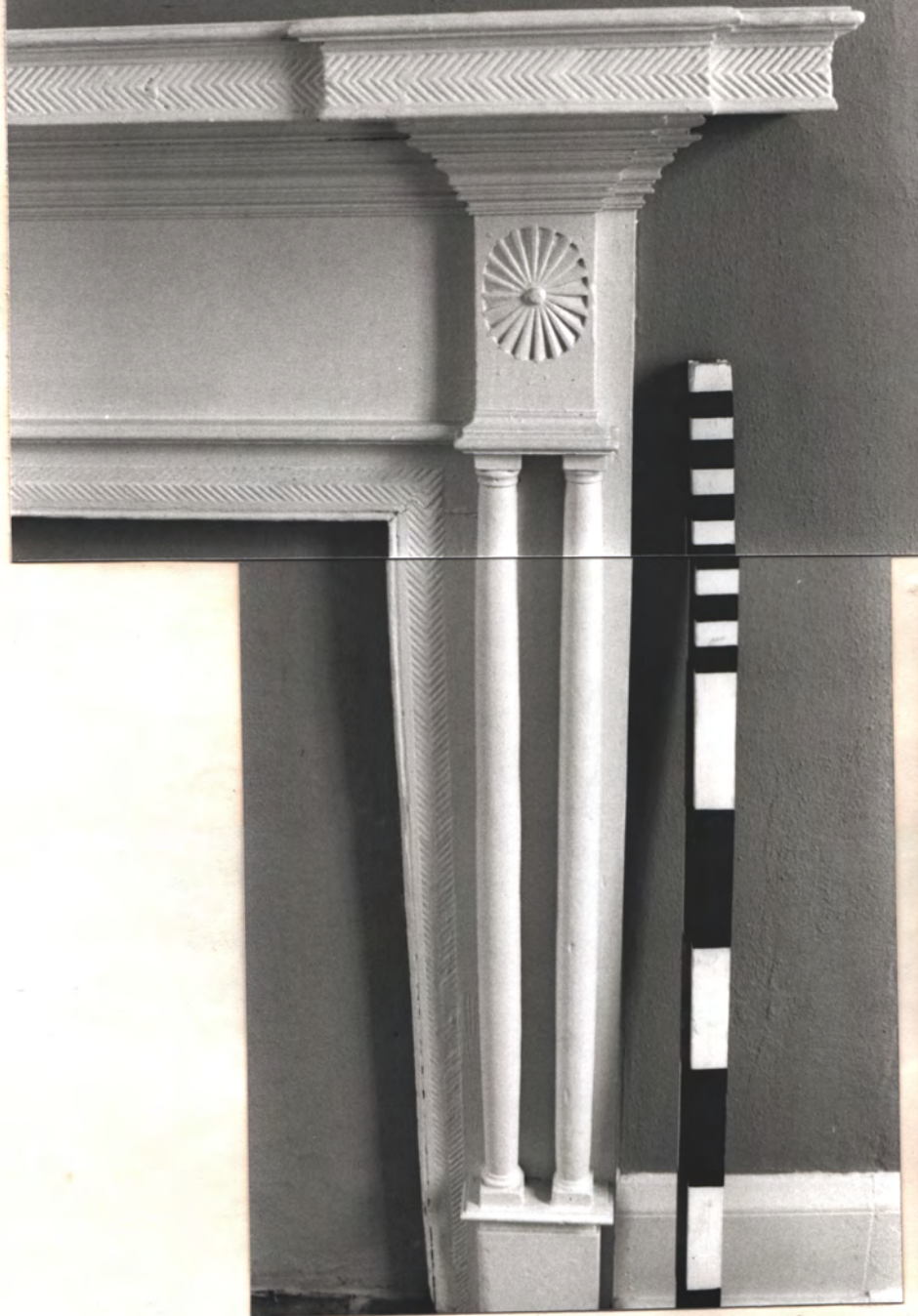
This is the other early 1800's mantel from the original Burrill Hse, mounted here in c. 1960's (verify) apparently in accord w/ Dr. Burrill's unfulfilled intentions. Original eccentric sandstone - slab mantel was demolished. Too bad!

Firebox closed - in perhaps 1970's (?) by the Museum Bldg.



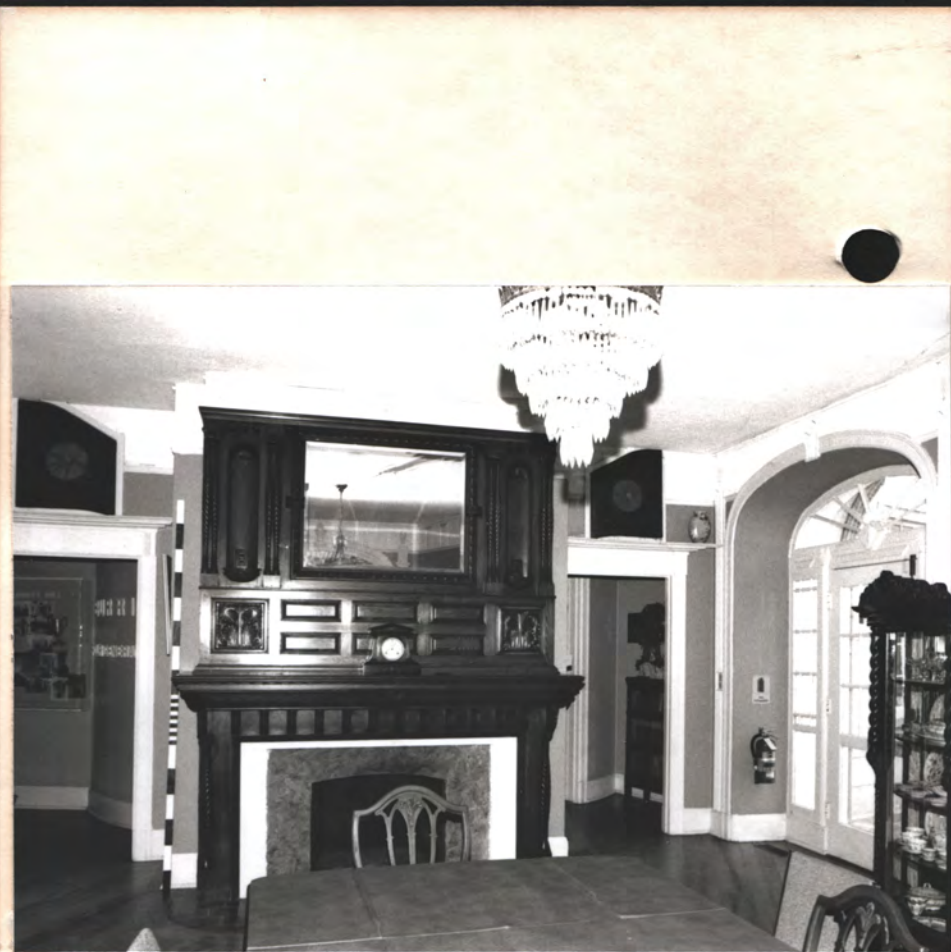
←

S.E. P.M.



Fall Period HABS Barrett also
mounted. See p. 9 for notes

S.E. Rm



2^o Best surviving eccentric mantel, designed by Dr. Burnett. West N.E. Rm.

1^o Late Victorian stained mantel, perhaps from a hotel or a mansion, in N. Cent. Dining Rm. Ya N

014

015



No "Art Moderne" mantel at 2nd. Fl. Central Rm. Probably designed by Dr. Burnett

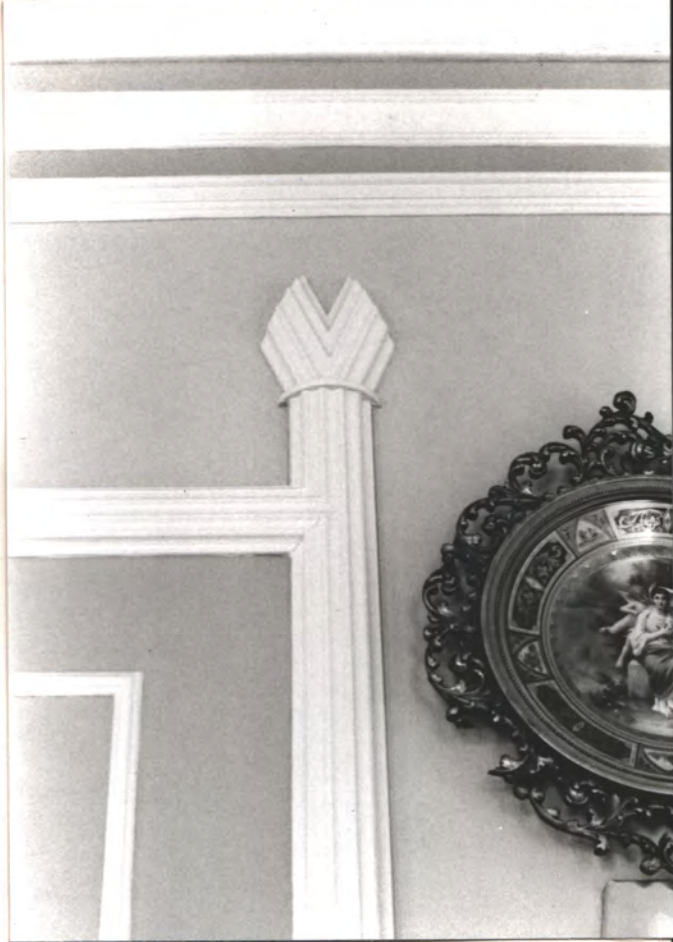
2nd Fl. S. E. M East window eccentric trim design (Dr. Burnett?)

Sandstone slabs

11 of 11

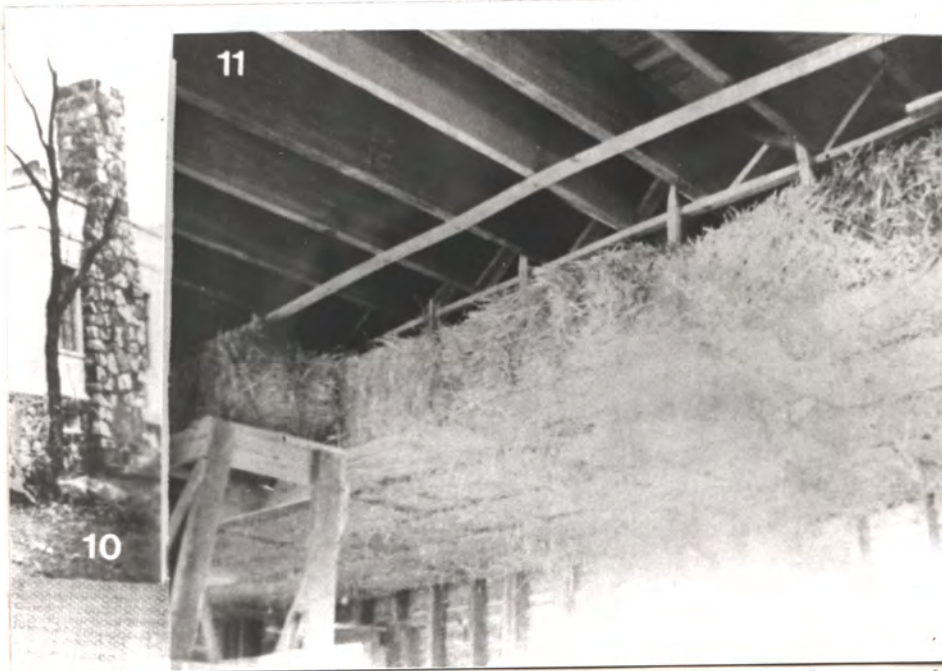


MANTEL BT N.W. WING, W. RM.
 (LINTEL IS SANDSTONE, NOW PAINTED
 TILES ARE QUARRY TILES, RED-BROWN)



S.W. PARLOR,
 TYPICAL "FLAME" CAPITAL
 FOUND IN PARLOR & DIN. RM.

Copies of c. 1939 photos.
 The wonderful mantels
 were demolished by
 "the ladies in charge"
 in the 1960's & replaced by
 early 19th c. mantels from
 the HABS Burnett Hse formerly
 of Easton, N.Y. (S.S.)



HAY BALES, ON WOOD STAKES, NAILED TO ROOF JOISTS



— MANTEL, SANDSTONE



S.W. PHELOR MANTEL - SANDSTONE



INT. - FRENCH WINDOWS TO N. REAR ROOF



→ N

EXT. DOOR AT N.W. WING



→ N



→ N



DOOR AT EAST TERRACE
AT DIN. RM.

→ N



DOOR AT WEST TERRACE / DIN. RM

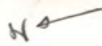


REAR DOOR (c. 1960's) AT
CONSERVATORY

→ N



SILL



2ND FL. WEST DOOR



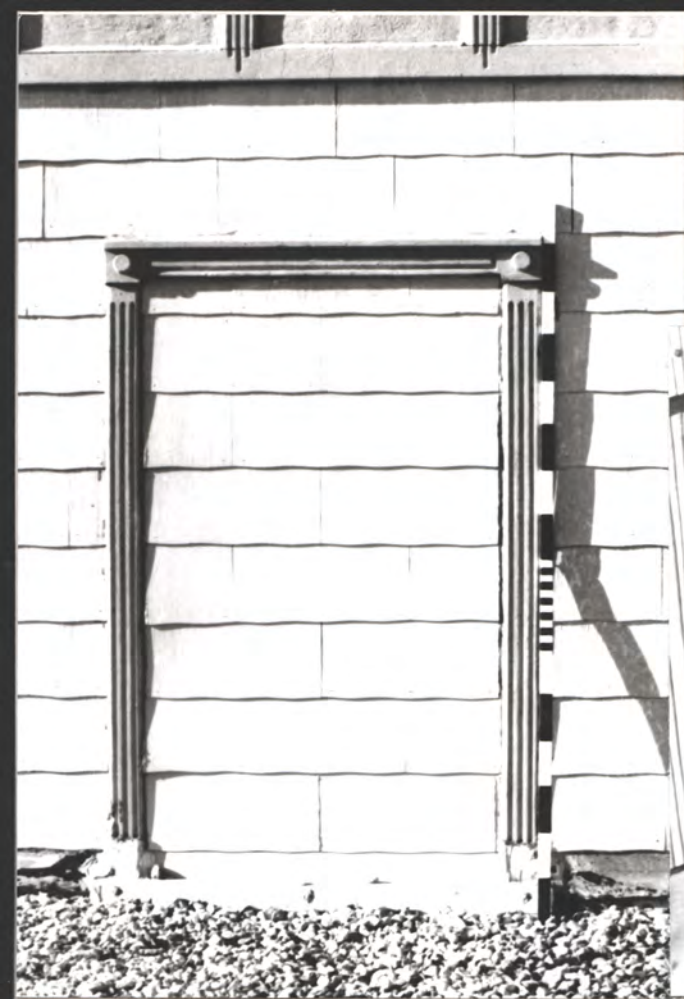
EXT.

N



INT.

N



→ N



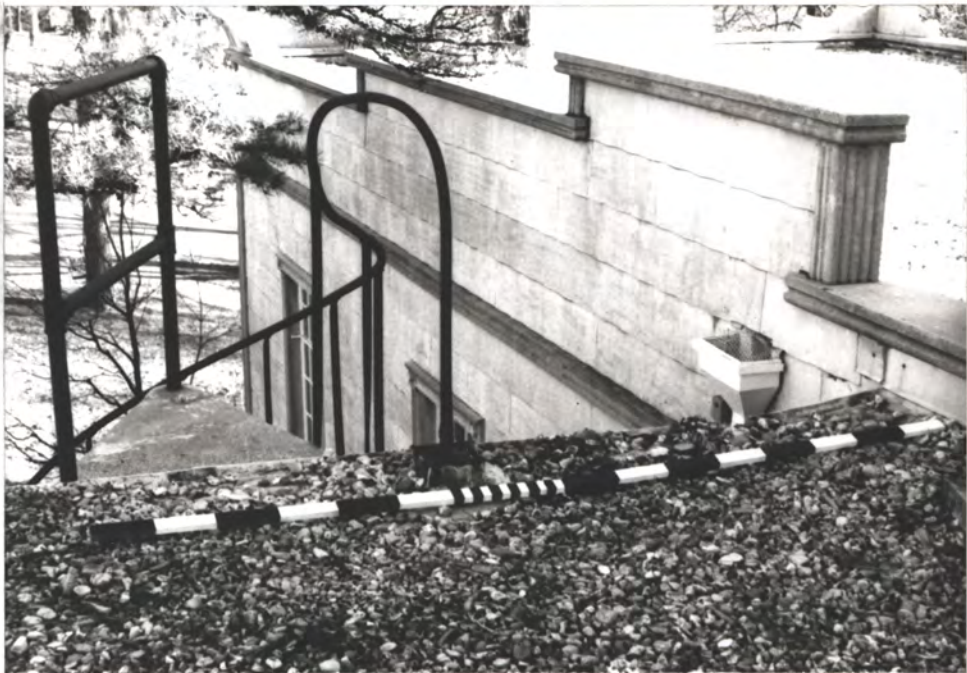
SILL

→ N

↙ ↘
2ND FL. EXST DOOR



FLUORESCENT
MINERALS



SPIRAL STAIR AT CONSERVATORY ROOF
↙ ↘

↙ ↘

JONES & HERRIN

Architecture/Interior Design

Jan 15 '91 Harvie P. Jones, F.A.I.A.

Melinda Herzog, Dir.
Burrill Museum

Re " 17 mar 90091

Dear Melinda —

I talked w/ Mrs Van
Valkenburgh at a reception
last night about giving her
drawings to the Lib. arch-
rekind. She is favorably
inclined, but no date.

I asked if she had any Love/
Burrill drawings. If she said she
did. This needs to be
mentioned (w/ qualifications)
in the Nat. Reg. Nom.

H. Jones

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

Wilfred
(Locket Ave)

Has arch.

drawings by

Edgar Love, Arch.

Conch to mid 20thc.

Wilfred

Van Valkenburgh

AD with my
photos, books,
drawings etc to

Mr. Prof. Lib

in 1991 as a
collection

This is the first house, begun 1934
 & burned 1936 as it neared completion
 (note portico cols not yet in place).
 Rebuilt on same plans but w/ numerous
 & different details & features, completed 1938±



Dr Burritt & his special right-hand
 drive Chrysler. Arrow arch of gate
 removed c. 1980 for bus passage.



A. W. JUDD, Murfreesboro, Tenn.



Dr. Burritt at Red-Top Mt. hse,
 perhaps c. 1940?

1 of 3

Dr. BURRITT in 19th c.
 Copy photos from Burritt Mus. Collection - H Jones

Mar. 1991



S.E.
Rm?



Din.
Rm
?

All these wonderful fireplaces "remodeled" by the
Burrill Museum Board in about 1958! Too bad.
Designs probably by Dr. Burrill.

This one mantel remains in 1991



SW
Parlor?

NE
Rm



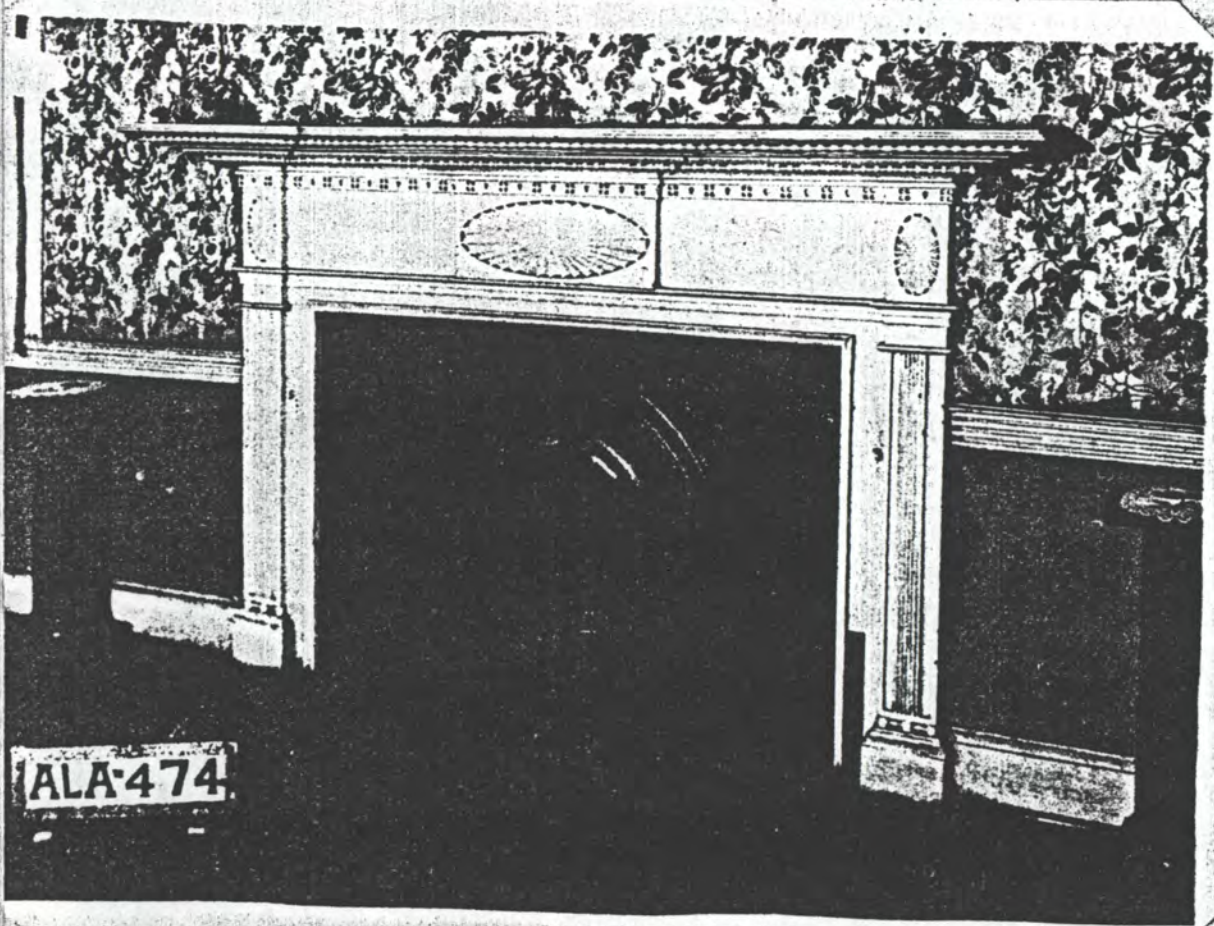


Removed c. 1958 by
Burrill Museum Board!



Dr. Burrill in St. Louis with
his patented wheels (or tires?)
Early 20th century

3. of 3 Burrill



The Burritt Home
 M. Matthews, Owner
 Birmingham, Alabama
 Donated to HABS c. 1940
 HABS NO. ALA-474
 for North Dept. Arch. in Enrich

*1930's
 Hist. Am. Bldg. Survey Photo*

Historic American Buildings Survey
 Alex Bush, Photographer, August 10, 1935

MANTEL IN N. W. ROOM

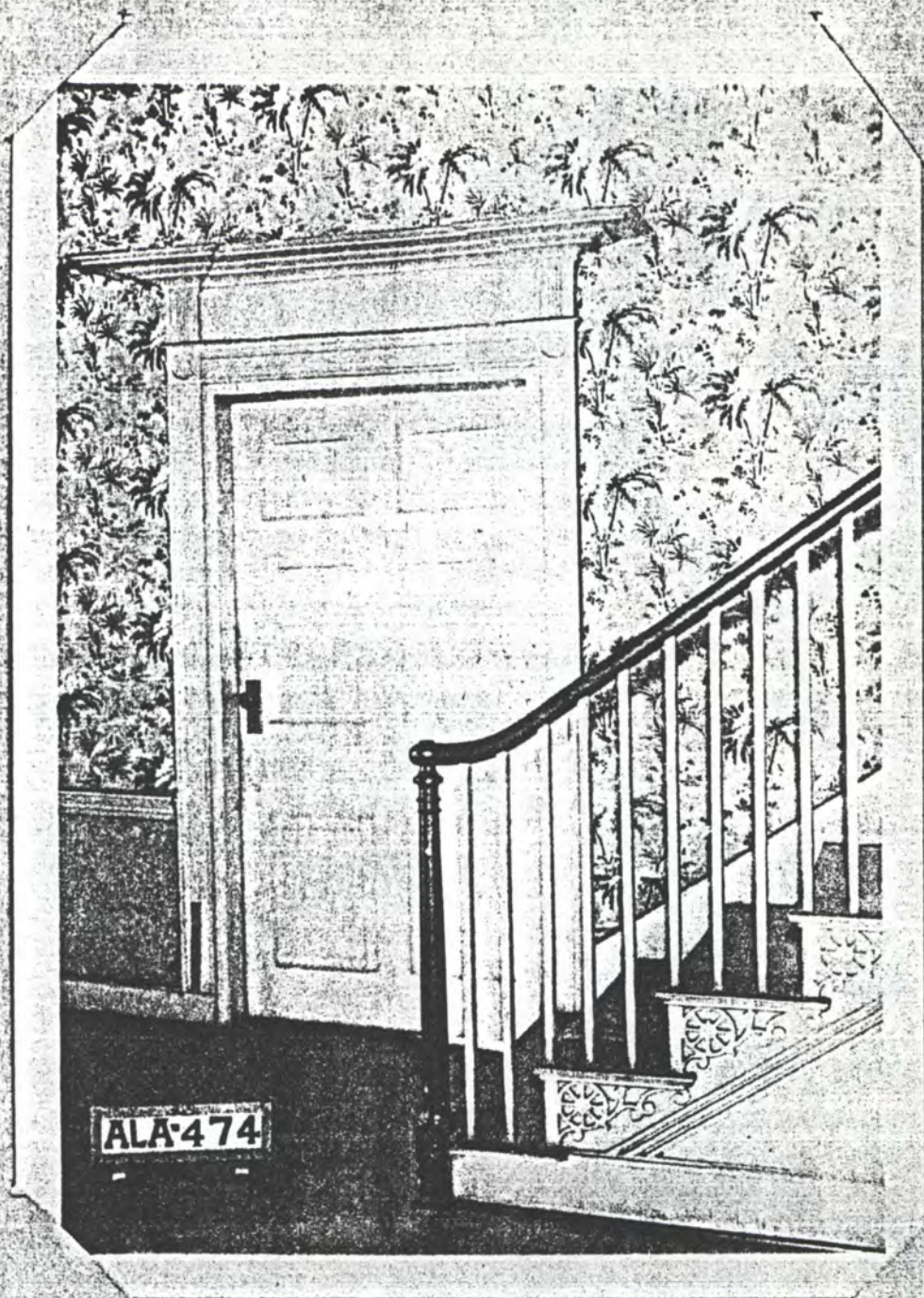
*In garden at 1930 has
 the Monte Sano*

HABS
 ALA.
 U.S. HWY
 11-9

The Buritt Home
M. Mathews, Owner
Huntsville, Alabama

HABS No. ALA-474

HABS
ALA
45-HUVI
11-7



Historic American Buildings Survey
Alex Bush, Photographer, August 10, 1936

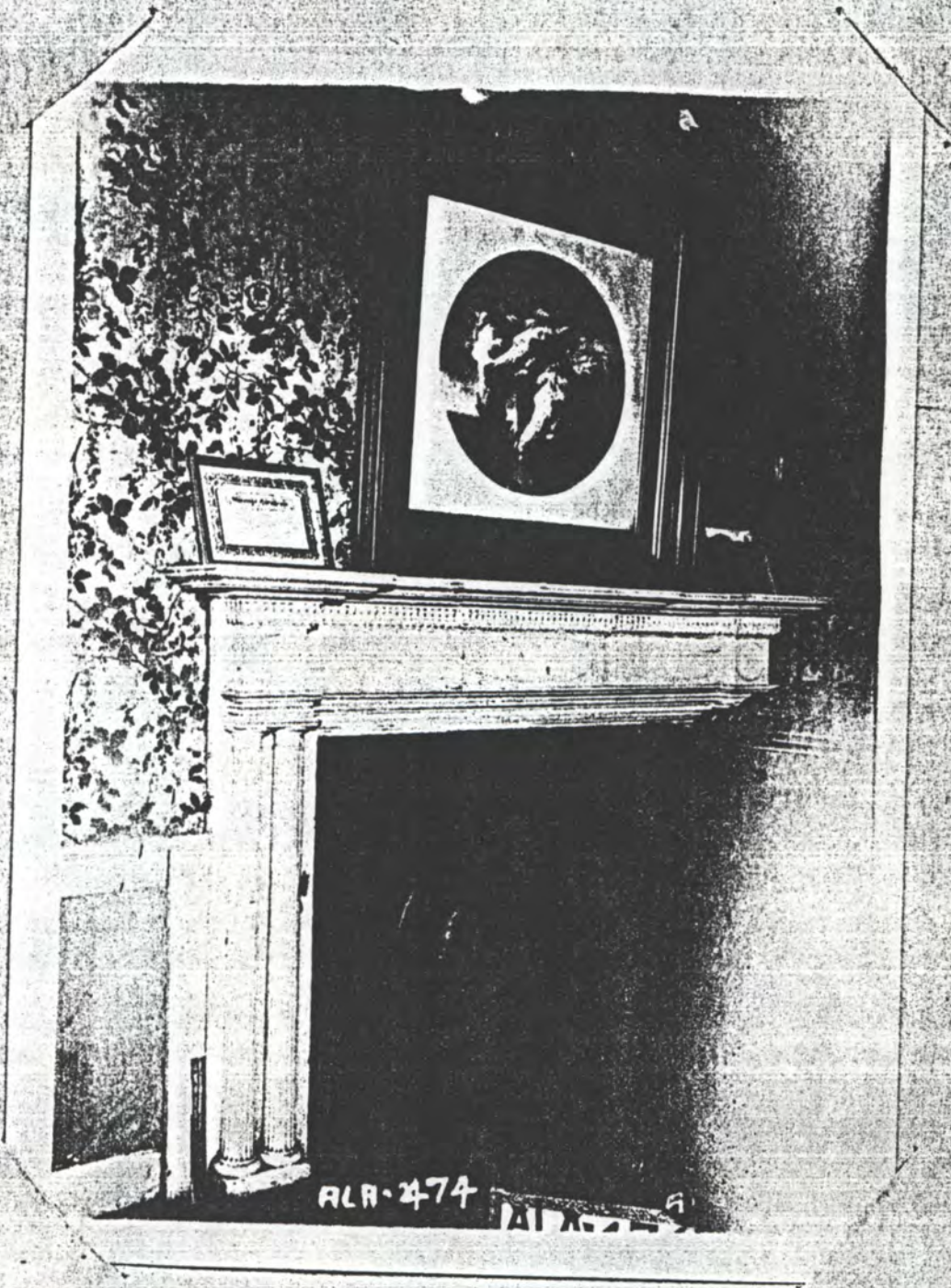
DOOR DETAIL AND STAIR BASE IN HALL, FIRST FLOOR

*Newel is not the same
in the c. 1939 Buritt Plan
on Monte Sano.
Small not at Monte Sano*

The Burritt Home
M. Mathews, Owner
Huntsville, Alabama

HABS NO. ALA-474

HABS
ALA
45-HUVI
11-10



Historic American Buildings Survey
Alex Bush, Photographer, August 10, 1935

MANTEL IN N. E. ROOM

*Not in 1939 Burritt Home
in North Side*



ILFORD PAN F

26A

28A

27A

27

26A

26

28A

28

27A

27

26A

26



ILFORD PAN F

25A

24A

23A

23

22A

22

21A

21

20A

20

24A

25



ILFORD PAN F

20A

19A

18A

18

17A

17

16A

16

15A

15

19A

20



ILFORD PAN F

15A

14A

13A

13

12A

12

11A

11

10A

10

14A

15



ILFORD PAN F

10A

9A

8A

8

7A

7

6A

6

5A

5

9A

10



ILFORD PAN F

5A

4A

3A

3

2A

2

1A

1

4A

5

4A

5



ILFORD PAN F

2A

3A

4A

5A

6A

6

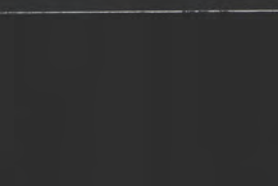
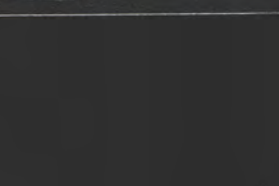
7

8

9

7A

8



ILFORD PAN F

35A

36A

35A

36

35A

35A

36

35A

36

35A

36



ILFORD PAN F

35A

36A

35A

36

35A

35A

36

35A

36

35A

36

copies of his photo collection
at the Bennett Museum,
Hv., N.J.

copies Feb '91 H.P. Jones, PMA

sh. 1 of 2

The burning house (neg. 5-20)
1935, completed & burned in 1936,
retained with modifications (except basic plans)
by c. 1958-39

The internal part of the archway
was unfortunately removed in the 1980's
to allow buses to pass thru (neg. 1-4, 13-15)

The two stone fireplaces in the front
were unfortunately removed c. 1958. (neg. 18, 20,
21, 23)

FP. neg. 22 remains in 1991 (N.E. Rm)

DATE:

ASSIGNMENT:

FILE NO.

