NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 10-90)

OMB No. 1024-0018

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NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Point Robinson Light Station
other names/site number Robinson Point Light Station

2. Location

street & number northeast end of Maury Island in Puget Sound not for publication
city or town Vashon Island vicinity
state Washington code WA county King code 033 zip code

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this ____ nomination ____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property _X___ meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally _X__ statewide ___ locally. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official — Date: 1.9.04

WASHINGTON STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official — Date: 2/27/04

Headquarters, U.S. Coast Guard
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:
_✓_ entered in the National Register
___ See continuation sheet.
____ determined eligible for the National Register
___ See continuation sheet.
____ determined not eligible for the National Register
____ removed from the National Register
____ other (explain): _____

for
Signature of Keeper: Edson H. Beall — Date of Action: 4/21/04

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)
____ private
__ public-local
___ public-State
__X public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)
___ building(s)
_X_ district
___ site
___ structure
___ object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
6		buildings
		sites
2		structures
		objects
6	2	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) __
Light Stations of the United States

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register
__N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)
Cat: __Transportation
Sub: __water-related

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)
Cat: __Transportation
Sub: _water-related

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)
Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals
Classical Revival/Colonial Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)
foundation _concrete
roof _wood shingle, standing seam - top of light, corrugated metal - oil house
walls __concrete – lighthouse; wood – dwellings, garage & barn; metal – oil house
other

Narrative Description:
See Continuation Sheet

8. Statement of Significance

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

__X__ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

_____ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

__X__ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

____ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

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

____ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

____ **B** removed from its original location.

____ **C** a birthplace or a grave.

____ **D** a cemetery.

____ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

____ **F** a commemorative property.

____ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance
See Continuation Sheet

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)
__Maritime History_____
___Transportation_____
___Architecture_____

Period of Significance
____1885–1953_____
_____
_____

Significant Dates
__1885, 1908, 1913_____
__1915, 1919_____
_____

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
_____
_____

Cultural Affiliation
____N/A_____

Architect/Builder
U.S. Lighthouse Service, 13th District
U.S. Lighthouse Board_____

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography: see continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary Location of Additional Data:

_x_ State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State agency
_X_ Federal agency
___ Local government
___ University
___ Other
Name of repository:
_____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 12.93 acres

UTM References

Quadrangles: Des Moines, WA (Reference points 1 and 2) and Vachon, WA (Reference Points 3 and 4)

	Zone	Easting	Northing
1.	10	547205	5248440
2.	10	547360	5248320
3.	10	547060	5247975
4.	10	547060	5248175

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of Point Robinson Light Station Historic District is as follows: Beginning at a point 4356 feet east of the section corner common to Sections 14, 15, 22, and 23, twp 22 N, Rge 3 E, WM, and S 685.50 feet in Sec 23, Twp 22, Rge 3 E to the true point of beginning; thence due east a distance of 434.05 feet; thence due north 905.06 feet to the United States Meander Line; thence S 53 degrees 00 minutes E a distance of 92.0 feet along the afore-mentioned meander line; thence S 39 degrees 00 minutes E a distance of 209.88 feet along afore-mentioned meander line; thence S 45 degrees 00 minutes E a distance of 396.00 feet along afore-mentioned meander line; thence S 30 degrees 00 feet W for a distance of 997.92 feet along afore-mentioned meander line; thence S 66 degrees 30 minutes W a distance of 460.68 feet along afore-mentioned meander line; thence due north a distance of 643.76 feet to the true point of beginning and containing in all 12.93 acres more or less.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries selected are the original boundaries of the Point Robinson Light Station property with the exception of 10.63 acres of the light station's original 23.56 acres that was sold in the 1960s. The verbal boundary description includes all remaining historic buildings that are part of the light station.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title August Gene Grulich and Elizabeth Anderson

organization Grulich Architecture + Planning Services date October 8, 2002

street & number 49 Broadway # 200 telephone 253.272.0007

city or town Tacoma state WA zip code 98402

Additional Documentation

Continuation Sheets

Maps:

"Des Moines, WA" USGS Quadrangle (7.5 minute series, 1949 revised 1995).
"Vachon, WA" USGS Quadrangle (7.5 minute series, 1949 revised 1994).
Sketch map of Point Robinson Light Station historic district.

