

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received MAY 12 1986

date entered JUN 18 1986

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Samuel Simpson House

and/or common Taber House

2. Location

street & number 216 North Main Street NA not for publication

city, town Wallingford NA vicinity of

state CT code 09 county New Haven code 009

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<u>NA</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: vacant

4. Owner of Property

name Town of Wallingford

street & number 350 Center Street

city, town Wallingford NA vicinity of state CT

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Wallingford Land Records, Municipal Building

street & number 350 Center Street

city, town Wallingford state CT

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title State Register of
Historic Places

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1986 federal state county local

depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission
59 South Prospect Street

city, town Hartford state CT

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Overview

The Samuel Simpson House is a late Greek Revival style structure that was extensively altered and enlarged to the Renaissance Revival designs of Henry Austin, c. 1867. The house is located on a remnant of its former ample grounds on the west side of North Main Street in a residential neighborhood, a block north of Wallingford's central business district.

Facing east, the Simpson House is sited close to the street, which is lined with shade trees, and is separated from the street by a low iron fence. (Photograph 2) The next house to the north is close by, having been built in the former Simpson garden. Grade slopes off sharply to the rear, where the carriage house was located. (See Beers 1868 Map A.) To the south, in the former side yard, is the new Wallingford Public Library building, constructed in the last year or two. (Photograph 1)

Exterior

The original 3-bay front block of the house is readily apparent despite Austin's work. Austin added a wrap-around front porch, a 2-story addition to the right, a 3-story tower to the left and a long 2-story ell with 2-story porch. He also carried out interior renovations.

The front elevation of the house is a 3-bay, late Greek Revival style design, with additions. The Greek Revival details of pilasters and pediment are of accentuated articulation. The corner pilasters project, their panels are deeply recessed and the gable-end pediment is deeply recessed. There is a triangular window in the pediment. Below the pediment the moldings dividing the architrave from the frieze are bold. The front door is

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glazed at the top and paneled below. Its flanking paneled pilasters have egg-and-dart capitals and stand on paneled pedestals with molded tops. First-floor windows are floor-to-ceiling in height. The frames of the 1-over-1 windows project. At the second floor their molded caps project further than the rest of the frames. At the first floor the window sills extend to form a string course that connects with the top moldings of the pedestals flanking the doorway. The front wall is tongue-and-groove flush boarding.

Prior to the Austin renovations, the house consisted of a 2-story main block and kitchen ell. The main block was irregular in shape, as there was, and is, a jog to the south at the west end of the south elevation. (See Sketch Plan B.) The rear gable end of the main block has eaves returns that are still visible. (Photograph 3) Austin added on to all four sides of the main block and increased the size of the ell, enlarging the overall size of the house to 2500 sq. ft. per floor. On the front he built a porch that runs across the original three bays and wraps around, filling the space of the jog, where it is glazed. The porch railing is made up of short, thick balusters between paneled pedestals that support fluted columns with acanthus leaf capitals. There are five columns across the front, one free standing next to the wall at the right and two in the wrap-around to the left. The columns support a frieze that is embellished with triglyphs and bosses. In front of the front door, over the steps leading up to the porch, is a pediment with recessed tympanum. The porch skirting is pierced by vertical slots.

Austin extended the front elevation to the north with a 1-bay, 2-story, flat-roofed addition. The flush boarding is continued and the window frames repeated, except that the first-floor window has a cap instead of the second. The molding of the porch roof is continued as a string course between stories. The roof line is an extension of the line of moldings in the capital of the main block's corner pilaster. There is a substantial roof overhang.

On the south side elevation (Photograph 4), Austin added a 3-sided bay to the rear jog and extended it up to a third floor, with tent roof, thereby altering it to an octagonal tower. In front of the tower, in the flush boarding of the main block at the second floor, there is a large, arched stained glass window. The entablature of the front continues along the side above the window. The tower has boarding and windows similar to those of the north addition. The windows are supported by impost blocks and the stories are separated by vigorous moldings. Window sills extend to become string courses as on the front. Third-floor windows consist of three vertical lights. There is a Greek key molding under the eaves. (Photograph 3)

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The original kitchen ell was increased by Austin in width, depth and height. On the south elevation, behind the tower, he created a 2-story porch. (Photograph 5) Its railing of balusters and pedestals and its pierced skirting are as on the front porch, but the columns are fluted Doric. The first-floor columns, which have entasis, are taller than those at the second floor. At the first floor, there are a pilaster against the tower wall and six columns, the fifth being at a rounded corner and the sixth, at the rear, against the wall. At the second floor, there are a similar pilaster and five columns, with the fourth and fifth close together at a square corner, with no pilaster or column next to the wall.

The porch walls are covered with clapboards. Steps that rise immediately behind the tower lead past a window in the tower, on the right, to a door in the south wall. To the left of the door is a tripartite window, each section being 2-over-2 although the flanking sections are much narrower than the central section. There are two 1-over-1 windows to the rear of the tripartite opening. All windows and doors have plain surrounds. The Austin ell has a gable roof that joins the main block below its eaves returns. The moldings and roof overhang of the tower join the main block above and below the eaves returns. (Photograph 3)

At the rear there is a 1-story clapboard section of dimension less than the full width of the ell. It is offset to the north, permitting the first floor of the side porch to wrap around and continue to a short section of balustrade that extends the rear wall of the 1-story section. (See Measured Drawing C.) This small section of porch has been closed in and there is a door at the top of the steps located behind the side porch that lead up to it. The slopes of the gable roof of the ell are the same pitch but of different lengths. The north slope is longer, i.e., the ridge line is off center to the south. (See Photograph 11.)