2 8 4 9

ILFORD PAN F

ILFORD PAN F

2 8 4 9

ILFORD PAN



1 1A

2A

3

3A

4

4A

5

5A

1 1A

2A

3

3A

4

4A

5

5A



6 6A

7A

8

8A

9

9A

10

10A

6 6A

7A

8

8A

9

9A

10

10A



11 11A

12A

13

13A

14

14A

15

15A

11 11A

12A

13

13A

14

14A

15

15A



16 16A

17A

18

18A

19

19A

20

20A

16 16A

17A

18

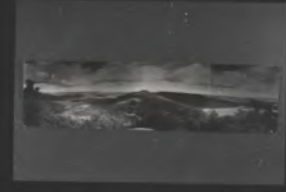
18A

19

19A

20

20A



21 21A

22A

23

23A

24

24A

25

25A

21 21A

22A

23

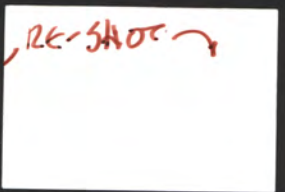
23A

24

24A

25

25A



26 26A

27A

28

28A

29

29A

30

30A

Copies of hist. photo collection
at the Burnett Museum, Nev., AL
copies Feb '91 H.P. Jones, FFA/S

Sh. 2 of 2

New dreams *for* Burritt

Museum's director wants to restore original look

By AMY FRENCH
Times Staff Writer

Wade Fairey was first a furniture maker. For seven years of his early professional life, he put his history degree to work in high-brow manual labor — restoring, sanding and savoring pieces of the past, or recreating pieces that hearkened to it. One year, he worked outside his native South Carolina as an apprentice to a prominent, seventh-generation chair maker in North Carolina. To some, what he learned might seem simply how to create pricey places to pop one's behind.

To Fairey, 48, they were always places to dream.

Back home, Fairey crossed over into museum management in 1979, when he became director of Historic Brattonsville, a restored village offering a look at how lifestyles changed from the American Revolution, through the progression of a plantation economy and into the mid-19th Century.

"I got to know those buildings very intimately and just really fell in love with them," Fairey recalled.

Now, he's four weeks into a new job as executive director of Burritt Park & Museum, but he's still a furniture maker at heart.

Antique furnishings, particularly when preserved in their original settings, can reflect the character, tastes and travails of a people and time, Fairey said during a recent tour of the historical exhibits he oversees. Furniture can be passed from generation to generation as heirlooms, always with stories rooted in personal struggle or prosperity.

Or, it can sit in a warehouse.

The latter fate has befallen much of the furniture that millionaire philanthropist William Henry Burritt bequeathed, along with his 11-room mansion and a 167-acre nature preserve, to Huntsville in 1955.

Fairey wants to put the furnishings back as they were found.

"I guess the No. 1 long-term goal I

have is to restore the Burritt House," Fairey said.

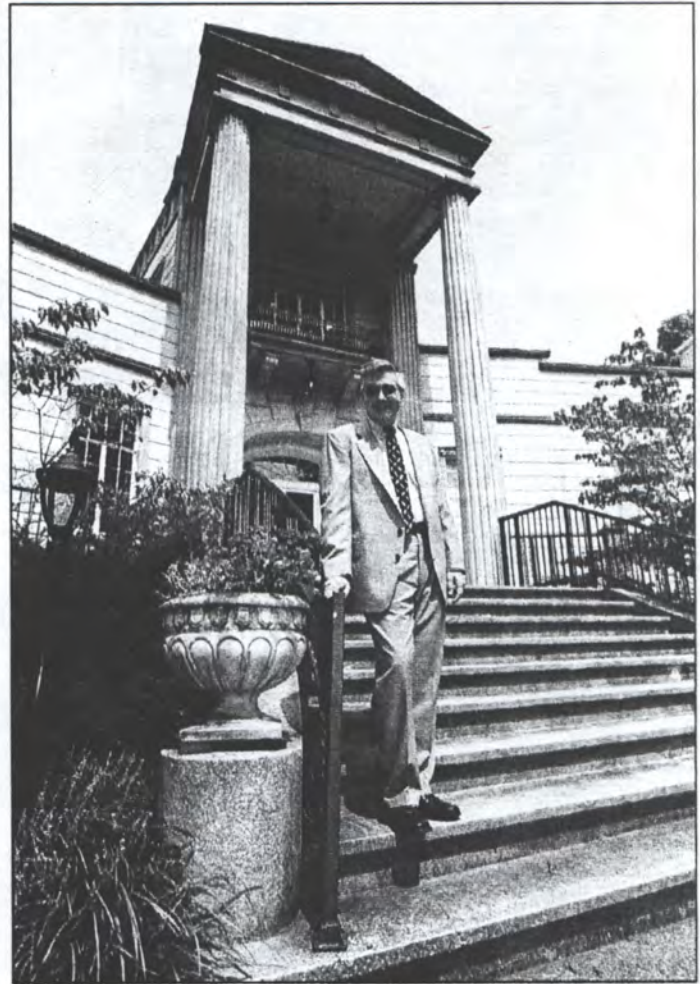
Burritt built the mansion, the centerpiece of the park and museum, on a knob of Monte Sano called Roundtop Mountain to see him into retirement. Several Madison County homes built from the 1850s through the early 1900s have been moved to the park and restored with the decor of the times, but the mansion is filled mostly with topical exhibits.

Photographs show faces and scenes from the past, artifacts show technology of the past, and rock samples illustrate local geology — but the mansion doesn't give a feel for Burritt's life, as Fairey would like.

Two yellow butterflies flutter-danced overhead as Fairey walked from his office toward the mansion, which Burritt completed on his second try in 1937, after a first attempt burned to the ground.

"There don't necessarily need to be exhibits in this house," Fairey said. "I think this house is so unusual that it's worth restoring on its own."

Nothing about the design seems arbitrary, Fairey said, pointing out how Burritt's unusual choice of flame-resistant building materials — concrete for the casings, metal for the window frames — must have been inspired by the fire. And, ahead of his time, Burritt



Dave Dieter/Huntsville Times

Wade Fairey, the new executive director of Burritt Park & Museum, stands before the site's centerpiece, the 11-room mansion built by millionaire philanthropist William Burritt in 1937.

insulated the building with hay bales, the efficiency of which some modern builders are just discovering.

But Burritt sacrificed nothing of beauty for practicality.

"Eclectic architecture is another one of the wonderful things about the Burritt mansion," Fairey said.

Burritt reportedly called upon only

one architect, Edgar Love, for assistance and only in the preliminary plans for the mansion. Burritt retains most of the credit for the mansion's strangely harmonious combinations of natural, classical and then-modern themes.

One mantle, for example, features a symmetrical rock formation next to white columns, and ornate moldings throughout the mansion show international influences.

The house is also shaped unconventionally, like a Maltese cross, offering views of exquisite natural surroundings in each direction. One room on the second floor has a southern exposure that is said to grant the best view in the city.

Fairey stood before that overlook and said that Burritt surely was a dreamer — at a time when dreams were dying, starved by the poverty of the Great Depression.

"I'm sure the people of Huntsville thought he was very eccentric," Fairey said. "He was just a very energetic man, apparently, and had lots of brilliant ideas. Where he got those ideas, I'd like to know."

The furnishings have stories to tell, Fairey is sure of it. But Fairey is also a proud stickler for authenticity —



Dave Dieter/Huntsville Times

Fairey stands next to a 19th-Century fireplace in one of the few restored rooms of the Burritt mansion.

Please see BURRITT on C3

best bets on TV

Masterminds
p.m. Cinemax

Patrick Stewart plays a villainous computer whiz who holds kids at an elite school hostage.

Nash Bridges
(9 p.m. WHNT Channel 19)

"Elvira, Mistress of the Dark" adds a light touch to this repeat about a sinister sniper.

NN

radio station produce their own version of a play

— From wire reports

to broadcast channels

ville (CBS)	WAFF-48 Huntsville (NBC)
ville (PBS)	WZDX-54 Huntsville (Fox)
ville (ABC)	WBRC-6 Birmingham (Fox)

Girl saves Bo fire on 'Days'

NN

Soaps

DREN: Hayley offered to be his child release. Judy Hayley was suspicious and Stuart searched

ca's purse. Edward schemed to steal Michael from Jason. Jerry told Jax that he thinks Veronica is crazy.

GUIDING LIGHT: Cassie is worried that Hart is becoming too attached to Dinah and the baby. Blake panicked when Ross mistakenly "returned" the video of her and Ben to a video store. Josh and Reva are being watched.

ORLD: After a eviction, Matt move back into on. Josie and when Scott set but they were and Amanda are

ONE LIFE TO LIVE: Clint became worried when Lindsay said she and Dorian are in business together. Viki caught Todd destroying evidence that he's faking his split personality. Sparks flew between Cristian and Roseanne.

ORLD TURNS: Eddie after film indicated Eddie antically inset that Ad-with Hal. Jack after Samantha are.

PORT CHARLES: Scott refused Lucy's plea that he let her back into Serena's life. Julie's murder trial got under way. Lee told Scott that he is going to clear Julie by testifying against Eve. Eve and Scott are getting closer.

AND THE
personating an-
eila signed pa-

Burrirt bequeathed his mansion to Huntsville in 1955. Burrirt

Continued from page C1

bringing in the furniture and placing it any old way won't be acceptable.

Restoration will require long, meticulous research, including the poring over of old photos and writings and interviews with anyone connected to the construction of, or life at, the mansion.

"When I'm taking about restoring the house," Fairey said, "I'm talking about taking paint samples, chemical samples, putting furniture back in its original arrangements with the fabrics (Burrirt) chose."

Fairey has also found shorter-term projects to tackle in his job. Burrirt Park & Museum, he says, has many strengths he wants to build on and a few weaknesses he wants to address.

One strength is remarkable support from the community.

Burrirt Park & Museum draws an estimated 123,000 visitors per year — so many that Fairey says he doubted the estimate when he first heard it. A look at Burrirt's system for daily headcounts has convinced him the estimate is accurate, but it also has convinced him the site needs more parking.

"Parking is a major problem here because, with most of our events, we have to shuttle people here," Fairey says, recalling that the on-site lot was full when he arrived for his first day on the job.

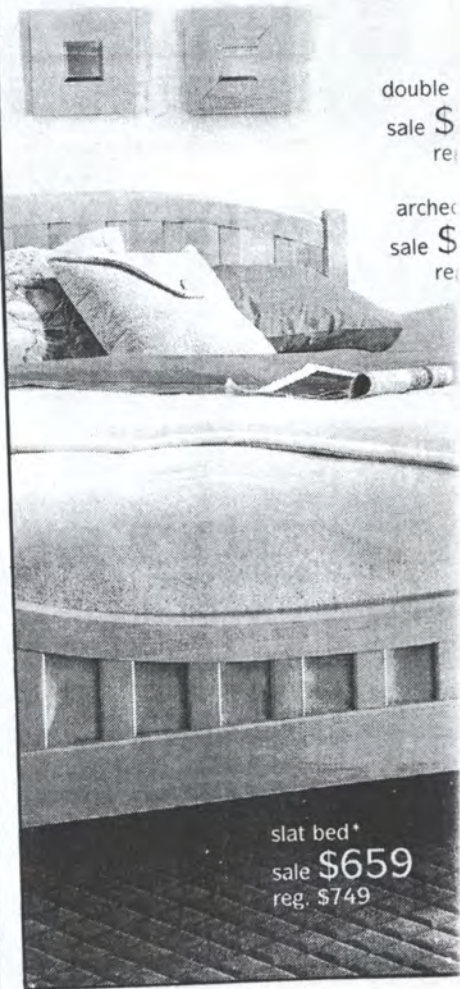
"It wasn't even an event day," he says. "We've had a lot of those days where regular, walk-in traffic fills the parking lot."

Events at Burrirt range from week-long, history-themed summer camps for children to fashion shows, crafts festivals, concerts and seminars. The grounds also include several popular nature trails and picnic areas.

Fairey says he hopes to draw more nature lovers to Burrirt's historical offerings, as well as creating new programs to promote appreciation of folk arts.

Etha Sum Now I

style isn't a luxury
it's a necessity.



double
sale \$
reg.

arche
sale \$
reg.

slat bed*
sale \$659
reg. \$749

BRAGG'S

AN AUTHORIZED ETHAN ALLEN RET.

3017 S. Memorial Parkway, Hunt

205.883.9770 Monday-Saturday

©1998 Ethan Allen Inc. Sale ends September 12



6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Single Dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Neo-Classical

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete & Sandstone
walls Concrete, wood frame & cem.-fiber
shingles, hay insulation.
roof Flat, plastic sheeting.
other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

See Continuation Sheets

See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 1

BURRITT - DESCRIPTION

A highly eccentric mountaintop house, insulated with bales of hay, apparently designed by its owner, with some assistance by an architect in technical matters and in polishing-up the details. There is some evidence that the architect was Edgar Love of Huntsville. Mrs. Wilfred Van Valkenburgh of Huntsville reports that she has some Edgar Love drawings of the Burritt House but does not recall their extent or nature. These drawings are not currently available for examination.

The house was begun in 1935. It was just completed when it burned on June 6, 1936. It was rebuilt, with some modifications of details and materials, and completed the second time in c. 1938. The original beginning date of 1935 is cast into the concrete shield above the entry.

The plan of the house is somewhat like a maltese cross formed by four angled one-story wings joined to a central two-story eight-sided section which is fronted by an extremely attenuated distyle portico, a free variation of a pedimented fluted doric order, all in a smooth off-white concrete. All roofs except at the small pediment are flat and concealed by stepped parapets with moulded concrete caps. The outer corners of the parapets are topped with large moulded concrete palmette acroteria that could be a variation on the type shown on p. 107 of Bannister Fletcher's 1956 edition of *A History of Architecture* on the temple of Artemis in Ephesus. At the concrete pediment, the triglyphs and guttae are widely spaced on a frieze that has no defined metopes in the classical sense. The triglyphs give the appearance of being applied rather than being an integral part of the frieze. The tympanum contains in relief an elongated elliptical shield containing the incised date "1935", the date construction began on the first house that burned on June 6, 1936.

The exterior walls are sheathed in cement-fiber-reinforced shingles of a light gray color. A horizontal accent strip of fluted concrete runs along the walls at the ceiling level of the room inside. The wall corners are similarly trimmed with a vertical fluted concrete ell. The windows are divided-light steel casements, mostly 24 lights (16 lights at the second floor.) The frames and face-trims of the windows are moulded concrete with backbands and corner-block decorations.

The hipped chimneys are sandstone from the site, faced (after the fire that occurred during construction) with fluted concrete on the roof-side for added strength.

The front entry has sidelights and an elliptical fanlight, as do the two side entries at the points of the maltese cross. The concrete "keystone" has edge-moulding and a raised gothic-font "B" (for Burritt.) Above the entry is a Baroque-flavored balcony with scroll brackets and a bulbous cyma-recta strap-iron-and-riveted balustrade. The wall behind the portico is ashlar-pattern vee-joint "stone" (cast concrete).

All of the decorative concrete, much of which appears to be cast in-place, is extremely precise and neat. The construction of the house provided several years of steady work for a 40 man crew through the depths of the 1930's Depression years.

A narrow elevated masonry and concrete terrace runs the length of the front. In recent years a visually-compatible metal railing has been added to the terrace and front steps to meet current code requirements, as well as a handicapped access ramp at the S.E. side. The house is now a museum, open to the public. This work was added by Milberger and Associates, Architects of Huntsville. Original concrete terraces are also at the interstices of the arms of the maltese cross. These terraces cover the basement space below.

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The front and west sides of the house overlook the city of Huntsville, one thousand feet below. The site, Round-Top Mountain, has an almost flat top of several cleared acres which is now the grounds of Burritt Museum. The site contains several relocated 19th century and recent structures, which are not a part of this nomination.

The most interesting technical aspect of the house is that the walls and roof are insulated with hay-bales. For the roof, the bales were each first impaled with two wooden stakes. The loose bales were wrapped with criss-crossed baling wire and troweled with "brown-coat" plaster. Each bale was then placed on a leveled scaffold platform placed at the ceiling elevation. Each bale stake and the baling wire was then nailed to the roof joists. The joints between the bales were stuffed with loose straw that had been treated with boric acid for fire resistance, since this loose straw, rather than the tightly compressed hay bales, had been the source that fed the 1936 fire. After leveling the bales and stuffing the joints the bottom (ceiling) was daubed with rough brown-coat plaster and then finished with smooth white plaster.

Dr. Burritt stated that he got this idea for insulation when making a medical call to a farmhouse in Missouri on a hot day. He walked into the shadow of a haystack and immediately felt cooler. This, of course, is reaching a correct technical conclusion about the efficacy of hay as insulation for the incorrect reason; the shade of a concrete wall would have cooled him just as well on that hot day in Missouri.

The entrance hall contains a spiral stair whose balustrade design is similar but not identical to the 1930's HABS photographs from the early 19th century Burritt House on Eustis Avenue in Huntsville. This house was demolished at about the time the mountain top Burritt House was being completed, to make way for the Madison County Health Department Building at 304 Eustis Avenue. Dr. Burritt salvaged at least two Federal Period mantels from his ancestral house with the intent of installing them at his new house. These were finally installed in c. 1958 after the house became a museum, in the S.W. parlor of the S.E. chamber.

The entry and parlor contain elaborate machine-made mouldings and applied moulded ornament of a delicate Adamesque character, with anthemias, ribands, swags, etc. French windows, flanked by ornamented pilasters, open onto the west terrace from the S.W. parlor. Some of the machine-made mouldings came from demolished buildings in St. Louis, per Museum records.

The parlor walls have applied fluted half-cylinder moulds that form panels, except that one or both vertical members continues up the wall about 6 inches above the panel top and then splits into two short, flaring sections, an eccentric and delightful non-academic detail that is surely another of Dr. Burritts inventions. The narrow wood flooring is laid on a diagonal, a clever way of avoiding clumsy floor joints at the junctions of the rooms which do not meet at 90 degrees.

The most interesting mantels are again those apparently invented by Dr. Burritt, who became interested in the shapes and colors of the thin slabs of sandstone being excavated for the construction of the road in 1934-35 up to Round-Top Mountain to his house site. Of the three that remain (two were removed to install the Burritt Federal Period mantels) the most flamboyant one is in the N.E. room. The fluted pilasters extend up past the mantel-shelf and are topped by cones, out of which shoot "flames" of book-matched sandstone. Similar extravagant sandstone slab patterns occupy the space between the "flames". The spirit of Antonio Gaudi and Simon Rodia is evoked.

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At the rear of the house is a flat-roofed conservatory. Its windows are 1982 replacements, and the canvas awning outside was added in 1989.

The second floor mantel combines a streamlined Art-Moderne design with three large slabs of sandstone forming a primitive jack- arch surround. The hearth and the three mantel shelves are elliptical in plan, as is the head of the closet door and frame nearby.

The dining room mantel is late Victorian, salvaged from a St. Louis building that had been demolished, per Museum records.

The second floor window facing-trim is another uninhibited, non-academic delight. The jambs are capped with fluted pilasters which extend up past the architraves, and thus visually support nothing. The pilasters are topped with strangely proportioned capitals of a vaguely Ionic inspiration.

In summary, this mountain top aerie was mostly designed by a man unhampered by much academic knowledge or inclinations, who set out to do whatever pleased him and made up much as he went along. The hand of the architect can occasionally be seen, trying to keep a rein on technical and some esthetic matters. The result, particularly in the sandstone mantels, is a free-spirited house that cannot be assigned any conventional stylistic label. While it utilizes some classical parts, it uses them in a non-classical way. "Individualistic" is the only label that seems to fit.

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BURRITT - PHOTO DESCRIPTIONS

1. View from private approach road, looking west.
2. South front portico, overlooking Huntsville 1,000 feet below. Looking N.W.
3. Portico and south entry, looking west. All decorative elements are concrete. Walls are fiber-reinforced cement shingles. Balustrades at the ground level are 1970's code-compliance safety measures. Looking west.
- 3A. Detail of south front entry and balcony. The "Keystone" (all is concrete) contains a Gothic-Font "B" for Burritt. The bulbous balcony rail is wrought strap-iron attached with neat rivets.
4. Portico, looking N.E. Date is 1935, the date of construction prior to the fire of 6 June, 1936. All elements of the portico are concrete.
5. Acroterion (typical of all corners), fluted corner trim, fluted concrete chimney faced with sandstone, fluted parapet-cap, fiber-reinforced shingles. Looking N.E.
6. Original concrete spiral stair to the conservatory roof. Note concrete decorative elements at windows, corners, parapet caps, frieze and acroteria. Frieze contains tan river-stones pressed into a cement field. The canvas awning and conservatory sashes are modern. Looking S.W.
7. Rear, looking south at the mountain's edge. Canvas awning is modern.
8. Copy of 1930's construction-progress photograph showing the method of installing the hay-bale insulation at the roof. The bales are impaled on wooden stakes that are nailed to the roof joists. The plaster ceilings are applied directly onto the bales.
9. South (front) entry, looking east. The measuring rod is 8 feet tall in 6 inch increments.
10. Front entry, east door pilaster-cap. These are probably elements from a catalogue. Looking east.
11. S.W. Parlor, looking west. This mantel is from the early 19th century HABS Burritt House in Huntsville below, demolished in circa 1940. Note the 2 and 3 pronged vees of the fluted trim over the windows and wall-panels, and the diagonal flooring pattern which eliminates awkward joints where the angled wings join.
12. Same as 11, looking north onto the west terrace. Note the unconventional use of various trim elements.
13. S.W. Parlor, looking west. Early 19th century Burritt House (HABS) mantel described at photo 11 caption.
14. S.W. Parlor, looking east to entry. Doorway frieze and pilasters contain delicate Adamesque swags, ribands, etc. that are probably catalogue items. Note the unusual flame-like vees at the wall-panel tops, surely an invention of Dr. Burritt.

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15. North-central dining room, looking south. Mantel appears late-Victorian, from an unknown building elsewhere.
16. Mantel at N.E. bedroom. The "folk art" use of the sandstone flags originated when Dr. Burritt became interested in the stone shapes and colors at the excavations for the private road leading up to his site on Round-Top Mountain. There are two other similar but less flamboyant mantels (see photo 17). Two others were removed in the 1960's to carry out Dr. Burritt's intention of installing the early 19th century Burritt House (HABS) mantels here. Looking N.E.
17. Second floor central room, looking S.E. This is probably another mantel designed by Dr. Burritt, in a somewhat "streamlined moderne" manner except for the three large sandstone flags that constitute the surround. Note that the three mantel shelves, the hearth, and the door-head are all elliptical.
18. Second floor south front room, looking N.E. An unconventional use of catalogue trim elements. The architraves are "supported" on the sides of the pilaster rather than on their caps

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

Period of Significance

1935-1939

Significant Dates

Cultural Affiliation

Significant Person

Architect/Builder

Dr. William Burritt & possibly Edgar Love,
Architect.

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

BURRITT - SIGNIFICANCE

The primary significance of the Burritt house is its folk-art aspects. This is not a conventional house in any way. The three surviving mantels which are surely the creations of Dr. Burritt show a vivid imagination unfettered by conventionailities. While neo-classical trim elements are utilized, they are used in ways no classicist would imagine. Fluted panel-moulds erupt in "flames" at the top. Pilaster caps at window-jambes project above the architraves to "support" nothing. Sandstone flags blaze on the wall from conical caps on fluted mantel pilasters.

On the exterior a spiral concrete stair swirls up to the rooftop in startling juxtaposition to the large acroteria and fluted friezes and trims. The two-story distyle portico has a width-to-height ratio of about 1 to 2-1/2, a proportion no proper classicist would consider. While the architect Edgar Love may have assisted to some degree, his role was obviously limited to translating Dr. Burritt's designs into technical documents. Love was an excellent architect and would surely have not taken such extreme but delightful liberties with proportions and details as we see here.

Dr. Burritt was obviously a strong-willed imaginative man who had the money (in the depths of the 1930's depression) to do just as he liked.

See continuation sheet

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Sometime prior to 1635 the Burritt family emigrated from Glenmorganshire, Wales, and settled in Stratford, Connecticut. In the mid 1700's part of the family moved to Troy, New York, where Dr. Alexander Hamilton Burritt was born in 1805. Alexander was a nationally-known physician who had studied medicine with his father and graduating the spring of 1827, from the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York city. Alexander practiced homeopathic medicine in New York, Pennsylvania and in 1850 was appointed to the Chair of Obstetrics in the Western Homeopathic College.

In 1833 Alexander and his wife Julia had a son named Amatus Robbins Burritt. Amatus, like his father, chose medicine as his profession and studied at the College of Homeopathic Medicine in Cleveland, Ohio, receiving his degree on February 28, 1853. In 1855, he moved to Huntsville, Alabama, and established a practice in November of that year. When the Civil War broke out, he remained neutral and served as a mediator between opposing sides while the Union Army occupied Huntsville. IN 1866, he married Mary King Robinson, the daughter of a prominent Madison County plantation owner. Before Amatus' death from cancer in 1876, the couple had two children, Carrie Boardman Burritt in 1867 and William Henry Burritt in 1869.

Little is known about the early education of William Burritt. It is known that he attended college at Brigham, North Carolina, and graduated from Vanderbilt Medical School, Nashville, Tennessee, in 1890. He did post-graduate work at Pulte Medical College in Cincinnati, Ohio, and the Lying-In Hospital, New York City.

