THE WILLSON-WALKER HOUSE:
A PROVINCIAL NEOCLASSICAL REVIVAL BUILDING

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INTRODUCTION

The following study of the Willson-Walker House of Lexington, Virginia, will examine the building through several avenues of investigation and documentation. Records located in the Rockbridge County Courthouse were used in establishing the date of construction, chain of title, and probate inventory of the first owner. Pertinent excerpts from these documents are found in Appendices A, B, and C. Information gathered from books, magazine articles, local newspapers and personal interviews afford a brief introduction to some of those who lived in the Willson-Walker House.

These and other sources were most important in allowing the architectural description of the structure to be expanded to include a conjectural reconstruction of the 1820 home of William Willson. Measured drawings of the current floor plans of the first and second floors were made as well as possible original floor plans. These are found in Appendix D.

The Neoclassical Revival temple form of this house in many ways reflects the thoughts and feelings, the spirit, of not only early provincial Lexington but early 19th C. America as well. An increasingly literate and patriotic populace was forming whose,

> enthusiastic citizens, often harried and perplexed by the thronging problems that surrounded the birth of a new nation, more and more turned back to ancient Rome (the mother of republics as of empires) and to ancient Greece (the country whose greatness came through her democratic city states) for inspiration and for comfort. Those ancient peoples had flowered and prospered; so should America. The classic world thus be-

> came, first, an inspiration; second, a refuge; third, a sort of marvelous vision of a Golden Age.[1]

As will be discussed later, William Willson was apparently a well read man and a man of high standing in the community. No records have been found which document exactly why he chose this new, highly nationalistic style of architecture for his residence. One can only surmise that Willson was cognizant of the efforts of leaders such as Thomas Jefferson who actively promoted the Roman temple as a new architectural form symbolically fit for the new American republic. The rather provincial treatment given some of the classical forms and details, especially when compared with Jefferson's Monticello and the pavillions of the University of Virginia, is only to be expected given Lexington's remoteness and unfamiliarity with classical forms.

Architectural pattern-books played an important role in the design and execution of many late 18th and 19th C. homes and manor houses. Examples are presented from various pattern-books which may have been in Lexington prior to 1820 and available to either Willson or to professional builders. John Jordan and Samuel Darst were two such men who had formed a partnership in 1815. Jordan's own home, built in 1818, was certainly one of the first Neoclassical Revival structures west of the Blue Ridge and may well have provided a prototype for the Willson-Walker House. This will be discussed more fully in the third section of this study.

A fourth and final look at the house will deal not with its

past, but rather with the immediate present and near future. The Willson-Walker House is an important and vital element of the Historic District of downtown Lexington. The character and integrity of the streetscape surrounding the house has been steadily improving for several years. The role the Willson-Walker House is to play in furthering this revitalization should be of no little concern. The structure is nearing a critical junction. No action will produce a slow but ever accelerating decline in the structural fabric of the building; stabilization will produce just that, the static non-involvement of a potentially dynamic building; or a program of restoration, however slow and halting at first, could be started. It lies within the realm of possibility that a faithful restoration undertaken with care and imagination could be fiscally responsible, commercially successful, and would recreate one of Lexington's finer buildings.

HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION

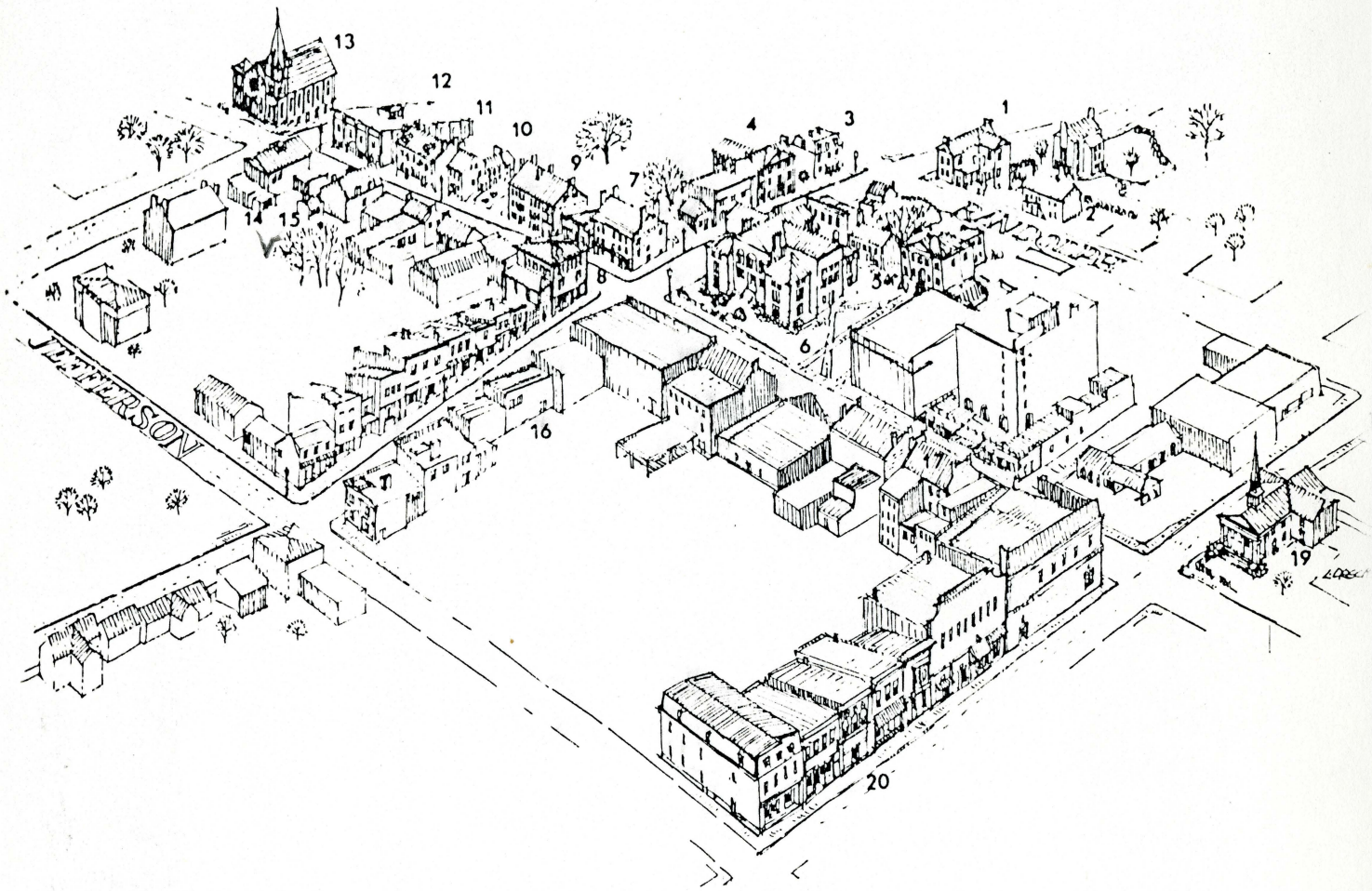
The Willson-Walker House (Figs. 1 & 2), situated at 30 North Main Street, Lexington, Virginia, (location #15 of Plate 1) was built in 1820 by William Willson. The building stands on a portion of lot #18 of the original town grid as it was surveyed by James McDowell at the founding of Lexington in 1778. Plate 2 shows the plat as it was drawn in 1787.

A title search was carried back to the purchase of a house and lot by William Willson from Dr. Samuel L. Campbell. The deed of March 13, 1815, DB J-212, states that William Willson was at that time residing on the property. Willson, also known as Capt. Willson, was a prominent merchant of Lexington and in 1803 had been elected treasurer of nearby Washington College, a position he held until his death in 1840.[2] Tax records indicate little activity on the property until 1820 when a structure valued at $1450 was erected. This structure would have been what is now the Willson-Walker House. Capt. Willson was also postmaster of Lexington during the early 19th C. and was said to have "kept his office in a small brick building where J. McDadair's dwelling now is."[3] This building may be located on an 1889 plat (Plate 3) which accompanied a deed found in DB 53-173; and also on an 1845 plat (Plate 4) in which it is described as simply the "Back Brick House". One might conject that this building was the earlier house on the lot; that when Willson moved into his new home of 1820 he turned this smaller house into a post office; and after his death in 1840, his wife

Fig. 1
Front Facade

Fig. 2
Front Facade

Historic Lexington



1. Sloan House (1844–45) and Campbell House (1844–45)
2. The Castle (c. 1790)
3. Davidson-Tucker House (1888)
4. Stonewall Jackson House (1801)
5. County Jail (1839–41) and adjoining buildings
6. County Courthouse (1897)
7. Dold Building (1820, 1826)
8. Alexander-Withrow Building (c. 1789)
9. Central Hotel (1809–57)
10. Jacob M. Ruff House (c. 1829)
11. John Ruff House (1811)
12. Sheridan Livery Stable (1887)
13. First Baptist Church (1896)
14. Troubadour Theatre (1853)
15. Willson-Walker House (1820)
16. Washington Street Row (1891)
17. Bear Building (c. 1828)
18. Brown House (c. 1840s)
19. Lexington Presbyterian Church (184
20. Nelson Street Row (late 1800s)

PLATE 1
– Map of Historic Downtown Lexington –

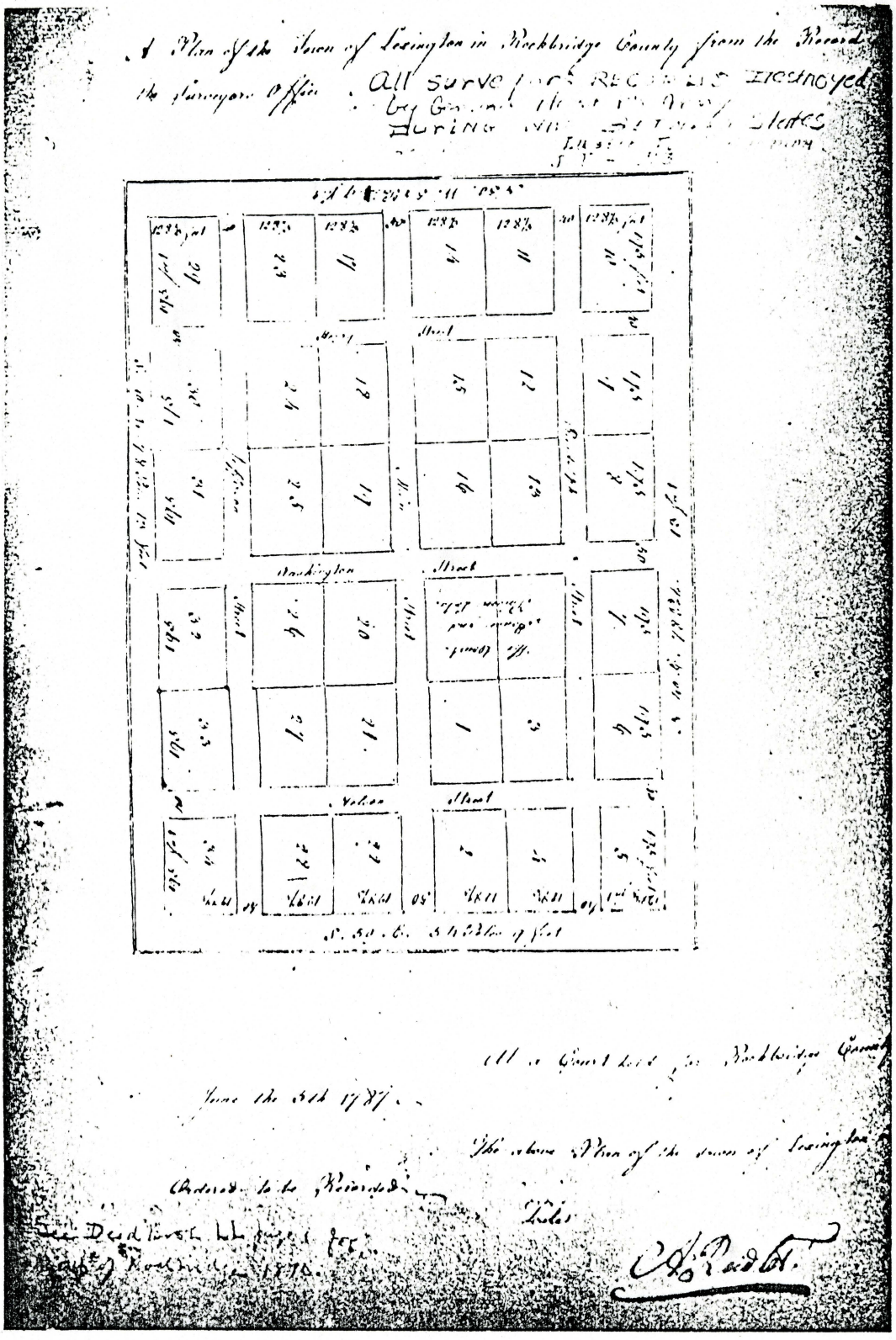
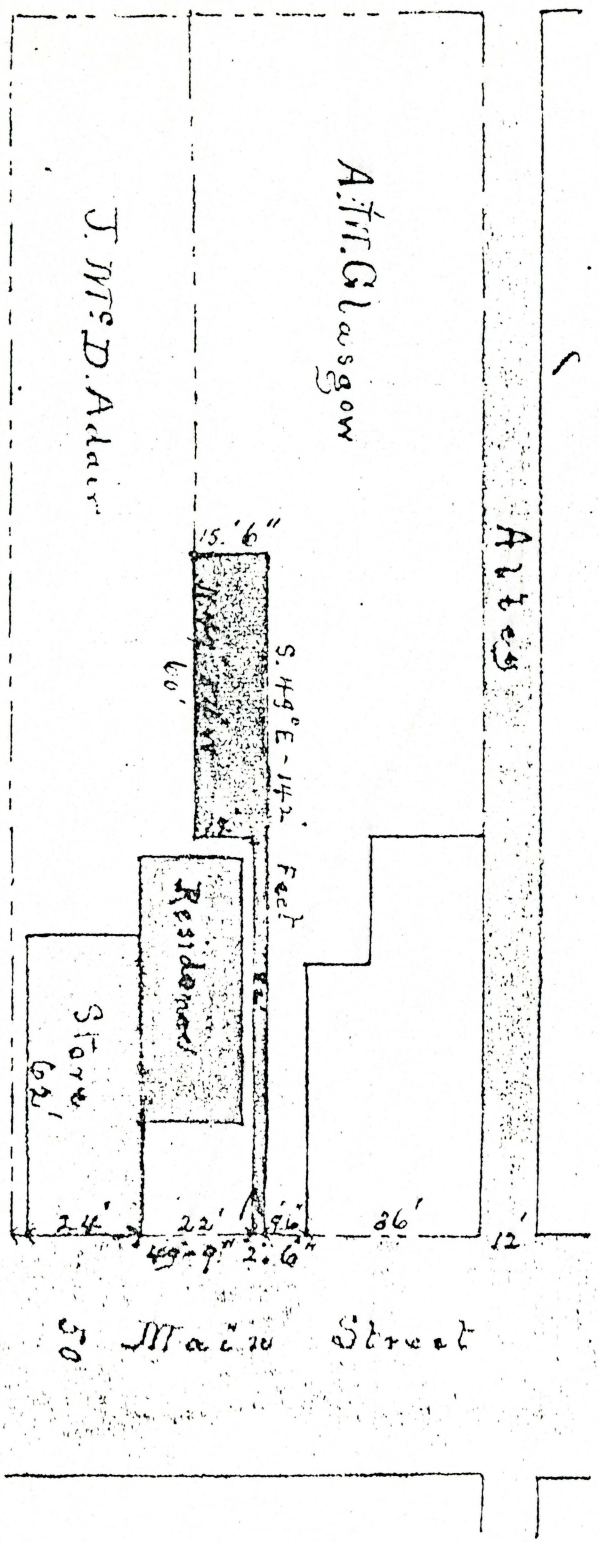


PLATE 2

Plat of Lexington, 1787



Plat
of
Part of a Lot
in
LEXINGTON
Sold by
A. M. Glasgow
to
J. Mc D. Adair

W. J. Hurlbut
March - 4 - 188[illegible]

PLATE 3

Plat of Glasgow House, 1889

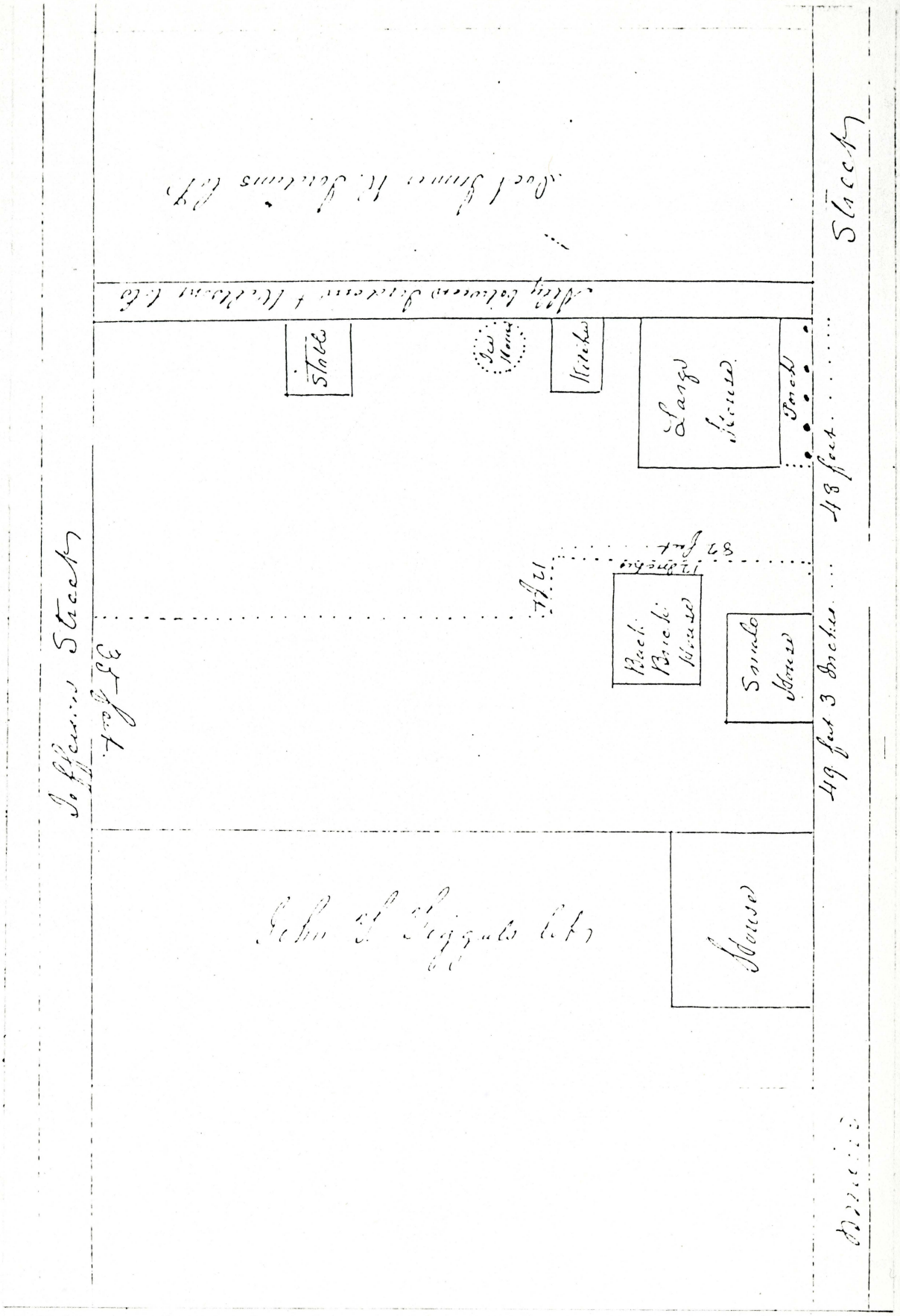


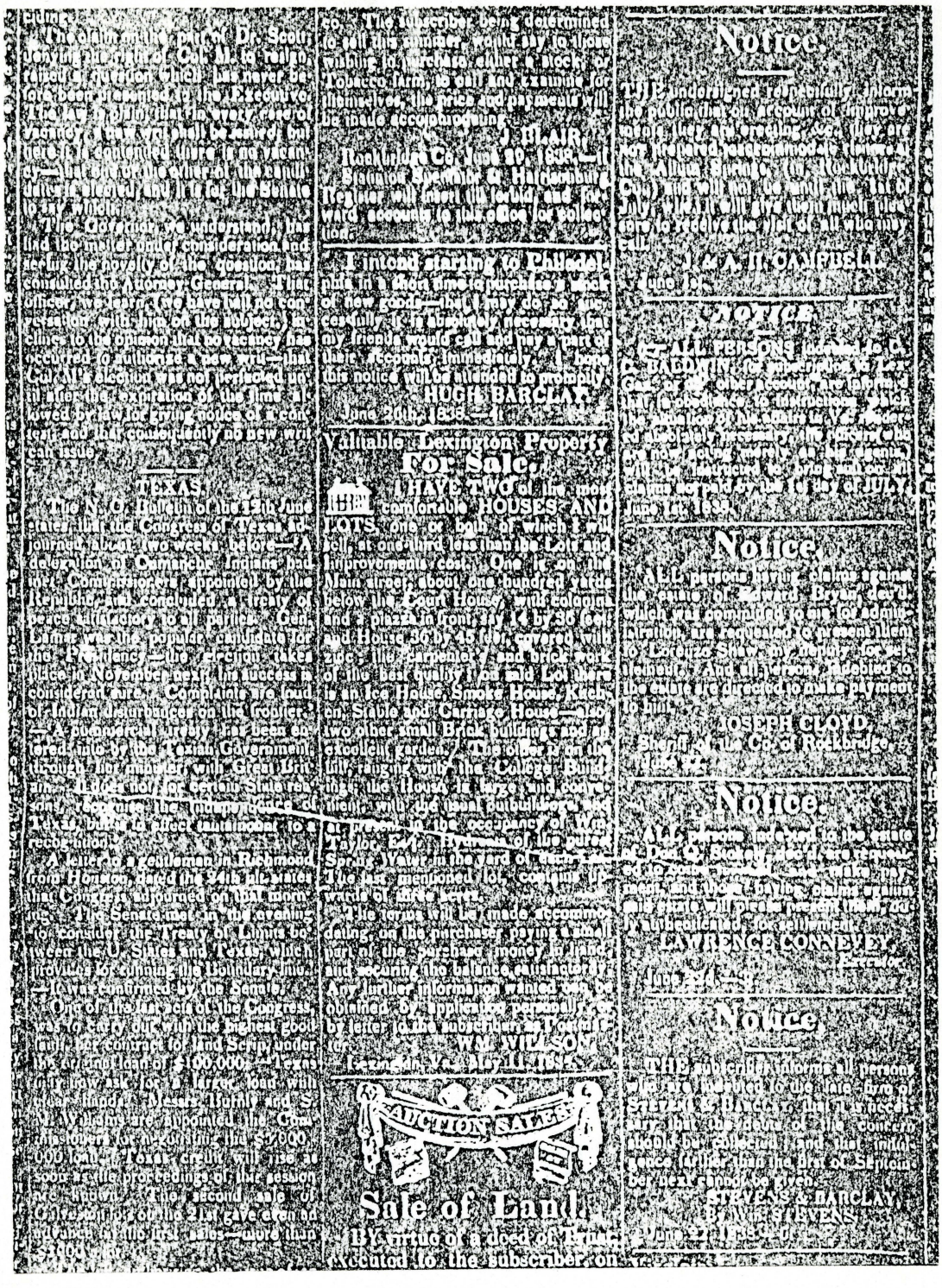
PLATE 4

— Plat of William Willson's —
Estate, 1845

bought it from the estate and turned it back into a residence. The other brick building referred to as "Smalo" (sic.) in the 1845 plat and as "Store" in the 1889 plat was standing by at least 1838 when in a classified advertisement, Willson offers a house "with columns and a piazza in front, say 14 by 16 feet; and House 36 by 45 feet, covered with zinc; the carpenter's and brick work of the best quality; on said lot there is an Ice House, Smoke House, Kitchen, Stable and Carriage House --- also, two other small Brick buildings and an excellent garden". (Plate 5)

William Willson died in 1840 and the probate inventory taken, WB 9-52, gives the indication that Capt. Willson was indeed a man of means. His estate became entangled in a chancery cause until a public auction was ordered April 15, 1845. At that time Willson's widow, Susan, bought the two smaller brick houses and the lot was divided. The "mansion house and lot"[4] was not sold because of insufficient bidding. A second auction was held in 1847 and the property sold to James G. Paxton. Paxton had been a member of the Board of Visitors of V.M.I., 1845-1846, and went on to be a member of both the Virginia House and Senate before entering the Confederate Army as a Major.

The property passed to Calvin McCorkle in 1863, Alexander Glasgow in 1868, J.S. LaRowe in 1889, L.D. Hamric in 1906, and finally Harry L. Walker in 1911. Shortly after his purchase, Walker made extensive renovations to the exterior facade and ground floor to convert the building from a residence to a meat market and grocery. Walker sold the rear portion of the lot in



Notice

Valuable Lexington Property
For Sale,

Sale of Land

PLATE 5
Advertisement of Willson-
Walker House, 1838

1919 and the property assumed the boundries it still possesses. Upon Walker's death in 1942, the building was willed to his daughter Mrs. C.M. Wood. Mrs. Wood made further modifications in 1960 and converted the second story into apartments. The Willson-Walker House remains in Mrs. Wood's possession and continues to house a business, the White Column Inn Restaurant, on the first floor with apartment rentals on the second floor.

Appendix A contains the chain of title from 1815 to 1942. Also included are tax records of the property from 1813 to 1828, (Appendix B) and a partial listing of the 1840 probate inventory of the estate of Capt. William Willson. (Appendix C)

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The Willson-Walker House (Figs. 1 & 2) is an excellent example of an early Neoclassical Revival domestic design, which still retains many earlier Federal motifs. The structure is basically a side-passage, two-thirds four-over-four rectangle oriented gable-end toward the street. The front facade is composed of a moderately pitched, pedimented, frame gable extending ten feet from the brick wall with a delicate elliptical pediment window centered in a flush, vertical board, wooden tympanum. The cornice is carried on a simple cushion frieze supported by four elongated giant Tuscan orders of plastered brick resting on raised masonry pedestals.

The front fenestration of the second story (Fig. 3) consists of three bays; a central six-over-six double-hung-sash window with delicate muntins and thin rail, and two doors. A heavy bolection molding forms the exterior surround on this, and all other, original windows of the building. All originial window sills are simple rectangular wooden members with a slight chamfer on the leading edge and pegged at each end to the window frame. Flanking this central window are two doors; the top two-thirds consisting of twelve lights which duplicate the central window, and the lower third having a wide lock rail and bottom rail with two square raised panels between. Both door jambs have a fine attenuated Federal-style paneling which spans the width of the brick wall. The doors, hung on the inner edge of the jamb, give access to a full width wooden-floored porch supported by

Fig. 3
2nd Story Front Fenestration

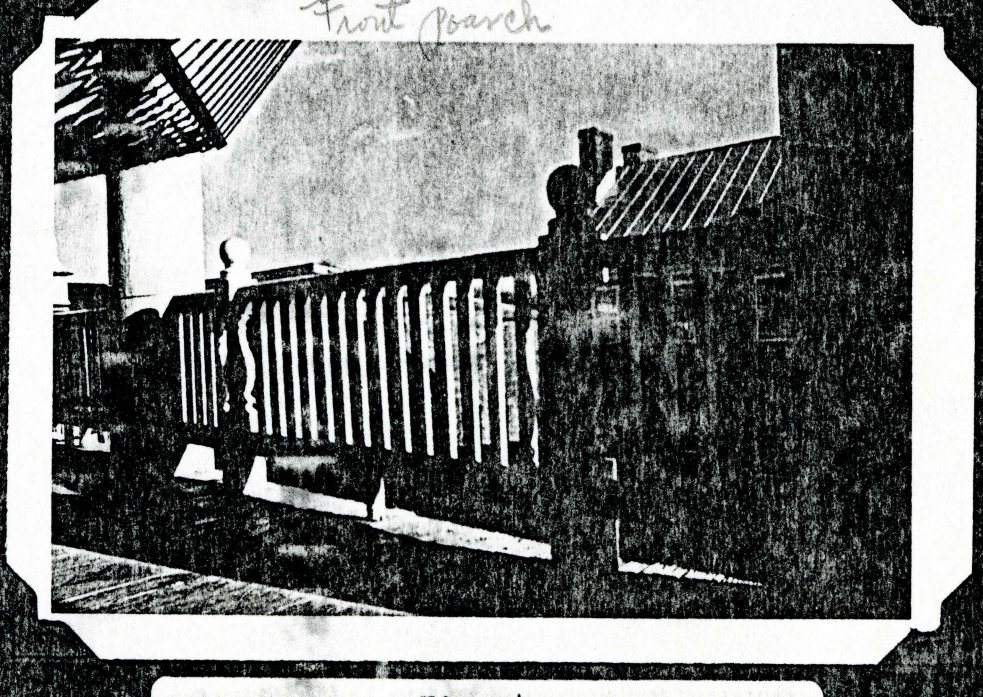


Fig. 4
Newels of Upper Balustrade

the four Tuscan columns. The porch has a plastered shallow tray ceiling, and is enclosed by a balustrade with a rounded handrail supported on plain rectangular balusters. Emphasis is given to the central span by two symmetrically placed turned newels (Fig. 4). The capitals of the orders (Fig. 5) have an abacus set back from the plane of the narrow architrave with a simple provincial Tuscan echinus and necking. The porch and wall facade appear to be original and in good condition.

The first story front wall facade is much altered from the original (First Floor Plan and First Floor Plan, Restored; Appendix D). There are now three bays consisting of two entrances and two windows (Fig. 1). The original entrance bay had, most likely, a paneled door flanked by two attenuated vernacular adaptations of the Corinthian order. Finely fluted, the shafts rest on moderately correct bases, which in turn sit on an awkward blocky plinth (Fig. 6). The shafts terminate at the top with a necking and carved leaves (Fig. 7) which carry a cornice. The cornice extends out from the capitals and then drops back into the wall to frame the doorway (Fig. 8). Above the cornice is a fanlight (Fig. 8) which incorporates a delicate heart motif. Surrounding the orders and fanlight is a round wooden arch with paneled soffit (Fig. 8), and a scotia cross-section with the inside edge articulated by a carved rope molding (Fig. 6). Above the wooden arch is a brick relieving arch. Also contained in the doorway is a transom, now concealed by an exhaust fan (Fig.8). The space this transom occupies was created by a lowering of the

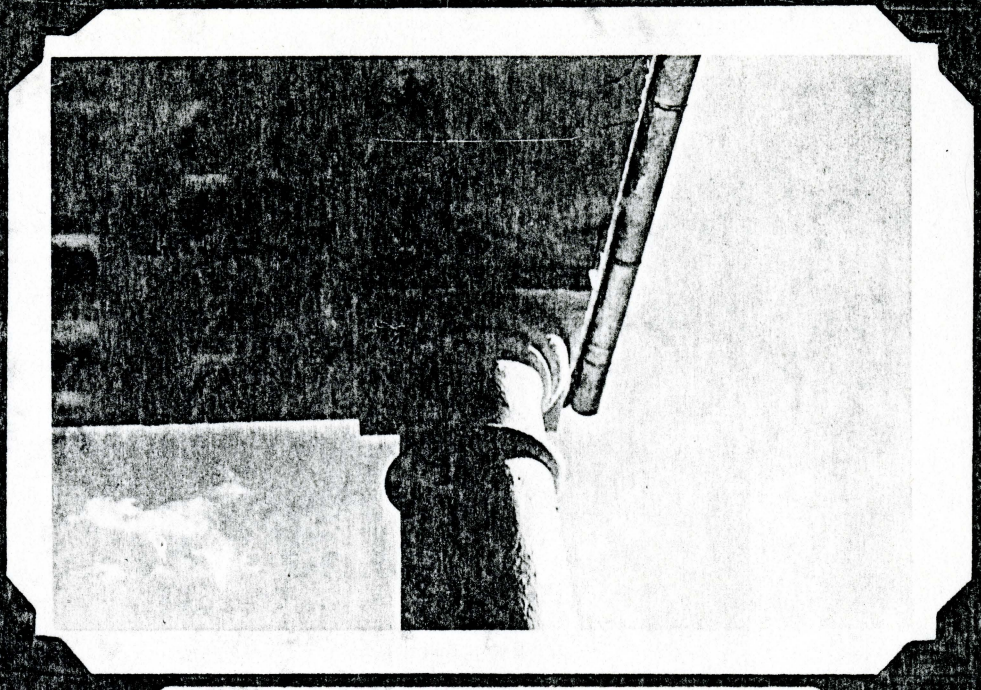


Fig. 5
Capital of Tuscan Order

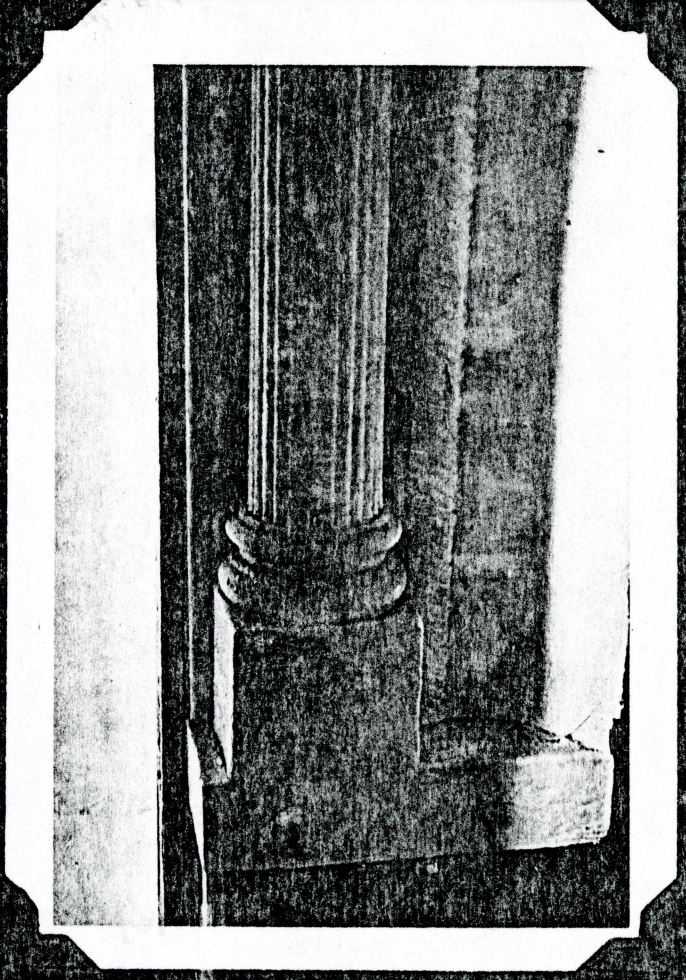


Fig. 6
Base of Corinthian Order

Fig. 7
Capital of Corinthian Order

Fig. 8
Fanlight Over Front Door

door during the 1911 renovation. This lowering also accounts for the awkward termination of the Corinthian orders (Fig. 1).

