

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received MAY 6 1987
date entered JUN 4 1987

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

1. Name

historic Benjamin Shotwell House

and or common Shotwell/Runyon House

2. Location

street & number 26 Runyon's Lane NA not for publication

city, town Edison vicinity of

state New Jersey code 034 county Middlesex code 023

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Mr. and Mrs. Louis Klingler

street & number 26 Runyon's Lane

city, town Edison vicinity of state New Jersey 08817

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Middlesex County Clerk's Office

street & number John F. Kennedy Square

city, town New Brunswick state New Jersey 08903

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

1. New Jersey Historic Sites Inventory: Middlesex County Survey

title 2. HABS has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1. 1977-78 federal state county local
2. 1939

depository for survey records 1. Office of New Jersey Heritage, CN404

2. Library of Congress

city, town 1. Trenton state 1. New Jersey 08625

2. Washington, DC 2. Washington DC

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

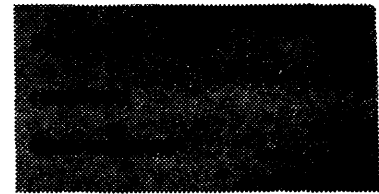
Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Benjamin Shotwell House was built in the second half of the 18th century in an area of relatively small farms on the western edge of the great Dismal Swamp of Piscatway Township, Middlesex County, New Jersey. Purchased in 1775 by Benjamin Shotwell, this 27½-acre farm tract and premises was then neighbored by the homes of prominent local men on three sides and a main road on the fourth, which connected South Plainfield on the north to roads leading eastward to Perth Amboy and southward to Bound Brook and the Raritan River Landing. The dwelling house originated as the most modest of homes regarding size, but otherwise as a conventional frame vernacular structure of its time and place: a 1½-story, south-facing 2-room-deep, cellarless building with one end chimney and unfinished loft.¹ A three-room plan, one room is a specially constructed milk room.² The house remained thus until 1846 (date said to be inscribed in a foundation stone) when it was doubled in size with a lateral addition of like proportions and a kitchen leanto. In 1868, the leanto was made two stories. Over its entire history it has been owned by but three families. Two of these descended from first-comers to the area and personified the homogeneous stock of the community.

The Benjamin Shotwell House is 7 bays wide, with two entrances, one in the third bay from the west, centered in the house property, and the other in internal position in the end two bays of the "leanto". The west gable wall contains two windows on first floor level and two in the attic. These windows have 6/6 sash, some with old glass, and are simply framed. Three tiny square windows of 3/3 sash are equidistantly spaced on the second story of the addition. The rear elevation of the original structure has one window of 9/6 sash and a small square window, lower in the wall, which contains wood grilles. (Behind it, at a later date, a 6-pane sash was installed.) This opening is for the milk room. A single shutter of board and batten has recently been removed from it. Most of the other windows have movable louvered blinds.

As late as 1939, the house was sheathed with 3'-long wooden shingles on all but the front wall which was (and still is) clapboarded with wide boards. Today, only the west gable wall retains its early shingling, new wood shingles having been applied to replace the deteriorated sheathing. The gable roof has no overhang. The raking course is flush. Boxed rain gutters, front and back, are of wood, a replacement in kind for the originals.

1. The actual height, before roof-raising, as seen in back attic room, was about 2 feet. It was raised another foot.
2. It is, to our knowledge, the only extant house of this area which reveals to us that milk rooms could be incorporated into the house proper.

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The 18th-century house is framed of widely spaced hewn uprights which rise from sill to plate, braced at corner posts. Its transverse beams were ceiled over in mid-19th century when the first improvements were made.³ This structural system appears to be of bents assembled in the manner of Dutch vernacular architecture. The intersticing is of bricks.⁴

The whole structure is set close to the ground on a rubble stone foundation. A wood board water table projects at their juncture. Two rectangular brick chimneys with drip courses (one now in interior position) mark the original gable ends of the house block. The floor plan of the first home places the main dwelling room across the front with a cater-cornered fireplace. The stairway, removed in 1846, appears to have been on the opposite wall. The rear space, of narrower depth, is shared with the "back room" and the milk room, connected by a board-and-batten door. Pine floorboards of an average width of 10" rest on a more or less replaced girt system above the crawl space, although some hewn timbers are still in place. A separate internal foundation lies below the milk room, and because the room is sunken below floor level by 16 inches a wood step leads down to its paved brick flooring. The stone foundation walls encircle the room up to floor level and provide storage shelves. A second doorway leads to the understairs area. Interior walls have wide beaded boarding.

Other room walls are plastered. A chair rail, which had been removed, leaving its shadow, has been replicated by the current owners of 40 years. The mantelpiece is late Georgian in style, with delicately scaled eared architraves. The wood shelf is a replacement for a Victorian era marble top. The splayed fire chamber and hearth have been rebuilt, and the surround decorated with old Delft Biblical tiles imported from Holland. Molding trim on openings dates to the time of the addition, but three paneled doors hung with seemingly original H-L hinges remain. Two are assembled with four shallowly recessed panels and one with two raised panels, triple beaded. All are flush backed. Brass-knobbed box locks are on most doors.

3. The present owner saw the beams when making repairs and remembers them as squared and plain edged.
4. See photographs.

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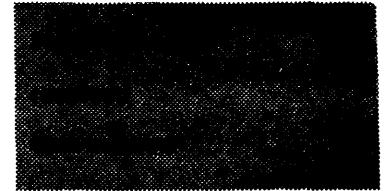
According to oral tradition within the Runyon family, owners of the house from 1801 to 1946, the front entry was centered in the facade of the first unit until the enlargement of 1846. Again, according to Runyon history, the first kitchen stood against the east gable wall under a leanto roof.⁵ In 1846, after the removal of the kitchen area, the house was doubled by a two-story addition, two rooms to the floor in the same spatial ratio as the first unit, and a kitchen leanto placed on the new gable wall, which shared the in-wall chimney. This section includes a cellar. Its stair flight, wood not stone, is somewhat ingeniously incorporated into the rear of the leanto, running parallel with the foundation wall and enclosed by an internal stone wall which holds back the crawl space of the leanto. Being only half the width of this final room, it allows for a storage area at floor level, beyond which is a door to the outside. The stair well and platform are partitioned off by a wall now filled with cabinets and closed by a board-and-batten door. Wall itself is vertical boarded.

The structural system of the addition is composed of narrower girts let into a weight-bearing transverse beam below the room divisions; kerfmarks of a vertical saw are in evidence. The floor is brick-paved. A relatively shallow monolithic stone chimney base projects from the east wall of the cellar. Externally, the two-bay similarly clapboarded addition is dateless, except for the presence of the diminutive sash windows on the upper floor. This addition made possible a balanced five-bay facade, and tradition claims that the entry door was relocated then to its present position and the former opening made a window. There is a three-pane transom, now hinged to open, mounted above the door. The existing Greek Revival portico, on square bevel-edged posts, with architrave and flat roof, is not the original but a well-executed replacement for one recorded in 1939 by HABS, which had more classical columns but a steeply hipped roof. The entry is plain framed. The door has two vertical panels trimmed with molding for most of its height, but has three panes of glass across its top.

5. This account may have become garbled over the years, for it seems more likely that a separate attached kitchen, with a leanto against its outer walls, would have been the conventional arrangement, and besides, a leanto against the stair wall would have lacked a chimney.

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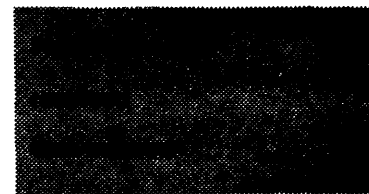
A small entry vestibule is within the doorway in front of a wide stair flight between walls. Both the vestibule and stairs are located within the periphery of the original east foundation wall. The milk room connects with the new front room through a doorway from under stairs, containing a board-and-batten door. A like door fills the exterior opening, which is squeezed against the common wall of old and new units. Floor boards are 7-8" wide.

The ceiling height of the new rooms on both floors is higher than that of the first house, as might be expected given its date of construction. At this time, the loft of the earlier house was raised so that one continuous roof could be thrown across the whole. The loft was then divided with full-height walls into two rooms and broad upper hall. Ceilings conceal the rafters. Essentially, this marked the completion of the house proper as it stands today.

Surviving elements of decor show that the new front room was given a modicum of Greek Revival styling. Door and window casings are trimmed with period moldings, and these were also introduced into the original dwelling rooms. Doors leading from the vestibule into the front rooms to either side have vertical-panel Greek doors, and a third of this style swings between front and back room of the added unit. A mantelpiece of plain Greek Revival mode is seen in the HABS photographs, but has since been removed.