Photographs

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

Property Owner

name United States Coast Guard, Operations Division, Aids To Navigation Branch
Contact Person in 2002 - John Barberi

street & number 915 Second Avenue telephone (206) 220-7276

city or town Seattle state WA zip code 98174-1067

Narrative Description:

SETTING

Located in the south end of Puget Sound, the Point Robinson Light Station sits at the far eastern tip of Maury Island, Washington. Maury Island is physically connected to the western larger Vashon Island by a narrow land bridge. The site of the station was modified from a marshy lagoon by the introduction of fill dirt, which has raised the area above the mean high tide line. The site is nearly flat with a slight change in elevation from the northern boundary of the light station to the southern tip.

SUMMARY

The Point Robinson Light Station is a group of buildings, which collectively represent the early 20th century functional requirements necessary for a maritime navigational aid. The six contributing buildings at Point Robinson are typical of many light stations throughout the United States. These buildings range in date from the earliest circa 1887 (storehouse/barn and the main section of the assistant keeper's quarters or "Quarters A") to the most recent 1919 (garage). The other buildings include the keeper's quarters or "Quarters B" (1908), the oil house (1913), and the lighthouse (1915).

Since 1919, the light station has retained most of its buildings and has a high level of integrity. With the exception of the lighthouse, which was constructed of cast-in-place concrete, all other buildings are wood framed structures. Of these structures, all have wood siding except for the oil house, which is clad in corrugated metal.

BUILDINGS CONTRIBUTING TO THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DISTRICT

LIGHTHOUSE **Built: 1915**

The 1915 lighthouse is a reinforced concrete structure designed to house a light, fog signal, and accompanying mechanical equipment. This rectangular building has an octagonal tower attached to the landward side (west) of the building. The building rests on a raised concrete base set with concrete pilings. The fog signal portion and equipment room is contained in a one-story building with a gable on hip roof.

The octagonal tower stands 31 feet from grade to the focal plane of the lantern. A projecting octagonal lantern gallery sits atop the tower and is enclosed by a two-tiered metal pipe railing. The lantern, which sits in the center of the gallery, is composed of two sections – a circular metal watch room and a helical glazed upper section. Atop the lantern is a conical metal roof crowned by a vent ball with a spike finial.

The exterior of the lighthouse is coated with a heavy parging placed over the concrete walls. A projecting hood with brackets and projecting lug sills forms the door and window openings. The main entry to the building is through a set of in-swinging stile and rail doors with a single upper glazed light. Above the doors is a transom window of three lights.

There are generally two sizes of double-hung, wood sash window units. The larger windows are located in the engine room of the building, while smaller windows are located on the light tower. The smaller tower windows, as well as one engine room window in the southeast corner, are one-over-one. The larger engine room windows are all two-over-two, with the exception of the window on the façade of the building, which while the same height as the other engine room windows, is narrower and is only one-over-one. The engine room windows have been covered with heavy expanded metal screens for security.

The engine room is accessed by way of a small vestibule at the entrance. Inside the building there is an engine room, a small toilet room, and an access to the light tower. The interior finish of the lighthouse is plaster applied over the concrete structure.

The engine room contains several pieces of equipment necessary for the operation of the light and fog signal. According to the original drawings, equipment similar to that existing in 2002 was installed after the 1915 opening. Equipment was later upgraded in the 1940s.

The existing equipment is placed on mounting brackets that were part of the original construction. The equipment includes: the main compressor, a stand-by compressor, and an emergency generator. The main compressor is a diesel internal combustion engine and an in-line two-cylinder compressor, which provides compressed air to the large overhead storage tank. Air from the storage tank was exhausted through the fog signal (now removed), which was a combination of three large horns projecting through the exterior walls in three directions. The horns measured approximately three feet in diameter at the outer ends. The stand-by compressor is an electricity-driven compressor and also provided compressed air to the overhead storage tank in the event the main one failed. The emergency generator is a diesel internal combustion engine with a generator that provided electricity to the light as well as the stand-by compressor.

Also located within the engine room are several electric switches and controls for the electric service to the building and light. An automatic transfer switch serves as the control between external electricity and electricity from the emergency generator.

