

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

|                  |             |
|------------------|-------------|
| FOR NPS USE ONLY |             |
| RECEIVED         | JAN 4 1985  |
| DATE ENTERED     | APR 11 1985 |

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Fiechter, John, House

AND/OR COMMON

Failing Cottage

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

William L. Finley National Wildlife Refuge

NOT FOR PUBLICATION N/A

CITY, TOWN

Corvallis

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF

Fifth

STATE

Oregon

CODE

41

COUNTY

Benton

CODE

003

**2 CLASSIFICATION**

| CATEGORY  | OWNERSHIP                                  | STATUS   | PRESENT USE                                    |
|---|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC | <input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED                    | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE           |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S) | <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE           | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED       | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE              | <input type="checkbox"/> BOTH              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL            |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SITE        | <b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>                  | <b>ACCESSIBLE</b>                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT                 | <input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED  | <input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT         |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED  | <input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED           | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT |
|   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> NO                          | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL            |
|   |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY              |
|   |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE     |
|   |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS             |
|   |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC            |
|   |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION        |
|   |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:                |

**4 AGENCY**

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)

United States Department of the Interior -- Fish and Wildlife Service

STREET & NUMBER

Suite 1692, Lloyd 500 Building, 500 NE Multnomah St.

CITY, TOWN

Portland

N/A VICINITY OF

STATE

Oregon

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE.

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Benton County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

120 NW 4th Street

CITY, TOWN

Corvallis

STATE

Oregon 97330

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

State of Oregon Inventory of Historic Properties

DATE

5 June 1976

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

State Historic Preservation Office

CITY, TOWN

Salem

STATE

Oregon 97310

# 7 DESCRIPTION

|  |                                       |   |   |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>CONDITION</b>                         |                                       | <b>CHECK ONE</b>                            | <b>CHECK ONE</b>                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT       | <input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED | <input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GOOD            | <input type="checkbox"/> RUINS        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED | <input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE <u>N/A</u> |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR | <input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED    |   |   |

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

## Introduction

The John Fiechter house is located in Benton County, Oregon, approximately 12 miles southwest of Corvallis within the confines of the William L. Finley National Wildlife Refuge. The house (1855-1857) and accompanying grounds, comprising a total of 11,201 sq.ft. contained within a picket fence, and auto garage (1933) are being nominated for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.

The 2-story wood balloon frame house was built during Oregon's Greek Revival period in a traditional southern vernacular double house form. The building was once the central feature of an extensive stock and farm estate administered by Fiechter on approximately 1000 acres (by 1859) of prime agricultural land. The physical integrity of the John Fiechter House is excellent. The house is a significant symbol of early Oregon architecture, lifestyle, and settlement history.

An early pioneer, Fiechter travelled to the sparsely inhabited Oregon territory in 1846, to eventually settle in 1850 on Donation Land Claim No. 54, sections 20, 21, 28, 29, and 30, Township 13 South, Range 5 West, Willamette Meridian. Sixty years later, the property and improvements were acquired by members of the Failing and Cabell families for hunting and investment purposes. In 1964, the Cabell landholdings were sold to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the creation of the William L. Finley National Wildlife Refuge. Current refuge management plans call for the preservation and eventual historical/architectural interpretation of the Fiechter House for the public.

## Site Description

John Fiechter established his farm south of the town of Marysville (Corvallis) in a thinly populated area bordered by the Willamette River to the east and the coastal range to the west. Fiechter's 641.58 acre Donation Land Claim was bisected by Muddy Creek, which emerges from the east slopes of the Coast Range and meanders in a northerly direction to enter the Mary's River southwest of Corvallis. Farming operations were initiated at the Fiechter settlement at a location 1/4 mile west of Muddy Creek. Here the elevation begins a gentle rise to the foothills of the coastal range. Swamp and marsh land to the southeast of the Fiechter homestead possibly provided then, as now, excellent waterfowl hunting.

Tradition relates that John Fiechter filed his claim, married, and built a "log cabin", a temporary home, in 1850. Reportedly, Fiechter first improved his land with an orchard (southeast of the cabin), then proceeded to erect the necessary farm buildings. A barn was built to the east of the cabin, and a hogshed was constructed nearby. Fiechter was primarily known as a stockman, raising horses, cows, sheep, and hogs, though he also grew wheat and oats. Construction on the lumber house began in 1855, to be completed by 1857. A picket fence enclosed the yard to the house.

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Tragedy struck in 1861 when John Fiechter was accidentally shot during a hunting expedition. His widow married resident farm hand Archibald Johnson six months later. Johnson continued agricultural operations at the farm until his death in 1889. Improvements to the farmstead during the Johnson occupation are unknown, though additional farm acreage was obtained. Cynthia Fiechter Johnson and son Marion Fiechter managed the farmstead, though occasionally selling off parcels. In 1906 a final sale of all the original Fiechter/Johnson property was carried out.

The land was purchased for seasonal hunting, stock raising and investment purposes by a Portland based family, the Failings/Cabells. The Fiechter House was rented by hired farm managers. By the early 1930's, the physical condition of the house had become poor. Concurrently, the barn and outbuildings associated with the house were razed. Fortunately, the landowners recognized the house for its historic value. The house became the subject of a "restoration" project in 1933. An auto garage/woodshed was constructed on the foundation of a pre-existing building 42 feet to the southwest of the house. The picket fence was reconstructed to enclose the yard. The yard supported ornamental plantings, fruit trees, almond trees and a grape arbor. A gravel driveway meandered from the auto garage, past the front of the house, and through a gate in the picket fence to the north of the house. Possibly this drive replicated original access to the Fiechter barn. A non-functioning privy was placed for aesthetic reasons underneath an apple tree on the site of a previous privy about 100 feet to the south of the house. A grape arbor, built 10 feet to the east of the house, resurrected an old grape vine. To the west of the house, on a slight terrace, was a lawn-tennis/badminton court.

After the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service acquired the property in 1964, no site alterations were carried out, however, the apple tree and privy were removed. Fields to the north, south, and east of the house have been periodically plowed. Pear trees from the orchard remain to the southeast of the house.

Presently, the landscaping around the house features plum (*prunus*) apple (*malus*), black locust (*Robina pseudoacaua*), white birch (*Betula pendula*), English laurel (*Laurocerasus officinalis*), Indian plum (*Oemleria cerasiformis*), quince (*Chaenomeles*), rose (*Rosa*), grape (*Vitis*), iris (*Iris*), and periwinkle (*Vinca major*).

In 1981, the Oregon State University Archaeological Field School conducted an architectural recording of the Fiechter House and auto garage. Archaeological research was undertaken to determine the nature and extent of cultural material remaining at the site. Architectural questions were addressed through archaeology. Of prime interest was to salvage cultural materials in the cellar, and to locate the site of the privy. Behavioral questions relating to lifesyle as well as refuse and depositional patterns are hoped to be answered. A more in-depth description of archaeological work carried out at the Fiechter site is presented in the significance section of this document.

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Architectural Description

House Exterior

The Fiechter House is a two-story wood balloon frame, central chimney "double house" with brick lined cellar, and full attic. The house was constructed in 1855-57 during Oregon's Greek Revival Period. Though unusual, the house faces west. The architectural style represents a cultural transplant--the double house form is a southern vernacular plan (also found in New York and Pennsylvania) which followed pioneer migrations to Ohio and on west.

House construction was supervised by John Fiechter's father-in-law Abiathar Newton, long time Kentucky resident turned Oregon Pioneer of 1847. The main form of the house (18' x 32') is rectangular, symmetrical and plain in form, utilitarian in function. Originally a two story piazza parallel to the facade cornice provided an exposed second floor balcony with double door access. The porch and upper story doors are no longer featured. A back porch is situated off the north end of the east elevation. Possibly this porch originally extended lengthwise across the back of the main form until a one and one-half story service wing was built perpendicular to the main form. The wing is Carpenter Gothic in character, possibly added in the 1860's to accomodate a growing family.

The house foundation, cellar, fire place and chimney are composed of brick. The hand-production and firing of the 2" x 4" x 8" brick was accomplished at the site. Mud mortar was used for bonding. The partially subterranean foundation is 11 brick courses (22") in height. The cellar is situated entirely under the north portion of the main form. Encased with brick walls, the 6' deep cellar has an earthen floor and exposed joist ceiling. The double fireplace is situated precisely in the center of the main form, facing north and south. Each 18" deep fire box has a 42" breast, a 36" back, an arched opening, and a flush brick hearth. The topped out chimney is massive, measuring 25" x 42". A 4" x 12" brick flue was built on the kitchen service wing at the east gable end to accommodate a wood burning cook stove.

The framing system of the main form is comprised of 4" x 4" rough sawn studs, and 8" x 8" hand hewn sills. The sills and first floor joists are mortised, tenoned and pinned together. The exterior wall studs, set 24" to centers, are notched to accept the second floor girders. Two by 6" plates cap the studs. Interior studs are found only on the first story, and the intersecting wall on the second story between the main form and service wing. The 2½" x 8" floor joists are set 24" to centers. The 2" x 6" attic floor joists and 2 ¾" x 2½" rafters, which intersect the plates, are set 24" to centers. Rough sawn 1" x 10" waney edge sheathe boards overlay the rafters. The service wing has 2½" x 8" floor joists set 21" to centers and 8" x 8" hewn sills. Attic joists are 2" x 6" and rafters 2" x 4", both set 24" to centers. The sheathing measures 1" x 3". Wall construction in this part of the house was probably done in the box, or plank method. Square nails were used to make tight joints at construction angles. Six inch weather-boards and a cedar shingle roof cover the building. A 9" watertable surrounds the base of the house. The original exterior paint scheme was white with black trim.

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Classic detailing is simple on the Fiechter House. The roof pitch of the main form is low. The entablature carries substantial returning eaves. Cornice detailing includes a cyma recta, fascia, and fascia moulding. The 8½" wide frieze is featured on each elevation. The uncapped corner pilasters are 3½" wide on the facade and east elevations, though only 1½" wide on the north and south gable ends.

Door and window placement throughout the house is symmetrical. All windows are 6 over 6 double hung sash. The original four panel facade exterior doors were modified at one point to contain 4 upper lights each. An architrave cap is featured on the plain trim of each door and window. The upper story facade windows are built up against the frieze, however. All door and window surrounds are flush to the exterior wall.

A small utility wing (1930's) to the east of the service wing was architecturally treated to resemble the house proper. The present front porch, not the original, has a shed roof with enough length to cover the two front doors. Two boxed pilaster corner posts support the roof. Decking (3¼") is not composed of re-used floor boards from the original porch, though some lumber used to construct the shed roof may be re-used lumber. The bay window on the south elevation is a later addition, as is the structural closing-in of the back porch.

#### House Interior

The spatial layout of the first floor includes living room, bedroom, dining room, kitchen, utility room, and enclosed back porch. The living room and bedroom, identical in size, feature exclusive front entrances. The second floor has two bedrooms, a bathroom, and access to two attics.

Room function and access has changed with various owners. Possibly before the service wing was added the north room on the first floor was used as a kitchen. In this room are a pantry, closet, two windows and two exterior doors. The back door originally led directly to a porch with well and water pump. From here it was only a short distance to the cellar. Through the years this room has been a kitchen, master bedroom, living room, and again a master bedroom. The south room was originally a living room, briefly a bedroom, and again a living room. The north and south rooms are connected east of the fireplace. The service wing was built off the south room for dining and kitchen space. Later a utility room was added off the kitchen. A door leads from the dining room to the presently enclosed back porch.

Second floor stair access is not in the original placement. Ascent at one time started from the south room. The stairs were located directly west of the fireplace and chimney, thus contained within a compact, unobtrusive area. The stairs access has since been moved to the north room.

The second floor was originally one open room. It was possibly devised this way with a plan to segment the area at a later date. Maybe two rooms, one for girls and one for boys, were created. Presently two bedrooms and a bathroom (ca. 1933) fill the area.

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Interior carpentry features and hardware are remarkably intact. Wall, floors and ceilingboards are matched flush handplaned tongue and groove lumber averaging 5-8" in width. (First story floor boards have been replaced). The kitchen and dining room have vertical board and batten walls. Board and batten walls divide upstairs rooms. Inner doors are of the two-panel variety with beveled faces. Original door hardware includes two-part hinges and rim locks with jet or porcelain knobs. Window sashes have plain metal twists. The sashes were constructed by the mortise, tenon and pin technique. Windows for the most part retain the original panes. All original door and window trim is plain and built flush with the wall boards. The two fireplace mantles are identical, composed of hand planed and finished wood. Presently the mantles protrude from the wall, however, they were originally set flat. The south room features a display cabinet above the mantle, apparently an original feature. A preliminary judgement on the interior paint scheme reveals the first floor walls and trim were initially painted a beige color. Walls were often left bare for an interim after construction. The second floor rooms initially received white paint for the walls and trim, and green floors. These colors may date to a 1933 restoration when the upstairs was "finished".

#### Auto Garage

The auto garage was built in 1933 on the foundation of a pre-existing structure. The wood frame garage was built on a square plan (21'2½") with a concrete foundation and hip roof. Featured are 2 double auto-entry sliding doors with glass pane tops and paneled bottoms. These doors are on the west and east elevations, a pass-through situation. A driveway meandered from the east door, past the front of the Fiechter House, and through a gate in the picket fence to the north of the house. The garage has a central cupola enclosed with glass panes. The exterior of the structure is clapboard with a wide frieze board. The roof is cedar shingle.