The only further change, made in 1868, was the raising of the leanto to two stories to add three small bedrooms (now two) for farm help, with a compact flight of back stairs fitted in between gable wall and cellar stairs well. With an apparent sensitivity to line and appearance, the pitched roof of the house proper was extended on the same alignment and the flush raking course of gable peak matched to the original gable. This has successfully preserved the serene straightforward lines of the simple rectangular box of origin. There is now a screened porch against the leanto under a corrugated plastic flat roof.

The leanto contains a cooking fireplace in plain board surround with bracketed shelf. A bake oven once projected into the room but was removed in 1892 to install an iron stove. This, too, has been removed, and the hearth restored with old bricks. The walls have a wainscoting of wide horizontally laid boards under a lip edging. Two matched windows of 6/6 sash have been inserted at different times in the long side wall.

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The leanto is at a lower level than the house and is reached through a steep down. This is true also of the upper floor levels of original house and addition, with a step down to the newer bedrooms.

In 1922, Herbert Runyon introduced heating with what was called a "pipeless system", which he installed under the entry vestibule. The present owners created a bathroom by dividing the back bedroom of the 1846 section. They have, otherwise, made only necessary improvements for modern living and have actively concerned themselves with preservation of the structure, including re-siding and re-roofing. The measures they have taken for accurate restoration are laudable.

Outbuildings which stood to recent times included a large English barn (partly visible in a 1939 photograph) which had cow stalls and horse stables, set to northwest of house; a wagon house and work shed aligned in front of the barn to the west; chicken houses, reflecting turn of century farm activity; and a privy. The deed of 1775 indicated a spring at the property's southeast corner. The well for the house, however, was "at the door" a short distance to the southwest. Up to a few years ago, as seen in photographs, a cast-iron pump marked its location.

The house now remains on only 1½ acres. A gable-roofed frame (shingled) garage for two cars occupies the site of the wagon house.* A pair of elms, a horse chestnut tree, and boxwood plantings are gone, but the lawns surrounding the house have been nicely landscaped and laid out with two sunken areas to side and back for gardening. A wooded area lies to the west, and the remaining property bounds are heavily screened with trees, including conifers. The house sits far back from its lane, which was its southern boundary. "Runyon's Lane", as it is still named has been paved but remains, as of now, a rural byway, which connects, as it did in the 1775 deed, with the road to South Plainfield, still called "New Brooklyn Road", its 19th-century name.

The zoning remains residential (except for property facing Highway 287, which flows at a distance behind the Benjamin Shotwell House and was laid on land taken from the original farm); however, as an outcome of tremendous pressures for industrial growth, the township granted a variance to a builder to erect a large plant on the opposite side of Runyon's Lane. This will be screened by plantings. The house property, too, is screened at road edge, and when viewed frontally, it yet conveys a sense of its time and setting, standing alone, the encroachments of modern times not visible.

* - non-contributing property

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/ humanitarian
<input checked="" 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 c.2nd/3rd quarter ^{18th century} Builder/Architect Unclear

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

In a township that has seen unbridled growth from the 1940s and has lost all but four of its farms and many of its historic structures, the Benjamin Shotwell House--itself a threatened survivor--remains as a rare example of a once characteristic vernacular dwelling house of mid-18th century erected by a typical farmer resident of average means in a cultural hearth which blended English and Dutch traditions. Originally associated with a small farm, characteristic of the early pattern of settlement and growth of a township founded in the 17th century, this well-preserved scarcely altered house consists of the first two-room structure and its incorporated milk room; a mid-19th century addition matching it in proportions and lines, and a kitchen leanto later raised to two stories. The entire house is 1½ stories high, under one roof span, eaves flush with walls, and hugs the ground. Two brick chimneys mark its original gable walls, though one now occupies an interior position because of the raised leanto. Original wood-shingled roof and walls were still in place as recently as 1939, except for the front facade which was clapboarded. The west wall still retains its early shingling. The lines are simple and clean.

Its history is associated with two of the most prestigious families of Middlesex County from its founding days. Benjamin Shotwell owned the house from 1775 to 1801. John Runyon and four generations of his descendants lived in it thereafter for almost 150 years. From service in the state militia to service on the school board, the Runyons, generation by generation, contributed to public life.

As an extant example, the Benjamin Shotwell House stands comparison with other utilitarian structures built in other areas of New Jersey during the same long period of replication of traditional "styles". Located as it is in a mixed cultural hearth which saw the commingling of various nationalities--English, Dutch, and Huguenot--from the late 17th century on, it affords an interesting study of the extent to which an amalgamation of building practices occurred. Owned across three centuries by but two families, both descendants of settlers who had taken up land before 1700, and were well established in community life, there probably was little motivation to make drastic changes to the old homestead. The one addition a century later was done in faithful keeping to the original house, which in itself makes a statement about social viewpoint on architectural styles and lingering acceptability of the traditional ways on the part of a self-assured farmer and respected member of the community. Continuing personal values and attitudes of descendants of New Jersey's first families are particularly well reflected in this simply ornamented but substantially built straightforward utilitarian house. Chosen as a site for HABS to record in 1939, it has also been included as one of the historic sites of Middlesex County on the

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acres of nominated property +1.25

Quadrangle name Plainfield

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

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

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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Verbal boundary description and justification

The boundaries coincide with the legal description for Block 54.A, Lot 1.A5 as recorded and are drawn on the Tax Map, p.8, of Edison Township, Middlesex Co., N.J.

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 Ursula C. Brecknell, Consultant

organization Historic House Surveys

date July 1986

street & number 36 Ellis Drive

telephone (201) 359-3498

city or town Belle Mead

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 National Park Service.

Deputy

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Alexander P. Sembr*

title Assistant Commissioner for Natural Resources

date April 28, 1987

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the
National Register

date 6/4/87

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Cultural and Heritage Commission map of 1977. A county-wide state inventory of sites in 1977/78 singled out the Shotwell House as eligible for the National Register and this was re-affirmed in 1985 in a second evaluation conducted at the request of the county.

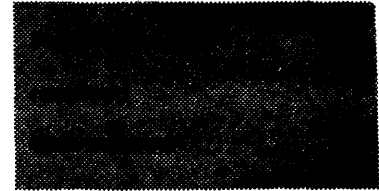
The Benjamin Shotwell House belongs to Piscataway Township's history, although it is now located in Edison Township (formerly called Raritan) which was erected from the south-easterly portion in 1870. Piscataway Township's history dates back to 1666, with a charter issued to its founders from New Hampshire. Its original population was of English extraction, mainly New Englanders of Baptist and Quaker persuasion, who came here to escape Puritan tyranny. They were joined by Huguenots from New Rochelle and by additional English from the New York/Long Island area. Under the land promotion sales of the East New Jersey Board of Proprietors at the end of the 17th century, Lowlanders from Staten Island and Long Island came to take up lands along the Raritan River. From the first New England-type town center at Piscatawaytown, settlement spread to out-plantations, which were reached by Governor Gawen Lawrie's "Road up Raritan" opened by 1686.

By the time the Benjamin Shotwell House was put up, midway into the 18th century, there was no longer a distinctive cultural hearth. Such center-chimney-plan houses of New England mode as might have been introduced at first--"Rockingham", Franklin Township, built by John Harrison of Connecticut, an example--soon passed from popularity, apparently, in the course of assimilation of peoples,⁶ and there emerged a vernacular one or one-and-a-half-story house, one or two rooms deep, with end chimneys that has been called the East New Jersey

6. The course of acculturation has been clearly illustrated by Rosalie F. Bailey in her account of the Field family who first bought land in 1695. "The Fields", she states, "were an English family, but became almost Dutch by adoption after settling in the Raritan River Valley--they spoke Dutch, attended the Dutch church and married Dutch wives...". As Baptists they supposedly accompanied Roger Williams to Rhode Island, and were in Newport in 1638. The Field progenitor moved to Flushing, Long Island, where he became a patentee. His grandson John then removed to Piscataway and built a stone house (date-stone 1710, since razed). His son John also lived in a stone house, erected 1743, on the same tract. (Pre-Revolutionary Dutch Houses, pp. 389f.) In like manner, the Runyons, second owners of the Shotwell House, though French Huguenots, joined the Baptists.

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Cottage adopted by all nationalities with slightly different internal arrangements.

In the original Piscataway Township bounds there are extant more Dutch than English houses from mid-18th century. Those slightly different features that make the Shotwell House seem distinctive from others to which it can be compared may perhaps just record a lost history. Illustrations of demolished houses of the era indicate an interesting variety of types, some with round-butt shingles (as observed by Peter Kalm in his 1740s visit) and gambrel roofs. However, there is a similarity, too. Wood became the eventual choice for building. Though the Fields, as noted, early on had masonry houses, and the early Dutch of Staten Island and Huguenots of New Paltz also built with stone, the framed house became the commonplace. Practicality of using available material may have been one factor; perhaps the New England tradition another. An apparent cross-over in building techniques occurred, with the use by English peoples of the Dutch system of framing bents.