The current owner, Mrs. C.W. Wood, has a photograph taken in 1911 just prior to the renovation. It shows the door in its proper place, immediately beneath the cornice. The plinthes of the Corinthian orders rest upon what remains of the old door sill. The door opened upon a wooden porch which extended out the same distance as the one above and tied into the pedestals so that the top of the porch floor was about six inches below the columns' base (Fig. 9). A balustrade extended around the porch and was identical to the upper one, save that the turned newels were positioned to the south end of the porch to frame a side entry. Brick infill set back several inches spanned between the pedestals. By leaving a series of voids, several diamond-shaped air vents were incorporated in the first and third spans. Both this infill and the side entry onto the porch were of a mid-19th C. origin.

The extreme height of the porch from the level of the sidewalk was a result of the lowering of the street, and consequentially the sidewalk, by the Town of Lexington in the early 1850's. This was done in order to ease the transport of goods from the canal docks of near-by North River to mid-town. Prior to this time, entrance to the porch would doubtlessly have been on axis with the front door and passage. After the lowering, entry was gained by means of steps to the south end of the porch, and bricks were used to fill between the now ex-

Fig. 9
Base & Pedestal of Tuscan Order

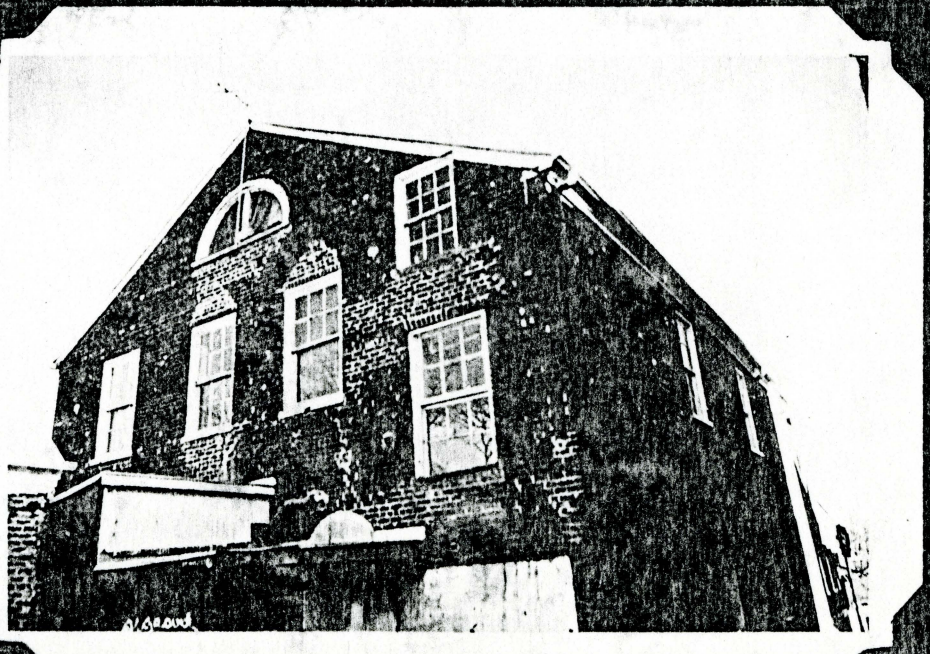


Fig. 10
Rear (W) and Side (S) Facades

posed foundations of the columns.

Again from the photograph, one may see that the front middle and north bays were composed of windows identical to, and centered beneath, the upper central window and north door. Ghosts of the two jack arches are still visible. These windows, as were all other windows visible in the photograph, were flanked by louvered blinds.

In 1911, the balustrade and porch were removed and a new porch level, directly accessible to the sidewalk, was formed of poured concrete. The main door was lowered and a one-over-one double-hung-sash window placed immediately to the south of the wooden arch. To the north of the old doorway the porch floor was dropped a step. The middle window was removed and a double door beneath a glass transom installed. The individual doors are of a simple early 20th C. commercial style with one long rectangular light over a single wooden panel. The northern window was removed and a one-over-one double-hung-sash (now essentially fixed) display window installed.

The south wall fenestration (Fig. 10) consists of three windows and a doorway. The two upper windows are identical to the middle front window, six-over-six double-hung-sash. These were probably placed so as to illuminate one upstairs chamber and a large upstairs passage (Second Floor Plan, Restored; Appendix D). A first story window is centered beneath the southeast upper window and although covered, is undoubtly similar to the others. Ornate cast-iron pintels still remain in the

Fig. 11
Rear (W) Facade

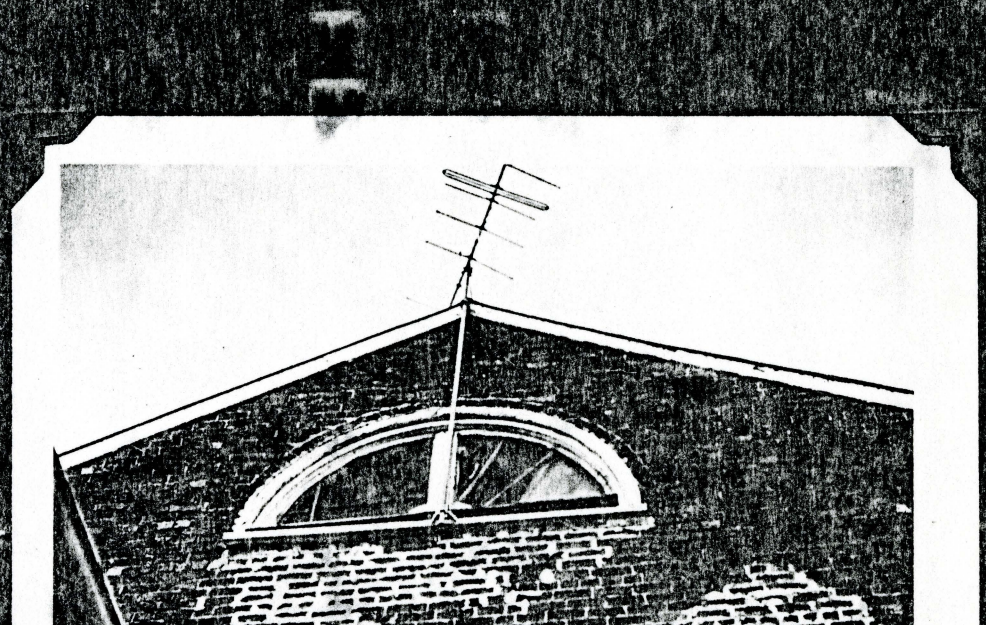


Fig. 12
Roman Bath Window of W Facade

bolection surrounds of these windows. Near ground level and off-center of these windows is the remains of a jack arch and wooden lintel -- the top of a crawl space ventilator since covered over with earth. Another such ghost in a similar position is found on the north wall. The doorway is placed in such a fashion that it is unlikely it was ever a window opening and certainly not an original door opening. Therefore, it is assumed that this doorway dates from no earlier than 1911 when access to the upper quarters needed to be separate from the commercial space of the first floor.

The rear, or west, wall (Fig. 11) contains the most vernacular treatment of the original wall fenestrations. At present it displays a hodge-podge of forms and functions. A typical six-over-six double-hung-sash window to the far south and midway up the wall lights the first stair landing. The third stair landing has a smaller six-over-six window. Although smaller and off-center to the interior stair landing, it was still found necessary to notch into the tapered rake board. This awkward bit of carpentry is expressed on the interior by having the window surround of this same corner disappear ten inches into the sloped stair landing ceiling. The top of this window is level with the bottom of the Roman bath window, but otherwise neither stair well window is oriented to any other feature of the wall.

The Roman bath window (Fig. 12), centered in the brick gable, is composed of two fan-shaped windows hinged to a center

mullion (Fig. 13). By using this mullion as a centerline, one finds symmetry and balance to the north side of the wall; and asymmetry, but perhaps a dynamic balance, to the south side. To the north are two typical six-over-six windows, with two others centered directly beneath on the first story, but hidden by later additions and walls. These lower windows differ by having fine paneled jambs (Fig. 14), which angle inward slightly toward the sash. To the south of the central mullion is another second story window (Fig. 11) which although at the same level as the others, is more closely set than the first two. The distance between this third window and the middle, or second, window is equal to the space between the third window and the first stair landing window. The north frame of the third window falls directly beneath the southmost point of the Roman bath window frame, and beneath the south frame of the third window was centered the rear door. The rear doorway had an arched frame and a fanlight. The available evidence for this is a rounded piece of exterior flashing (Fig. 15), and the memory of Mrs. C.M. Wood. The door was hinged on the outer surface of the wall and had paneled jambs which still exist (Fig. 16). At one time, after 1845 (Plate 4) and prior to 1889 (Plate 3), this doorway may have led to a back porch which extended from the back of the house to approximately the southeast corner of a still detached kitchen. Such an arrangement appears on Grey's New Map of Lexington published in 1877 (Plate 7); a still vacant flashing joint exists at what would have been a proper porch roof height;

Fig. 13
Interior of Roman Bath Window

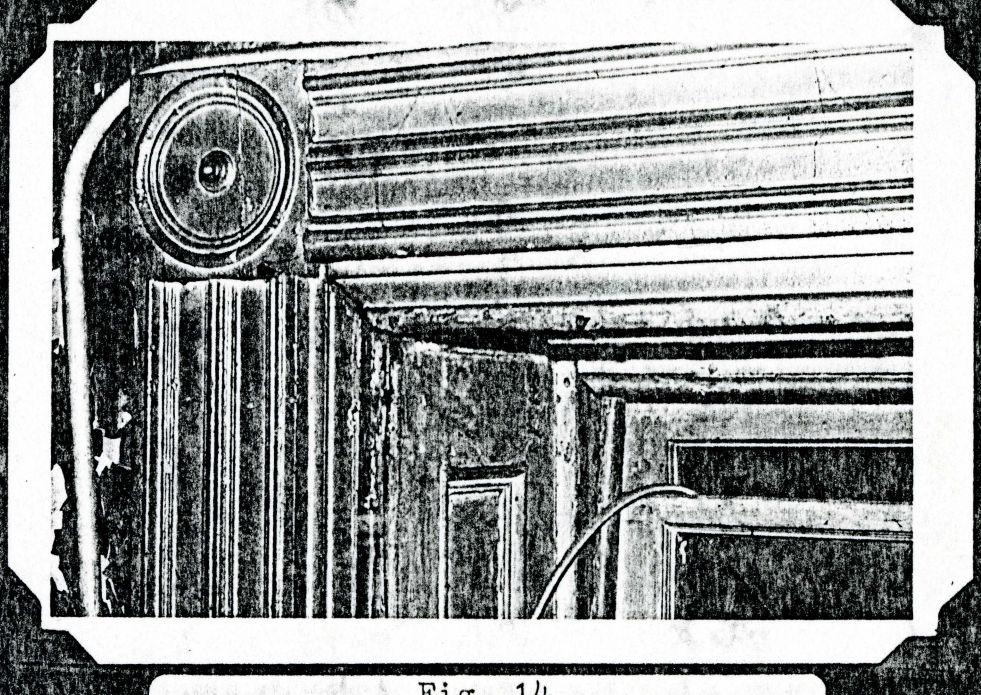


Fig. 14
Architrave, Corner Block, & Jamb of 1st Story Window

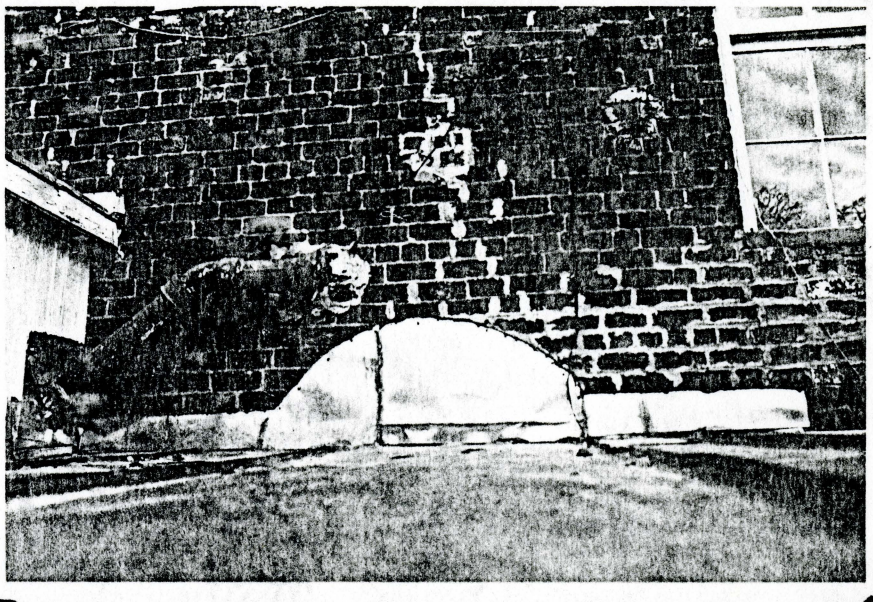


Fig. 15
Rear (W) Doorway Arch

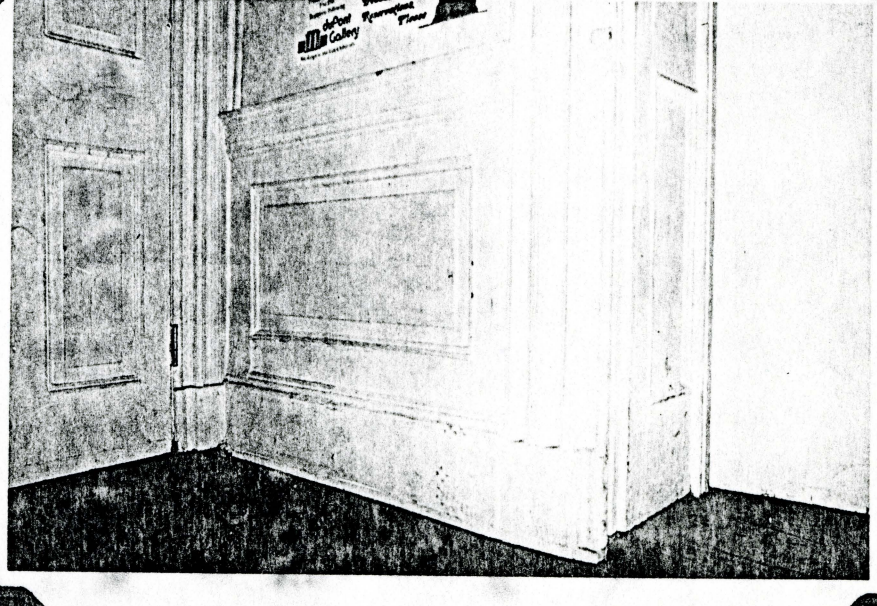


Fig. 16
First Story Interior

PLATE 7

– Map of Lexington, 1877 –

and the wall beneath this joint has a fresher appearance as though it had been sheltered for a period of time.

A single story hyphen (Figs. 11 & 17) now connects the rear wall of the house and east wall of the kitchen. It may have been built as early as 1889, since the plat of Plate 5 does not show a detached building, but simply one unit. At any rate, the hyphen is of two separate parts, the southern frame half providing a powder room and bathroom for the restaurant; and an earlier, brick northern part providing access to the kitchen through an exterior door.

The kitchen is a single pile, one-over-one plan, on axis with the main house, having a large external chimney at the western end and a steeply pitched gable roof (Figs. 17 & 18). Windows were smaller and originally six-over-nine double-hung-sash. There were two such windows on the south wall; two small four light casement windows on the west gable end; one central window on the north wall which originally matched those of the south wall, but has since been modified with a smaller bottom sash; and one central upper window in the east gable-end. An off-center doorway was in the lower east wall and a quarter-turn-with-winders stairway gave access to the upstairs. The small upstairs fireplace remains intact, but the downstairs cooking fireplace is totally covered. Save for a chair-rail at window sill height, little of the original flooring or interior remains. Molded brick forms the cornice beneath a metal roof (Fig. 19).

Fig. 17
House, Hyphen and Kitchen

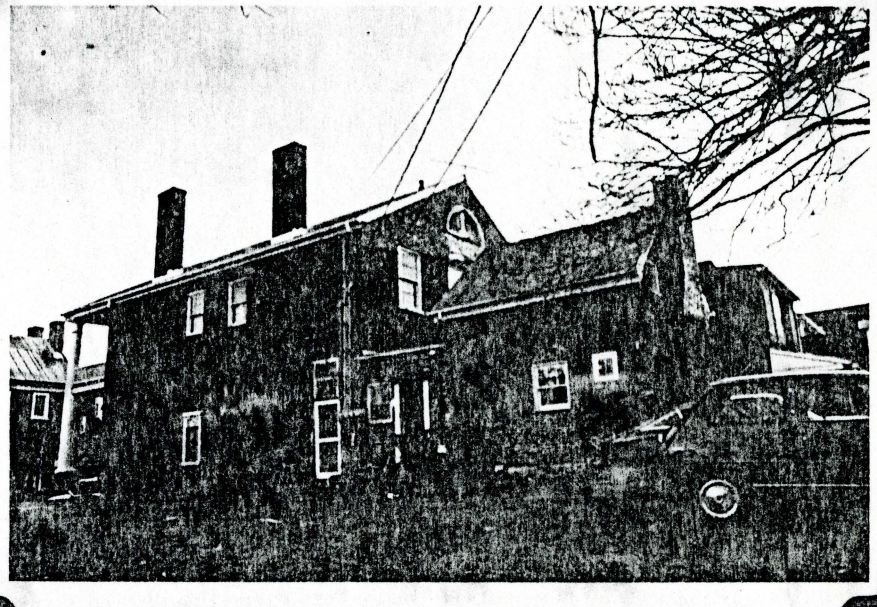


Fig. 18
N Facade of House & Kitchen

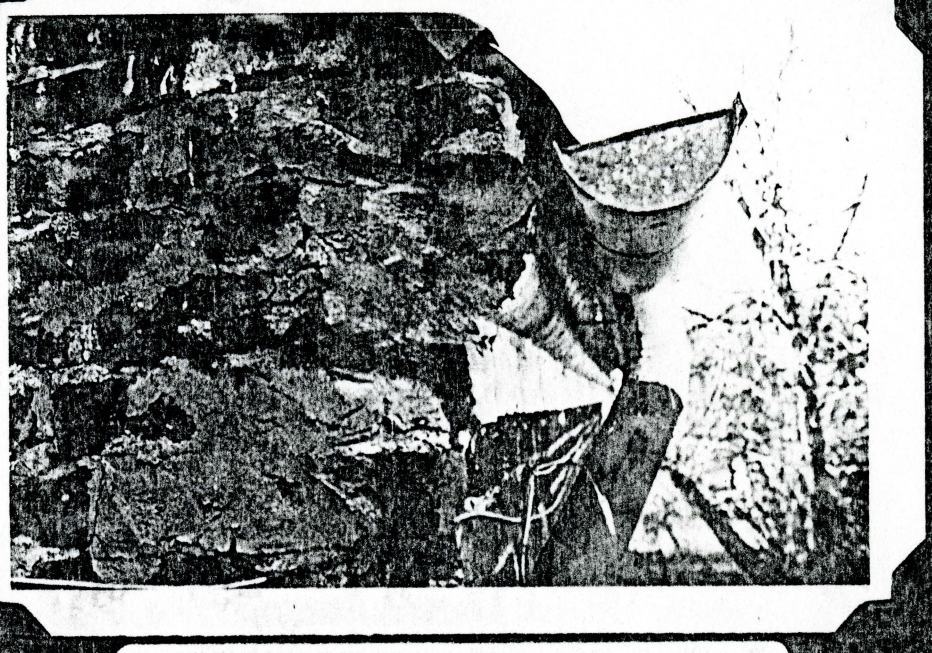


Fig. 19
Molded Brick Cornice

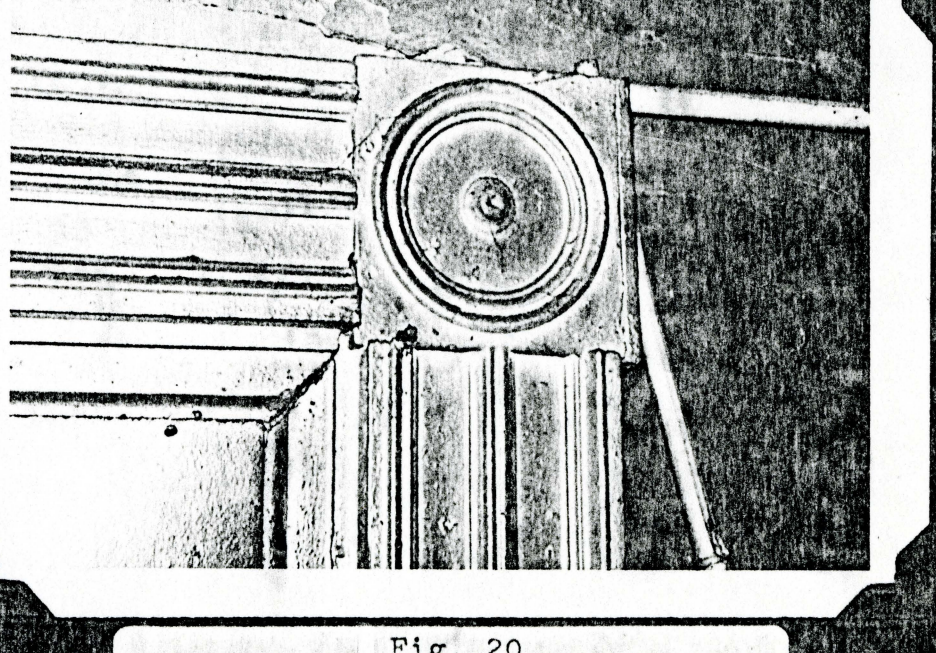


Fig. 20
Corner Block, 1st Story Window

The north wall of the main house (Fig. 18) contains three windows which probably conformed with the other windows originally but which are now considerably smaller. The upper windows, six-over-six double-hung-sash, are placed closely together on both sides of what is thought to be an original upstairs wall. They would thus illuminate the interior corner of each chamber on that side of the house (Second Floor Plan, Restored; Appendix D). One corresponding window appears on the first story and is a single light, casement window of an obviously later date, probably 1911. There has been extensive brickwork about all three windows and also about the doorway of the north wall. There may have been an original window situated there in the same relative position to the dining room fireplace as the other window to the hall fireplace. This doorway could have been installed after the 1851 street lowering to provide easier ground-level access; or whenever the north end of the hyphen was added to provide better access to the kitchen.

Few details remain intact of the first floor interior (First Floor Plan and First Floor Plan, Restored; Appendix D). The front half of the passage wall and hall doorway have been removed. All flooring and floor structural systems have been removed and the floor lowered. The wall between the dining room and hall has been replaced by a non-structural walk-in cooler wall. The ceilings have all been lowered, thus covering the front and rear fanlights. The south wall window has been covered over and salvage floor boards used to close off the

stairway except to an outside entrance. What had been the dining room has been sub-divided into restroom, kitchen, and walk-in cooler. The dining room windows and fireplace have been walled over. Only in the bathroom and the crawl space above the kitchen may one see the quality of the fluted window architrave with its bulls-eye corner blocks and paneled jambs (Figs. 14 & 20). The architraves of both front and back doors are somewhat different. Here a stylistic Greek order is created with block plinth, fluted shaft, bulls-eye capital and molding cornice (Figs. 16, 21, & 22). Original raised paneling with chair-rail may be seen near the front door (Fig. 22). An original panel door, two small panels over two-over-two larger panels, still gives access to a closet beneath the stairs. A short section of paneling still connects this door to the rear door (Fig. 16).

The original hall is now the main lobby of the White Column Inn Restaurant (Fig. 23). A rubble stone foundation beneath the small 19th C. fireplace gives an example of the extent to which the floor was lowered (Fig. 24). Mrs. C.M. Wood recalls that prior to the 1911 renovation, both the hall and dining room fireplaces had marble mantels. She also remembers the passage having a large wooden arch which would have divided it into an entrance lobby and stair hall. In Mrs. McCulloch's Stories of Ole Lexington, Mrs. McCulloch remembers the "beautiful carving" in the Glasgow (Willson-Walker) House and how "all that beautiful woodwork, I understood, was sold. It was carved by hand, the

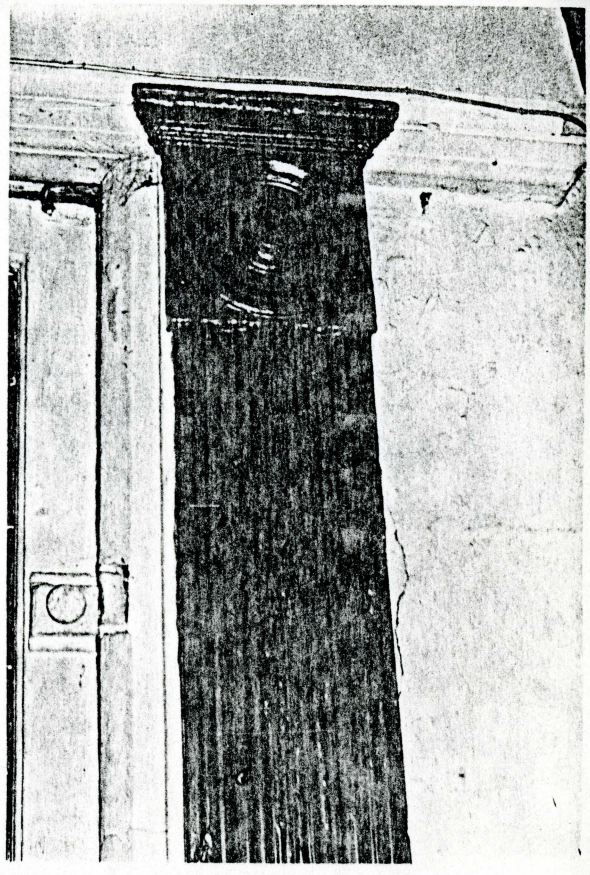


Fig. 21
Top of Front Door Architrave

Fig. 22
First Story Interior

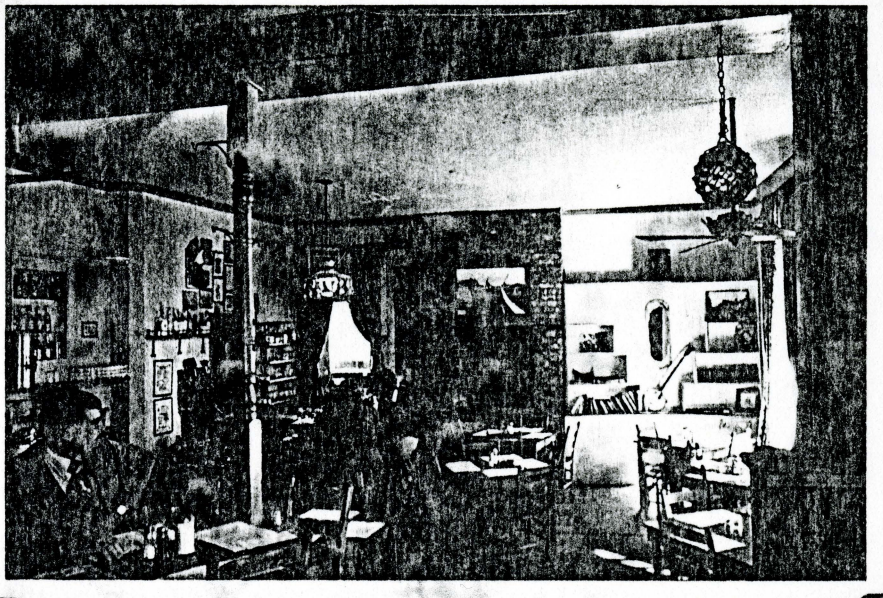


Fig. 23
White Column Inn Restaurant

Fig. 24
Original Fireplace

pillars and the hall and all".[5]

On the stairs between the first and second landings, one may find sawn step-ends (Fig. 25), fret-work (Fig. 26), and raised paneling with a chair-rail (Fig. 27). Simple, but graceful turned newels reminiscent of classical orders, complete with entasis (Fig. 28), carry the plain handrail at each landing (Fig. 29). The step-ends of the final flight and a half become less complex (Fig. 30), the raised paneling ends at the second landing with the chair-rail continuing to the third landing over a very plain board paneling. The architrave and corner block of the second story windows become slightly less ornate, and on the window of the third landing the surround is simply mitered (Fig. 31). Two small turned pendants decorate the bottoms of the newel posts on the third stair landing (Fig.32). As the result of an apparent miscalculation, the top eight inches of the terminal newel post is lost through the sloping ceiling of the stair well.

Within the northwest chamber was a built-in cupboard which still retains one of its original doors, again the two-over-two-over-two motif of the larger paneled doors (Fig. 33). Only one other original paneled door was found in place on the second floor.

