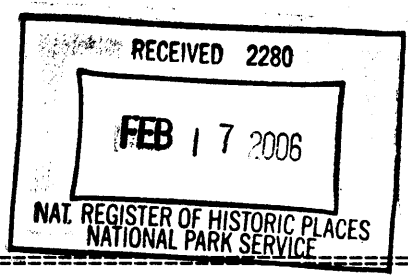


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**



**1. Name of Property**

historic name Old Rock House

other names/site number Condon House; Cohill House; Norris House; Eastis House; Newman House

**2. Location**

street & number 1 mile SE of Harpersville at the end of farm lane on N side of US 280 not for publication N/A  
city or town Harpersville vicinity X  
state Alabama code AL county Shelby code 117 zip code \_\_\_\_\_

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination        request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets        does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant        nationally X statewide        locally. (        See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer      10 Feb 2006  
Signature of certifying official      Date

Alabama Historical Commission  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property        meets        does not meet the National Register criteria.  
(        See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

- I hereby certify that this property is:
- entered in the National Register  
     See continuation sheet.
  - determined eligible for the National Register  
     See continuation sheet.
  - determined not eligible for the National Register
  - removed from the National Register
  - other (explain):

[Signature]      \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper      Date of Action  
Edson H. Beall      3/29/06

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper      Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box.)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public-local
- public-state
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>2</u>	_____ buildings
_____	_____ sites
<u>2</u>	_____ structures
_____	_____ objects
<u>4</u>	_____ Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Domestic Sub: single dwelling

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Vacant/Not in Use Sub: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification** (Enter categories from instructions)

Early Republic (Federal)

**Materials** (Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation: Stone

Roof: Metal

Walls: Stone: Limestone, Granite

Other: Wood

**Narrative Description** (Describe the historic and current condition on continuation sheet/s.)

=====  
**8. Statement of Significance**  
=====

**Applicable National Register Criteria** (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations** (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance** (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance** circa 1835;circa 1900

**Significant Dates** circa 1835; circa 1900

**Significant Person** (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

**Cultural Affiliation** N/A

**Architect/Builder** N/A

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Explain significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**  
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(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS)**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # ALA-447
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of repository

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**10. Geographical Data**

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**Acreage of Property** less than 1 acre

**UTM References** (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	16	555140	3687860	3		
2				4		
						See continuation sheet.

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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**11. Form Prepared By**

=====

name/title Hank Johnson, Intern

organization Alabama Historical Commission date 11 August 2005

street & number 468 South Perry Street telephone 334-242-3184

city or town Montgomery state Alabama zip code 36130-0900

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**Additional Documentation**

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

- A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

=====

**Property Owner**

=====

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name James Newman and the Estate of Frank Newman

street & number Post Office Box 554 telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town Fairfield state AL zip code 35064

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National Park Service

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**SECTION VII: NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION**

Located in a wooded rural setting near Harpersville in Shelby County, Alabama, the Old Rock House faces south and is approached from US Highway 280 (Alabama Highway 38) by a winding farm lane. A definable tree line establishes a yard and domestic space around the house. While the house's immediate surroundings are level, a slight downward slope east of the house leads to fields formerly used for growing cotton. A drystone well, 28 feet in depth and surmounted by a modern wooden cover with a metal roof, is located northeast of the house, and a frame, 2-seat outhouse sheathed in metal is located southeast of the house. The area behind the house once contained a vegetable garden, hog pens, and a number of now-lost dependencies including corncribs and a smoke house.<sup>1</sup> A five-room frame house dating from circa 1950 is situated south of the Old Rock House, and a barn, also built during the mid-twentieth century, is located north of the house; these structures fall outside the boundaries of the nominated property.

The Old Rock House is a two-story, masonry dwelling with a side-gable roof and interior end chimneys. Dating from circa 1835, the house is constructed of locally quarried grey granite and limestone and rests on a stone and rock foundation. The structure's stone walls and chimneys are laid in regular courses, and its side-gable roof consists of heart-pine substrate on heart-pine framing and is covered in metal. The roof is constructed with pegged rafters and does not employ a ridge pole. On the south side of the house, two centrally positioned doors provide access to the first floor rooms. The front doors are wooden and contain six raised and fielded panels in a "cross and bible" configuration. Each door is recessed beneath a masonry arch containing a central keystone as well as a voussoir at its original and terminal point. The reveals are lined with wooden paneling; the vertical wall-coverings within each reveal contain three raised and fielded panels, while the wood veneers covering the bottoms of the arches contain four raised and fielded panels. Each door is separated from the fanlight that surmounts it by a moulded transom bar, and a course of moulding connected to the transom bar separates the vertical members of the reveal from the wood veneer covering the lower portion of the arch. One centrally positioned door, situated in a rectangular panelled reveal, is located on the north or rear side of the house. Like the front doors, the back door is a wooden "cross and bible" door, but it is not surmounted by a light.

The fenestration on each facade of the house is symmetrically arranged, and, in a manner reminiscent of high-style Georgian houses, the windows on the house's second story are shorter and narrower than those on the first floor.<sup>2</sup> A 1935 HABS photograph shows that the Old Rock House's first-floor windows originally contained 6/9 double-hung panels, but the windows on the first floor were refitted 4/4 double-hung panels after 1935. Two windows are located on the first floor of the south or front side of the house, and two windows are situated on the first floor of both the east and west sides of the building. The first floor of the north or rear side of the house appears originally to have contained two windows corresponding in position to those on the first floor of the south side of the structure. One window, currently covered in wood, is located at the western end of the first floor of the house's

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<sup>1</sup> Recollections of James Newman, 8 August 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Gamble, "The Old Rock House," *Alabama Heritage* 72, Spring 2004, 6-7

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north side; the corresponding window at the eastern end of the house's north side was covered when a frame ell was added to the structure circa 1900. While HABS photographs from 1935 indicate that the windows on the house's second story originally contained 6/6 double-hung panels, three of the second story windows have been refitted with 4/4 double-hung windows. The south or front side of the house's second story contains four evenly-spaced windows; the panes of the central windows are arranged in a 4/4 configuration, while the panes of the windows at either end are arranged in a 6/6 configuration. The east and west sides of the house's second story contain no windows. Two windows are centrally located on the north or rear side of the house's second story. These windows correspond in position to the central pair of windows on the south side of the house; the panes of the west window are arranged in a 4/4 configuration, while the panes of the east window are arranged in a 6/6 configuration.