Differences to be noted are in the greater freedom exercised in the arrangement of rooms. The Dutch as a rule stayed with a certain geometry in 2- or 4-room houses, which neatly placed one room behind the other, with the front room(s) always larger than those at back.

The Benjamin Shotwell House, as it originated, must indeed be a quintessential record of the prevailing vernacular form in the heart of Piscataway. Given the almost ingrown nature of the population, with perhaps the same dozen surnames appearing of those who sold the farm to Shotwell and neighbored him--there is good basis to believe that this snug little house in its original state was like that of all other residents. Two that have been rescued and relocated at Olde Towne, Johnson Park, Piscataway, afford examples. These two, also associated with descendants of founding fathers of the township--FitzRandolph and Dunn--show, even so, a certain individuality of treatment, unless this can be ascribed to later enlargement and changes. Both have assigned a greater spatial area to the front but have disposed of the remaining space in different ways. The FitzRandolph House has two small rooms at back with flight

7. Photographs are to be seen in Walter C. Meuly History of Piscataway Township, 1666-1976, and Bailey, op. cit.

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of stairs enclosed between them. A leanto is against one gable wall. The Dunn House, originally sited at Stelton, was a neighbor to the Shotwell House. Like the FitzRandolph House, it is five bays wide but has only a half-deep center hall with staircase, and one larger room of lower height across the back.

The Benjamin Shotwell House is an example of a smaller--3-bay--house of but three rooms and loft, with, however, an additional kitchen somewhere, perhaps as side wing, against which was the leanto mentioned in Runyon family history. The spatial divisions, front and back, are in the same ratio as the Olde Towne houses, but also of Dutch houses of Central New Jersey, which may have first set the pattern.

A date c. 1750, as sometimes advanced, would not be too early for the house based on size and plan. It is similar to two others thus dated for their original sections--the Isaac Onderdonk House (NR) and the Abraham Staats (Steuben) House. These two Dutch houses are opposite each other across the Raritan River. Both have a two-room-deep plan, with at least one corner fireplace in end wall and a side hall (half depth in the latter house, with room behind). Of even greater interest to the similarity to Dutch plan is the apparent construction of the Shotwell House by a system of framing bents. On the other hand, it is less surprising to find a corner fireplace in Shotwell's house, since its origin in Englishmen's houses seems to have followed an importation from Wren's England, than to discover this feature in a Dutchman's home.

The first deed found for the property dates to 1775, when Jonathan Dunham and Joseph FitzRandolph jointly sold to Shotwell this relatively small-27½-acre--"tract or parcel of land and premises". It has been impossible to determine the reason for the co-ownership, or an indication that either one of the sellers--or a tenant--actually dwelt here. A possibility exists that it was

8. Houses of English and Scotch-Irish seen in northern Somerset County use other proportions.

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a liquidation of assets for an incarcerated debtor.⁹ As to size of property, though small, it was not particularly atypical of farms in this long-settled area. However, it was smaller than the mean farm averages of c. 1780 for Middlesex County, which were 70 to 99.9 per cent.¹⁰ This just may be explained by its location, being close to the great Dismal Swamp on the northeast¹¹ and bounded on the west by the main north-south road connecting the Samptown/New Brooklyn area (South Plainfield today) with the road to Perth Amboy and somewhat indirectly to Metlars Lane and Raritan River Road. On all its bounds, the names of different owners appear, suggesting that adjacent farms were also small.

If the house was not erected until 1775, the year of sale to Shotwell, that date would be equally acceptable because of the tenacity of tradition in replicating the familiar, lacking reason to do otherwise on the ordinary farmer's part.¹² The property may have represented a message or tenement farm for Shotwell, since it cannot be confirmed whether he lived here and if so for how long. Research has failed to identify which of the several Benjamin Shotwells of

9. On April 17, 1775, a notice in the New York Gazette stated that a Jonathan Dunham (the same?) was an insolvent debtor then in jail, and on order of the Inferior Court of Common Pleas an assignment of his estate would be made to those appointed, on May 11, to procure Dunham's release from prison. The land was sold on May 5, six days before the date announced. New Jersey Archives, Newspaper Extracts, Vol. XI, p. 118.
10. Peter A. Wacker, "Relations Between Cultural Origins, Relative Wealth, and the Size, Form and Materials of Construction of Rural Dwellings in New Jersey During the Eighteenth Century", Map #11.
11. This great swamp of fearful proportions--some 460 acres--figures into the boundaries of an Indian deed of 1677, in which it is stated it is "called by them Maniguescake but by the English dismall." As quoted in Meuly, op. cit., p.47.
12. On the other hand, from about mid-century, two-story houses were being built, mainly by English, in adjacent counties. Possibly they reflected greater wealth.

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Inventory—Nomination Form

Benjamin Shotwell House

Continuation sheet Edison Twp. Middlesex Co. NJ item number 8

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the last quarter of the century bought the property.¹³ The house and farm passed to his daughter Nancy by inheritance, according to a deed of 1801. Nancy Shotwell married Lewis Thornall at the Metuchen Presbyterian Church in 1796. She was 16 years old at the time and gave her home as Woodbridge, where other descendants of the Shotwell family lived.¹⁴ If her father were living at that time, it is assumed that she lived at home.

The house was clearly in a well-settled neighborhood of descendants of Piscataway's earliest families. On its north was the home of Jacob Martin, Esq., who had been made first moderator of the township meetings in 1790, owned in 1801 by Phineas Dunham. On its west, alongside the road, was the home of Jonathan FitzRandolph, at whose house (probably a tavern) township meetings were regularly held from 1780 on.¹⁵ On its east was the home of Isaac Stelle, Jr., and on the south that of Thomas Manning. (All of these 18th-century homes are gone.)

Nancy and Lewis Thornall sold the parcel to John Runyon in 1801 for \$1,000. It is very likely indeed that John Runyon was in fact a tenant first before buying the farm. Runyon family tradition states that Ephraim Runyon, John's son, was born, lived, and died in the house. He was of age by 1812, when he accepted his first appointment to public service. John Runyon was listed as only 25 years old (but perhaps 27), when he served in the militia in 1792. It seems plausible that such a young married man might set up housekeeping at first in a leased farmhouse.

13. One possibility is the Benjamin Shotwell, member of the Rahway-Plainfield Quaker Meeting, who had wife Anney and son Benjamin born 1759. Both the parents died about the same time, intestate, in 1783, and Jacob Martin (perhaps the same who lived north of the Shotwell House) took custody of their new-born, child, being related. New Jersey Archives, Abstracts of Wills, Vol. VI, p. 351; records of the Rahway-Plainfield Meeting.
14. NJA, Marriage Records, "Middlesex County Clerk's Marriage Records", Vol. XXII, p. 638. J.W. Thornall's family genealogy gives Nancy's birth year as 1780 and provides additional information about her marriage; also phone interview with Mr. J.W. Thornall.
15. Piscataway Township Minutes, passim.

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National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
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Benjamin Shotwell House

Continuation sheet Edison Twp. Middlesex Co., NJ Item number 8

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The Runyon family itself was well established in Piscataway. Descendants of the Huguenot immigrant Vincent Rognion, settler of 1677, were to be found throughout the township, with a record of public service accrued to them over the years. John Runyon was a carpenter as well as farmer. He died in 1819 at age 52. His wife, Christiana Stelle (descendant of another old family), stayed on the homestead until her death in 1848. Both are buried in the Dunham Family cemetery in Piscataway. Ephraim Runyon, married into another old family, then took ownership of the house and was responsible for its enlargement and updating that same decade, even before his mother's death. He was middle-aged by then with a history of public service behind him. During the years 1812-23, he had served repeatedly as an overseer of the poor; and as a more mature person as judge of local elections from 1836 through 1841. Why at this time of life he needed a larger house can only be guessed at. Perhaps he felt motivated to live his final years--he died in 1860--in a more spacious, more modern yet unostentatious house that would speak well of him as prosperous solid citizen.

Ephraim's son Isaac S. Runyon, inherited the homestead. During Ephraim's lifetime Piscataway Township became more populated, and the old farms became part of a larger community linked by additional roads. Just down the road, within walking distance of the house, New Durham sprouted as a hamlet at the crossroads of two early roads, one that had now become the Perth Amboy-Bound Brook Turnpike. It has a cluster of new houses, artisans' shops¹⁶, and a school. Times were changing. Isaac Runyon was able to hire farmboys¹⁶, and it is thought for this reason he added three small bedrooms over the kitchen leanto in 1868. Also married--his wife a Dunham descendant--he eventually got around to modernizing the kitchen in 1892, removing the old bake oven which projected from the fireplace and replacing it with a cookstove. He probably laid the narrow-board floor at the same time. This was but four years before his death in 1896. The couple had seemingly lived through the Victorian era of technological advances for the home without feeling the need to have improvements. Isaac Runyon was also a staunch member of his community. He served as township assessor from 1857 to 1864 and also as overseer of highways 1860-62. Under newly erected township of Raritan, he filled the position of justice of the peace of 1875.