In 1891, Dr. Burritt returned to Huntsville, where he met and courted Miss Pearl Budd Johnson. Pearl was the daughter of Captain James R. Johnson, one of the Union officers who seized Huntsville. Captain Johnson had fallen in love with Huntsville during the war and brought his family from Denver, Colorado, to visit Huntsville for several months in 1891. It was during this time that Dr. Burritt courted Pearl and the two were married in Denver on November 16, 1892. The couple returned to Huntsville after their honeymoon and moved into the Burritt family estate on Eustis Street. In 1893, Dr. Burritt became involved with the Hagey Institute for drug abuse and became a shareholder in the patent program. His interest in the program led the Hagey Institute of Austin, Texas, to offer him the position of Physician-In-Charge of the Austin hospital; it appears he turned the position down. Other business activities seemed to keep Dr. Burritt from his medical practice until June of 1898 when he received his license to practice medicine in the state of Alabama. This event was overshadowed by the death of Pearl on July 3, 1898 from complication from surgery.

Dr. Burritt met his second wife in the summer of 1899 when he was called to treat Mrs. Josephine T. Drummond, a widow from St. Louis, Missouri. Mrs. Drummond was twenty years older than Dr. Burritt and she proposed to him in the fall of 1899. They were married on November 28, 1899, in St. Louis, Missouri. They lived briefly in Huntsville while Dr. Burritt served as Examining Surgeon for the United States Bureau of Pensions and then moved to St. Louis sometime in 1900.

While in St. Louis, Dr. Burritt shifted his attention from medicine to the rubber industry. From 1903 to 1927 Dr. Burritt received numerous tire patents. He was granted over 22 patents in the United States and other foreign countries. His interests in patents continued until Josie's death on March 6, 1933.

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THE REASON FOR USING HAY AS INSULATION

Dr. Burritt used "several new ideas never before tried by homeplanners."¹ One of the most notable was the use of hay as insulation in the mansion. "The walls, ..., were packed with bales of hay to insulate the building against hot and cold weather, and to insure good radio reception. Radios are a hobby with the doctor."²

Dr. Burritt further recognized "Straw would be easy enough to handle if it had been baled. From his own farm experience he knew dry straw would neither rot nor mildew. Walls of straw would give the house superb acoustics."³

THE IDEA OF USING HAY AS INSULATION

There is a popular story credited with his origination of the idea of using hay as an insulation: "One day some years ago Dr. W.H. Burritt was trudging across a Missouri farm. It was hot-112 degrees or thereabouts. He sat down in the shade of a large heap of straw and to his entire satisfaction shortly felt much better. In a few minutes he was comfortably cool, arose and started walking again. For quite a while after that, something threatening to become an idea rambled back and forth in his head. And presently, when he moved to Huntsville, Alabama, the idea matured and the doctor went to work on it. He built himself a house of straw."⁴

SOURCE OF HAY USED AS INSULATION

"Wheat straw," used in the Burritt Mansion as insulation, "came from Aaron Fleming's farm. (Now Lilly Flag....)"⁵

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In the fall of 1934, Dr. Burritt returned to Huntsville to build a mountain retirement estate, which had been a boyhood dream. It was during construction of the mansion that he married a widow, Mrs. Alta Jacks from New Market, Alabama. The ceremony took place in , Tennessee, on May 20, 1937. They returned from their honeymoon to live in the upper three rooms of the mansion, while the bottom floor was completed. Dr. Burritt to live in the mansion until his death at the age of eighty-six in 1955.

His mansion and the surrounding 167 acre estate was willed to the City of Huntsville upon his death. Spread out along a ridge of a mountain overlooking the the city it provides an expanse of green meadow which is surrounded by woodlands. The site includes several 1850 coal mines and a late 1880 quarry which provided stones used to build Huntsville's jail and city sidewalks more than a century ago.

Since October , 1955, the mansion has served as the centerpiece of Burritt Museum and Park. Its rooms serve as galleries for a growing collection interpreting regional history and natural history. Typically 133,000 people tour Burritt Museum and Park in a year and the site is considered one of Alabama's Top Ten Tourist attractions.

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2

HISTORY OF HAY BALER USED TO PREPARE BURRITT BALES

"Mr. Eli Hall was the first farmer in the area to use a hay baler to bale wheat straw. He was also the owner of the only hay-baler for miles around. As a result of this situation, Mr. Hall gradually took on the task of baling most of the hay for several miles around. This period of history is known as the hay baler era by family and friends."⁶

"Mr. Hall had some help with his haybaling...His sons, Robert, James and Harvey were taught to work in the fields as soon as they were old enough.

Mr. Lewis Bolden who later became Mr. Hall's partner was quite helpful in many way."⁷

DESCRIPTION OF BALES OF HAY

"The wheat straw used to insulate the walls in Dr. Burritt's home came... out uniformly 18X20 feet (editor's note: The size was probably 18X20 inches not feet.) with 4 wires to hold the straw together. As Dr. Burritt said when looking them over, the bales of hay looked like giant bricks all in a row." The bales were split "so they would fit in the walls."⁸

LOCATION OF HAY BALES IN MUSEUM

Bales of hay were placed in the walls and ceiling of the mansion. According to an article in the Huntsville Times in December, 1935, "Crews there yesterday were placing straw in the walls of the wings, in readiness for the plasterers. The entire building will be encased in straw...."⁹

"...loose straw...was used for insulation between the concrete foundations and the sub-flooring...."¹⁰

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3

METHOD OF SECURING BALES IN CEILING

"By trial and error the workers evolved a satisfactory 'Scratch' coat of plaster for each bale of straw. Wooden stakes were then driven through these bales and the projecting ends were nailed to wooden rafters and framework which had been built earlier. Workmen also placed stakes diagonally in the ends of adjoining bales, and tied the entire ceiling together with a network of baling wire.

'We set the bales in the wall as if they were giant bricks,' the doctor said."¹¹

AMOUNT OF HAY BALES USED

"The huge house is insulated with 2200 bales of hay. All plaster was placed on the hay, supported by four inch concrete slab floors, covered in heavy oak."¹²

In weight, "The mansion contains 20 tons of baled straw and two carloads of concrete."¹³

HAY BALES DURING THE FIRE

The hay did indeed serve as an insulation. The following account states it served to insulate the heat of the fire from certain areas: "...the servants quarters, not 50 feet from the burning structure. Its hay packed walls, steaming under the little water that had been thrown over them, kept out the heat so that a person could find comfort in the rooms even at the height of the blaze."¹⁴

DECISION TO USE HAY BALES AGAIN IN RECONSTRUCTION

"Baled hay again will be packed down between the walls, but, this time, it will be non-inflammable. A coincidence brought him the idea.

While on a visit to St. Louis a few weeks ago, a contractor told him of a lawyer who had insulated his home with wheat straw. It was an old residence and Dr. Burritt could not understand how it could have been fireproofed with such

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4

a combustible material as straw.

So he went to see the lawyer, and was directed, in turn, to C.D. Cope, resident of the city who had worked out the method principally as a hobby."¹⁵

METHOD OF FIREPROOFING LOOSE STRAW

"They prepared a boracic acid and borax solution to fireproof the loose straw which was used for insulation between the concrete foundations and the sub-flooring. The straw was first soaked in this solution; then it was forced through a washing machine wringer to extract the moisture; finally it was sun-dried. The tightly compressed straw already in baled form was not treated."¹⁶

DR. BURRITT'S OPINION OF USING HAY AS INSULATION

According to an article in The Atlanta Journal and Constitution Magazine in November, 1951, Dr. Burritt was very pleased with the value of using wheat straw as insulation. It states, "The builder, now 82, says the most outstanding feature of his home is the natural air-conditioning system created by the straw walls... Its year round temperatures usually range between 65 and 75 degrees...."

After living in his straw home for 15 years, Dr. Burritt has become convinced that straw will be the building material of the future. He says, 'When people find out how comfortable straw houses are they won't want to live in any other kind.'¹⁷

9. Major Bibliographical References

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 _____

UTM References

A Zone Easting Northing

C Zone Easting Northing

B Zone Easting Northing

D Zone Easting Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See Attached Site Map

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The site includes only the Burritt Mansion and excludes later nearby museum structures, some of which are relocated historic buildings.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Harvie P. Jones, FAIA

organization Histroic Huntsville Foundation date 04/09/91

street & number 420 Eustis Avenue telephone (205) 539-0764

city or town Huntsville state Alabama zip code 35801

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FOOTNOTES

1 "Fire Razes Dr. Burritt's New Home on Round Top," The Huntsville Times.
June 7, 1936.

2 Ibid.

3 "He Lives in a Southern Mansion Built of Straw," The Atlanta Journal and
Constitution Magazine. November 4, 1951.

4 Newspaper or magazine article, Title of article, name of publication and
date of publication unknown.

5 Handwritten notes of Mrs. _ H. Merrill, Huntsville, Alabama.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 "Burritt Home Taking Shape," The Huntsville Times. December 1, 1935.

10 Op. Cit. "He Lives in a Southern Mansion Built of straw."

11 Ibid.

12 "Huntsville Will Open Showplace on Mountain Top Soon," Birmingham News.
December 16, 1956.

13 Op. Cit. "He Lives in a Southern Mansion Built of Straw."

14 Op. Cit. "Fire Razes Dr. Burritt's New Home on Round Top."

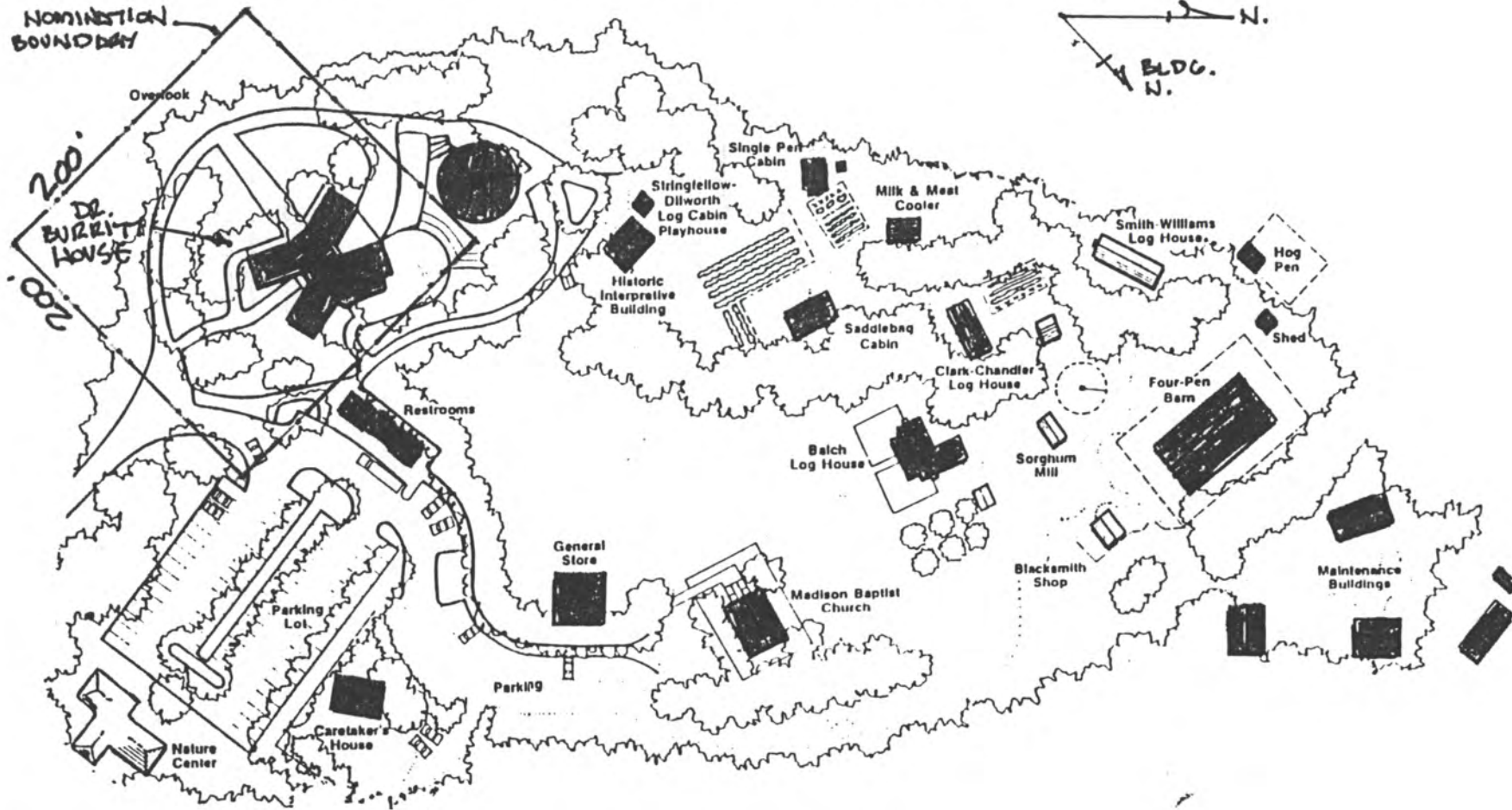
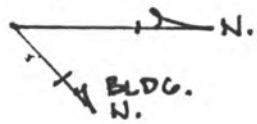
15 "Fire Prevention Methods Feature of Burritt Home," The Huntsville Times.
September 13, 1936.

16 Op. Cit. "He Lives in a Southern Mansion Built of Straw."

17 Ibid.

BURRITT MUSEUM AND PARK SITE PLAN SHOWING EXISTING AND FUTURE BUILDINGS

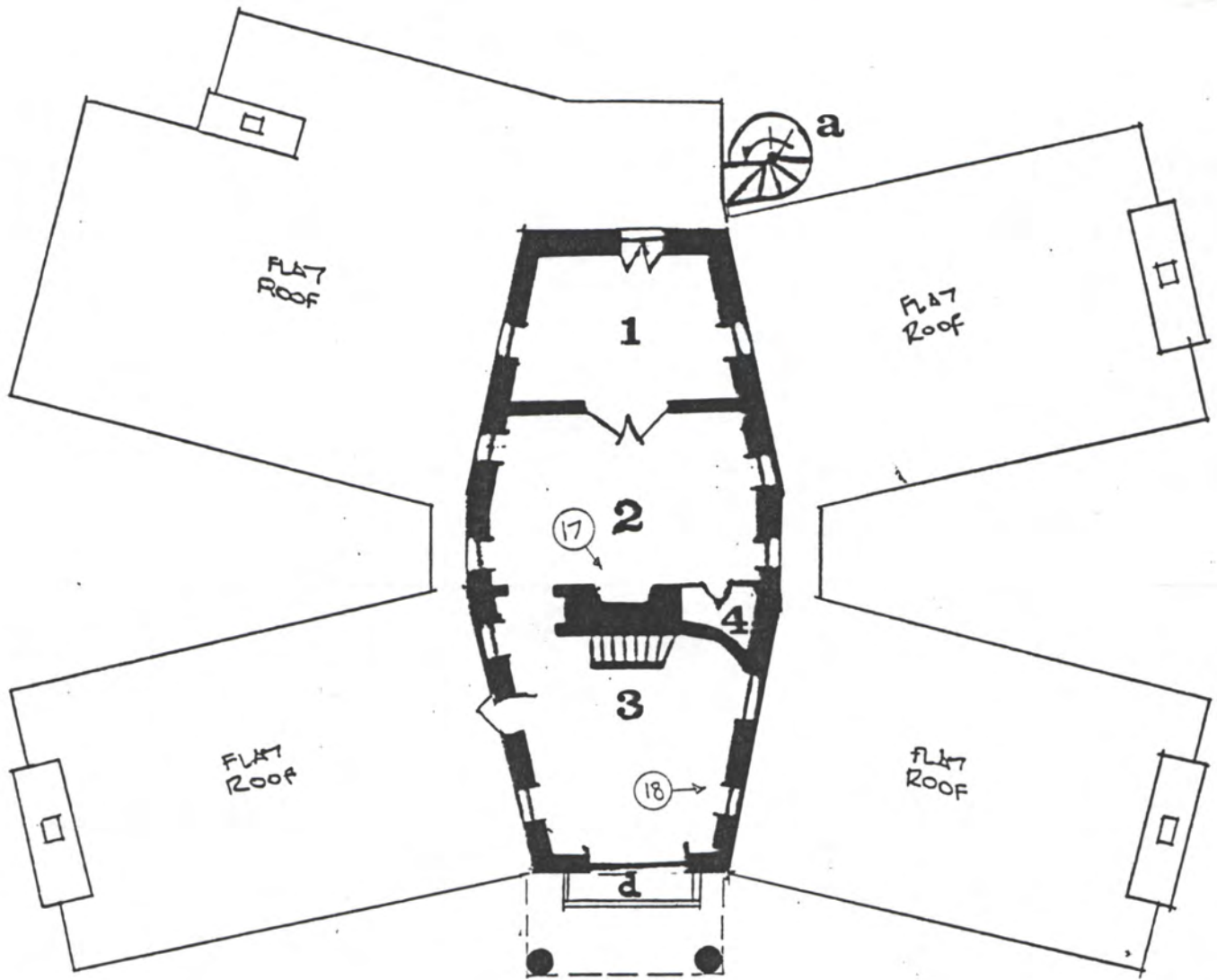
1" = 100'



KEY

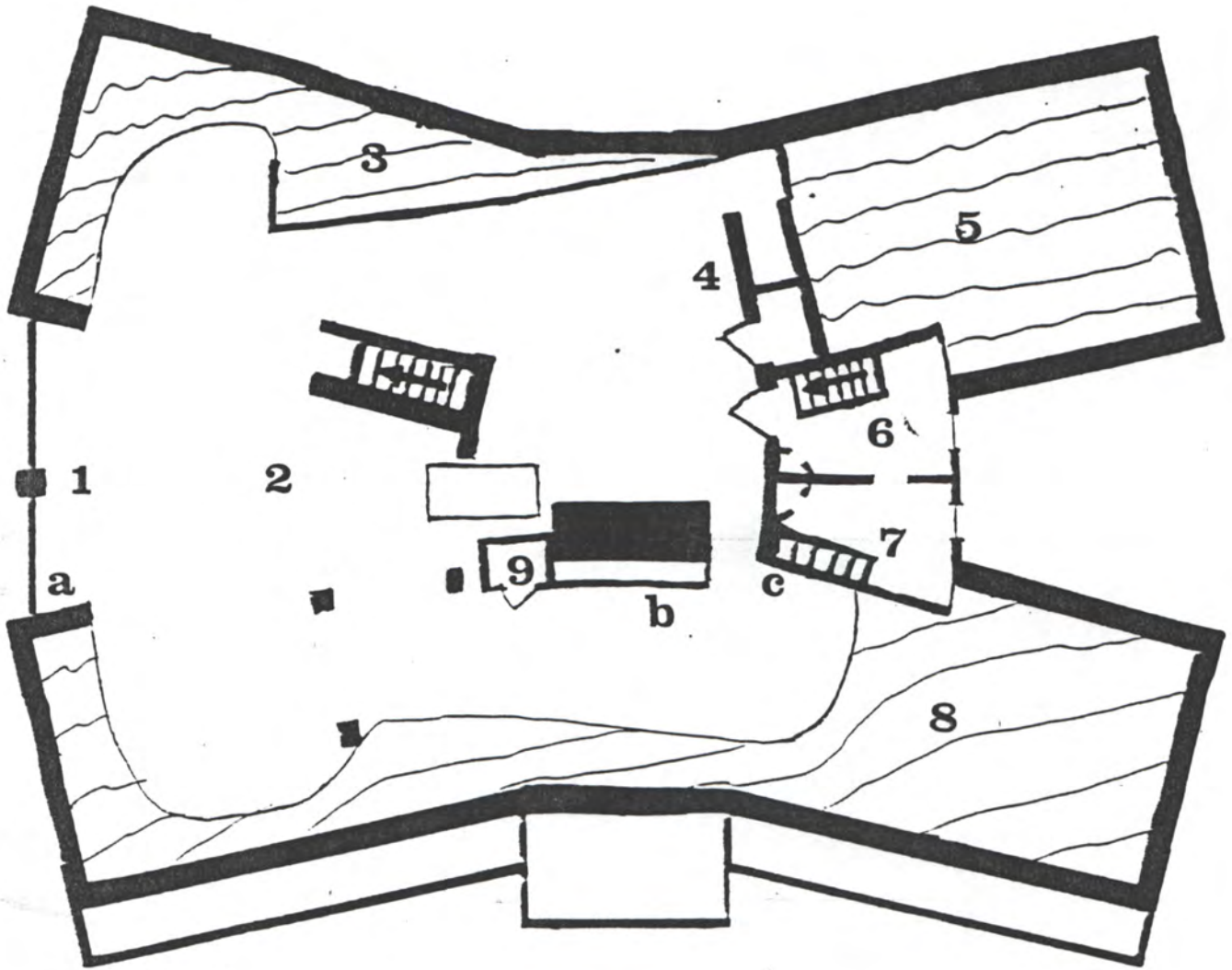
- Orange Indicates Existing Structures
- Blue Indicates Structures Under Construction
- Pink Indicates Those Structures That Will Be Constructed Before 1995

12/1/90



BURRITT MANSION
SECOND FLOOR - FLOOR PLAN

- DESCRIP
- N
↑
N
1. Collection Storage Area
 2. Archeology Gallery
 3. Rock and Mineral Gallery
 - a. Exterior Concrete Fire Escape Staircase
 - b. Cat Walk Connecting Northwest and Northeast First Floor Wings
 - c. Cat Walk Connecting Southeast and Southwest First Floor Wings
 - d. Second Floor Balcony Over Front Entrance



BURRITT MANSION
BASEMENT - FLOOR PLAN



1. Double Metal Garage Doors
 2. Open Garage Area with Concrete Floor
 3. Exposed Rock Shelf Foundation
 4. Storage Closets
 5. Exposed Rock Shelf - Crawl Space Under First Floor
 6. Janitorail Supply Closet
 7. Exhibit Case Storage
 8. Exposed Rock Shelf - Crawl Space Under First Floor
 9. Restroom
-
- a. Exterior Ground Lighting Breaker Box and Timers
 - b. Two Breaker Boxes and Splice Boxes for Mansion
 - c. Main Power Cut Off for Mansion

BURRITT FAMILY

William Henry Burritt was the only son of Dr. Amatus Burritt and Mary K. Robinson. Amatus Burritt moved to Huntsville from Springfield, Illinois, in 1853 to establish a homeopathic medical practice on the Courthouse Square in Huntsville. In 1866, Amatus Burritt married Mary King Robinson, the daughter of a prominent Madison County plantation owner. Before Amatus Burritt's untimely death from cancer in 1876, the couple had two children, Carrie Boardman Burritt (1867) and William Henry Burritt (1869).

Little is known about the early education of William. He graduated from Vanderbilt Medical School in 1890 and did post-graduate work at Pulte Medical College in Cleveland, Ohio, and at the New York Lying-In Hospital, New York City.

In 1891 Dr. Burritt returned to Huntsville where he met and courted Miss Pearl Budd Johnson, whom he married in Denver, Colorado, on November 16, 1892. Their marriage ended tragically on July 3, 1898, when Pearl died at the age of 23, from complications following surgery.

Dr. Burritt met his second wife in the summer of 1899, when he was called to treat Mrs. Josephine T. Drummond at the Monte Sano Hotel. Mrs. Drummond, a widow from St. Louis, fell in love with Dr. Burritt and proposed to him. Married in November 28, 1899, they briefly lived in Huntsville and then moved to St. Louis, Missouri.

In St. Louis Dr. Burritt shifted his attention from medicine to rubber products. From 1903 to 1927 Dr. Burritt invented numerous tire patents. The Burritts remained in St. Louis until Josie's death on March 6, 1933.

In the fall of 1934 Dr. Burritt returned to Huntsville to build his mountain retirement house. It was during the construction of his house, he married Alta Jacks. They returned from their honeymoon to live in the three rooms of the mansion, while the bottom floor was completed: Dr. Burritt lived in the mansion until his death in 1955 at the age of 86.

THE MANSION

The grounds are entered through an arch which was designed for the eventual support of a cremation urn containing the ashes of Dr. W.H. Burritt.

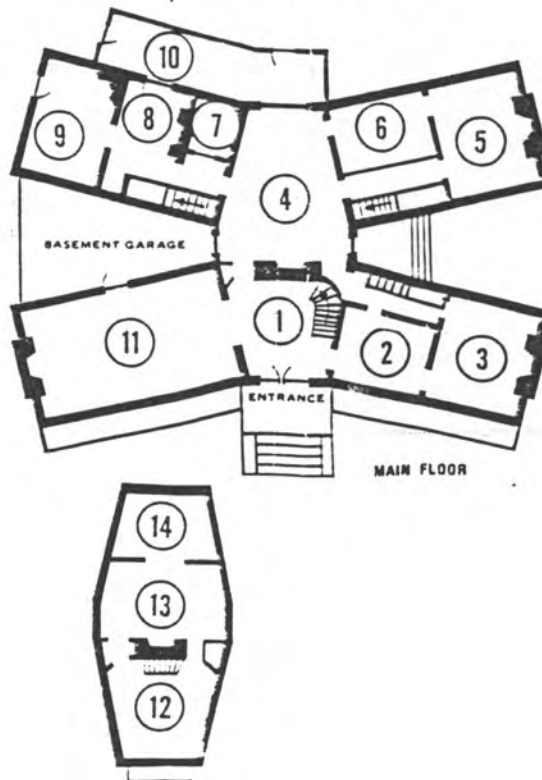
However, his ashes were interred at Maple Hill Cemetery. The inner arch of the original structure was damaged in 1975. Today the outer arch is all that remains.

At the top of the hill stands the eleven room mansion designed and originally built in 1935 by Dr. Burritt. Its unusual design makes it one of Huntsville's unique architectural landmarks. Built in the shape of a Maltese cross, each wing permits a three

sided exposure to the mountain top estate.

The present house is the second built on the site. The first house, built of wood and native stone, burned on June 6, 1936. During its reconstruction, concrete and asbestos shingles were used to replace much of the original design. The second house was completed in late 1938.

A novel feature of both houses was the use of 2200 bales of wheat straw insulation. As a young man, Dr. Burritt walked into a barn and noticed the air temperature was 20 degrees cooler because of the stacks of hay stored there. At that point, he decided when he built his house he would use



straw to insulate the walls and ceilings. In the second structure the straw was treated with a fire retardant solution of borax and boracic acid.

Dr. Burritt lived here until his death. Having no heirs from his three marriages, he left the mansion and the surrounding 167 acres to the City of Huntsville to become the city's first museum.

COLLECTIONS

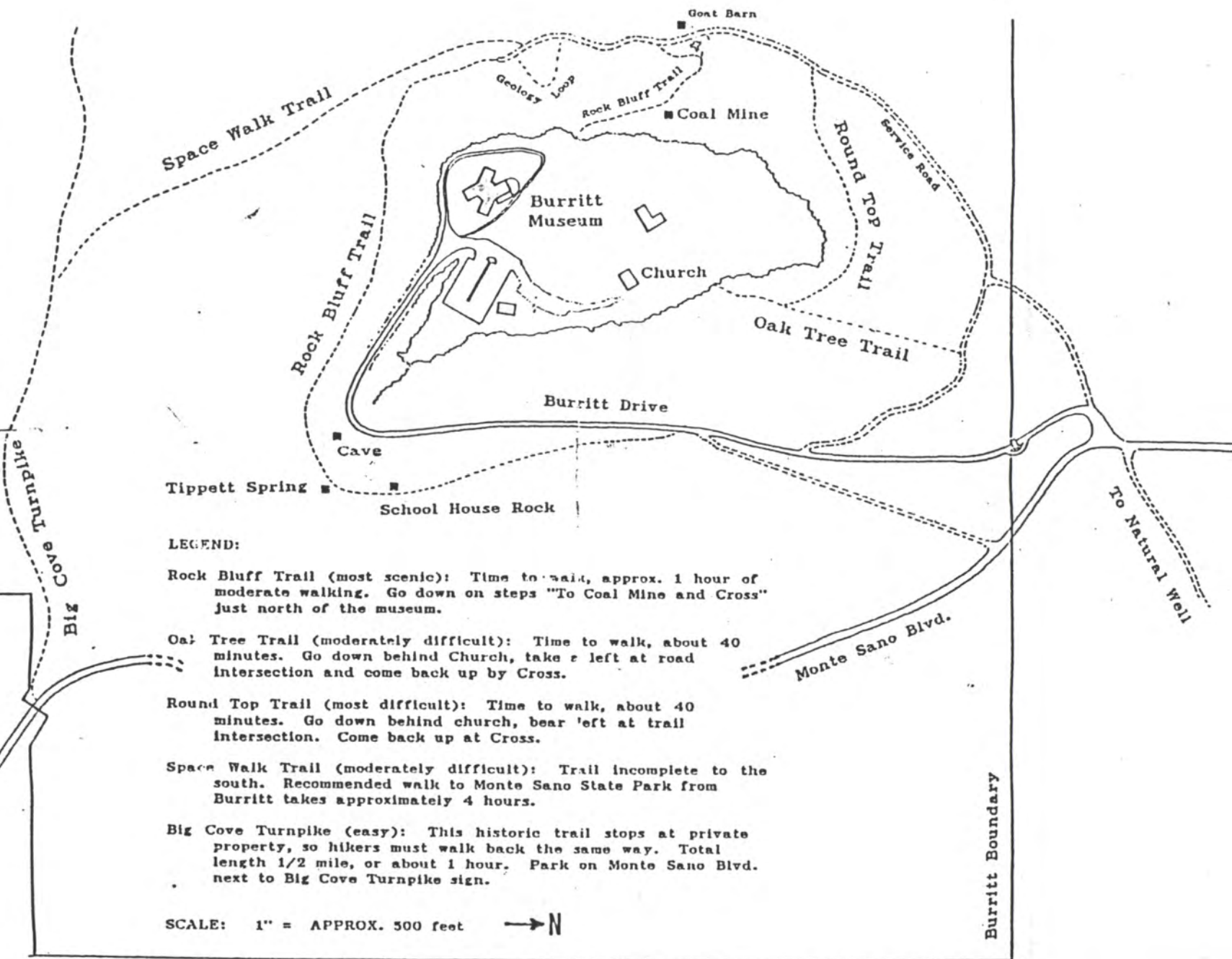
Housed within the Burritt mansion are a variety of artifacts pertaining to the history and culture of Huntsville and North Alabama. Following the wishes of Dr. Burritt, the Museum today maintains two rooms of the mansion with the original Burritt furnishings. Many of the objects displayed in these rooms were collected by Dr. Burritt on trips to foreign countries. Some of the more popular items include the solid rosewood Steinway grand piano, the collection of American and European china and porcelains, silver place settings and tea service belonging to Josephine Burritt, and the 1890 Swiss cylinder music box.