The north and south elevations each feature a 6 over 6 double sash window. The interior floor is concrete. Spacing is divided between single auto parking and wood storage. The structure has always been painted white with green trim. The design concept was meant to convey a "New England lighthouse" effect.

#### Architectural Modifications

Architecturally, the John Fiechter House is very intact. Most of the original featuring characteristic of the Greek Revival style and concept of space utilization remain. Major structural changes carried out in the past did not effect the original framing system. Most other architectural modifications are minor and/or superficial.

The main form of the house was most likely a single, self contained home with kitchen, living area, upstairs room (possibly divided into two bedrooms) and a full-length front and back porch. A full length back porch is feasible since the entire east "exterior" wall of the main form is hand planed lumber, not weatherboard siding. The north first floor room over the cellar, would have served as a kitchen. The privy was out back. Later, possibly as the family grew, a service wing was added for dining and kitchen space,

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opening up the original kitchen to a master bedroom. The new kitchen had a wood sink on the north wall, and a wood cook stove on the east wall. A work table and cupboard would round out the furnishings. The service wing interior walls are board and batten. Window sashes are 6 over 6 but of a slightly different construction (thicker muntins) than the main form. The boxed surrounds protrude from the walls, not flush like the main form windows. Doors are two-panel, identical to main form doors.

Sometime prior to 1906, during the Johnson occupation, the front piazza was removed and replaced with the existing porch. The two upper-story doors were also removed, and the holes patched on the exterior and interior. The interior boards are unevenly placed and matched. Possibly during the Johnson occupation the upstairs rooms were finished with board and batten walls.

Between the Johnson occupation and the Cabell restoration the house was a rental, and thus received no known alterations. The Cabell restoration was carried out by carpenter Frank Neave (deceased) in 1933. At this time numerous changes were made. Mrs. Cabell noted the restoration cost about \$1500.00 and was carried out using salvaged lumber and materials from other sites.

Most of the brick foundation of the house was repaired or replaced. Concrete and wood block supports were used at junctures. A brick retaining wall was built adjacent to the original north cellar wall. Brick faces cover the original arched firebox fronts. Many bricks in the firebox were repointed or replaced.

A bay window, replacing a 6 over 6 window but utilizing the sash, was added to the south wall of the main form. Candle shelves and a triangular corner platform, for a display cupboard, were installed in the living room. Shelves for pewter display were added to a dining room wall.

The staircase entry, was moved from the south main form room to the north main form room. The original stairs were reportedly extremely steep--possibly they were a straight ascent. The landing was thus possibly originally directly west of the chimney. The original stair entry door was modified into a cupboard at the top half, and wood box at the bottom. A two-panel door was cut in half for the woodbox door. The cupboard door has 9 glass panes.

The smallest second floor room became a bathroom with sink, toilet and enameled bathtub. The kitchen wood sink was replaced with an enameled sink. The legs to the enameled sink were discovered in the cellar. A toilet room was installed on the back porch. This was the first plumbing installation in the house. The well underneath the back porch was covered with a cement cap.

Two of the doors on the second floor appear to have been scavenged from razed houses. Possibly no doors were hung upstairs during the Fiechter/Johnson occupation and the rental period. The door hinges are of a 20th century variety. The bathroom door resembles the first floor north room back door. These two doors are unique to the house (the panel

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faces were planed differently). Possibly this door was originally the back door of the first floor south room, since no door hangs there presently. The two front doors to the house were probably modified, with the addition of 4 glass panes, during the restoration. The north door received new hardware.

A single sash 6 paned window may have been added to the upstairs south bedroom on the east wall. A hot-air furnace was installed in the cellar next to the fireplace foundation. Venting to the first floor has been since replaced with floor boards. A vent between the first and second floors remains, however. The house was wired for electricity in the early 1940's. Flooring on the first floor was replaced with 3" wide boards. Ceiling molding was added in downstairs rooms.

A small utility room, for storage and a refrigerator, was added to the east exterior wall of the service wing. In architectural detailing, this addition resembles house featuring, but with an added attraction of lattice sections. The yard was enclosed with a picket fence which was made and situated to replicate the original.

The house was acquired and used by the Finley Wildlife Refuge for an office in 1964. The lower rooms were used for offices, while the upstairs provided herbarium, darkroom, and storage space. A few minor structural repairs and visual improvements were carried out by refuge personnel.

In 1966, the house was re-roofed. In about 1975 the back porch was structurally enclosed to provide additional office space. Also, the front porch received a treated beam foundation. In 1976 the house exterior was painted, and the interior received its present paint color scheme. The house and auto garage were painted externally in 1982. Each received a new cedar shingle roof. The cellar was temporarily reinforced with a wood bracing system.

The house substructure was supported at one point. A sewage system was situated 43' east of the house in 1967. A cement sidewalk was added which led from the front porch of the house to the front drive. The meandering driveway became overgrown with grass, and is not presently visible. The stairs leading to the cellar, and the door, were replaced. Occasionally, exterior house siding has been repaired, and window panes replaced.

Currently, refuge personnel have plans to structurally stabilize the house and carry out appropriate visual improvement. A focus on maintenance and long term preservation is foremost in their plans. An interpretive museum operated in conjunction with the Benton County Historical Society is a desirable end-goal.

## 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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799            | <input type="checkbox"/> ART                            | <input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING                       | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC                  | <input type="checkbox"/> THEATER             |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE                       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY             | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900-                | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS                 | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY                          | <input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT    | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)     |
|   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION                         |   |  |

SPECIFIC DATES 1855-1857

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Abiathar Newton, carpenter-builder

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

#### Introduction

The John Fiechter House (1855-1857) remains as a representation of a significant era in the history of Oregon. Fiechter was a western explorer, pioneer settler and agriculturist who made a lasting contribution to the early Oregon settlement period. Fiechter was a member of the first overland expedition party to follow the southern route of the 1846 Applegate Trail. Most of the early Oregon emigrants settled the upper Willamette Valley, however, Fiechter was one of the first to choose to settle in the Mary's River region. Fiechter was also one of the first to take advantage of the 1850 Oregon Donation Land Law.

The phases which led to the population, growth and expansion of the Oregon Territory are seen in Fiechter's brief life record: European emigration, overland to Oregon, the Cayuse War, the discovery of gold, settlement, the Donation Land Law, marriage and family, the log cabin period, the new lumber house, and Willamette Valley agriculture.

The John Fiechter house is a superb example of Classic Revival Architecture adapted to western domestic use. The house remains as one of Oregon's few intact examples of Greek Revival architecture from the 1850-1860 time period. However, by the mid-1850's, as many as a third of Oregon houses used the double house form. Today, examples of classic form in the Willamette Valley are rare, an estimation of 12 houses fitting this category survive. Most have been substantially altered. The 1855 Belknap house, an architectural "sister" of the Fiechter house, burned in 1981. The Fiechter house thus remains the only double house connected, however remotely, to the Belknap clan. The John Fiechter house is one of four remaining Classic Revival homes in Benton County.

The Fiechter house is a tribute to the level of hand craftsmanship and construction technology achieved in early lumber home building. The house is an excellent architectural study of early frame systems, planed lumber, profiled pieces, sash and door construction, and masonry. The house was essentially built by hand from local materials - clay for the bricks and lumber from nearby stands of trees. The shaping and fitting of construction members required good carpentry skills. Only the best quality wood was used. Remarkably, most of the brickwork and mud mortar has remained intact. The house reflects the remoteness of early settlement building sites, and the resourcefulness of the craftsman.

The house has survived intact not only due to fine materials and good construction techniques, but to the fact that it has sustained only four owners. The

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See Continuation Sheet.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 0.26 Acres  
 UTM REFERENCES

USGS Greenberry Quadrangle 7.5 min.  
 Series  
 Scale 1:24000

A 10 475700 4919350  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
 C

B        
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
 D

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION The John Fiechter house-site is located within the confines of the William L. Finley National Wildlife Refuge. The nominated area constitutes 11,201 sq. ft. or 1/4 acre. This area is bordered to the north by Finley road and is situated 3.0 miles west on this road from 99 West. The site is encompassed within Tract 14, Township 13 south, Range 5 west, Willamette Meridian, of the US Fish and Wildlife Service land acquisition, 3 April 1964, Book 190, page 339, Benton County Deed Records, Benton County Courthouse, Corvallis, Oregon. The UTM designation given . . . continuation page

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

|       |     |      |     |        |     |      |     |
|-------|-----|------|-----|--------|-----|------|-----|
| STATE | N/A | CODE | N/A | COUNTY | N/A | CODE | N/A |
| STATE | N/A | CODE | N/A | COUNTY | N/A | CODE | N/A |

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

1981 OSU Archaeological Field School  
 Director: David R. Brauner

NAME / TITLE

Judith A. Sanders, Ardyce E. Harrison

ORGANIZATION

Department of Anthropology

DATE

June 1983

STREET & NUMBER

Oregon State University

TELEPHONE

503/754-4515

CITY OR TOWN

Corvallis

STATE

Oregon 97331

## 12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES

NO

NONE

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is  National  State  Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

*Walter O. Stiglich*

TITLE

Fish and Wildlife Service Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

March 7, 1985

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I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*Thomas M. Dwyer*

DATE

4/11/85

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
 ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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Fiechter/Johnson families did not alter the interior to any great degree. For 30 years the house was a rental which meant for little architectural modification, but increase of physical wear and tear. The house was restored in 1933, but modifications did not significantly affect the physical integrity. The changes which were carried out reflect the evolutionary growth a historic home often endures. The added attraction of the 1933 auto garage on the site of a pre-existing structure, enhances this concept of change and growth. Once the property was acquired by the US Fish & Wildlife Service in 1964, the house was maintained and left unaltered. Thus the integrity of the John Fiechter house is excellent.

Historical archaeology carried out at the house-site in 1981 offered insight into the material by-products generated by everyday living. Cultural material was abundantly scattered throughout the back reaches of the house. An unsuccessful search for a privy location turned up numerous fragmented articles discarded to the southeast of the house. Searching for evidence of an original front porch foundation post mould near the corner of the house proved unfruitful, though evidence of the meandering gravel driveway was found. Possibly the most significant aspect of archaeological research was the excavation of the Fiechter house cellar floor. Purposes of excavation were many: (one) to salvage cultural materials from the earthen floor so structural stabilization of the brick walls could be facilitated without damage to or interference from the artifacts, (two) to provide for an archaeological study in pattern of discard, deposition and decay, (three) to decipher types and functions of articles used (four) to delineate storage areas, and (five) to establish an evolutionary time sequence of cellar use and changing function. Inferences about a past way of life will be generated once archaeological analysis is completed at the Fiechter site.

The John Fiechter house is a significant study in early Oregon architecture and lifestyle. The house reflects occurrences of the settlement period in Oregon, which in turn reflects the national scene of Greek Revival building. It is one of the first true styles of architecture commonly used in Oregon. The house is an important symbol of Willamette Valley history. Finley Wildlife Refuge personnel have specific plans to preserve the house and offer public interpretation to explain the historical and architectural significance of the building. An interpretive museum operated by the Benton County Historical Society in cooperation with the US Fish & Wildlife Service is a desired end goal to fully appreciate the cultural significance of the John Fiechter house.

Historical Background

John Fiechter, born in Baden (Germany) in 1822, came to the United States through the port of New Orleans when he was about 12 years old. He probably traveled with a group of people named Feichter/Fiechter and Hauber. At the time of the 1850 federal census, these people were living in Savannah Township, Andrew County, Missouri, on land that was part of the Platte Purchase. There are two family traditions in Oregon which shed some light on John's early experiences after arriving in the country.

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The first, related by his daughter Annie Fiechter, who was born in the Fiechter house in 1859, holds that John came to the United States with an uncle, Martin Hauber. Stories had reached Europe of great riches to be had in the beaver trade, but by the time Martin and John left in 1835 the trade was no longer lucrative. Eventually, John used his experiences as a guide and "trail-viewer". One of his western trips was with an expedition of the U.S. government led by Captain John C. Fremont to Colorado in the early 1840's.

The second tradition, silent about any adventures of John's on his own or with his uncle while roaming the trans-Mississippi west, notes that he lived with his family near Nodaway City, Missouri, just north of St. Joseph. In 1846 Nodaway City was a thriving river port, and, according to this second tradition, John Fiechter joined an overland party which left St. Joseph for Oregon in the first week of May of that year:

...From the Platte River he drove one of the teams belonging to A(gustus) L. Humphrey and travelled with the family consisting of Mr. and Mrs. Humphrey and Manley and Elizabeth Currier (Elizabeth Currier Foster)... They followed the old emigrant trail to Fort Hall. There they were met by Jesse Applegate and party who came to meet the emigrants and who advised them to take the new route they had viewed out.

They traveled down the California trail to within forty miles of the sink of the Humboldt River, then turned off on the Applegate route for Oregon by way of High Canyon, Goose Lake, Klamath Lake, across the Siskiyou Mountains, through the Rogue River and on to the Umpqua.

John Fiechter and Manley Currier drove the first two wagons that ever passed through the famous Cow Creek Canyon. The family went on ahead with the cattle. They were three days driving through, a distance of about twelve miles. The family went on ahead on horseback, driving the cattle. It was here that they met the winter storms, and many lost all they had. The way was paved with dead cattle. But as they had a good outfit and were first in the train they fared better than many.