16. Isaac S. Runyon had bought additional farmland by his house and was credited with 83 acres on the 1876 Atlas Map of Raritan Township. 1850 Census shows typical farm to be of 80-90 acres.

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Benjamin Shotwell House

Continuation sheet Edison Twp. Middlesex Co. NJ Item number 8

Page 8

Herbert Runyon, the fourth generation to live in the house, came into possession of it upon his father's death. He introduced central heating with a modest system which only emitted hot air at one location. He tried his hand at improving the portico by extending its floor area to both sides. No other alterations are recorded. Herbert Runyon continued the family custom of filling public office by serving for some years on the school board.

Gilbert Runyon, his son, was the last son to be born and raised in the house. In 1946, the house finally passed out of Runyon ownership. The present owners since that date see themselves as caretakers of a historic site.

In summary, this simple 1½-story frame house, pure in its boxy lines, documents in its scale, floor plan, construction, and fabric, the vernacular building style prevailing at mid-18th century and still viable a century later in a conservative homogeneous area. It occupies its original site, and its setting, at present, remains one of rural tranquility.

Located in a township that has seen enormous growth, much of an industrial nature, over several decades, it is one of but two 18th-century houses surviving with sufficient integrity to meet National Register standards, according to the Middlesex County inventory of history sites. It is the lone survivor of its neighborhood, of its time. The hamlet of New Durham has completely vanished, swept away for new industrial ratables. Its nearest neighbor, an early 19th-century house, is scheduled for demolition, being at the edge of Dismal Swamp. In an almost fully developed township, builders are seeking to develop the swamp itself, labeled "the last frontier" by one official. It is only a matter of time before further encroachments take place, unless steps are taken to afford the Benjamin Shotwell House some protection in recognition of its significance to architectural and East New Jersey history.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Inventory—Nomination Form



Benjamin Shotwell House

Continuation sheet Edison Twp. Middlesex Co. NJ Item number 9

Page 1

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Thornall, Jay W. Isreal Thornal, Planter, Woodbridge, New Jersey, and His Descendants of the Woodbridge-Metuchen, N.J. Area. C. 1982.

Wacker, Peter O., "Relations Between Cultural Origins, Relative Wealth, and the Size, Form and Materials of Construction of Rural Dwellings in New Jersey During the Eighteenth Century", published in English from Geographie Historique, Du Village at de la Maison Rurale, a Colloquy at Bazas, October 19-21, 1978.

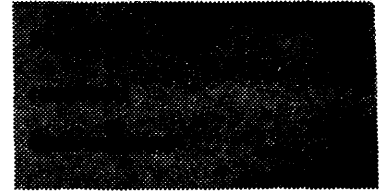
Wall, John P., and Hannah E. Pickersgill, History of Middlesex County, New Jersey, 1664-1920. (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1921).

Also:

Historic American Building Survey (HABS), New Jersey 55, 1939. Library of Congress.

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

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



Continuation sheet Benjamin Shotwell House
Edison Twp., Middlesex Co., NJ Item number 9 Page 2

New Jersey Archives series: Newspaper Extracts; Abstracts of Wills; Marriage Records.

Runyon, Herbert, typescript of a very precise oral history of the house given to Louis and Catherine Klingler, 1946, upon their purchase. A few dates differ from HABS report.

Rutgers University Library Genealogical Collection: Runyon Family.

Cemetery Records: Dunham Family Burial Ground (graves of John and Christiana Runyon).

Phone interviews:

Gilbert Runyon, Flemington, New Jersey (son of Herbert, born in Shotwell House).

Mrs. Marion Stone, Metuchen, New Jersey, local historian.

Jay W. Thornall, Cranbury, New Jersey researcher on Shotwell and Thornall families.

Maps:

1850 Map of Middlesex County, New Jersey, entirely from original curves by J.W. Otley & J. Keily. (Camden, New Jersey; published by Lloyd Van Der Veer, 1850).

1876 New Historical Atlas of Middlesex County, N.J. (Everts & Stewart, 1876).

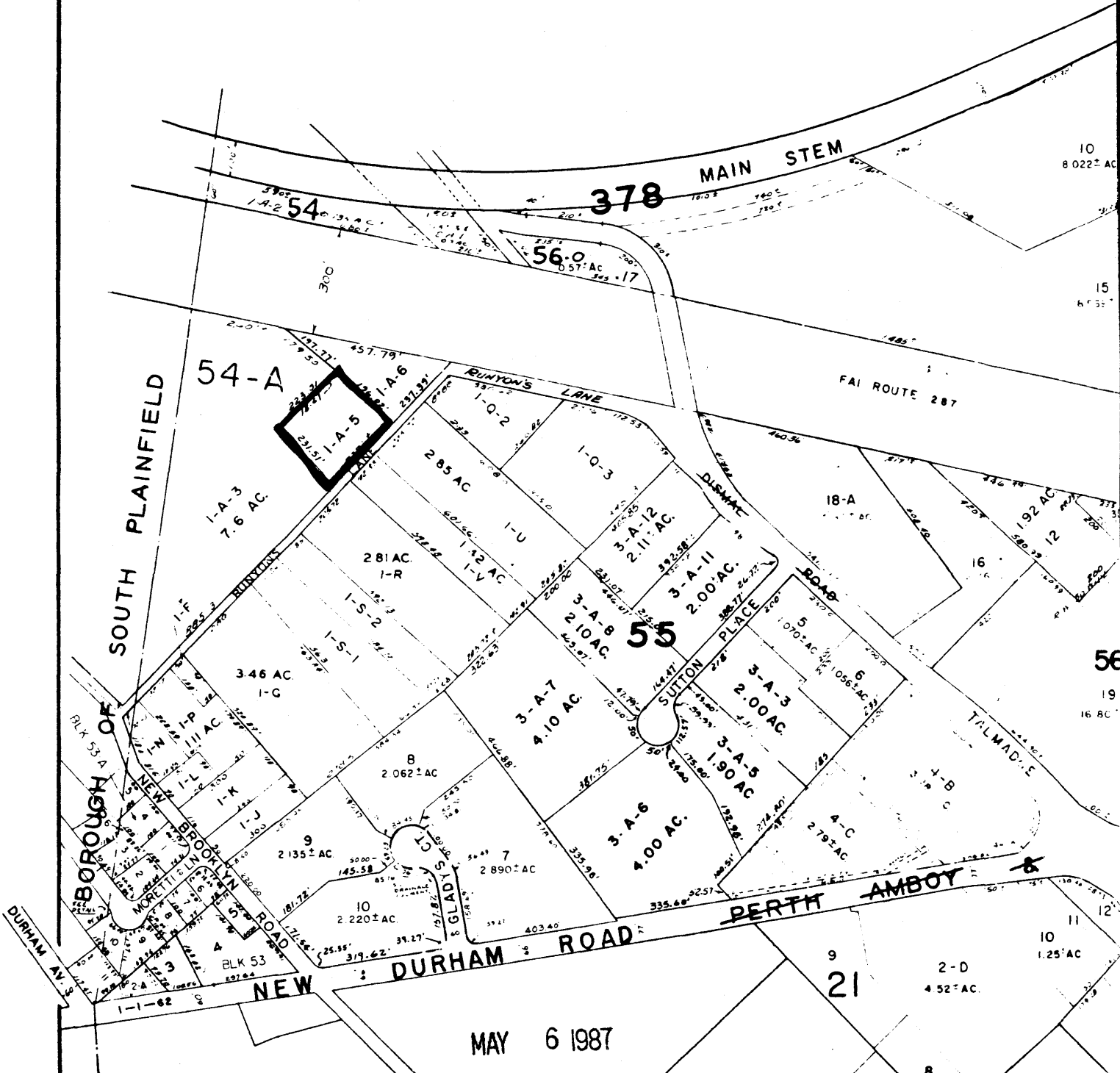
1977 Cultural and Heritage Commission of Middlesex County, "Places of Cultural and Historical Interest in Middlesex County, N.J."

Hagstrom Road Map of Middlesex County.

BENJAMIN SHOTWELL HOUSE
Runyon's Lane
Edison Township, Middlesex Co., N.J.

Edison Tax Map 1/1/86
Scale: 1"=200'

INDEX MAP NO 2



MAY 6 1987

BENJAMIN SHOTWELL HOUSE
 EDISON TOWNSHIP, MIDDLESEX COUNTY, N.J.