The attic consists of three roughly equal rooms divided by beaded, vertical pine board walls with batten doors. Each room has knee-walls, sloped sides, and a low flat ceiling (Fig. 34). Entrance is gained by a low door advanced slightly into the room from the plane of the knee-wall and several steps above the third

Fig. 25
Step-ends Between 1st & 2nd
Stair Landings

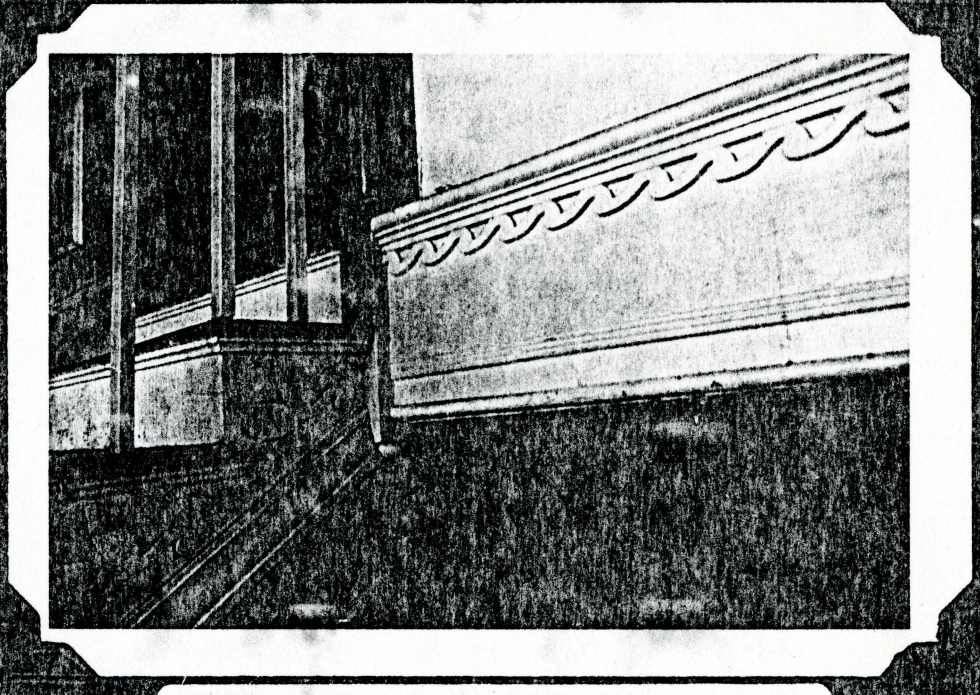


Fig. 26
Fret-work at 1st Stair Landing

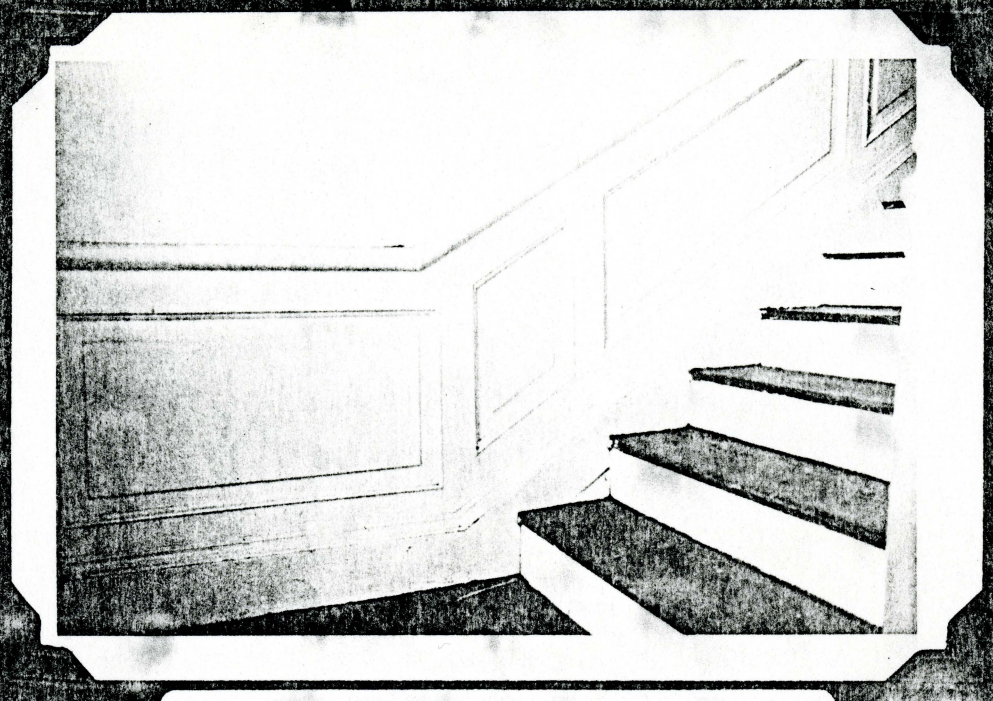


Fig. 27
Wainscoting of Stairway

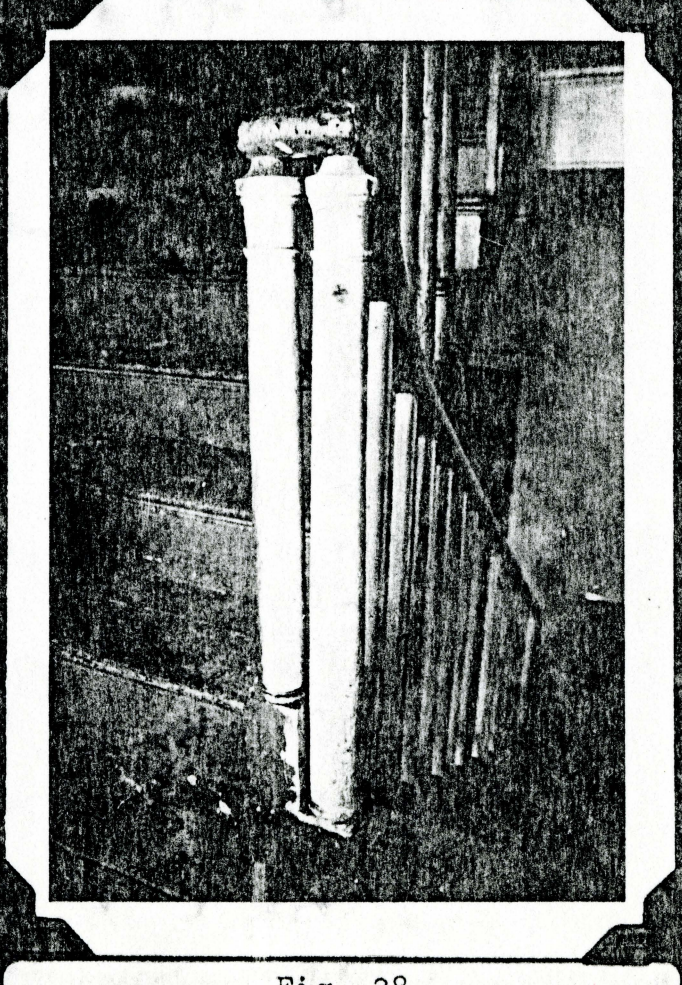


Fig. 28
Newel Posts of 3rd Stair Landing

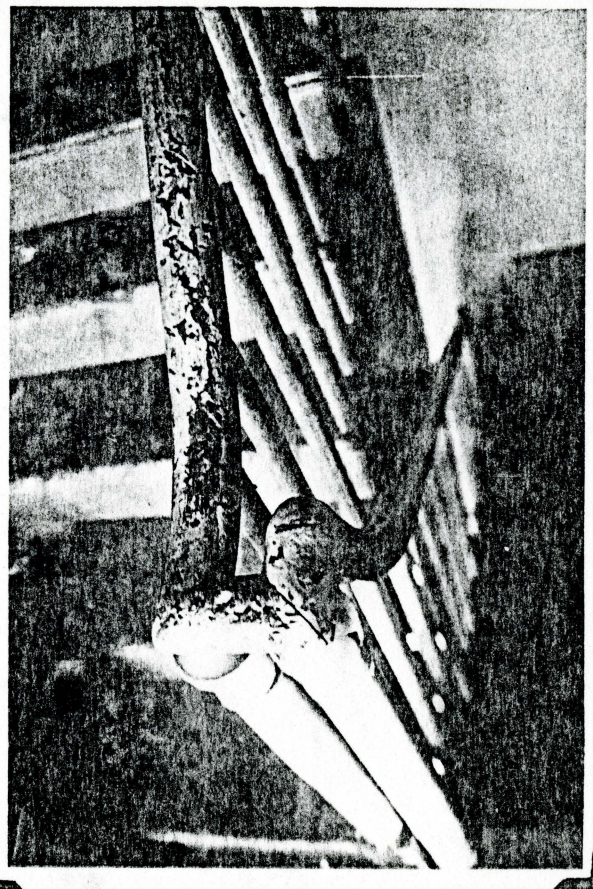


Fig. 29
Hand-rail of Stairs

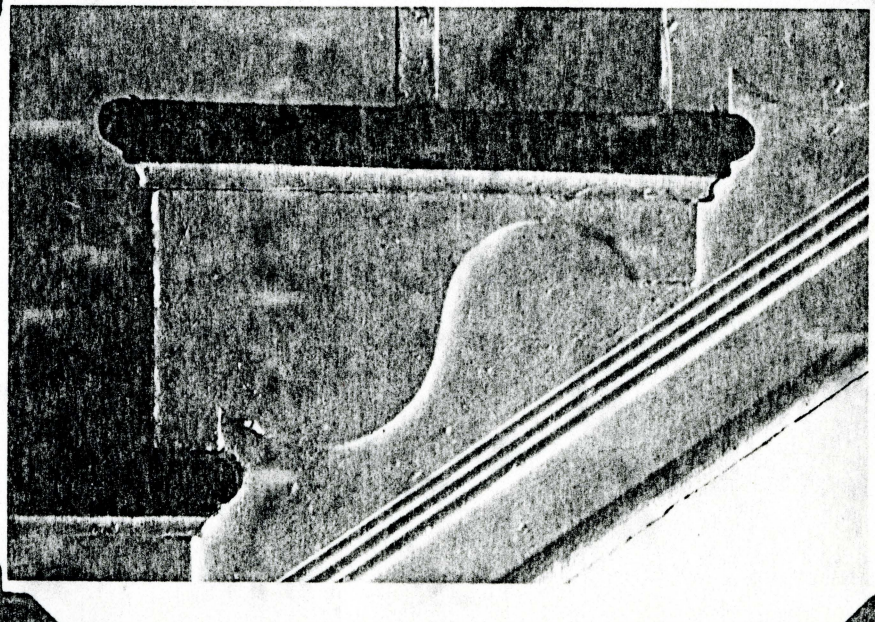


Fig. 30
Step-ends Between 2nd & 3rd
Stair Landings

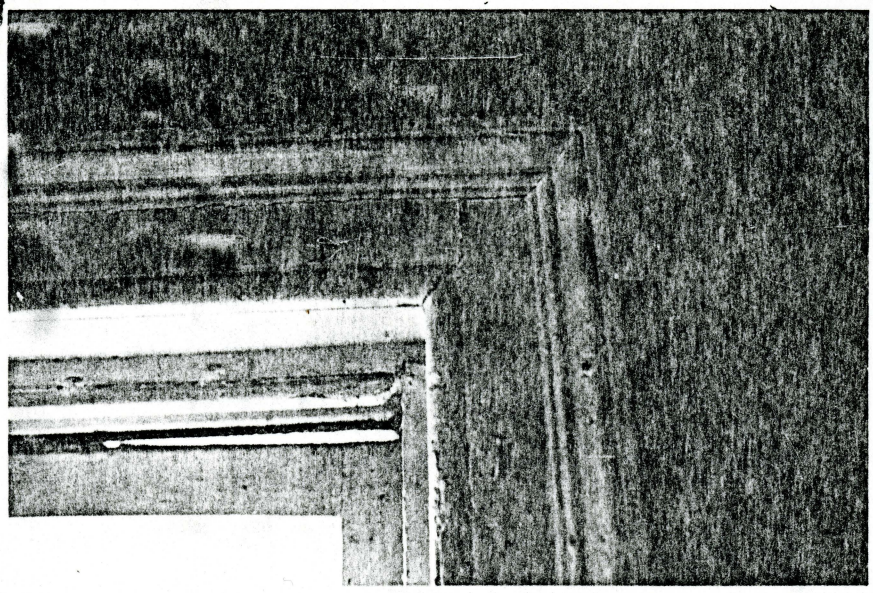


Fig. 31
Surround at 3rd Stair Landing

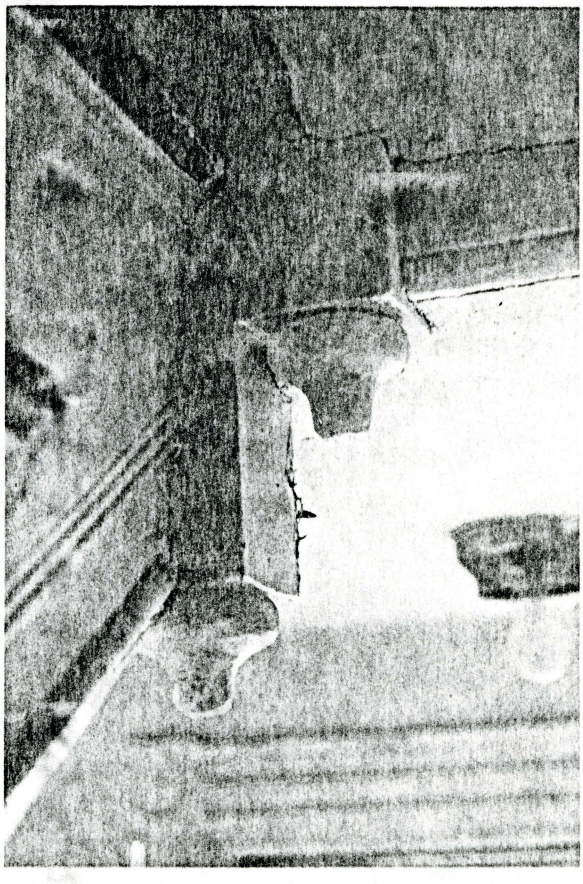


Fig. 32
Newel Post Pendants

Fig. 33
Cupboard of 2nd Story NW Chamber

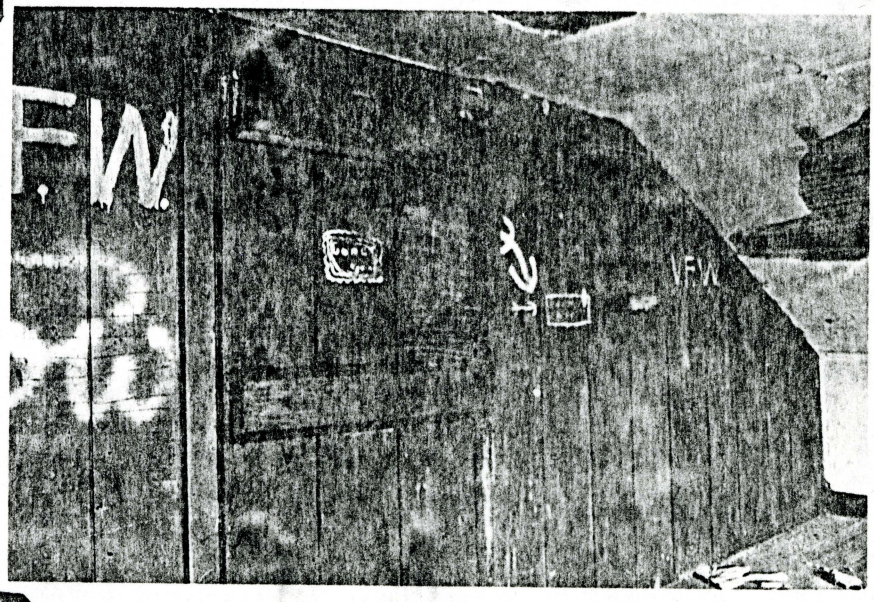


Fig. 34
Interior Wall & Door of Attic

stair landing. All original plaster is over split-board lath (Fig. 35). The front pediment window and Roman bath window may be clearly examined (Figs. 13, 36, & 37). Prior to a 1975 re-roofing, a single, original dormer on the south face of the roof gave light and ventilation to the middle attic room. The three inch common rafters are mortised and tenoned and pegged at the peak. These rafters carry wide pine boards of the sub-roof and terminate at a false plate carried on the floor joist ends which are angled to continue the pitch of the roof. No evidence was available to determine if the attic space had once been used as a living quarters.

The roof covering on both the main house and kitchen is metal and has been so on the main house since at least 1838 (refer to Plate 5). Two tall narrow chimneys rise from within the north brick wall. There were certainly two fireplaces on the lower floor and from the probate inventory one assumes two fireplaces on the second floor. The photograph of 1911 also shows a chimney and the single dormer rising above the south-eastern roofline. No trace now remains, both original elements having been removed during the re-roofing.

The brick of the front facade is laid in Flemish bond with the back and side walls in four course American bond. The first story walls are twelve inches thick, decreasing to eight inches thick for the second story. All walls are laid on a sixteen to eighteen inch limestone rubble foundation. The front wall has been painted many times so any original decorative work

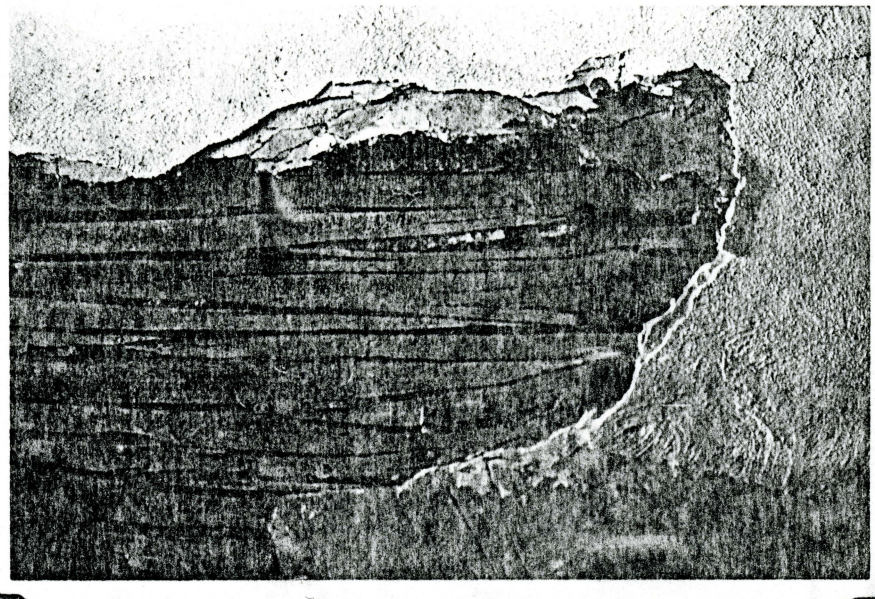


Fig. 35
Spilt-board Lath

Fig. 36
Detail of Roman Bath Window

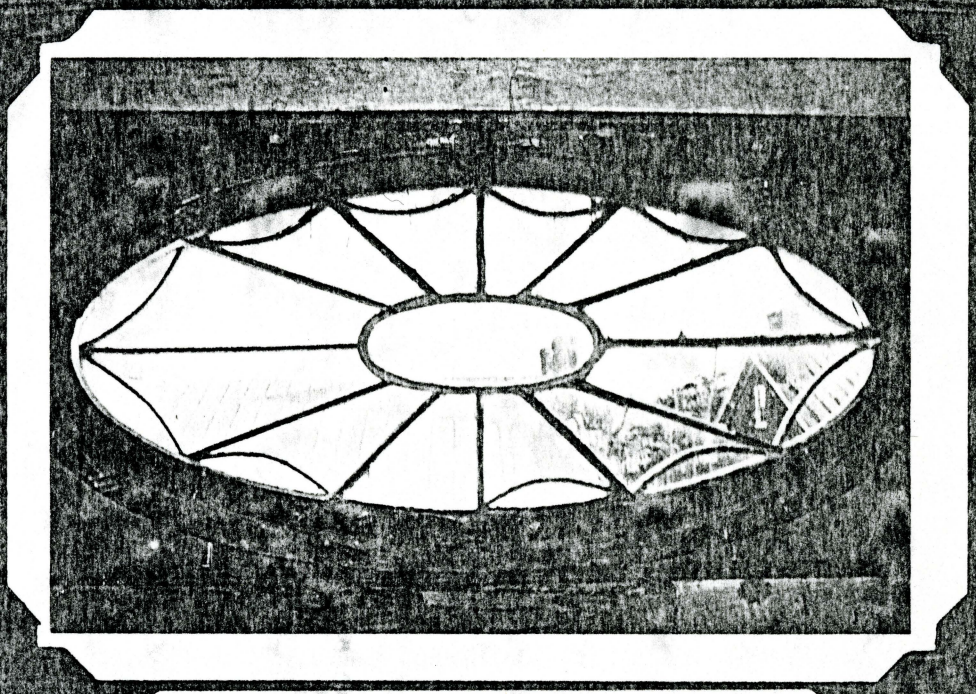


Fig. 37
Elliptical Pediment Window

with glazed headers is impossible to discern. All brick is hand made with molded brick being used only as a simple cornice at the eves of both the main house and kitchen (Fig. 19). The brick was originally laid in a typically soft burnt lime and sand mortar in a competent fashion, and the joints penciled. Glazed headers are scattered about in usually the upper third of the walls with no apparent decorative devices attempted.

POSSIBLE SOURCES OF DESIGN AND DETAIL

The design of the Willson-Walker House is one which was becoming very popular in the early 19th C., that of the Neo-classical Revival. The clarity of the High and Late Georgian designs and the sophistication of the Federal style had given way to a desire of the new country to find its own national style of architecture. As in all architectural styles, the forms of the new were not totally embraced nor the forms of the old totally discarded.

A specific source of the style and detailing of the Willson-Walker House would be impossible to pinpoint. However, there are two areas worthy of exploration: late 18th C. and early 19th C. pattern-books which may have been used by Capt. Willson to design his own house and supervise its construction; or the availability of Lexington builder-architects such as the team of John Jordan and Samuel Darst.

Capt. Willson, obviously a capable man, was a successful merchant, postmaster of Lexington, and Treasurer of Washington College for thirty-seven years. He was also a very well read man. His probate inventory lists ten volumes of Shakespeare in his personal library at the time of his death in 1840. Willson was also a member of the "Lexington Library Company" and was recorded present at the earliest known meeting in 1801.[6] This Company spent the sizable sum of $150 the first year to acquire books and continued adding to their collection for the next twenty years. At that point the Company dissolved and

many of the volumes were bought by another Lexington organization, The Franklin Society.[7]

The Franklin Society, or as it was incorporated in 1816, "The Franklin Society and Library Company"[8] was begun about 1800 or possibly as early as 1795, operating under various names until, "In August, 1811, by overwhelming vote the members adopted the name of America's greatest diplomat, Benjamin Franklin. The name suggests usefulness, seriousness, intellectuality, and above all, patriotism."[9] Although primarily a debating society, The Franklin Society also gave a great deal of energy to literary and scientific pursuits. Books were donated to the society by members and friends until in 1813 thirty-eight volumes were purchased. During a period from about 1811 to the early 1820's these books of the Franklin Society were kept in the hatter's shop of Mr. John Ruff.[10] This shop happened to be just across Main Street from the residence of William Willson. Capt. Willson may or may not have been a member of the Franklin Society, but one might imagine that he did have access to the libary across the street, as well as to the library of his own Lexington Library Company. A catalog of the volumes contained in these two libraries prior to 1820 has not been located. However, Owen Biddle's Young Carpenter's Assistant (1810) is known to have been in Lexington about this time.[11]

The following are plates from publications which Capt. Willson may have seen and which may have influenced his choice in the motifs, design and details of his home:

Batty Langley in The Builder's Director, 1751, gave helpful hints in Plate 8 on making proper pediments; in Plate 9 on a proper Corinthian capital, although Fig. 7 shows little evidence of it being followed; in Plate 10 on how to produce a cavette such as that used in the wooden arch (Fig. 6) and the cornice above (Fig. 7); and a much simplified Tuscan order is given in Plate 11.

Abraham Swan in his The British Architect of 1758, shows the Tuscan order in great detail in Plates 12 and 13 (Figs. 5 & 9); the Corinthian order in Plate 14 (Figs. 6 & 7); as well as how to flute the shaft in Plate 15.

(Door)

Charles Bullfinch, working out of Boston in the late 18th C. and early 19th C. helped to popularize the attenuated delicate Federal tabernacle doorways with rich round-headed fanlights. Plates 16, 17, and 18 are examples of such doorways. Etchings or engravings of doorways like this may have made their way into publications that reached Lexington.

An associate of Bullfinch, Asher Benjamin, was a prolific American pattern-book author. Elements found both in his works and in the Willson-Walker House are the following: The six panel door from Plate 19 and Fig. 33; the six-over-six double-hung-sash window of Plate 20 and Fig. 3; the top of the newel from Plate 21 and Fig. 28 are all from The Country Builder's Assistant, 1805. The six-over-six window and paneled jamb of Plate 22 and Figs. 14 & 16; modified Corinthian capital of Plate 23 and Fig. 7; water leaf of Plate 24 and Fig. 7; newel of Plate

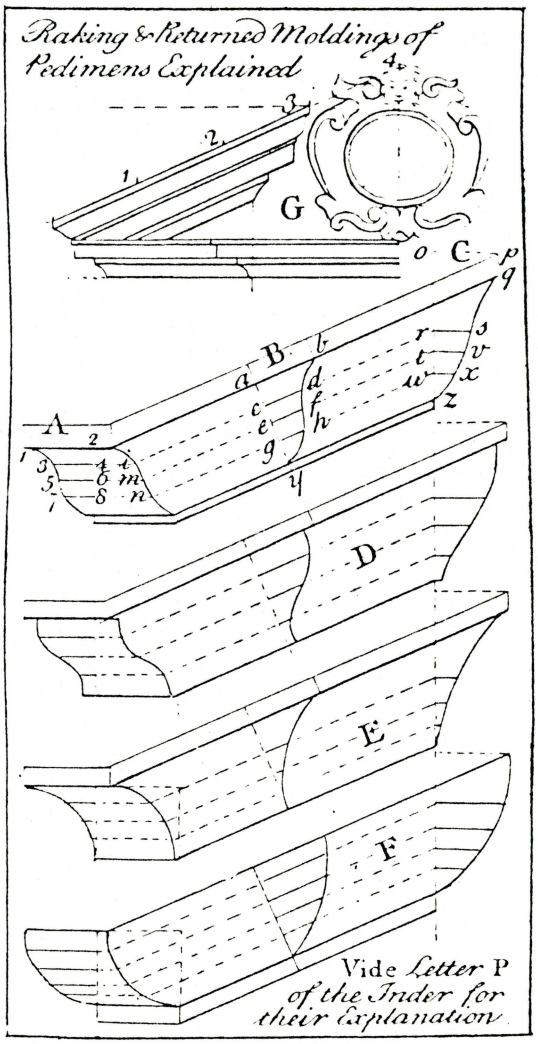


PLATE 8

– Raking & Returned Moldings of Pediments –

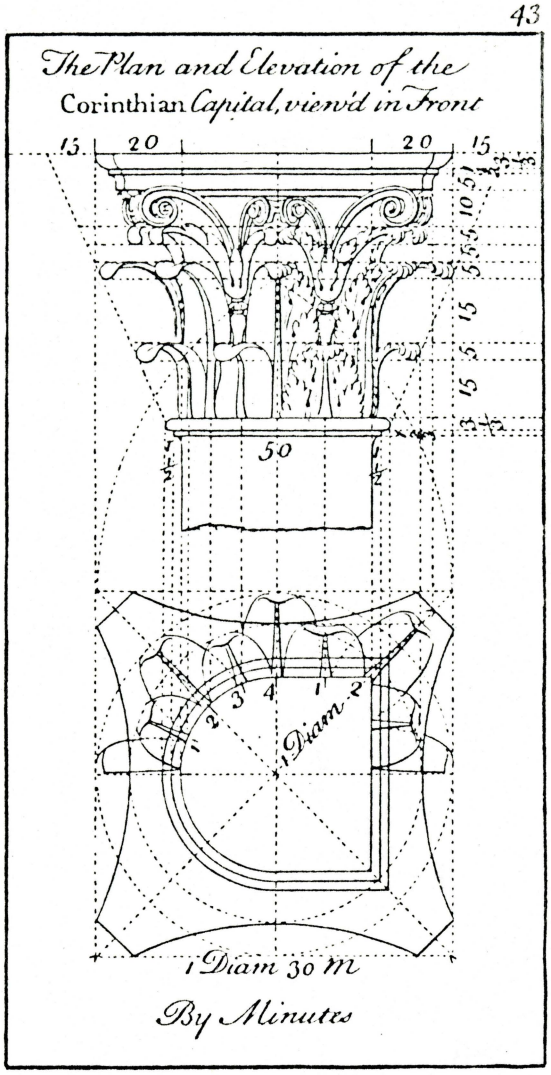


PLATE 9
Corinthian Capital

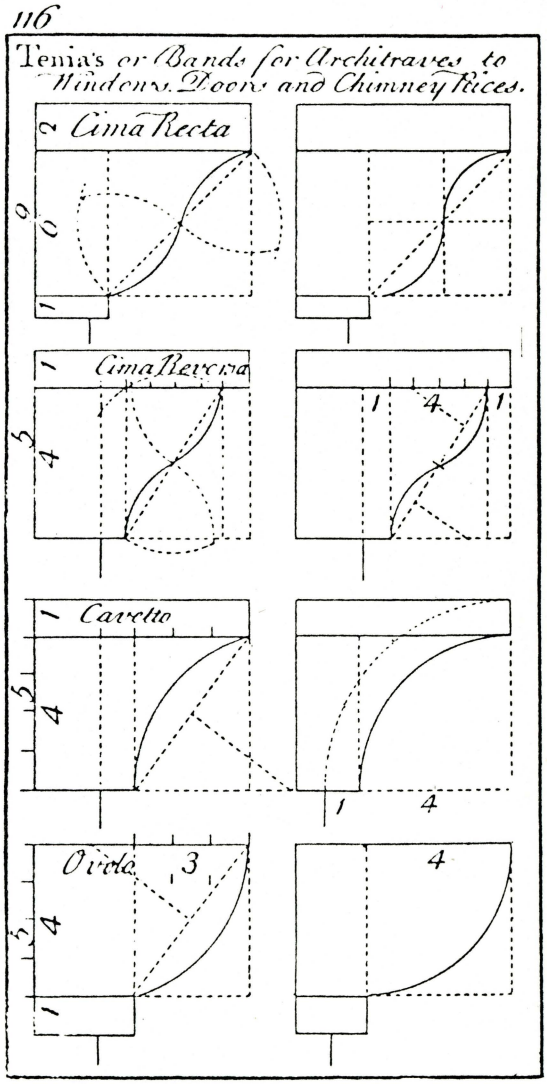
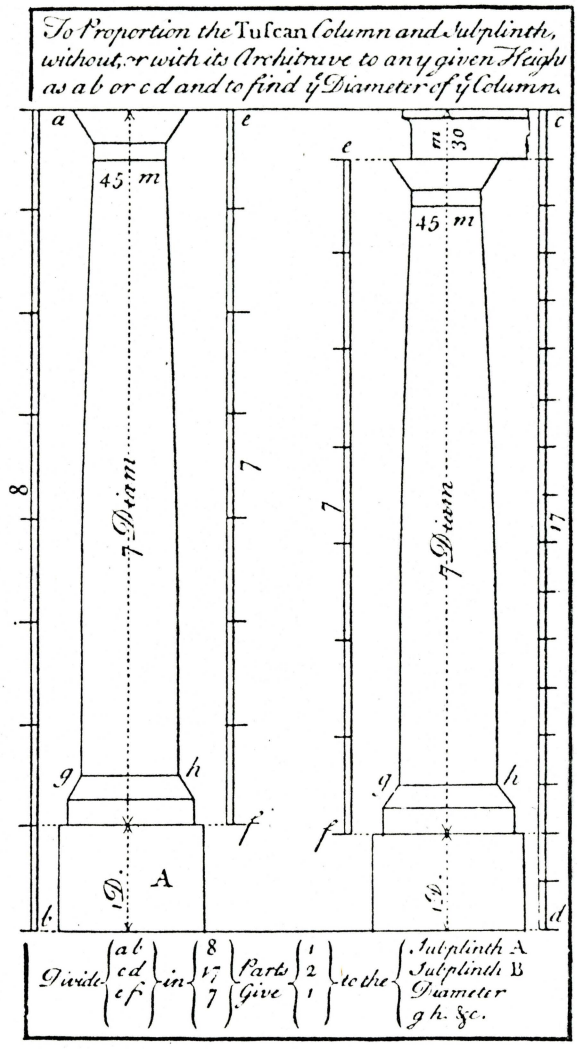


PLATE 10
Architraves for Windows
and Doors

4



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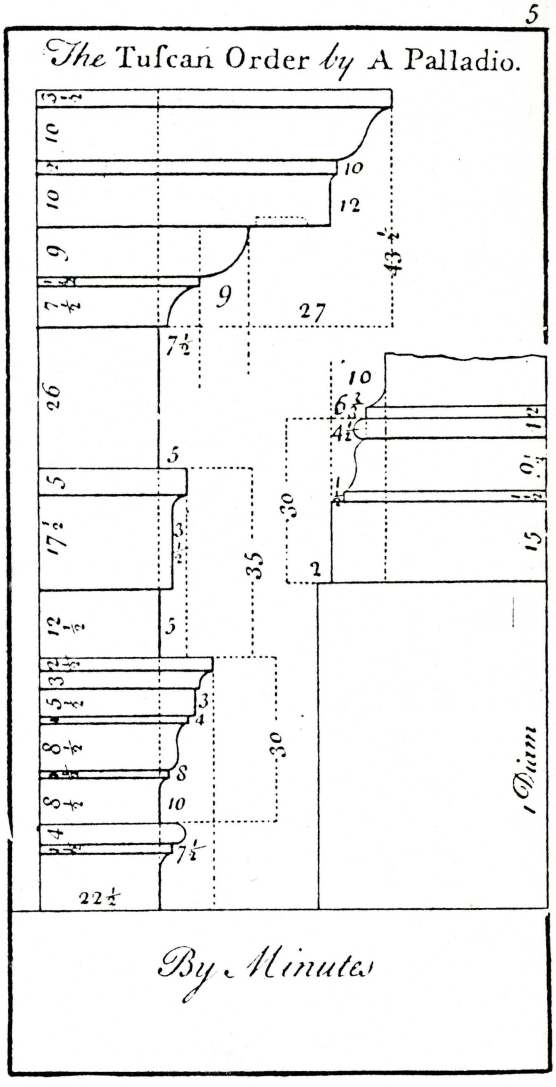
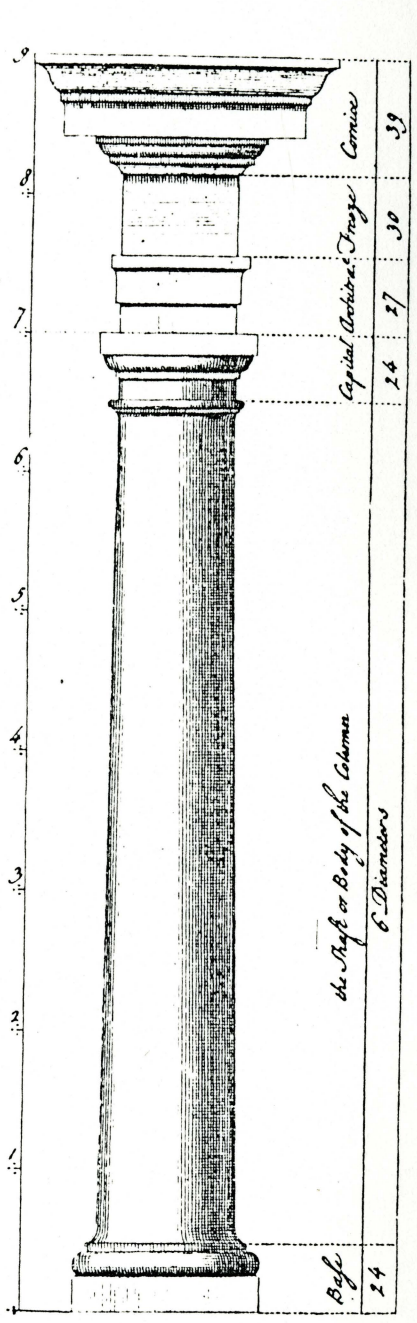


PLATE 11

Tuscan Order

TUSCAN Order.