Measuring approximately 33.5 feet in length and 21.1 feet in depth, the Old Rock House contains two rooms on each floor. The first and second stories of the house are linked by an enclosed 8-tread staircase that ascends from north side of the west room on the first floor to the south side of the west room on the second floor. On the first floor, the staircase is entered through a doorway situated on the west wall of the house's east room; this doorway is itself approached by two steps along the western wall of the room. A closet is located beneath the staircase in the east room. The house's interior walls were originally covered with lathe and plaster, much of which has been removed. In some places the interior walls have been recovered with planking; on the second floor, however, the stone walls are largely exposed. The house's ceilings, floors, windows and window trim, and doors and door trim are constructed of heart-pine. The ceilings on the second floor of the house are raked. The floors on the east room of the house's first floor have been partially covered with linoleum.

The interior door cases of the front doors exhibit highly sophisticated woodwork. The facings of the doorframes are fluted, resembling pilasters, and they are surmounted by blocks decorated with bulls-eye carvings. Surmounted by semi-elliptical fanlights adorned with guttae moulding, the doors are separated from their transoms by transom bars decorated with guilloche reliefs. The house's front doors appear originally have been finished with a faux graining. On both the first and second floors, the main rooms are connected by an interior doorway. Constructed of wood and containing six raised and fielded panels in a "cross and bible" configuration, the door connecting the rooms on the house's first floor and that leading to the enclosed staircase are identical to the house's front and rear doors. The door leading into the under-stair closet differs slightly in that it contains four panels rather than six panels in a "cross and bible" configuration. The three interior doorways on the house's first floor are set in fluted wooden surrounds; at the doorway's upper corners, the casings terminate in wooden blocks decorated with bulls-eye carvings. The beaded facing of the single door on the house's second story lacks bulls-eye decoration and is simpler in design than those on the first floor; like the door leading to the first-floor closet, this door contains only four panels.

Other interior decorative elements include a Federal-style wooden mantle which was recorded in a 1935 HABS photograph. Located in the west room on the first floor of the house, this mantle consists of attenuated pilasters at either end of the fireplace and a three-panelled breast supporting a narrow, reeded mantle shelf; the mantle shelf's corners have been rounded. A rudimentary mantle located in the east room of the house's first floor may originally have been situated in one of the upstairs rooms; the ghost of a larger mantle can be seen on the wall of the first

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floor's east room. While the fireplace in the west room has a brick hearth, the east room's hearth has been replaced with concrete. The offset fireboxes in the upstairs rooms appear originally to have been furnished with mantelpieces but are now unadorned. In the north room on the house's second floor, a balustrade surrounding the stairwell includes square wooden balusters and a slightly rounded handrail. Two chamfered newel-posts project above the other members of the balustrade. On the first floor of the house, elements of the original 7-inch beaded baseboard remain, and the walls appear originally to have been decorated with a chair-rail. Peg rails are attached to the walls in both upstairs rooms.

A two-room rectangular frame ell, used as a dining room and kitchen, was added to the north or rear side of the house circa 1900. The ell is self-supporting and is separated from the stone structure by a space of approximately five inches; no interior doors connect the ell and the stone portion of the house. The ell is constructed of heart pine with a heart-pine veneer, and its windows, flooring, flushboard walls, and ceiling are constructed of heart pine. The ell's gabled roof is currently covered in metal. A porch, open at its west and north sides, is situated beneath the gabled roof on the west side of the ell. Two 4/4 double-hung windows are located on the south end of the ell's east side, and one window, currently covered, is situated centrally on the ell's west side. A doorway, no longer containing a door, is located at the north end of the addition's east side; small steps and a stoop once led to this doorway. A door is also situated on the south end of the addition's west side. The wall between the ell's two rooms is supported by a cross brace. The rear room appears once to have contained a stove, as a flue is present in the structure's attic space. While the ell reads as an addition in the overall form of the house, because it is freestanding it has been counted as a separate contributing building.

Other alterations include the construction of a non-attached, full-facade porch on the south or front side of the house. The porch consists of five wooden supports, wooden flooring, and a metal-clad pent roof. The current porch, built circa 2005, replaces a porch documented in a 1935 HABS photograph. The earlier porch extended across the central portion of the house's south or front side, covering both front doors and both front windows. Situated on a stone and log foundation, the porch consisted of rough-hewn wooden columns supporting a metal pent roof.

Though the Old Rock House remains structurally sound, it was for many years covered by a thick growth of vines which caused damage both to wooden elements of the structure and to the mortar of its stonework.<sup>3</sup> The southeastern corner of the stone portion of the house currently leans away from the rest of the building,<sup>4</sup> and efforts have been made to stabilize the structure using cables. The house's wooden ell has deteriorated considerably; much of the original wooden siding has disappeared from the ell's northern roof gable, and the supports of its porch are no longer in place.