On the north side elevation, the Austin 2-story addition has brownstone ashlar foundations and a low-pitched, almost flat, shed roof. The first part of this addition, at the front of the house, is a 2-story, 3-sided bay of flush boarding, under wide roof overhang. Three 1-over-1 windows in a clapboard wall follow, taller at first floor than second, with impost blocks like those in the octagonal tower. Next, there is a rectangular porch with railing of balusters like the others, but without pedestals. In this porch fluted Corinthian columns rise from the floor, with pilasters at the walls, supporting an entablature of three courses of bold moldings. At the east end of the porch, steps descend to grade, toward the front. The railings of the steps flare out at the bottom and terminate in angled paneled piers. The porch has the same pierced skirting as found elsewhere. The door to the porch is glazed at the top, over panels. Behind the porch is one 6-over-6 window. The north elevation is obscured from view by overgrown vegetation.

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Interior

The interior of the house also assumed a changed character under Austin's hand, with the possible exception of the front stairway. The stair rises immediately on the left, inside the front door, the traditional Greek Revival location, and perhaps dates from before 1867. It has the simple turnings in spindles and newel of an unpretentious Greek Revival house. (Photograph 6.) It appears that Austin simply continued the stairway in place.

He made important changes elsewhere. The north wall of the main block was removed, making possible a long, narrow front room, with an arch in the middle where the wall had been, to support the upper floors. (Photograph 7.) The vista from the stairway through the front room to the new north bay was enhanced by making the opening from the hall wider and fitting it with a screen at the top. Many doorways in the house have similar screens, although each one is different, composed of spindles and latticework. (Photograph 8.) The trim around the enlarged opening between the hall and the front room is flat stock with peripheral band moldings, as is the window and door trim throughout the house. The front room was made grand with a beamed ceiling. Other rooms in the house received similar ceilings.

For the new dining room in the newly enlarged ell, Austin created a new chimney and fireplace.¹ The firebox is surrounded with exposed red brick under a frieze of dark wood with central raised motif which is similar in design to that in the front porch tympanum. Consoles support the mantel shelf. Tall flanking pilasters support a second, higher pair of consoles and cornice over a mirror. To the left of the fireplace is a built-in cupboard, one of several in the house. It has hinged doors with diamond-shaped glazing over two tiers of drawers. Wood in the dining room, including the beamed ceiling, is finished in a dark or natural wood color, while most of the woodwork elsewhere in the house is painted a light color. (Photograph 9.)

On the second floor, the rooms are arranged and treated in a manner similar to that on the first floor. A door from the hall gives access to the second floor of the south side porch. (Photograph 10.)

From the third floor of the main block it is possible to see the relationship of the original ell roof to the roof of the enlarged ell. (Photograph 11.) Also visible in the third floor are the braces installed to support the roof of the octagonal tower. (Photograph 12.) The short ladder visible in the picture leads to a scuttle that provides access to the third floor of the tower, which is completely finished in matched boards, ready to serve as a child's playroom. (Photograph 13.) From the attic it is apparent that the triangular window of the front pediment has muntins of wood, not lead, intricately carved.

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Austin's work also included a carriage house, mentioned in the specifications and visible on the Beers 1868 map, but it was demolished at an unknown date.

1.

In the first scheme, the fireplace faced the kitchen. See Austin Plan E.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates c. 1838/c. 1867 **Builder/Architect** Unknown/Henry Austin

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Criteria C and B

The Samuel Simpson House is significant architecturally because it is an example of the work of Henry Austin and is the only known work of Austin, extant or demolished, for which both drawings and specifications exist. (Criterion C - Architecture) Austin's client, Samuel Simpson, was an important figure in the history of Wallingford, contributing significantly to the development of its major industry, the manufacture of silverware. (Criterion B - Famous People)

Criterion C - Architecture

Samuel Simpson purchased the modest Greek Revival house on North Main Street at the end of the Civil War.¹ He must have retained Austin's services soon thereafter, for the enlarged house shows on the Beers' 1868 atlas map. Why Simpson elected to enlarge the modest house, rather than build an imposing new house, is unknown, but conjecture suggests that the location of the Moses Y. Beach House (1850)² on the adjoining lot, even though it faced another street, may have been a factor. The Moses Y. Beach House was the finest in town, and had been designed by Austin. The circumstantial evidence places Simpson in the position of attempting to achieve parity with Beach in location and architect. On the other hand, this may simply have been a generally desirable location.