ANY Height being given for this *Order*,

Let it be divided into nine equal Parts, as is ſhewn up the Side of the *Column*.

Then, one of theſe Parts is the *Diameter* of the *Column* at its *Baſe*; ſeven Parts are given to the *Shaft*, or Body of the *Column*, including the *Baſe* and *Capital*; and two to its *Entablature*, which includes the *Architrave*, *Freeze*, and *Cornice*.

Having found the Diameter of the *Column* at its *Baſe*,

Let it be divided into four equal Parts, as in PLATE II. Then divide one of theſe into twelve, which is done thus;

Take the Extent of one of theſe four Parts, and ſet it from A to B; then ſet your Compaſſes at Pleaſure, and run twelve Diviſions, as on the Line B C; from the Extent of theſe Diviſions draw a Line to A; when theſe Diviſions are ſquared up from the *Baſe Line*, that is, drawing the Perpendiculars 1, 2, 3, &c. your Scale is made, and the Line A B is divided into twelve equal Parts; as would eaſily appear by drawing Parallels from each of theſe Perpendiculars to A B.

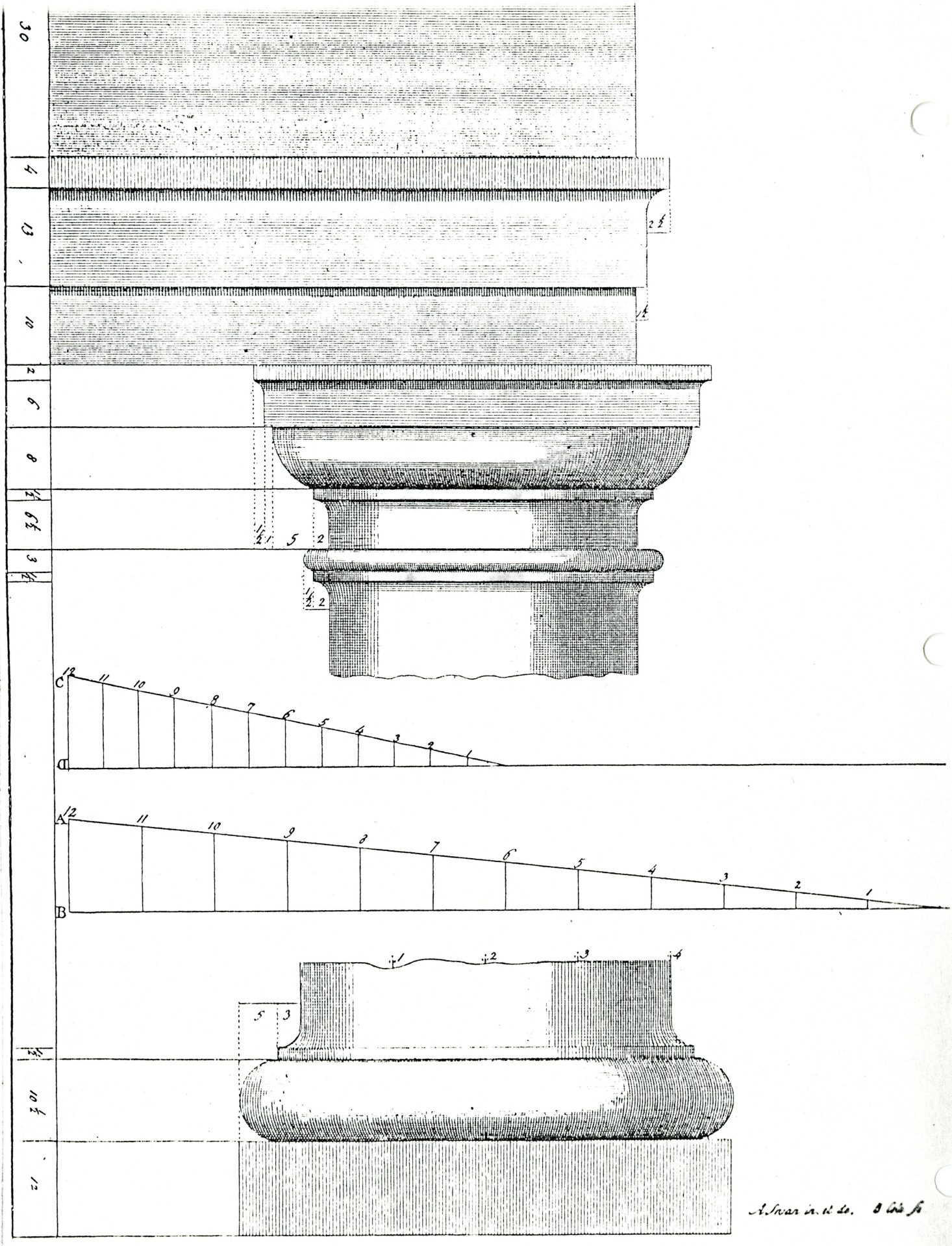


PLATE 13

Tuscan Order

CORINTHIAN Order.

ANY Height being given for this *Order*,

Let it be divided into twelve equal Parts, as is ſhewn up the Side of the *Column*.

One of them is the *Diameter* of the *Column* at the *Baſe*; Ten Parts are given to the *Shaft*, including the *Baſe* and *Capital*; and two to the *Entablature*.

The *Capital* in this *Order* is one *Diameter* and a ſixth Part.

This PLATE alſo exhibits another *Cornice* larger than that fixed to the *Profile*, but yet is not near ſo large, as that which *Vignola* has given to his *Corinthian*.

'Tis not neceſſary to ſay any more of the Proportions, the Meaſures being ſet to the reſpective Parts.

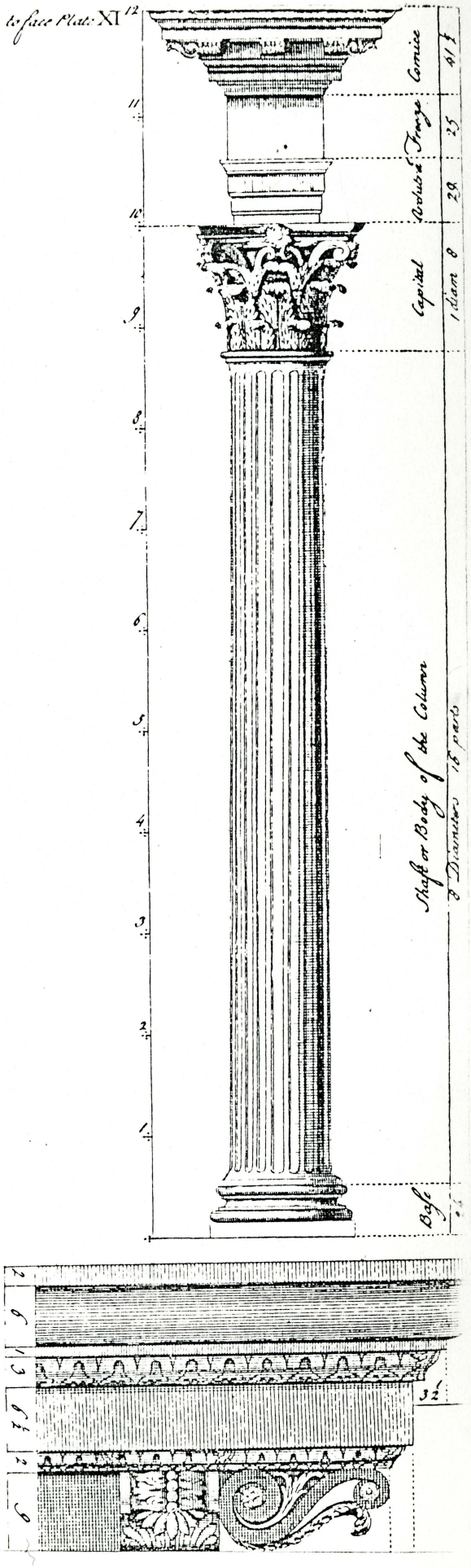
PLATE XII. Shews the different Parts of the *Capital*.

FIG. I. Shews the Pieces glued upon the *Diagonal*.

FIG. II. Shews the *Capital* viewed Angle-ways, with Part of the naked *Bell* of the *Cap*.

FIG. III. Repreſents the Body of the *Capital*, with ſome of the *Blocks* glued on; FIG. II, at the upper Corner to the Left ſhows how much the *Capital* ſhould taper, at each Side, ſince ſeven and an Half on the other Side is ſcarce ſufficient for the Plan of the *Abacus*.

FIG. IV. Shews the *Capital*, with all the Meaſures of the Height; Width, and Projection ſet to every Part.



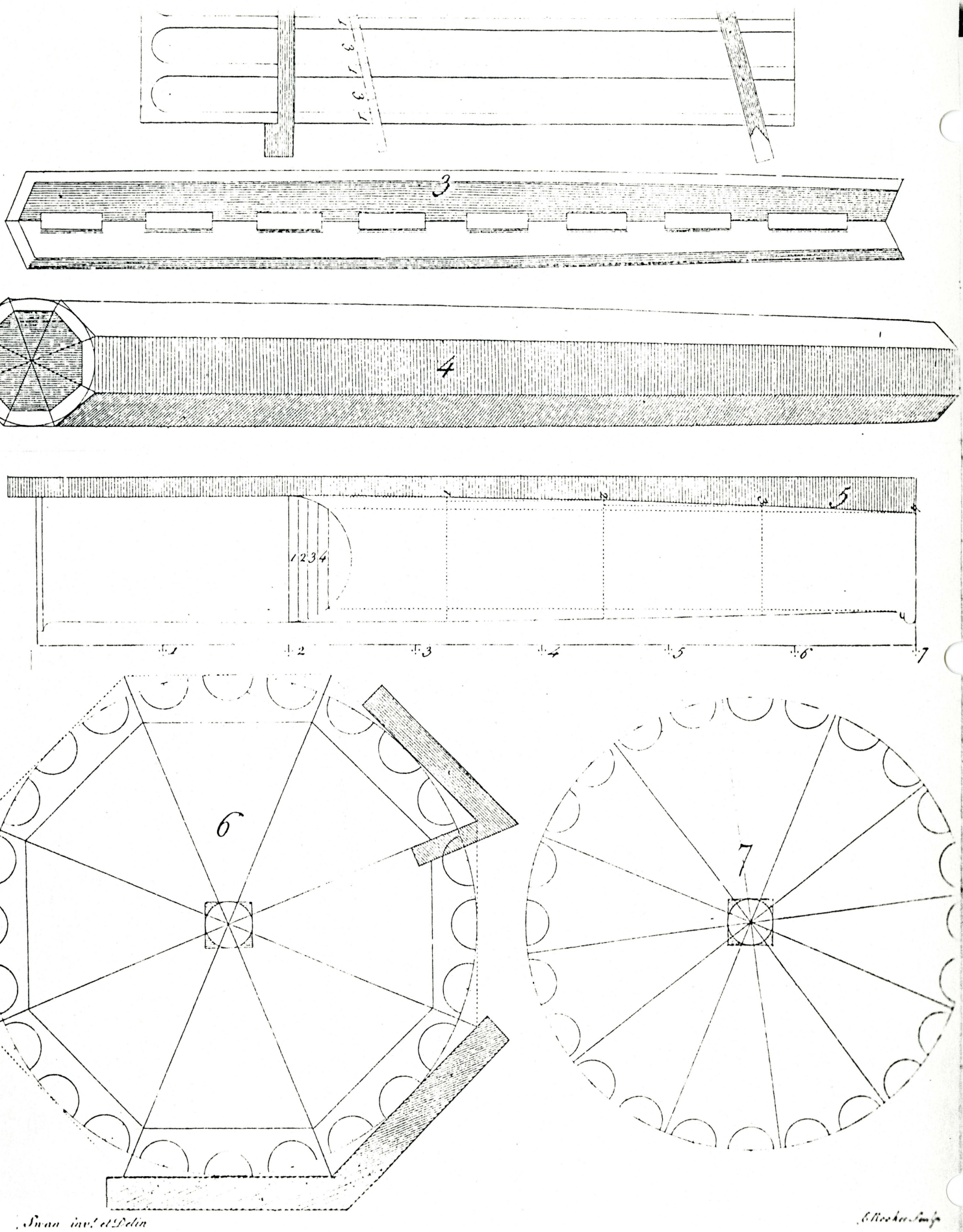
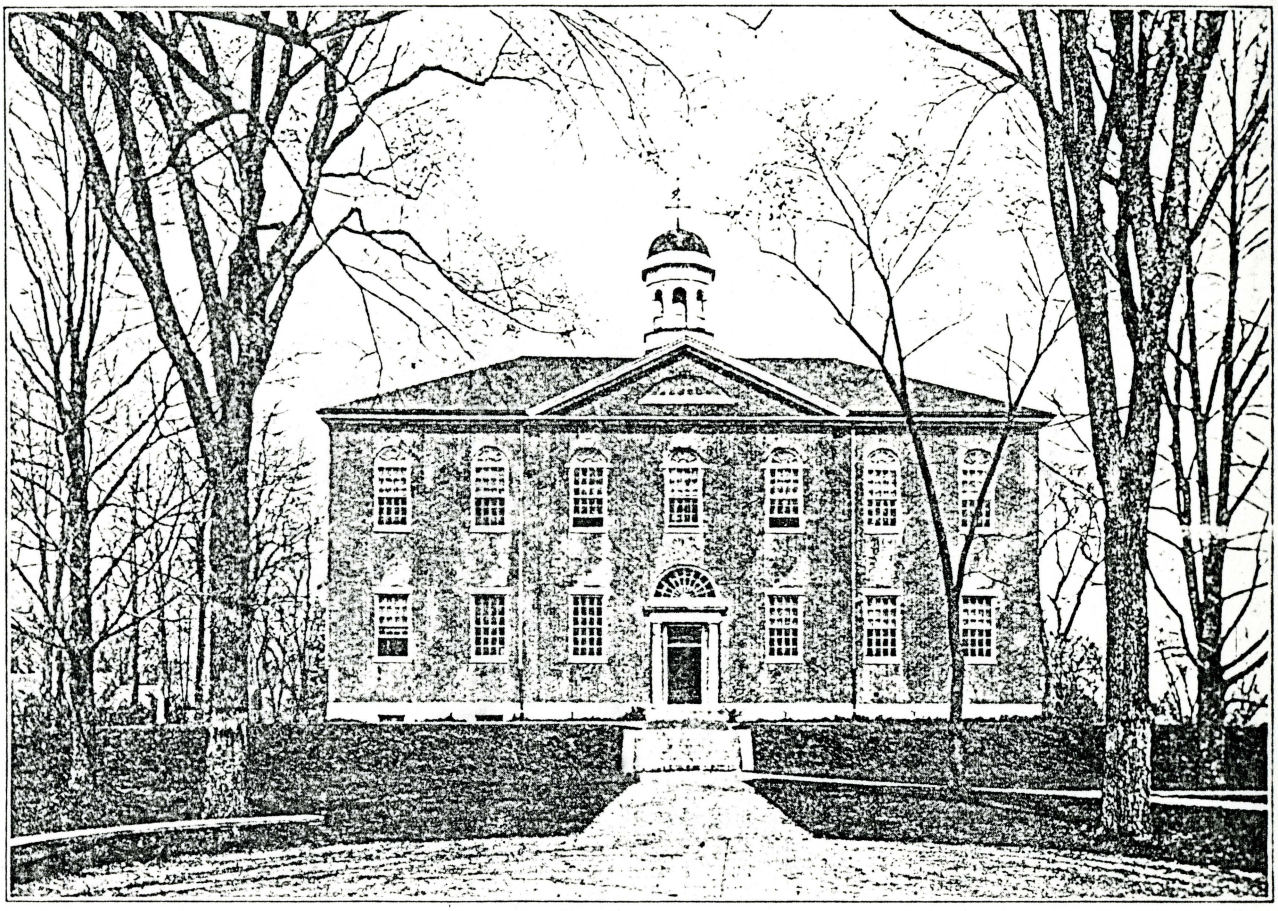