31 AC ±

BOROUGH OF SOUTH PLAINFIELD
 TOWNSHIP OF EDISON

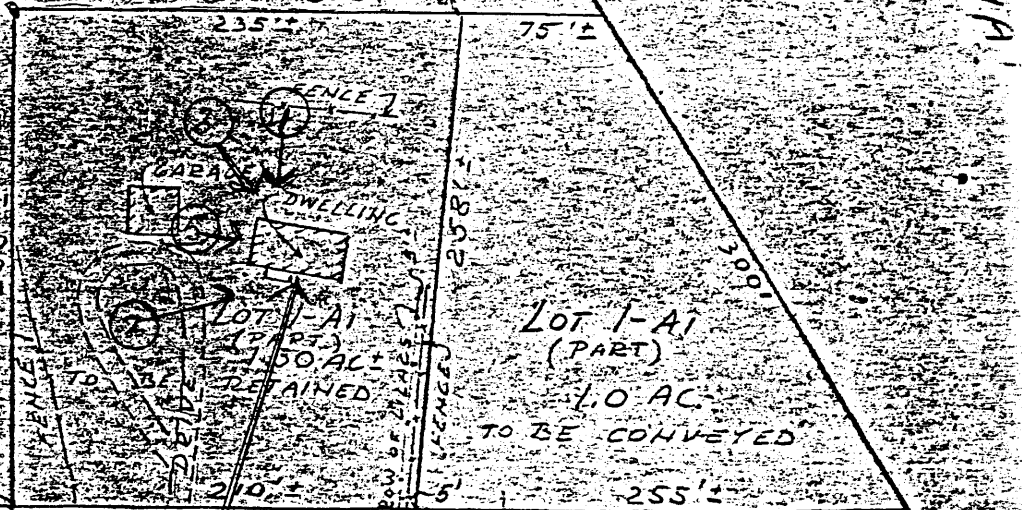
BOROUGH OF S. PLAINFIELD FROM PISCATAWAY
 Apparently, the west corners and side lines of the farm were cut off and placed in Piscataway Township, when Raritan Township was erected in 1870. The boundary line as given did not follow New Brooklyn Road on its various courses but went in straight line to New Dunham s.h.

R BB - RESIDENCE ZONE

TAX MAP SHEET 8
 BLOCK 5A
 LOT 1-A1 (PART)
 7.68 AC ±
 TO BE CONVEYED

AREA
 TO BE RETAINED 7.30 AC ±
 TO BE CONVEYED 1.00 AC
 TO BE CONVEYED 7.18 AC ±
 ROAD WIDENING 0.44 AC ±
 TOTAL AREA 9.92 AC

15' WIDE STRIP TO BE DEDICATED
 FOR THE FUTURE WIDENING OF RUNYON'S LANE
 0.44 AC ±



RUNYON'S LANE

from proposed subdivision map (minor)
 filed at Edison Township

Post-1446

MAP 5 1987



PHOTOGRAPH MADE IN 1939 FOR HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY

Benjamin Shotwell House
Edison Township
Middlesex County, NJ

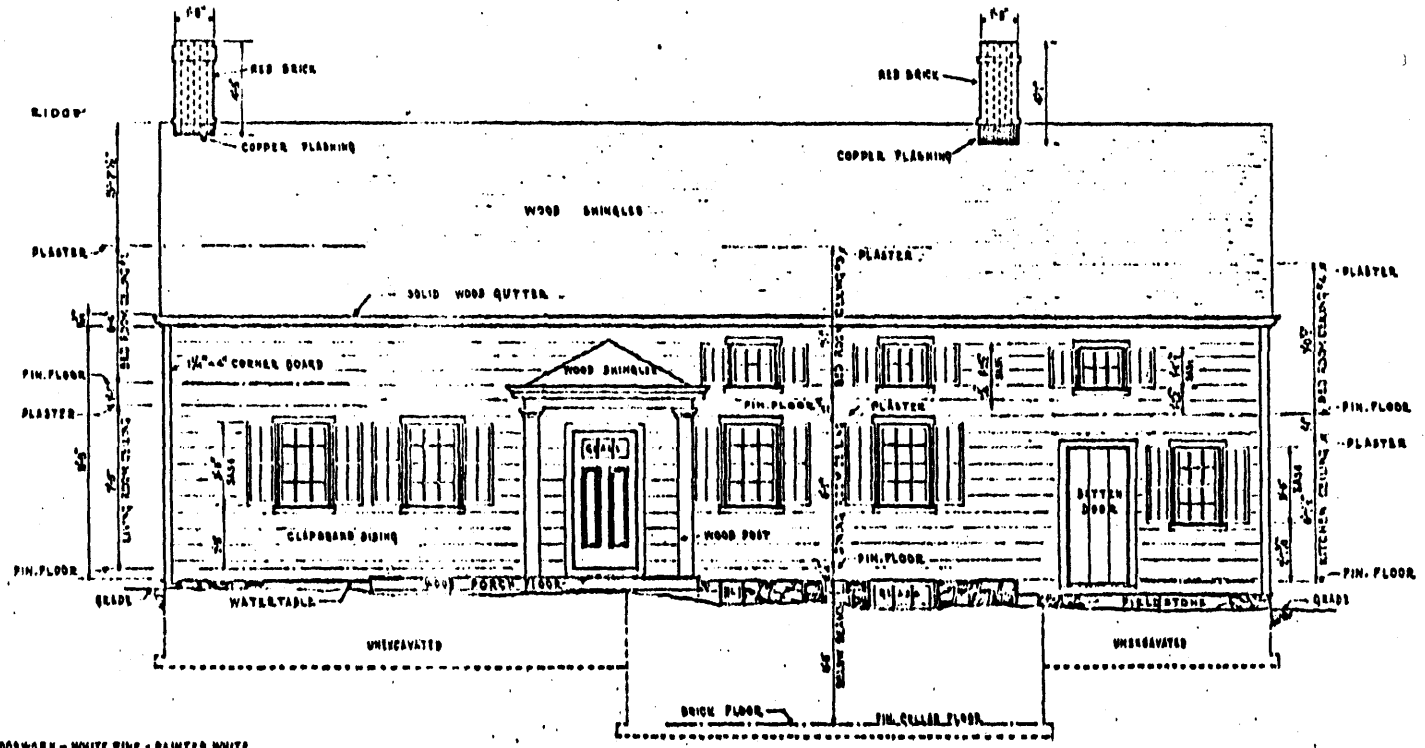
MAY
6 1987

Benjamin Shotwell House
Edison Township
Middlesex County, NJ



PHOTOGRAPH MADE IN 1939 FOR HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY

MAY 6 1987

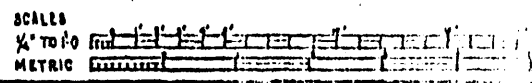


SOUTH ELEVATION

NOTES -
 ALL EXPOSED WOODWORK - WHITE PINE - PAINTED WHITE.
 WOOD SHINGLES ON ROOF COVERED WITH GRIT COATED
 ROLL ROOFING, BUT ARE SHOWN AS ORIGINALLY EXISTING.
 CHIMNEYS BUILT OF SOFT RED BRICK LAID WITH 1/8 INCH
 LIME MORTAR JOINTS.
 SHUTTERS ARE MODERN TYPE WITH ADJUSTABLE SLATS,
 STOCK PATTERN HINGES AND HOLDFASTS
 GLASS SIZES IN FLOOR WINDOWS - LIVING ROOM & DINING ROOM 8'-0" X 10" INCHES
 " " " " " " KITCHEN 7'-0" " "
 " " 8'-0" " " " " " BED ROOM 8'-0" " "
 " " " " " " " " " " 6'-0" " "

MAY 6 1987

ARTHUR CHURCH DEL.