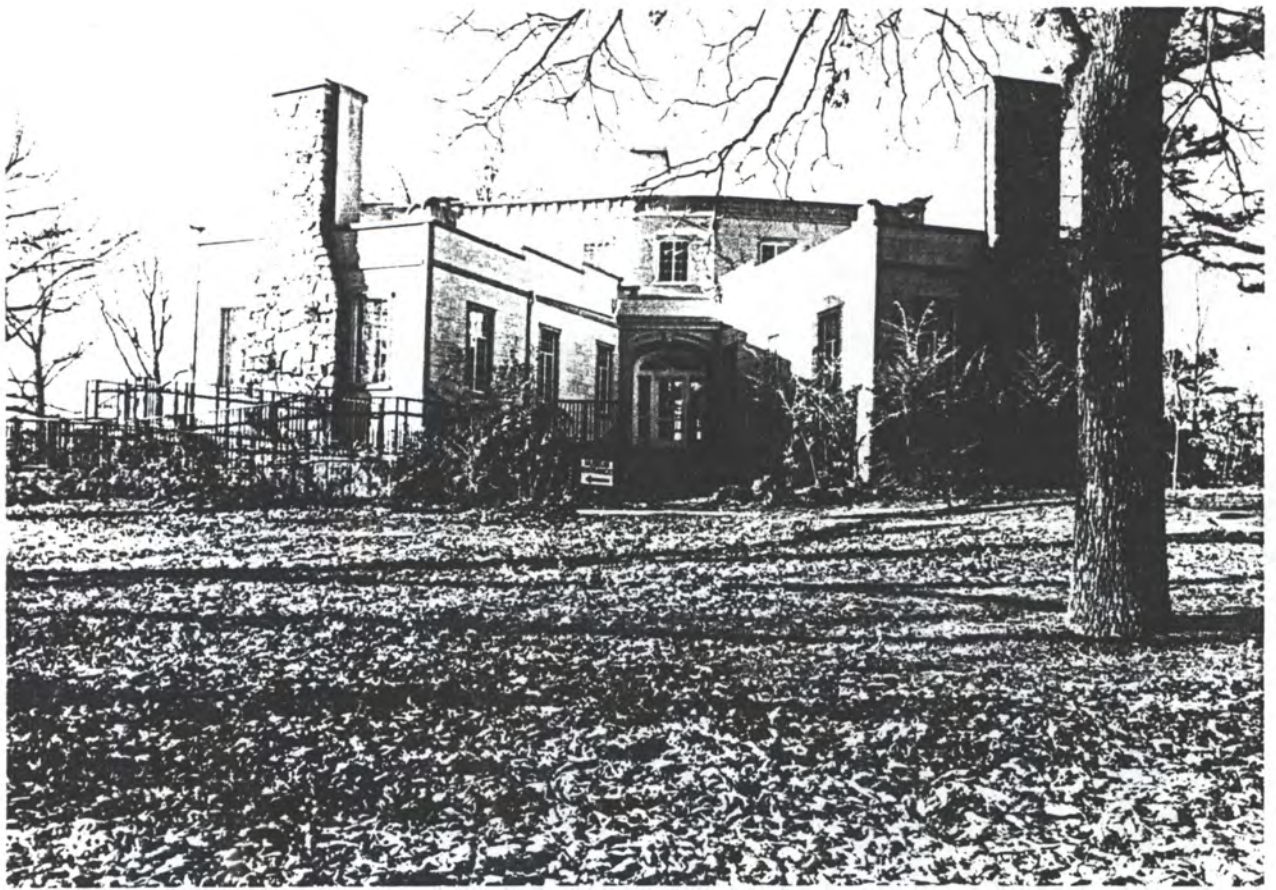
The remaining galleries house the following:

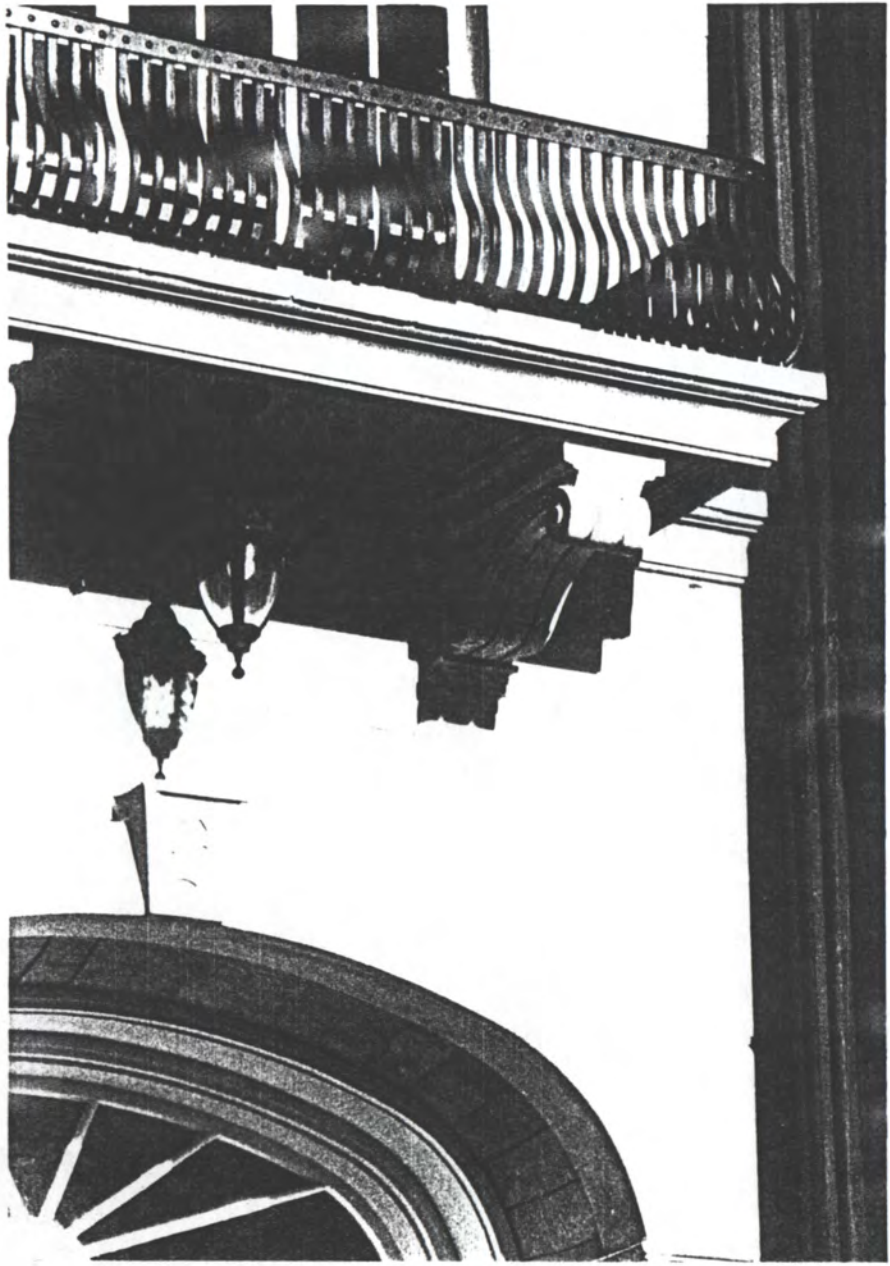
- Prehistoric Alabama Indian Archeological Relics
- History of Huntsville and Monte Sano
- Portrait of a Southern Woman: featuring the works of Maria Howard Weeden (1847-1905) and Anne Bradshaw Clopton (1878-1956)
- Folk Medicine to Modern Medicine
- Natural History: including birds, wildflowers, fish, rocks and minerals

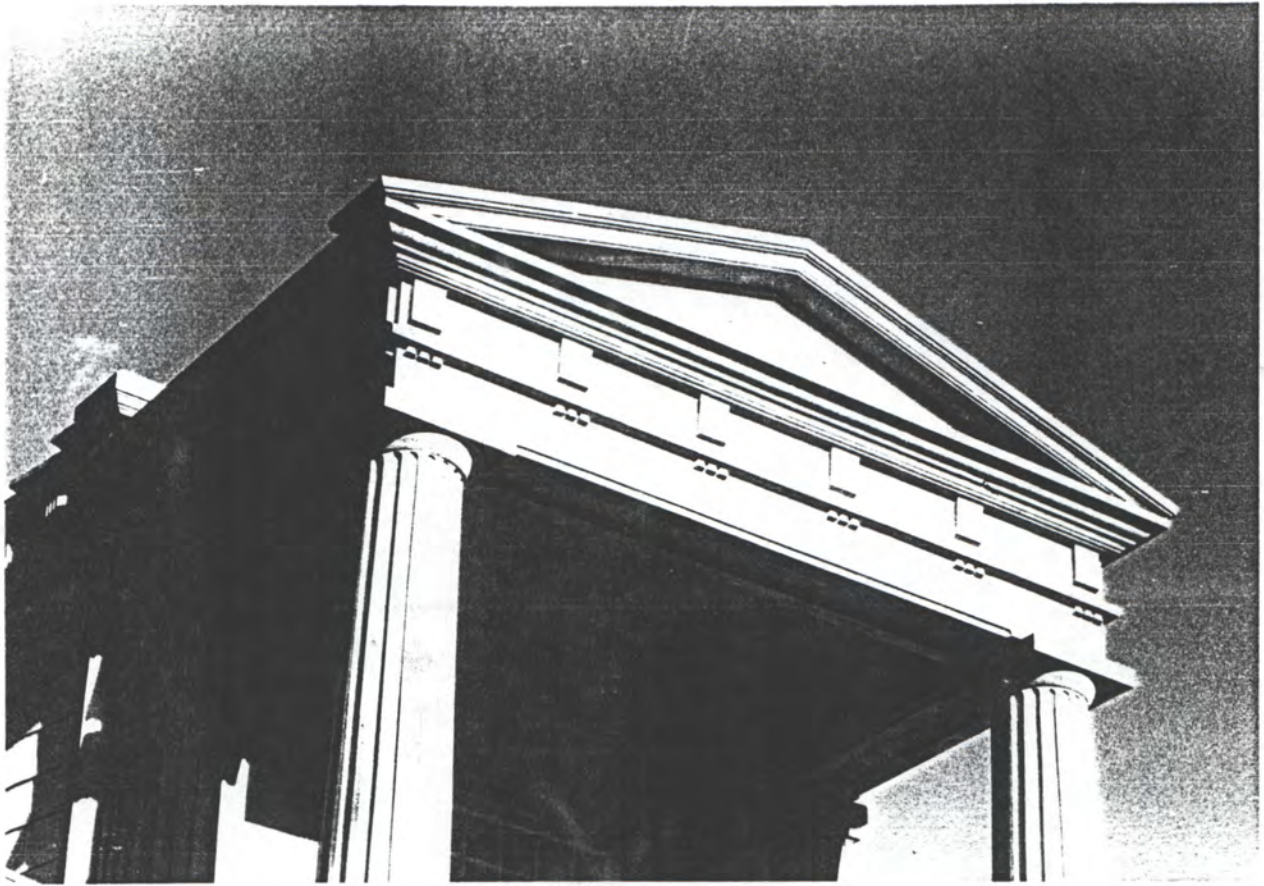
FLOOR PLAN OF THE BURRITT HOUSE

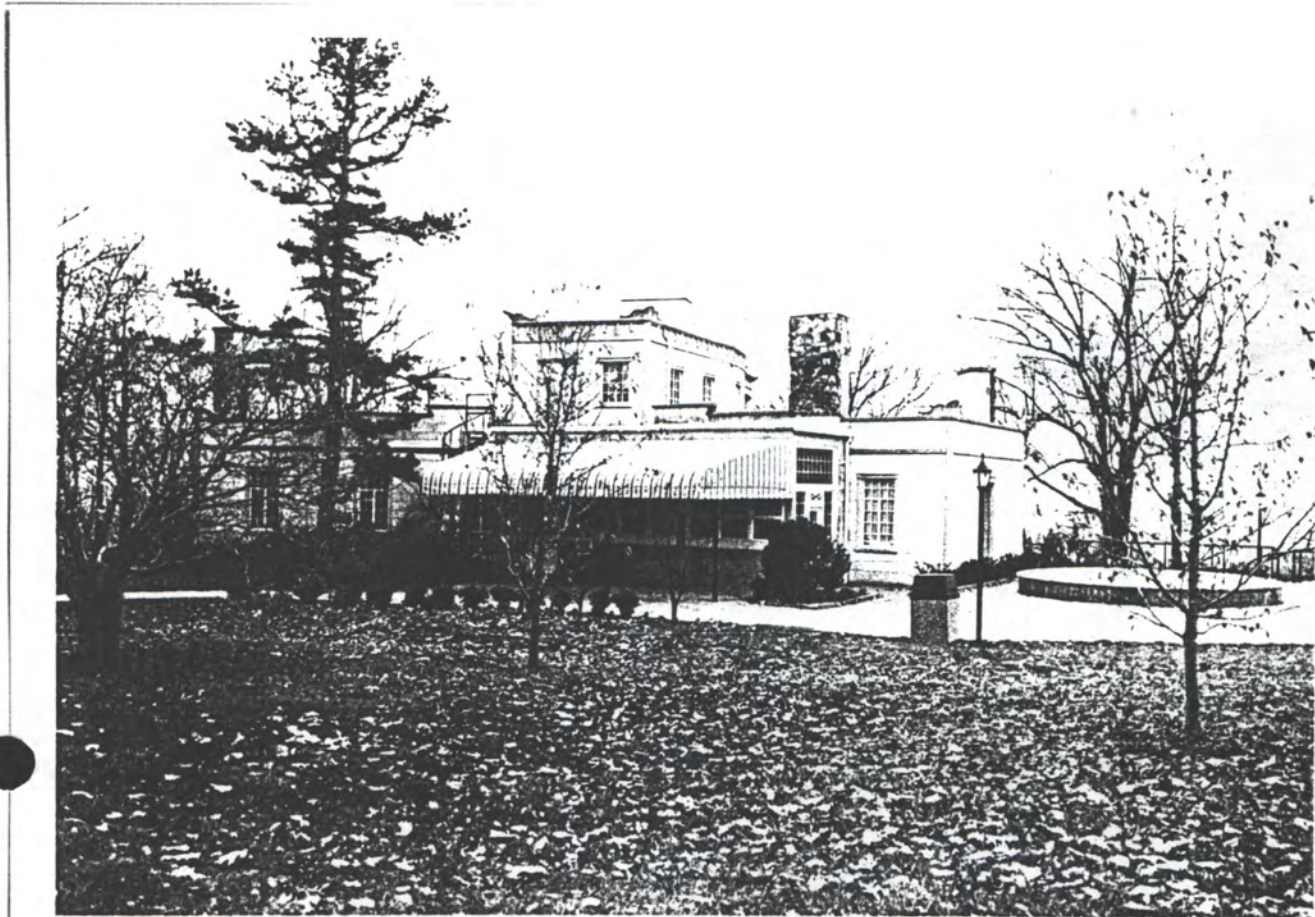
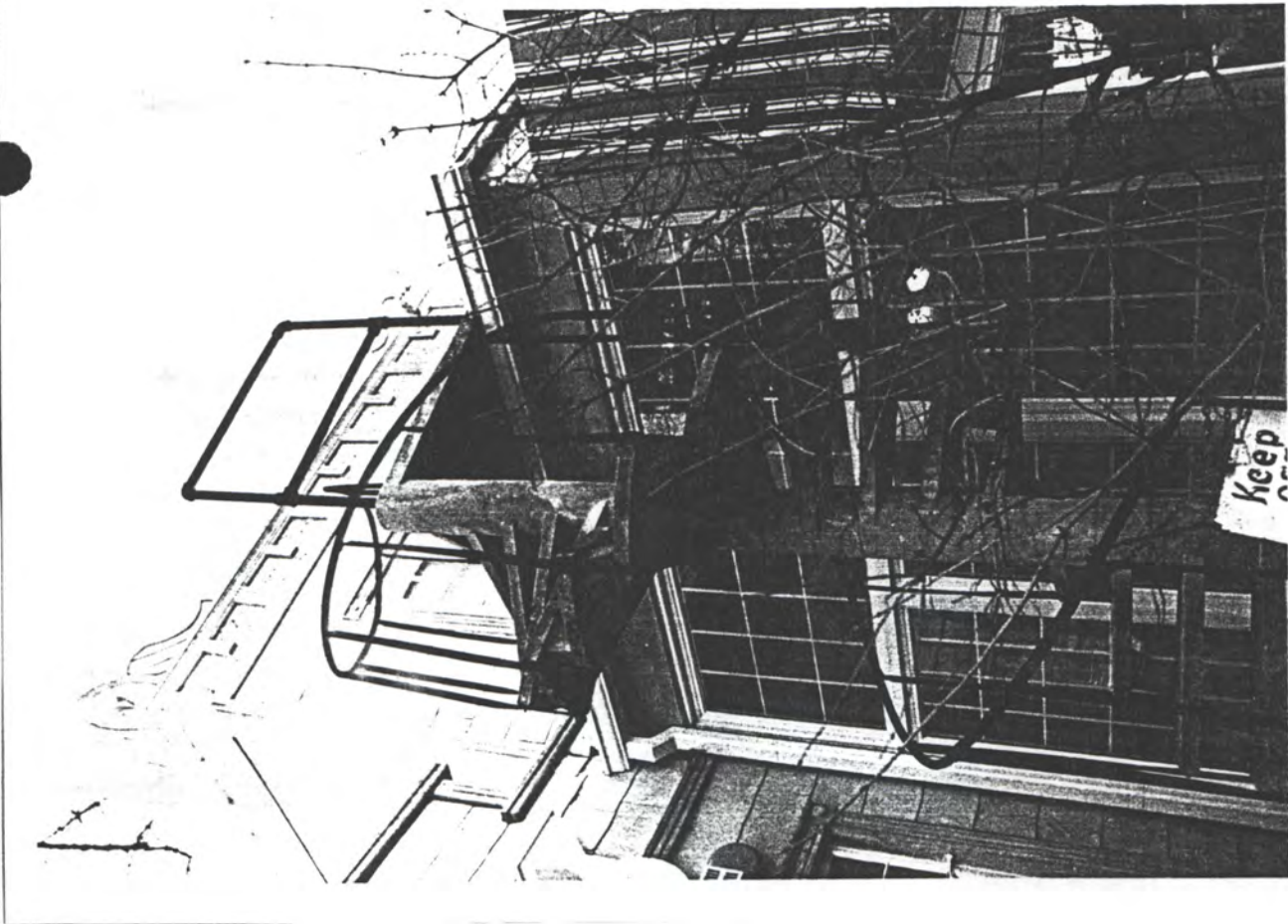
1. Entrance Hall
2. Study-Office
3. Master Bedroom
4. Dining Room
5. Bedroom
6. Sitting Room
7. Butler's Pantry
8. Kitchen
9. Bedroom
10. Conservatory
11. Parlor
12. Observatory
13. Bedroom
14. Kitchenette

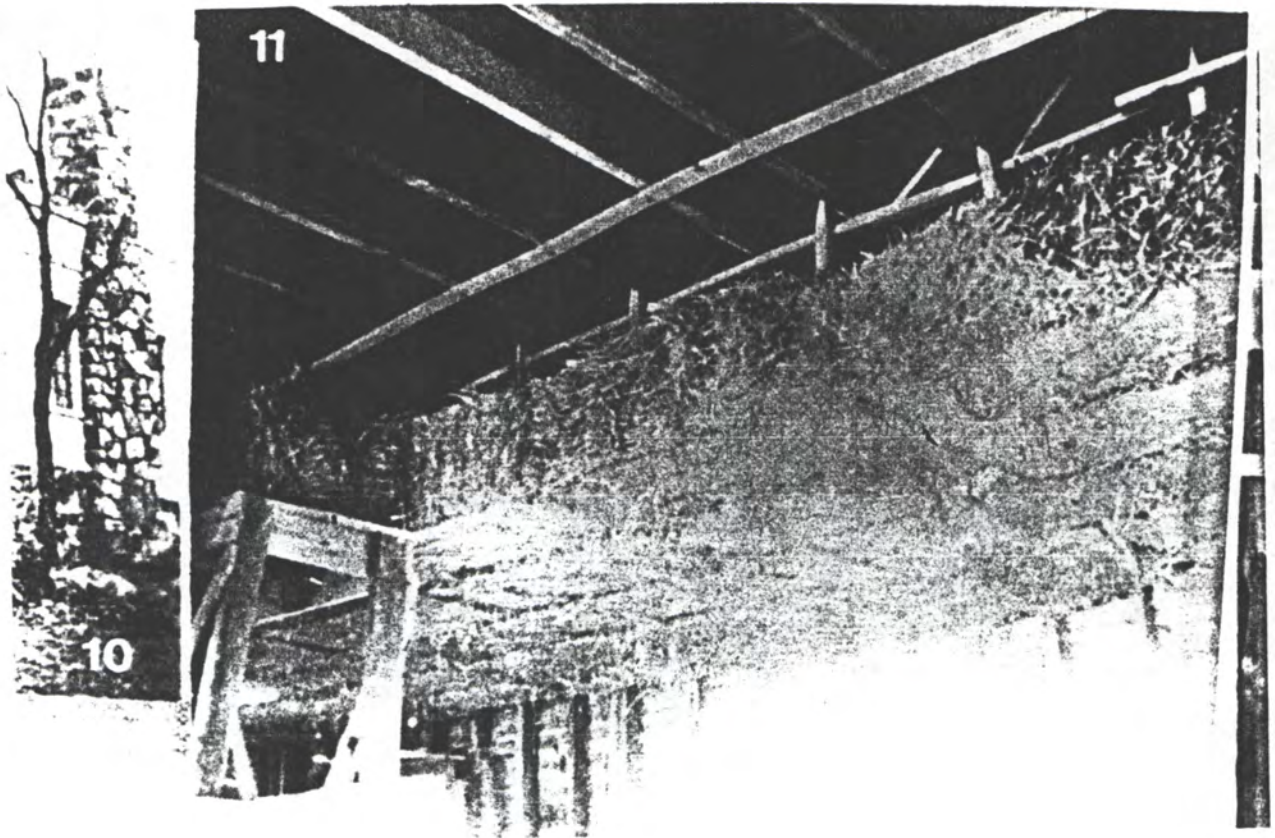


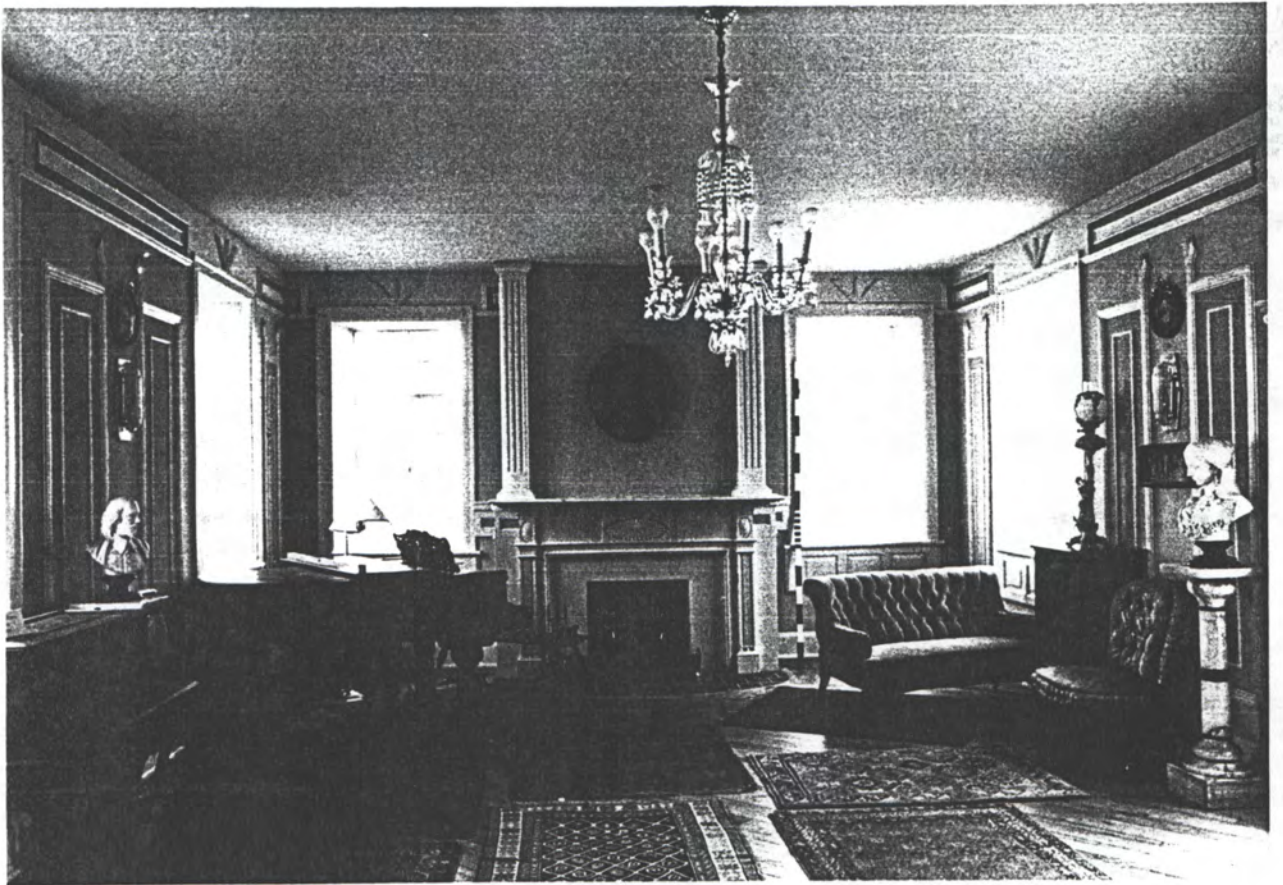
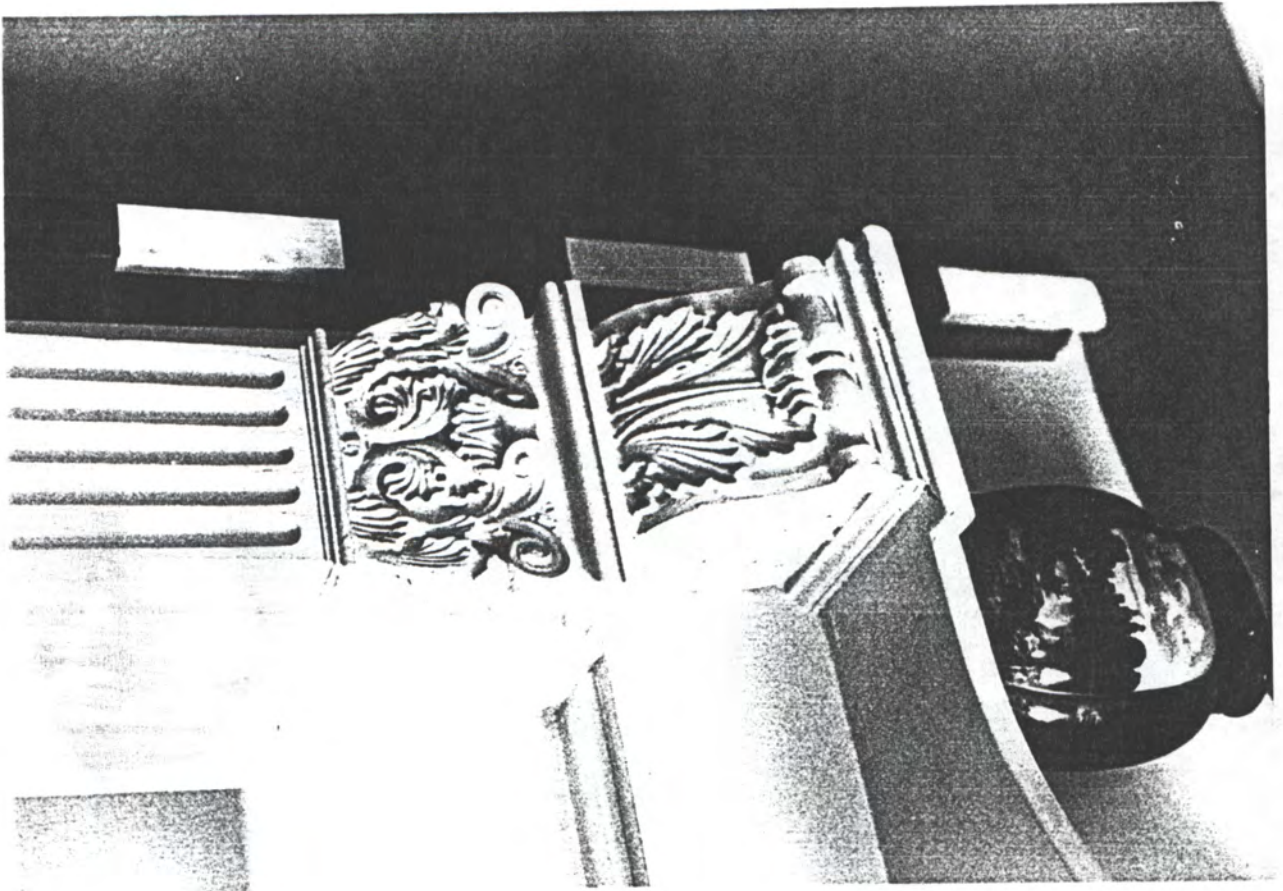