Although no archaeological survey of the nominated parcel has yet been undertaken, some potential exists for the presence of subsurface remains because a constellation of dependencies was once situated in the domestic space behind the Old Rock House.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

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SECTION VIII: STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

CRITERION C: ARCHITECTURE

The Old Rock House (also known as the Condon-Cohill-Norris-Eastis-Newman House), located near Harpersville, is eligible under Criterion C, Architecture, as a rare and intact example of an early stone dwelling in Alabama. In fact, the house may be the state's sole surviving example of this building type, according to Architectural Historian Robert Gamble, as well as "the oldest rock structure of its kind between West Point, Georgia and Fredericksburg, Texas."<sup>5</sup> The Old Rock House's strictly symmetrical facade and the handling of its transomed front doorways and simple mantelpieces reflect late Georgian and Early Republic stylistic tendencies and point to a possible construction date of circa 1835. Remarkable not only for its unusual building material but also for the sophistication of its design and construction, the Old Rock House bears a greater resemblance to eighteenth and nineteenth-century stone houses constructed in New England and the mid-Atlantic states than it does to the frame or brick dwellings typical of antebellum Alabama.<sup>6</sup>

ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

The Old Rock House in Shelby County is both a unique structure in the history of Alabama's built environment and a building that reflects the construction methods and aesthetic principles of an enduring tradition of stone architecture in North America. According to Architectural Historians Virginia and Lee McAlester, "[a]lthough wooden framing has always dominated American house construction, European immigrants to the New World brought with them an intimate knowledge of masonry techniques as well."<sup>7</sup> Settlers from the British Isles would, for example, have arrived in North America with an understanding of stone construction drawn from rich national traditions of the use of regular and irregular stone masonry to erect vernacular dwellings and farm buildings as well as field walls.<sup>8</sup> Though the majority of masonry structures in eighteenth and early nineteenth America were built of brick, a number of stone buildings were to be found along the Eastern seaboard of the United States by the first decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>9</sup> The records of the Historic American Buildings Survey indicate that stone dwellings were also constructed by early nineteenth-century settlers in the territories that comprise present-day Illinois and Missouri.<sup>10</sup> Existing early stone structures in the Upper South include the two-story, three-ranked Hezekiah Alexander House, built circa 1774 in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, and the circa 1802 Old Stone Church in Pickens County, South Carolina. In the Deep South, examples of antebellum stone building are rare;

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5 Robert Gamble, "The Old Rock House," *Alabama Heritage* 72, Spring 2004, 6-7 and "Rock House Tour," *The Alliance—Alabama Preservation Alliance Bulletin* 42 (Summer 2005): 6.

6 Ibid.

7 Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 38.

8 Ibid. See, also, sections on Irregular and Regular Types of Stone building in R.W. Brunskill, *Vernacular Architecture* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 1978), 37-43.

9 See Lee Goff, *Stone Houses: Colonial to Contemporary* (New York: Harry N. Abrams), 14ff.

10 Early nineteenth-century stone dwellings recorded by HABS in the middle west include the Stone House (Monroe County, IL), the Daniel Hays Stone House (St. Charles County, MO), the Stone House (St. Francois County, MO), and the Old Musick's Ferry Rock House (MO).



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Georgia's only surviving instance of early stone construction is the one-story Ansley House near Thomson in McDuffie County, which was erected circa 1785 by a settler from New Jersey.

As Architectural Historian Robert Gamble points out, the Old Rock House in Shelby County "claims a position of statewide, arguably even of region-wide, importance...as Alabama's sole surviving example of an early stone dwelling, besides being one of a mere handful of such houses in all the vast area stretching from the Carolinas to central Texas."<sup>11</sup> While the name of the builder responsible for the Old Rock House's construction was not recorded, census records from 1840 and 1850 mention Timothy Cullins, a stone mason born in Ireland, as being a resident of Shelby County in the mid-nineteenth century. Little is known about Cullins or his work in the area, but there is a real possibility that he could have worked on this 1835 building during his residency in the county.<sup>12</sup>

The plan of the Old Rock House—a medieval hall-and parlor configuration with staircase leading to an upper level (also with two rooms) and two end chimneys—can be traced to medieval England by way of the Eastern seaboard. Both the Old Rock House's general design and the decorative elements associated with its front doorways also owe a debt to Georgian-period stylistic trends: Architectural Historian Gamble observes that the house's "compact facade...points to a builder familiar with the rudiments of late Georgian symmetry and proportion—right down to second-floor windows that narrow slightly in relation to those below."<sup>13</sup> Particularly Georgian in character are the house's front doorways, which include exterior paneled reveals, interior grooved surrounds, and elliptical transoms.<sup>14</sup> A simple mantelpiece on the first floor of the house reflects the Federal style.

The Old Rock House's architectural significance was recognized as early as 1935, when a team of surveyors from the HABS Survey photographed and collected information about the building.<sup>15</sup> More recently, the house was the subject of an article written by Robert Gamble in *Alabama Heritage* magazine and was also included on the 2004 list of "Places in Peril" by the Alabama Historical Commission and the Alabama Preservation Alliance.

## HISTORICAL SUMMARY

The Old Rock House, also known as the Condon-Cohill-Norris-Eastis-Newman House, is located in the vicinity of the town of Harpersville in Shelby County, Alabama. Created in February 1818, more than a year before Alabama's admission to statehood in December 1819, Shelby County was settled primarily by pioneers from South and North Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee. Settlers began to arrive in Shelby County's eastern or Coosa River Valley region, where the Rock House is situated, in approximately 1820. Among the earliest settlers of the Harpersville community was John White Kidd, a Georgian whose family shared numerous connections with the Condon and

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<sup>11</sup> Robert Gamble, "The Old Rock House," *Alabama Heritage* 72, Spring 2004, 6-7

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, and Shelby County Census Records from 1840 and 1850.