The party who came to meet them on the Humboldt, took all of the men tools, and food that could be spared and went on ahead to build roads for the wagons to pass over, but when they got as far as the Calapooya Mt. they had gone on without making a road. So with their meager resources the emigrants built roads but their progress was slow for it was over rough country. They were sixteen days crossing the Calapooya Mt. a distance of about fifteen miles. It was storming and they endured many hardships. They crossed Mary's River at the present site of Corvallis, in the pouring rain on December 5, 1846. Theirs were the first wagons to arrive over the southern route.<sup>2</sup>

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The historical record is not precise as to what John Fiechter did in the year or so following his arrival in the Willamette Valley. It is possible that he continued traveling to the Dallas area with the Humphrey and Currier families for the winter. However, he may have ventured to the present-day Monroe area, where he was reportedly living in 1847.<sup>3</sup>

Fiechter filed a claim with the Oregon Provisional Government on December 18, 1847. The claim was about 4 miles west-northwest of the mouth of the Mary's River.<sup>4</sup> The original claim is now within the confines of the City of Corvallis.

Family tradition holds that when Fiechter and Manley Currier heard news of the Whitman Massacre (29 November 1847) they proceeded to present-day Portland to join a militia unit forming under Captain John Owens. The muster roll of Captain Owen's Company B, 1st Regiment, Oregon Militia, dates Fiechter's enrollment as January 9, 1848.<sup>5</sup> Fiechter accompanied the regiment on its march to Wailaptu where they helped rebury bodies which had been unearthed by coyotes. There were several engagements that he took part in, including the battle east of Wells Springs. Here the Cayuse drove off Fiechter's gray Spanish horse, for which he later sought reimbursement from the Cayuse War Commission.<sup>6</sup> Fiechter was discharged from military duties July 5, 1848, at Oregon City.<sup>7</sup>

According to granddaughter Leatha Porter, John Fiechter took off for the California gold fields "in the mid-1840's"--and he fared quite well.<sup>8</sup> Many men, upon their return from the Cayuse War, sought their fortunes in the California gold rush of 1848-49. Manley Currier, a frequent cohort of Fiechter's, went south in the fall of 1848, to return in the spring of 1849.<sup>9</sup>

On a cold, wet evening in November 1849, Fiechter visited at the home of Abiathar and Rachael Newton (near present-day Philomath). The topic of conversation was Fiechter's "settling down", which prompted Abiathar Newton to suggest Fiechter consider marrying his 16 year old daughter "Syntha" or Cynthia.<sup>10</sup> It was reasoned they could file on a 640-acre claim when the Oregon Donation Land Claim Act went into effect in 1850. John and Cynthia came to an agreement and were married on March 21, 1850, one day after filing on a claim in Marysville.<sup>11</sup>

The claim was about 12 miles south of Marysville, Township 13 south, Range 5 west, Willamette Meridian, sections 20, 21, 28, and 29.<sup>12</sup> The Fiechters settled about 8 miles north of the nucleus of the Belknap settlement. Cynthia Ellen Newton Fiechter was a relation to the Belknap clan. She was born in Ohio a few years before her cousin, Ransome Belknap, who was born in Kentucky. Each were members of the same extended family that left Massachusetts and Connecticut by way of Pennsylvania and New Jersey, pushing the frontier westward through New York, Kentucky, Ohio, Iowa, and Indiana. Along the way they added to their numbers--Hawleys, Starrs, Garlinghouses, Gilberts, and many more. Several communities formed besides the Belknap settlement--the Newton settlement, Bellefountain, Starr's Point, Alpine, Philomath, Marysville, etc.<sup>13</sup>

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Of first priority once Fiechter established a claim was the erection of living quarters. A "log cabin" was built approximately 150 feet north of the present location of the 1855-57 lumber house. An idea of the nature of Fiechter's initial building techniques can be gained from a description of his tool kit, an essential item for the pioneer. Hand woodworking tools itemized in 1861 included one cross cut saw, one broad axe, five augers, one square, two chisels, one drawing knife, one pair pincers, and one grinding stone.<sup>14</sup> Fiechter possibly had these tools to build a log cabin, a temporary structure, and a permanent hewn frame barn, of which he would have required assistance to construct. A barn is referred to on the original Fiechter farmstead as late as ca. 1930.<sup>15</sup>

John Fiechter applied for United States citizenship in 1851. In order to file a land claim, he was required to declare an oath of citizenship by December 1851. The first session of the 2nd District Court, which involved Fiechter's petition, took place on September 29. The court met at the home of J.C. Avery, in Marysville, with Judge O.C. Pratt presiding. Fiechter's statement of intention read:

I, John Fiechter, was born in Baden in Germany, aged now 29 years, embarked from that country for the United States, in the year 1835--arrived in the United States to wit at New Orleans in the same year, and came to the Territory of Oregon in the year 1846 and expect to reside in future in Oregon. And it is bonafide my intention to become a citizen of the United States and to renounce forever all allegiance and fidelity to every foreign prince, potentate, state of sovereignty whatever; and particularly to the sovereign of Baden in Germany whose subject I am. So help my God.<sup>16</sup>

At the October 1854 term of the United States District Court, John Fiechter appeared and took oath of citizenship.<sup>17</sup>

Fiechter settled into a subsistence farming and ranching routine, similar to his "neighbors". Thirteen farmers settled in the Willamette Precinct between 1848 and 1852.<sup>18</sup> Most were centered in the valley around Fiechter's claim. Fiechter started farm production activities almost immediately. An orchard which produced apples, pears, peaches and plums was planted to the southeast of the farmstead. Necessary outbuildings were erected, including a hog barn.<sup>19</sup> Family tradition relates that Cynthia sold home-churned butter at the rate of one dollar a pound to those heading south to the California gold fields. She also tended a garden by the summer of 1850, and raised chickens acquired from her mother. Fiechter got a start in cattle raising by asking John Fremont to pay a debt he owed with a herd of Spanish cattle. This event possibly took place in 1851 or 1852, when Fremont was in California. Fiechter reportedly drove the cattle north along the California Trail.<sup>20</sup>

The story of an incident which occurred in the cabin has passed down through the generations. When the first Fiechter child, Melissa, was a baby in a cradle, a large

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group of local Native Americans came to the door of the cabin and walked right in. Cynthia tried to persuade them to leave, but to no avail. They moved about the cabin and picked up objects to examine. At this point, Cynthia picked up a rifle, walked to the door and fired in the air. Fiechter, plowing in a field nearby, came running to help. Apparently, he was able to explain that, though he thought Cynthia and the baby were in no danger, the intruders may have taken something she valued, so she was correct in calling him.<sup>21</sup>

John and Cynthia Fiechter had seven children between 1851 and 1859--Melissa, Francis Marion, Emeline, Rachael, Clarinda, and twins Ellen Ann and Cynthia Annie.<sup>22</sup> Most of the children were born in the log cabin. Construction began on a lumber house south of the cabin and barn in 1855, to be completed about 1857. Funds for the house possibly came from Fiechter's successful ventures in the gold mines. Fiechter's father-in-law, Abiathar Newton, acted as "architectural" consultant.<sup>23</sup> Newton's Oregon home (Philomath area, no longer standing) was a ca. 1850 two-story wood frame double house in the Greek Revival style. The house featured a veranda, with upper story double doors, on the gable-end facade.<sup>24</sup> Newton had lived previously in Kentucky, hence the source of the southern vernacular double house form. The double house form would be chosen for Oregon building because of its simplicity and cultural associations. Newton applied this strategy to the Fiechter home. However, the Fiechter house, in style and form, more closely resembles double houses built between 1848 and 1855 at the Belknap settlement. The Belknaps were relations to the Newtons.

Trees were cut near the building site to provide lumber for Fiechter's new house.<sup>25</sup> Most likely the logs were whipsawn locally. However, the logs may have been hauled to a mill to be rough sawn into lumber. The Rycraft Brothers operated a water-powered sash saw from 1853 to 1860 on the south fork of the Alsea River, approximately 11 miles southwest of the Fiechter claim. The mill produced flooring and siding which the Rycraft Brothers supplied, along with their building skills, for the construction of numerous houses and barns in the Belknap settlement.<sup>26</sup>

Also to the south of the Fiechter farmstead were two mills, each established about 1850--one run by Lorenzo Dow Gilbert on Muddy Creek, and one by Joseph White on the Long Tom River (present-day Monroe).<sup>27</sup> Gilbert was instrumental in the construction of many houses and institutional buildings in the Belknap settlement. He had supplied lumber for the last-built Belknap building, a double house erected in 1855 for Ransome A. Belknap.<sup>28</sup> Though sawmills sprang up west of Fiechter's claim, such as Gleason's and Irwin's mills on Beaver Creek, their dates of initial operations are unknown.

Taking into consideration a limited manufacturing technology in the 1850's West

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mill-produced wood finishing elements, such as window sashes and doors, would not be readily available. Fiechter was not trained in carpentry, nor did he possess specialized hand tools commonly used to construct a lumber frame house. Saws, molding planes, hand planes, and other woodworking hand tools used to shape and fit rough sawn lumber would have been brought to the building site by Newton and other helpers. Bricks were formed and fired near the site, and set with mud mortar. Square nails, window glass panes, and door hardware may have been purchased at Irwin's Trading Post, or at Silas Belknap's and George Starr's General Store (at Starr's Point (Monroe), near the Belknap settlement) or in Marysville (Corvallis) at either Avery of Hartless and St. Clair's mercantile businesses.

Southern routes to the Belknap settlement could be accomplished on old trails turned into wagon roads. Bellefountain Road (established 1852) at the foothills of the Coastal Range and Highway 99 West are two early examples. Highway 99 West is described as the "main road from Marysville to the gold mines" on an 1853 map. Irwin, once a merchant in Portland and Corvallis, established a trading post and post office on this road in 1852, about two and one-half miles east of Fiechter's farmstead. This would be the closest store available to Fiechter at the time of house construction. The Main Road became a Territorial Road, connecting Corvallis and Winchester, sometime after 1853. Once at Marysville, crossing the Mary's River could be accomplished by Avery's canoe in 1846, by ferry in 1853, and by bridge after 1856. Goods available in 1853 at Corvallis, a principal shipping point for the southern mines, included household foods and articles: apples, butter, cheese, candles, flour, wheat, sugar, nails, cooking stoves, and lumber. Pitman's sash and door factory appeared in 1875, while knight's furniture factory started operation in 1860. A few blacksmiths in town were established by 1851.<sup>29</sup>

The Fiechters stored products from their vegetable garden and orchard in the brick-lined cellar underneath their house. Brined meat, kraut, and pickles were stored in stoneware crocks. Crocks of gallon and half-gallon size were brought west by Abiathar Newton. Cynthia Fiechter received a few, which to this day have been passed down in the family. Signs of Oregon Trail cooking fires are visible on one of these crocks.<sup>30</sup>

Stock raising and farming were Fiechter's main occupations. By the time of premature death in 1861, his estate was worth \$7,7785.04. This included 764 acres of land valued at \$3,056.00. His farm stock was comprised of 37 cows, bulls, and steers; 330 sheep; 2 buck goats; 26 hogs, and 14 horses. Fiechter grew wheat and oats for stock feed. The threshed wheat possibly went to a local flouring mill. Benton County's earliest flour mill operated on Beaver Creek prior to 1850.<sup>31</sup> Fiechter owned standard agricultural tools essential at the time for cultivation and harvesting. Included were a two-horse "plough", a couple sets of harness, a shovel "plough", a harrow, a mowing

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scythe, a cutting box, wheat fan, and one large iron bailer. Other possessions included a two-horse "waggon," a double-barrel shot gun, and a "riffle" gun. Only major household items are known, possibly because they were considered "his", and not Cynthia's. Included were a large brass kettle, a cooking stove, a bureau, a table, four beds and bedding, and five sets of bed stock.<sup>32</sup>

John Fiechter was active in political affairs of the territory. His name appears on the 1849 territorial election records.<sup>33</sup> These elections were the basis for a burgeoning county government. In 1852 he signed a reprieve petition (both for and against!) for convicted murderer Nimrod Kelly in Benton County's first murder case.<sup>34</sup> In March 1852 Fiechter was named supervisor of the 4th District Road "from Herberts' Mill to Lloyds schoolhouse."<sup>35</sup> This road is a section of Bellefontain Road.

Fiechter's youngest children were Ellen Ann and Cynthia Annie (twins with red hair like their father's), born the year Oregon became a state. In June 1861, daughter Rachael died. She was buried in the Newton cemetery (Mt. Union). On October 3, 1861, early in the morning, John Fiechter was fatally shot by a discharging bullet as he stepped through a fence on a hunting expedition. Archibald Johnson, farm laborer from Indiana who apparently lived on the premises (according to the 1860 census) was in his company. Fiechter was buried in the Newton cemetery. Cynthia, 27 years old, was left with six small children.