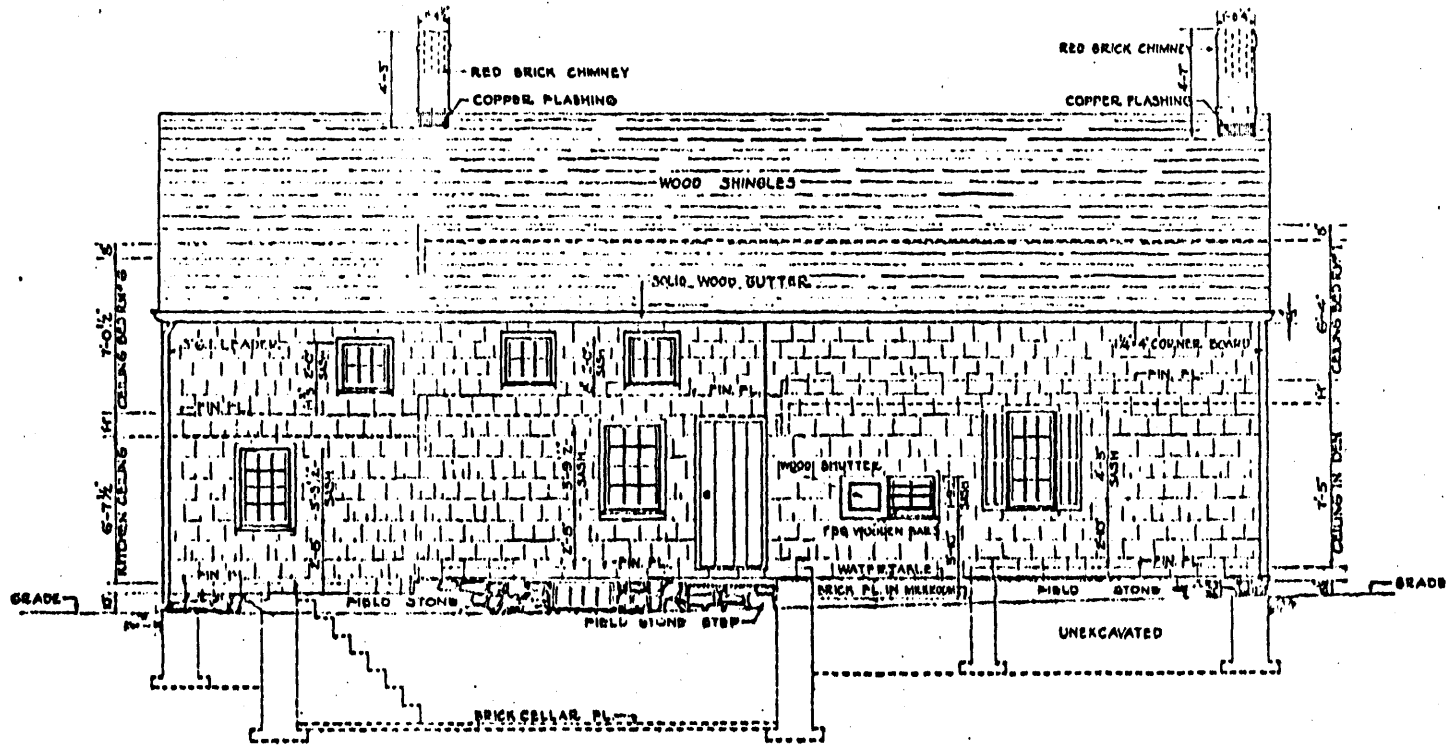


WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
 OFFICIAL PROJECT NO. 10-10-123-500
 UNDER SPONSORSHIP AND SUPERVISORY CONTROL OF THE INTERIOR
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, BRANCH OF PLANS AND DESIGN

NAME OF STRUCTURE
BENJAMIN SHOTWELL HOUSE.
 HAPPY VALLEY LANE, RAPITAN TOWNSHIP, MIDDLESEX COUNTY NEW JERSEY.

DUNSTON NO.
N.J-55

HISTORIC AMERICAN
 BUILDINGS SURVEY
 SHEET 4 OF 9 SHEETS



9/6
Sketch
in
hand

NOTES

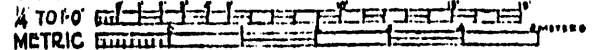
WINDOW GLASS SIZES--FIRST FLOOR--REAR HALL
7'0" x 2'0", STUDY 8'0" x 10'0", MILK ROOM 10'0" x 10'0",
DEN 7'0" x 11'0"
SECOND FLOOR GLASS SIZES 7'0" x 2'0"
CHIMNEYS BUILT OF SOFT RED BRICK LAID
WITH 1/2" LIME MORTAR JOINTS.
ALL EXTERIOR WOOD WORK WHITE PINE.
SHOWN ON THIS ELEVATION ARE ORIGINAL
HAND SPLIT PINE SHINGLES, FASTENED
WITH HAND V. NAIL NAILS.
WOOD SHINGLES

NORTH ELEVATION

DEL.

REGISTRATION

SCALES



BENJAMIN SHOTWELL HOUSE.
LANE PARITAN TOWNSHIP, MIDDLESEX COUNTY, NEW JERSEY.

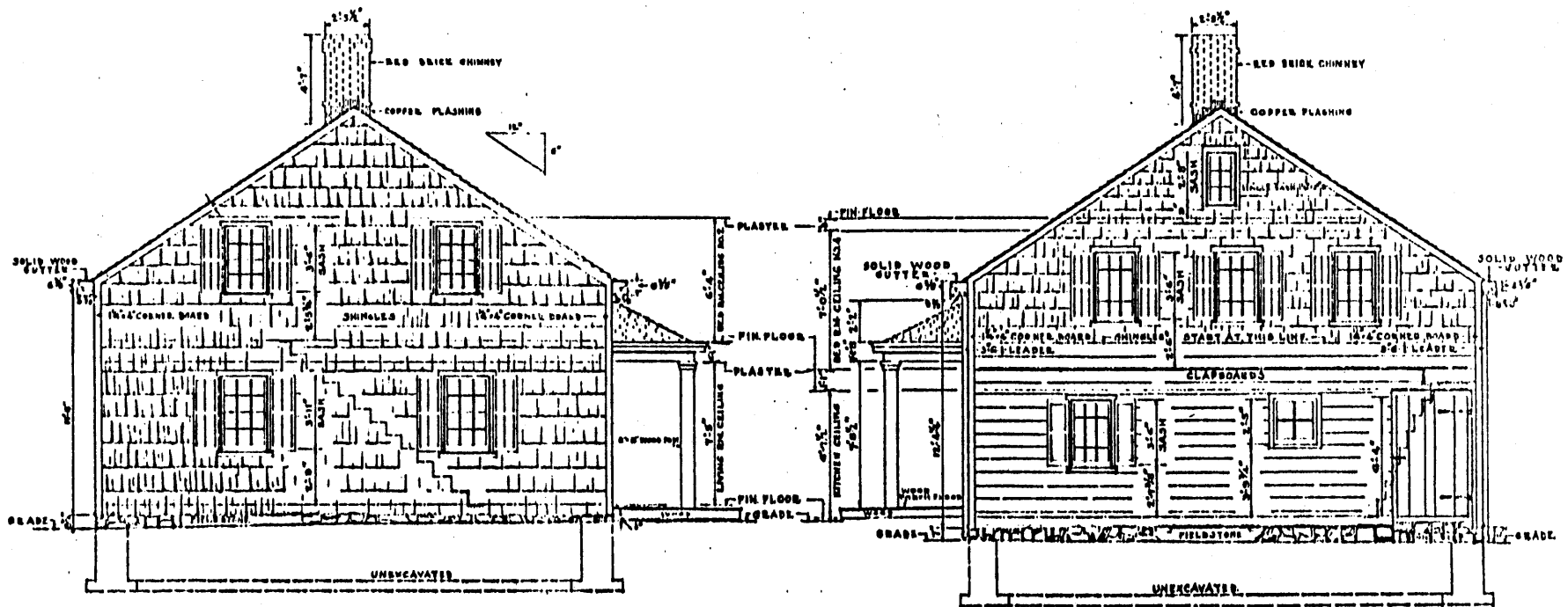


SURVEY NO.
NJ-55

HISTORIC AMERICAN
BUILDINGS SURVEY
SHEET 6 OF 9 SHEETS

1/8\"/>

MAY 6 1987



WEST ELEVATION

EAST ELEVATION

NOTES -
 ALL EXPOSED WOODWORK - WHITE PINE - PAINTED WHITE.
 ORIGINAL HAND SPLIT SHINGLES ON WEST ELEVATION.
 CLAP BOARDS & HAND SPLIT SHINGLES ON EAST ELEVATION.
 GLASS BLOCK IN FLOOR WEST SIDE 1ST FLOOR 7'-0"
 " " EAST SIDE 4th MAIN LEVEL 1ST FLOOR 7'-0"
 " " ATTIC 6'-10"

EMIL BECK DEL.