<sup>13</sup> Gamble (2004), 7.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> HABS No. ALA-447 (Rock House)

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Cohill families who occupied the Old Rock House during the nineteenth century.<sup>16</sup>

The lands on which the Rock House now stands were patented in the second and third decades of the nineteenth century. On 14 May 1822, Elisha Turner patented the west half of the southwest quarter of Section 35, Township 19, Range 2E;<sup>17</sup> the east half of the same section's southwest quarter was patented by William H. Greenwood on 1 April 1823.<sup>18</sup> On 21 January 1832 and 16 November 1833, Lewis Condray patented, respectively, the west half of the southeast quarter of Section 35 and the southeast quarter of the same section's southeast quarter.<sup>19</sup> The lands originally patented by Turner and Greenwood were acquired by one William Condon prior to his death circa 1843.<sup>20</sup> Condon amassed relatively substantial landholdings in the area: when his real estate was offered for sale in April 1854, his properties included the east half of the southwest quarter of Section 35, Township 19, Range 2E the west half of the southeast quarter of Section 35, and the southeast quarter of the southeast quarter of Section 35 in addition to lands in Section 27 of Township 19 and Section 2 of Township 20.<sup>21</sup>

Though no conclusive information about the Rock House's earliest history or builder has yet come to light, Architectural Historian Robert Gamble believes that William Condon and his family may have been the first residents of the house.<sup>22</sup> Gamble notes that "a tantalizing clue as to the identity of a craftsman may be the presence in the area, during the mid-1800s, of one Timothy Cullins—Irish-born and a self-styled stonemason, according to the 1850 census."<sup>23</sup> The Rock House's shape, floorplan, and interior and exterior detailing reflect the late Georgian and Early Republic styles, leading the Historic American Buildings Survey to estimate a construction date of circa 1835.

William Condon appears to have settled in Shelby County prior to 1830. Census records indicate that in 1830 William Conden [sic] was the head of a household of nine persons; by 1840, his household included eleven members.<sup>24</sup> The economy of antebellum Shelby County was based almost solely on agriculture, and, as a post mortem inventory of his estate indicates, farming was the source of Condon's livelihood. This inventory, taken in March 1844 by John Singleton, administrator of Condon's estate, reveals Condon to have been a moderately

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16 Information on the early history of Shelby County is drawn from pages 14 of *The Heritage of Shelby County, AL* (Clanton: Heritage Publishing Consultants, 1999).

17 Information on patented lands in this paragraph are drawn from the Shelby County Tract Book. The name Elisha Turner does not appear in the 1820 or 1830 Shelby County Census records; however, the 1840 census for Shelby County lists an Elisha Turner whose household included a male aged 15-20, a male aged 50-60, a female aged 20-30, and a female aged 70-80.

18 The name William H. Greenwood appears twice in the 1830 Shelby County census but does not appear in the 1840 county census.

19 The 1830 Shelby County census lists a Lewis Condra [sic] as the head of a three-member household, but this name does not appear in Shelby County's 1840 census.

20 Information from an Abstract in the possession of James Newman.

21 Ibid.

22 Robert Gamble, "The Old Rock House," *Alabama Heritage* 72, Spring 2004, 6-7

23 Ibid.

24 According to 1830 Shelby County census records held by the Alabama Department of Archives and History, William Conden's [sic] household included two males under age 5, two males aged 5-10, one male aged 10-15, one male aged 15-20, one male aged 20-30, one male aged 30-40, one female aged 15-20, and one male aged 30-40. In 1840, records show that William Condon's household consisted of two males aged 5-10, two males aged 10-15, one male aged 20-30, one male aged 40-50, two females under age 5, and one female aged 40-50.

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prosperous farmer.<sup>25</sup> Condon's six slaves were the most valuable of his possessions; their total value is listed as amounting to \$1650. His livestock included one "lot" of cattle appraised at \$40, sixteen hogs valued at \$30, four sheep valued at \$6, and four horses appraised at \$127; he also owned various farming implements. Household possessions recorded in the inventory indicate that Condon's house was simply though adequately furnished: items listed include ten chairs, four tables, one "lot" of books, a clock, a churn, four beds and bedsteads, a sideboard, one chest and one trunk, as well as knives, forks, and crockery.

Though William Condon died early in the 1840s, his estate seems not to have been settled until the mid-1850s, by which time Hudson Nelson, a local tanner, had succeeded John Singleton as administrator of the estate.<sup>26</sup> According to the 1850 Shelby County census, William Condon's survivors included his wife, Jane (born in Georgia circa 1785), a twenty five year old son who worked as a "merchant's clerk", three sons ranging in age from 17 to 20 who are listed as laborers, as well as two daughters aged 16 and 10.<sup>27</sup>

In March 1856, the Rock House was purchased by John Cohill, a Maryland-born local farmer.<sup>28</sup> Though Cohill's name does not appear in Shelby County Census records from 1830 or 1840, he seems to have arrived in the county at some point during the 1830s, for Shelby County marriage records indicate that Cohill married Mary E. Kidd on 25 September 1839.<sup>29</sup> Mary Kidd Cohill was born in Georgia and was likely a member of the locally prominent Kidd family who were among the earliest settlers of Shelby County. According to the 1850 Shelby County census (taken six years before he purchased the Condon property), John Cahill [sic] was the head of a household of five persons and the owner of property valued at \$3000. Cohill died circa 1865, and his estate was administered by W.W. Kidd and J.M. Kidd, who are likely to have been kinsmen of his wife. An 1865 appraisal of Cohill's estate reveals that he was involved in diversified farming; most valuable among the property listed is "1 lot of cotton in a damaged condition, supposed to make 55 hundred pounds" which was appraised at \$1680.<sup>30</sup> Agricultural produce held by Cohill at the time of his death further included 640 bushels of corn appraised at \$704, 40 bushels of wheat valued at \$80, 300 pounds of fodder appraised at \$50, and 30 bushels of oats appraised at \$30.<sup>31</sup> Cohill's livestock included 3 horses and 2 mules, valued collectively at \$295, 21 head of cattle appraised at \$160, "1 lot" of stock hogs and 25 pork hogs valued at \$98.<sup>32</sup> When Cohill's property was sold on 14 December 1865, "one years' provisions," various livestock, and "all the beds & household furniture of every kind, books & c"

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25 Inventory included in Shelby County Will Book D (Book #302) 1841-1846, pages 294-296.

26 See "Account for final settlement by H.W. Nelson admin. of the Estate of William Condon dead" (circa 1856) in the William Condon (1842-1856) file held by the Shelby County Historical Society (Shelby County Estate Case Files, Drawer 7, Packet 0012; Box 3, Folder 96 of 102). According to Shelby County Will Book D (pages 294-296), William Condon died 15 February 1844.

