

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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

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

For HCRS use only  
received AUG 6 1985  
date entered SEP 5 1985

**1. Name**

historic Ayers-Allen House

and/or common Allen House Tavern

**2. Location**

street & number 16 Durham Ave.

NA not for publication

city, town Metuchen

vicinity of

~~Congressional District~~

state New Jersey

code

034

county

Middlesex

code

023

**3. Classification**

**Category**

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

**Ownership**

- public
- private
- both
- Public Acquisition**
- in process
- being considered
- NA

**Status**

- occupied
- unoccupied
- work in progress
- Accessible**
- yes: restricted
- yes: unrestricted
- no

**Present Use**

- agriculture
- commercial
- educational
- entertainment
- government
- industrial
- military
- museum
- park
- private residence
- religious
- scientific
- transportation
- other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Mrs. Louise King

street & number 16 Durham Ave.

city, town Metuchen

vicinity of

state New Jersey

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Metuchen Boro Hall

street & number Main Street

city, town

Metuchen

state New Jersey

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

Middlesex County Inventory of Historic, Cultural  
title & Architectural Resources

has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1977-1979

federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Office of New Jersey Heritage

city, town

CN 402, Trenton

state

New Jersey 08625

# 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 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

### DESCRIPTION

The Ayers-Allen house is a pre-revolutionary shingled, frame dwelling standing on its original site. The front facade has four bays with the entranceway at the center. There are four eyebrow windows in the upper story. Records show that the house was owned by one family, Ayers, from construction, C 1740, until 1924. Prior to 1760 it was owned by Jonathan Ayers, recorded in legal documents as being a carpenter. In all probability he was the builder-owner. There is an inscription with the date, "1737" on one of the rafters.

The dwelling retains the original two rooms in the east portion, both served by one chimney, typical of East Jersey farmhouse construction. Originally each room contained a corner fireplace, but only the front room fireplace remains, the other having been removed in the 1920's to accommodate a gift shop. These rooms contain plaster walls, exposed beams and original floorboards.

There is evidence that an alteration took place in the early 1800's during the residence of the Misses Deborah and Eunice Ayers. The roof was raised above the original level, providing space for two bedrooms, and at that time adding two eyebrow windows. At the same time, a one story addition was added to the western exterior wall probably replacing a lean-to kitchen. The chimney in this addition has a fire opening and adjacent bake oven with ember chute. Both the central Dutch, or divided, door and the door adjacent to the chimney in this addition have unusual angled, wrought iron hinges. (These are similar to ones seen in Hugo Freer House, New Paltz, N.Y.) There are butterfly hinges, on the warming cupboard in the side of the chimney.

In 1924 the roof was raised over the addition to match the level of the roof on the main section. This provided space for an additional bedroom with eyebrow windows to correspond to the older ones. A contemporary kitchen was added at this time.

A side porch across the east facade was added in the 1930's. There are several lean-to type additions to the first story, and a modern dormer window on the roof on the rear facade.

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The house stands on its original site in the heart of the Borough of Metuchen at the junction of two early roads, namely: Main St., formerly the heavily traversed road called the Bonhamtown-Oak Tree Road, and Durham Ave., once known as the Road to Piscataway. Borough owned property housing a school and playground lies adjacent to the Ayers-Allen house on its west border, and a parking lot owned by the N.J. Bell Telephone Company lies on its east boarder.

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An examination of the Ayers-Allen House by William Pavlovsky, historic architect, and an interview by telephone and letter with a former resident, Katherine Wale Grant, daughter of the Wale family who purchased the house in 1924 and made a renovation of the building, revealed data that is pertinent to the study of the house and that therefore should be included in the architectural description and its history.

It was Mr. Pavlovsky's opinion that the house was originally a one and one-half story building with a one story wing, typical of construction of 18th Century central Jersey farmhouses. Strong evidence for this evaluation is based on the existence of a 3"x5" chamfered beam which runs from front to the rear of the building along the west wall of the center hall and is exposed to view from both rooms. The chair rail in the west room, now serving as a dining room, is beaded along both top and bottom edges, typical of early construction.

The ceiling beams of both east rooms are cased and beaded, an indication that they were meant to be exposed, and the wide ceiling boards that can be seen above these beams are the original wide floor boards of the room above.

There are early wrought iron strap hinges on the inner doors opening from the rear east room onto the hall and hand wrought H&L hinges on the door from the hall into the present kitchen.