Fiechter had died without a will, thus Cynthia appeared with her two brothers before the district court on October 28 to request that her elder brother, Norris P. Newton, be appointed administrator of the Fiechter estate.<sup>36</sup> He was duly appointed. A bond for \$11,000 was signed, and John Foster, Merrill Jasper, and Archibald Johnson were appointed to appraise Fiechter's landholdings and personal belongings.<sup>37</sup> A few months later, Cynthia petitioned in front of the court to gain support money for the family, and salary money for the farm hands. She was granted \$300.00 for one year's support money.<sup>38</sup> On January 6, 1862, N.P. Newton filed a notice of personal property sale: "one sorrel mare, one bay mare, about 100 head of mutton sheep, 1 plow, and 1 rifle gun, at private sale." Newton also filed a statement of the condition of the estate of John Fiechter, and he was granted extra time to collect outstanding notes.<sup>39</sup> Newton next came into court on April 6, 1863, to file the accounts and petition for final settlement.<sup>40</sup> Notice of final settlement appeared in the Oregon Democrat, Albany, May 4, 1863. At the time of final settlement, the Fiechter estate was valued at \$8178.25.<sup>41</sup>

Cynthia married Archibald Johnson on March 30, 1862. They continued to operate the farm with major assistance from Marion Fiechter, the eldest son. In May 1863, Abiathar Newton, Cynthia's father, was appointed guardian of the Fiechter children.<sup>42</sup> Notice of this guardianship was appended to the Donation Land Claim record to read "Syntha Johnson, Widow, and heirs of John Fiechter, deceased." Abiathar Newton made a yearly report to the court in the matter of the guardianship of the Fiechter children. Finally, on August 24, 1872, Archibald Johnson was appointed their guardian.<sup>43</sup> Johnson, too, made periodic reports to the court on the worth of the Fiechter estate. Also

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recorded were matters concerning guardianship such as statements of payment for school tuition, medical bills, taxes, court charges, sale bills, petitions to sell property and items, and vouchers of persons having claims against the estate of John Fiechter.<sup>44</sup>

By 1873 Archibald Johnson had added acreage to the estate by purchasing land in sections 19, 30, and 31. He amassed a total of 1470 acres. However, animal stock was down compared to Fiechter's management. Johnson had 4 horses, 16 cattle, 450 sheep and goats, and 10 swine. The gross value of all his property equaled \$9428.40.<sup>45</sup> Johnson was a charter member of the Willamette Grange.<sup>46</sup> The original grange hall was located on Muddy Creek a few miles north of the Johnson residence. The auxillary school, which all the children attended, was located about three-fourths of a mile to the northwest of the Johnsons.

Cynthia and Archibald Johnson had five children between 1869 and 1875: John, Adeline, Justina, Ella Nora, and Archibald. All in all, Cynthia bore 12 children. While the Johnson children were very young, the Fiechter children were starting to marry. They also each received an inheritance from the estate. Melissa married William S. Henkle in 1869 and received \$390.41 in 1870. Francis Marion received \$500.00 in 1873 and married Sarah E. Brown in 1877. Emeline received \$587.00 and married John W. Brown in 1875. Clarinda married Peter Rickard in 1877, in the Fiechter House, and received \$620.00 in 1878. Ellen Ann and Cynthia Annie each received \$822.00 in 1881. Ellen died soon after (on December 1, 1881). Cynthia Annie married William G. Burr in 1884.<sup>47</sup>

Archibald Johnson died in 1889.<sup>48</sup> The property holdings he acquired through the Fiechter family apparently went back into the hands of Cynthia Fiechter Johnson and her son Marion Fiechter. By 1895, Marion Fiechter was cultivating only 200 of a total of 800 acres. Improvements on the property were valued at \$800.00. Gross value of all property was only \$3072.02. Stock was apparently sold off through the years, since no sheep and only four cows and four horses were recorded for tax purposes.<sup>49</sup> Portions of the landholdings were sold off from 1883 to 1906, when a final sale occurred. The bulk of the land went to R.S. Hughes and J.W. Foster.<sup>50</sup>

Cynthia Johnson moved to Corvallis into a large, new home in 1906. This home still stands at Second and Western streets in Corvallis. A carriage house renovated into a residence remains at the rear. Cynthia stayed at the house until her death in 1924. Meanwhile, R.S. Hughes sold his property to Henry Failing's three daughters. Failing was a prominent Portland entrepreneur, politician, and philanthropist. The daughters were Miss Henrietta D. Failing, Miss Mary F. Failing, and Mrs. Henry C. Cabell, wife of Captain Henry C. Cabell, U.S.A.<sup>51</sup> Mrs. Henry C. Cabell bought out her two sisters a few years after the purchase. In 1910, Henry C. Cabell bought property from Hughes and Foster which adjoined his wife's property on the south.<sup>52</sup> Various tracts of land were added to and subtracted from these two main parcels over the years. The Cabells eventually amassed a few thousand acres of land, which entirely engulfed the original Fiechter donation land claim.

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The Cabells established a seasonal hunting estate on the property. Geese were abundant, though ducks, pheasant, snipe, and deer were also hunted. Stock raising and agricultural pursuits were carried out for investment purposes. About four barns were raised on the property, all for use in the horse and cattle operations. Two barns remain: a gambrel roof dairy barn, and a "western" style general stock, hay, and grain barn situated about 50 feet northwest of the Fiechter house. A few sheep grazed on the farm. Small lambing sheds, roofed with cedar shakes, were scattered about the property.

A bungalow style "club house" was built in 1912 about 200 feet directly south of the Fiechter house, on a slight knoll. The first story housed the farm manager and family. Jes Campbell started as farm manager for the Cabells in 1912. His wife Vina cooked meals when the Cabells were in residence. The second story was used by the Cabell family and visitors during trips to the estate. The Fiechter house was used as a rental by the resident assistant farm manager.<sup>53</sup> Roughly four or five people held this position between approximately 1910 and 1933.<sup>54</sup>

At the time of Emily Failing Cabell's death, her family holdings fell under Col. Cabell's ownership. When he died in 1925, the administration of the Failing-Cabell estate was assumed by his son. Henry Failing Cabell carried on at the estate like his father before him. He allowed and encouraged students from Oregon State College (Corvallis) to conduct agricultural and wildlife research on his property throughout his ownership. He married Margaret Malarky Cartwright in 1931.<sup>55</sup> During the time when the Fiechter House was used as a rental, it fell into a poor state of repair. Cabell considered tearing it down; however, his wife pointed out the historic value of the house. Thus, in 1933, the house was improved, and Mrs. Cabell used it for club meetings and social events. The house was furnished with antique pine and maple pieces brought from the East Coast.<sup>56</sup>

Cabell was a well known, distinguished philanthropist and civic leader. He served for years on a half-dozen major boards and commissions. His philanthropies ran to hundreds of thousands of dollars. He was a veteran of World War I and II. After studying at the University of Virginia and Harvard Law School, he joined a law firm in 1922 and served until he became full-time administrator of the Henry Failing Estate in 1926. He and his wife were leaders in national, state, and local civic affairs, and were active patrons of the arts and other cultural enterprises.<sup>57</sup>

In April 1964, Henry and Margaret Cabell sold their extensive landholdings to the United States Department of the Interior Fish and Wildlife Service.<sup>58</sup> Selection of a suitable waterfowl habitat in the Willamette Valley for inclusion in the National Wildlife Refuge System was initiated in the 1950s. David B. Marshall recommended that the area now comprising the William L. Finley National Wildlife Refuge be considered. He based this recommendation on knowledge of waterfowl use problems in the valley. A paper, "Waterfowl Population of a Swamp in Western Oregon," served to document the value of the area to the Fish and Wildlife Service, and Governor Mark Hatfield. Between 1941 and 1949, 39 species of waterfowl were noted in a 225-acre area.<sup>59</sup> A formal ascertainment to the feasibility of acquiring this swamp land was undertaken in the early 1960s by Mr. Marshall.

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A total of 5325 acres were obtained. This property was primarily Cabell landholdings, though four or five property holders adjacent to Cabell were also induced to sell.<sup>60</sup> Though the State of Oregon was agreeable to the land transactions, Benton County feared loss of tax revenue. House Bill 1551 was passed by the Oregon legislature, which would require county approval as conditional for state approval for purchase of land for water-fowl refuges under the authority of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act. Governor Hatfield vetoed the bill, and the sales were cleared. Hunters' duck stamp funds were used to purchase the wetlands by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In 1964, the refuge was established as the Willamette National Wildlife Refuge, and was later renamed the William L. Finley National Wildlife Refuge, after the renowned pioneer Oregon naturalist.<sup>61</sup>

The Cabells had made attempts at the time of the land sale to interest the Benton County Historical Society in preserving and historically interpreting the Fiechter House. Local parties offered historical furnishings with the stipulation that enough interest be generated to open the house for public display. Neither Historical Society was in a position to endorse such a project, however. Nevertheless, the Wildlife Refuge planned to not alter the house in any manner pending the possibility of it being turned into a historical landmark.<sup>62</sup> The Fiechter House became Refuge headquarters in 1964. It has remained unoccupied since 1979.

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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Footnotes

- 1) Personal Communication. Annie Fiechter Taylor, 1931, Philomath, Oregon. Interviewed by Ardyce E. Harrison.
- 2) Mark Phinney. Works Progress Administration Historical Records Survey, Leatha Porter Interview, September 26, 1940, Corvallis, Oregon.
- 3) David Fagan, History of Benton County, Oregon. (Portland, Oregon: Walling, 1885), p. 450.
- 4) Oregon Provisional Government Land Claim Records, Volume 7, Page 59, Oregon Archives, Salem, Oregon.
- 5) "Muster Roll of 3rd Company (B Company) for 1847-1848", Militia of the Provisional Government of Oregon, Cayuse Indian War, (N.D./col 2, line 1, Document File A), Oregon Archives, Salem, Oregon.
- 6) "Claim filed by John Fiechter with the Cayuse War Commission", 7 September 1852, Document File A, No. 62, Microfilm No. 1, The Provisional and Territorial Papers, Indian Wars in Oregon, Film 14, Item 43, Oregon Archives, Salem, Oregon.
- 7) "Muster Roll, 3rd Company".
- 8) Personal Communication. Leatha Porter, 11 March 1982, Interviewed by Sheila J. Settles.
- 9) David Fagan, p. 446.
- 10) Taylor Interview, 1931.
- 11) Donation Certificate No. 3375, Oregon Donation Land Claim Records, Oregon City, Oregon. U.S. Land Office, National Archives Record Group No. 49, Washington, D.C.
- 12) Ibid.
- 13) Ardyce E. Harrison, Research Notes, on file, William L. Finley National Wildlife Refuge, Corvallis, Oregon.
- 14) Estate No. 115, "Inventory Bill, Estate John Fiechter", Guardianship of minor heirs of John Fiechter deceased. Filed 3 December 1861, Office of the County Clerk, Benton County Courthouse, Corvallis, Oregon.
- 15) Personal Communication. Bobby and Virginia Campbell, 30 April 1983, Bend, Oregon, Interviewed by Judith A. Sanders.

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- 16) Journal of the District Court of the United States, Territory of Oregon, County of Benton, Circuit Court Journal #1, September 3, 1849--October 10, 1858.  
Benton County Courthouse, Corvallis, Oregon.
- 17) Donation Certificate No. 3375, Attachment: "Naturalization Certificate", 6 October 1856.
- 18) David Fagan, pp. 446-447.
- 19) Leatha Porter Manuscript. "John Fiechter", ca. 1940.
- 20) Taylor Interview, 1931.
- 21) Ibid.
- 22) Ardyce E. Harrison, Research Notes: Genealogical.
- 23) Personal Communication, Leatha Porter, as related by Grace Hennings, 27 May 1983 to Judith A. Sanders. Corvallis, Oregon.
- 24) Historic Photograph of the Newton House; ca. 1870's. Possession of Mrs. Gertrude Cropsy, Corvallis, Oregon.
- 25) Leatha Porter/Grace Hennings Interview, 1983.
- 24) Philip Dole. Buildings and Gardens. "Farmhouses and Barns of the Willamette Valley." Space, Style and Structure: Building in Northwest America. Thomas Vaughn and Virginia Guest Ferriday, Editors. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon, 1974, p. 94-95. Edna A. Mintoynne, Compiler: "Ryecraft Brothers" They Laughed Too. 1968, pp. 44-45.
- 27) David Fagan, p. 334.
- 28) Bruce P. Snider, June 1978, National Register of Historic Places Inventory--Nomination Form. Ransom A. Belknap House.
- 29) David Fagan.
- 30) Ardyce E. Harrison, Research Notes.
- 31) David Fagan, p. 447.
- 32) "Inventory Bill," 1861.

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- 33) "Poll Book of an election held within the County of Benton", 4 June 1849 and 15 October 1849, (Marysville, Oregon Archives MS #1791 and 1789, Salem, Oregon.
- 34) Lawrence A. McNary, "Oregon's First Reported Murder Case," Oregon Historical Quarterly, 36:2 (Summer, 1935), pp. 359-364.
- 35) Inventory of the County Archives of Oregon. No. 2, Benton County Corvallis, Portland, Oregon, Oregon Historical Records Survey Works Project Administration, 1940, pp. 17-18.
- 36) Probate Journal No. 1, Office of the County Clerk, Benton County Courthouse, Corvallis, Oregon, p. 120.
- 37) Estate No. 115, Guardianship of Minor Heirs of John Fiechter, deceased. Office of the County Clerk, Benton County Courthouse, Corvallis, Oregon, and Inventory Bill, 1861.
- 38) Probate Journal No. 1, p. 125.
- 39) Ibid, p. 167. And Estate No. 115, Guardianship of Minor Heirs of John Fiechter, Deceased.
- 40) Ibid, p. 174.
- 41) Final Settlement, Estate of John Fiechter, 4 May 1863, Office of the County Clerk, Benton County Courthouse, Corvallis, Oregon.
- 42) Probate Journal No. 1, p. 177. And Guardian Bonds, 6 May 1859-26 May 1899, Office of the County Clerk, Benton County Courthouse, Corvallis, Oregon, p. 28.
- 43) Guardian Bonds, p. 112.
- 44) Estate No. 115, Guardianship of Minor Heirs of John Fiechter, Deceased.
- 45) Benton County Assessment Rolls, 1873, Willamette Precinct, Office of the County Clerk, Benton County Courthouse, Corvallis, Oregon.
- 46) Personal Communication. Evelyn Thompson, 1983, Corvallis, Oregon. Interviewed by Judith A. Sanders.
- 47) Estate No. 115, Guardianship of Minor Heirs of John Fiechter, Deceased. And Ardyce E. Harrison. Research notes: genealogical.