The Austin drawings for Simpson show how the program became more ambitious from the first sketches to the final plans, presumably in response to the client's desire to make a more substantial statement of his presence in the community. In the first drawings the front porch was limited to a portico, the octagonal tower was two stories high, the south side porch was one story, the rear ell was 1½ stories, and the north addition was one story. There was no north side porch. The specifications refer to a 1-story addition. Then, the porch was made into a wrap-around and a story was added to the tower, south porch, ell and north addition. The north porch was added, although a drawing showing it is not at hand, but its details are clearly similar to details of other porches. One drawing shows the front porch increased to its wrap-around dimensions but without the porch pediment. An overlay shows this added feature. Obviously, it won approval. This drawing shows cresting, similar to that in the porch pediment tympanum, over the central second-story window and artifixia on the roof line of the north addition. Whether these decorative features were executed is unknown.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Less than one

Quadrangle name Wallingford

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	8	6	8	2	3	2	0	4	5	9	1	6	3	0
Zone				Easting				Northing						

B

Zone				Easting				Northing						

C

Zone				Easting				Northing						

D

Zone				Easting				Northing						

E

Zone				Easting				Northing						

F

Zone				Easting				Northing						

G

Zone				Easting				Northing						

H

Zone				Easting				Northing						

Verbal boundary description and justification

The boundary of the nonimated property is shown by the dotted line on the portion of Assessor's Map A44 drawn at scale of 1" = 100'. The boundary includes the house and 15' of land on each side remaining from original ground

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state NA code NA county NA code NA

state NA code NA county NA code NA

11. Form Prepared By

name/title David F. Ransom/Consultant, edited by John Herzan
Connecticut, National Register Coordinator

organization Historical Commission date November 2, 1985

street & number 59 South Prospect Street telephone 203 566-3005

city or town Hartford state CT

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

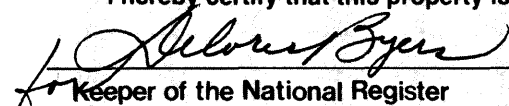
As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title Director, Connecticut Historical Commission date May 5, 1986

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

 Keoper of the National Register ~~Entered in the~~ National Register date 6/18/86

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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One drawing for the interior (See Austin Detail F) shows the arch to replace the original north wall of the front room. The quality of the draughtsmanship and the clarity of the details of the moldings and soffit are outstanding. Several of the drawings are signed; none is dated.

The specifications, also unsigned and undated, apparently were drawn up early, as they omit Simpson's first name, and do not identify which side elevation is to receive which alteration. (See Specifications G.) Also, they provide for "carriage and horse shed built connecting with house and barn." This scheme is at variance with the layout shown by the Beers map.

The drawings and specifications were found in the attic in 1982 at the time Simpson's great-granddaughter ceased to occupy the house. Documentation relating to other Austin work was also found. The house has been vacant since that time. The statement that the Simpson House is the only known structure designed by Austin, extant or demolished, for which both drawings and specifications exist, is on the authority of John B. Kirby, Jr., the recognized scholar of Austin's career.³

It appears that few changes have been made in the house since Austin's plans were executed, other than for plumbing and other mechanical systems.⁴ The 1-over-1 sash probably were installed at the turn of the century when such sash became popular. The existence of one 6-over-6 window at the northwest corner suggests that 6-over-6 was the original glazing pattern, perhaps in conjunction with the 2-over-2 pattern in the dining room tripartite window. On the whole, the house has excellent integrity.

The architect, Henry Austin (1804-1891), was born in the New Haven area and first worked for Ithiel Town. Austin opened his own architectural office in 1837. Small Greek Revival houses such as the Simpson House in its original condition, were among his early works. The first Austin building to win acclaim was the stone Gothic Yale College Library (1842-1845), followed by the Egyptian Revival sandstone gate for New Haven's Grove Street Cemetery (1848-1849) and the fanciful New Haven Railroad Station of 1850.⁵ The 1850 house in Wallingford, for M. Y. Beach, publisher of the New York Sun, was Austin's most distinguished use of oriental elements, while his Morse-Libby House, Portland, Maine (1859-1863), is recognized for his mastery of the Italian Villa style. Yet Austin's stylistic range was even broader. His New Haven City Hall, opened in 1862, was a spectacular example of the High Victorian Gothic, and he went on in 1879 to design a house in Branford for W. J. Clark that is a superb example of the Stick Style.⁶

In working in such a wide range of 19th-century Romantic Revival styles Austin was in step with the changing architectural tastes of his era. He

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moved with the times, interpreting the latest fashion with outstanding skill and success. He is primarily known for designing new structures, rather than for planning renovations as he did for Simpson. The Simpson renovations themselves involve more than one style. The Greek key at the top of the octagonal tower is a salute to the basic Greek Revival character of the original house, but the tower itself and the 3-sided north bay are post-Greek Revival. The columns and railings of the porches are of classical inspiration and, with the motif used in the porch pediment and planned for the central window, are not inconsistent with Austin's work for the Beach and Morse-Libby houses. The wide roof overhang at the front of the north addition is Italianate but the antifixa planned for its embellishment are Grecian. The Simpson House is consistent with Austin's regular use of a variety of styles.

The timing of the work on the Simpson house is not clear. On the one hand, the Beers atlas shows the enlarged footprint extant in 1868 and therefore probably executed by 1867. On the other hand, the heaviness of the Renaissance Revival style exterior features belongs more to the 1880s. On the interior, the doorway screens and particularly the dining room with its beamed ceiling and classical revival fireplace wall are characteristic of the 1880 or 1890s. It is possible that the work was carried out in stages. Examination of the drawings tends to support this postulate. If the more modest program of work called for by what may be regarded as the first drawings was executed, it was in turn altered by the more ambitious program later on. It is these presumably later drawings for the more ambitious program that are signed. A corroborating detail is the overlay for the front porch pediment which is in a different hand and on a heavier paper than the drawing of the overall porch. The house as it appears today corresponds with the signed drawings whose stylistic traits are at odds with the 1867 date.