27 The "Account for final settlement...of the Estate of William Condon dead" provides information about the whereabouts of the Condon family circa 1856.

28 Newman Abstract and Shelby County Census, 1850. While John Cohill's middleinitial noted to be "E" in the Newman abstract, 1850 Census Records, Shelby County Marriage record and papers in the Cohill file of the Shelby County Historical Society indicate that his middle initial was "M" or "N."

29 *Early Shelby County, Alabama, Marriages*. Compiled by Nell Motes Goggans, 1960. p. 31.

30 See "A true appraisement of the All the Personal estate of John N. Cohill..." (7 November 1865) in the John N. Cohill file held by the Shelby County Historical Society.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

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were retained by his “widow & family.”<sup>33</sup> Mary Kidd Cohill apparently continued to live in the Rock House following her husband’s death; 1870 census records list her occupation as “keeping house” and indicate that her two daughters, 16 year old Caroline and 13 year old Cornelia, lived with her. Both Cohill daughters are marked as having attended school within the past year. John Cohill’s estate was finally settled in 1873, and abstract records indicate that Cornelia Cohill, by then married to a W.I. Norris, acquired the property from her mother on 6 January 1887.<sup>34</sup>

Willis Clayton Eastis purchased the Rock House and associated properties from W.I. Norris and Cornelia A. Cohill Norris in June 1906, and the property remains in the hands of Eastis heirs.<sup>35</sup> In January 1953, Larkin Newman, stepson of Willis Eastis, acquired the property; in this transaction, Newman obtained 160 acres of land in Section 35, Township 19, Range 2E including the east half of the section’s southwest quarter and the west half of the section’s southeast quarter.<sup>36</sup> In the years following Larkin Newman’s death, the property has been owned by his sons Ellie Newman, James Newman, and the late Frank Newman. James Newman and Frank Newman acquired the southeast quarter of the southwest quarter of Section 35, Township 19, Range 2E (including approximately 40 acres) from their brother Ellie Newman in 2002.<sup>37</sup> The Rock House is currently uninhabited and used for storage. A non-contributing one-story, five-room frame dwelling was constructed near the Rock House circa 1950.<sup>38</sup>

### SECTION IX: BIBLIOGRAPHY

“A true appraisalment of the All the Personal estate of John N. Cohill...” (7 November 1865) in the John N. Cohill (1856-1874) file, Shelby County, Alabama, Historical Society (Shelby County Estate Case Files, Drawer 8, Packet 0019; Box 3, Folder 89 of 102).

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33 Ibid, and “A true and correct account of the sale of the personal property of the estate of John N. Cohill” (14 December 1865) in the John N. Cohill file held by the Shelby County Historical Society (Shelby County Estate Case Files, Drawer 8, Packet 0019; Box 3, Folder 89 of 102).

34 Newman abstract and John N. Cohill papers, Shelby County Historical Society.

35 Newman abstract.

36 Ibid.

37 Bill of Sale, Ellie A. Newman and Eileen Boe Newman to Frank Newman and James Newman, Office of the Shelby County Tax Assessor.

38 Record Card for the property of Frank Newman and James Newman, Office of the Shelby County, Alabama, Tax Assessor.

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Shelby County, Alabama, Will Book D.

**SECTION X: GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

Verbal Boundary Description: The Old Rock House is located in the vicinity of Harpersville in Shelby County, Alabama, at the end of a farm lane (Larkin Lane) on the north side of US Highway 280 (Alabama Highway 38). The nominated property is bounded by four imaginary lines running parallel to each facade of The Old Rock House. One such line is situated 72 feet from the porch on the house's south facade; another such line is located 85 feet

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from the house's east facade; another such line is situated 60 feet from the north wall of the frame ell appended to the north facade of the house; another such line is located 29 feet from the house's west facade. The nominated parcel is situated within property owned by James Newman in the SE ¼ of the SW ¼ of Section 35, Township 19 South, Range 2 East.

Boundary Justification: The boundaries of the nominated property contain the Old Rock House and its immediate surroundings, including a well and an outhouse, while omitting several nearby structures dating from after 1950.