The light tower projects into the engine room and a single door provides access to the tower's stair. The interior of the light tower is circular with a winding metal staircase. The interior finish

of the tower is the same plaster over concrete as found in the engine room. A cabinet is located at the base of the tower. The stair leads to two intermediate landings and the lantern gallery. The original (1915) fifth order Fresnel lens remains in operation.

At the first landing, a door separates the upper tower from the tower base. At this location there is access to the attic above the engine room. The attic of the building has a dormer formed by the transition from a hipped roof to a gabled roof with the dormer set into the gable end. Two small windows flank a central louvered vent on the dormer. The roof is wood framed.

Changes Over Time
Changes to the lighthouse have been few and the integrity of the original design has been maintained during the past 87 years. Two changes are noted: first, the large 36 inch diameter fog signal horns that once projected from the building in three locations--north, east, and south--have been removed and the exterior openings have been closed (as evidenced by circular projections in the walls). The second change over time has been the removal of the chimney located above the roofline in the center of the south elevation. The base of the chimney remains, but the upper portion has been removed.

In addition, an emergency light is mounted on a pole on the east side of the lantern gallery.

OIL HOUSE **Built: 1913**
Constructed in 1913 at a cost of $377, the oil house was designed as a simple structure to store oil supplies used to light the lamp of the lighthouse.

The structure is a small wood-framed, single story building. The simple rectangular floor plan measures 8 feet in width by approximately 12 feet in depth. The building rests on a concrete footing and has a concrete slab floor. The building is clad with modern corrugated metal siding (installed in 1980) and has a front facing gable roof. (The original siding was corrugated galvanized iron.) Decorative details on the building are limited to the steel entry door , which boasts ornate strap hinges and a door surround topped by a full entablature. Centered in the frieze is the date 1913 – historic photos show the letters U.S. and L.H. appeared on either side of the date at one time.

The construction drawings of the oil house show the date "1902" inscribed on the building, indicating the oil house was constructed from standard plans. It was one of thirty-eight isolated fireproof structures for the storage of kerosene and other inflammable supplies constructed under

allotments made from the balances existing under appropriations of $10,000 each by acts of May 27, 1908, March 4, 1909, and June 25, 1910.[1]

The roof of the oil house is also corrugated metal with a ridge cap and a central ventilator. Today, the ventilator is a standard modern design and differs from the style shown on the drawings and in historic photographs. A new concrete walk and step are located at the door.

"QUARTERS B" Built: 1908

"Quarters B" is the first of the second generation of buildings at the Point Robinson Light Station. Funds for a second house were first requested in 1897 – "Now that there is a fog signal here an additional keeper is much needed. But the keeper's dwelling is barely sufficient for the present keeper and his family. An additional keeper's dwelling is therefore an urgent necessity." The request was repeated every year until 1905. In that year the request was changed to "The dwelling at this station is arranged for the accommodation of one family, but as there are two keepers employed the quarters are insufficient and a new buildings is urgently needed." In June 1906 an act appropriating $5,000 for a new keeper's dwelling was approved and plans for the structure were made. The *Report of the Light-House Board* for 1907 indicated that bids received for erecting the keeper's dwelling were all in excess of the amount available and thus rejected. A working party and the appropriate materials were landed at the station with the structure to be completed "early in the coming season."[2]

"Quarters B" is a wood framed dwelling with a raised concrete foundation. Rectangular in shape, the main body of the building has a simple side gable roof highlighted by a small gable dormer in the center of the facade. The dormer contains two small windows flanked by pilasters and is capped with a decorative sunburst design in the upper gable end. The roof is covered with wood shingles and is interrupted by a stucco-clad chimney.

The classical inspired dwelling has a covered entry porch with roof supported by two sets of Tuscan wood columns and engaged pilasters. The short columns rest on paneled pedestals, which tie in a simple balustrade and railing. The porch entablature is well defined with classical details of cornice, frieze, and architrave.

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[1] U.S. Lighthouse Service, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Lighthouses to the Secretary of Commerce and Labor for the fiscal year ended June 30, 1915* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1915), p. 92.
[2] U.S. Lighthouse Board, *Annual Report of the Light-House Board of the United States to the Secretary of the Treasury for the fiscal year ended June 30, 1897, 1898, 1899, 1900, 1901, 1902, 1903, 1904, 1905, 1906, 1907* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1897-1907).