Criterion B - Famous Person

Samuel Simpson (1814-1894) was born in Wallingford, the youngest of seven children. At age 15 he entered into an apprenticeship with Charles Yale, becoming a journeyman in the manufacture of brittania ware.⁷ Subsequently, with a partner, he bought the business and for the rest of his life engaged in a series of business enterprises in the field of processing metal for household use. In 1847 he bought an old woolen mill and fitted it up for plating metal by electricity, becoming probably the first manufacturer in this country to plate silver electrically on hollow ware. This business was merged with Meriden Brittania Co. Another enterprise, a partnership, was called R. Wallace & Co. Descendants of Simpson's various enterprises continued producing silverware well into the 20th century under the names R. Wallace & Sons Manufacturing Co. and International Silver Co.⁸

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Simpson was active in the Wallingford community, contributing time and money to the construction of a school, the Town Hall and the Opera House. He was a founder and president of the Dime Savings Bank, a director of the First National Bank and for 30 years was senior warden of the Episcopal church. He represented the town in the Connecticut General Assembly in 1846, 1859, 1865 and 1879.⁹ Among the Simpson philanthropies was the donation, by will, of land and funds for construction of the 1903 Wallingford Public Library on North Main Street close to the center of town. The library recently has moved from that building to the library adjoining the Simpson House.

By his lifetime of vigorous business and community activities, Samuel Simpson made a significant contribution to the economic and social development of Wallingford.

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1. The house probably was built c. 1838 by John Meigs Hall on the site of a 17th-century house and possibly incorporating some of its fabric. After Hall, there were two other owners before Simpson bought the property. Clara Booth Newell, History of Wallingford, Connecticut, 1670-1956, Wallingford Historical Society, nd, v. 3, p. 1613.
2. The M. Y. Beach House was demolished in 1960, to make way for a bank.
3. John W. Kirby, Jr., interview with author, October 28, 1985.
4. The lighting fixtures were manufactured by Meriden Britannia Co., a Samuel Simpson company. Bills for the fixtures were found in the attic.
5. Destroyed by fire 1894.
6. This account of Austin's career is taken from John W. Kirby, Jr., "Austin, Henry" in Alfred Placzek, ed., Encyclopedia of Architects, New York: MacMillan, 1981.
7. Britannia metal is an alloy of tin, antimony and copper similar to pewter.
8. Connecticut Circle, July 1945, p. 46.
9. The biographical information on Samuel Simpson is taken from J. L. Rockey, ed., History of New Haven County, Connecticut, New York: W. W. Preston & Co., 1892, pp. 445-448.

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Austin, Henry, specifications and drawings for alterations and additions to the Samuel Simpson House, c. 1867.

Beers, F.W., Atlas of New Haven County, Connecticut, New York: 1868.

Connecticut Circle, July 1945.

Kirby, John W., Jr., "Austin, Henry" in Alfred Placzek, ed., Encyclopedia of Architects, New York: MacMillan, 1981.

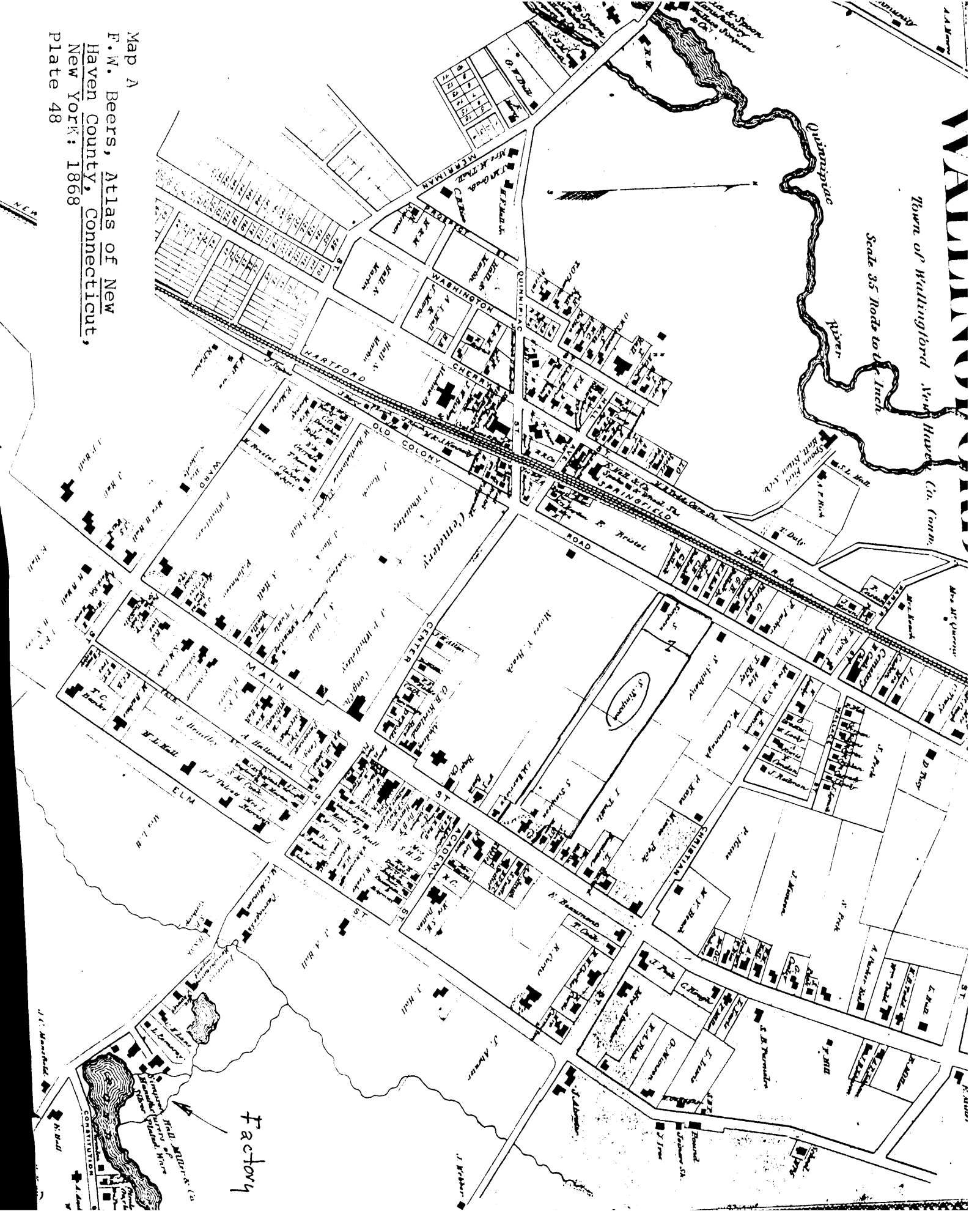
Newell, Clara Booth, History of Wallingford, Connecticut, 1670-1956, Wallingford Historical Society, nd.