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- 48) Oak Lawn Cemetery, Corvallis, Oregon.
- 49) Benton County Assessment Rolls, 1859. Willamette Precinct. Office of the County Clerk. Benton County Courthouse, Corvallis, Oregon.
- 50) Benton County Deed Records. Office of the County Clerk. Benton County Courthouse, Corvallis, Oregon.
- 51) Chapman Publishing Co. "Henry Failing", Portrait and Biographical Record of the Willamette Valley, Oregon. Chicago, 1903, pp. 33-37.
- 52) Benton County Deed Records.
- 53) David B. Marshall, Regional Refuge Biologist, Portland, Oregon, 2 October 1968. Memorandum. On file at William L. Finley National Wildlife Refuge, Corvallis, Oregon.
- 54) Bobby and Virginia Campbell Interview, 1983.
- 55) Bonita Peterson et. al., Cultural Resource Inventory of the William L. Finley National Wildlife Refuge. Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon, 1980, p. 35.
- 56) Personal Communication. Margaret Cabell, 1983, Portland, Oregon. Interviewed by Judith A. Sanders.
- 57) "Civic Leader, Philanthropist Henry Failing Cabell Dies", The Oregonian, Tuesday, January 11, 1972, Portland, Oregon.
- 58) Benton County Deed Records, Book 190, p. 339. Office of the County Clerk Benton County Courthouse, Corvallis, Oregon.
- 59) Fred G. Evenden, Jr., David B. Marshall and Thomas H. McAllister, Jr., "Waterfowl Population of a Swamp in Western Oregon", The Condor, July - August 1950: 52 (4), pp. 159-163.
- 60) Personal Communication. David B. Marshall, 17 May 1983, Portland, Oregon. Interviewed by Judith A. Sanders.
- 61) David B. Marshall Interview, 1983.
- 62) David B. Marshall, Regional Refuge Biologist, Portland, Oregon, 10 August 1964. Memorandum. On file, William L. Finley National Wildlife Refuge, Corvallis, Oregon.
- 63) Architectual Elevation Drawings by Valerie A. Merrill. Floor plan drawings by Mathew Zweifel. Graphics by Lucie Tisdale.

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PAGE 1

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- Edna A. Mintoyne, They Laughed Too. 1968.
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- Lawrence A. McNary, "Oregon's First Reported Murder Case", Oregon Historical Quarterly, 1935, pp. 359-364.
- Fred G. Evenden, Jr., David B. Marshall, and Thomas H. McAllister, Jr. "waterfowl Population of a Swamp in Western Oregon", The Condor, 1950, pp. 159-163.
- Bruce P. Snider, "Ransome A. Belknap House", National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form, 1978.
- Leatha Porter Manuscript, "John Fiechter", ca. 1940.
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- Indian Wars in Oregon. Claim filed by John Fiechter with the Cayuse War Commission, 1852, Oregon Archives.
- Estate No. 115, Guardianship of Minor Heirs of John Fiechter, Deseased, 1861. Benton County Courthouse.

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Journal of the District Court of the United States, Territory of Oregon, County of Benton, 1849-1858. Benton County Courthouse.

Probate Journal No. 1. N/D. Benton County Courthouse.

Guardian Bonds, 1859-1899. Benton County Courthouse.

"Poll Book of an Election Held Within the County of Benton". June 4, 1849 and October 15, 1849. Salem, Oregon.

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Annie Fiechter Taylor, personal interview, 1931.

Leatha Porter, personal interview, March 11, 1982.

Bobby and Virginia Campbell, personal interview, April 30, 1983.

Grace Hennings/Leatha Porter, personal interview, May 27, 1983.

Evelyn Thompson, personal interview, 1983.

Margaret Cabell, personal interview, 1983.

David B. Marshall, personal interview, May 17, 1983.

Historic photograph of Newton House, ca. 1870's. Possession of Mrs. Gertrude Cropsy, Corvallis, Oregon.

Oak Lawn Cemetery, Corvallis, Oregon.

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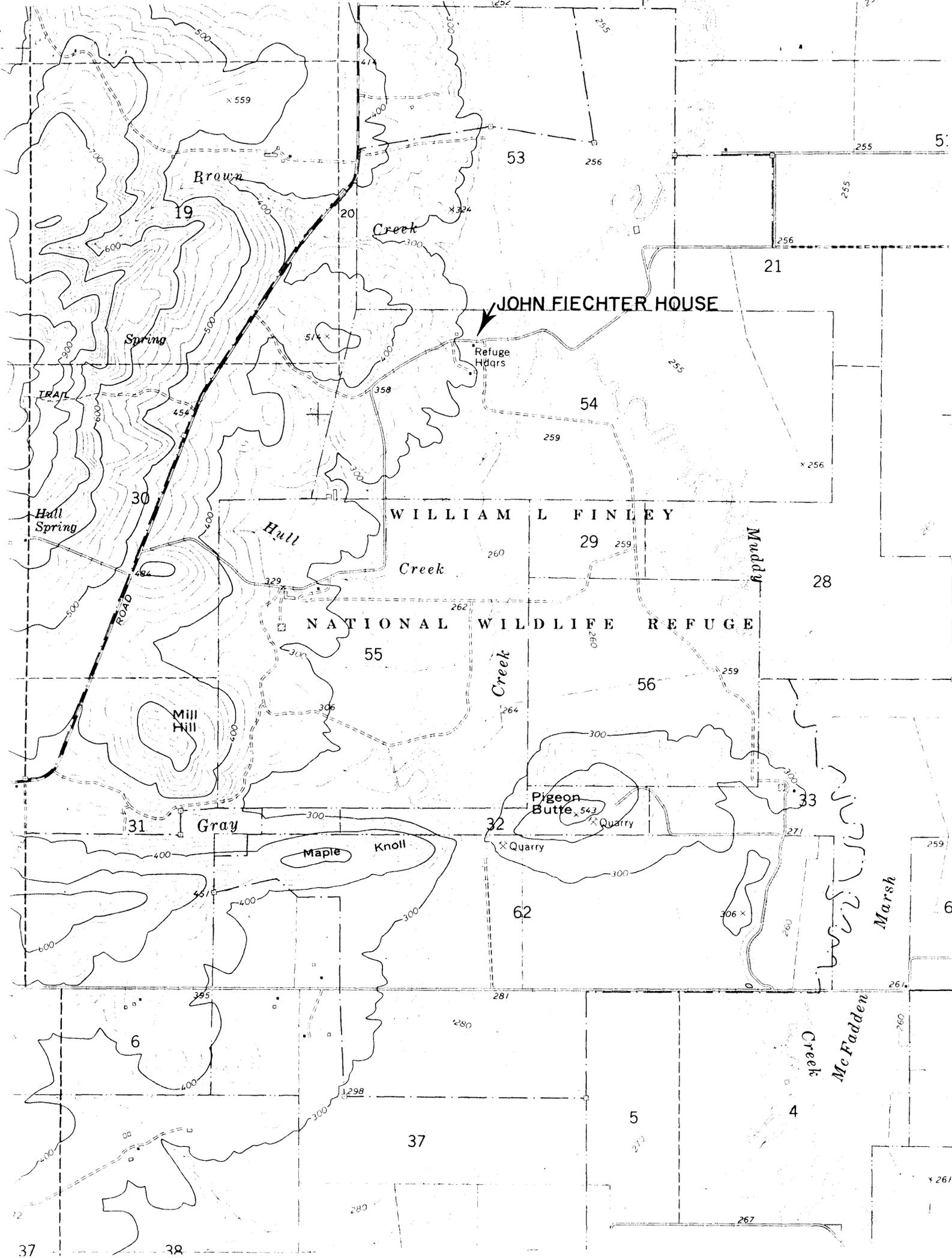
CONTINUATION SHEET

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PAGE 1

on the previous page is the central point of the nominated area.

The area is more precisely delineated as follows: Beginning at point of intersection of the south edge of Finley Road and the west edge of Cabell Marsh Road, thence westerly along the southern edge of Finley Road 140 feet; thence southerly in a line generally parallel with Cabell Marsh Road 10 feet to the true point of beginning; thence westerly in a line generally parallel with Finley Road 112 feet; thence southerly in a line generally parallel with Cabell Marsh Road 75 feet; thence westerly in a line parallel with Finley Road 21 feet; thence southerly in a line parallel with Cabell Marsh Road 21 feet; thence easterly in a line generally parallel with Finley Road 133 feet; thence northerly in a line parallel with Cabell Marsh Road 96 feet to the true point of beginning, containing in all 0.26 acres, more or less.



JOHN FIECHTER HOUSE

WILLIAM L FINLEY

NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

McFadden Marsh

Pigeon Butte

Gray

Maple Knoll

Mill Hill

Hull Spring

Spring

Brown

Creek

Creek

Creek

Muddy

Creek

McFadden

Refuge Hdqrs

Quarry

Quarry

33

32

31

30

19

53

21

54

29

28

55

56

62

6

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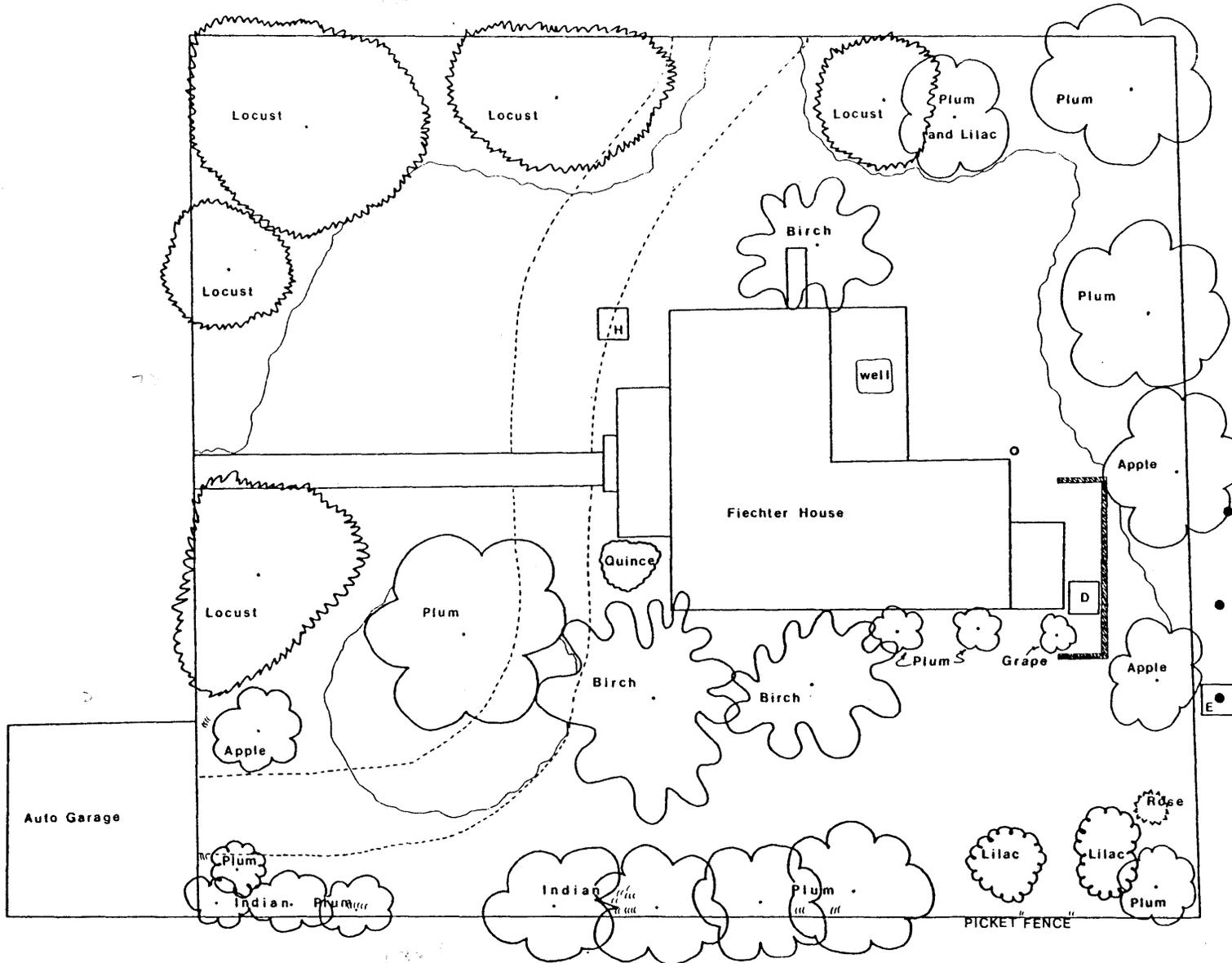
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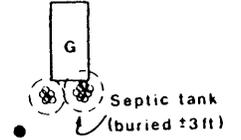
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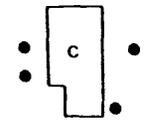
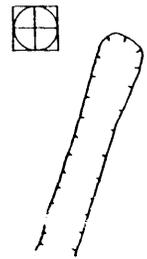
**LEGEND**