Old weatherboards from a remodeling of the house in the early 19th century still exist on the western exterior wall of the house but are covered by a shed roof and are not exposed to view. On the three exposed sides of the house these have been replaced with shingles.

In Mr. Pavlovsky's opinion, the present window sash is no earlier than 1790. The style of the mantelpiece moldings date from the Greek Revival period also indicative of a remodeling in the early 1800's.

The interviews with Katherine Wale Grant, former resident, reveal the following information. When the Wale family purchased the house in 1924 it was clapboarded and the west wing had a flat roof with a false front about two feet high. The false front was removed at this time, a bedroom was added to the west side of the house and the roof made to

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conform to the original level of the east side, complete with corresponding eyebrow windows.

When the Wale family purchased the house in 1924, there were the same number of first floor rooms as there are at present. There was at that time the original very narrow, steep, enclosed staircase in the hall located very close to the front door. Under an architect's direction the staircase was removed and the present stairs, with landing, was built in the rear of the hall leading into a hall above instead of directly into a bedroom as it had done previously.

There were two chimneys, one on either end of the house. The chimney on the east end served two corner fireplaces, one in each of the two adjacent rooms. The chimney on the west end served a fireplace there and a beehive bake oven. The Wale family had the corner fireplace in the rear room removed in order to make more space in the room and to improve the draft of the adjacent fireplaces.

The original wide floor boards had paths worn in them that showed the traffic patterns through the years. Raised knotholes projected in unexpected places. On the advice of the architect these two-inch thick floor-boards were removed, the reverse side finished and relaid and replaced in such a way in the rear east room as to leave no evidence of the former presence of a hearth of the original corner fireplace in that room.

The wrought iron hinges on the inner doors are original to the house, including the butterfly hinges on the warming cupboard and the H&L hinges on the door from the hall to the present kitchen.

In addition to appearing on the 1799 map of the Metuchen section of Woodbridge Township, it also appears on a map of 1776, namely: "Plan of the Northern part of New Jersey showing the Positions of the American and British Armies after crossing the North River in 1776", drawn for George Washington by his cartographer and appearing with Marshall's "Life of Washington". (Photostat of the map accompanies this addenda).

On this map "Matuchin", sic, is designated as the site at which Lord Stirling was stationed, specifically at the 'Matuchin Meeting House', and the building north of the Meeting House and also on the west

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side of the road to Bonhamtown, is the site of the Allen House Tavern and is considered to be that building.

Mrs. Katherine Wale Grant states that in 1924 the Wale family began to establish a garden around the house. They were confronted with the problem of removing thousands of oyster shells buried in the yard. They attempted to have the excess carried off, but the number was never ending. Found with every spadeful of earth were not only oyster shells, but also shards of ceramic mugs and mug handles, many pieces of clay pipes, shards of old dishes and old coins. The Wale family felt at that time that there was no doubt but that the tremendous amount of oyster shells indicated that many many more oysters were consumed than at a place of family residence; in addition, the number of mug shards and clay pipes were indicative of the house having served as a tavern. A Mr. Ayers, nephew of Eunice and Deborah Ayers, documented residents of the house for most of the nineteenth century, stated that his aunts had told him that Continental soldiers had been served refreshment at the tavern upon returning home following the Battle of Princeton in January, 1777.

The Ayers-Allen House survives as a comparatively little changed farmhouse from its construction in 1740 until today when it stands in a bustling town environment striving to keep its own identity but also to relate the history of the era that is long gone.

Marian C. Stone  
Preservation Chairperson

Life of George Washington.  
Maps of Subscribers Names  
by John Marshall 1807  
C. P. Wayne, Phila.  
XE 312.5 .M368L  
Atlas.

Alexander Library, Rutgers Library  
College Avenue, New Brunswick, N.J.

# 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 type="checkbox"/> social/
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input 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 type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates**      c. 1740      **Builder/Architect**      Unclear

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

SIGNIFICANCE

The Ayers-Allen House, built C 1740, is believed to be the oldest structure in the Borough of Metuchen. It is typical of the construction of a mid-18th century Central Jersey farmhouse. It has remained on its original site, a part of a tract of land designated as upland acreage distributed to the earliest settlers of Woodbridge Township as part of their patent. A search of legal and genealogical records indicated that the house and property on which it stands remained in the ownership of one family, descendants of Obadiah Ayers, from the date of construction, C 1740 until 1924, or 184 years.