Rockey, J.L., ed., History of New Haven County, Connecticut, New York: W.W. Preston & Co., 1892.

WALLINGFORD

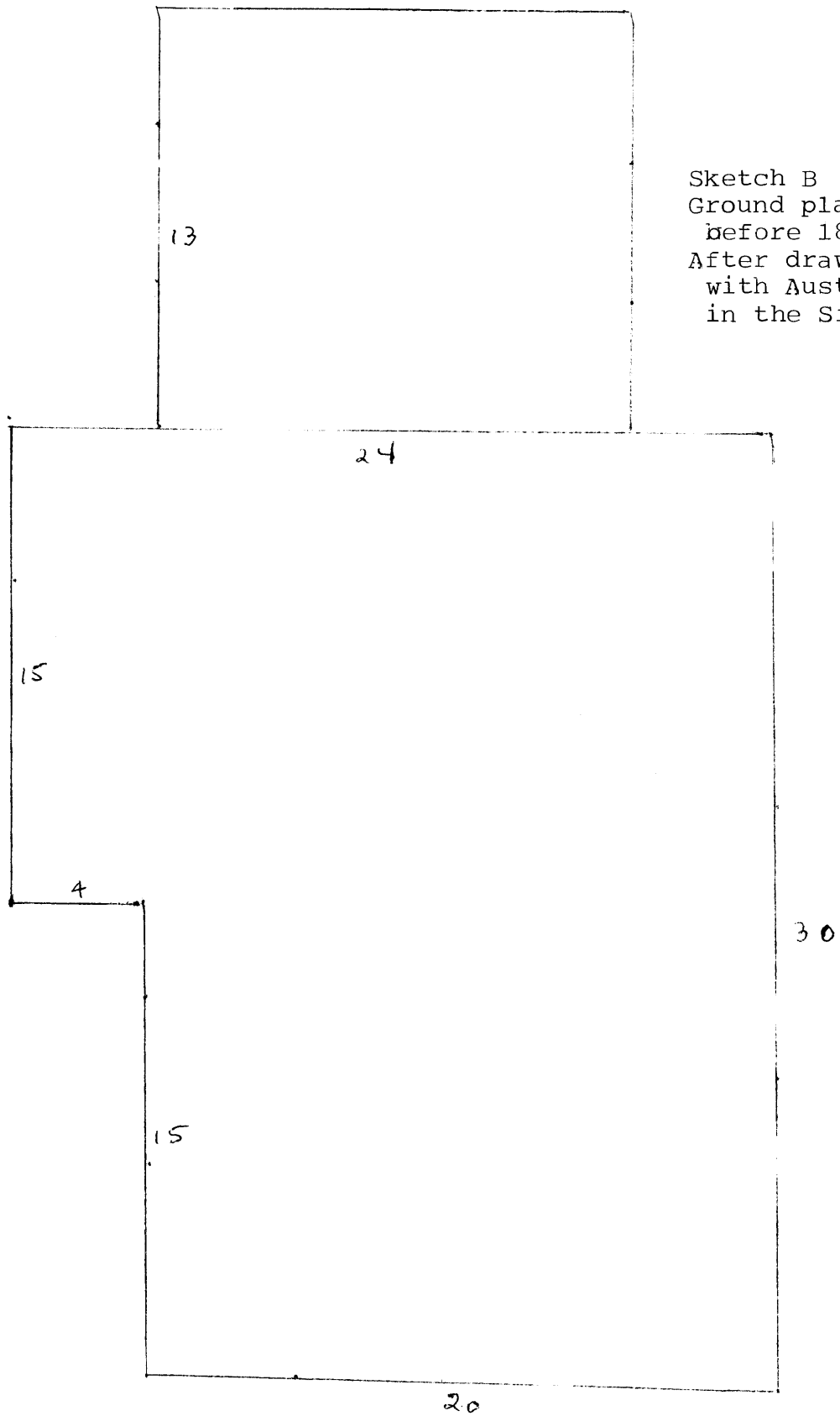
Town of Wallingford, New Haven Co., Conn.