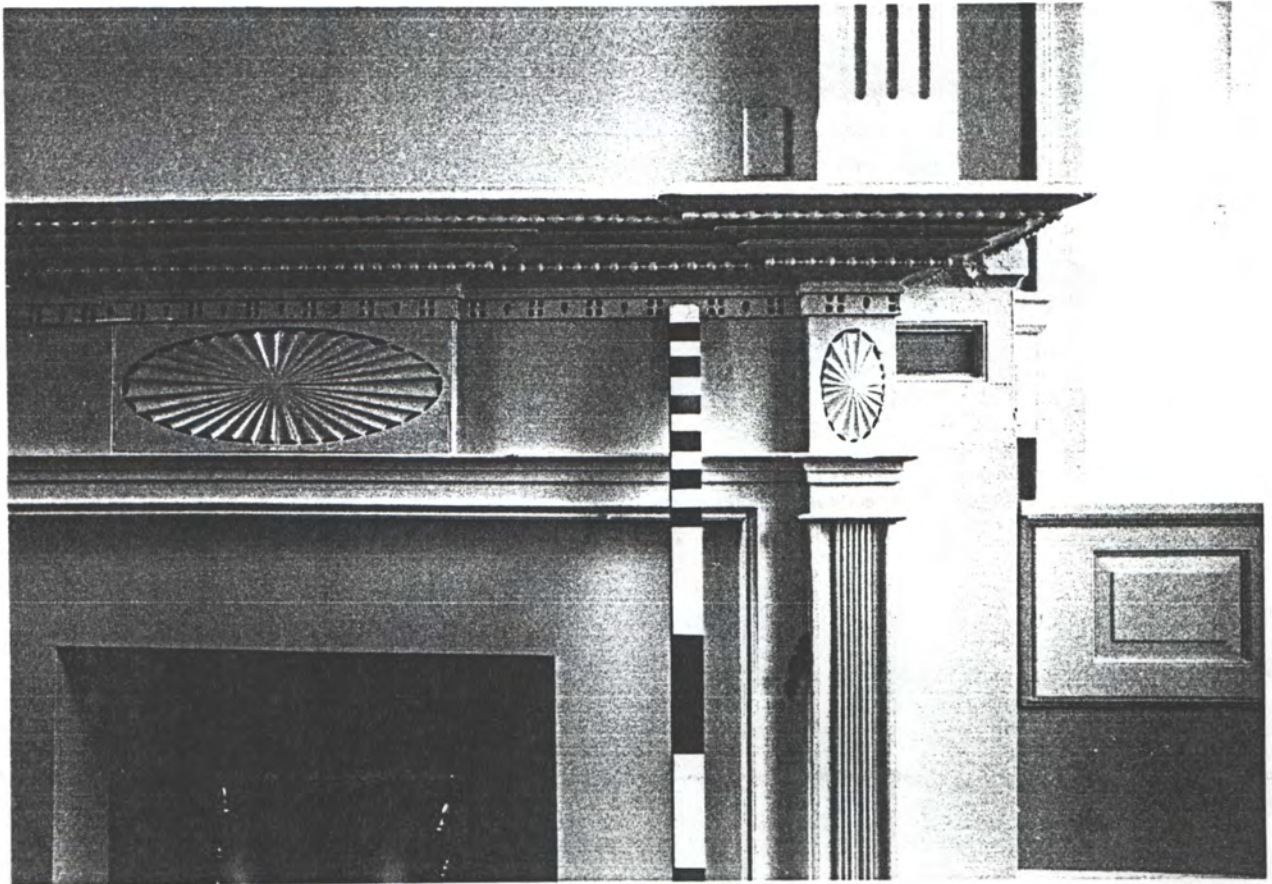
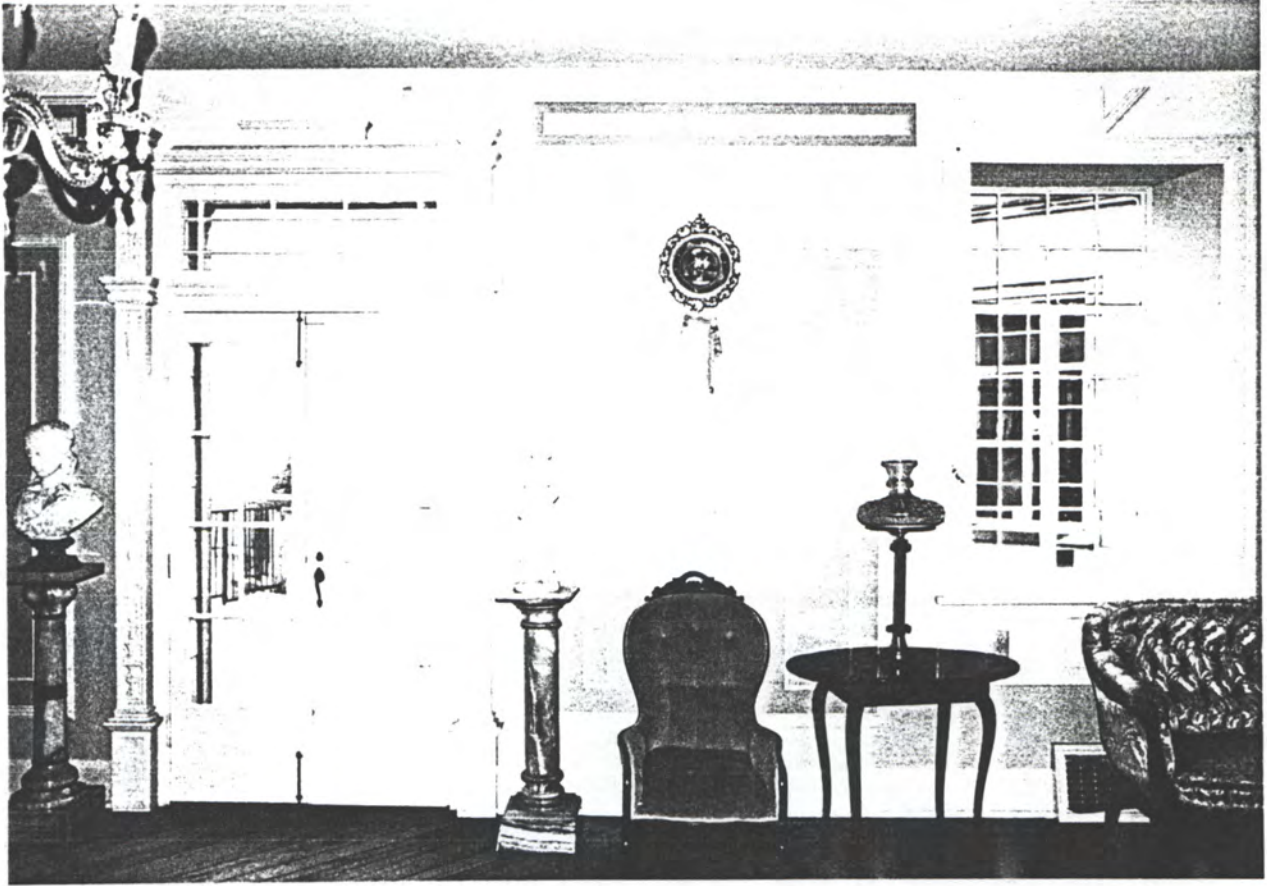


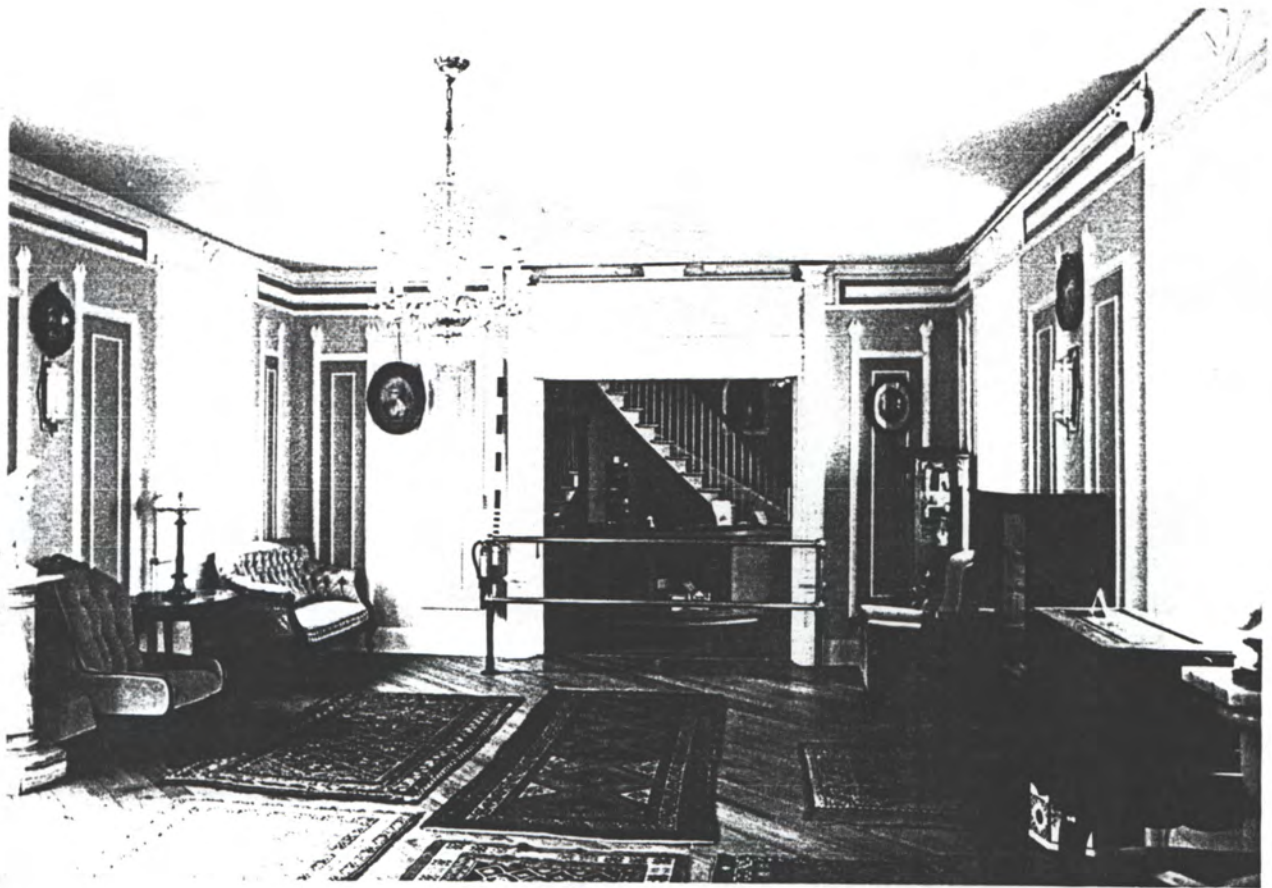


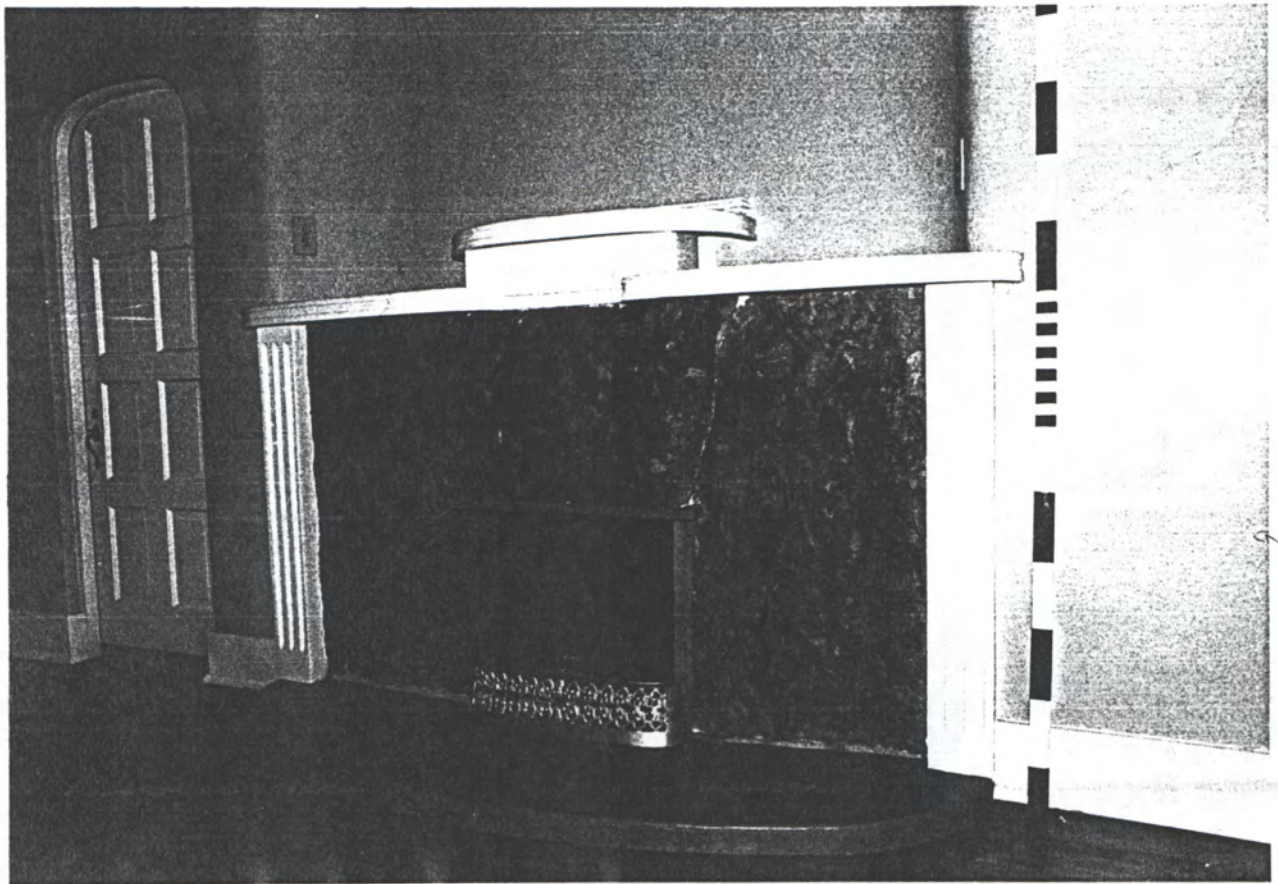
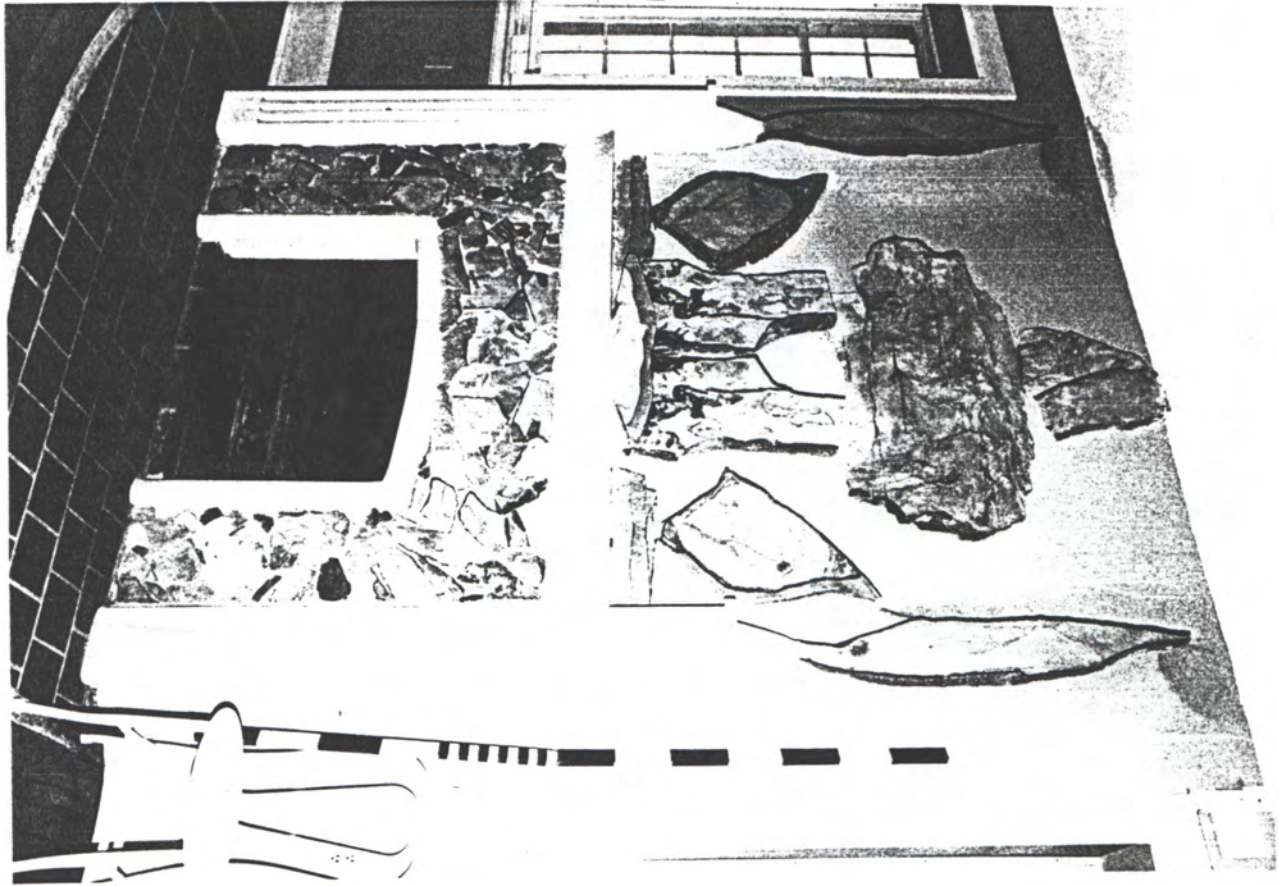


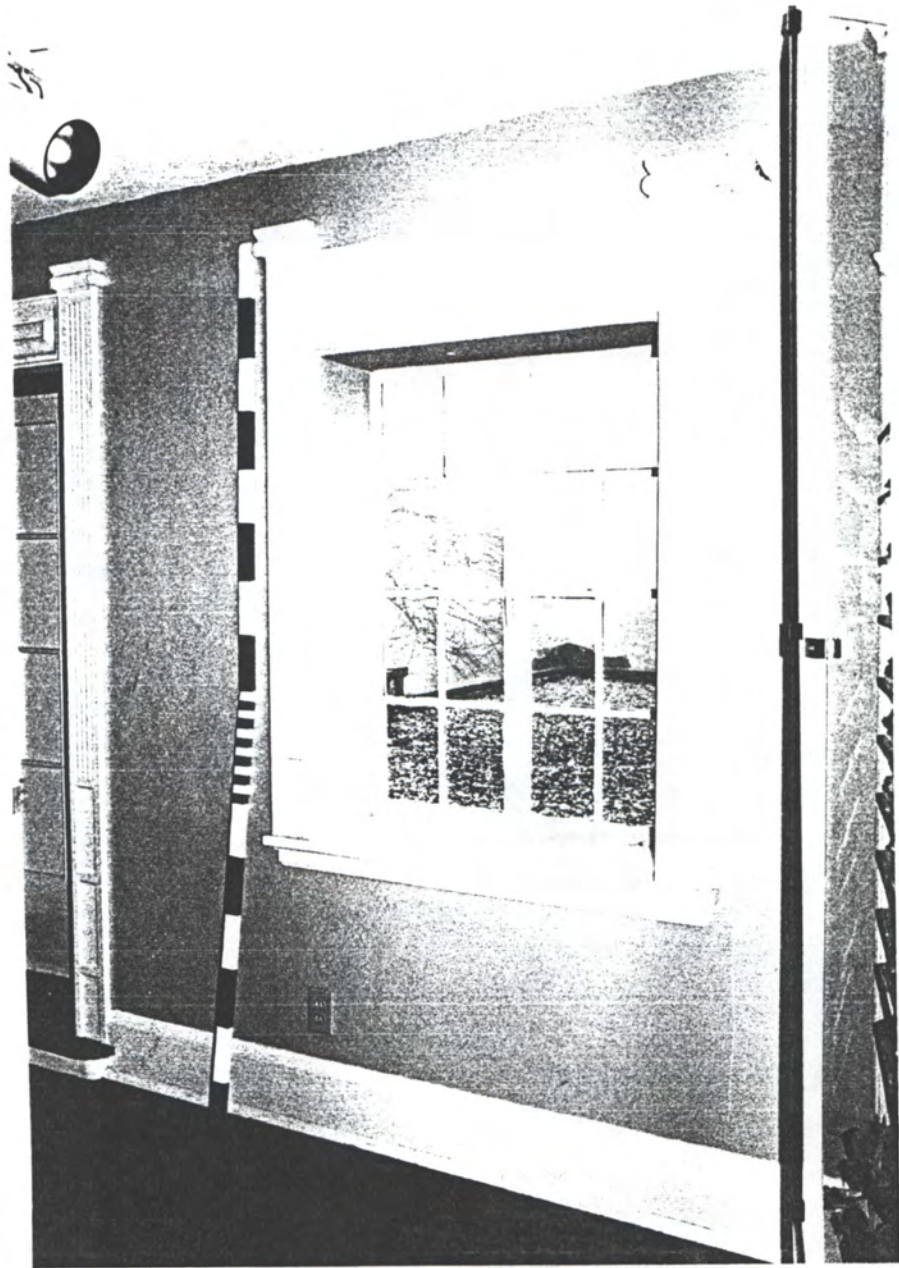












*Agreement by
Al. Hist. Comm.
Mar. '92 H2*

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: William Burritt Mansion

other name/site number: same

2. Location

street & number: 3101 Burritt Drive, S.E.

not for publication: NA

city/town: Huntsville

vicinity: NA

state: AL county: Madison

code: 089

zip code: 35801

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: public-local

Category of Property: building

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: NA

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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 Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic: DOMESTIC Sub: single dwelling

Current : RECREATION AND CULTURE Sub: museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

Neo-Classical Revival

Other Description: _____

Materials: foundation concrete & stone roof unknown
walls cement other _____
asbestos

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

8. Statement of Significance

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

Applicable National Register Criteria: C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) : _____

Areas of Significance: ARCHITECTURE

Period(s) of Significance: 1936 1938

Significant Dates: 1936 1938 _____

Significant Person(s): NA

Cultural Affiliation: NA

Architect/Builder: Dr. William Burritt
(possibly Edgar Love)

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.
X See continuation sheet.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS): NA

- 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 # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acres of Property: less than one acre

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

A	<u>16</u>	<u>542160</u>	<u>3841440</u>	B	___	___	___
C	___	___	___	D	___	___	___

___ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: ___ See continuation sheet.

Boundary Justification: ___ See continuation sheet.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title: Harvie P. Jones, FAIA; Jennifer Bryant/AHC Intern Reviewer

Organization: Historic Huntsville Foundation Date: April 1991

Street & Number: 104 Jefferson Street Telephone: 205 539-0764

City or Town: Huntsville State: AL ZIP: 35801

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7

William Burritt Mansion

Page #1

The William Burritt Mansion, located in Huntsville, is a highly eccentric mountaintop house. It was apparently designed by its owner, William Burritt, with some assistance by an architect, possibly Edgar Love, in technical matters and other details. The house overlooks the city of Huntsville, one thousand feet below. The site, Roundtop Mountain, consists of 167 acres of cleared and wooded land, several 1850s coal mines and a late 1880 quarry which provided stone for Huntsville's jail and city sidewalks. The site also contains several relocated 19th-century and more recent structures which are all noncontributing; none of these resources are included in this nomination.

In 1935 construction began on the house. It was just completed when it burned on June 6, 1936. It was rebuilt with some modifications of details and materials and completed for the second time in 1938. The original beginning date of 1935 is cast into the concrete shield above the entry.

The plan of the house resembles a maltese cross. Four angled one-story wings join a central two-story eight-sided section which is fronted by an extremely attenuated distyle portico, a free variation of a pedimented fluted doric order. All roofs, except the small pediment, are flat and concealed by stepped parapets with molded concrete caps. The outer corners of the parapets are topped with large molded concrete palmette acroteria that could be a variation on the type shown on page 107 of Bannister Fletcher's 1956 edition of A History of Architecture on the temple of Artemis in Ephesus. At the concrete pediment, the triglyphs and guttae are widely spaced on a frieze that has no defined metopes in the classical sense. The triglyphs give the appearance of being applied rather than being an integral part of the frieze. The tympanum contains in relief an elongated elliptical shield containing the incised date "1935," the date construction began on the first house.

The exterior walls are sheathed in asbestos shingles of a light gray color with a beltcourse of fluted concrete. The wall corners are similarly trimmed with a vertical fluted concrete ell. The windows are divided-light steel casements, mostly 24 lights (16 lights on the second floor.) The frames and face-trims of the windows are molded concrete with backbands and corner-block decorations.

The three shouldered, exterior end chimneys and two interior chimneys are made of sandstone obtained on the site, faced with fluted concrete on the roof-side for added strength.

The front entry has sidelights and an elliptical fanlight, as do the two side entries at the points of the maltese cross. The concrete "keystone" has edge-molding and a raised gothic-font "B". Above the entry is a Baroque-flavored balcony with scroll brackets and a bulbous cyma-recta cast-iron-and-riveted balustrade. The wall behind the portico is ashlar-pattern vee-joint "stone" cast concrete. A narrow elevated masonry and concrete terrace runs the length of the front. In recent years a visually compatible metal railing has been added to the terrace and front steps to meet current code requirements, as well as a handicapped access ramp at the southeast side.

The entrance hall contains a spiral stair whose balustrade design is similar but not identical to the 1930s HABS photograph from the early 19th century Burritt House on Eustis Avenue in

*Typos are those of the
Al. Hist. Comm., who "edited" & retyped this.*

H. Jones

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

NPS Form 10-900-a

(8)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7

William Burritt Mansion

Page #2

Huntsville. This house was demolished about the same time that the Mountaintop Burritt House was completed to make way for the Madison County Health Department Building at 304 Eustis Avenue. Dr. Burritt salvaged at least two Federal Period mantels from his ancestral house with the intent of installing them at his new mansion. These were finally installed around 1958 after the house became a museum, in the southwest parlor of the southeast chamber.

The entry and parlor contain elaborate machine-made moldings and applied molded ornament of a delicate Adamesque character, with anthemias, ribbands, swags, etc. French windows, flanked by ornamented pilasters, open onto the west terrace from the southwest parlor. Some of the machine-made moldings came from demolished buildings in St. Louis ~~X~~ (per museum records).

The parlor walls have applied fluted half-cylinder molds that form panels, except that one or both vertical members continues up the wall about six inches above the panel top and then splits into two short, flaring sections, an eccentric and delightful non-academic detail that is surely another of Dr. Burritt's inventions. The narrow wood flooring is laid diagonal; ~~a~~ ^{on the} clever way of avoiding clumsy floor joints at the junctions of the rooms which do not meet at 90 degrees.

The dining room mantel is late Victorian, salvaged from a St. Louis building that had been demolished ~~X~~ (per museum records).

The most interesting mantels are again those apparently invented by Dr. Burritt, who became interested in the shapes and colors of the thin slabs of sandstone being excavated for the construction of the road in 1934-35 up to Roundtop Mountain to his house site. Of the three that remain (two were removed to install the Burritt Federal period mantels), the most flamboyant one is in the northeast room. The fluted pilasters extend up past the mantel-shelf and are topped by cones, out of which shoot "flames" of bookmatched sandstone. Similar extravagant sandstone slab patterns occupy the space between the "flames."