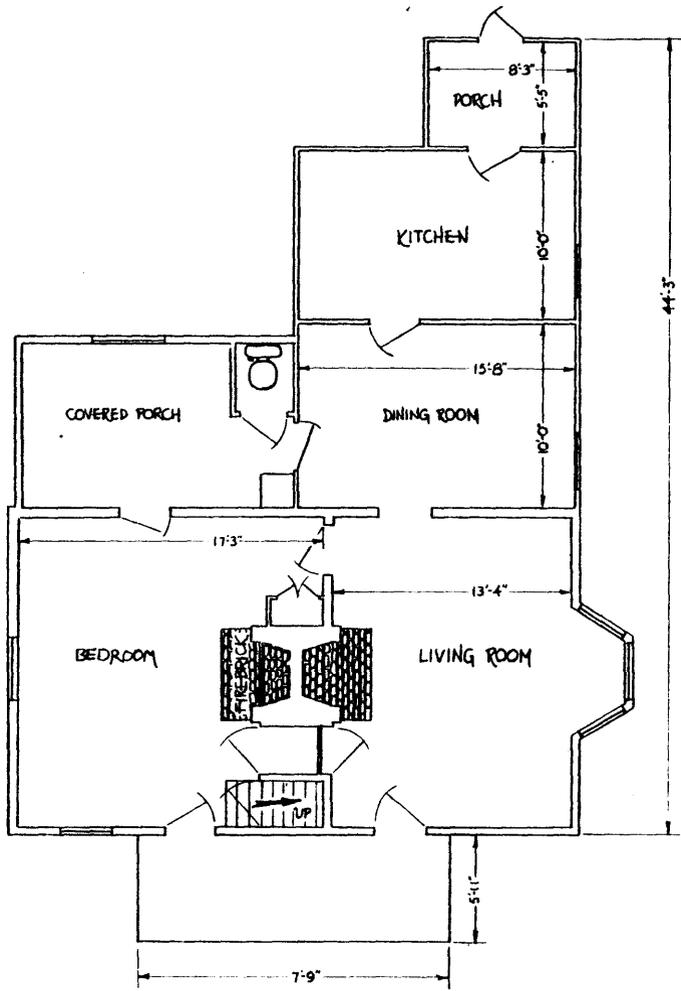
Scale 1" = 8'

- T Test Pits with alphabetical designation
- Auger hole
- - - Boundary of gravel feature
- ▬ Grape arbor
- /- Ditch
- /// Iris
- ~ Periwinkle
- ⊠ Antenna
- Drainage tile

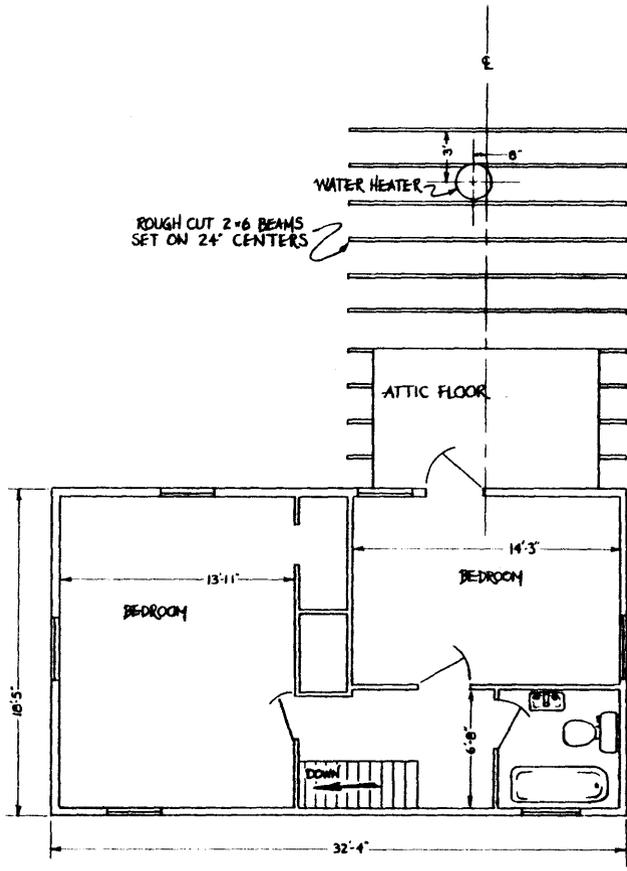


**Fiechter Site Plan**  
11,201 SQ. FT.





1<sup>st</sup> FLOOR



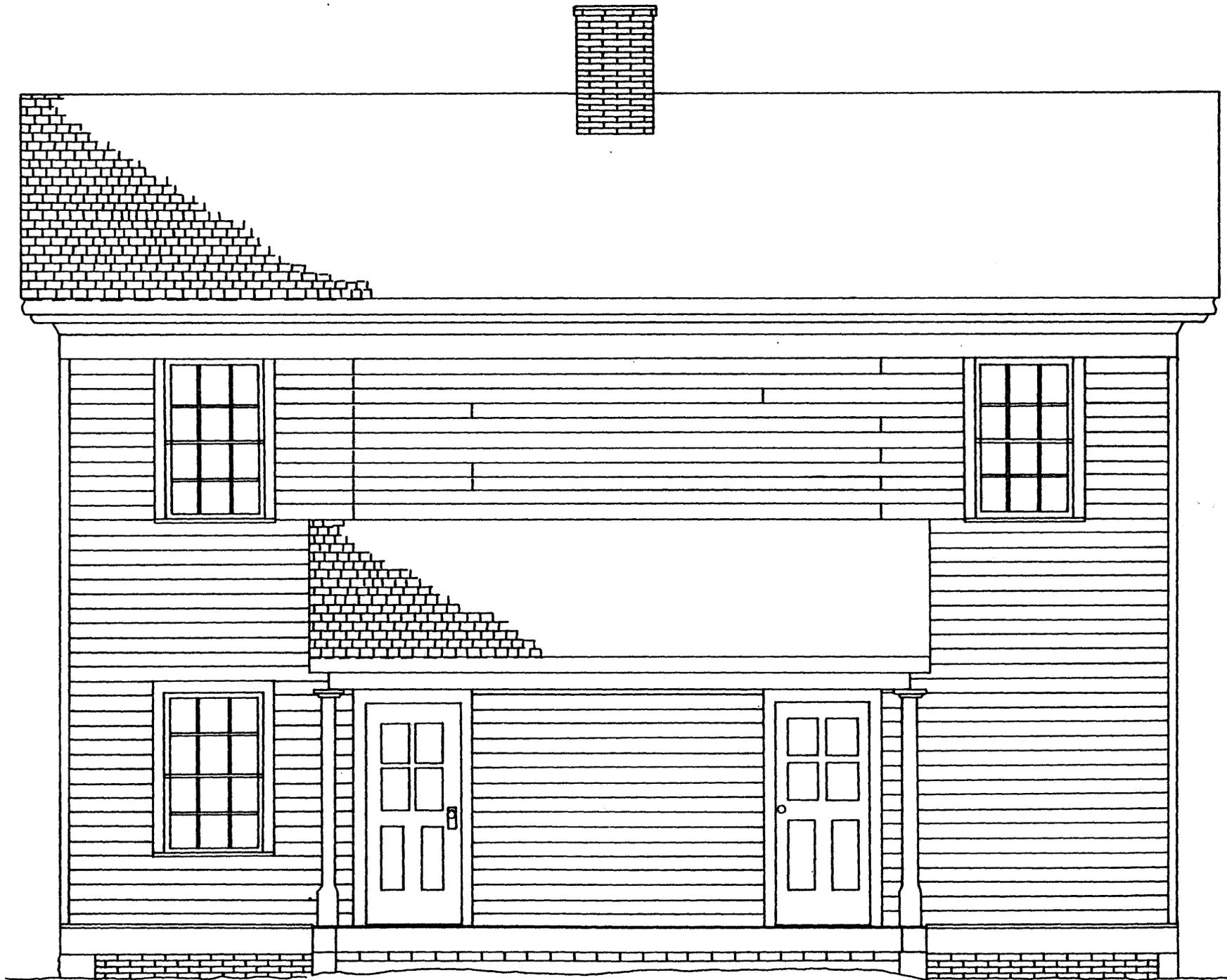
2<sup>nd</sup> FLOOR

|                         |                  |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| <b>FIECHTER HOUSE</b>   |                  |
| DATE: 14 AUG. 1981      | SCALE: 1" = 5'   |
| DR. BY: <i>J. J. J.</i> | DRWN. NO. 1 OF 3 |



0 1 2 3 4'

FIECHTER HOUSE  
EAST ELEVATION



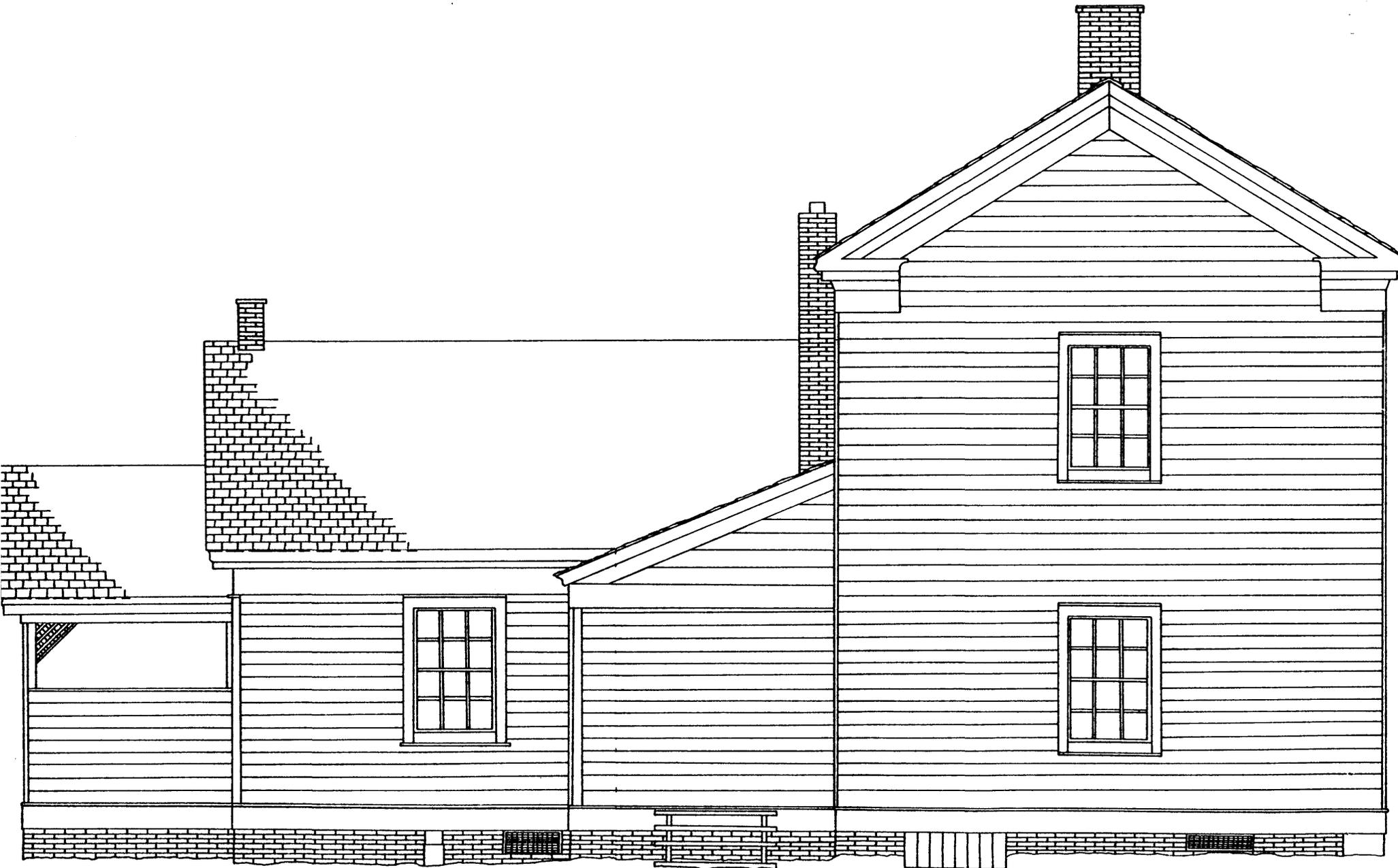
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FIECHTER HOUSE  
WEST ELEVATION