SCALE:
 1/8" TO 1'-0"
 METRIC EQUIVALENT: _____ METERS

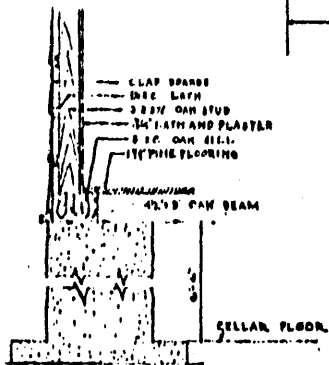
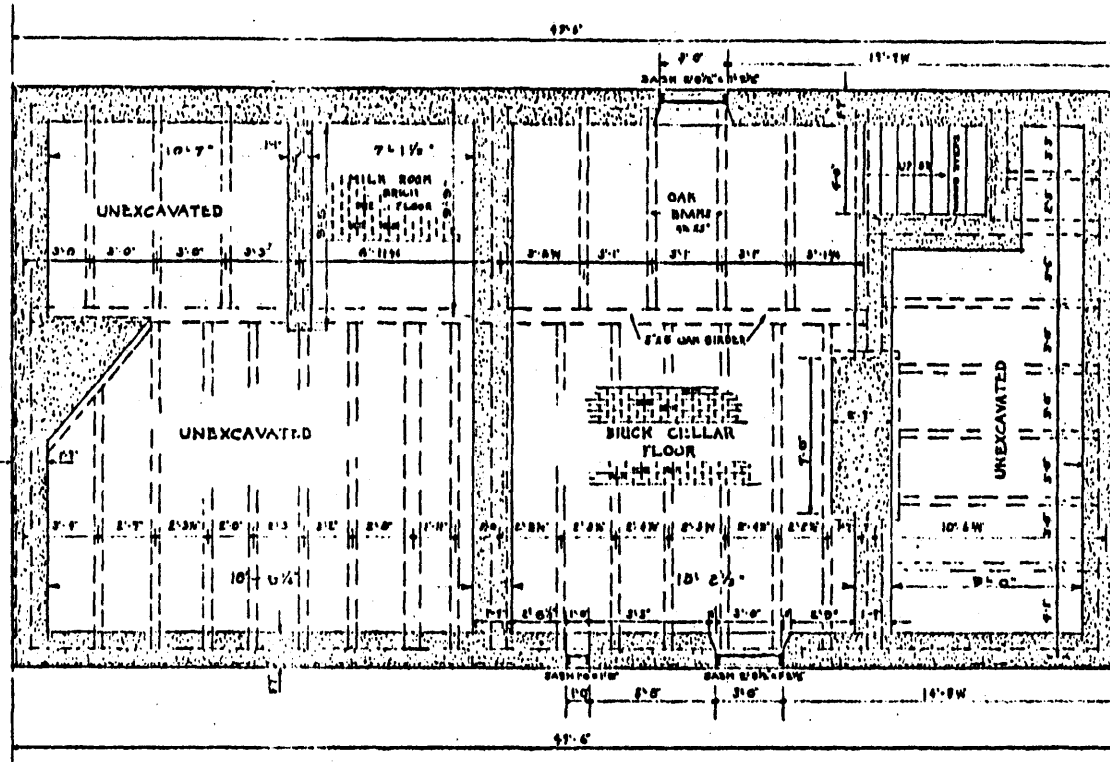
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
 OFFICIAL PROJECT NO. 100-22-6999.
 UNDER DIRECTION OF UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, BRANCH OF PLANS AND DESIGN

NAME OF STRUCTURE
BENJAMIN SHOTWELL HOUSE.
 HAPPY VALLEY LANE, RARITAN TOWNSHIP, MIDDLESEX COUNTY NEW JERSEY.

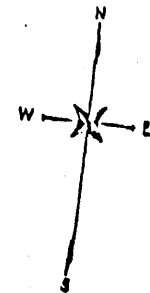
SURVEY NO.
NJ-55

HISTORIC AMERICAN
 BUILDING SURVEY
 SHEET 5 OF 9 SHEETS

MAY 6 1987

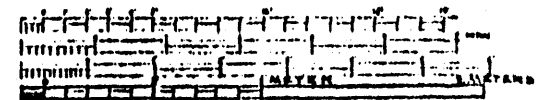


FOUNDATION PLAN



LEGEND
 WOOD [Symbol]
 STONE [Symbol]

SCALES
 1/4" TO 1'-0"
 METRIC
 1/4" TO 1'-0"
 METRIC



NOTES:
 FIELD STONE, LAID IN LIME MORTAR, USED FOR-
 FOUNDATION WALLS
 OAK BEAMS & STUDS MORTISED & PINNED TO-
 SILL & GIRDER.

PETER F. O'ROURKE - DEL.

MAY 6 1987

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
 OFFICIAL PROJECT No-168-EE-6199
 UNDER DIRECTION OF UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, BRANCH OF PLANS AND DESIGN

NAME OF STRUCTURE
BENJAMIN SHOTWELL HOUSE.
 HAPPY VALLEY LANE, RARITAN TOWNSHIP, MIDDLESEX COUNTY, NEW JERSEY.

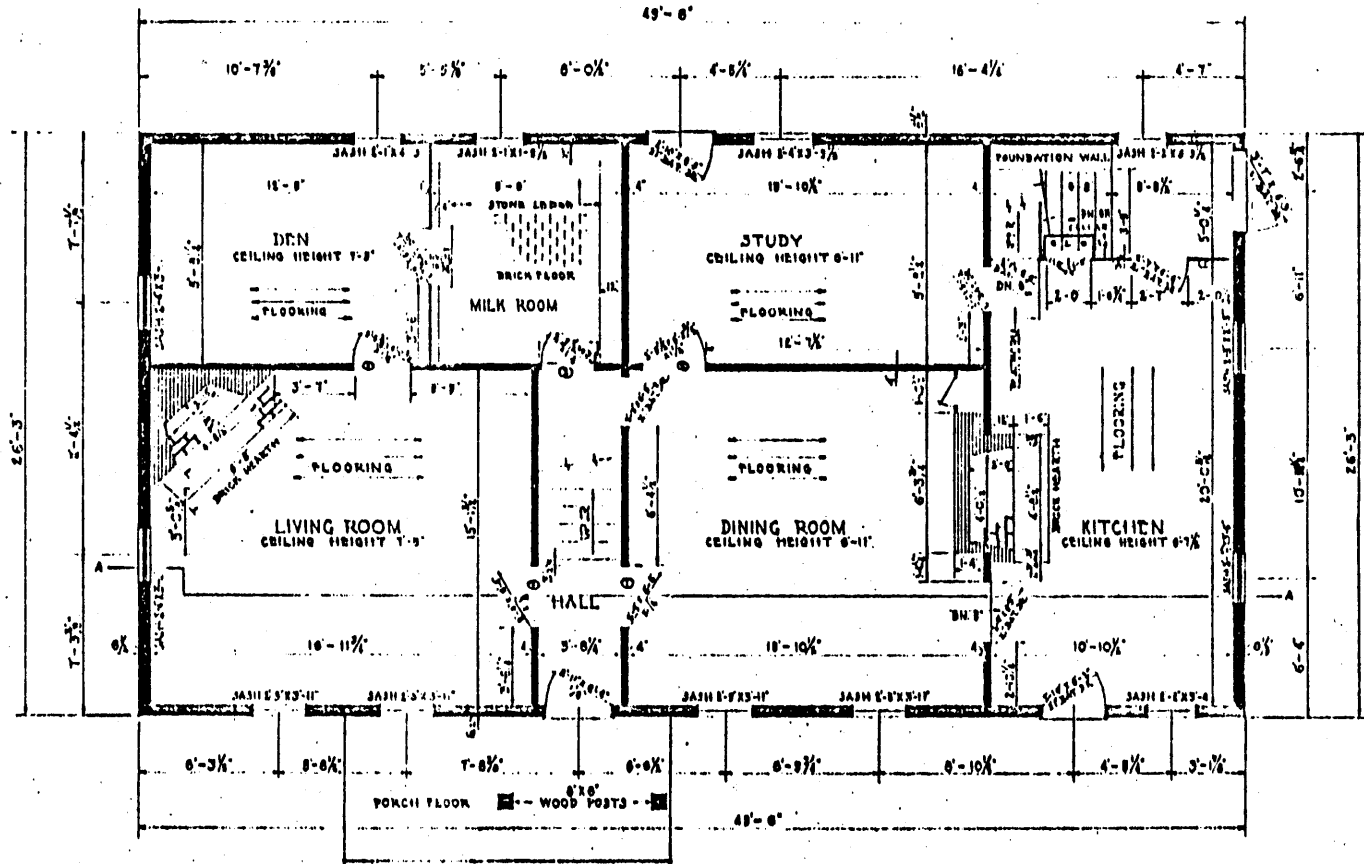


SURVEY NO.
NJ-55

HISTORIC AMERICAN
 BUILDINGS SURVEY
 SHEET 1 OF 9 SHEETS

Sheet of [unclear]
 (OAK BEAM)

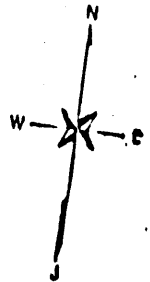
Benjamin Shotwell House
 Edison Township
 Middlesex County, NJ



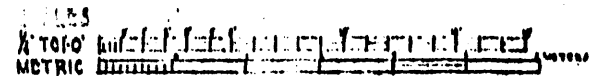
NOTES:
 ALL FLOORING 8" TO 16" WIDE 1/2" WHITE PINE
 EXTERIOR WALLS BRICK FILLED
 OAK TIMBER USED FOR ENTIRE CONSTRUCTION
 ALL JOINTS MORTISED AND PINNED
 DOORS ARE NUMBERED 1, 2, 3 SEE DETAIL SHEET