The second floor mantel combines a streamlined Art-Moderne design with three large slabs of sandstone forming a primitive jack-arch surround. The hearth and the three mantel shelves are elliptical in plan, as is the head of the closet door and frame nearby.

The second floor window facing-trim is another uninhibited, non-academic delight. The jambs are capped with fluted pilasters which extend up past the architraves, and thus visually support nothing. The pilasters are topped with strangely proportioned capitals of a vaguely Ionic inspiration.

At the rear of the house is a flat roofed conservatory. Its windows are 1982 replacements, and the canvas awning outside was added in 1989.

Perhaps the most interesting technical aspect of the house is the unique insulation material; hay bales. Burritt stated that he got this idea while visiting a farmhouse in Missouri on a hot day. He walked into the shadow of a haystack and immediately felt cooler. Burritt used 2200 bales of wheat straw as insulation. For the roof, the bales were first impaled with two wooden stakes. The loose bales were wrapped with criss-crossed baling wire and troweled with "brown coat" plaster. Each bale was then placed on a leveled scaffold platform at the ceiling

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7

William Burritt Mansion

Page #3

elevation. Each bale stake and the baling wire was then nailed to the roof joists. The joints between the bales were stuffed with loose straw that had been treated with boric acid for fire resistance, since this loose straw, rather than the tightly compressed hay bales, had been the source of the 1936 fire. After leveling the bales and stuffing the joints, the ceiling was daubed with rough brown-coat plaster and then finished with smooth white plaster.²

Archaeological Component

Although no formal archaeological survey has been made of this property, the potential for subsurface remains is high. Properties of this type were sited within a constellation of dependencies such as kitchens and other outbuildings. Buried portions may contain significant information that may be useful in interpreting the entire property.

1 Newspaper or magazine article. Title of article, name of publication and date of publication is unknown.

2 "He Lives in a Southern Mansion Built of Straw," The Atlanta Journal and Constitution Magazine. 4 November 1951.

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8

William Burritt Mansion

Page #1

=====
Criterion C (Architecture)

The William Burritt Mansion, located on Round-Top Mountain in Huntsville, is an unusual example of 20th century Neoclassical architecture. Burritt's ideas resulted in a individualized structure full of unconventional neoclassical details and unique structural features. Because of its design, size and complexity, the mansion is essentially one of a kind and especially unusual for its time period. Homes of this magnitude were not normally built during the Great Depression. The mansion has suffered minimal alterations and retains most of its details, form and shape, and materials.

Historical Summary

William Burritt was born in 1869 in Huntsville. His father, Amatus Robbins Burritt, a homeopathic physician from New York, married Mary King Robison in 1866. William Burritt also chose medicine as his profession and set up practice in Huntsville. However, in 1900, Burritt moved to St. Louis, Missouri with his second wife, Josephine T. Drummond. From 1903 to 1927, Dr. Burritt shifted his attention from medicine to the rubber industry. He received over 22 tire patents in the United States and foreign countries.¹

In 1934 Burritt returned to Huntsville to build his mountain top retirement estate and community showplace on Monte Sano Mountain, the highest point in the city. 24 men were employed under the direction of G.H. Walters, superintendent of carpenters and Carney Gardiner, superintendent of labor.² In June 1936, a fire destroyed the entire building and Burritt claimed he would not build again.³ However, the public sentiment and sympathy was so strong that he changed his mind and began construction again this time fireproofing the straw by soaking it in a boracic and borax solution.⁴ The second mansion was completed in 1938.

Burritt lived in the mansion until his death in 1955 at the age of 86. Having no heirs even after three marriages, Burritt willed the mansion and the surrounding estate to the City of Huntsville. Since 1955 the site has served as the Burritt Museum and Park. It houses art, natural history and prehistoric Indian collections.⁵

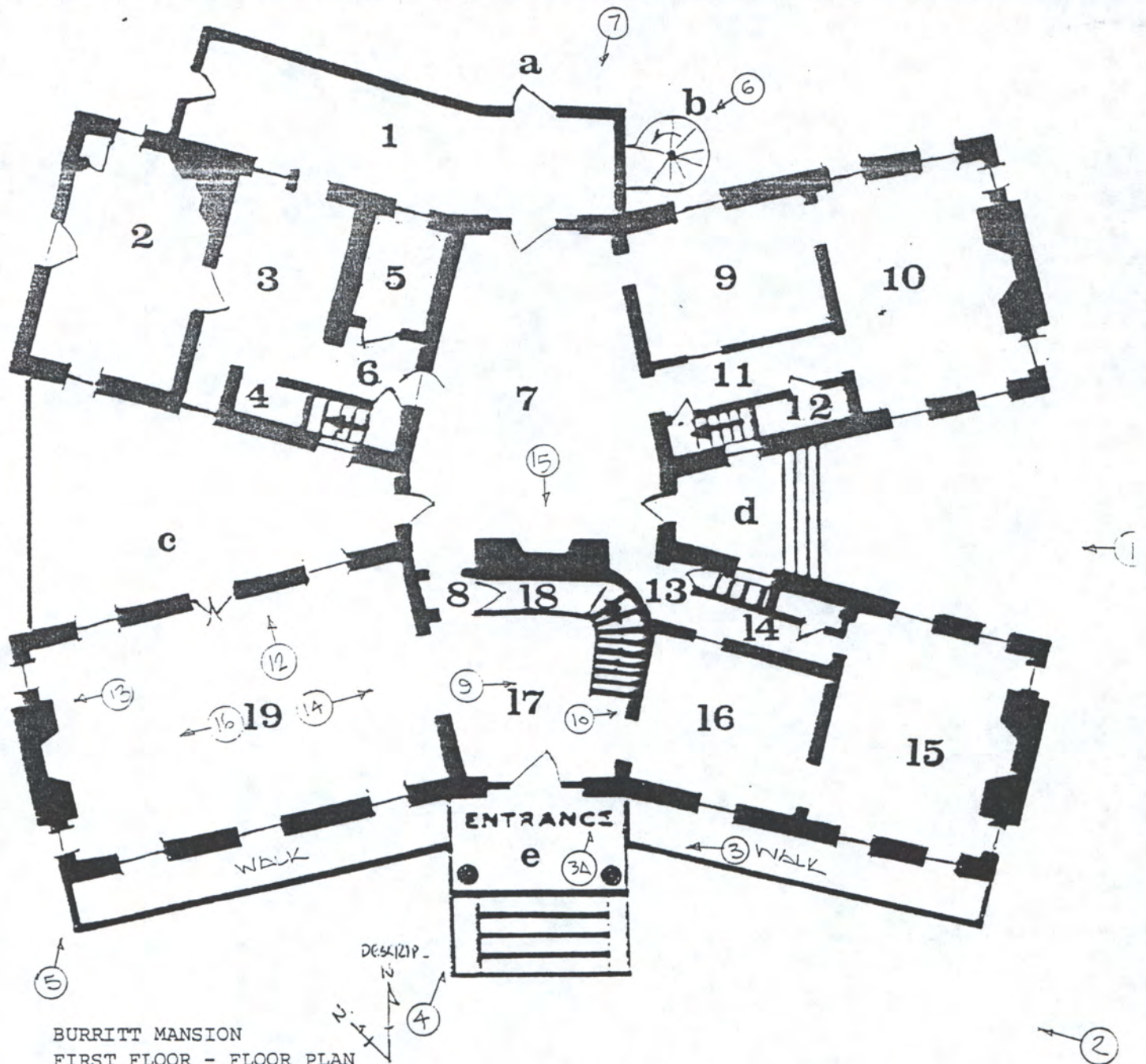
-
- 1 Pamphlet from Burritt Museum and Park.
 - 2 Huntsville Times, 1 December 1935.
 - 3 Huntsville Times, 7 June 1936.
 - 4 Huntsville Times, 17 June 1936.
 - 5 Pamphlet from Burritt Museum and Park.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 9 William Burritt Mansion Page #1

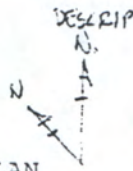
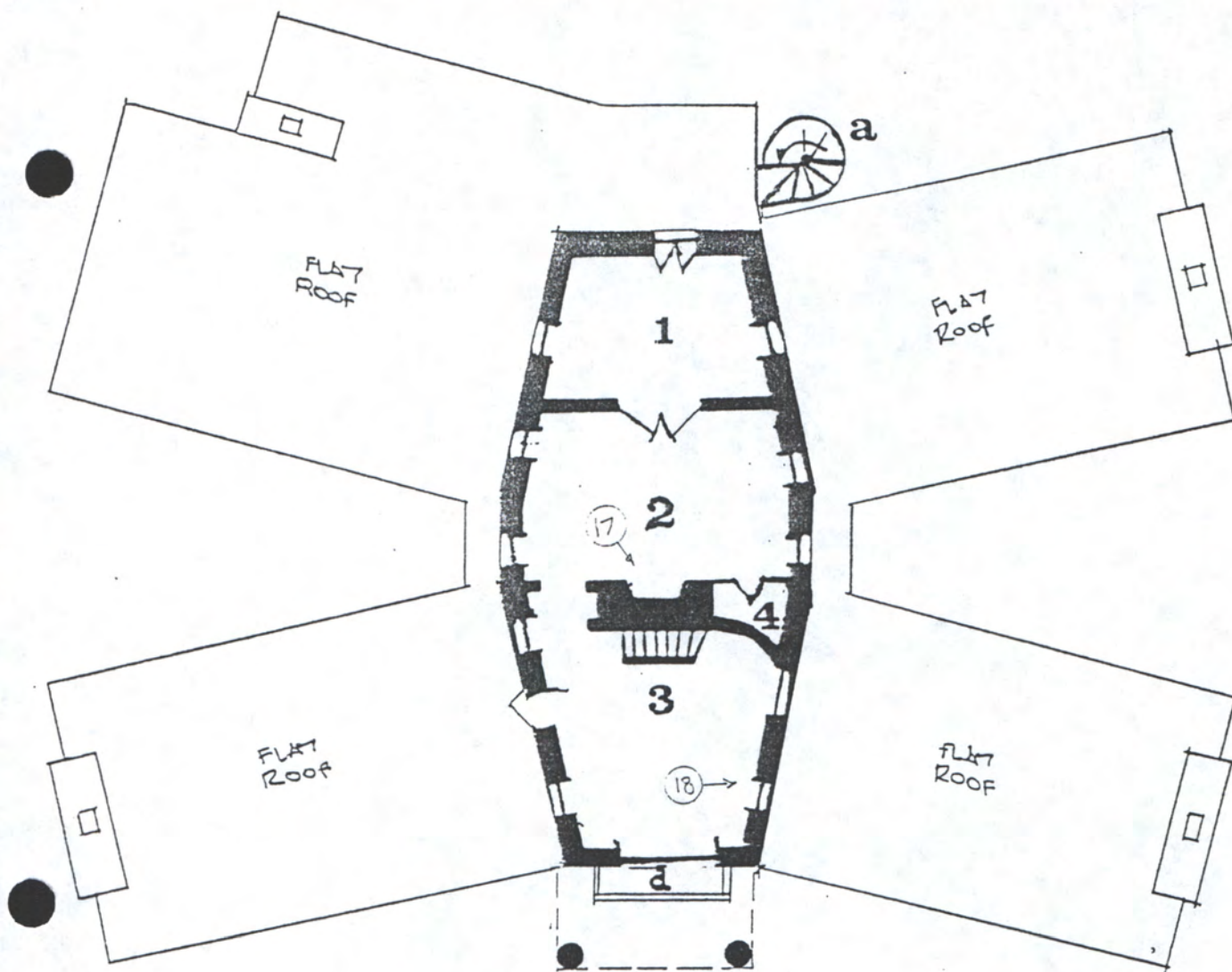
- "Fire Prevention Methods Feature of Burritt Home," The Huntsville Times. 13 September 1936.
- "Fire Razes Dr. Burritt's New Home on Round Top," The Huntsville Times. 7 June 1936.
- "He Lives in a Southern Mansion Built of Straw," The Atlanta Journal and Magazine. 4 November 1951. Constitution
- "Huntsville Will Open Showplace on Mountain Top Soon," Birmingham News. 16 December 1956.
- Pamphlet from Burritt Museum and Park.



1. Glass Conservatory Office Area
2. Office
3. Office
4. Office Supply Closet
5. Kitchen
6. Kitchen Hall
7. Exhibit Gallery - Burritt Dining Room
8. Hallway
9. Exhibit Gallery - Water Works
10. Exhibit Gallery - Medical Exhibit
11. Exhibit Gallery - Birds and Wildflowers
12. Restroom
13. Exhibit Gallery - Burritt Four Generations
14. Restroom
15. Exhibit Gallery - Changing Exhibitions
16. Exhibit Gallery - Changing Exhibitions
17. Entrance Hall - Visitors Desk
18. Sales Storage Closet

19. Exhibit Gallery - Burritt Parlor
- a. Office Entrance
- b. Exterior Concrete Fire Escape
- c. North Terrace Over Garage
- d. South Terrace
- e. Visitor Entrance to Museum

← 6 = PHOTO

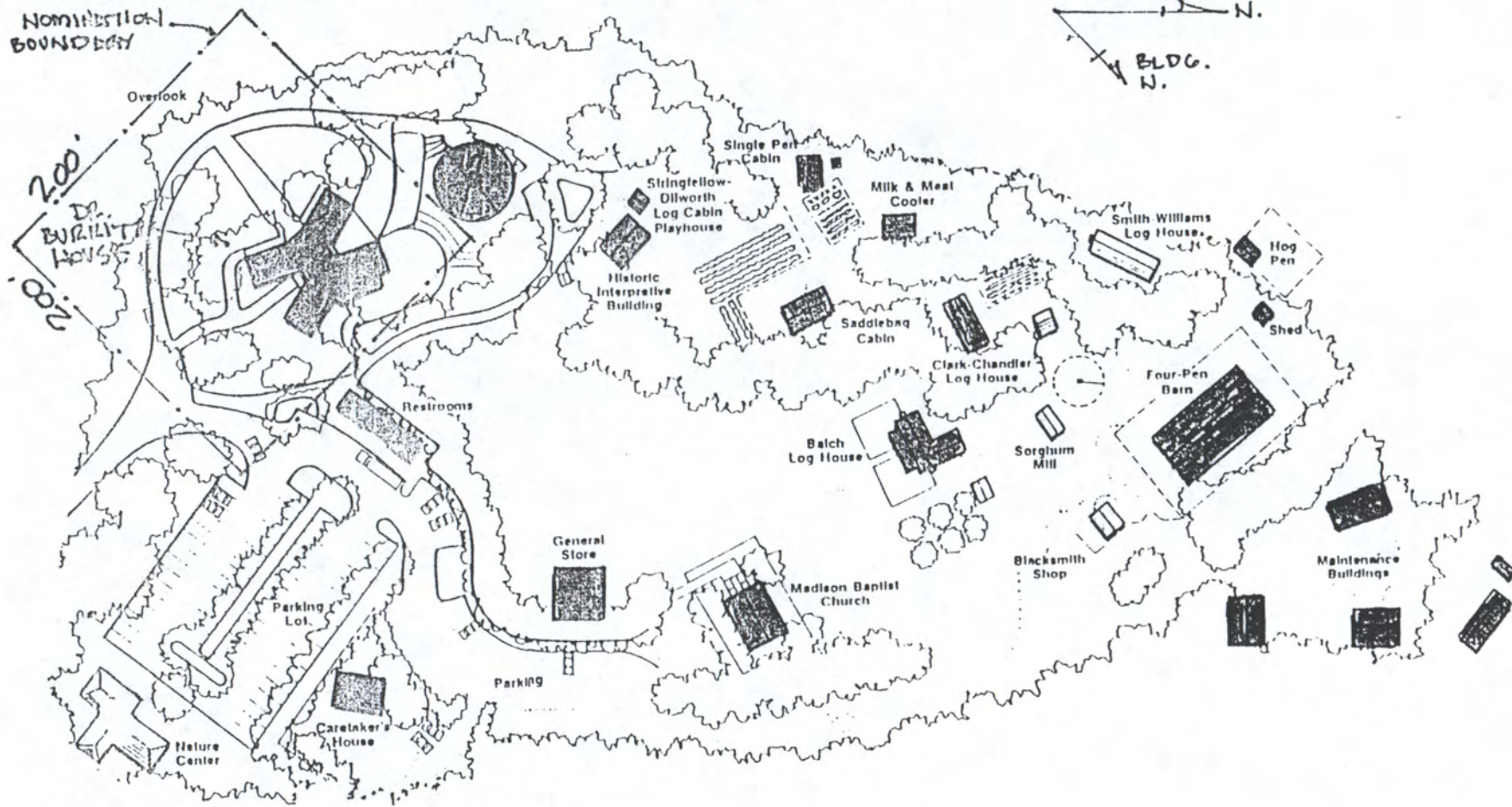
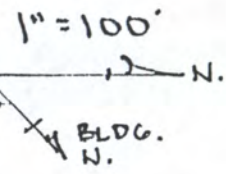


BURRITT MANSION
SECOND FLOOR - FLOOR PLAN

1. Collection Storage Area
2. Archeology Gallery
3. Rock and Mineral Gallery

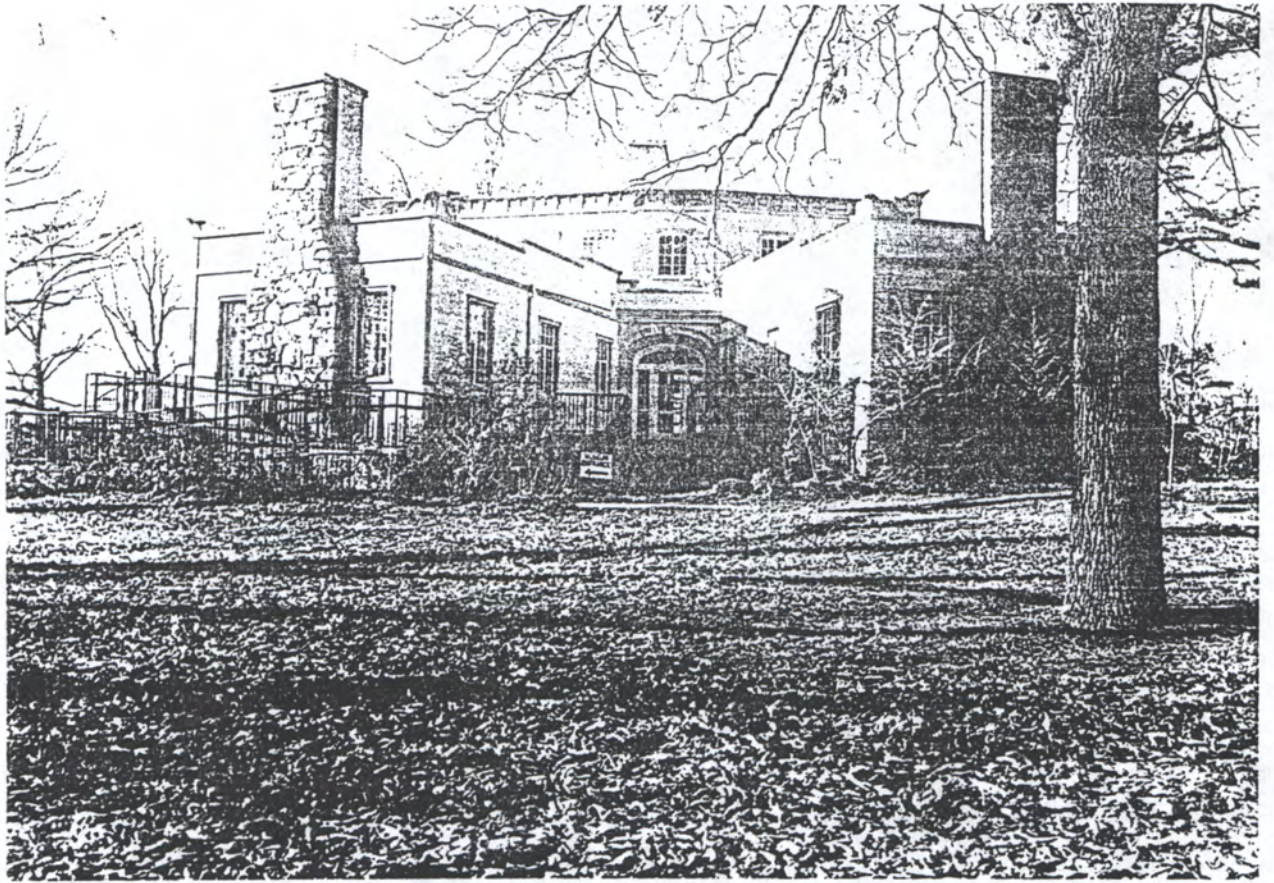
- a. Exterior Concrete Fire Escape Staircase
- b. Cat Walk Connecting Northwest and Northeast First Floor Wings
- c. Cat Walk Connecting Southeast and Southwest First Floor Wings
- d. Second Floor Balcony Over Front Entrance

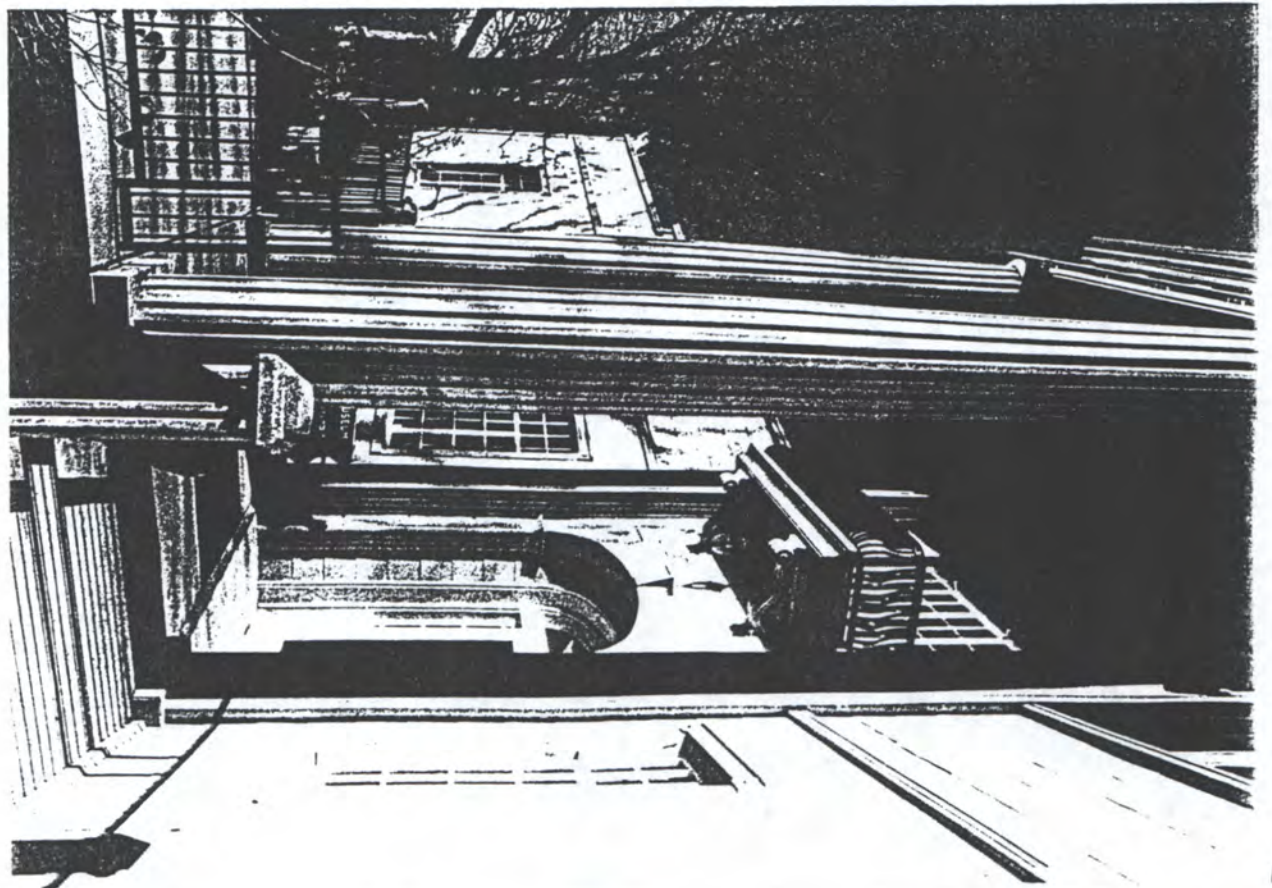
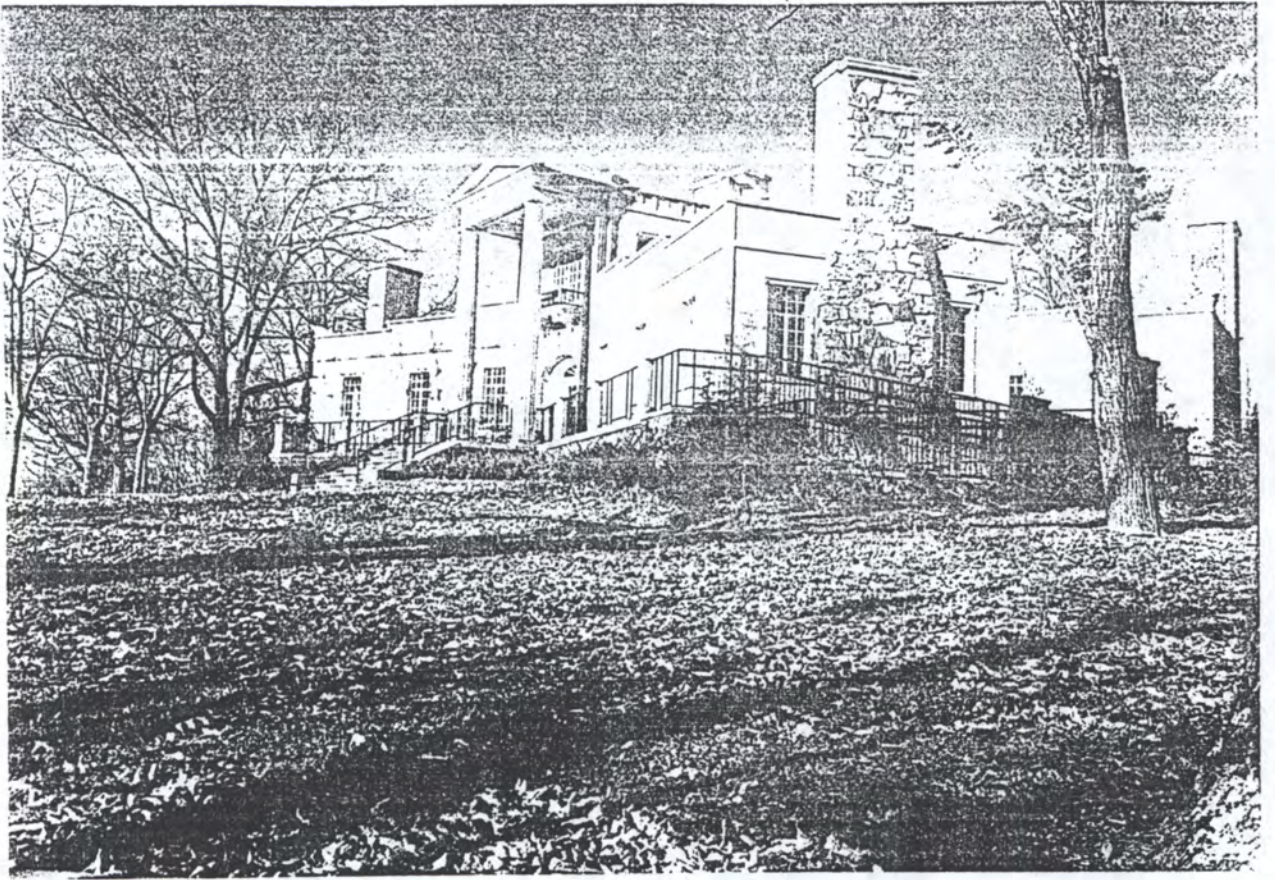
BURRITT MUSEUM AND PARK SITE PLAN SHOWING EXISTING AND FUTURE BUILDINGS