PLATE 15

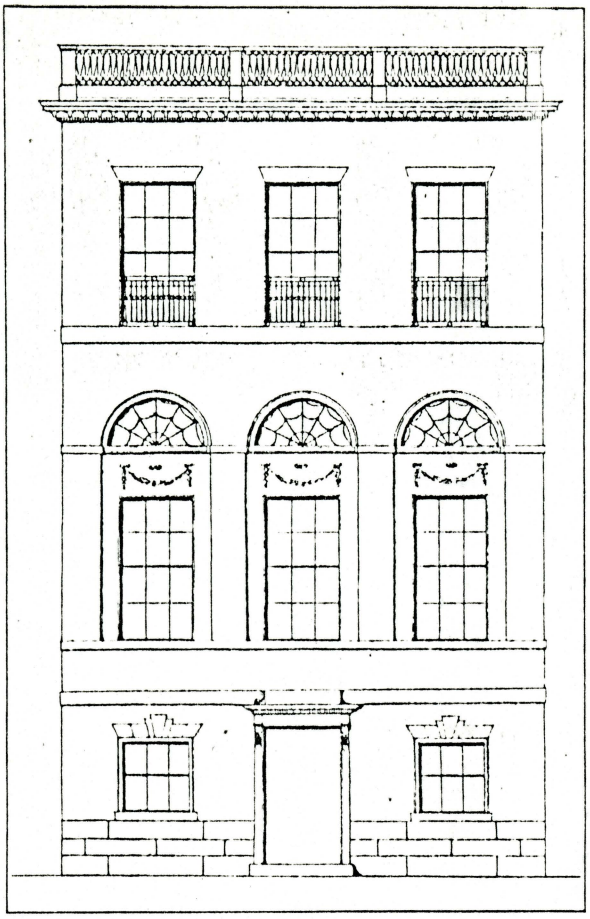
— Means of Fluting a Shaft —



THIRD BUILDING, PHILLIPS ACADEMY

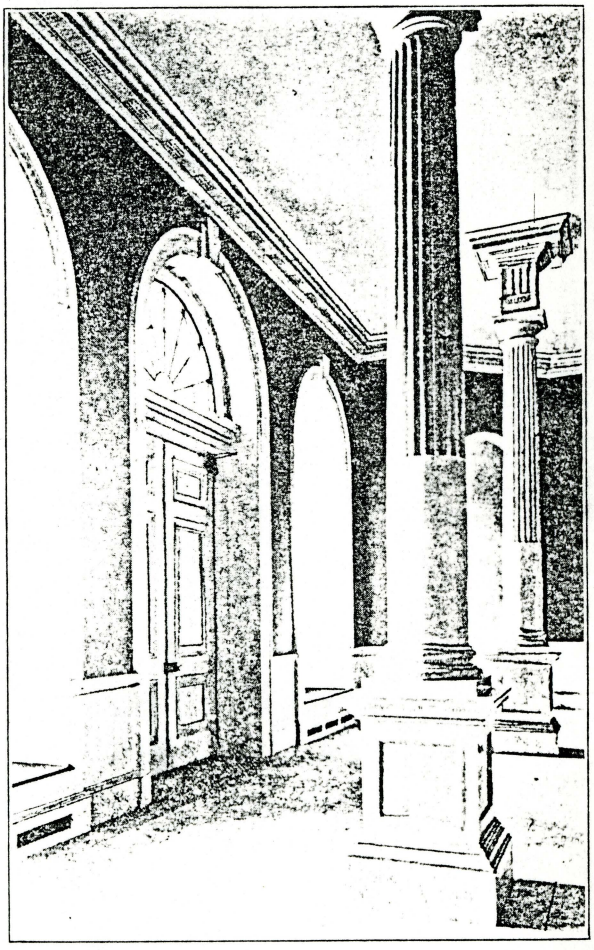
PLATE 16

– Third Building, –
Phillip's Academy



DESIGN FOR A CITY HOUSE
From the original drawing made after 1800

PLATE 17
Design of Building



DORIC HALL, SHOWING SOUTH DOOR

PLATE 18
Doric Hall

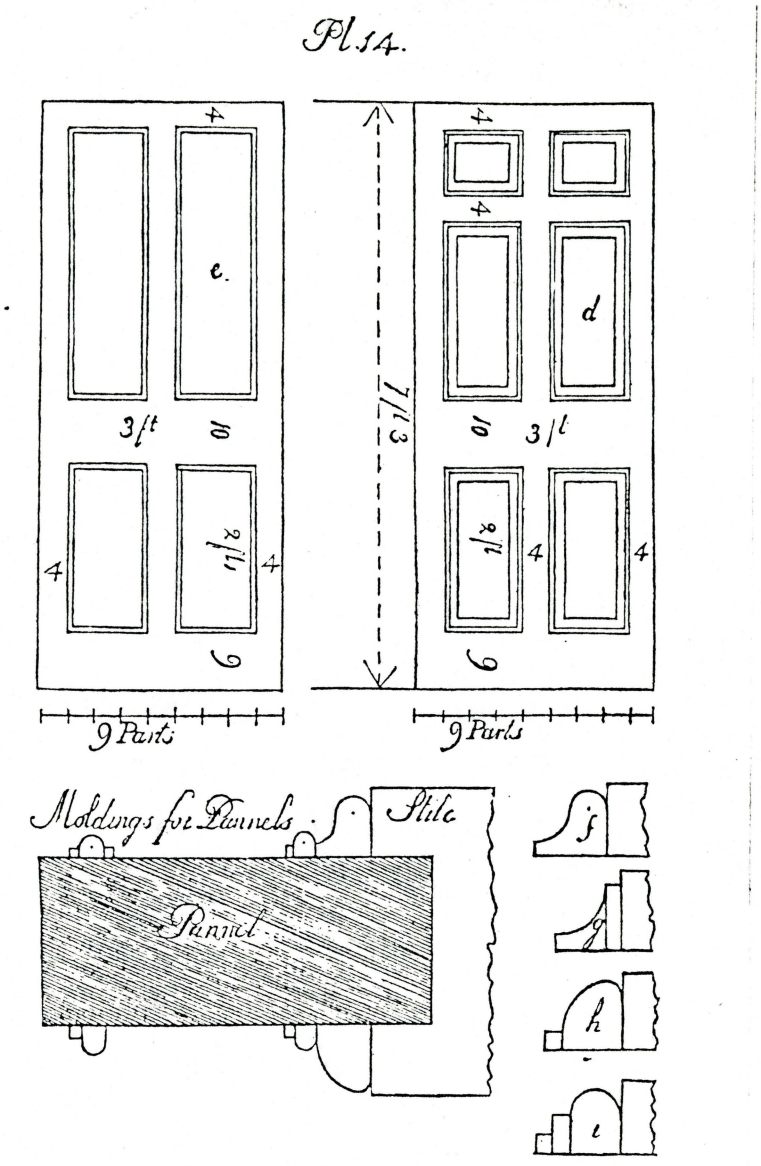


PLATE 19

Paneled Doors and Moldings

Pl. 15

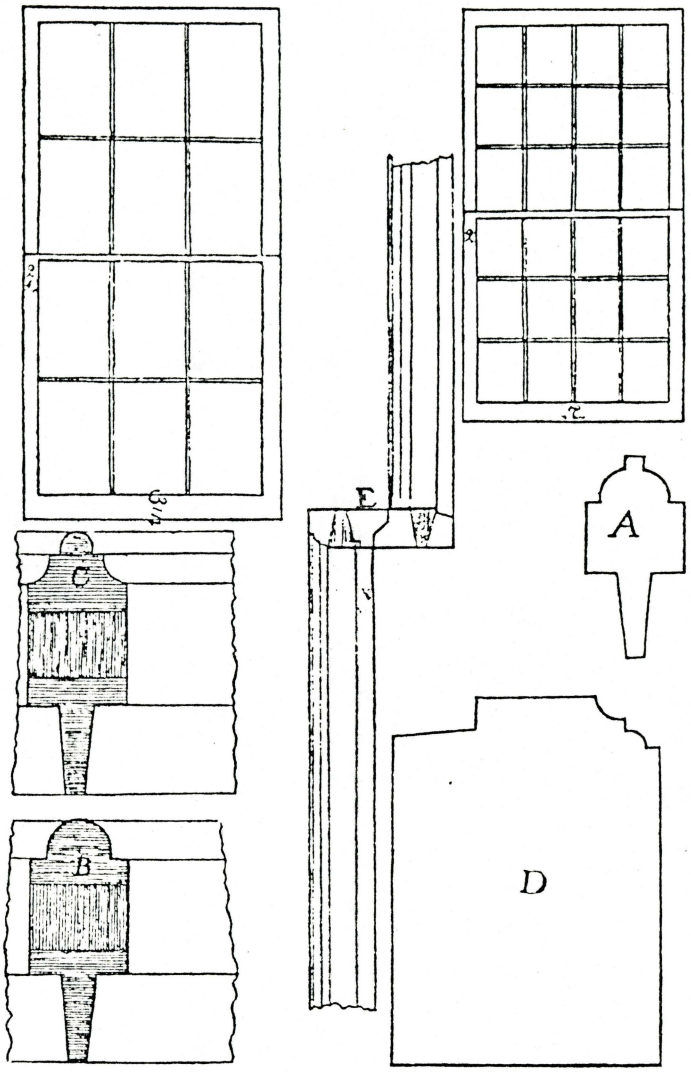


PLATE 20
Double-Hung-Sash Window
and Muntins

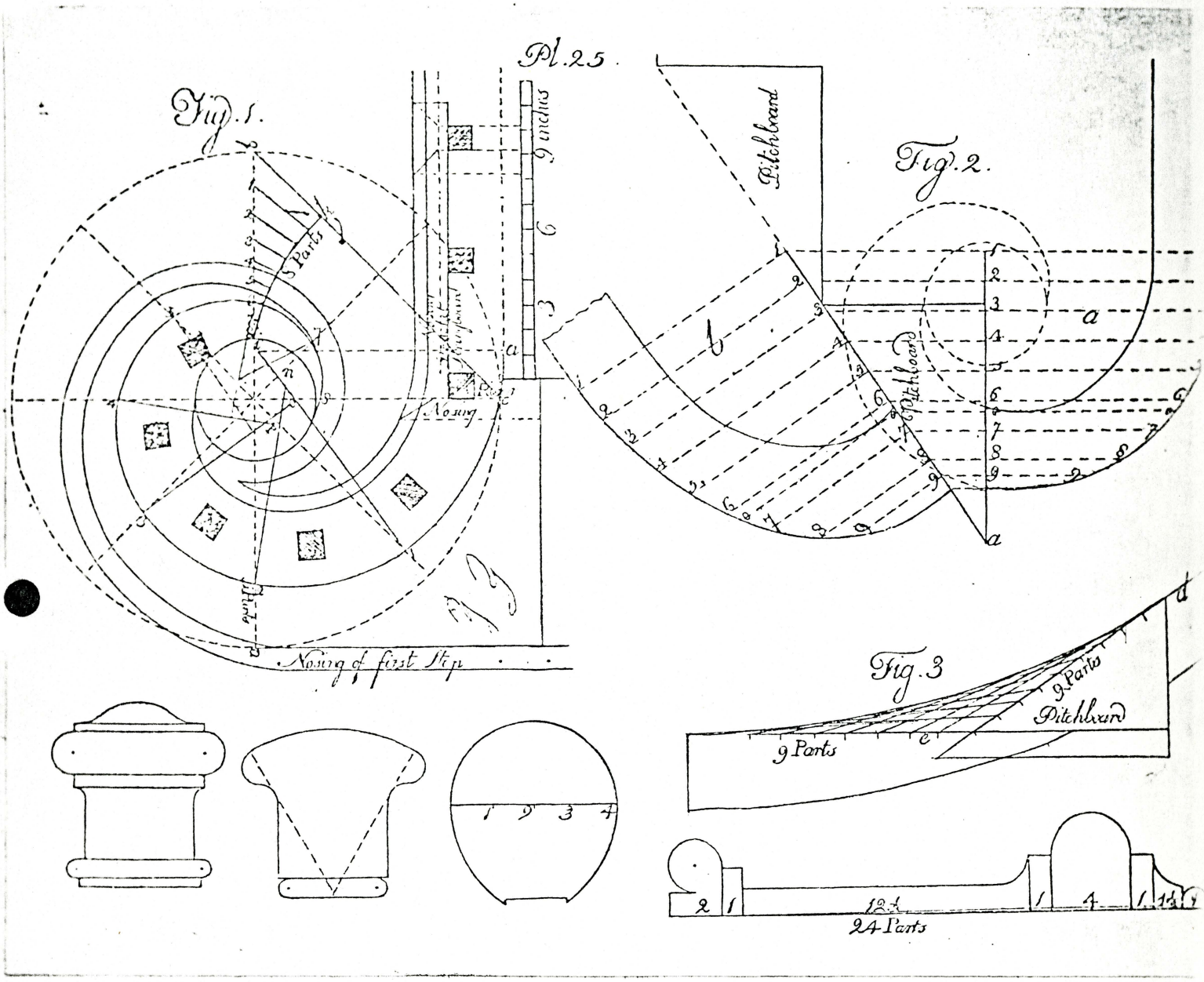


PLATE 21
— Tops of Newel Posts and —
Handrail Computations

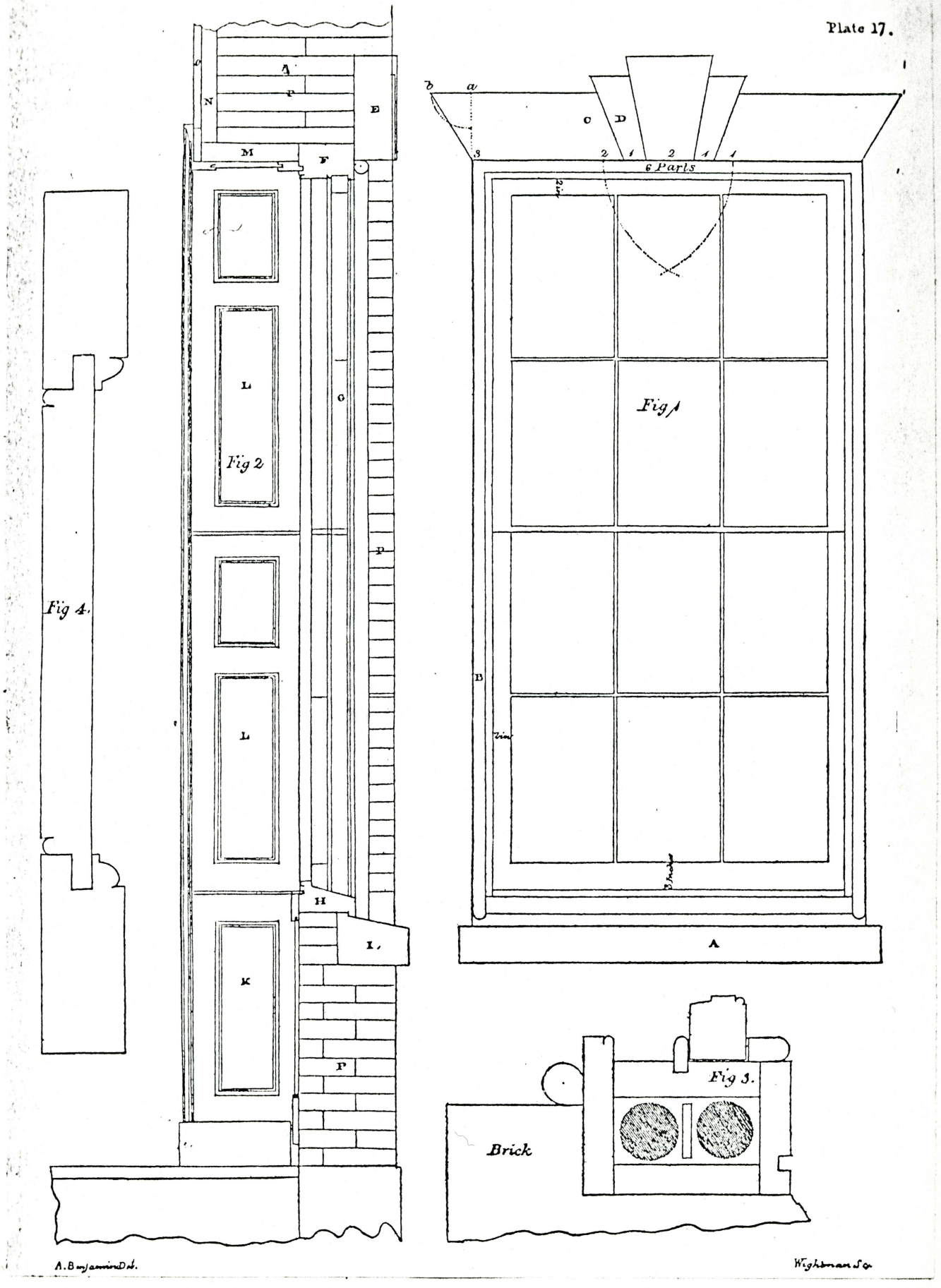


PLATE 22

— Window and Pameling for Jamb —

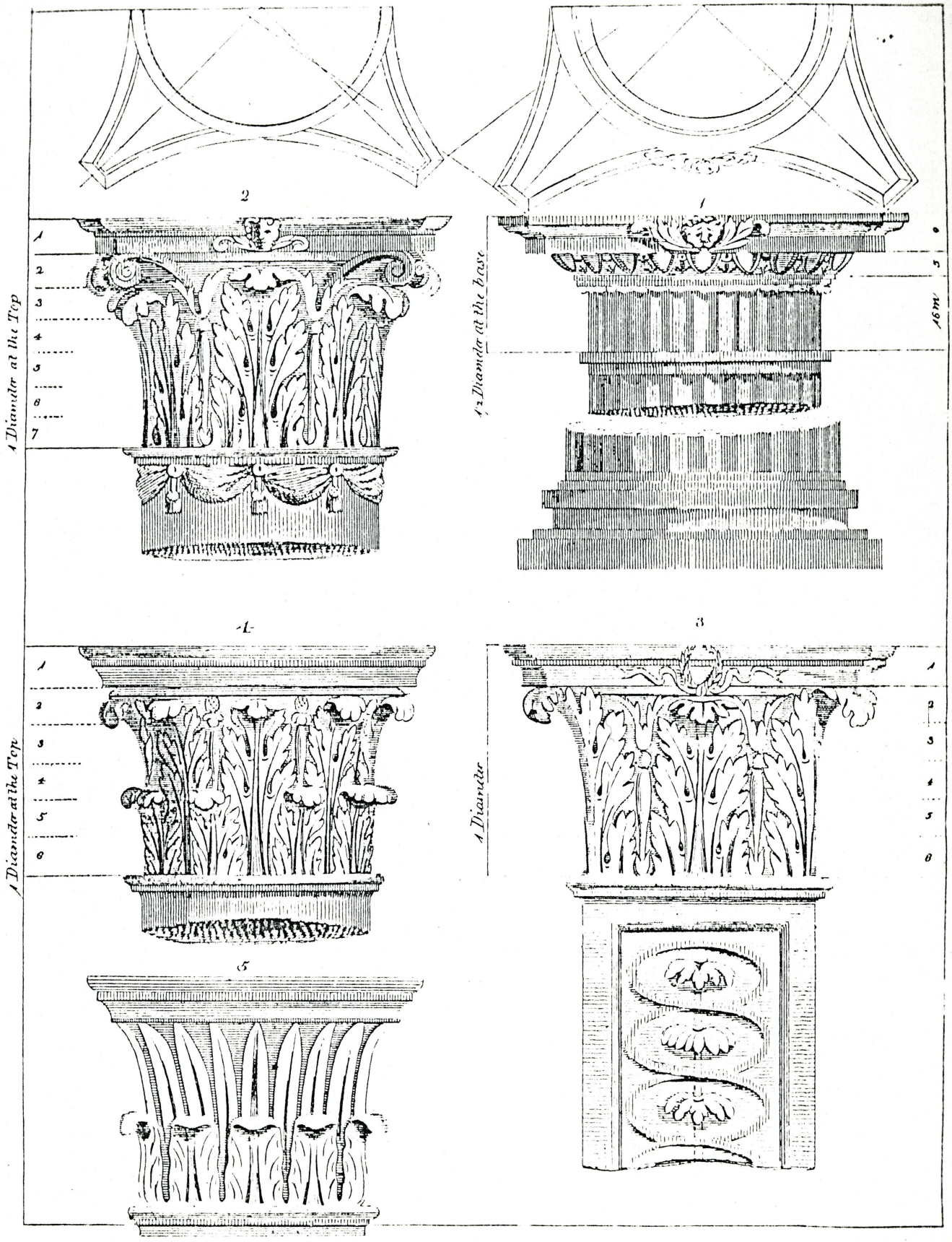


PLATE 23

Corinthian Capitals

25 and Fig. 28; Tuscan order of Plate 26 and Figs. 5 & 9; and examples of fashionable six paneled doors and fanlights of Plate 27 are all from The American Builder's Companion, 1806. The The newel of Plate 28 and Fig. 4; and examples of doorways from Plate 29 are from The Rudiments of Architecture, 1814.

And finally Owen Biddle's The Young Carpenter's Assistant, 1810, which was in Lexington, has the cavette and newel of Plate 30 and Figs. 6, 7, & 4; the method of treating a handrail and step-ends of Plate 31 and Figs. 29 & 25; and an excellent example of a tabernacle doorway in Plate 32.

The other likely, and far more probable, source for the design and detailing, however provincial, of the Neoclassical Revival style of the Willson-Walker House is in the personage of John Jordan. Jordan came to Lexington around 1800 at the age of twenty-three and was soon working as a brickmaker and bricklayer. Some have credited the brickwork of Mulberry Hill (c. 1801), a late Georgian style house just outside of Lexington, to Jordan.[12] By late 1805, correspondence between Jordan and Thomas Jefferson shows that Jordan had just completed some brickwork at Monticello. Here Jordan would have had a chance to observe such Jeffersonian design features as the round arches with fanlights of the east entrance (Plate 33); the classical Tuscan temple portico of the front entrance (Plate 34); or the simple carved step-ends and newel pendant of a stairway at Monticello (Plate 35 and Figs. 30 & 32).

In 1811, Jordan joined the Rockbridge county militia and

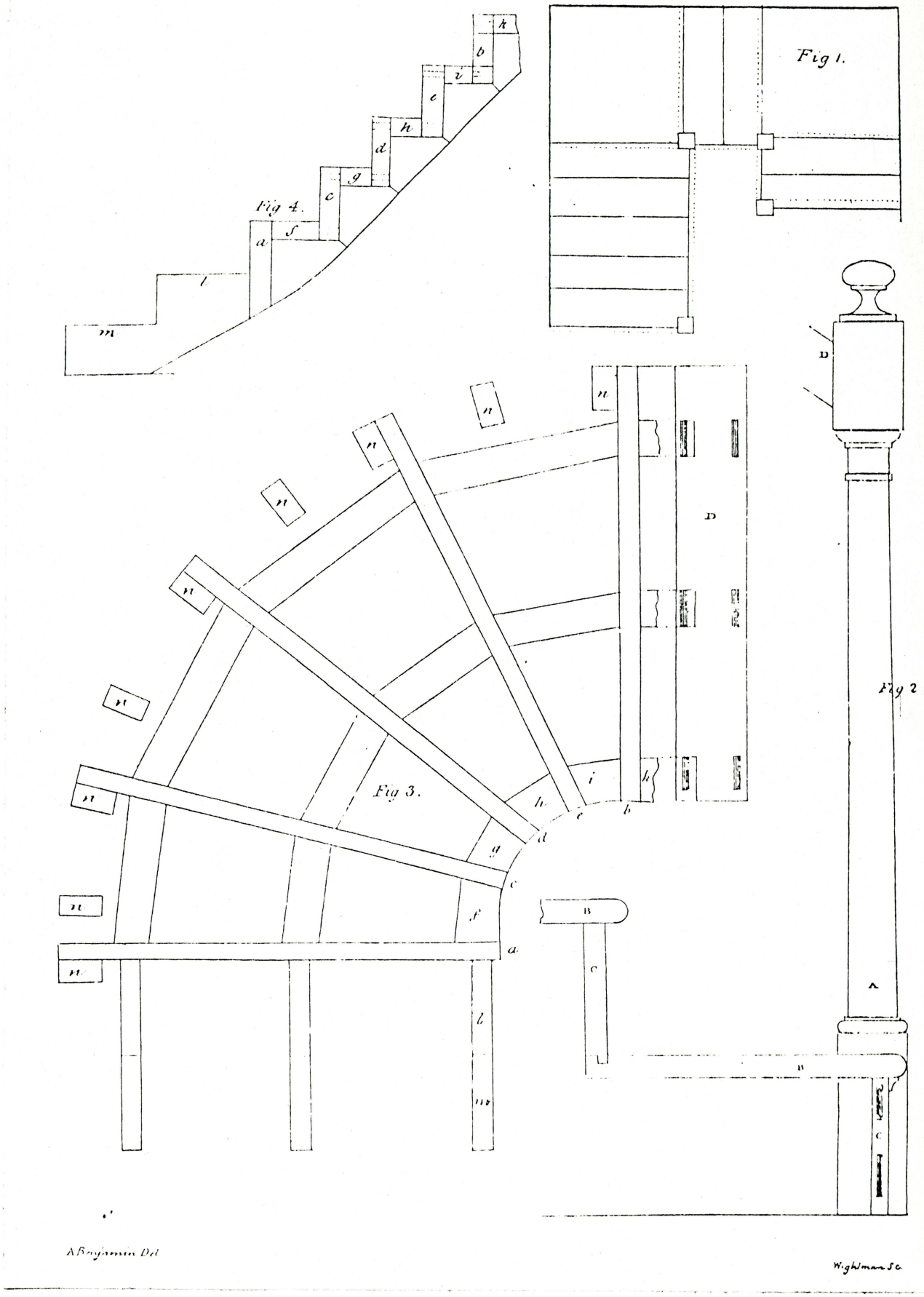
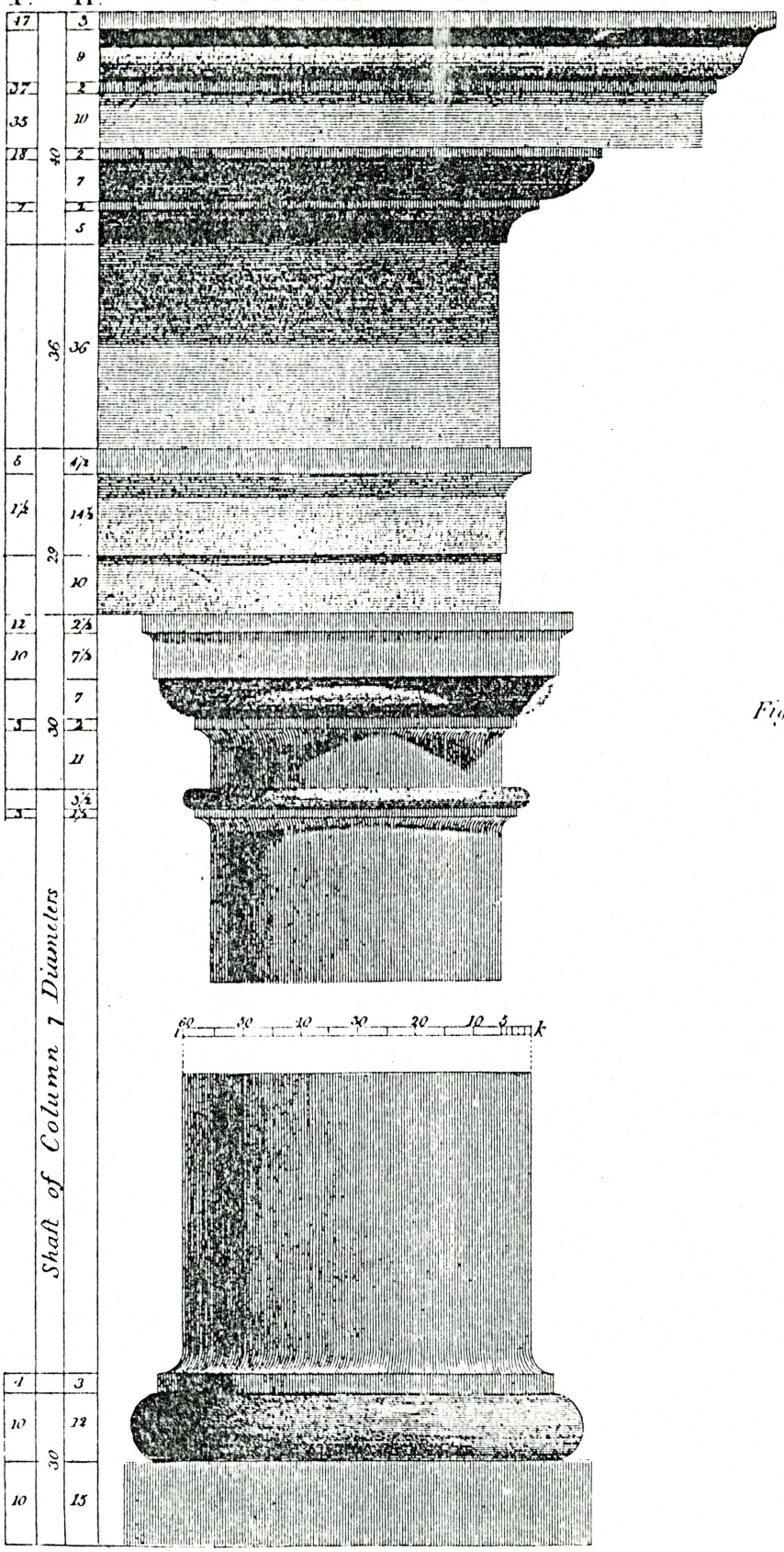


PLATE 25

– Method of Working Stairtreads –
and Newel Post

TUSCAN ORDER



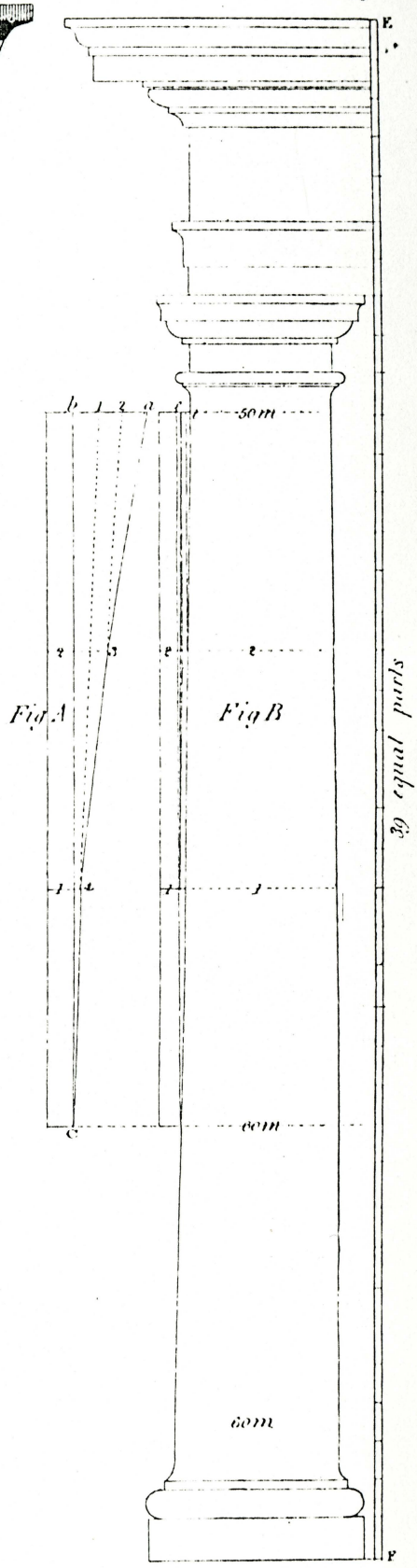


PLATE 26

Tuscan Order

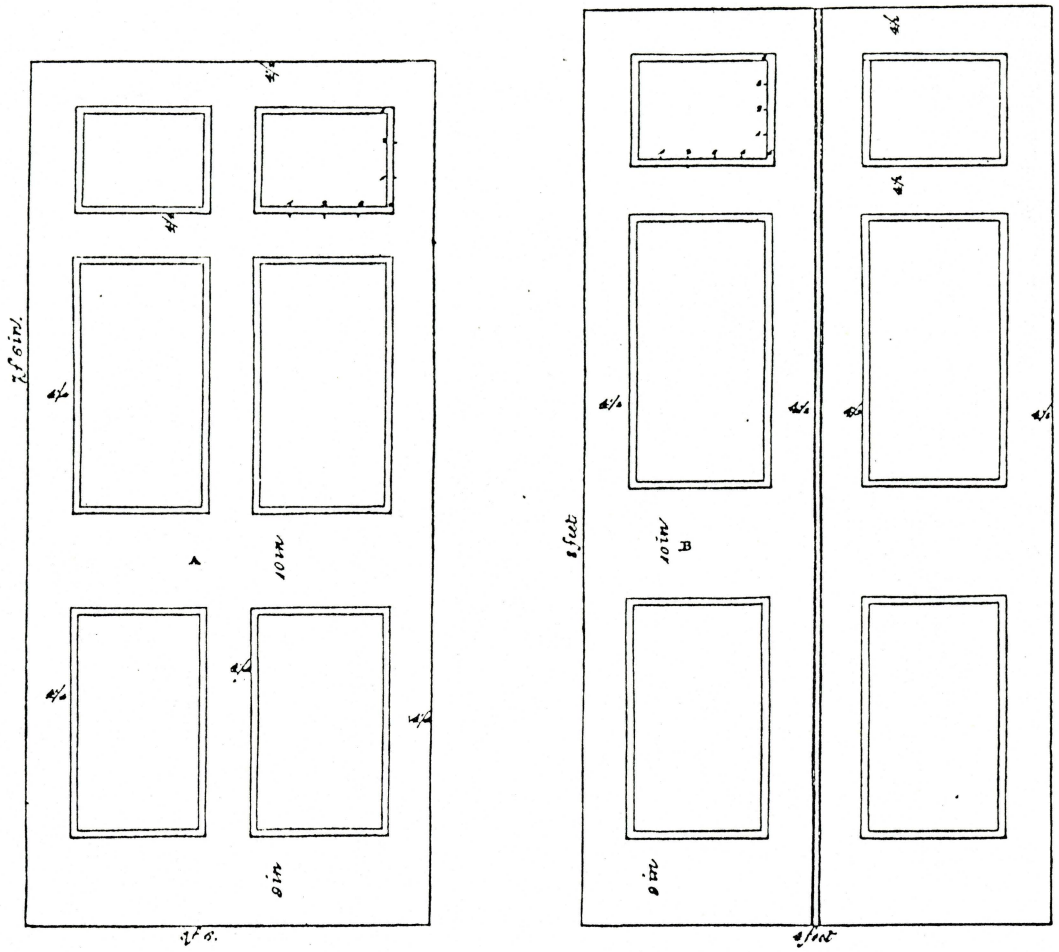


PLATE 27

– Paneled Doors and Fanlights –

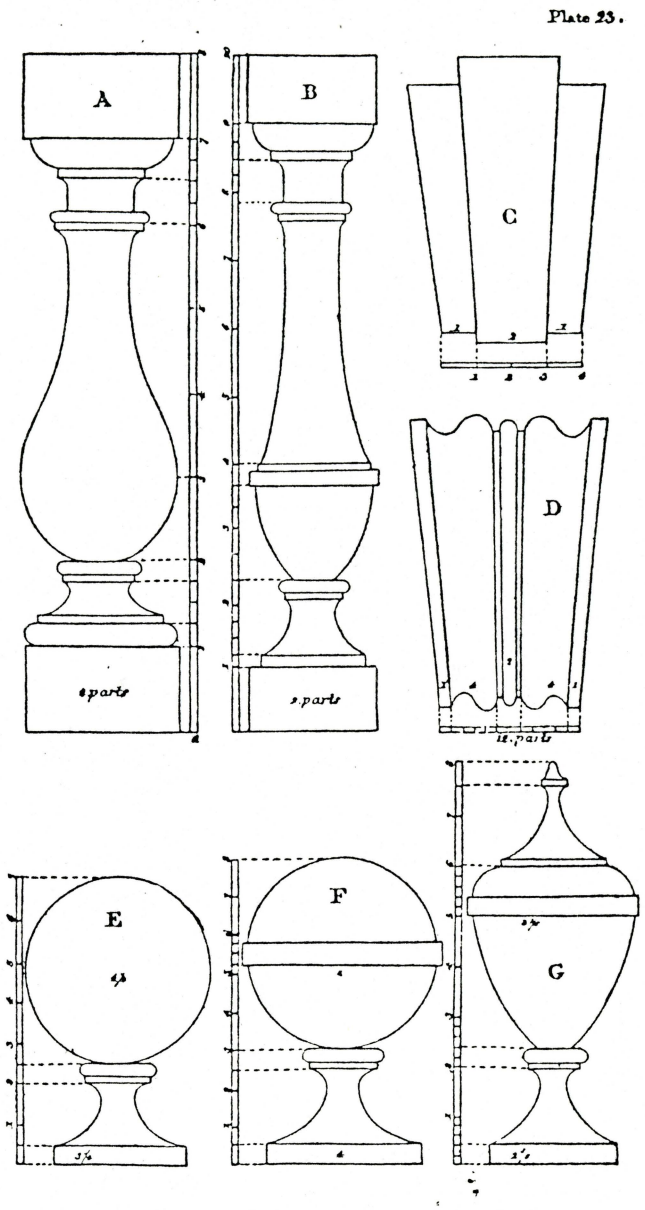
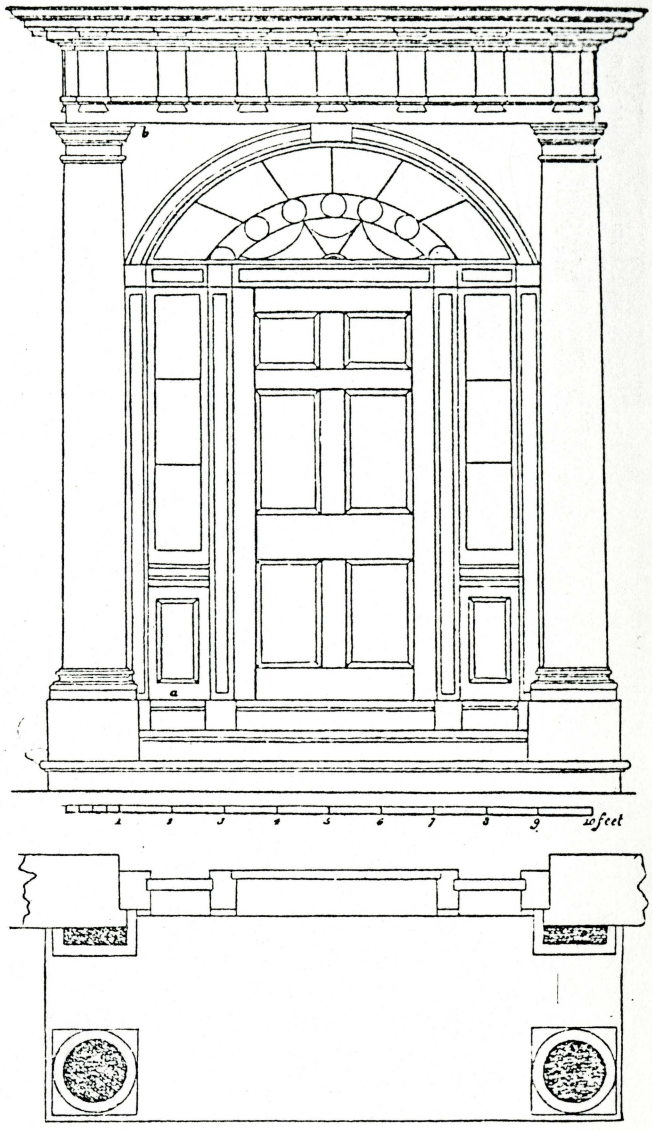


PLATE 28

Balusters and Urns



26.