The exterior of the dwelling is clad with simple clapboards highlighted by a wide frieze board, corner pilasters and a water table.

Most of the windows are two-over-two, double-hung, wood sash units with lamb's tongue detailed upper sashes. Located in the gable ends are decorative windows composed of a central round arched window flanked by smaller rectangular units forming a "Palladian" composition. Also included in the gable ends are triangular window units designed to follow with the pitch of the roof. These windows are bottom pivoting, inward acting units with muntins radiating in a sunburst motif. The raised basement windows are hopper style, inward tilt, three-pane wood sash units. The dwelling has a double set of entry doors off the porch. These modern wood doors are nine light units. Windows and doors have simple board trim with decorative drip caps.

The interior of "Quarters B" has few decorative features. The original door and window trim can be found throughout. The trim is formed with a central board with an incised bead along the centerline and a decorative incised quarter round detail at the inside and outside edge. The trim is mitered at the head of both doors and windows. At the doors the jamb trim rests on a plinth formed by a simple board with an outside-incised quarter round detail similar to the remaining trim. At the window the side trim terminates at the base with a traditional projecting sill and a decorative apron. The sill is formed by a torus and scotia, which forms a transition to the apron. The apron detail is similar to that of the head and jamb trim with a central incised bead and a quarter round edge.

The interior of "Quarters B" was constructed with plaster on wood lath walls and ceilings and with wood floors. The wall base is an eight-inch baseboard with an ogee cap formed in one piece. In the southern rooms, which were originally the kitchen and dining room, there was wainscoting formed by vertical 3-inch boards capped with a wood trim of similar detail with the door and window trim.

The stair railing and newel post is the most decorative feature of the building's interior. The guardrail at the second floor landing is a decorative one-piece oak member with incised beads on each side. A newel post at the stair landing edge supports the railing. The post is formed in oak with paneled sides, chamfered corners, and a simple cap with a finial formed by incised beads. The spindles are turned.

Changes Over Time

The Coast Guard records indicate several small changes over time, with most changes occurring to the interior, kitchen and bath, and in the electrical and mechanical systems. The original drawings illustrated an open rear porch with lattice screening. This porch has been enclosed and new concrete steps replaced the original wood stairway at the rear of the building.

The most significant change to the building occurred in 1956 when "Quarters B" was converted to duplex quarters. The entry to the building was significantly altered when two entry doors replaced the single door and sidelights. The original door and sidelights were discarded along with the associated trim and replaced with the current two doors and modern door trim.

The conversion to a duplex required the addition of a second kitchen and bathroom as well as changes to various rooms. Interior changes include the removal of some wainscoting in the kitchen areas and the installation of some modern paneling. The conversion also required the installation of new partitions with gypsum wallboard used for walls and the addition of several new doors. The flooring in the kitchens and baths has been changed several times, however the wood floors in most of the other rooms remain. Other changes included those to the mechanical system and the electrical system within the building.

QUARTERS A **Built: Main section dates from 1885/6; moved and enlarged c. 1920s**

A memorandum from the Office of Inspector 17th District to the Commissioner of Lighthouses dated April 10, 1918 indicates that the "old dwelling" at the station – the original 1885 keeper's quarters – was in a "dilapidated and unsanitary condition" and "Several additions which have been out on from time to time are beyond repair." However, the memo goes on to state that "a portion of the original building can be moved and permanent additions and improvements made at a cost of less than a new dwelling."[3]

Sometime later, "Quarters A" was moved and enlarged with an addition to the east doubling its size. Today the building is a one and-one-half story, T-shape wood framed building with a raised concrete basement. The exterior siding is wood shingle without trimmed corners. A broad water table band forms the transition to the concrete foundation.

The gable roof is covered with red painted wood shingles. The windows are a variety of sized one-over-one vinyl single-hung windows with simple trim boards. On the east elevation is a large rectangular picture window installed in 1980. The original windows were four-over-four double-hung wood sashes, which were also changed out in 1980.