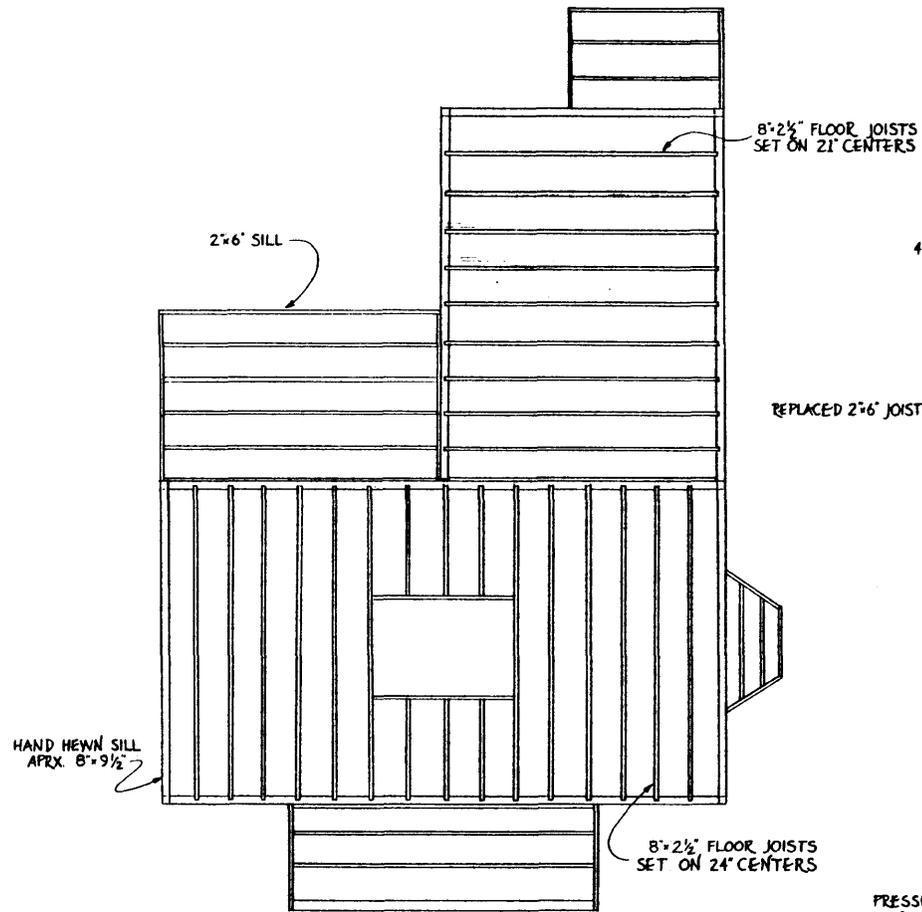
FIECHTER HOUSE  
SOUTH ELEVATION

0 1 2 3 4'

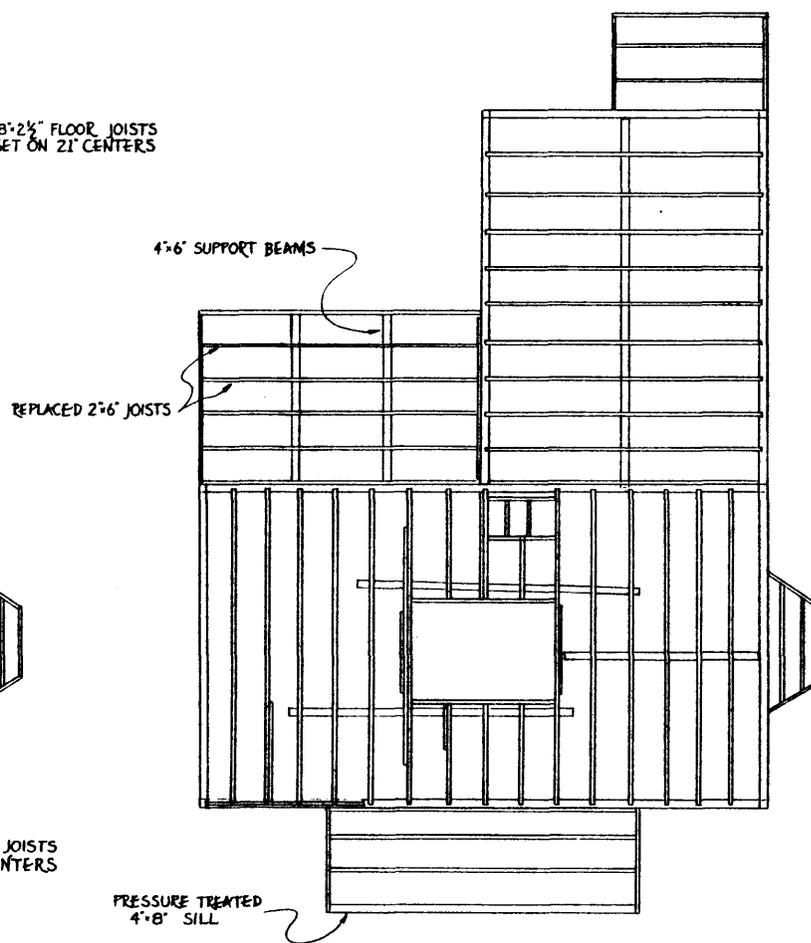


0 1 2 3 4'

FIECHTER HOUSE  
NORTH ELEVATION



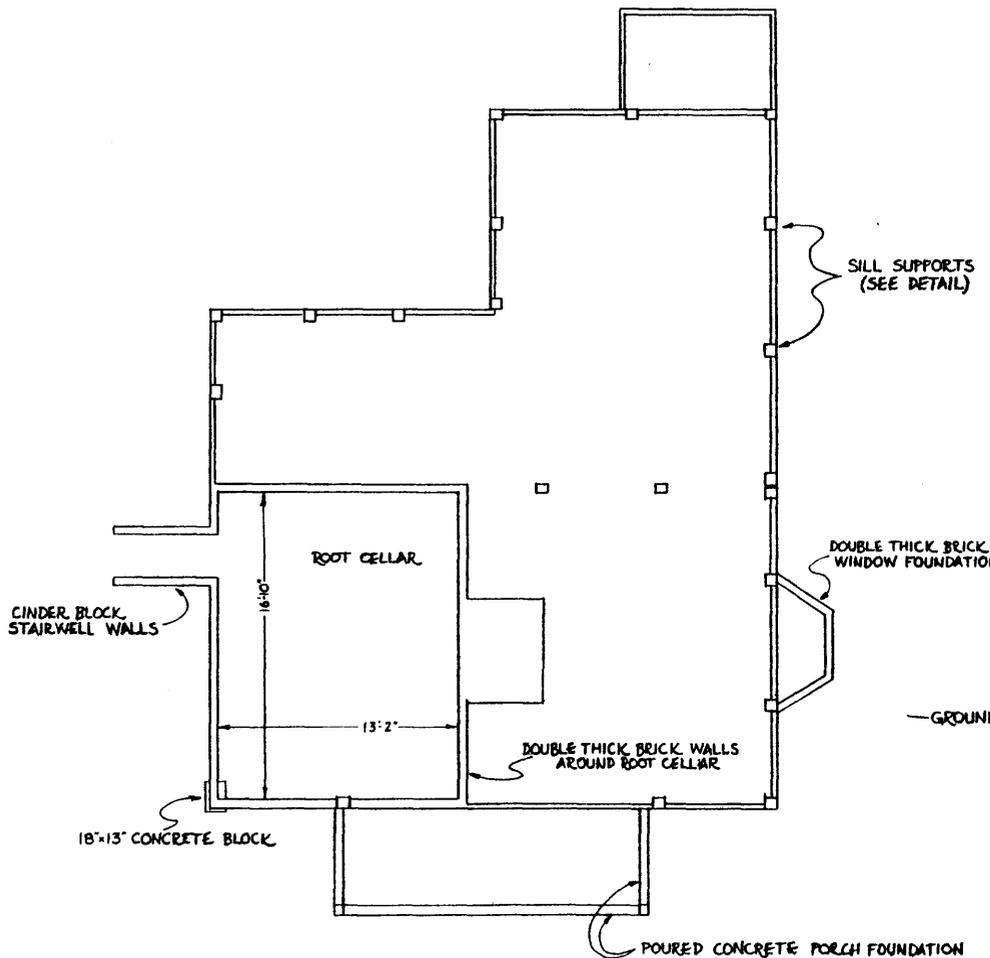
ORIGINAL JOIST PLANS



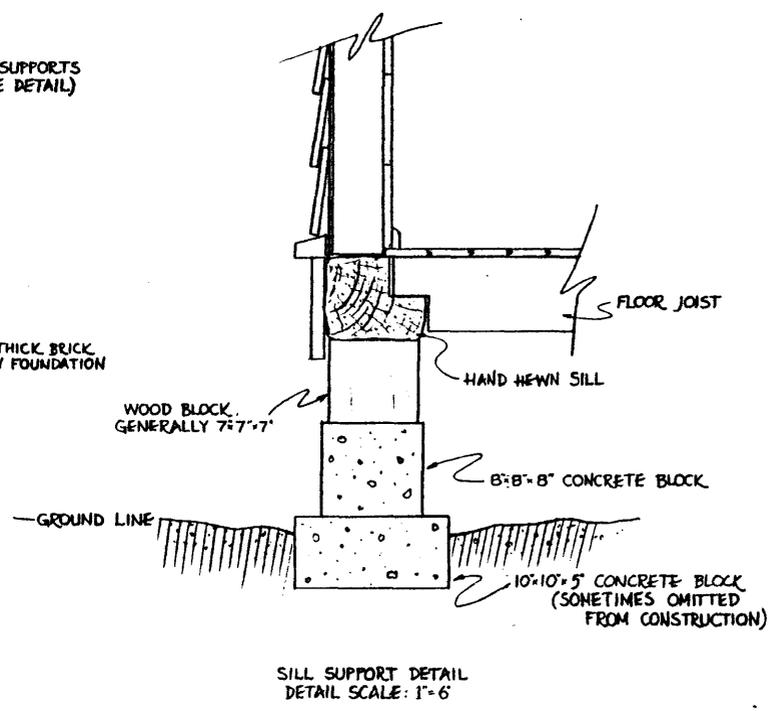
ORIGINAL JOISTS WITH MODERN SUPPORTS

FIECHTER HOUSE

|                            |                 |
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| DATE: 18 AUG 1981          | SCALE: 1"=5'    |
| DR. BY: <i>[Signature]</i> | DRWN NO. 2 OF 3 |



FOUNDATION PLANS

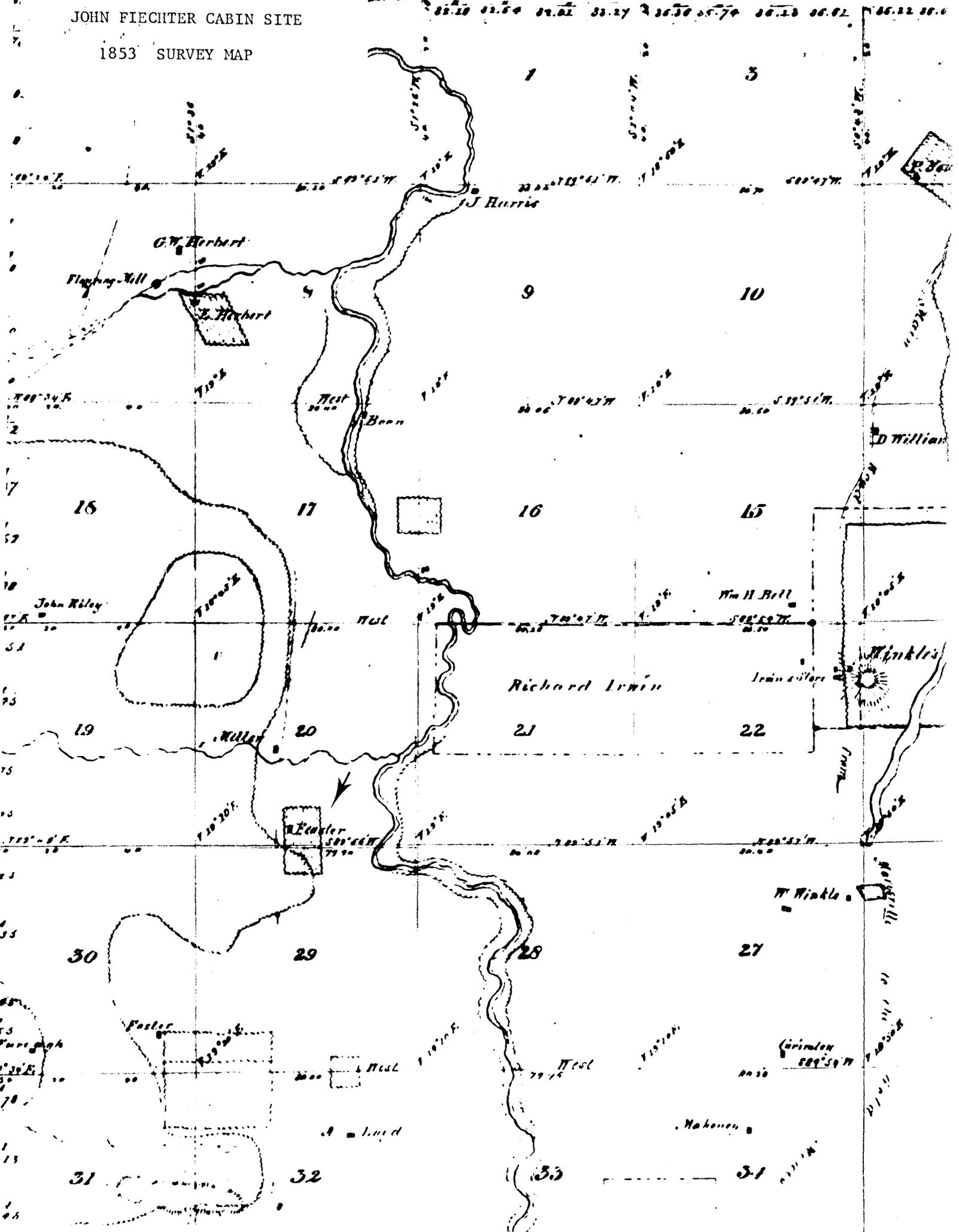


SILL SUPPORT DETAIL  
DETAIL SCALE: 1"=6'

|                      |                 |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| FIECHTER HOUSE       |                 |
| DATE: 18 AUG. 1991   | SCALE: 1"=5'    |
| DR. BY: <i>Jim R</i> | DRWN. NO 3 OF 3 |