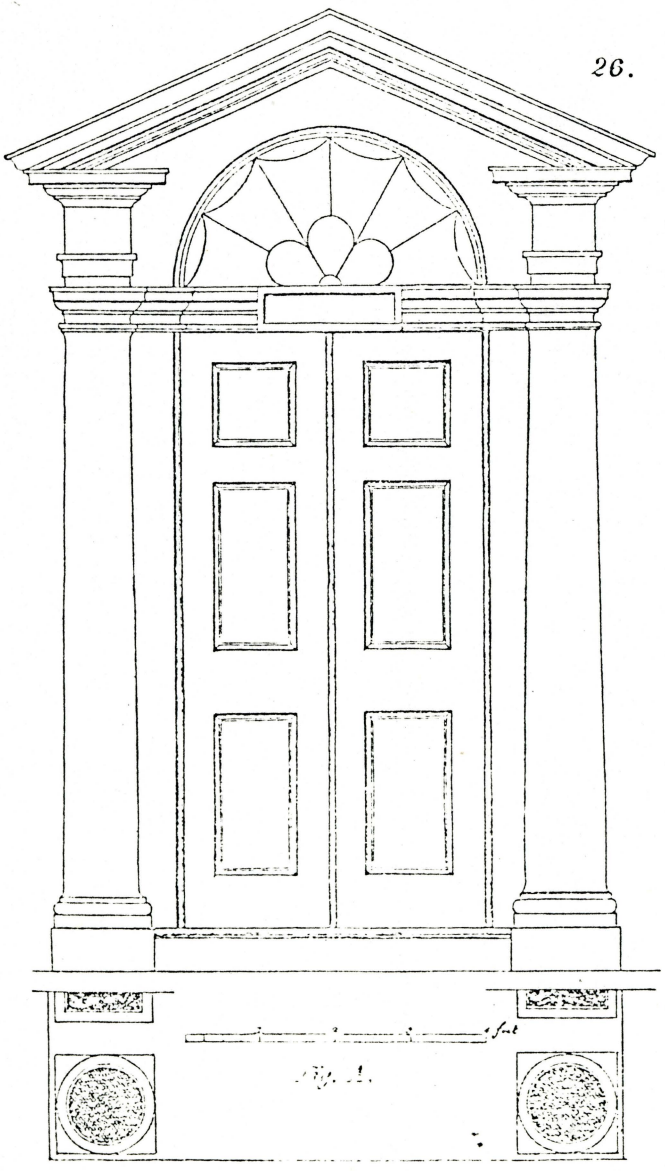


PLATE 29
Doorways

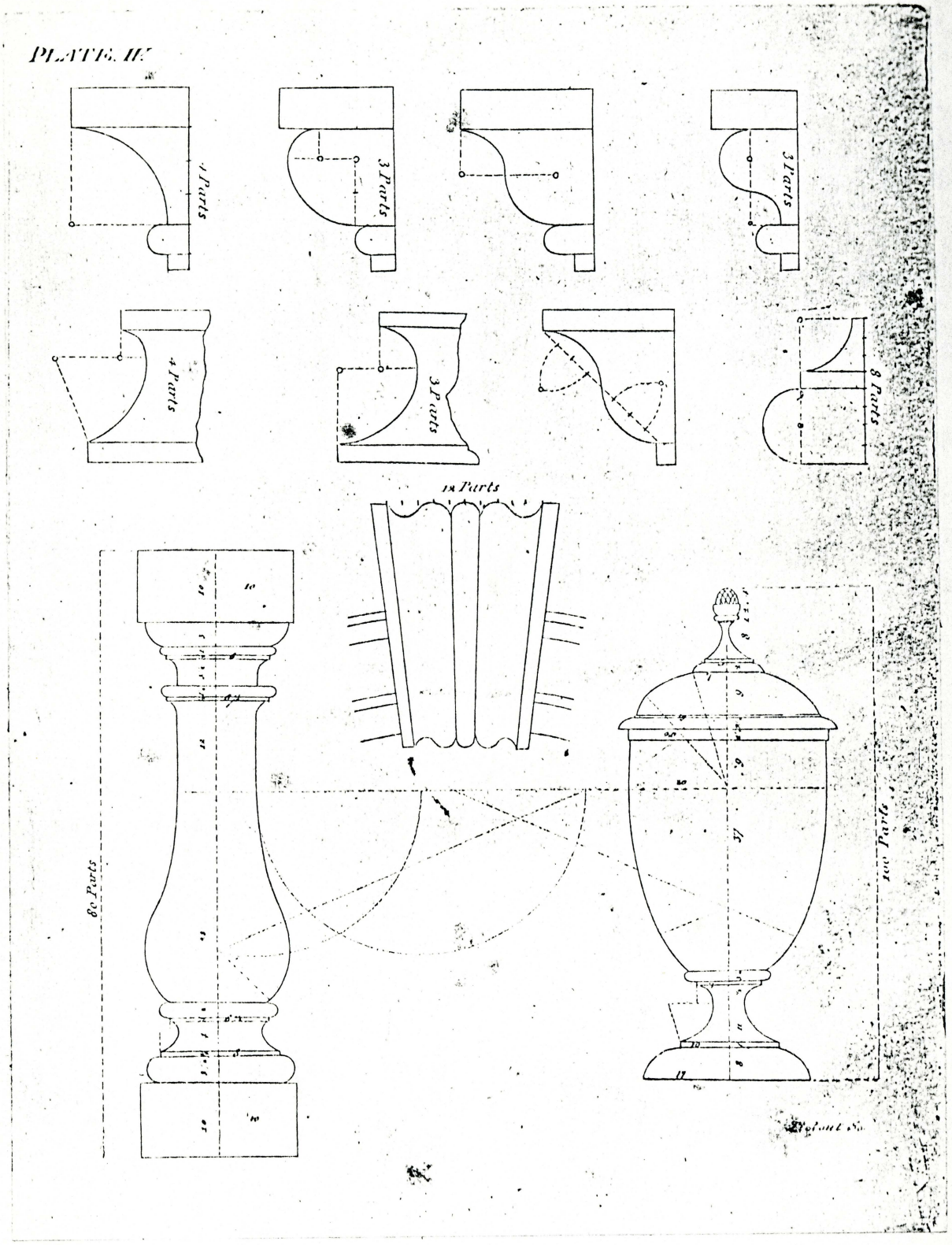


PLATE 30

Baluster, Urn and Moldings

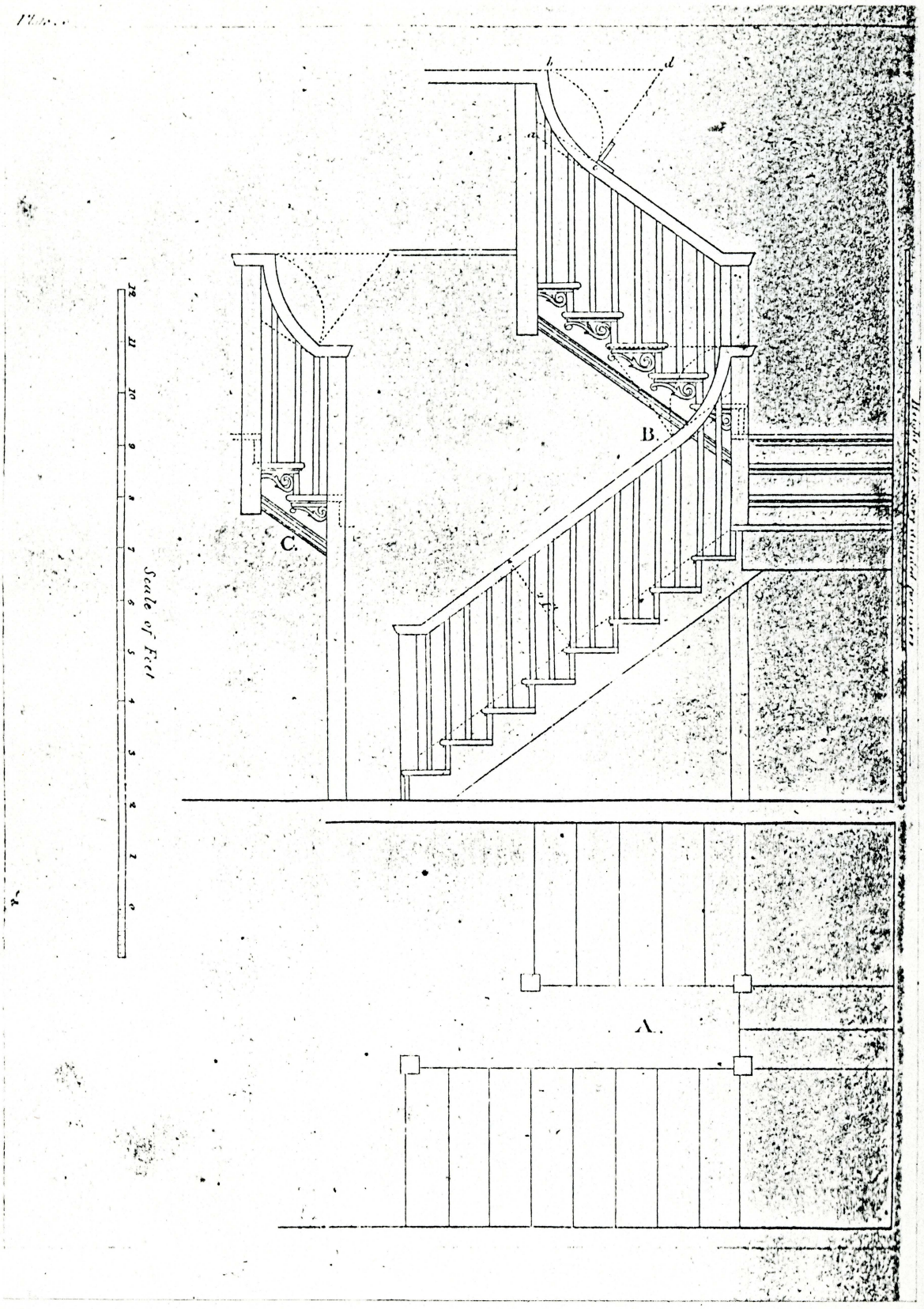
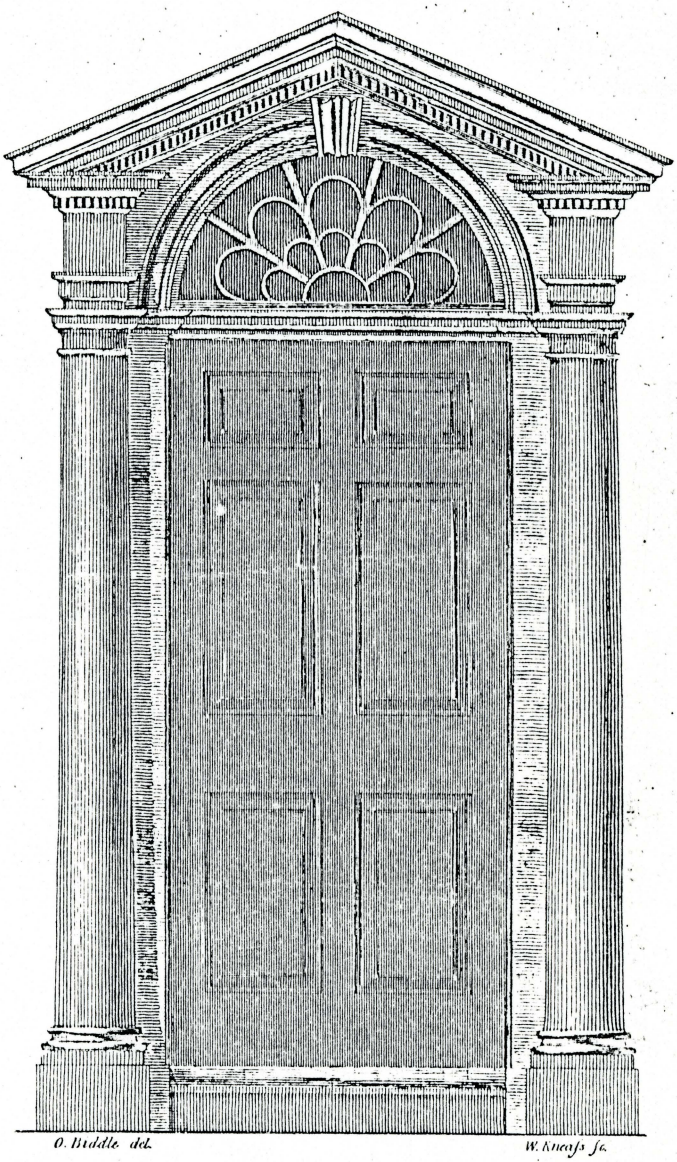


PLATE 31

Stairway



O. Biddle del. W. Kneass Sc.

PLATE 32

Doorway

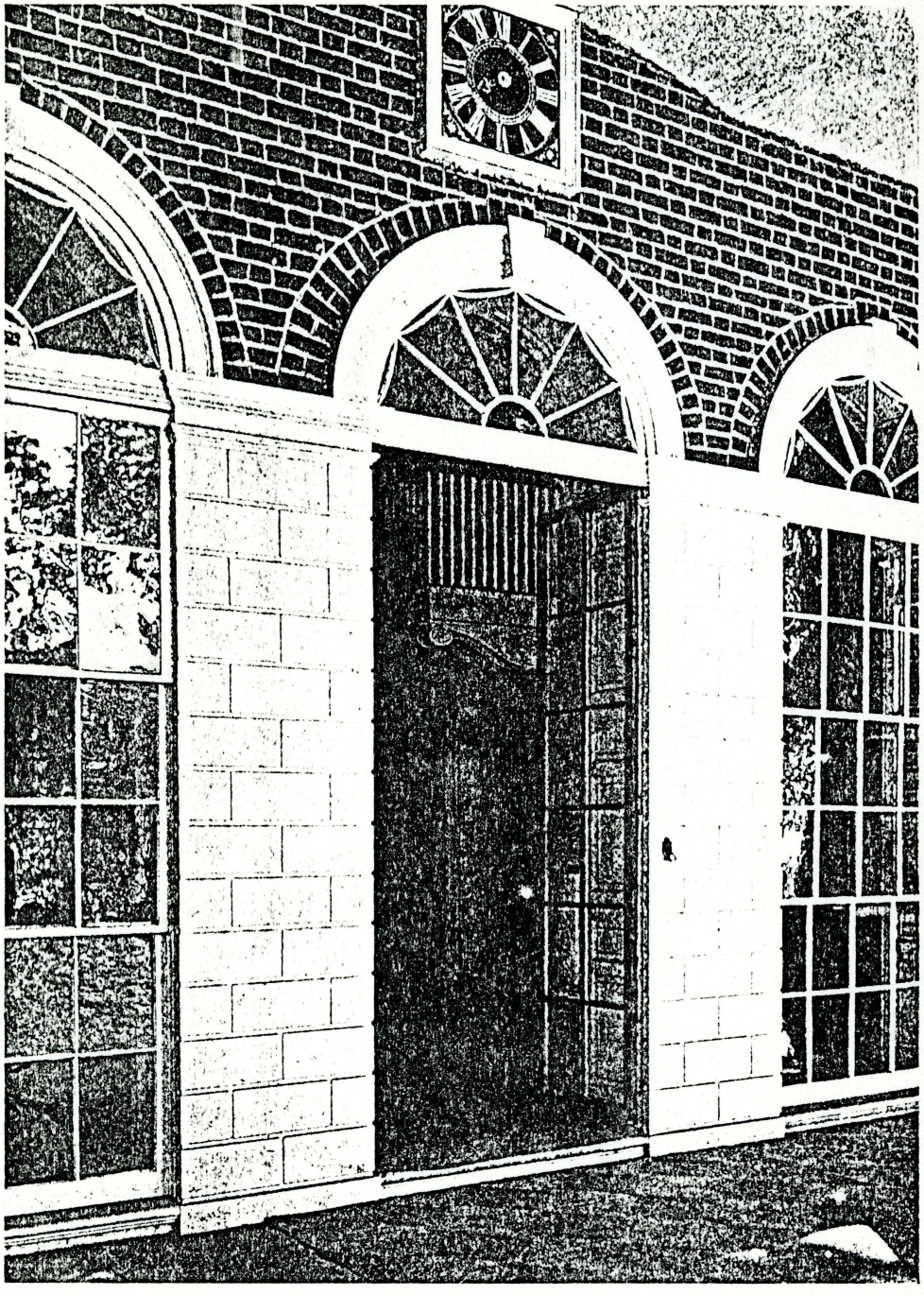


PLATE 33

— East Entrance of Monticello —

PLATE 34

Monticello

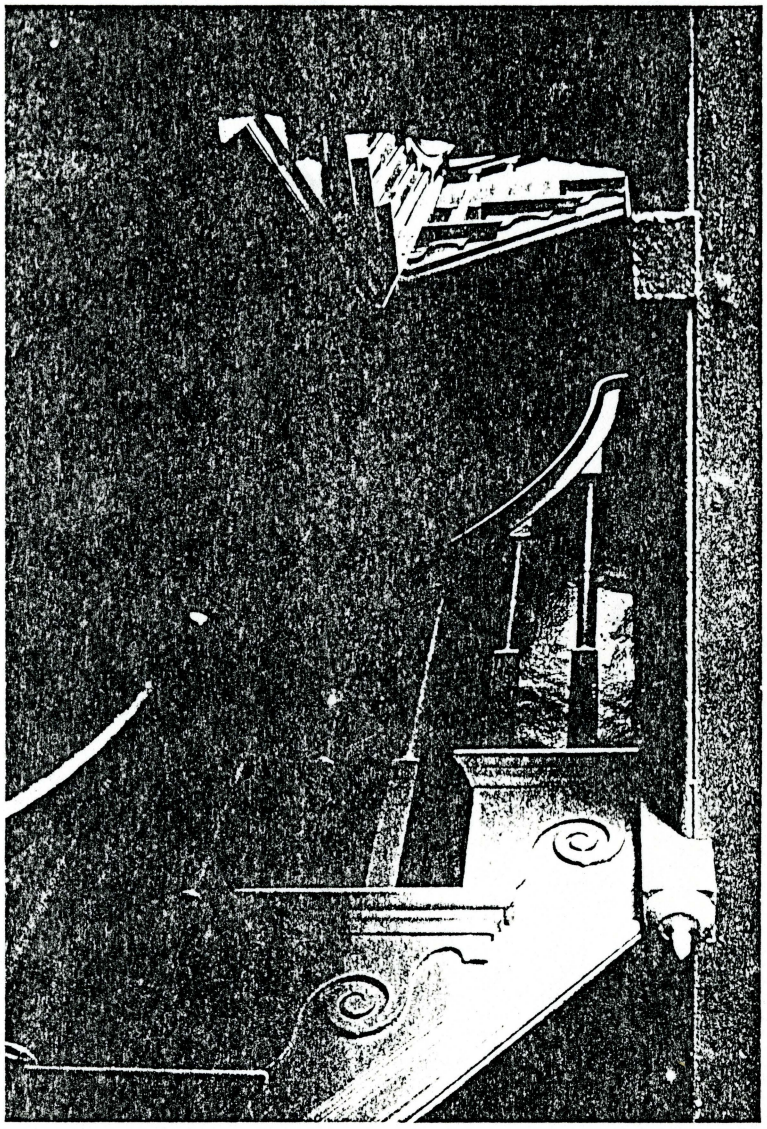


PLATE 35

Stairway at Monticello

served in eastern Virginia. While near Richmond he may well have taken the opportunity to see Jefferson's Neoclassical state capital.

Somewhat later, during the initial construction of the lawn of the University of Virginia, Jordan was "a frequent visitor at Belmont, a country home near Charlottesville, then owned by his brother-in-law, John Winn III."[13] No record is available that Jordan was actually involved with the building of the campus. However, he was certainly aware of the developments there. Judge Archibald Stuart of Staunton in a letter of March 9, 1819, to Thomas Jefferson accuses Jordan and his business partner Samuel Darst of "conspiring to monoplize the brickwork contracts for the building of the University of Virginia."[14]

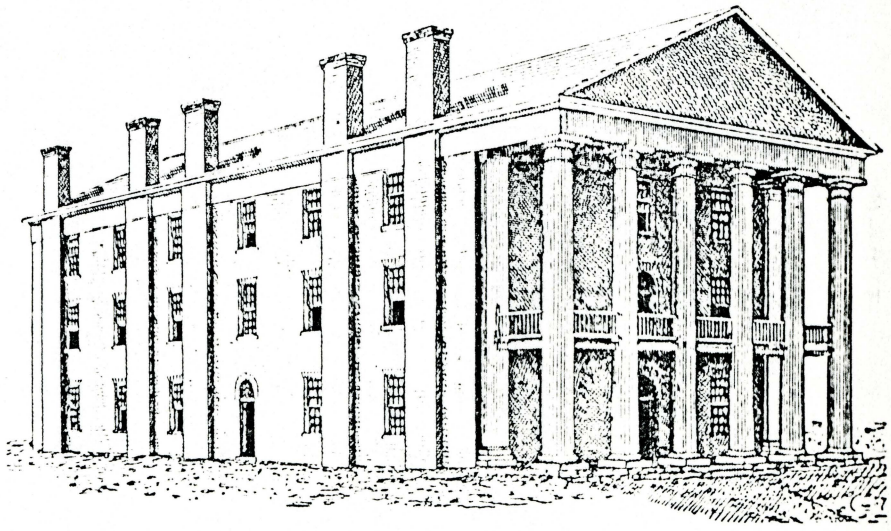
Jordan had obviously taken a great liking to the Roman temple forms being promoted by Jefferson. This influence may be clearly seen in Jordan's own Lexington home of Stono (Plate 36), built in 1818 and said to be "the earliest verified Neoclassical structure west of the Blue Ridge."[15] It has a Roman temple form with tall slender Tuscan orders, double balustraded porches, graceful pediment window, and delicate fanlight over the entrance. Jordan and Darst later built Beaumont (Plate 37) in 1824 which again has elongated Tuscan orders and double balustraded porches. Also, in 1824, they built Washington Hall for Washington College. A conjectural drawing of the original appearance (Plate 38) shows similar Tuscan orders and a second

PLATE 36

Stono

PLATE 37

Beaumont



209. Humphreys's conjectural drawings of the original appearance and floor plan of the center building

PLATE 38

Conjectural Drawing of Washington Hall

story porch with balustrade.

No record has been found linking the firm of Jordan and Darst to the Willson-Walker House. There is, however, strong circumstantial evidence. Jordan was familiar with the work at the University of Virginia. Pavillion IV (Fig. 38) may have provided a model for both Stono and the Willson-Walker House. Details such as the Roman bath windows of Pavillion VI (Fig. 39), Pavillion VII (Fig. 40), and Pavillion X (Fig. 41) may have provided ideas for the gable windows of the Willson-Walker House. The 1820 date of the house falling between Stono of 1818, and Beaumont/Washington Hall of 1824; together with a remarkable similarity of motifs used in all four structures leads one to strongly suspect the hands of Jordan and Darst in the building of the Willson-Walker House.

Fig. 38
Pavillion 1V, Univ. of Va.

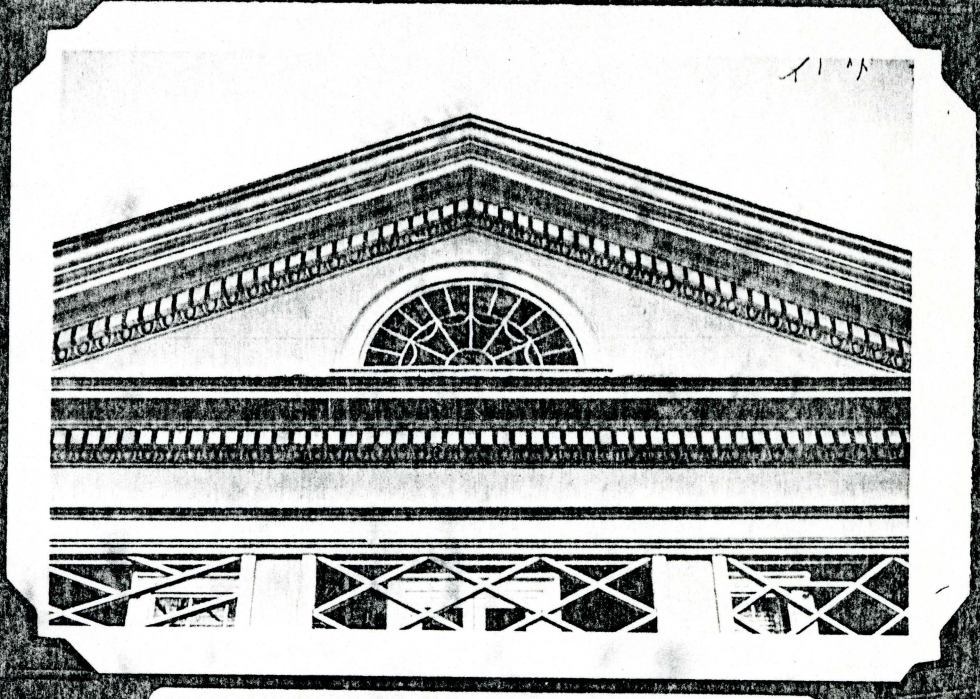


Fig. 39
Roman Bath Window
Pavillion VI, Univ. of Va.

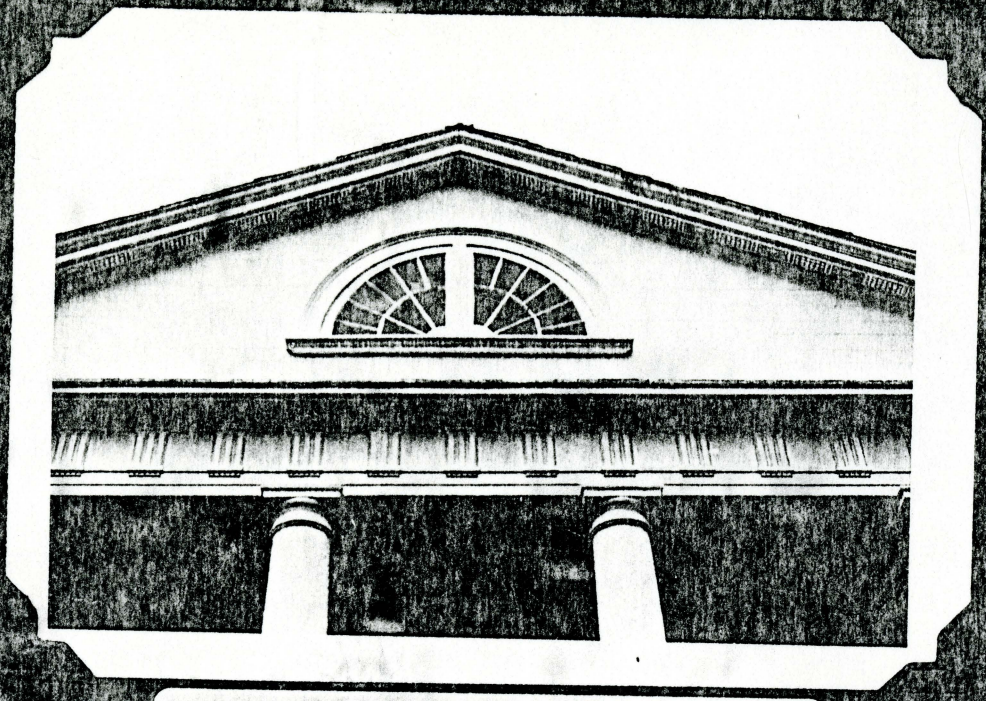


Fig. 40
Roman Bath Window
Pavillion VII, Univ. of Va.

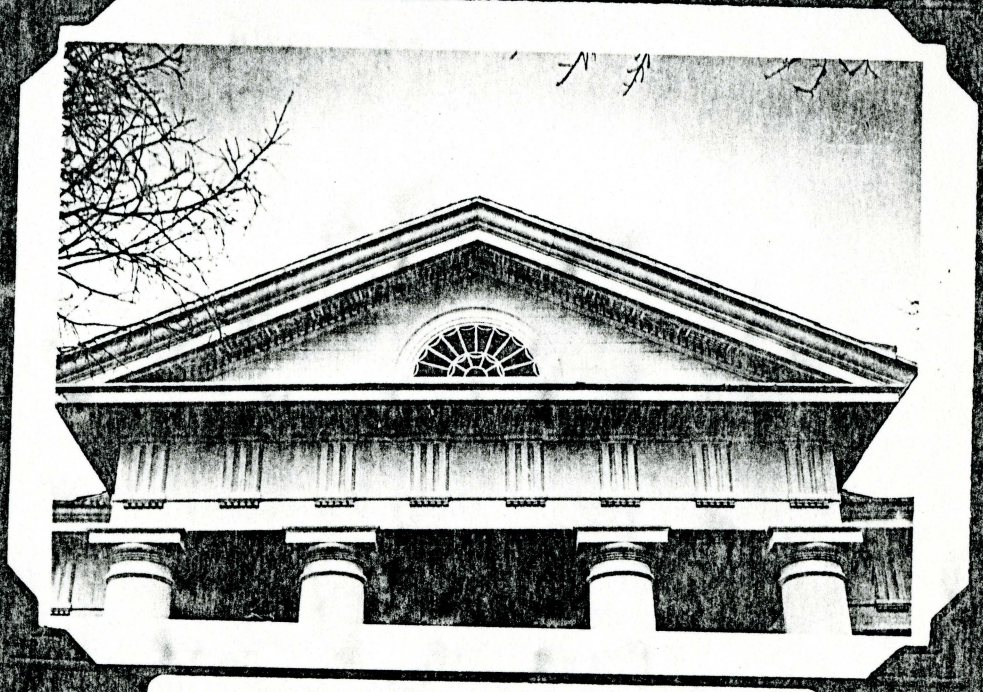


Fig. 41
Roman Bath Window
Pavillion X, Univ. of Va.

A RESTORATION CRITIQUE

Potential restoration of the Willson-Walker House should be considered with attention given to the original and current fabric of the building; the adaptive possibilities the building holds; and its place in the streetscape of North Main.

The most pressing need of the Willson-Walker House is an immediate program of stabilization. In places deterioration of the mortar has progressed to such a point that the structural integrity of the wall is in jeopardy. This is the case of the southwest corner of the building as seen in Fig. 42. Remedial action here would be to stabilize the wall; dig about the foundation and repair the footing, or install a more solid footing; relay the brick in an appropriate manner with a proper lime mortar; and insure that downspouts are properly installed and functioning.

In the front of the building, to the south side of the fanlight, one may see evidence of the relieving brick arch working itself out of the wall (Fig. 43). This is probably due to an accelerated movement of this section of the wall perhaps caused by increased and abusive usage of the door during the building's commercial life, combined with removal of solid support beneath the arch. Immediate, but short ranged, action would be a competent job of repointing the arch. A permanent solution would be removal of the window and replacing the wall; or at the very least installing a steel plate beneath the arch at the springing line with a steel support incorporated into

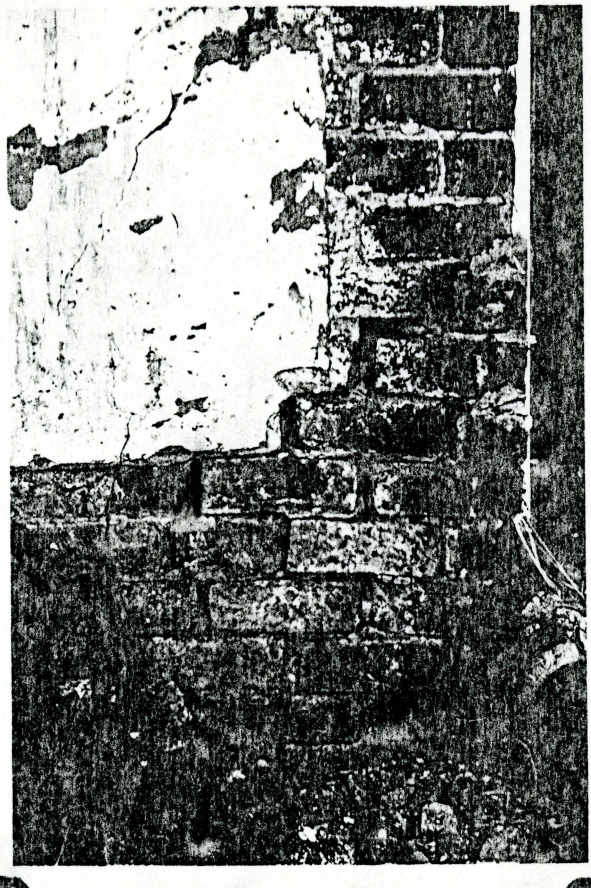


Fig. 42
SW Corner of Willson-Walker House

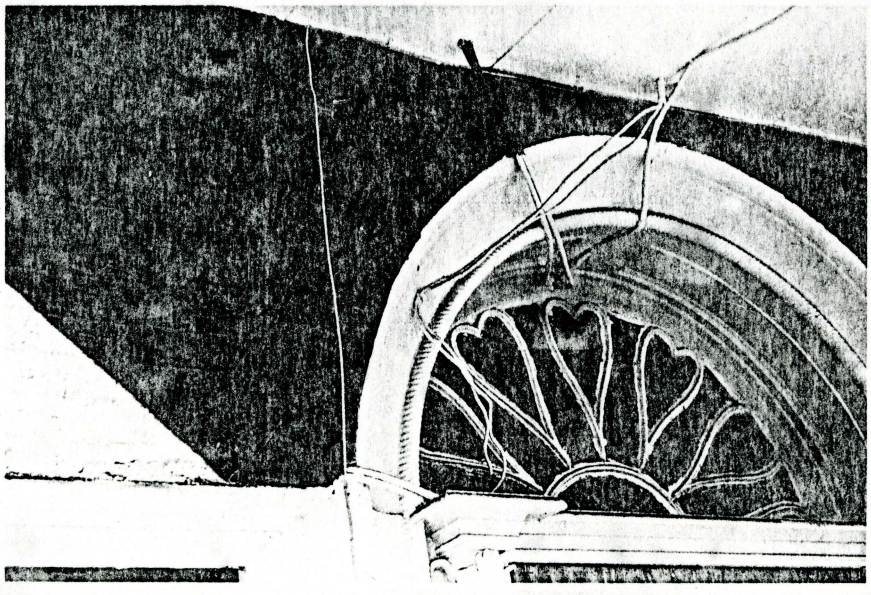


Fig. 43
Displaced Brick Arch

the window frame to carry the load to solid masonry.

At the rear of the kitchen is a large massive chimney exposed to constant weathering from the north and northwest. The mortar has so deteriorated here that there are places where, with little effort, one could pluck the bricks from the chimney like so many apples from a tree. A thorough repointing is in order.

Repointing of brick seems to have been a craft totally foreign to whatever manner of workmen that have inflicted themselves on the Willson-Walker House in the past, and present. A glance at Figs. 10, 11, 15, 17, & 19 will demonstrate the quality of the workmanship these men have preformed. Even more unfortunate than the marred appearance of the building is the fact that the fabric of the brick itself will continue to be damaged as time passes. At best, the mortar used in the repointing was a standard brick mortar mix, having only a percentage of portland cement incorporated. At worst, the mortar was essentially a straight portland cement mix. A very recent repair of the window sills of both stair landing windows, which were found to have some rot, consisted not of repairing the sills with available epoxy resins suitable for such purposes; nor of replacing the sills with appropriate wooden members; but rather of chopping away the old sills, forming the cavities, and pouring new concrete sills. It seems very doubtful that this action can ever be repaired without extensive effort.

The reason one must choose a mortar compatible to the brick or stone with which one is working is:

> Cement pointing is detrimental, particularly if it is applied to soft stone (or bricks) because it is hard, non-resilient, comparatively non-absorbent and therefore does not respond to the variations in the atmosphere to the same extent as the stone or brickwork with which it is in contact. If hard pointing is employed, the physical action causes rapid weathering and disintegration of the softer stone or brickwork. ... Soft hand-made brick or underburnt bricks, deteriorate rapidly when they are set and/or pointed up in Portland or other hard setting cement. In fact, the greater the difference in density of the bricks to the mortar, the greater is the degree and rapidity of disintegrating of the bricks. ... This erosion is due to the fact that practically all moisture absorbed in the wall is held in suspension in the softer textured bricks and when frost supervenes the surface of the brick gradually disintegrates.[16]

The final pressing stabilization need is the repair of the Roman bath window of the western gable end. Fig. 13 illustrates the state of decay in which it has fallen. The makeshift sill should be removed and a new one installed; the frame repaired where needed; and the sashes either repaired to their original condition or used as models for duplicates. Once the house and kitchen were stabilized, one would need to determine the extent to which other restoration projects would be feasible.