[3] Office of Inspector 17th District to Commissioner of Lighthouses, April 10, 1918, RG 26 Entry 50, National Archives.

The front and rear entry doors are modern single light metal doors. On the rear elevation is a small gable dormer, which boasts one double-hung one-over-one window. From photographs in the files of the USCG Historian's office, the dormer was added at some later date.

On the east elevation, facing the water is a large full width entry porch. The porch is covered with a hipped roof supported by four square columns. The columns are formed by 6" x 6" wood posts with chamfered corners. Two-inch blocks with a beveled cap form a simple wood base. Another column feature is the banding at the handrails. The banding gives the appearance of the columns resting on plinths. The balustrade has simple top and bottom rails with 1" x 1" picket banisters. The porch rests on a raised concrete base.

The interior of "Quarters A" is little changed in configuration but has modernized finishes and features. The kitchen and bathroom have received modern cabinets and equipment. Floor coverings are modern; and the modern vinyl windows installed in 1980 have replacement trim. "Quarters A" functions as a modern rental house today.

GARAGE **Built: 1919**

The earliest site map to indicate a road to Point Robinson was drawn in 1917. The map indication is that of a "roadway" ascending the bluff to the west of the station. According to Coast Guard records the garage was constructed in 1919.

The building is a simple rectangular form with a gable roof. The garage has one bay with a large modern roll-up door at the north elevation. On the south elevation is a single four-paneled entry door. The east and west elevations have a single rectangular six pane fixed window. In the north and south gable ends is a small rectangular vent. The garage has painted wood shingle siding without corner trim boards. The roof composition is red shingles. The rafters are square cut and the soffits are boxed. The interior of the garage is exposed wood framing. The floor is a concrete slab. A small wood planked section in the floor may conceal a service pit for vehicle maintenance. With the exception of the garage doors, there appears to have been no other significant changes to the building since its construction in 1919.

STOREHOUSE/BARN **Built: 1887**

The storehouse/barn is a two-story wood framed building with a gable roof. The building is raised above the ground level on concrete piers and has a simple rectangular shape without projecting bays, dormers, etc. The exterior finish is a drop cedar siding with trimmed corner boards. The roof is wood shingle, replaced in 2001 and painted red.

The building has a variety of door and window types. On the east elevation is a pair of swinging plywood doors, capped with a three light, transom window; a large, square opening currently

covered with plywood, is located above the swinging doors and provided access to the haymow. On the south elevation is an original six-over-six double-hung wood window and fixed six-pane window. On the rear or west elevation is a six-over-six double-hung wood window on the upper level and two non-original metal sliding windows on the lower level. The north elevation displays a modern overhead garage door and an original four-over-four double-hung wood window. The door and window trim is simple 1 x 4 boards.

The interior of the storehouse/barn is unfinished with exposed studs, plates, and joists. The building is balloon-framed with the haymow floor joists supported by the studs that are secured by side nailing. The floors are wood planks and the underside of the haymow is exposed.

NON-CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURES

Within the vicinity of the lighthouse and oil house there are several elements linked to modern communications for the Coast Guard. These include a large antenna tower and a fenced compound of equipment containing another antenna tower and four equipment modules. The large antenna is a simple metal tower rising out of an octagonal fenced area. The tower has a single point base and is stabilized by three guy anchors. The antenna is located approximately 150 feet north northwest of the lighthouse. The equipment compound is located approximately 100 feet to the south-southwest of the lighthouse and includes the second antenna tower and several enclosed equipment modules within a chain link fenced perimeter. The compound also contains a triangular based tower. At the top of the tower is a platform on which is mounted a revolving structure resembling a radar antenna.

In addition, modern chain link fencing encloses various parts of the light station including the keepers' quarters, storehouse, and garage. Historic photos show wooden frame with metal screen fencing enclosing the keepers' dwellings.

These elements are of modern construction and are not linked to the historic light station.

Narrative Statement of Significance:

Summary

The Point Robinson Light Station is historically significant under Criterion C as an exceptionally complete assemblage of early 1900s light station buildings. The design and construction of the buildings are typical products of the system of government design and construction of navigational aids and support buildings in the Pacific Northwest from the late 1800s through the early twentieth century. Additionally the light station is historically significant under Criterion A for its direct association with the maritime history of Puget Sound.