The Ayers family were original settlers of Woodbridge Township, arriving in 1669. Obadiah Ayers and his wife, Hannah Pike Ayers, daughter of one of the nine original associates of Woodbridge Township, John Pike, arrived from Massachusetts with a group whose spiritual leader was Rev. John Woodbridge in whose honor the township was named. Obadiah and Hannah's son John is the first recorded land owner in what is now known as Metuchen and is referred to in a deed of 1695 as "John Ayers of Metuching".

In 1799 the house appears on a map drawn for the Township of Woodbridge, Middlesex County, N.J., Lands Vol. 2, p. 407. (See photostat). It is referred to as the "Allen House" and is one of eleven structures then existing, only four of them dwellings.

Henry Allen's will recorded in 1783, states that he purchased the lot and house in which he lived from his father-in-law, Jonathan Ayers. Upon the death of Henry's wife, Phebe Ayers Allen, the house reverted to ownership by her cousin, Jacob Ayers. Both Henry Allen and Jacob Ayers were patriots who are recorded as having served in the Revolutionary War.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Metuchen, the Brainy Borough, unpublished Library Manuscript, W.P.A. project  
Rev. Joseph W. Dally, Woodbridge and Vicinity, the Story of a New Jersey Township, 1873  
Ebenezer Mack Treman and Murray Poole, History of Treman, Tramine, Truman Family in  
in America with Related families of Mack, Dey, Board and Ayers, Part II

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than an acre

Quadrangle name Perth Amboy

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UMT References

A 

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

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

E 

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F 

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G 

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H 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

### Verbal boundary description and justification

Block #60 Lot #58

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

state code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mrs. Marian C. Stone, Preservation Chairman

organization Metuchen Regional Historical Society date 1984

street & number 37 Oak Hills Road telephone (201) 549-8288

city or town Edison state New Jersey

# 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title Acting Director, Division of Parks & Forestry

date 7/10/85

For HCERS use only

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

Entered in the National Register

date 9-5-85

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration



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The building is endangered. There is a strong possibility that the house will be placed on the market in the near future. A purchase of the property and subsequent demolition of the house by neighboring N.J. Bell Telephone Co. would enable that company to expand their small parking lot that is immediately adjacent to it.

The Ayer-Allen House is important as it is one of the earliest structures in the community of Metuchen, is still standing on its original site and is little changed since 1740. It has served as the home of descendants of the Obadiah-Hannah Pike Ayers family, one of the original patentees of Woodbridge Township, from construction in 1740 until 1924, a total of 184 years. It is still used as a private residence.

In the 18th century a small cluster of buildings was situated along the main thoroughfare that passed the Metuching Meeting House in northwestern Woodbridge Township Middlesex County. The Ayers-Allen House, a typical 1½ story 18th century farmhouse still standing on its original site remains as the least changed of these buildings. A county survey includes the records and photos of eight other 18th century buildings that remain in what is now the Borough of Metuchen. Six of these houses have been moved at least once. The other two have remained on their original foundations but have been drastically altered and can no longer be recognized as examples of 18th century architecture.

A strong local tradition exists that the Ayers-Allen House served as a tavern during the Revolutionary War. Its historic name, The Allen House Tavern, gives credence to this fact. In addition, its location, at the junction of two main roads, indicates that it was situated in a primary location to serve passersby including the military in the Revolutionary War.

Furthermore, a photostat of a letter written by an owner of the building in the 1920's is attached to this report, giving a description of the many shards of china, fragments of clay pipes, and pieces of oyster shells found in the surrounding grounds when the garden was being landscaped, the quantities of which indicated it served as more than a residence.

However, documentary sources have been searched for a record of a tavern, but none have been found. These sources include: Robert Erskin's maps for Washington, Berthier's maps for Rochambeau, and Hill's maps for Clinton.

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The Ayers-Allen House is worthy of nomination to the State Register of Historic Places as the best standing illustration of the least changed 18th century edifice remaining on its original site in the Borough of Metuchen, Middlesex County, New Jersey.

Marian C. Stone  
Preservation Chairman

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Ezra M. Hunt, Metuchen and Her History. Fisk, Russel and Ames, printers, New York. 1870

Metuchen, The Brainy Borough Unpublished Library Manuscript. Compiled and written by the Federal Writers Project of the W.P.A. State of N.J.