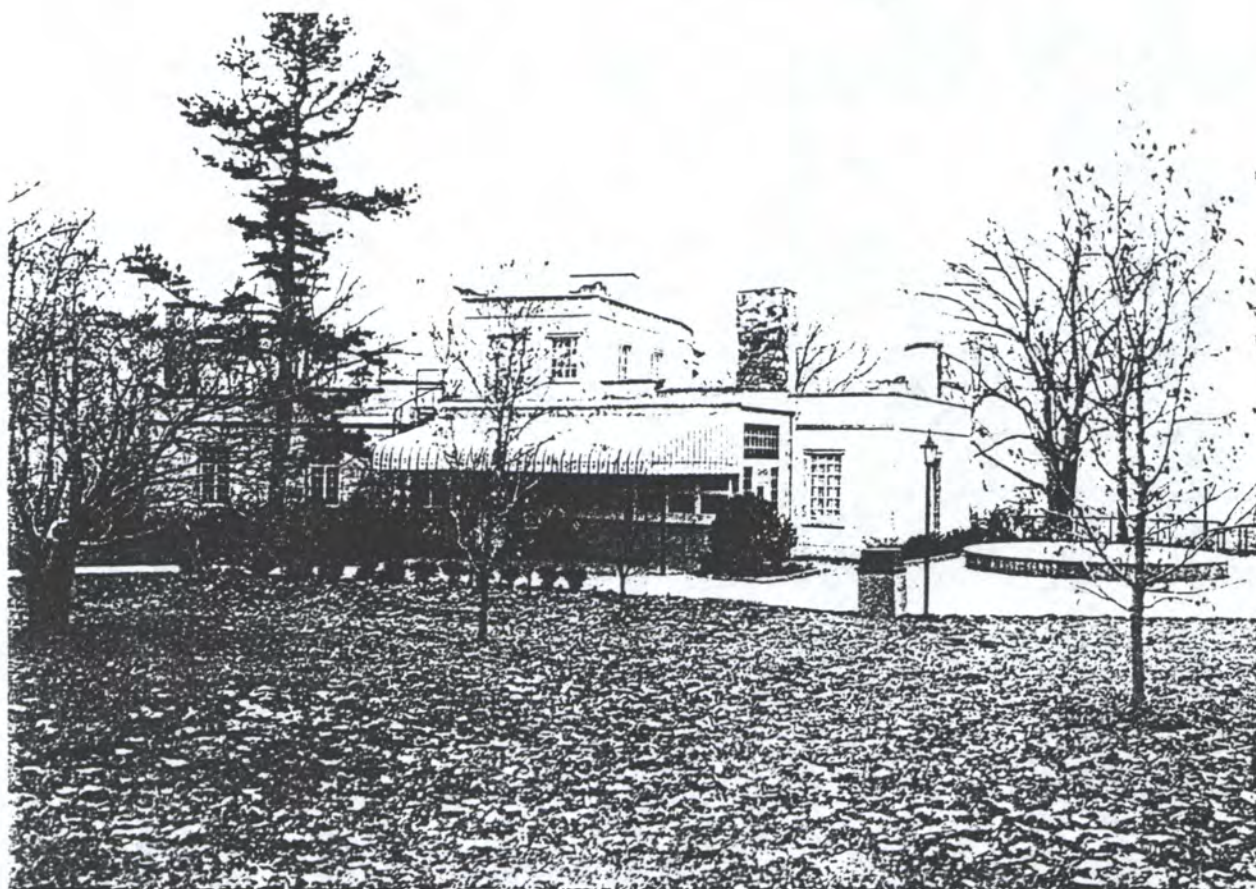
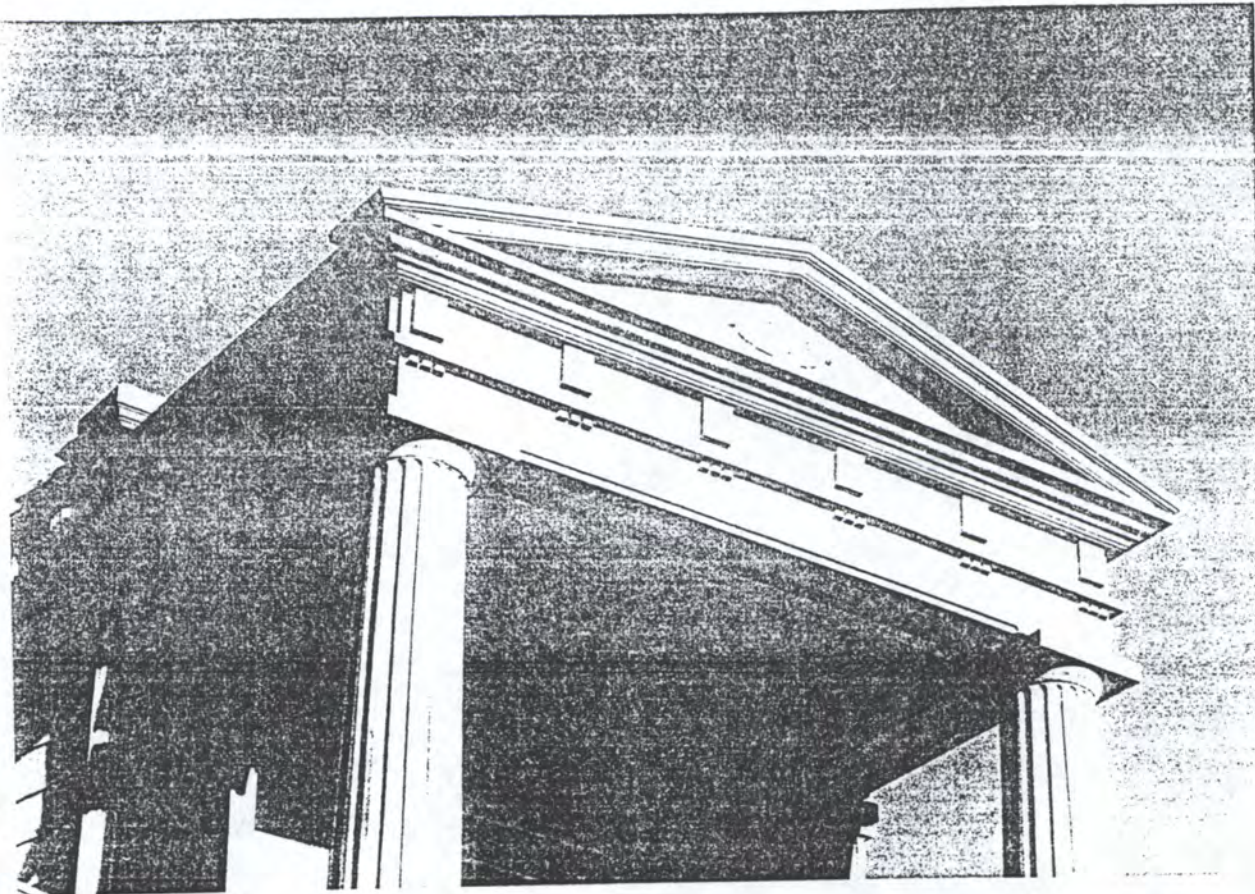


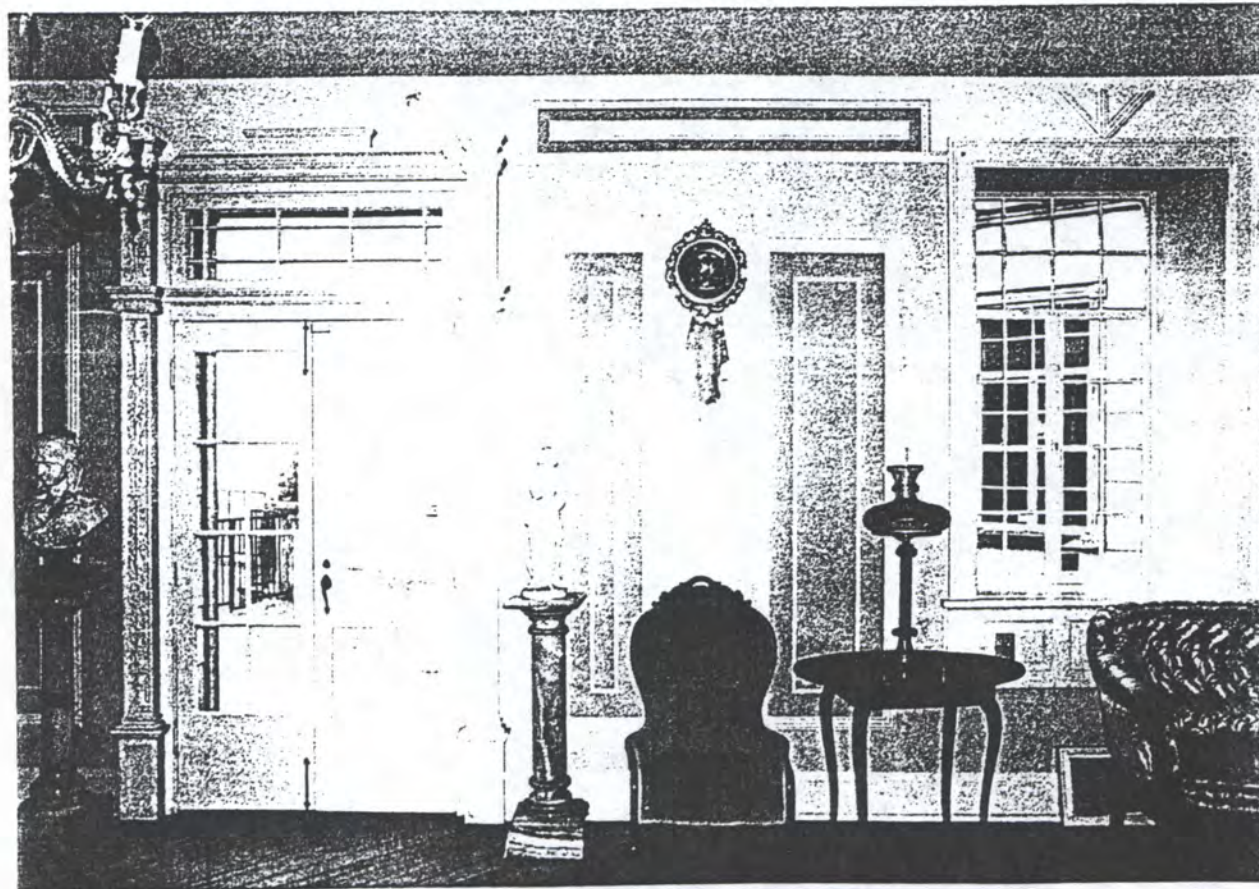
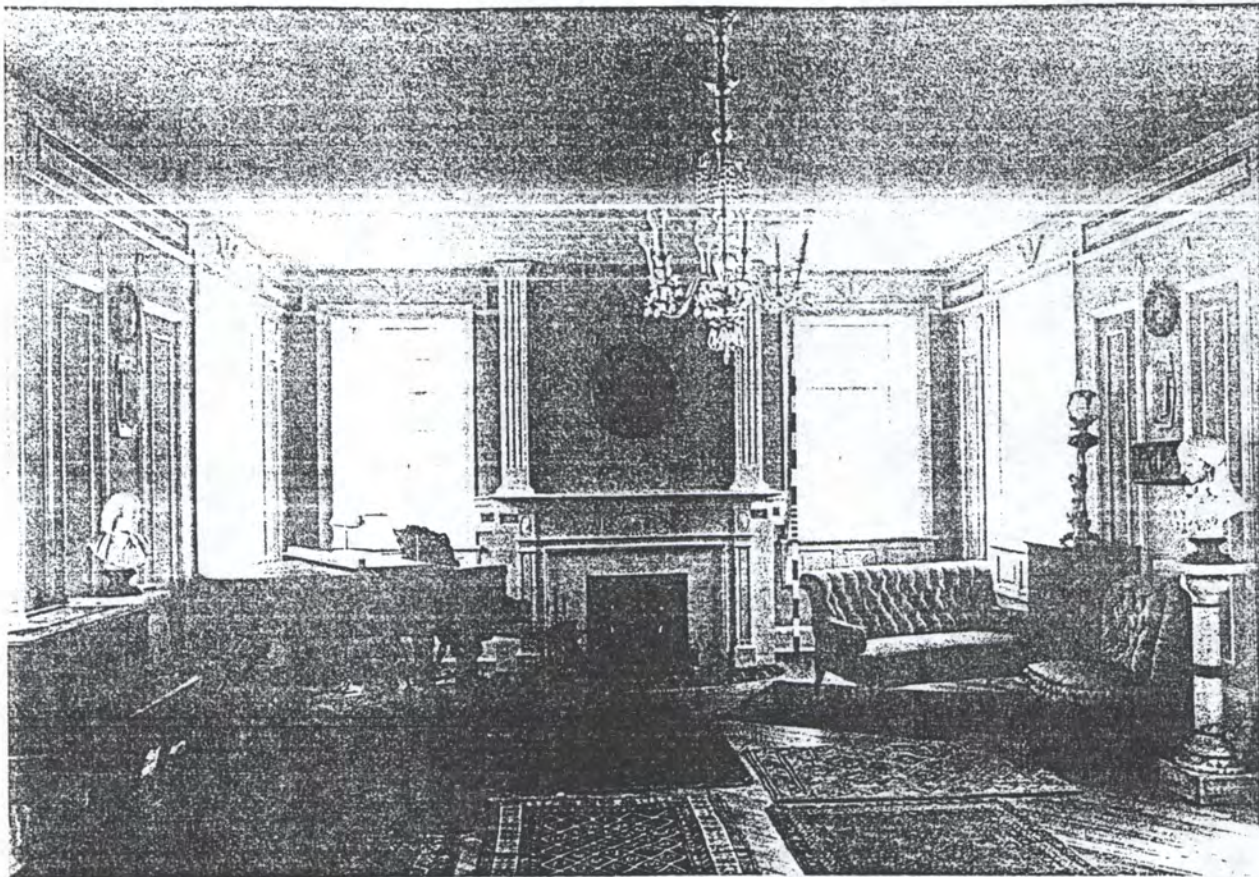
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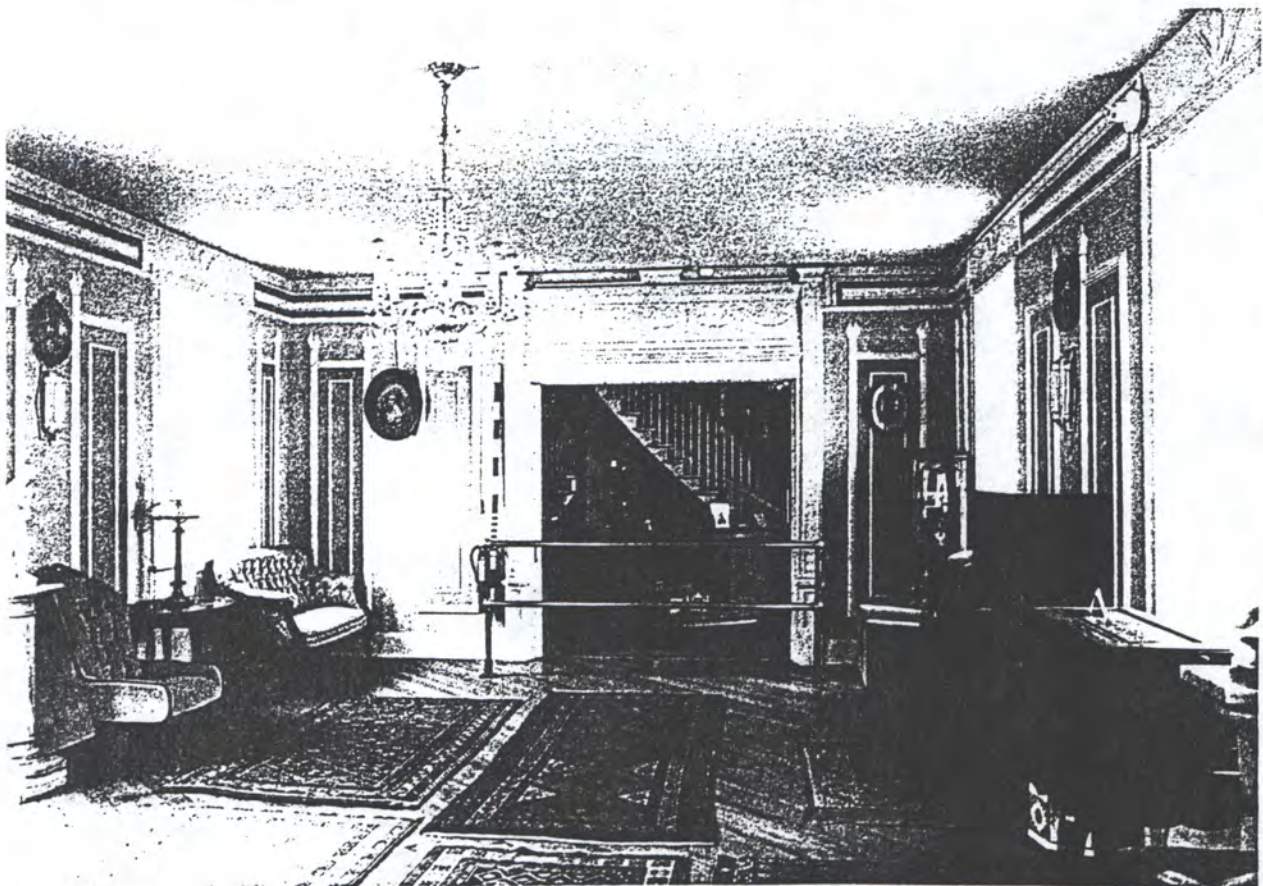
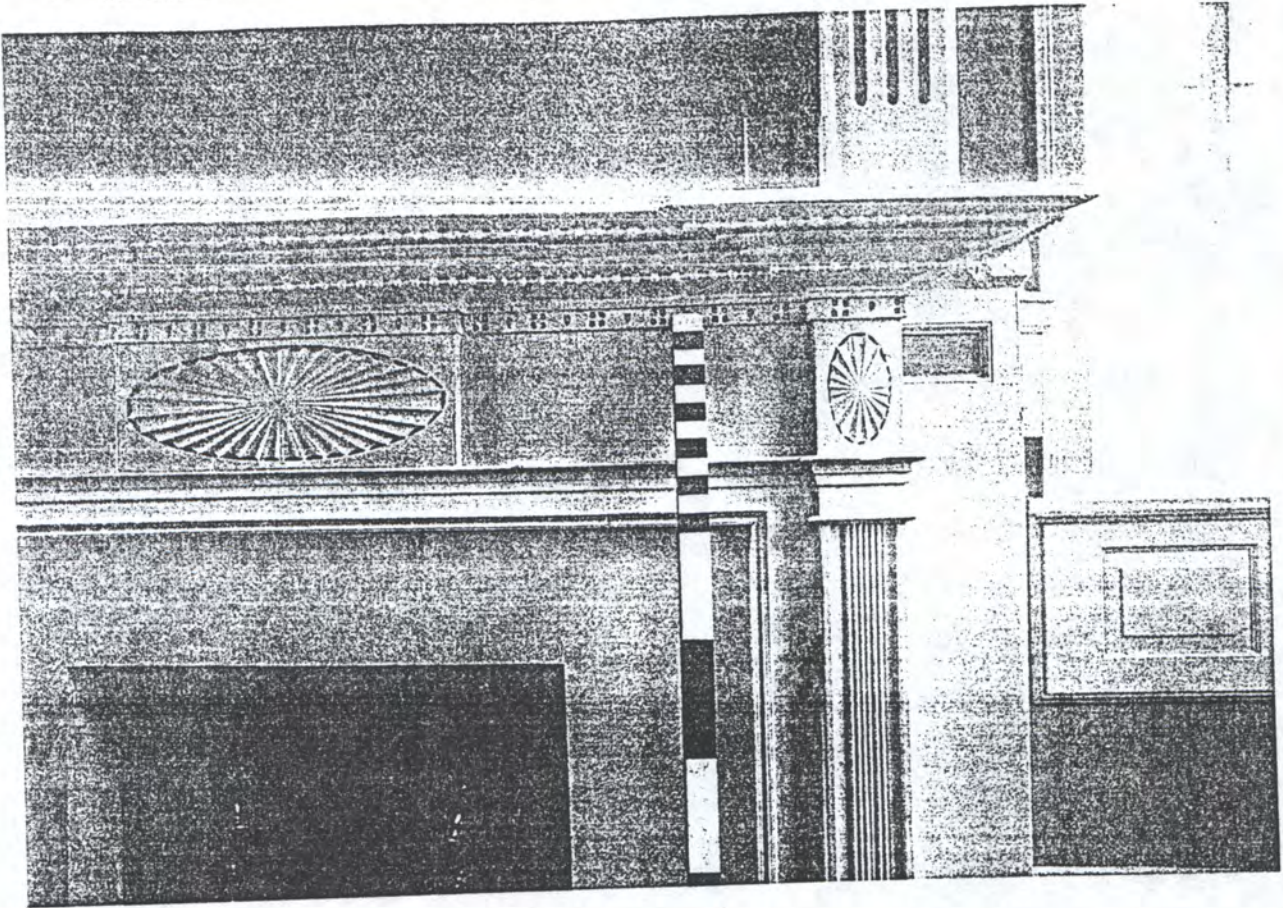
- Orange Indicates Existing Structures
- Blue Indicates Structures Under Construction
- Pink Indicates Those Structures That Will Be Constructed Before 1995













F. LAWRENCE OAKS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STATE OF ALABAMA
ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

725 MONROE STREET
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA 36130-5101

June 9, 1992



TELEPHONE NUMBER
242-3184

Burritt Museum and Park (City of Huntsville)
Attn.: Charles Pautler, Curator of History
3101 Burritt Drive
Huntsville, Alabama 35801

Dear Mr. Pautler:

The Alabama Historical Commission is pleased to inform you that the William Burritt Mansion in Huntsville was added to the National Register of Historic Places by the U.S. Department of the Interior on May 29, 1992. By copy of this letter we are notifying local public officials and concerned citizens.

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the nation's cultural resources worthy of preservation. Authorized under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Register is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect our historic and archaeological resources.

A certificate signed by the Governor and lettered with the name of the property is available from our office. Information on such certificate is enclosed. Let us know if you would like for us to place an order for this National Register certificate.

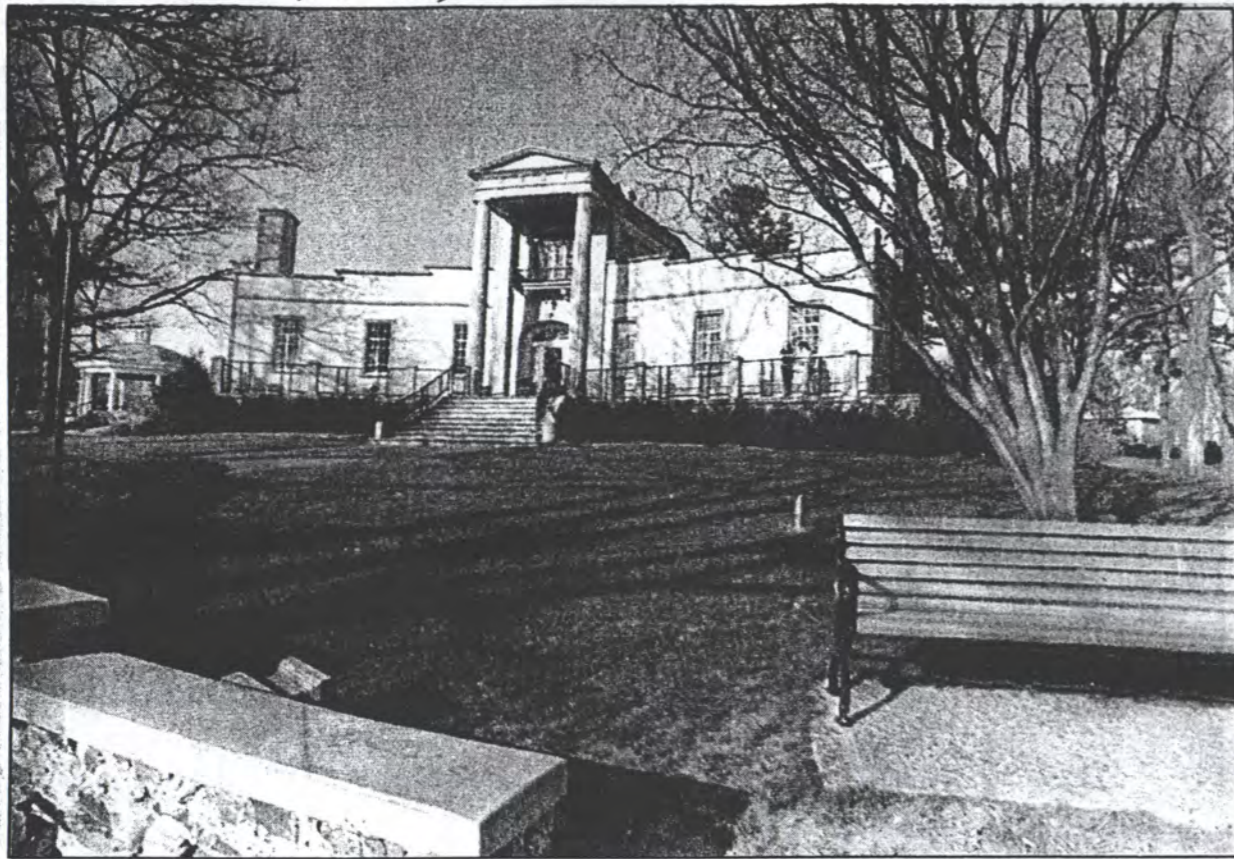
In order that our files remain accurate, please notify us of any change in the ownership or any significant changes to the structure.

Sincerely,

F. Lawrence Oaks
Executive Director

FLO/MAB/cgh
Enclosure

- cc: Honorable Steve Hettinger
- Honorable Frank H. Riddick
- Mr. Michael C. Gillespie
- Mr. Hulan Smith
- Mr. Harvie Jones ✓
- Ms. Jennifer Bryant



Stuart Siniard/Huntsville Times

This file shot of Burritt Museum, taken in early spring before leaves filled the trees, shows the architecture being recognized by the National Historic Register.

Burritt Museum is on the list

Landmark is now national treasure

By PAIGE OLIVER
Times Staff Writer

To the people who maintain its grounds and its history, the William Burritt Mansion atop Monte Sano has always had the character and the history to stand as a Huntsville landmark.

Now it will be a national one as well, having recently been named to the National Register of Historic Places.

The National Register of Historic

Places is the nation's official list of historic buildings and sites worthy of preservation. Buildings must be at least 50 years old to be considered for the designation.

The one-time home of Dr. William Henry Burritt now serves as a museum to the more than 130,000 visitors to the 167 acres of Roundtop Mountain property Burritt deeded to the city when he died in 1955.

"It's a house that really reflects the life of the man who built it," Museum Director Melinda Herzog said. "Especially if you think of the time he was born — just after the Civil War — to the time he died in '55 — when the space program was just beginning."

The world was to reap many an

invention from that time period, and Burritt would include a few of his own in the mansion.

Burritt began construction on the 11-room house in 1934, after moving back to Huntsville from St. Louis where his second wife, tobacco and rubber heiress Josephine T. Drummond, had died. Many of her belongings, including her silverware monogrammed with "Josie", remain in the house today.

A practitioner of homeopathic medicine, Burritt believed this "mountain of health" was the perfect location for his retirement home. The windows, the wings of the house's bedrooms and the big porches were strategically posi-

See BURRITT, page B5

Burritt

Continued from page B1

tioned to give Burritt and visitors a bird's eye view to the grounds around the property and the city below.

Building the house was a boyhood dream for Burritt, who incorporated different styles of architecture that included elements from houses in St. Louis and his parents home on Eustis Avenue, the property now occupied by the Madison County Mental Health Center, Ms. Herzog said.

"He was a Victorian man with modern ideas who looked to the future, and the house reflects that," Ms. Herzog said. "He just built a house he liked. He took some of his past, and put it in his new house."

Only one architect, Edgar Love, was believed to have worked on the preliminary design of the house, but Burritt is credited with most of the house's design and decor.

Forty men were involved in the construction of the Maltese cross-shaped mansion, which had to be rebuilt after a fire destroyed the house on June 6, 1936, Ms. Herzog said. It was completed in 1938 using many natural resources on the site, including sandstone mined from the mountain's quarry.

Burritt's "blending of old and blending of new" was more than the fixtures that adorn the house's interior. Modeling the home's in-

sulation after the coolness of a barn, Burritt filled 16-inch wall frames and the roof with 2,200 bales of wheat straw connected to the plaster with brown mud, Ms. Herzog said.

Burritt also lined vents placed along the sides of the main room's fireplace with copper, which was warmed by the fire to heat rooms on both floors.

When Burritt willed the property to the city upon his death, it was with the stipulation that the area be used to reflect the regional and natural history and the area's growth, Ms. Herzog said.

Among the directors' missions for the property is to use it to "develop people's knowledge of environmental and earth sciences," Ms. Herzog said. "As the city continues to grow it becomes ever more important." A collection of 19th-century rural structures are also located on the property, and some 24 buildings are expected to be available for touring by about 1995, Ms. Herzog said.

The museum is open from noon to 5 p.m. daily except Monday until Thanksgiving Day when it closes for the winter. Individuals may tour the museum and other buildings on the grounds, and group tours of 10 or more can be arranged.

The grounds are open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. until October. They close at 5 p.m. from October to March. For information, call 536-2882.

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Cows could have a feast on these new homes

By PATRICIA L. BROWN
N. Y. Times News Service

TUCSON, Ariz. — It takes stamina. It takes commitment. It takes a lot of antihistamines.

Such was life one recent Sunday morning at a festive "wall raising" outside Tucson, when 16 men and women helped Dan Dorsey build his 475-square-foot dream house insulated with straw bales.