The streetscape of North Main Street from Washington Street to Henry Street (Plate 39 and Figs. 44 & 45) has received a great deal of attention over the last ten years from

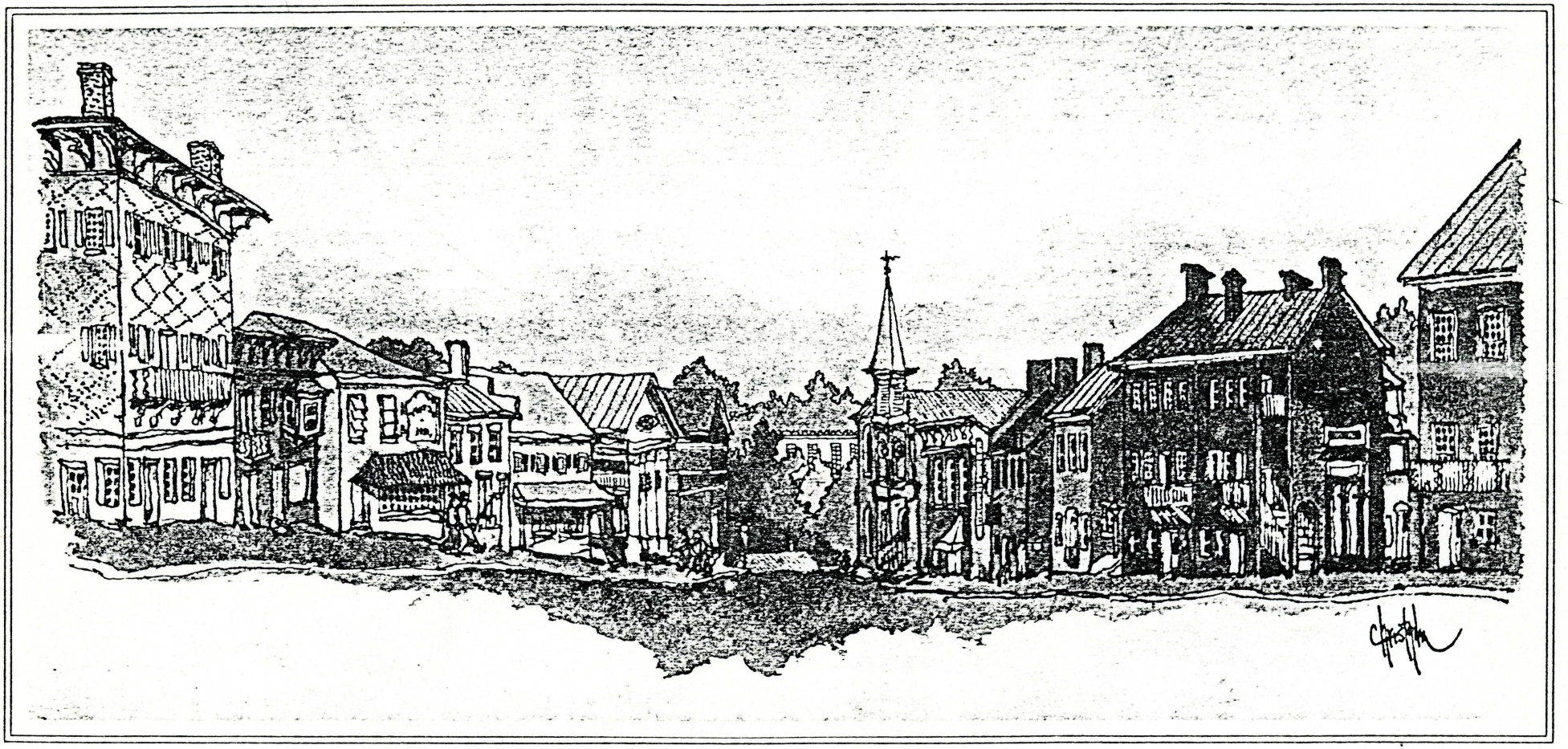


PLATE 39

North Main Street

Fig. 44
W Side of North Main Street

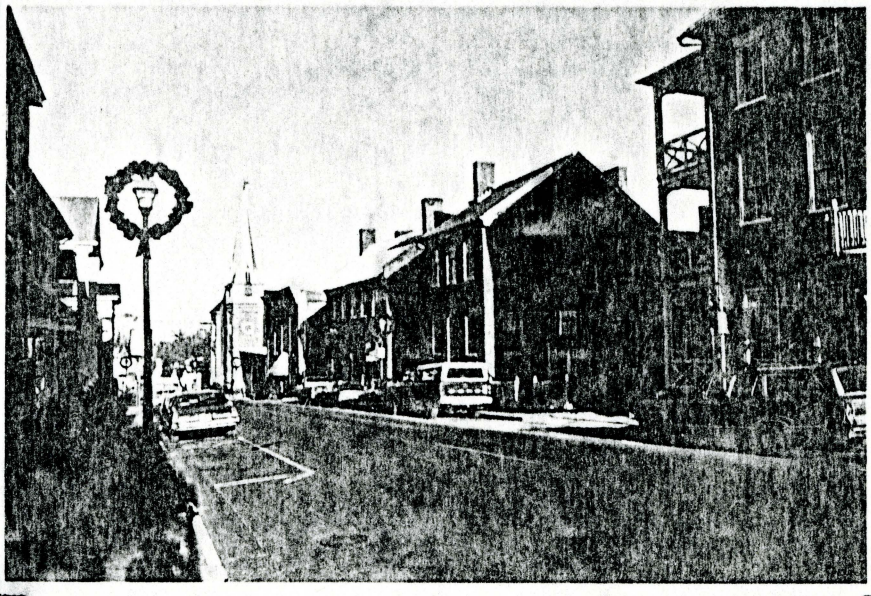


Fig. 45
E Side of North Main Street

organizations such as the APVA, National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the Historic Lexington Foundation. The area is included in Lexington's "Historical Area" and is among the central business district entered in the National Register of Historic Places. Recent activity, especially by the H.L.F., has resulted in the exterior restoration of four buildings and attractive refurbishing of many others in this block. The energy and desire is in Lexington to see the Willson-Walker House restored. A key word, however, is feasibility.

Should the activities of the building remain as they are, namely a restaurant on the first floor and rental apartments on the second story, several steps intermediate to total restoration could be undertaken. The simplest, but an essential step, would be to repoint the walls of the house, kitchen, and hyphen in a skillful manner with an appropriate mortar. At this time it would be wise to explore the possibility of cleaning the paint from the front facade to let the Flemish bond be seen. Also painting the roof an appropriate color could be undertaken. Other steps a bit more bold could include: installation of windows and doors more in sympathy with the originals on both sides and back; removal of the front window by the entrance; re-opening the southern first story window; replacing the front double doors and large window with more correct windows at a height compatible with the front entrance; or in a major move, putting the windows and door back to their original positions and reinstating a first

story, balustraded, side-entrance wooden porch. This of course would mean major renovation on the interior.

At this point, one would have to review the ultimate goal of the restoration work being done, and the ultimate goal of the individual(s) or organization funding the work. As previously stated, the only work absolutely necessary is that of stabilization. The appearance of the building even now does fit well into the context of the streetscape. The repointing would be wise to avoid future problens, as well as to enhance the inherent beauty of the house. This enhancement would also be true for the other cosmetic niceties. But there would hopefully come a point in the work that one would realize that the Willson-Walker House is a unique and valuable building which if competently restored to its original facade would provide a brillant example of early 19th C. Neoclassism west of the Blue Ridge.

To make such a restoration compatible with its present commercial situation would indeed require major expenditures. However, the house, already in an Historic District, may well succeed in being placed individually on the National Register. This would open the way for tax incentives for its rehabilitation as well as potential grants-in-aid for preservation and/or restoration. Here then might be the means of helping to finance a restoration of the Willson-Walker House suitable to both commercial success and the cultural enrichment of Lexington.

ENDNOTES

1. Talbot Hamlin, Greek Revival Architecture in America, Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1944, p. 6.

2. Henry Boley, Lexington In Old Virginia, Garrett & Massie, Richmond, 1935, p. 53.

3. W.A. Ruff, "Reminiscences of Lexington 65 & 70 Years Ago," Rockbridge County News, February 20, 1902.

4. Deed Book CC-113.

5. Charles W. Turner, ed., Mrs. McCulloch's Stories of Ole Lexington, McClure Press, Verona, Va., 1972, p. 57.

6. Edmund Tompkins, Rockbridge County, Virginia, Whittet & Shepperson, Richmond, 1952, p. 128.

7. Ibid, p. 129.

8. Ibid, p. 127.

9. Ibid, p. 129.

10. Ibid, p. 128-129.

11. Royster Lyle, Jr., and Pamela Simpson, The Architecture of Historic Lexington, University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1977, p. 22.

12. L. Moody Simms, Jr., "John Jordan Builder and Entrepreneur," Virginia Cavalcade, Vol. 23 (Summer 1973), p. 20.

13. Jerry Donovan, "John Jordan, Virginia Builder," Journal Of The Society Of Architectural Historians, Vol. IX, No. 3 (1950), p. 19.

14. Ibid, p. 18.

15. L. Moody Simms, Jr., "John Jordan Builder and Entrepreneur," Virginia Cavalcade, Vol. 23 (Summer 1973), p. 25.

16. Harley McKee, Introduction To Early American Masonry, National Trust For Historic Preservation, Washington, 1973, p. 72-73.

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Ruff, W.A., "Reminiscences of Lexington, 65 & 70 Years Ago," The Rockbridge County News, February 20, 1902, Lexington, Va.

Simms, L. Moody, Jr., "John Jordan Builder and Entrepreneur," Virginia Cavalcade, Vol. 23 (Summer 1973), p. 19-26.

APPENDIX A

Chain of Title.

Location of Records: Transfers reference Deed Books (DB) by book letter or number and page. Records are located in the Records Room of the Clerk of the Court, Rockbridge County Courthouse, Lexington, Virginia.

DB J-212
Deeded: March 12, 1815 Recorded: March 19, 1815
To: William Willson
From: Dr. Samuel L. Campbell
Price: $2700

"a certain lot---on which the said Samuel L. Campbell formerly resided and on which the said William Willson now resides." Boundaries of the lot were: on the south east by the Main Street fifty seven feet in front; on the north east by a line of John Alexander's lot two hundred and fifty nine feet eight inches; on the north west by Jefferson Street fifty seven feet; and on the south west by William Caruthers' lot.

DB CC-113
Deeded: April 12, 1850 Recorded: July 13, 1852
To: James G. Paxton
From: William C. Lewis, Administrator of William Willson, deceased
Price: $3000

To settle a chancery cause the Rockbridge County Circuit Court ordered on April 15, 1845 that William C. Lewis, administrator of William Willson's estate, offer at public auction "the houses and lots on the main street in Lexington". An auction was held after the necessary notification period and several of the smaller houses on a portion of the lot were sold. However, due to insufficient bidding the "mansion house and lot" was not sold until a second auction was held April 12, 1847. The new property boundaries are described as:

"Beginning on the main street at the corner of Mrs. Susan S. Willson's lot (Susan was the widow of William Willson and had purchased the two smaller houses and lot at the first auction of 1845) thence down said street forty eight feet to the alley running between said lot and the lot of James R. Jordan thence with said alley to Jefferson Street thence up Jefferson Street to a stake 35 feet from the upper corner of Susan S. Willson lot. Said 35 feet being the sidth of the lot sold to Susan S. Willson, on Jefferson Street. Thence a straight line to a stake near the smoke house on Mrs. Willson's lot

thence twelve feet in the direction of the kitchen on said Paxtons lot to a stake, thence eighty two feet passing the back part of the Brick House on Mrs. Willson's twelve inch from the wall of said house and with the line of the said Susan S. Willson lot to the beginning..."

Please see Plate 4 for a copy of the plat drawn on the bill of sale of the 1845 purchase.

DB FF-428
Deeded: December 30, 1857 Recorded: January 2, 1858
To: Hugh L. Wilson
From: James G. Paxton and his wife Ann Maria
Price: $4000

DB II-240
Deeded: January 28, 1863 Recorded: February 4, 1863
To: Calvin McCorkle
From: Hugh L. Wilson and his wife Esthen
Price: $7200

To settle a chancery cause, the Rockbridge County Circuit Court issued an order on April 25, 1868, directing the sheriff of Rockbridge County to hold a public auction for the sale of the house and lot. The auction was held August 6, 1868, and A.M. Glasgow and S.J. Campbell bought the property. On September 24, 1868, the sale was confirmed and S.J. Campbell disclaimed all interest in the title. A.M. Glasgow received the deed August 20, 1875, from John LeBoude, a special commissioner of the Circuit Court of Rockbridge County, who certified that A.M. Glasgow had satisfied the terms of a second chancery cause which involved the house and lot.

DB 90-62
Deeded: September 18, 1899 Recorded: April 10, 1900
To: J.S. LaRowe
From: W.T. Shields and Paul M. Penick, special commisioners
Price: $1500

Prior to this date two small strips of land had been sold to J. McAdair, current owner of the neighboring lot formerly owned by Susan S. Willson. These sales were deeded March 7, 1889 (DB 53-173 - Please see Plate 5) and September 24, 1895 (DB 88-67). At Alexander Glasgow's death a public auction was ordered to settle a "chancery cause pending in the Circuit Court of Rockbridge County, Virginia, entitled F.A. McChesney's Admr. vs. A.M. Glasgow's Admr. and others, and Rockbridge Savings Bank vs. A.M. Glasgow's Admr. and others."

DB 99-419
Deeded: August 28, 1906 Recorded: August 30, 1906
To: L.D. Hamric
From: J.S. LaRowe and his wife Sarah
Price: $2650

"...all that certain house and lot fronting on Main Street in the town of Lexington, Virginia, on the west side of the said street, extending back between parallel lines, or lines about parallel through from Main Street to Jefferson Street, adjoining the lot of J. McAdair on the south west, and with an alley on the north east adjoining the lot of Miss Nannie Jordan, and generally known as the Glasgow house and lot."

DB 111-141
Deeded: June 22, 1911 Recorded: July 1, 1911
To: Harry L. Walker
From: L.D. Hamric and his wife C.E. Hamric
Price: $2800

DB 122-461
Deeded: April 28, 1919 Recorded: May 1, 1919
To: J.M. Withrow
From: Harry L. Walker and his wife Eliza
Price: $10 "and other good and valuable consideration"

Harry Walker here sold the rear portion of the lot which fronted on Jefferson Street and extended back toward the kitchen 166 feet. This transaction produced the boundaries which the property still maintains.

APPENDIX B

Tax Records.

Location of Records: Tax records are located in bound volumes in the basement of the Rockbridge County Courthouse, Lexington, Virginia.

Tax records were examined from the years 1813 through 1828, and include ownership of the property by Dr. Samuel Campbell and William Willson. The year 1820 is of particular interest due to the addition of a building valued at $1450 on William Willson's lot.

Date	Name	Yearly rent of lot	Value of lot	Total Value	Tax
1813	Dr. Samuel Campbell	$60	-	-	$1.24
1814	"	"	-	-	$1.66
	Note: William Willson in possession				
1815	"	"	-	-	$2.18
1816	William Willson	$60	-	-	$1.80
1817	"	"	-	-	"
1818	"	"	-	-	"
1819	"	"	-	-	"
1820	"	$100	$1450	$2000	$3.00
1821	"	"	"	"	$2.25
1822	"	"	"	"	"
1823	"	"	"	"	$2.03
1824	"	$75	"	"	$1.52
1825	"	$100	"	"	$2.03
1826	"	"	"	"	"
1827	"	$50	"	"	$1.02
1828	"	"	"	"	"

APPENDIX C

Probate Inventory.

Location of Records: Will Books are located in the Records Room of the Clerk of the Court, Rockbridge County Courthouse, Lexington, Virginia.

A probate inventory of William Willson's estate was conducted October 20, 1840 by Robert White and James D. Davidson, and recorded in Will Book #9, page 52. A selected listing is presented below with a conjectural placement of the items into various rooms. Original spellings and abbreviations have been retained.

1 eight day clock and case
1 china press
1 side board
1 old piano
1 walnut dining table
1 small table
6 chares
1 pr. bellows — Dining Room
1 pr. brass andirons
1 pr. shovel and tongs
4 brass candle sticks
1 looking glass
1 rag carpet 20 yds.
1 lot glass ware
1 glass bowl
1 dozen glass tumblers
(sets of silver ware, china ware and other dining amenities)

1 sofa
1 pr. card tables
1 dozen cane chares
2 rocking chares
1 brass fender
1 pr. fine shovel & tongs
1 pr. brass andirons — Hall
1 mantle glass
2 glass candle shades
1 mantle lamp
1 pr. candle sticks
2 glass lamps
1 fine carpet 40 yds.

1 rug
2 window curtins
1 copy Shakespears plays 10 No.
1 set dining tables
1 map of Virginia — Passage
1 passage lamp
8 chares
1 fine piano and cover
1 side board

1 clothes press poplar
1 ward robe
1 backgammon box
1 big wheel
1 set drawers
4 green chares
1 washstand — Upstairs Chamber
1 dressing glass
1 dressing table
1 couch
1 carpet 16 yds.
1 mattrass
1 feather bed bolster and pillows
1 acorn bedstead & sacking bottom

2 rag carpets 20 yds. old
1 mattrass
1 feather bed
1 bed stead and sacking bottom
1 walnut bureau — Upstairs Chamber
1 dressing glass
1 poplar workstand
1 dressing table
1 pr. brass andirons
1 wire fender
1 pr. shovel & tongs

6 red chares
1 lg. F. Bible
1 mahogany bureau
1 wash stand — Upstairs Chamber
1 wash bowl and pitcher (broke)
2 high post bed steads and sacking bottoms
2 feather beds bolsters and pillows
1 easy chare

Also listed in the inventory and of interest were:

1 refrigerator (This term in an 1840 context refers to a coiled metal worm, or system of tubes, used to cool hot liquid or vapours)
1 dining room stove
1 10 plate stove (The existence of these stoves indicate that by 1840, some modification of the fireplaces may have been made to accomodate stoves for heating or cooking purposes. An example of a 10 plate stove may be seen in Plate 6)

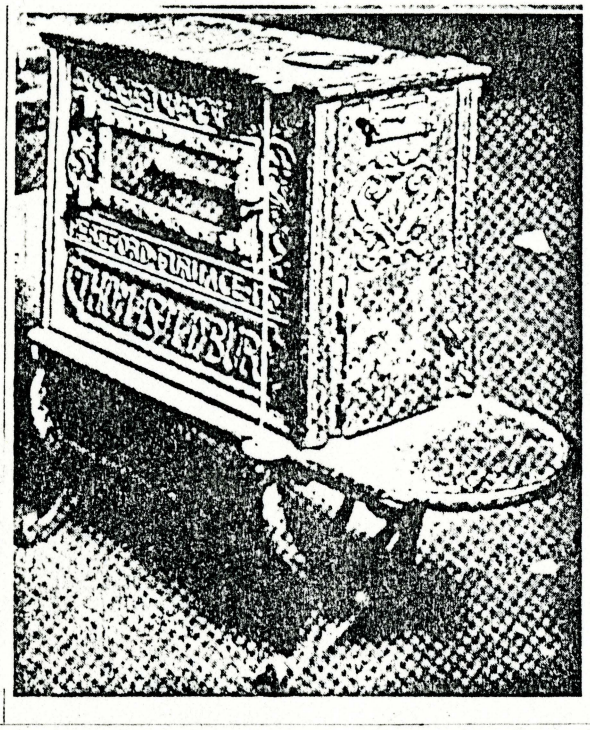


Illustration 11

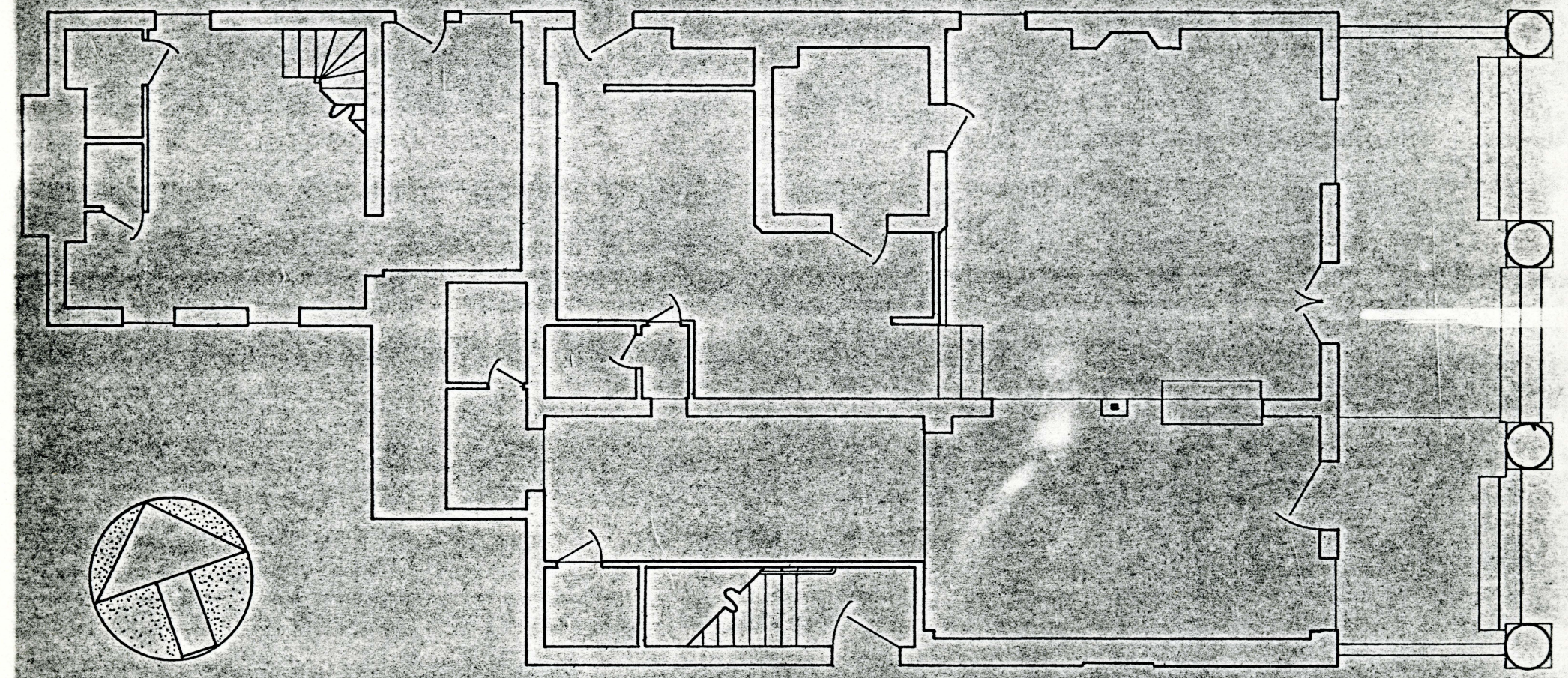
Ten plate stove made by Thomas Maybury, Hereford Furnace, Berks County, Pa., c. 1767. Note the still prevalent Germanic influence in the design and the absence of a raised collar on the top plate for a stove pipe. This stove measures on its side plate, thirty-six inches long and thirty-four inches high.

Photo: Reprinted from Henry C. Mercer, Bible In Iron

PLATE 6

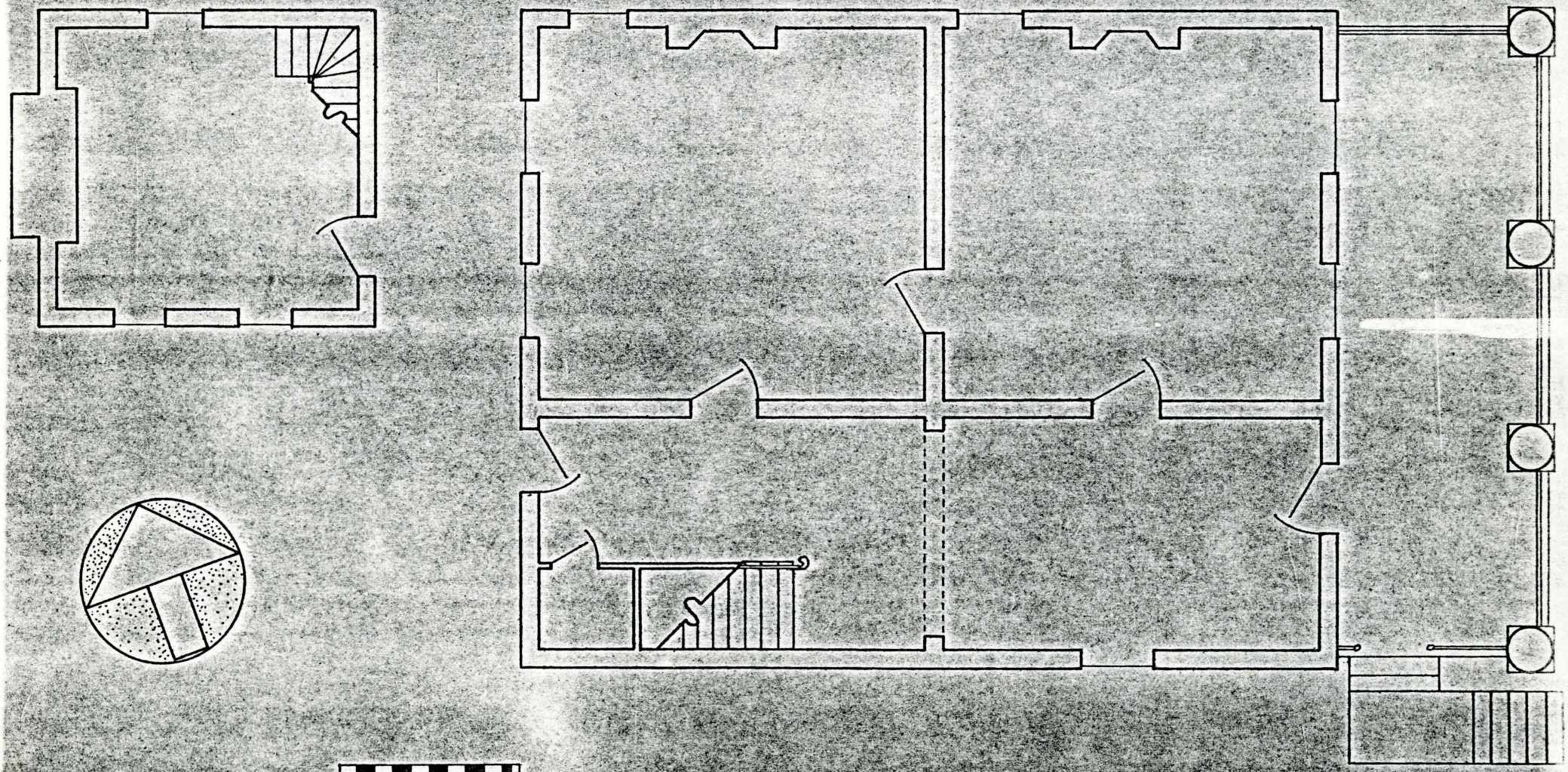
Ten Plate Stove

APPENDIX D



SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"

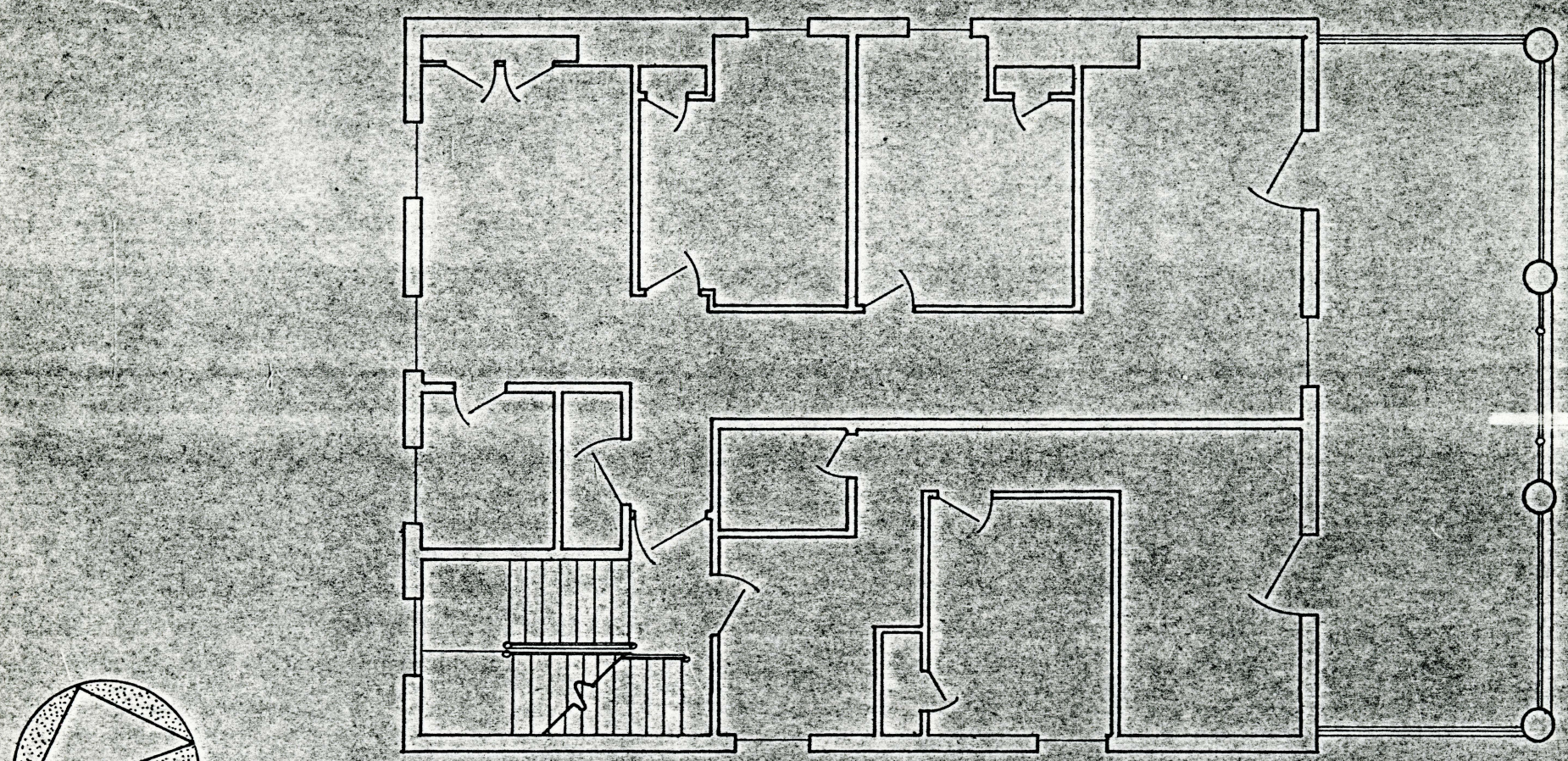
WILLSON-WALKER HOUSE
First Floor Plan

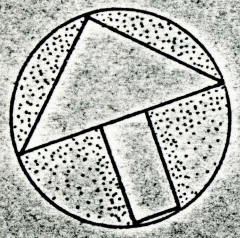


SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"

WILLSON-WALKER HOUSE

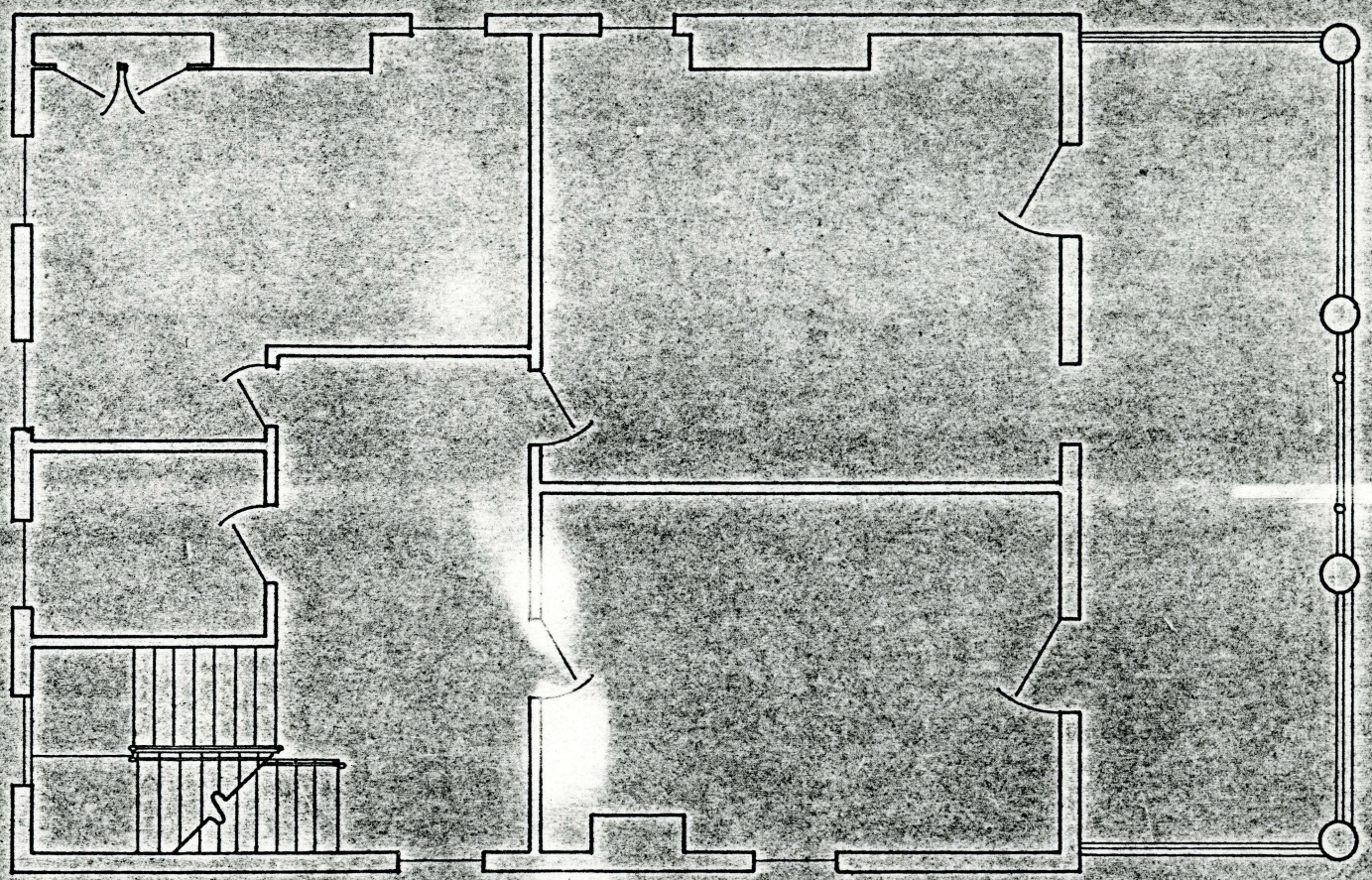
First Floor Plan
(Restored)

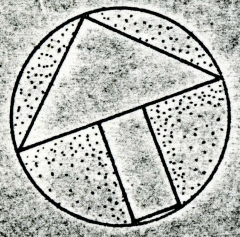




SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"

WILLSON-WALKER HOUSE
Second Floor Plan





SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"

WILLSON-WALKER HOUSE

Second Floor Plan
(Restored)

ADDENDUM

ADDENDUM

Shortly after the completion of the preceding study, additional material in the form of Mutual Assurance Society Policies taken by Dr. Samuel Campbell and William Willson was located. The written and sketched descriptions included in these fire insurance policies are important documentation tools and are here presented with a short discussion of their pertinence to William Willson and his house.