David Trumbull Marshall, Boyhood Days of Old Metuchen. 1930 Reprinted by Quinn and Boden Co. 1977.

KNOW YOUR TOWN HANDBOOK, Metuchen. Published by the League of Women Voters.

Letter from Miss Wales to Mr. and Mrs. Samuel King.

Orra Eugene Monnette, New Jersey Deed Records from First Settlers of Ye Plantations of Piscataway and Woodbridge. Old East New Jersey 1664-1714. Vols. 1,4,5,6. The Lerop Press, Los Angeles, Calif. 1934.

William S. Stryker, Official Roster of the Officers and Men of New Jersey in the Revolutinary War. Trenton, N.J. 1872.

Thomas Weber, The Heritage of the First Presbyterian Church of Metuchen, N.J.

New Jersey Archives, Vol. XXI First Series 1664-1704 Calendar of N.J Records (Special Collections, Alexander Library Rutgers University).

Rev. Joseph W. Dally, Woodbridge and Vicinity, The Story of a New Jersey Township. A.E. Gordon No. 22 Albany St., New Brunswick, 1873.

W. Woodford Clayton, History of Union and Middlesex Counties. New Jersey, 1882, Phila.

Ebenezer Mack Treman and Murray Poole, History of the Treman, Tremaine, Truman Family in American with Related Families of Mack, Dey, Board and Ayers. Part II.

Minutes of the Court of Common Pleas Vol. 15, 1764-1771 and Vol. 16, 1772-1795

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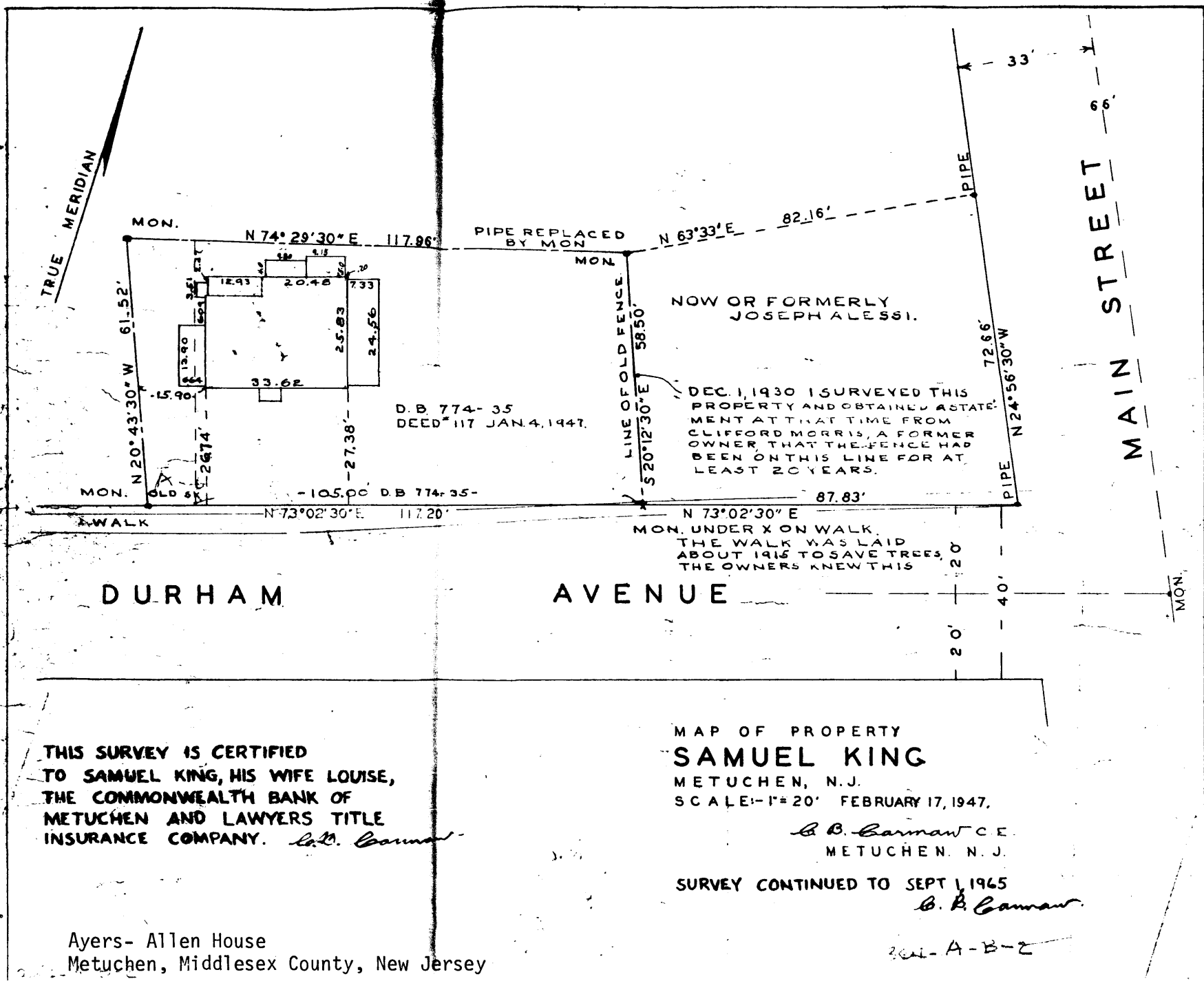
received