Scale 35 rods to 1 inch

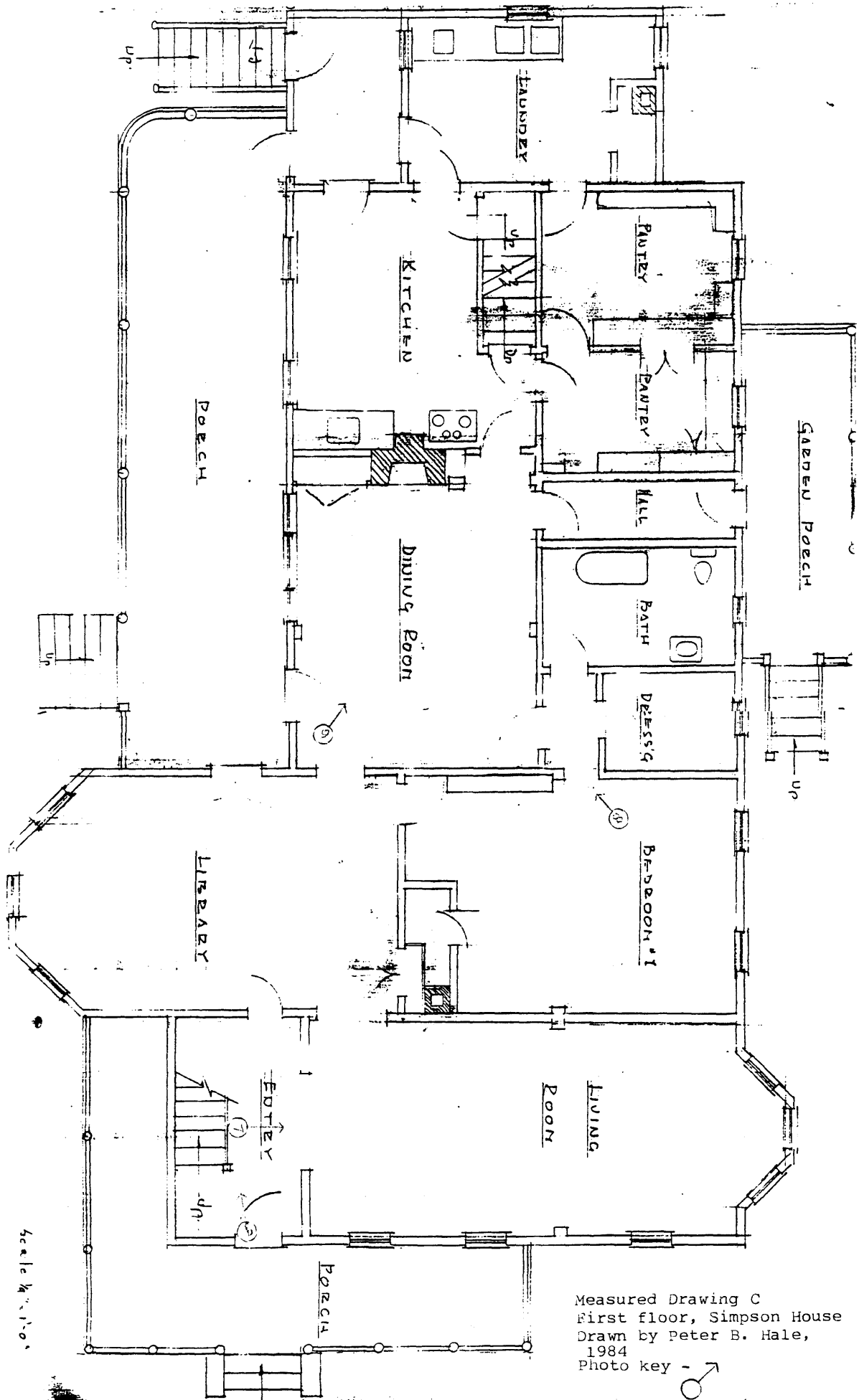


Factory

Map A
F. W. Beers, Atlas of New
Haven County, Connecticut,
New York: 1868
Plate 48