Plate A-1 is the 1802 policy of Dr. Samuel Campbell. The house is described as "Brick dwelling house two stories high 22 by 19 feet covered with wood." It had a "wooden porch 4 by 8 feet" on one end, a "wooden wing 18 by 10 feet" on the other end, and is shown to have two end chimneys. This is the dwelling which William Willson purchased in 1815 (DB J-212) and contrary to earlier conjection is the front building rather than the "Back Brick House" of Plates 3 and 4.

Plate A-2 is a policy Willson took out on the property in 1816. By this time the dwelling house had been joined by another one story brick "dwelling house" measuring 20 by 10 feet and having a wooden roof. It appears that the older house had a central front entrance with a rear door in an end bay. This door faces the front central door of the back structure. The two buildings are shown connected by a covered walkway or porch. This later dwelling might have been a detached kitchen and/or quarters for slaves Willson may have owned at this time. The next policy, written in 1822 (Plate A-3), shows

both structures unchanged.

The Willson-Walker House first appears in a policy of 1825 (Plate A-4) as a "dwelling house of brick covered with wood, 45 by 36 feet, two stories" fronted by a "portico 12 feet, set on pillar(s) of brick" with a "kitchen, brick covered with wood, 16 by 17 feet," connected to the main house by a "store room." This store room is elaborated on in an 1831 policy (Plate A-5) as being 6 by 8 feet and has a wall drawn whose thickness is equal to the brick walls of the house and kitchen. Although the store room appears very early in the existance of the Willson-Walker House, the brick work as seen in the current hyphen as well as the very close proximity of the south wall of the store room to the northwest dining room window indicates that it was probably incorporated as an early addition. Also in 1831 Willson renewed his policy on the two smaller brick buildings. Plate A-6 shows both are now described as offices. The dimensions of the back building have expanded to 18 1/2 by 30 1/2 feet and it appears to be fully attached to the front building.

An 1838 policy (Plate A-7) indicates that the connection between the two buildings may be a porch. The back building is now said to be of 1 1/2 stories. In this policy a metal roof is reported to be on the main house, although the store room and kitchen still have wooden roofs. Also the store room is here said to have walls of brick. A rather curious development occurs in that the store room and kitchen are shown to

be southwest of the house rather than to the northwest.

The last policy located (Plate A-8) was taken in 1845 by the heirs of William Willson. It describes the roof of the main house as now being partly wood. The connection between the two smaller brick houses is specified as a one story porch and apparently an addition to the rear brick building had been built by the time the policy was taken out in September of 1845.

R2 V20 No. 65

Declaration for Assurance.

I THE underwritten Saml. L. Campbell residing at Lexington [illegible] in the county of Rockbridge do hereby declare for Assurance in the Mutual Assurance Society against Fire on Buildings of the State of Virginia, established the 26th December, 1795, agreeable to the several acts of the General Assembly of this state, to wit:

My one building on [illegible] now occupied by myself situated between the Lot of [illegible] and that of [illegible] in the county of Rockbridge their dimensions, situation, and contiguity to other buildings or whatever, what the walls are built of, and what the buildings are covered with, are specified in the hereunto annexed description of the said buildings on the plat, signed by me and the appraisers, and each valued by them as appears by their certificate hereunder, to wit:

The dwelling house	marked A at	800	Dollars, say eight hundred	Dollars.
The	do B at	do		do
The	do C at	do		do
The	do D at	do		do
The	do E at	do		do
The	do F at	do		do
The	do G at	do		do
The	do H at	do		do
		800		

Say Eight hundred Dollars in all.

I do hereby declare and affirm that I hold the above mentioned buildings with the land on which they stand, in fee-simple, and that they are not, nor shall be insured elsewhere, without giving notice thereof, agreeable to the policy that may issue in my name, upon the filing of this declaration, and provided the whole sum does not exceed four-fifths of the verified value, and that I will abide by, observe, and adhere to the Constitution, Rules and Regulations as are already established, or may hereafter be established by a majority of the insured, present in person, or by representatives, or by the majority of the property insured represented, either by the persons themselves, or their proxy duly authorised, or their deputy as established by law, at any general meeting, to be held by the said Assurance Society. Witness my hand and seal at Lexington the 12th day of December 1802

Wit. [illegible]

S. L. Campbell (Seal)

WE the underwritten, being each of us house-owners, declare and affirm that we have examined the above mentioned property of Saml. L. Campbell and that we are of opinion that it would cost in cash eight hundred ———— Dollars to build the same, and is now (after the deduction of ———— Dollars for decay or bad repair) actually worth eight hundred ———— Dollars in ready money, as above specified to the best of our knowledge and belief, and he the said subscriber has acknowledged before us his above signature.

} Residing in Lexington

Alexr. Shields

David Shields

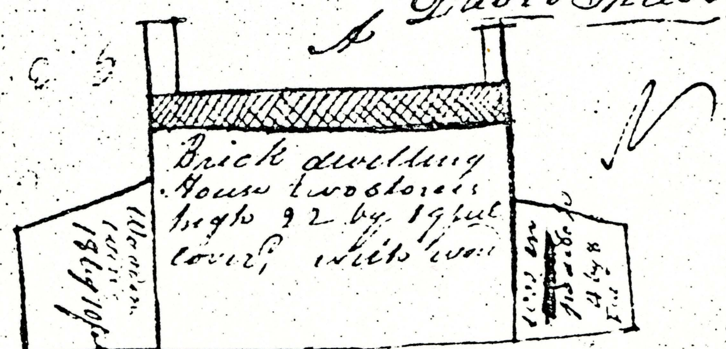


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PLATE A-1

— Policy of Dr. Samuel Campbell —
1802

R9 V72

(renewed)

No. 2223 Revaluation of the Buildings formerly declared for Assurance by Samuel Lockhart per declaration No. 533

the underwritten William Wilson

residing at Lexington in the county of Rockbridge do hereby declare for assurance in the Mutual Assurance Society against fire on buildings of the State of Virginia, my two buildings on my Lot of No 168 now occupied by myself & situated between the lots of Wm Lorettum and John Alexander

in the County of Rockbridge Dimensions, Situation and Contiguity to other Buildings or Wharves, what the walls are built of, and what the Buildings are covered with, are specified in the hereunto annexed description of the said Buildings on the Plat signed by me and the Appraisers, and are valued by them, as appears by their Certificate hereunder, to wit:

	Marked.	Dollars.		Dollars.
The Dwelling House	A at	1000	Say one thousand	Dollars.
The Ditto	B at	770	seven hundred and seventy	do.
The	C at			do.
The	D at			do.
The	E at			do.
The	F at			do.
The	G at			do.
The	H at			do.
		$		

Say one thousand seven hundred and seventy Dollars in all.

I do hereby declare and affirm, that I hold the above-mentioned buildings with the land on which they stand in fee Simple and that they do not, nor shall be insured elsewhere, and that I my heirs and assigns will abide by, observe and adhere to the constitution, rules and regulations, which are already established, or may hereafter be established by a majority of the insured, present in person, or by representatives, or by a majority of the property insured, represented either by the persons themselves, or their proxy duly authorised, or their deputy, as established by law, at any general meeting to be held by the said *Assurance Society*; or which are or hereafter may be established by the Standing Committee of the Society. Witness my hand and seal this Seventh day of Sept 1816

Test, Wm Willson (Ex)

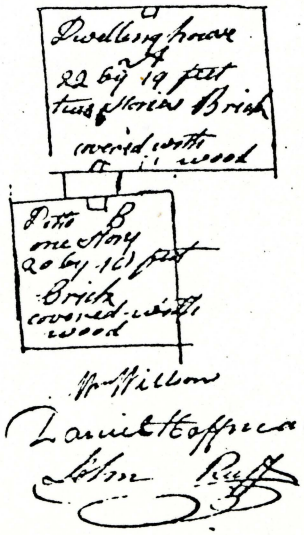
Alex Hall Special Agent.

WE the underwritten, being each of us Freeholders, declare and affirm, that we have examined the above-mentioned building of Wm Wilson and we are of opinion that they would cost in cash one thousand eight hundred dollars to build the same, and that now (after the deduction of twenty dollars for decay or bad repair) they are actually worth one thousand seven hundred and seventy dollars in ready money, as above specified to the best of our knowledge and belief. As witness our hands,

I the undersigned do hereby certify that I verily believe the building herein described to be not over-valued. } Daniel Taffinder, John Ruff } Residing in Lexington

Alex Hall Special Agent.

main street 50 feet wide



Wm Willson

Daniel Taffinder

John Ruff

The Special Agent will write nothing on this margin.

PLATE A-2
Policy of William Willson
1816

R11V80 ~~R2 V80~~

NO. 4052 { Revaluation of the Buildings formerly declared for Assurance by Wm Wilson per Declaration No. 2223

I the underwritten William Wilson

residing at Lexington in the county of Rockbridge do hereby declare for Assurance in the MUTUAL ASSURANCE SOCIETY against fire on buildings of the state of Virginia, my two buildings on my lot now occupied by myself situated between the the lots of Andrew Alexander and William Taylor

in the county of Rockbridge dimensions, situation and contiguity to other buildings or wharves, what the walls are built of, and what the buildings are covered with, are specified in the hereunto annexed description of the said buildings on the plat signed by me and the appraisers, and are valued by them, as appears by their certificate hereunder, to wit:

	Marked.	Dollars.		Dollars.
The Dwelling house	A at	1000	Say one thousand	do.
The Ditto	B at	770	seven hundred and seventy	do.
The	C at			do.
The	D at			do.
The	E at			do.
The	F at			do.
The	G at			do.
The	H at			do.
		$1770		

Say one thousand seven hundred and seventy dollars in all

I do hereby declare and affirm, that I hold the above mentioned buildings with the land on which they stand in fee simple and that they are not, nor shall be insured elsewhere, and that I my heirs and assigns will abide by, observe and adhere to the constitution, rules and regulations, which are already established, or may hereafter be established by a majority of the insured present in person, or by representatives, or by a majority of the property insured, represented either by the persons themselves, or their proxy duly authorised, or their deputy, as established by law, at any general meeting to be held by the said *Assurance Society*: or which are, or hereafter may be established by the Standing Committee of the Society. Witness, my hand and seal this 25th day of October 1822

Teste,

Wm Wilson (Seal)

Alexr Hall Special Agent.

WE, the underwritten, being each of us freeholders, declare and affirm, that we have examined the above-mentioned buildings of William Wilson and we are of opinion that they would cost in cash one thousand seven hundred and seventy dollars to build the same, and that now, (after the deduction of 00 dollars for decay or bad repair) they are actually worth one thousand seven hundred and seventy dollars in ready money, as above specified to the best of our knowledge and belief. As witness our hands.

I, the undersigned, do hereby certify, that I verily believe the building herein described is not over-valued.

[illegible] } Residing in Lexington

Jas. Sloan

Alexr Hall Special Agent.

Main Street 50 feet wide

Dwelling house at two stories brick covered with wood 22 by 19 feet

A

Ditto B two stories 20 by 18 feet brick covered with wood

Wm Willson

[illegible] Jas. Sloan

PLATE A-3

Policy of William Willson 1822

R10V78

New Town (No. 3552)

I the underwritten William Willson - - - - - - - - - residing at Lexington in the county of Rockbridge do hereby declare for Assurance in the MUTUAL ASSURANCE SOCIETY against fire on buildings of the state of Virginia, my two buildings on my lot now occupied by myself situated between the Lots of Wm Taylor And the Lots of Wm Caruthers in the county of Rockbridge dimensions, situation and contiguity to other buildings or wharves, what the walls are built of, and what the buildings are covered with, are specified in the hereunto annexed description of the said buildings on the plat signed by me and the appraisers, and are valued by them, as appears by their certificate hereunder, to wit:

	Marked.	Dollars.		Dollars.
The Dwelling house - -	A at	4200	Say four thousand two hundred	do.
The Kitchen & Store room - -	B at	300	" three hundred - -	do.
The	C at			do.
The	D at			do.
The	E at			do.
The	F at			do.
The	G at			do.
The	H at			do.
		$4500-00		

Say Four thousand five hundred dollars in all

I do hereby declare and affirm, that I hold the above mentioned buildings with the land on which they stand in Fee Simple - and that they are not, nor shall be insured elsewhere, and that I my heirs and assigns will abide by, observe and adhere to the constitution, rules and regulations, which are already established, or may hereafter be established by a majority of the insured present in person, or by representatives, or by a majority of the property insured, represented either by the persons themselves, or their proxy duly authorised, or their deputy, as established by law, at any general meeting to be held by the said *Assurance Society*: or which are, or hereafter may be established by the Standing Committee of the Society. Witness my hand and seal this Eighth day of March 1825.

Wm Willson (Seal)

Teste,

Alexr Hall *Special Agent.*

WE, the underwritten, being each of us freeholders, declare and affirm, that we have examined the above-mentioned buildings of William Willson and we are of opinion that they would cost in cash Four thousand five hundred dollars dollars to build the same, and that now, (after the deduction of no dollars for decay or bad repair) they are actually worth Four thousand five hundred dollars in ready money, as above specified to the best of our knowledge and belief. As witness our hands.

I, the undersigned, do hereby certify, that I verily believe the building herein described are not over-valued.

Alexr Hall *Special Agent.*

Saml McD Reid } Residing Lexington
Daniel Hoffman
William [illegible]

Main Street 50 feet

Porch 12 feet [illegible]
Dwelling house A
brick covered with wood
45 by 36 feet
two stories

Store room
Kitchen B
brick covered with wood
46 by 17 feet

Wm Willson
Saml McD Reid
Daniel Hoffman
W[illegible]

The Special Agent will write nothing on this margin.

PLATE A-4
Policy of William Willson
1825

R13V09

No. 7819 / 389. { *Revaluation of Buildings formerly declared for Assurance by William Wilson of Lexington per Declaration No. 3052*

I the underwritten William Wilson

residing at Lexington in the county of Rockbridge do hereby declare for Assurance in the **MUTUAL ASSURANCE SOCIETY** against Fire on Buildings of the State of Virginia, my three buildings on Lot No. 6 in Main Street in the town of Lexington now occupied by myself & family situated between a frame of Mr Taylor on the E. & my office on the W. in said Town of Lexington, &

in the county of Rockbridge the dimensions, situation and contiguity to other buildings or wharves, what the walls are built of, and what the buildings are covered with, are specified in the hereunto annexed description of the said buildings on the plat signed by me and the appraisers, and are valued by them, as appears by their certificate hereunder, to wit:

	Marked		
The Dwelling house	A at	$4500 Say four thousand five hundred	Dollars
The Kitchen & three rooms	B at	" 500 " five hundred	do.
The	C at		do.
The	D at		do.
The	E at		do.
The	F at		do.
The	G at		do.
The	H at		do.

$5000

Say five thousand dollars in all

I do hereby declare and affirm, that I hold the above mentioned buildings with the land on which they stand in fee simple and that they are not, nor shall be insured elsewhere, and that I & my heirs and assigns will abide by, observe and adhere to the constitution, rules and regulations, which are already established, or may hereafter be established by a majority of the insured, present in person, or by representatives, or by a majority of the property insured, represented either by the persons themselves, or their proxy duly authorised, or their deputy, as established by law, at any general meeting to be held by the said *Assurance Society*; or which are, or hereafter may be established by the Standing Committee of the Society. Witness my hand and seal this 15th day of Feb. 1831

Wm Wilson (L.S.)

Teste, James Wilson Special Agent.

We, the underwritten, being each of us freeholders, declare and affirm, that we have examined the above-mentioned buildings of William Wilson and we are of opinion that would cost in cash dollars to build the same, and that now, (after the deduction of dollars,) they are actually worth five thousand dollars in ready money, as above specified to the best of our knowledge and belief. As witness our hands.

I, the undersigned, do hereby certify that I verily believe the buildings herein described are not over-valued.

Geo A Cummings
Jam[es] McClung
Rockbridge

James Wilson Special Agent.

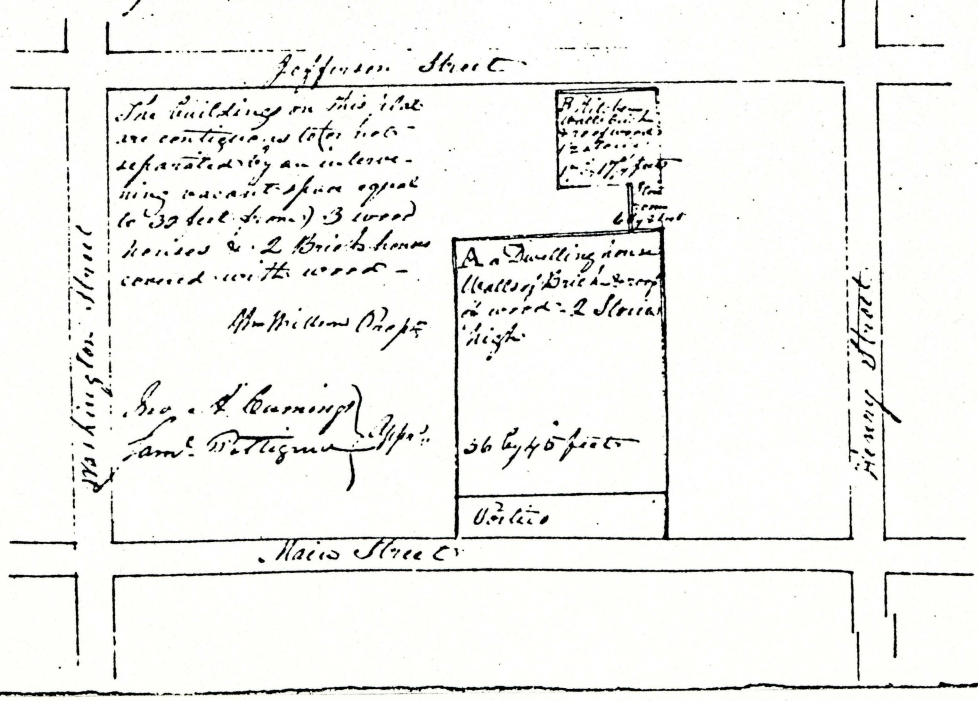


PLATE A-5
Policy of William Willson
1831

R13V92

7820

No. 7820. { Revaluation of Buildings formerly declared for Assurance by William Wilson of Lexington per Declaration No. 4052.

I the underwritten William Wilson

residing at Lexington in the county of Rockbridge do hereby declare for Assurance in the MUTUAL ASSURANCE SOCIETY against Fire on Buildings of the State of Virginia, my two buildings on the N. W. side of Main Street in the Town of Lexington now occupied by myself situated between my own Dwelling house on the W. by a wood house of John P. Campbell on the E. in the said Town of Lexington, and in the county of Rockbridge the dimensions, situation and contiguity to other buildings or wharves, what the walls are built of, and what the buildings are covered with, are specified in the hereunto annexed description of the said buildings on the plat signed by me and the appraisers, and one valued by them, as appears by their certificate hereunder, to wit:

		Marked		
The	Office	A at	$ 1000 Say one thousand	Dollars
The	Office	B at	650 six hundred & fifty	do.
The		C at		do.
The		D at		do.
The		E at		do.
The		F at		do.
The		G at		do.
The		H at		do.
			$1650	

Say one thousand six hundred & fifty dollars in all

I do hereby declare and affirm, that I hold the above mentioned buildings with the land on which they stand in fee simple and that they are not, nor shall be insured elsewhere, and that I and my heirs and assigns will abide by, observe and adhere to the constitution, rules and regulations, which are already established, or may hereafter be established by a majority of the insured, present in person, or by representatives, or by a majority of the property insured, represented either by the persons themselves, or their proxy duly authorised, or their deputy, as established by law, at any general meeting to be held by the said *Assurance Society*; or which are, or hereafter may be established by the Standing Committee of the Society. Witness my hand and seal this 15 day of Feb. 1831.

Wm Wilson [seal]

Teste,
James Nelson Special Agent.

We, the underwritten, being each of us freeholders, declare and affirm, that we have examined the above-mentioned buildings of William Wilson and we are of opinion that would costin cash dollars to build the same, and that now, (Nic. the deduction of dollars) they are actually worth one thousand six hundred & fifty dollars in ready money, as above specified to the best of our knowledge and belief. As witness our hands.

I, the undersigned, do hereby certify that I verily believe the building herein described are not over-valued.

Jno A. Cummings
Saml Pettigrew
Lexington

James Nelson Special Agent.

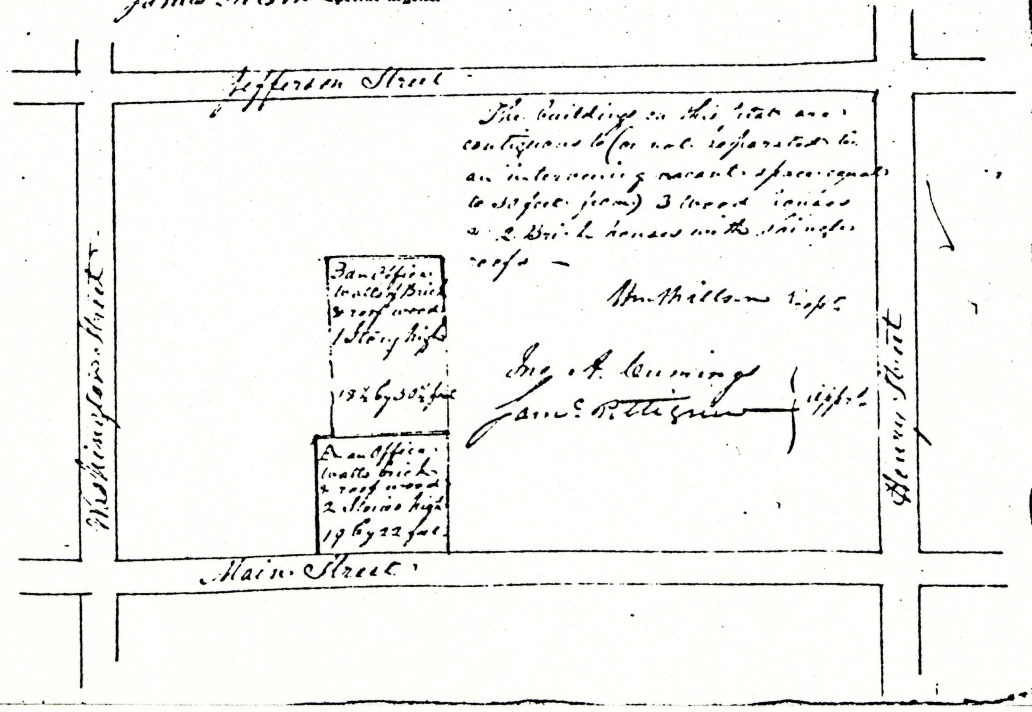


PLATE A-6
Policy of William Willson
1831

R15V102

No. 10792 { Revaluation of Buildings formerly declared for Assurance by William Wilson per Declarations No. 7519 & 7520

I the underwritten William Wilson

residing at Lexington in the county of Rockbridge do hereby declare for Assurance in the MUTUAL ASSURANCE SOCIETY against Fire on Buildings of the State of Virginia, my Four buildings on the Nor. West side of Main Street in the Town of Lexington now occupied by myself situated between a lot of Wm Taylor on the Nor. East, & a house of John P. Carrithers on the South West in the Town of Lexington aforesaid in the county of Rockbridge the dimensions, situation and contiguity to other buildings or wharves, what the walls are built of, and what the buildings are covered with, are specified in the hereunto annexed description of the said buildings on the plat signed by me and the appraisers, and are valued by them, as appears by their certificate hereunder, to wit:

	Marked		
The Dwelling	A at	$ 4500 Say Four thousand five hundred	Dollars
The Kitchen & Store room	B at	500 " Five hundred	do.
The Office	C at	350 " three hundred & fifty	do.
The Office	D at	650 " Six hundred & fifty	do.
The	E at		do.
The	F at		do.
The	G at		do.
The	H at		do.

$ 6500

Say Six thousand five hundred dollars in all. —

I do hereby declare and affirm, that I hold the above mentioned buildings with the land on which they stand in fee simple and that they are not, nor shall be insured elsewhere, and that I and my heirs and assigns will abide by, observe and adhere to the constitution, rules and regulations, which are already established, or may hereafter be established by a majority of the insured, present in person, or by representatives, or by a majority of the property insured, represented either by the persons themselves, or their proxy duly authorised, or their deputy, as established by law, at any general meeting to be held by the said *Assurance Society*; or which are, or hereafter may be established by the Standing Committee of the Society. Witness my hand and seal this 27th day of October 1838

Teste, James Nelson Special Agent.

We, the underwritten, being each of us freeholders, declare and affirm, that we have examined the above-mentioned buildings of William Wilson and we are of opinion that they would cost in cash dollars to build the same, and that now (after the deduction of dollars) are actually worth Six thousand five hundred dollars in ready money, as above specified to the best of our knowledge and belief. As witness our hands.

I, the undersigned, do hereby certify that I verily believe the building herein described are not over-valued. Robt White Reading Lexington

G. P. Dorman

James Nelson Special Agent.

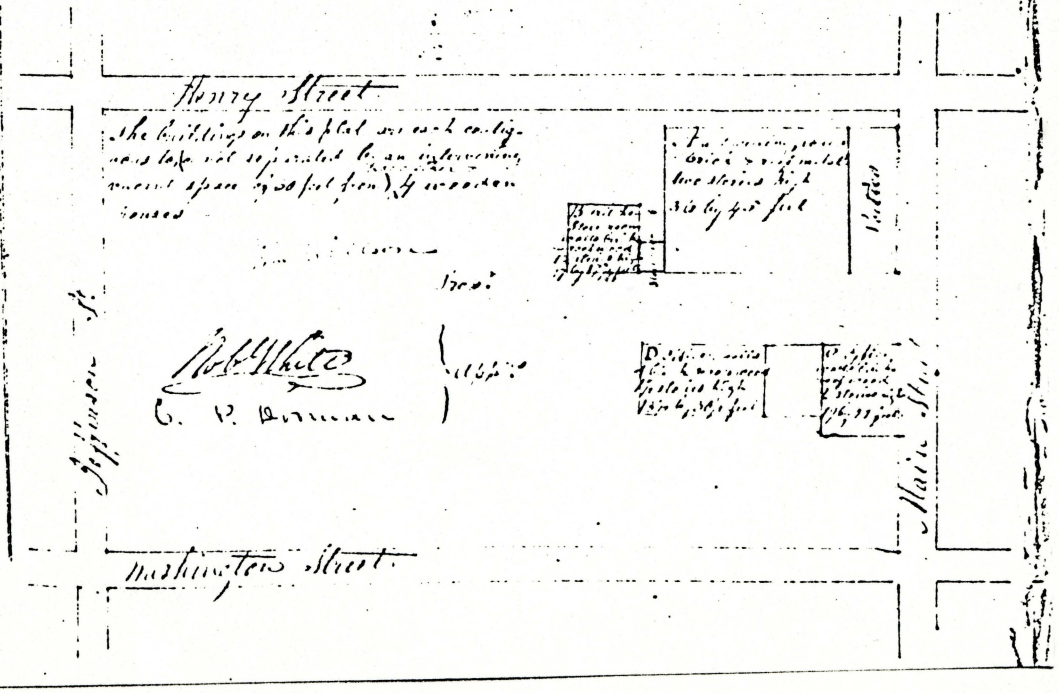


PLATE A-7
Policy of William Willson
1838

R18V113

No. 11,199 } Re-valuation of Buildings declared for Assurance by William Wilson as per Declaration No. 10792

We, the underwritten James Wilson Special Agent, and Wm C. Lewis & Wm Crawford Appraisers, do hereby certify that we have viewed and re-valued the Buildings heretofore declared for Assurance, in the Mutual Assurance Society against Fire on Buildings of the State of Virginia, by William Wilson as per his Declaration for Assurance, Numbered 10792 That the said Buildings are at present owned by Wm Wilson's heirs residing Rockbridge, Augusta & Alabamaa

and are now occupied ~~residing~~ Mrs Christian & Mrs Rhodes. That they are situated on the N.W. side of Main Street, between James River and Jails Dwelling on the S.E. Side and J. T. Segal's on the S.W. in the Town of Lexington, and in the county of Rockbridge. We further certify, that their dimensions, situation and contiguity to other Buildings or Wharves, what the walls are built of, and what the Buildings are covered with, are specified in the hereunto annexed description of the said Building on the plat signed by us: And we, the undersigned Appraisers, have valued the said Buildings, and certify their actual value to be, as expressed in our certificate hereunder, to wit:

		Marked.			Dollars.
The	Dwelling	A at	$ 4000	Say Four thousand	Dollars.
The	Kitchen & Storeroom	B at	400	" Four hundred	do.
The	Dwelling	C at	730	" Seven hundred	do.
The	addition to Dwg.	D at	500	" Five hundred	do.
The		E at			do.
The		F at			do.
The		G at			do.
The		H at			do.
			$ 5600		

Say Five thousand six hundred Dollars in all.

WITNESS our hands, this sixth day of September one thousand eight hundred and forty five

James Wilson Special Agent for the M. A. Society.
Wm C. Lewis Appraiser, residing in Lexington
Wm Crawford Appraiser, residing in Lexington

We, the underwritten, being each of us freeholders, declare and affirm, that we have examined the above mentioned Buildings of Wm Wilson's heirs and we are of opinion that, having ~~would cost in cash~~ respect to their local situation, dollars to build the same, and that now, (after the deduction of state of repair & the present cost of building, they) are now actually worth Five thousand six hundred dollars in ready money, as above specified, to the best of our knowledge and belief. As witness our hands,

Wm C. Lewis
Wm Crawford

I, the undersigned, do hereby certify, that I verily believe the buildings herein described are not over-valued.

James Wilson SPECIAL AGENT.

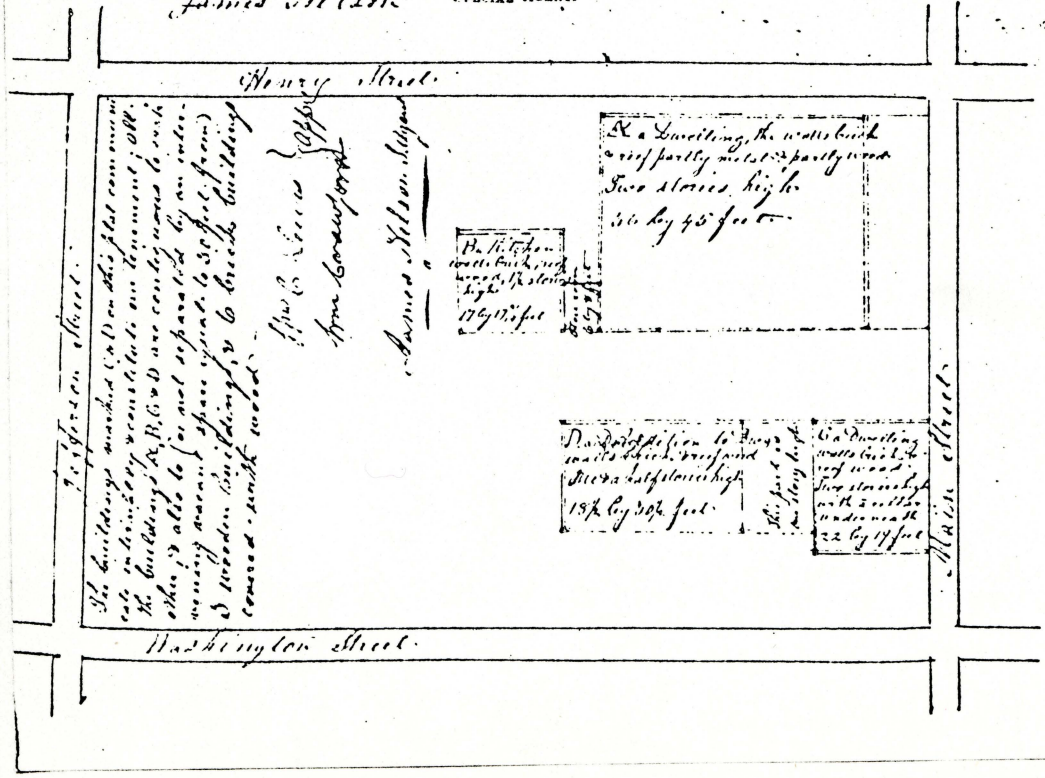


PLATE A-8
— Policy of William Willson Heirs —
1845

The Willson-Walker House:
A Provincial Neoclassical Revival Building

By Wayne Kille

Built in 3 stages 1802, ?, ?.

Granddaddy Bought 30 Main St 6/22/11

Building Permit for Demolishing
60' x 60' 2 Story Bldg Between
Main and Randolph or Henry ST.
By First Bapt. Church Permit #2
3/1/76 Wesley 206 Fuller St