As one of three early pivotal points of navigation upon which maritime traffic in Puget Sound relied, Point Robinson Light Station is related directly to the transportation and economy of the Pacific Northwest. Today the station has retained its integrity of location, setting, design, feeling and association. Each of the six contributing buildings has retained a high degree of integrity of materials and workmanship. The interior of the lighthouse at Point Robinson is one of the most intact in the Pacific Northwest containing much of the equipment once employed in the operation of the light and fog signal prior to automation. Additionally, with the exception of the boathouse, Point Robinson has retained all of the buildings that were important to the function of an early 20th century light station.

The Engineering Office of the 13th (later 17th) Lighthouse District in Portland, Oregon designed the lighthouse, keepers' quarters, and oil house. This office produced construction documents for navigational aids throughout the Northwest including those for Admiralty Head, Burrows Island, Gray's Harbor, North Head, Cape Disappointment, Patos Island, and Point Wilson. Some of the designs produced by the Portland engineer's office, such as those for the keepers' quarters and oil house at Point Robinson, were used in more than one location -- similar buildings are found at different locations around the Puget Sound including Brown's Point and New Dungenesse.

The Pacific Northwest and Aids to Navigation

As early as 1849 the U.S. Congress authorized a survey of the coasts of the Oregon Territory and California for lighthouse sites. In the Northwest, allocations were made in response to the vastly expanded U.S. territory, increased shipping activity, and a concurrent increase in navigational mishaps and loss of vessels, property, and lives.

Narrative Statement of Significance: (cont'd)

By the 1880s, the Washington Territory had a rapidly growing railroad and marine infrastructure accessing its outstanding natural resources. It was during this time that the future state experienced a huge population growth. Between 1880 and 1890 the population expanded from 75,116 to 349,390, an increase of 365%. President Benjamin Harrison formally declared Washington's statehood in November of 1889. Among federal services to the newly established state was funding for navigational aids to guide shipping to and from the ports of Puget Sound. Along with Oregon and California, the Puget Sound area benefited from investments in aids to navigation, with fog signals, lighthouses, buoys, and tenders to haul supplies and personnel to the isolated light stations.

The geography of Point Robinson made it an essential navigational marker for shipping to traverse Puget Sound to major ports in Seattle and Tacoma, as well as to numerous smaller harbors. The *U.S. Coast Pilot*, 34th edition, 2002, notes: "Robinson Point, the easternmost end of Maury Island and major turning point in the passage, is a low spit projecting 140 yards from the wooded highland. Robinson Point Light (47° 23.3'N, 122° 22.5'W.), 40 feet above the water, is shown from a 38-foot white octagonal tower on the point; a fog signal is at the station."

The deep channel here makes a critical 90-degree turn around a long low reach of land, and ships must make that turn to safely navigate all the way into the south sound. By the 1880s there was plenty of reason for making the journey into the southern reaches of Puget Sound. Lumber had been exported from that area to support the phenomenal growth of San Francisco since the 1850s. The territorial capitol had been established at Olympia and the Northern Pacific Railroad had established its early headquarters, yards, and warehouses at Tacoma. Ships entering the inland waterway from the Strait of Juan de Fuca locate the lane down Puget Sound by passing between Point Wilson (light station established 1879) at the northern end of the Olympic Peninsula and Admiralty Head (1860/1903) on Whidbey Island. To safely come down Puget Sound, the navigator must locate Point No Point (1879), West Point (1881), and Point Robinson-- the three major navigational sites along the shipping channel. The U.S. Lighthouse Board had planned these three locations before 1882. According to this plan, ships would be able to maintain visual contact with at least two light stations while traveling through northern and central Puget Sound. Several other light stations were added along this channel as time went on. They still stand at Brown's Point, marking the entrance to Commencement Bay and Tacoma, and at Alki Point, marking the south entrance to Seattle's Elliot Bay.