JOHN FIECHTER CABIN SITE

1853 SURVEY MAP

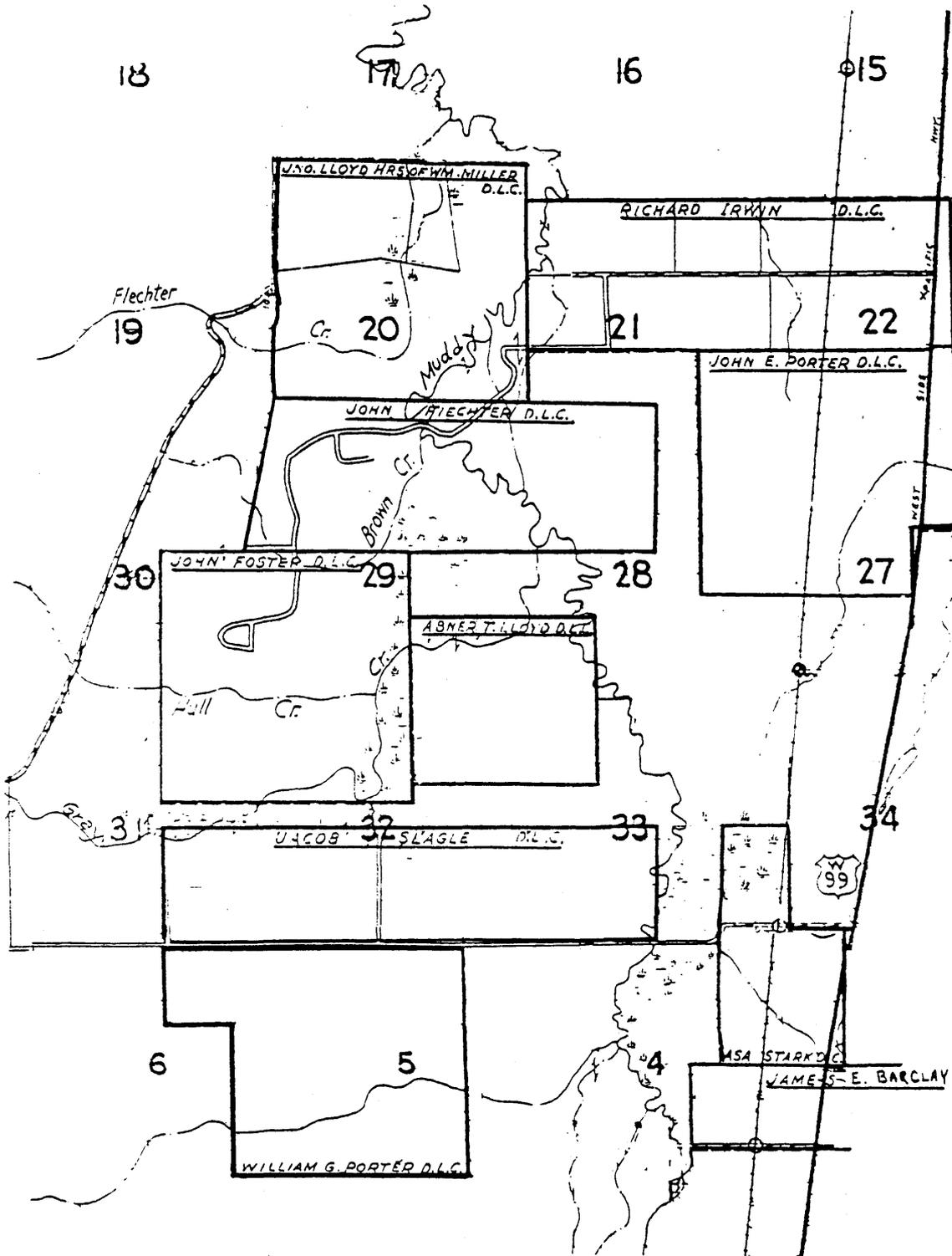




ORIGINAL DONATION LAND CLAIMS

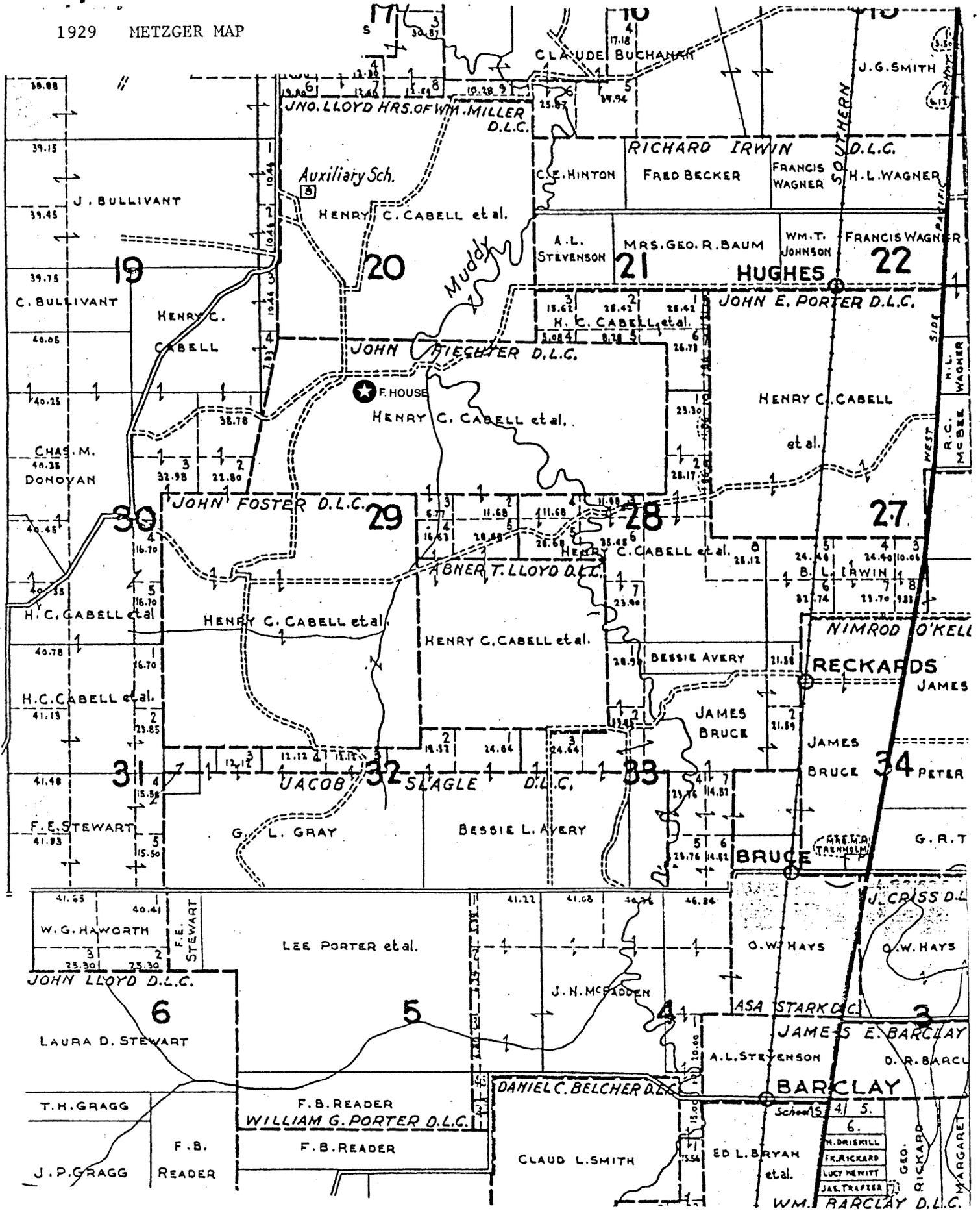
SHOWN WITHIN FINLEY REFUGE

BOUNDARIES



CABELL LANDHOLDINGS

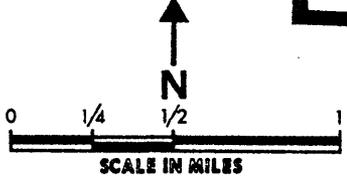
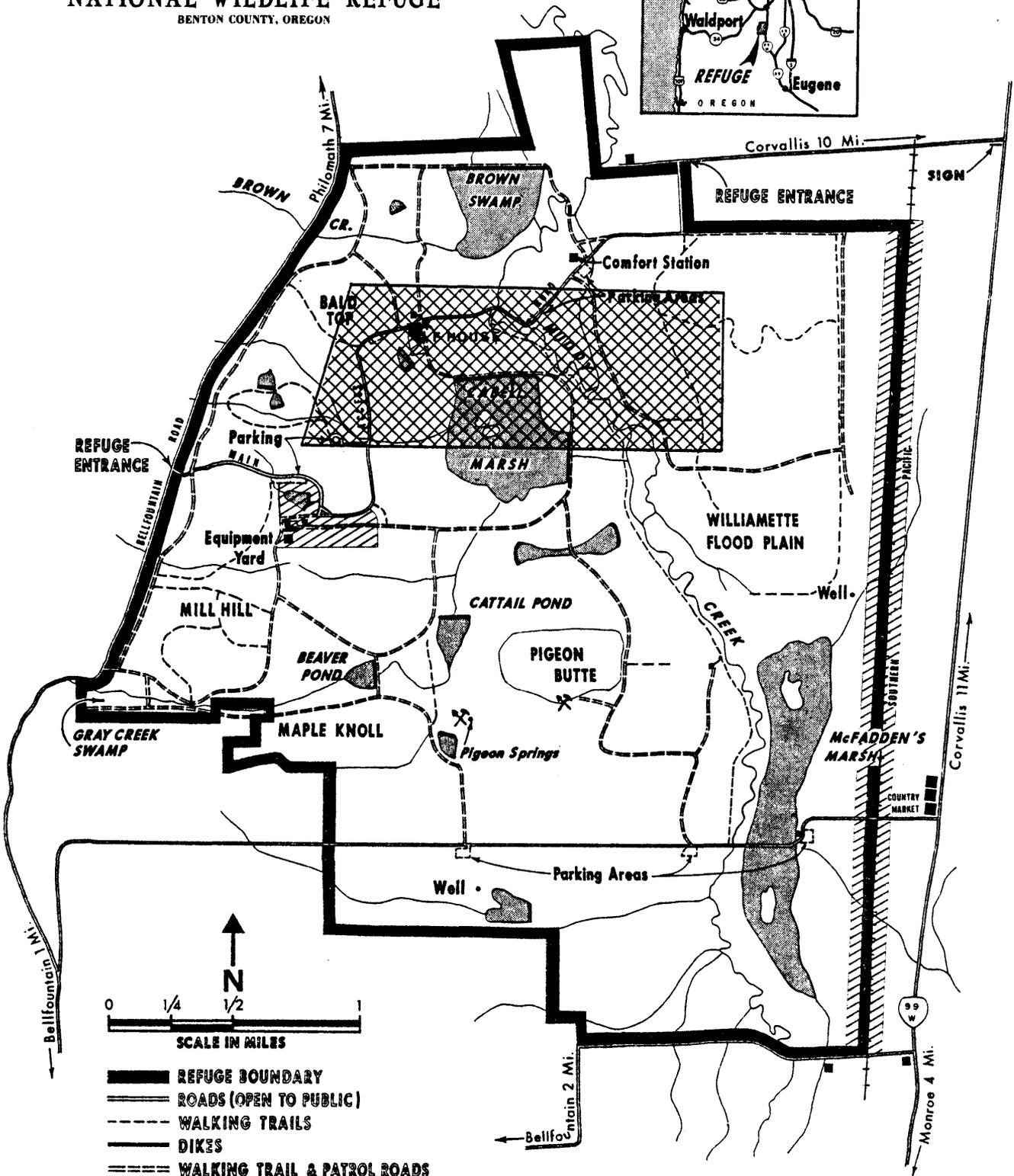
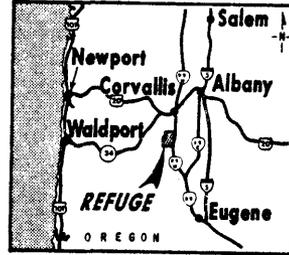
1929 METZGER MAP



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

# WILLIAM L. FINLEY NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

BENTON COUNTY, OREGON



- REFUGE BOUNDARY**
- ROADS (OPEN TO PUBLIC)**
- WALKING TRAILS**
- DIKES**
- WALKING TRAIL & PATROL ROADS**
- AREAS CLOSED TO PUBLIC USE.**
- J. FIECHTER D.L.C.**