**Photos**

Old Rock House, Harpersville Vicinity  
Shelby County, Alabama

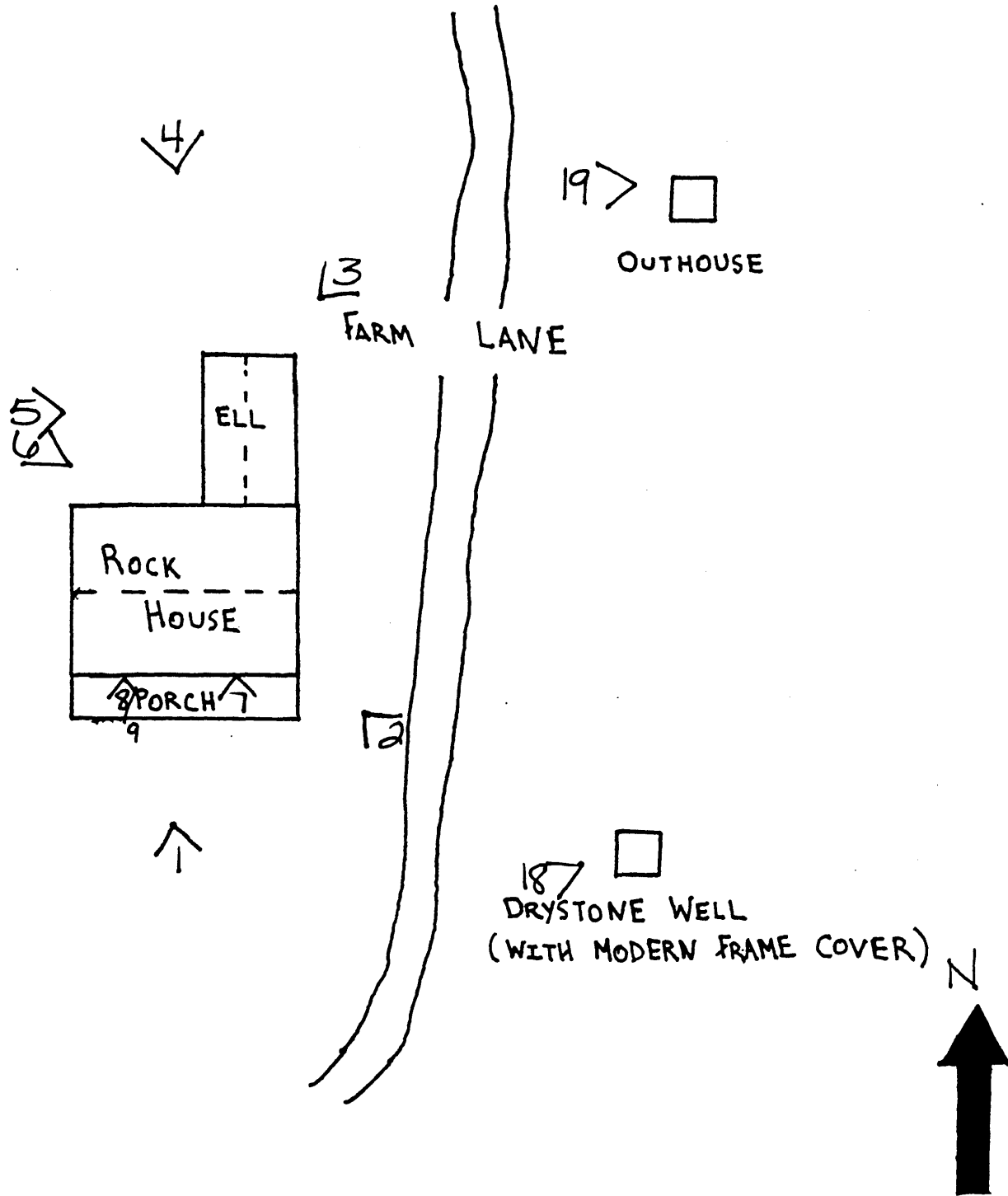
Christy Anderson, Alabama Historical Commission  
August 8, 2005

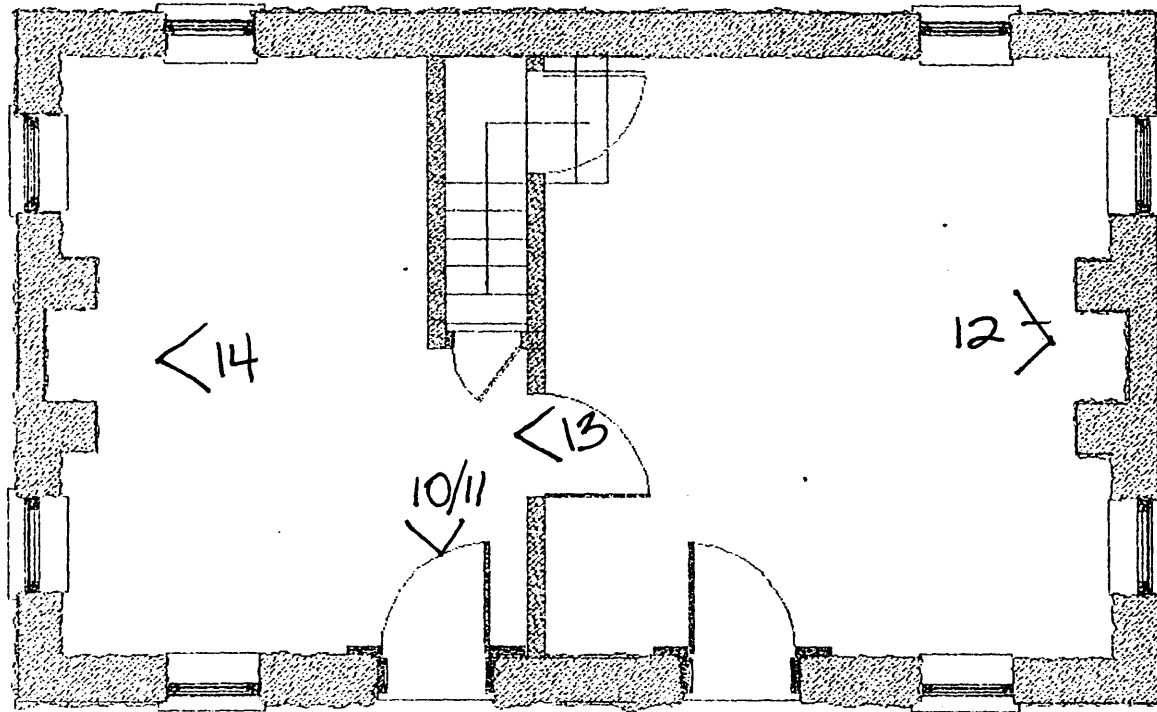
Negatives on file: Alabama Historical Commission  
468 S Perry Street  
Montgomery, AL 36104

1. Front façade facing north
2. View of house and ell from southeast
3. View of house and ell from northeast
4. View of ell and rear of house facing south
5. View of west elevation of ell
6. View of west elevation of ell and rear (north) wall of house
7. View of front (right) door
8. Detail of door reveal on left front door
9. Detail of elliptical arch and fanlight over front left door
10. Interior of front door showing graining on the woodwork
11. Detail of interior of fanlight
12. Mantel on first floor east room
13. Room view of first floor west room
14. Mantel on first floor west room
15. Detail of plaster over stone on exterior wall
16. Stairwell and balustrade from second floor, facing north
17. Second floor west room
18. Drystone well, facing northeast
19. Privy, facing east