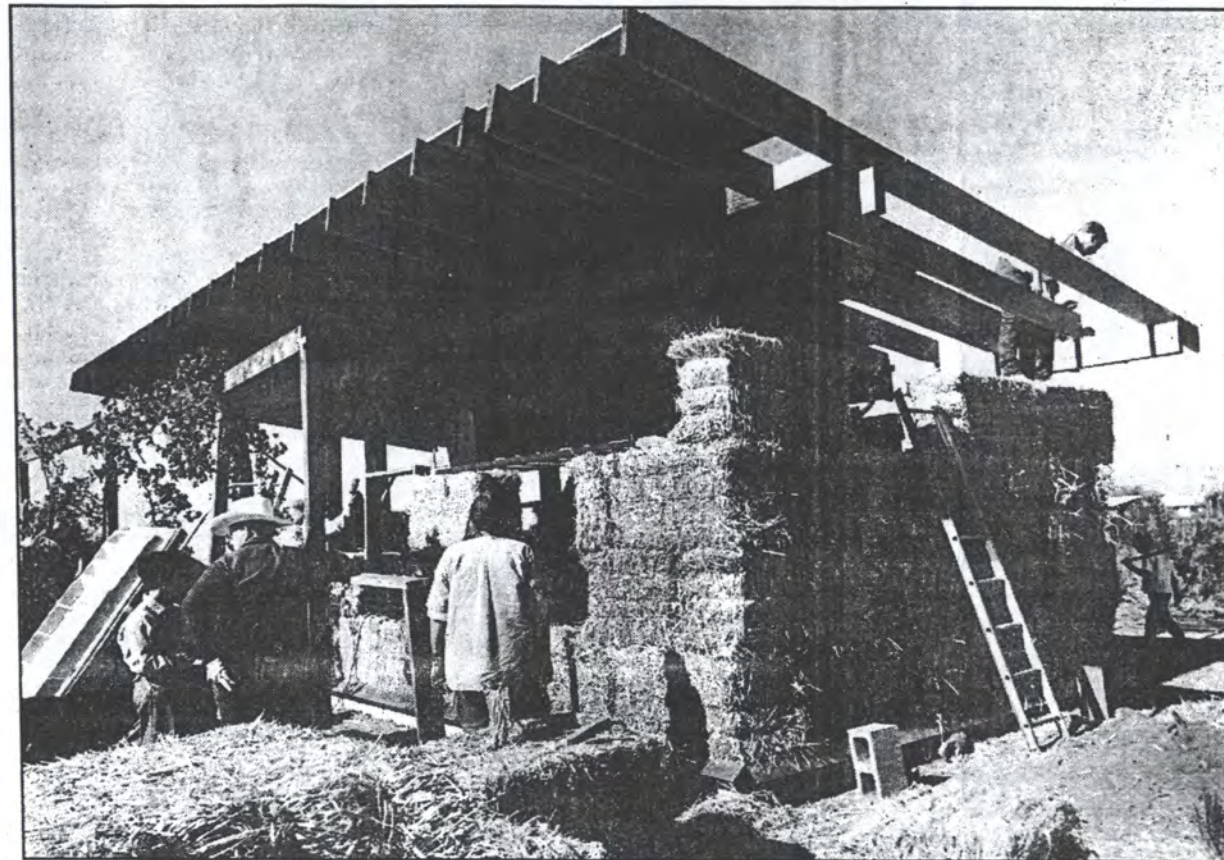
Their bumper stickers said "Teach Peace" and "Solar." They talked earnestly about customizing their bales. Their ranks included a 64-year-old retired geologist, a telescope operator, a university professor and a schoolteacher who paid \$140 each to learn about plastered straw-bale construction, an alternative home-building technique that has gained a small but dedicated band of followers.

Messianic straw balers like Matts Myhrman, who runs a straw-bale consulting company in Tucson called Out on Bale Unlimited, have yet to infiltrate the mainstream. Ninety percent of the new homes built in the United States last year were insulated with fiberglass, according to a study by F.W. Dodge, a market research firm that specializes in the construction industry.

But Myhrman's ranks are growing as architects and designers, mostly based in the Southwest, join self-taught owner-builders in raising high the straw bales.

Dorsey, a landscape designer, bought the 95 straw bales he needed at a feed store for \$3.50 apiece, delivery included. His three-room house, built with help from friends and novice balers, is expected to cost \$9,000 to \$10,000.

It took Dorsey and his compadres about five hours — "se-



N.Y. Times

Straw-bale houses have a small but loyal new following in the Southwest.

naded by a drummer — to raise the walls. The house rests on concrete; a traditional post-and-beam configuration holds up the roof.

Its only novelty is the straw bales, which are anchored in place in the wall cavities and then finished with adobe mud plaster indoors and cement stucco outdoors. Dorsey was moved to build the house, which received a permit from the Pima County building

codes department, because of "diminishing planetary resources."

Harry Smedes, a retired geologist, was there to learn how to cut costs. Elena Berman, a professor at the University of Arizona, alluded to that 1990s concept, empowerment. "I can understand this myself," she said. "If I'm going to spend money on a house, I want what I want."

Straw bale adherents, who can

straw, using bales and other techniques.

"Inch-for-inch," he said, "fiberglass is more efficient." But because of the bale walls' mass, he said, straw provides good insulation.

Fisk also noted that straw, unlike wood, is an annually renewable resource. In many regions, like California, it is commonly burned. Dr. Bryan M. Jenkins, an associate professor of agricultural engineering at the University of California at Davis, said that his state burned 99 percent of the 1 million tons of rice straw it produced each year, resulting in serious air pollution; the state recently passed a law that will gradually eliminate rice-straw burning.

One beauty of bales is that builders can change their minds as they go along — rounding a corner, for instance, by shearing a bale. Nevertheless, visions of "The Three Little Pigs" and the scarecrow in "The Wizard of Oz" continue to haunt them.

"Historically, there have been many ways of building with straw, grass or reed-based materials," Fisk said. "But psychologically, people just have trouble with the idea of building with straw."

Among those having trouble are building officials. Straw bale construction is not written into any of the country's building codes, said Leroy A. Sayre, the chief building official for Pima County, Ariz.

The county gave Dorsey the go-ahead after insisting that he work with an engineer, who helped him determine whether the bales could withstand high winds and seismic tremors.

Arizona's building code allows for alternate methods of construction, usually adobe bricks, which

are a combination of straw and clay. Because the bales are coated with stucco and not exposed, Sayre said, fire is not the chief concern. He said he would review future straw-bale proposals case by case.

The only fire test on record, conducted in 1986 by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp., found that the coating of mortar on a straw-bale wall withstood two hours at 1,850 degrees Fahrenheit before a small crack developed. But more tests are needed to determine the safety of the material, said Robert M. Unthank, director of the construction industries division for the State of New Mexico, which has an experimental permit for a straw-bale house.

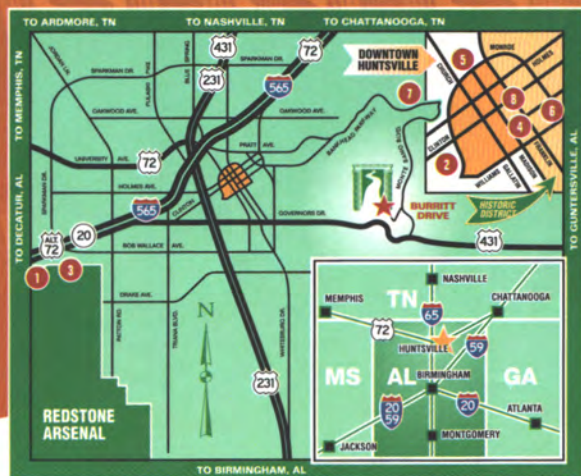
Tightly baled straw smolders but does not burn quickly, Myhrman said. As Unthank put it, "Have you ever tried burning a phone book?"

Unthank is keeping an open mind about straw-bale construction, though he thinks standards must be established for bale compaction and moisture infiltration. "Adobe has become a material for upper-income people," he said. "As regulators, we feel it's incumbent upon us not to be an impediment. But we need assurances on the life and safety issues."

Virginia Carabelli, an artist near Santa Fewho was the recipient of Unthank's permit, had to sign a disclaimer taking responsibility for her experiment.

"I wanted double adobe and I couldn't afford it," she said. "Being from Italy, where we like thick walls, the bales made sense to me right away. I like earthy materials. Every wall is artistically beautiful. There are no straight lines."

BURRITT Museum & Park Huntsville, Alabama



Take exit 340 off I-65 and proceed east on I-565 (Hwy. 20) to Huntsville. Exit 17B (Governors Drive) and continue east for 7 miles. Turn left at Monte Sano Boulevard (at the top of the mountain) and look for Museum entrance on left.

ATTRACTIONS: #1 Alabama Space & Rocket Center; #2 Museum of Art & Huntsville/Madison County Tourism Bureau (Von Braun Civic Center); #3 Huntsville Botanical Gardens; #4 Constitution Hall Village; #5 Railroad Depot Museum; #6 Weeden House Museum; #7 Monte Sano State Park; #8 Harrison Bothers Hardware.

HOURS OF OPERATION

PARK: April through September
Daily: 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.
October through March
Daily: 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

MANSION: March to Thanksgiving Day
Tues - Sun: 12:00 to 5:00 p.m.
Closed Mondays & Thanksgiving Day

OFFICE: Mon - Fri: 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Sat & Sun: 12:00 to 5:00 p.m. (March to Thanksgiving Day)
Closed Holidays

For more information call: (205) 536-2882
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BURRITT Museum & Park Huntsville, Alabama





E

xplore the rich tapestry of life among the foothills of the Cumberland mountain range and experience the natural and historic heritage of Alabama at Burritt Museum & Park. Crowning Round Top mountain, the Museum is nestled in a 167 acre woodland preserve with a commanding panoramic view of Huntsville and the Tennessee Valley.

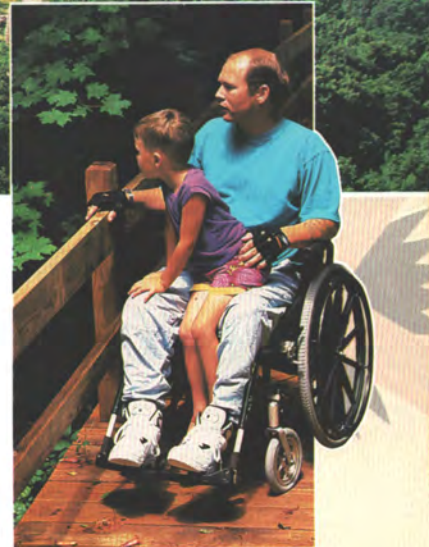
S

tep back into the lives of 19th Century southern farmers as you visit historic log structures assembled to reflect 1850 and 1900 rural life. Living history interpreters, dressed in period clothing, recreate the diversity of farm life allowing you to become involved through lively conversation, demonstration, and hands-on activities.



W

ander along the winding hiking trails which take you past mountain springs, cascading wet weather waterfalls and 19th Century coal mines. Or walk along the 1840 Big Cove Turnpike, the site of the Confederate surrender in Madison County in May, 1865. During the Spring and Fall enjoy the dazzling beauty of the wildflowers that blanket the forest floor along the Park's award winning Handicap Nature Trail.



E

nter the 1936 mansion of Dr. William Henry Burritt, physician and inventor, and see two rooms of original furnishings as well as exhibition galleries of regional and natural history, Pre-historic Indian artifacts,

rocks and minerals, 19th Century furnishings and personal artifacts, 150 years of medical and pharmaceutical equipment, items and photographs from the 1887 Monte Sano Hotel and Health Resort and the works of noted regional artists. These are but a few of the collections reflecting the rich tapestry of life in the Tennessee River Valley.



A

ttend one of our special events and experience the rare and wonderful mountaintop atmosphere that has become Burritt Museum & Park!

- WILDFLOWER WEEKEND (March)
- EARTH DAY (April)
- LIVING HISTORY WEEKENDS (June - August)
- CIVIL WAR LIVING HISTORY ENCAMPMENT (September)
- FALL SORGHUM FESTIVAL (October)
- INDIAN HERITAGE FESTIVAL (October)
- CANDLELIGHT CHRISTMAS (December)



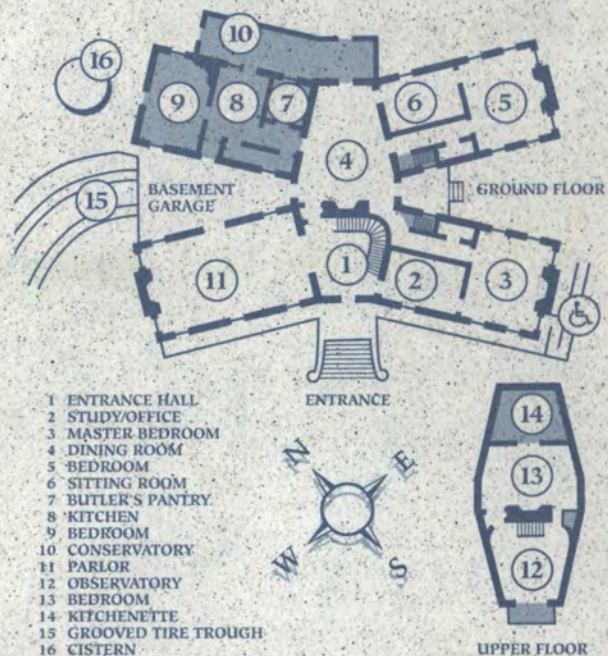
For more information or for handicap assistance, call the museum office at (205) 536-2882.



The Burritt Mansion

There are many stories as to why Dr. Burritt built an X-shaped house. In an interview in 1951, he stated the house was designed to provide every room with a beautiful view and cross-ventilation. His friends recalled that he designed the X-shaped structure to hold a cross-grid of antennae to improve radio reception. Whatever the reason, the house provides comfortable living spaces within easy access of each other. Below is Dr. Burritt's floor plan for the house.

The shaded areas are closed to the public.



At the driveway leading to the basement garage, notice the two concrete tire paths that lead to the garage entrance. Dense winter fog on the mountain made steering an automobile into the garage difficult, so Dr. Burritt designed trough shaped channels to guide the driver's side tires into the garage. Unfortunately the guides did not work properly and Dr. Burritt filled them in with concrete.

On the upper patio, near the gazebo, there is a large wooden platform. This wooden cap covers a 65 foot deep cistern used to store water for the house until 1955.

The open area behind the mansion was once a ten acre farm where Dr. Burritt grew a large quantity of fruits and vegetables. He also operated a goat dairy on the property until his death in 1955.



*TO BE INSTALLED
For special accessibility needs,
contact the Museum office: (205) 536-2882

HOURS OF OPERATION

Museum

March to Thanksgiving Day:
Tuesday through Sunday; 12:00 to 5:00 p.m.
(Closed Mondays)

Grounds

April through September: daily; 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.
October through March: daily; 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Office

Monday through Friday; 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Saturday & Sunday; 12:00 to 5:00 p.m.*
*March to Thanksgiving Day (Closed Holidays)
Phone: (205) 536-2882

Text by Melinda Herzog, Director
Design & Illustration by
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Burritt Museum & Park



GUIDE BOOK



Burritt Museum & Park
3101 Burritt Drive
Huntsville, AL 35801

For rental or group tour information,
contact the Museum office at (205) 536-2882

Burritt Museum & Park Mansion

William Henry Burritt was the only son of Dr. Amatus Burritt and Mary King Robinson. Amatus Burritt moved to Huntsville from Springfield, Illinois, in 1853, to establish a homeopathic medical practice. In 1866, Amatus married Mary K. Robinson, the daughter of a prominent Madison County plantation owner. Before Amatus Burritt's death from cancer in 1876, the couple had two children, Carrie Boardman Burritt (1867) and William Henry Burritt (1869).

Little is known about the early education of William. He graduated from Vanderbilt Medical School in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1890, and did post graduate study in Ohio and New York before returning to Huntsville in 1891. Like his father and grandfather before him, William opened a homeopathic medical practice and for a time served as the Health Officer of Madison County.

Once settled in Huntsville, he met and courted Miss Pearl Budd Johnson, whom he married on November 16, 1892, in Denver, Colorado. Their marriage ended tragically on July 3, 1898, when Pearl died at the age of 23, from complications following surgery.



Dr. Burritt at age 81 standing on the mansion's grand staircase.

William would remain a widower only briefly. In the summer of 1899 he met his second wife when he was called to treat Mrs. Josephine T. Drummond at the Monte Sano Hotel. Mrs. Drummond was a wealthy widow from St. Louis, Missouri. Though 20 years older than Dr. Burritt she fell in love and proposed to him. Married on November 28, 1899, they briefly lived in Huntsville and then moved to St. Louis, Missouri.

In St. Louis Dr. Burritt shifted his attention from medicine to the manufacture of rubber products. From 1903 to 1927 Dr. Burritt invented numerous tire patents in the United States, Canada and Europe. The Burritts remained in St. Louis until Josephine's death on March 6, 1933.

Following Josephine's death, Dr. Burritt returned to Huntsville from St. Louis and began plans for building his retirement house. Many people wondered why he selected the 167 acre site on Round Top Mountain to build his house; the site was quite isolated and the mountain roads were often impassible. Even so, he was attracted to the healthful spring waters and mountain air that had won the neighboring mountain the name "Monte Sano," or Mountain of Health.

The present house is the second one built on the site. The first house, built of wood and native stone, burned the day Dr. Burritt moved in on June 6, 1936. During its reconstruction, concrete and concrete-fiber-reinforced shingles replaced much of the wood used in the original design. The second house was completed in late 1938.

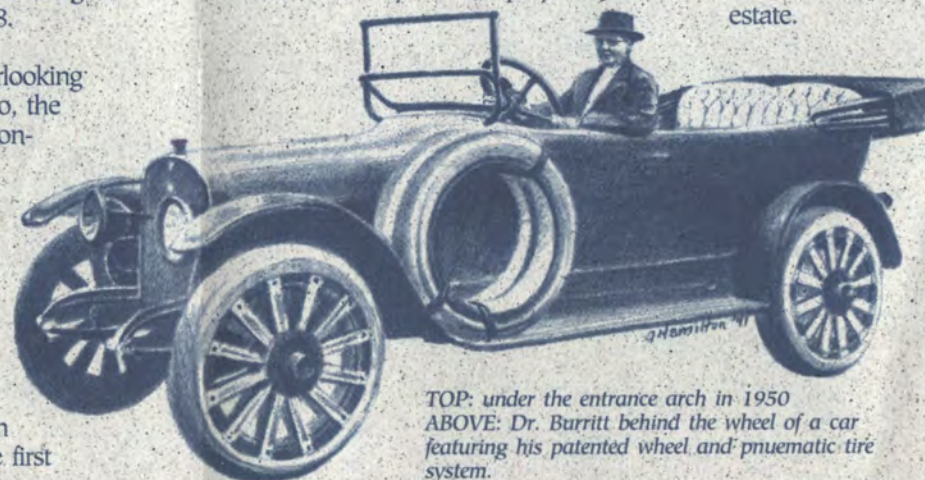
The entrance to the house faces the bluff overlooking Huntsville. Fronted by a large two-story portico, the entranceway features large doric columns of concrete which were cast by hand on site. The ornamentation of the house combines many different architectural styles including classical revival, federal and art deco. Unique to both houses was the use of 2200 bales of wheat straw as insulation.

It was during the reconstruction of his house that he married Alta Jacks, on May 20, 1937. They returned from their honeymoon to live in the top three rooms of the mansion, while the first



floor was completed. Their marriage was brief, ending in divorce in the 1940's. Alone, Dr. Burritt would live in the mansion with the assistance of a housekeeper and a grounds caretaker until his death in 1955 at the age of 86.

Having no heirs from his three marriages, he left the mansion and the surrounding 167 acres to the City of Huntsville to become the city's first museum. Today the mansion houses exhibits pertaining to regional and natural history, and displays objects from the Burritt estate.



TOP: under the entrance arch in 1950
 ABOVE: Dr. Burritt behind the wheel of a car featuring his patented wheel and pneumatic tire system.

1st



Chim. too short.
No corbels at
top.

Chim.
shoulders
not correct

→ N

Porch roof
too flat.

Porch too
deep. Should
be 8' ± max.
Front - back



End of 1900's log was c. 1930 Sharp Cabin
originally 13 miles N. of Mt. Airy for community in
N.W. Land New York Co., built by
Samuel Gray in Adirondack Park
Pittsburg, N.Y., moved c. 1901 by Mrs
M. W. Wright to 15 mi. NE of Florence on Sandhills Hwy.



Skinned
posts not
correct
("rustic")

Processor
burnt - out
edges of all
prints
(regs = ok)

PN



Log Life
(1934-1935)
Landscape Co

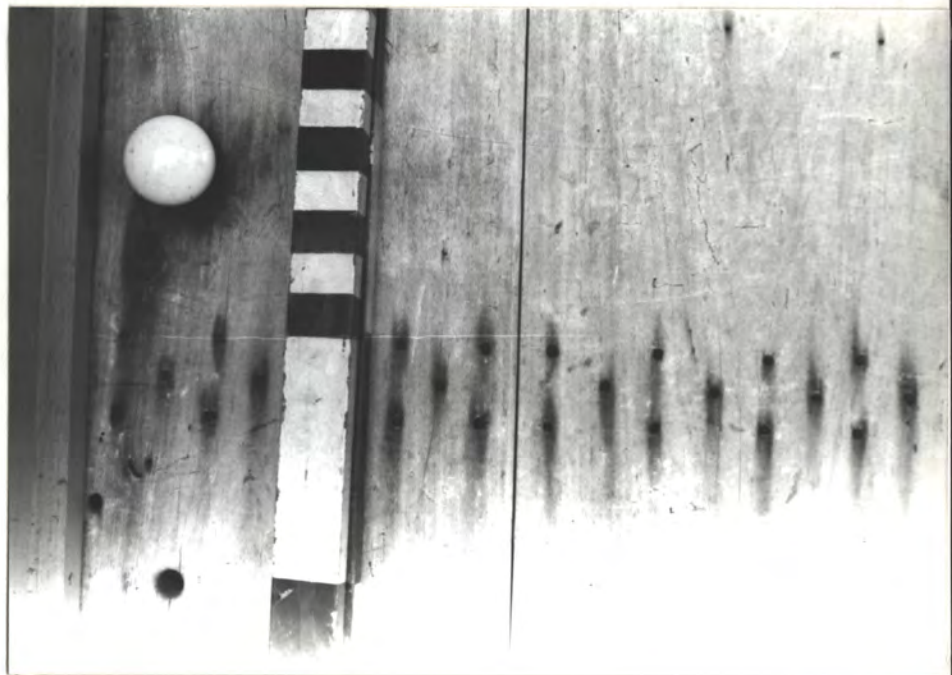


NA



North door
(orig. door,
vic. look)

Note nail
pattern
on battens



7

2

7
A.M.



2
2



2
2

Orig. mounted.
Compare w/
"before"
photos

FL. 1

2
2

2
2



2

507

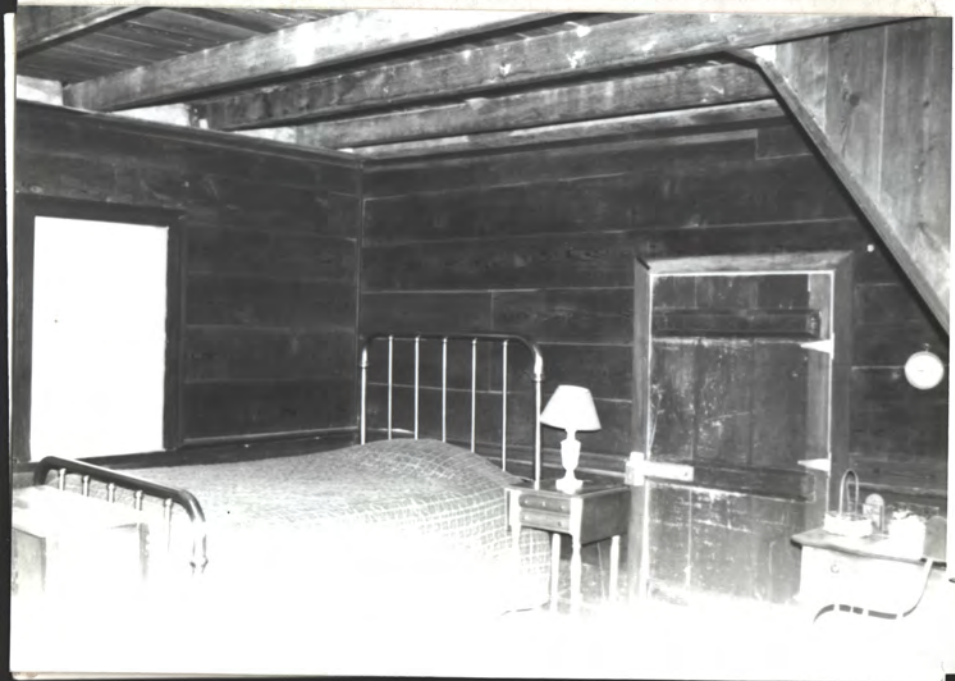


Z
↓

FL. 1



Z
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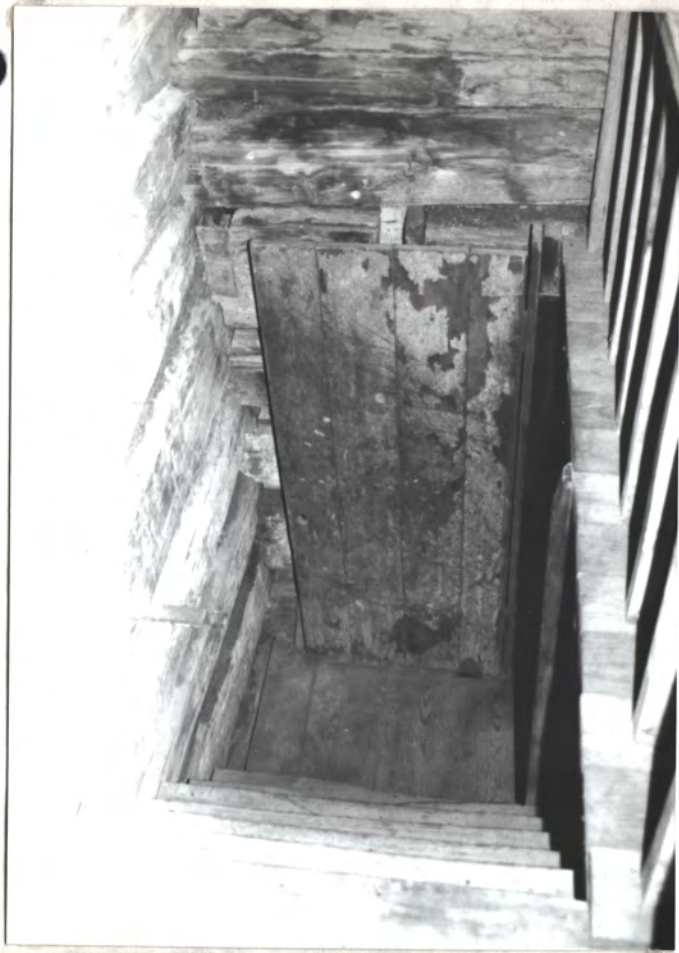
modern hinges
on original door

PL. 1



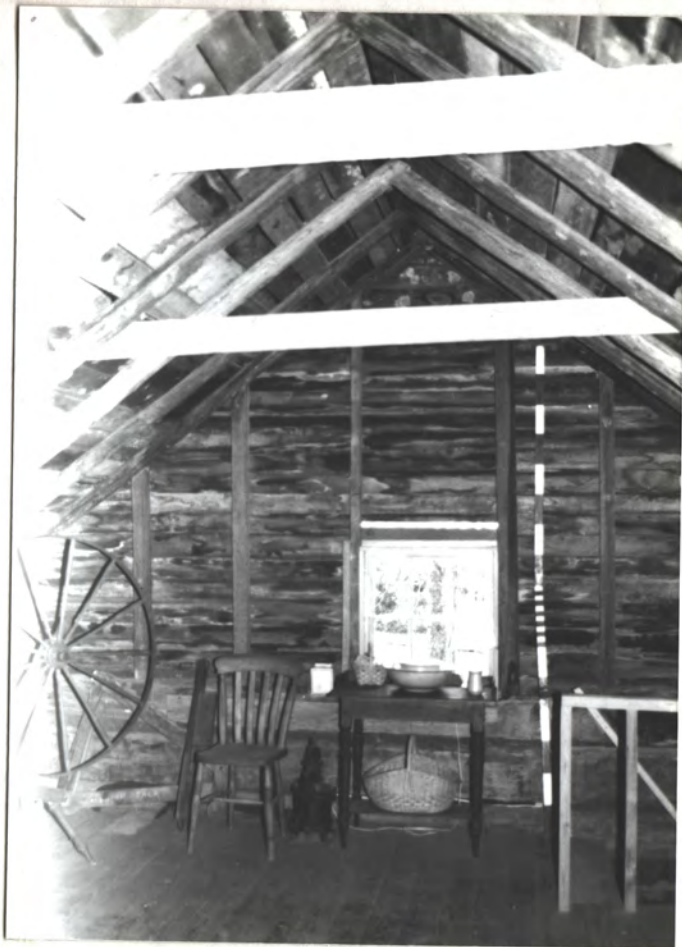
N. Door (orig.)
Compare w/ next photo on p. 2
Note nail patterns
(there are many patterns for
bed.-d.-batten doors)

796



↑

FL. 2
(LOFT)



← Paint is
Not correct
(is modern
2x strokes)

←

← mod. plywood over
original deck-boards
& rafters

↑



BOOK 64, BURRIT MUSEUM, 2
~~~~~

HARVIE P. JONES - -  
~~~~~

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