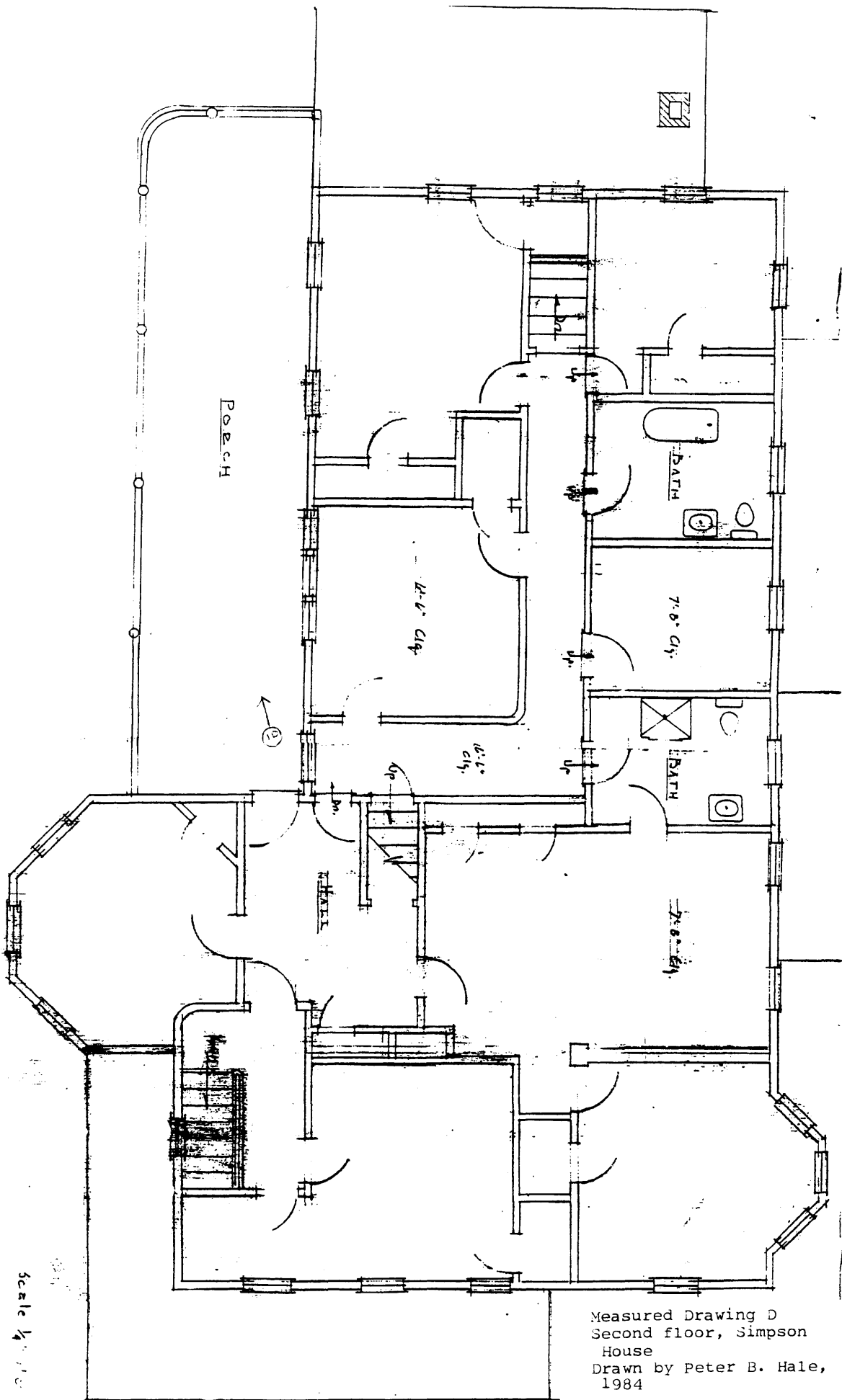


Sketch B
Ground plan of house
before 1867
After drawing found
with Austin drawings
in the Simpson House



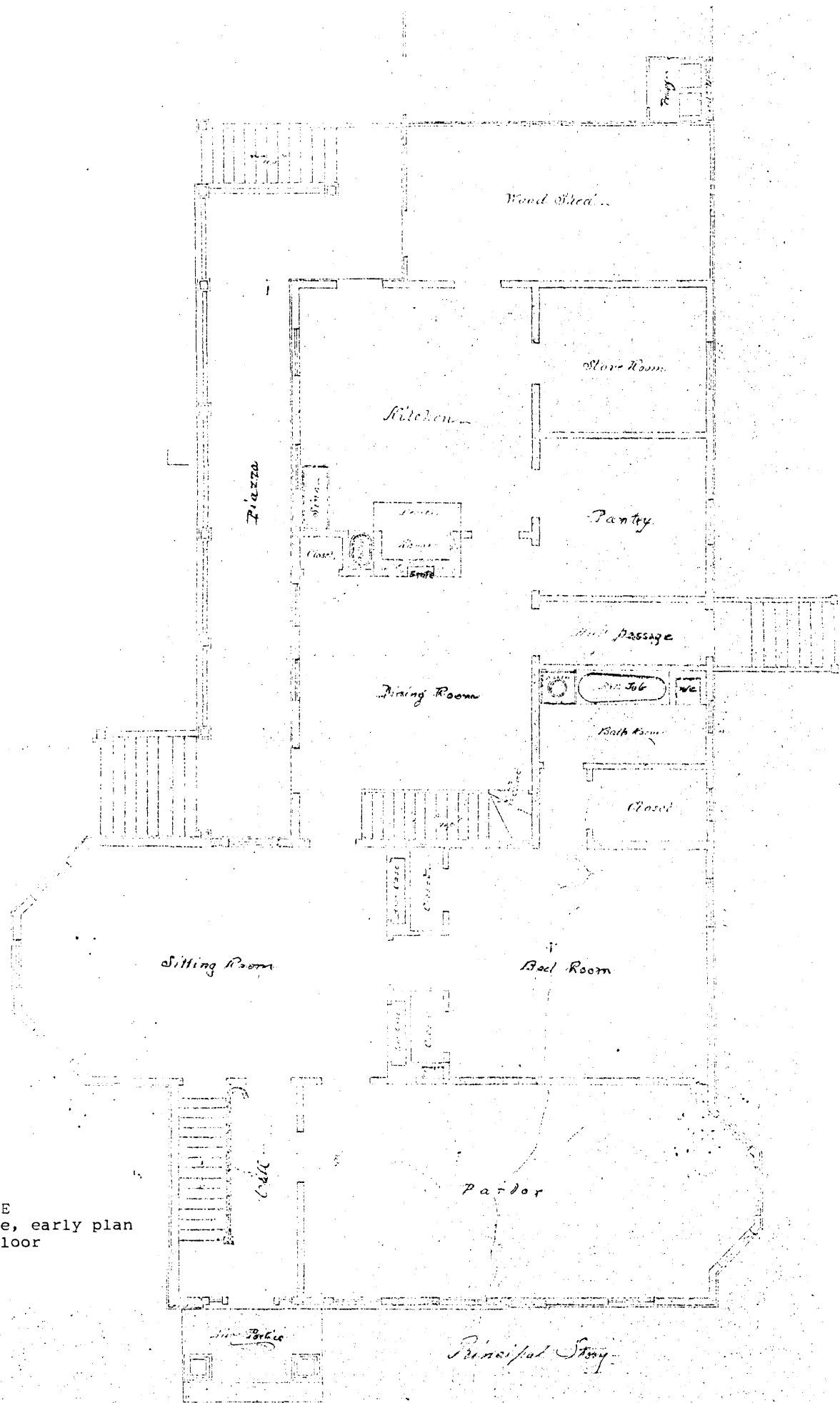
Measured Drawing C
 First floor, Simpson House
 Drawn by Peter B. Hale,
 1984
 Photo key -