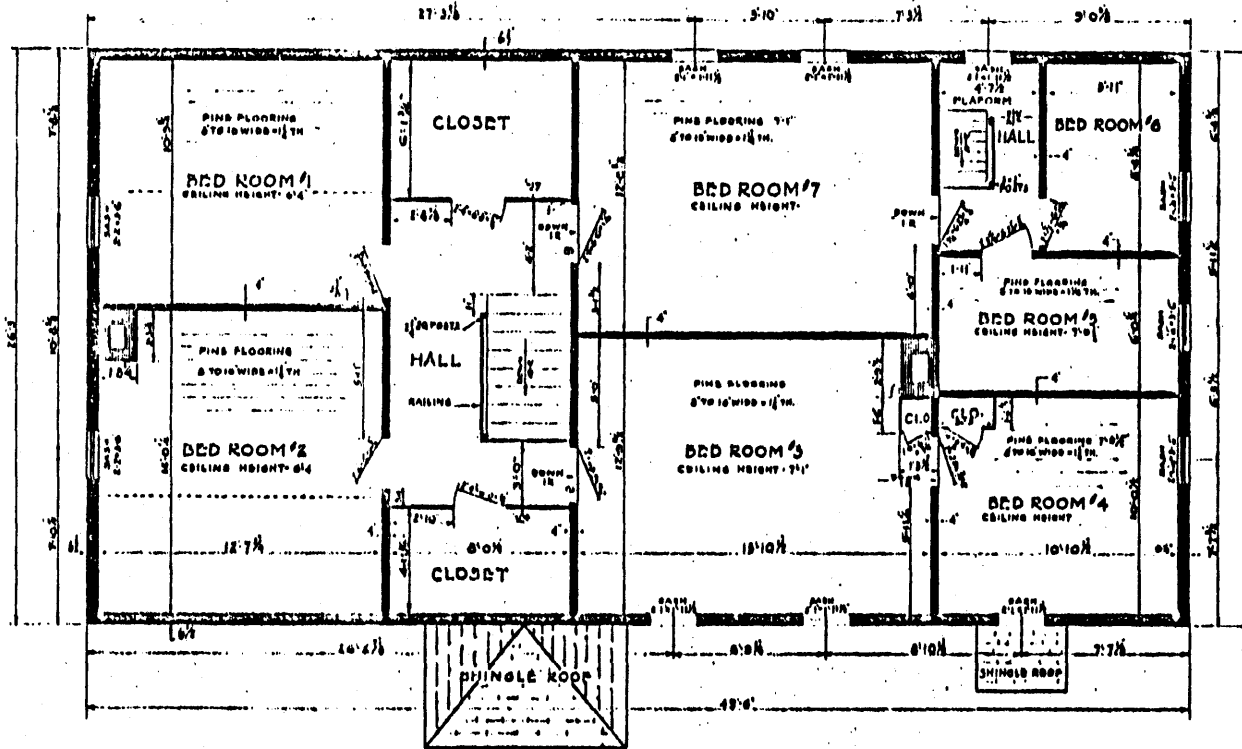
FIRST FLOOR PLAN

WOOD 
 BRICK 



MAY 6 1987

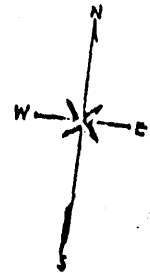




NOTES:

OAK TIMBER USED FOR ENTIRE CONSTRUCTION.
ALL JOINTS MOULDING AND FINISHED.
ALL EXTERIOR WALLS BRICK PIERED.
TRAP DOOR IN CEILING OF HALL AND BED ROOM #4
FOR ACCESS TO ATTIC.
MAIN STAIRWAY AND STAIRWAY OFF BED ROOM #6,
CONSTRUCTED OF WHITE PINE.
ALL DOORS, EXCEPT DOORS FROM HALL TO BED-
ROOMS #1, 2, 7, AND WHITE PINE BATTERY DOORS.

SECOND FLOOR PLAN



LEGEND
WOOD [hatched pattern]
BRICK [cross-hatched pattern]

SCALES
MTO 1"0' [graphical scale]
METRIC [graphical scale]

DANIEL C RUDDIMAN DEL.

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
OFFICIAL PROJECT IND-100-EE-6908
UNDER DIRECTION OF UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, BRANCH OF PLANS AND DESIGN

NAME OF STRUCTURE
BENJAMIN SHOTWELL HOUSE.
HAPPY VALLEY LANE, RARITAN TOWNSHIP, MIDDLESEX COUNTY, NEW JERSEY.

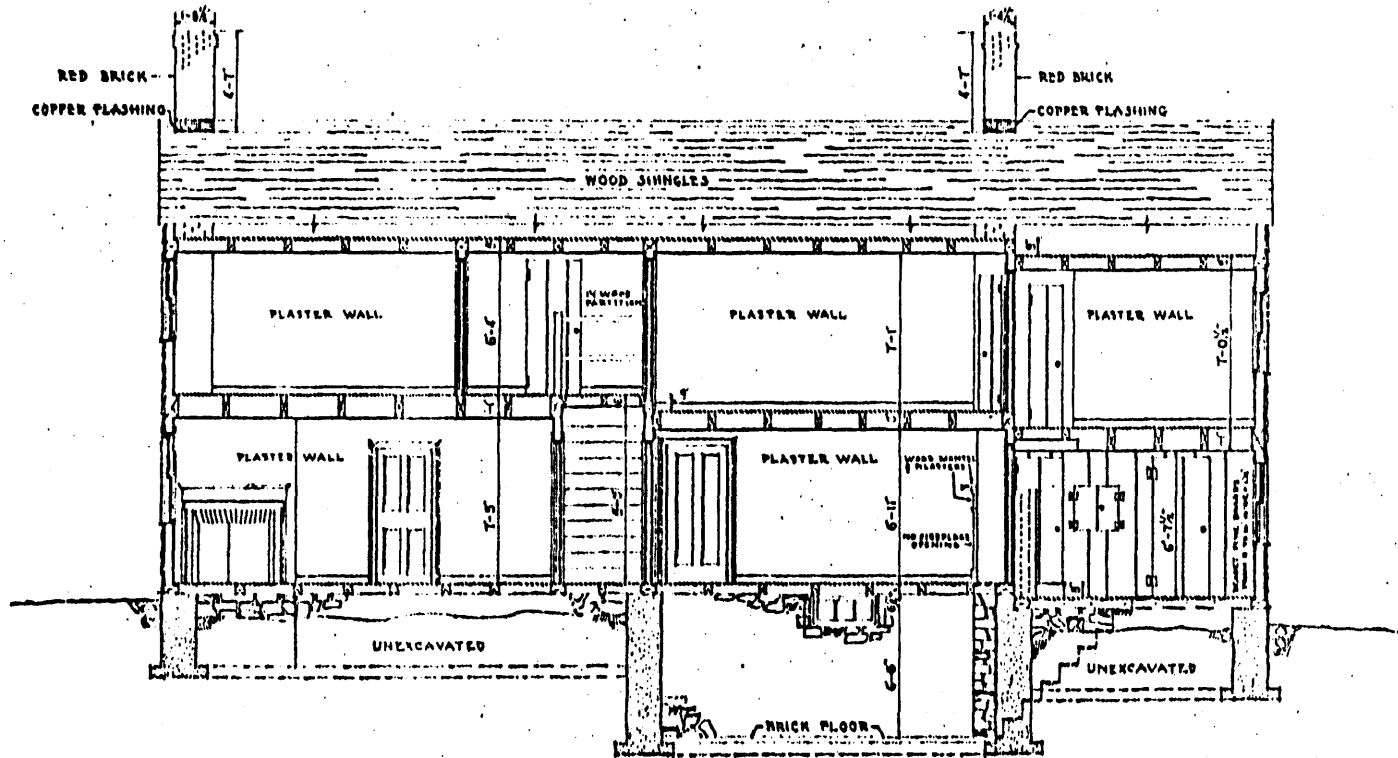


SURVEY NO.
NJ-35

HISTORIC AMERICAN
BUILDINGS SURVEY
SHEET 5 OF 9

APR 6 1987

Benjamin Shotwell House
 Edison Township
 Middlesex County, NJ



NOTES:
 FOUNDATION WALLS CONSTRUCTED OF FIELD STONE,
 LAID IN LIME MORTAR.
 ALL FRAMING TIMBERS OAK, HAND HEWN, MORTISED
 AND PINNED.
 ALL EXTERIOR WALLS FILLED WITH CLAY AND BRICK
 FLOORING, WHITE PINE 2" TO 3" 1/2"
 HEAVY BLACK LINE INDICATES PLASTER; PLASTER ON
 CEILING APPLIED AT A LATER DATE; ALL BRAMS WERE
 ORIGINALLY EXPOSED.

LONGITUDINAL SECTION A-A

MAY 6 1937

SCALES
 1/4" = 1'-0"
 METRIC

REGISTRATION
 100-100-22 6399

BENJAMIN SHOTWELL HOUSE.
 VALLEY LANE, RARITAN TOWNSHIP, MIDDLESEX COUNTY NEW JERSEY

NAME OF STRUCTURE
 SURVEY NO. NJ-53

HISTORIC AMERICAN
 BUILDING SURVEY
 SHEET 7 OF 9 SHEETS

DATE OF DRAWING
 1937