date entered

Interview with Mrs. Louis King, owner - resident Allen House Tavern.

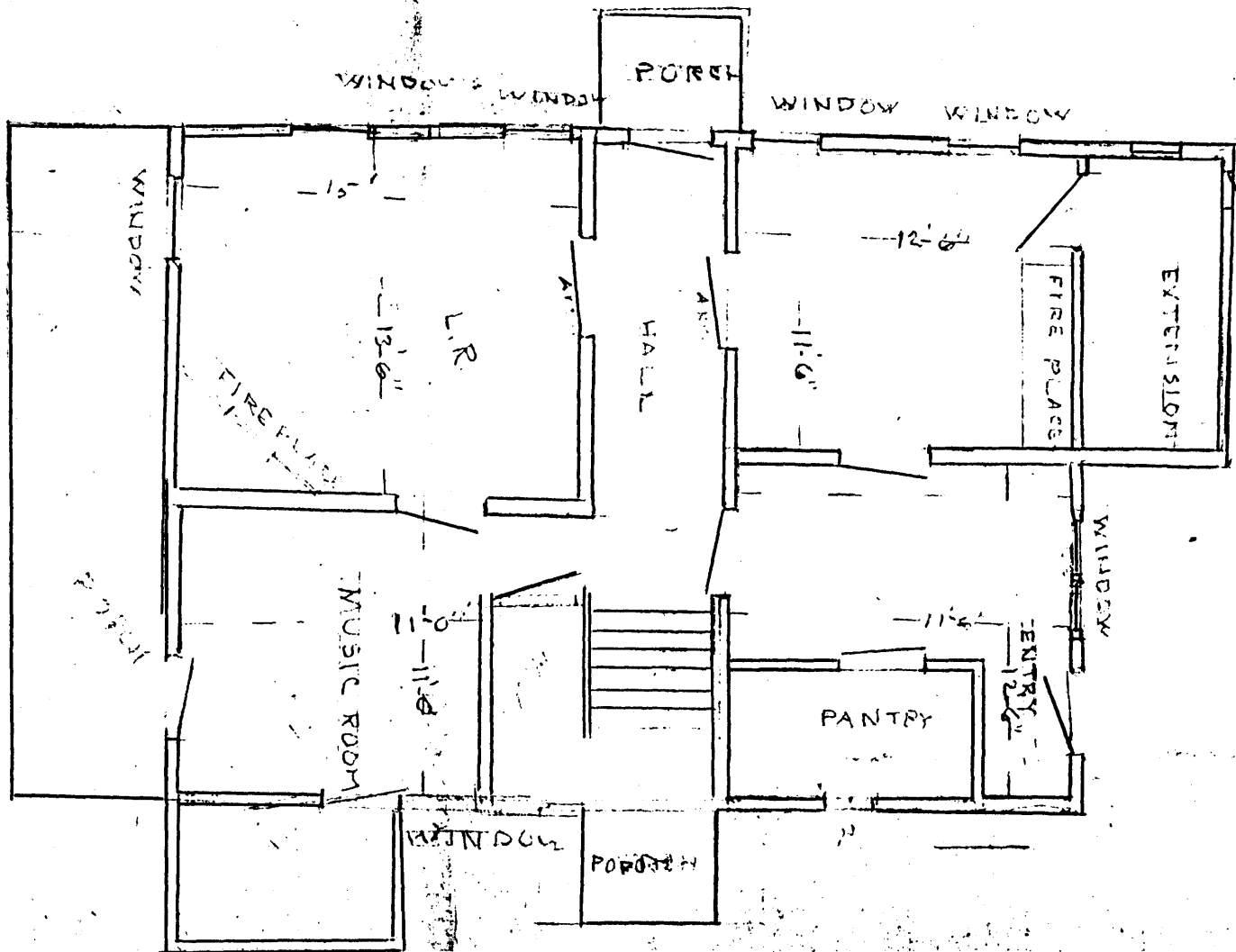
Record of Graves in Colonial Cemetary, Metuchen, N.J., compiled by F.J. Sortore in 1931-32 for the Mataschoning Chapter, D.A.R.