# THE OLD ROCK HOUSE SHELBY COUNTY, AL

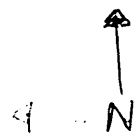
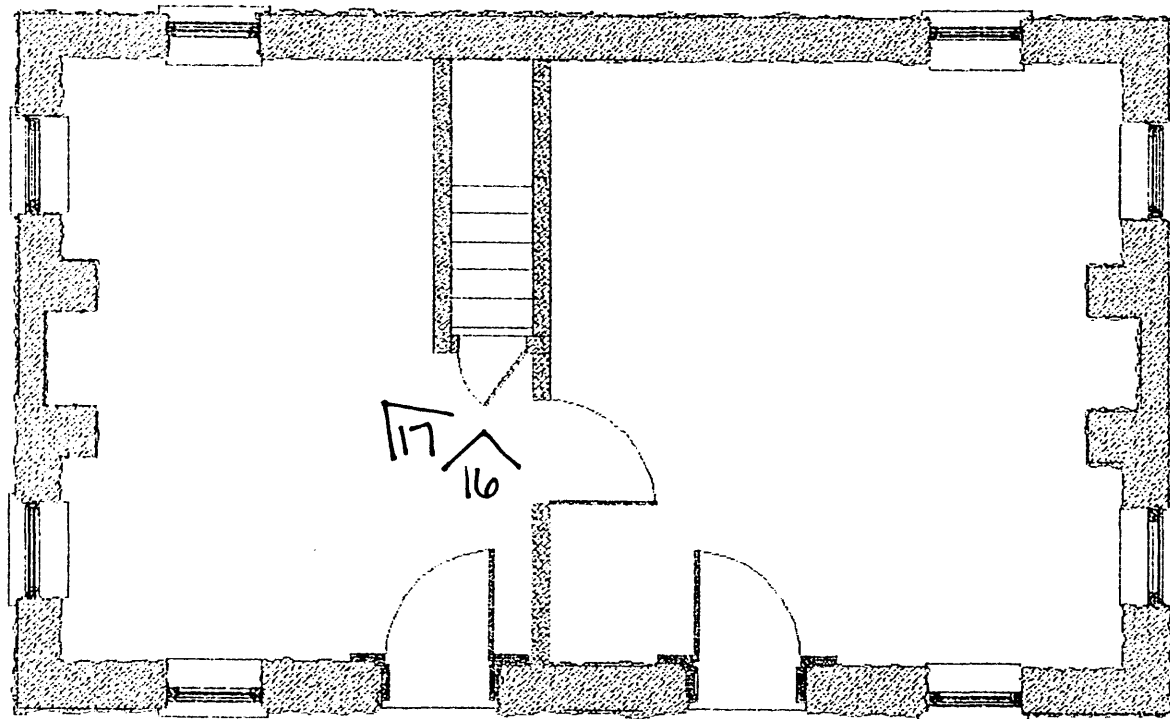
SITE PLAN (NOMINATED PARCEL)  
NOT TO SCALE