Scale 1/8" = 1'-0"



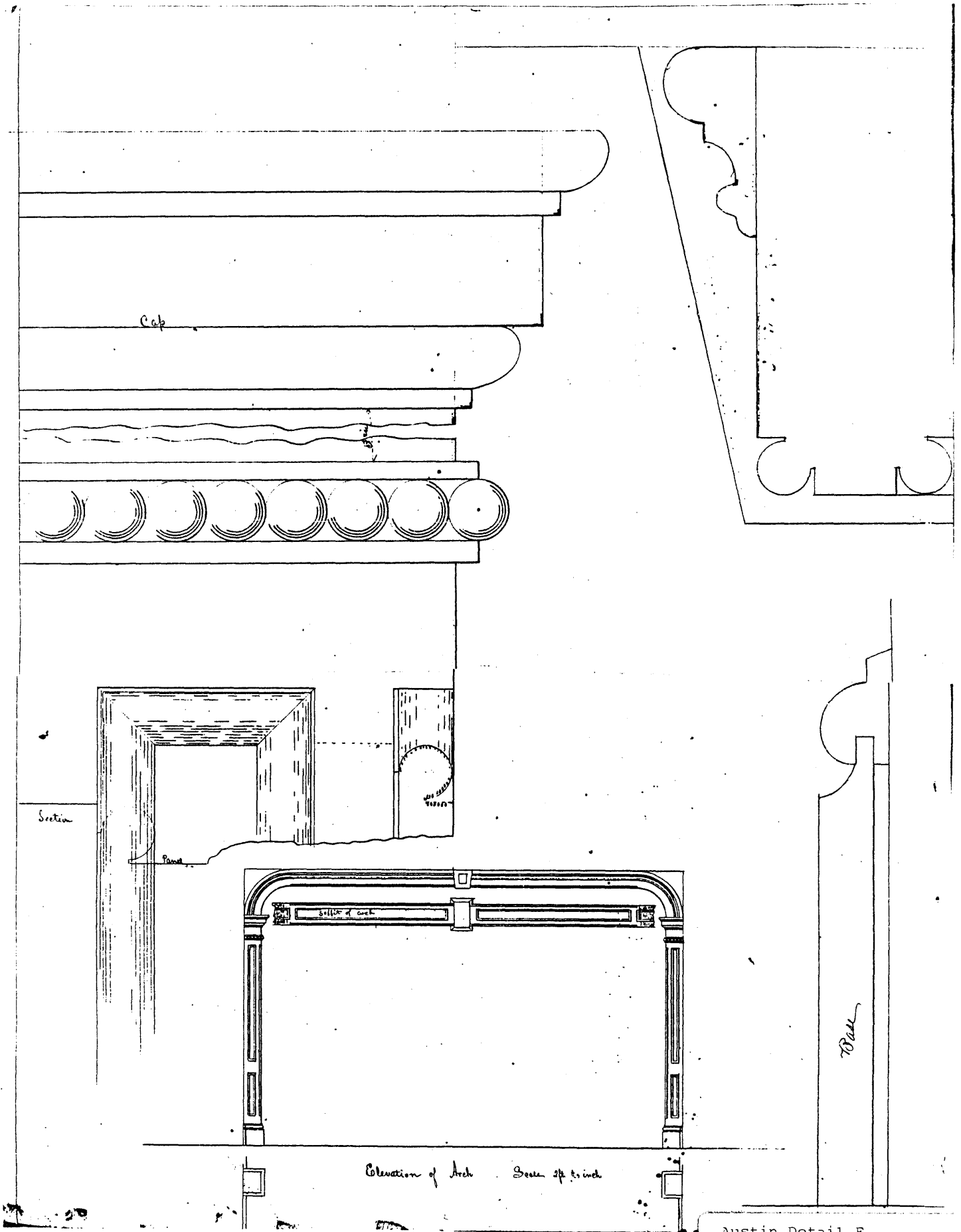
Scale 1/4" = 1'-0"

Measured Drawing D
 Second floor, Simpson
 House
 Drawn by Peter B. Hale,
 1984



Austin Plan E
 Simpson House, early plan
 for first floor

Principal Story



Cap

Section

Plan

SILL OF ARCH

Elevation of Arch Scale 1/4 inch

Back

Austin Detail F
Plan, elevation & details
for front room arch, as
executed.