Early Session Records of First Presbyterian Church, Woodbridge N.J.



60% reduction copy

FIRST FLOOR

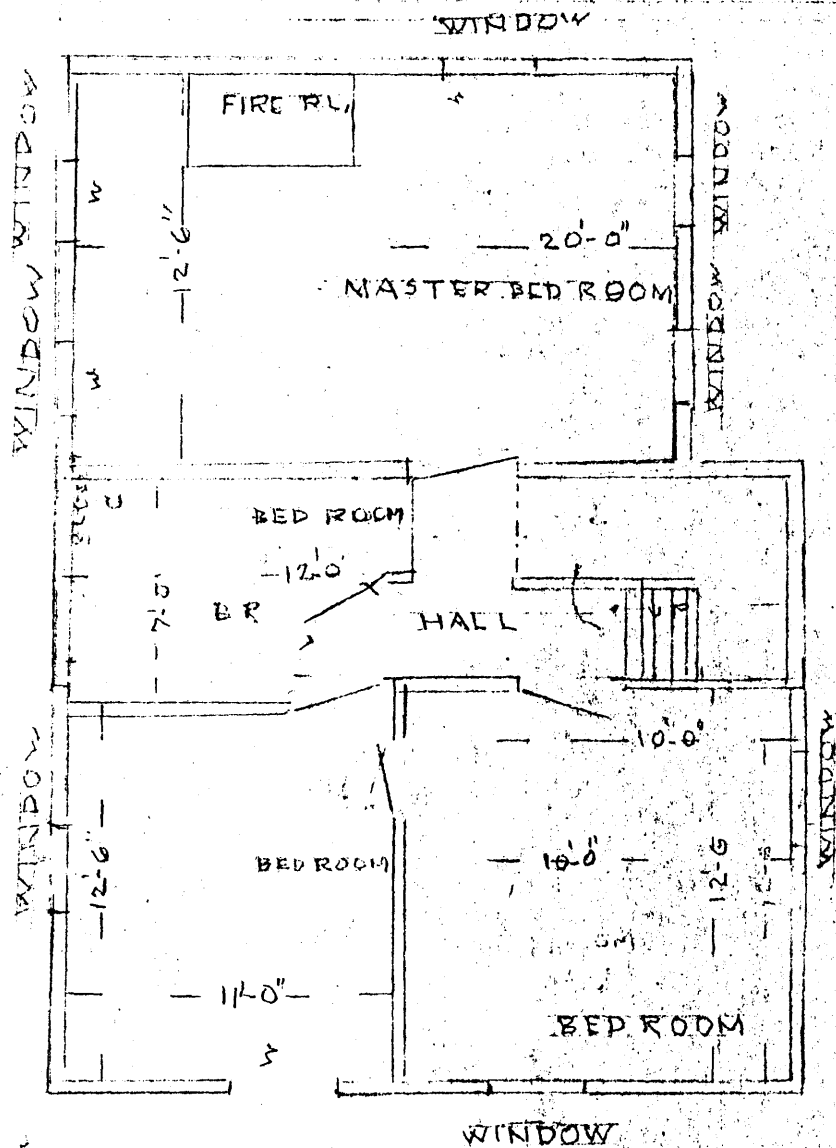


16 DURHAM AVENUE  
SEE SURVEY.

Ayers, Allen House  
Metuchen, Middlesex County  
New Jersey

THE 2 DRAWINGS WERE GIVEN  
ME BY MRS KING AND TRACED BY  
C. B. CARMAN, ARCHITECT - N.J.C. 1071-

THIS HOUSE HAS FULL BASEMENT  
PARTIAL ATTIC



SECOND FLOOR

Ayers-Allen House  
Metuchen Borough, Middlesex County, NJ