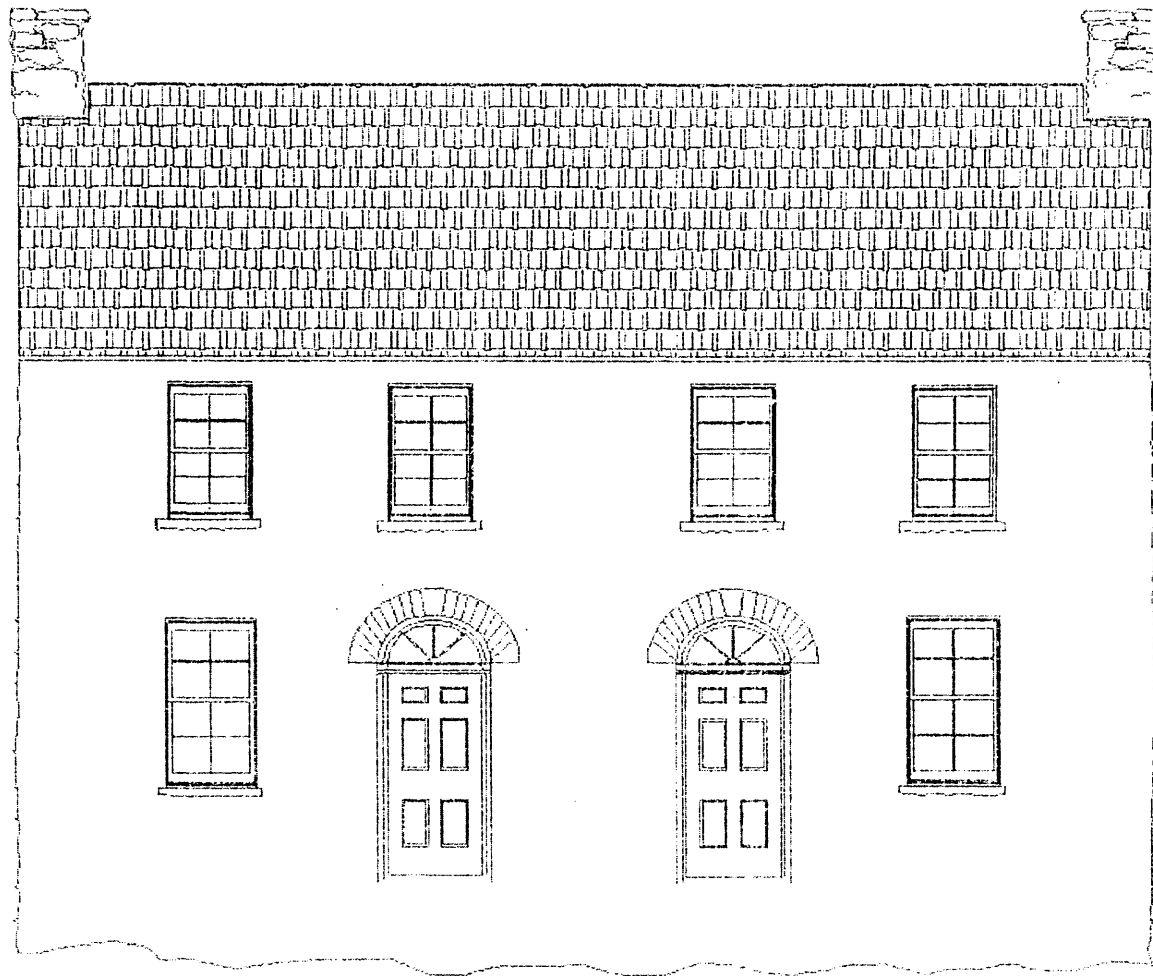


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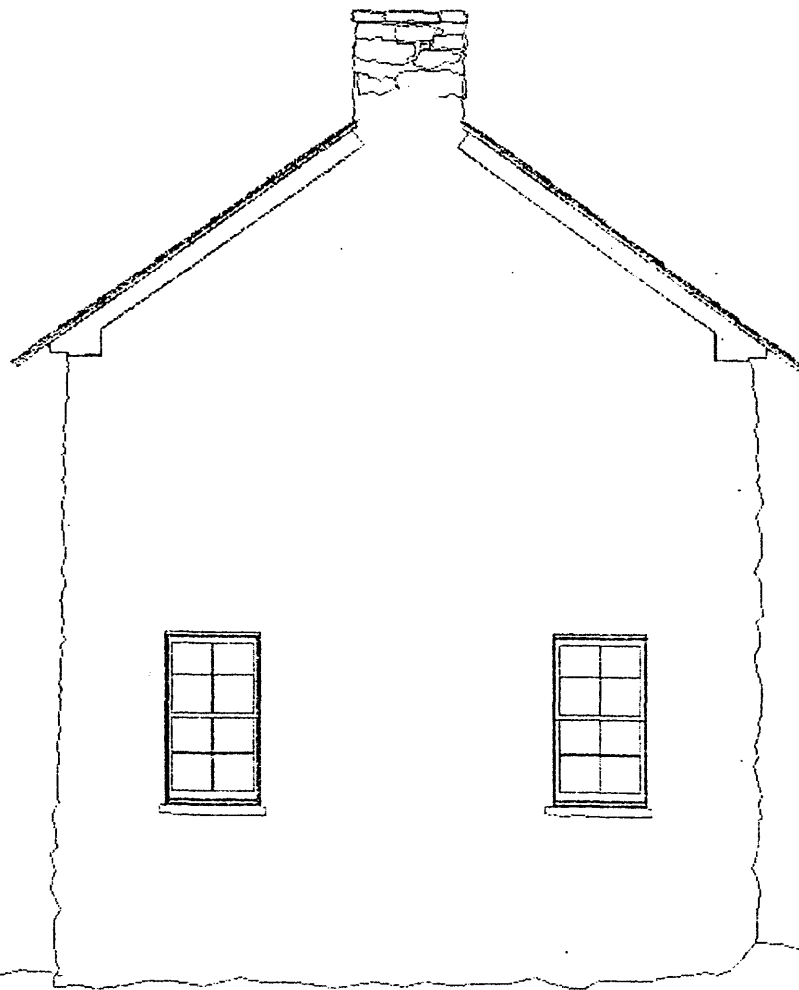




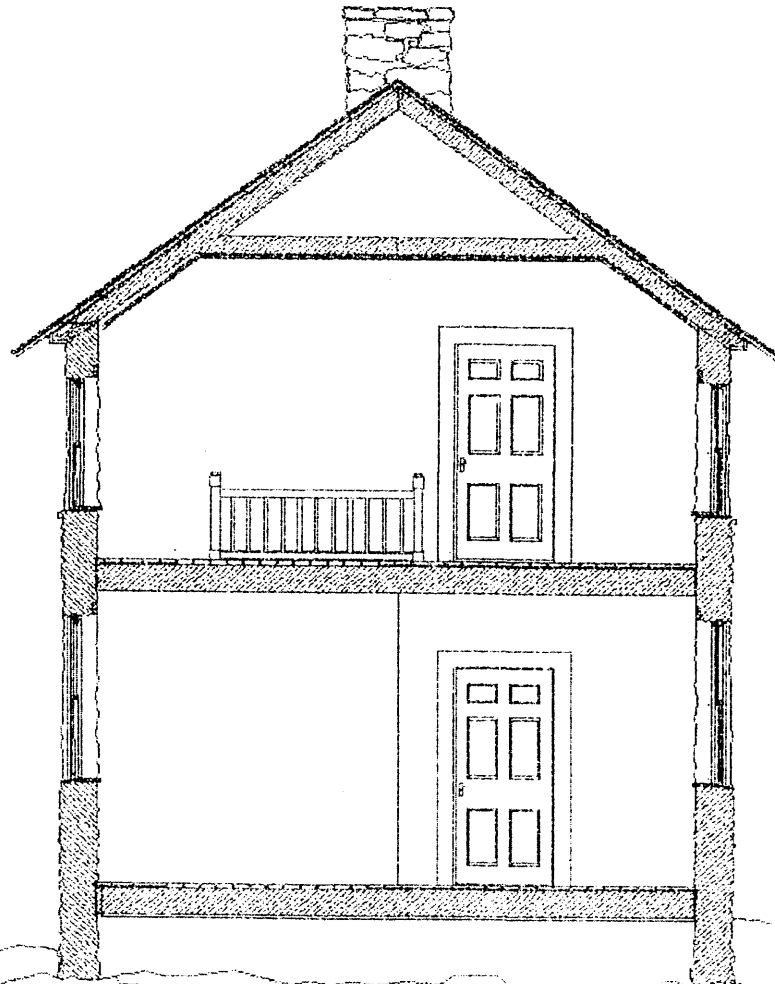
SECOND FLOOR



FRONT ELEVATION



SIDE ELEVATION



SIDE ELEVATION CUTAWAY