Narrative Statement of Significance: (cont'd)

Point Robinson Light Station

The first mention of the Point Robinson (or Robinson's Point as it was then called) in the reports of the Light-House Board was in 1879:

> *This prominent point, next in importance to West Point or Sandy Point, is located on the northeast end of Maury Island, Puget's Sound, about 12 miles north of New Tacoma, the prospective terminus of the main Northern Pacific Railroad, and the present terminus of the branch of that road connecting Puget's Sound with the Columbia River at Kalama. A 10-inch fog-whistle is needed for this station. It will cost $7,000. An appropriation of that amount is accordingly recommended*[1].

In September of 1882, R. Heber Thomson surveyed the land at Point Robinson for the 13th Lighthouse District. At the time, the 23-acre site was not much more than a high bank with a low triangular outcrop of land containing a salt marsh and pond bounded by drift logs and a gravelly beach. Thomson's survey map indicates that there was a fog signal building and watershed planned for the beach at the water's edge.

On June 27, 1884 the deed for the property was transferred to the Lighthouse Board from Mary Elizabeth Webster, *"...for fog-signal station at Point Robinson."* The standard language in the deed includes *"...together with all the tenements, heriditaments and appurtenances thereunto belonging."* The real estate cost to the Board was $1000.00.

Accordingly, the U.S. Lighthouse Board established the "Point Robinson fog-signal" in 1885 with a 12-inch steam whistle to warn that this was the turning point – the easternmost extent of Vashon-Maury Island and a low, sandy spit for shipping to clear and not run aground. The fog signal equipment was housed in a one-story frame building. Adjacent to the fog signal building was a watershed with cisterns to collect water for the steam whistle. The plan for the "Fog Signal House for Robinson's Point", which may have been a standardized plan used at several locations, is dated 1882. It shows a central boiler room and storeroom flanked by two fuel rooms

[1] U.S. Lighthouse Board, *Annual Report of the Light-House Board of the United States to the Secretary of the Treasury for the fiscal year ended June 30, 1879* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1879).

Narrative Statement of Significance: (cont'd)

for storage of wood for the boiler, however photographs of the building, as built, show only one fuel room constructed. The *Report of the Light-House Board* for 1885 states that the fog-signal building was a one-story wood frame construction with the main part measuring 36 x 16 feet, divided into a boiler room 27 x 16 feet in plan and a storage room 9 x 16 feet in plan with an addition 20 x 16 feet in plan for fuel. Equipment housed in the building consisted primarily of a boiler and steam compressor. The wooden building and whistle remained in use until the integrated light tower and fog-signal building were activated in 1915.

The water shed associated with the fog signal building consisted of two brick cisterns 17 feet in diameter beneath a V-shaped shingle roof that collected rainwater and channeled the water into the cisterns. The cisterns were approximately six feet in depth with the lower three feet below grade. Archeological investigation may determine more about the construction of the cisterns.

The first keeper's dwelling was also completed by June of 1885. Located 630 feet south from the signal building it was a one and a half story frame building, 20 x 30 feet in plan, with a one-story addition on the north side measuring 12 x 16 feet. The outside walls were covered in rustic siding and painted white and the roofs were shingled and painted brown. A 4 1/2 foot wide porch extended across the front and along the north side to the one-story addition. A brick cistern, 14 feet in diameter and 4 1/2 feet deep was located on the south side of the dwelling and was filled from the roofs of the dwelling. Work was suspended at the station on June 3 and a watchman was left in charge. The first keeper – Franklin Tucker – was due to arrive the middle of the same month.[2]

A number of improvements were made to the site in the early years. The *Report of the Light-House Board* for 1886 states that the filling of the lagoon by hydraulic sluicing from the bluff bank as well as the construction of a large bulkhead around the spit had commenced. In addition the fence that had been removed from around the dwelling was replaced and the barn raised about 1 foot. Work continued on the filling of the lagoon and the bulkhead was completed the following year enclose an overall area of about 4 1/2 acres. The *Report of the Light-House Board* for 1887 reported "Grass seed was sown over the ground, and it now has a good start. The work has made a great improvement in the station."

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[2] U.S. Lighthouse Board, *Annual Report of the Light-House Board of the United States to the Secretary of the Treasury for the fiscal year ended June 30, 1885* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1885) and Registers of Lighthouse Keepers 1845-1912, M-1373, National Archives.

Narrative Statement of Significance: (cont'd)

While initially planned as a fog-signal station, Point Robinson became a light station as well. What the original light signal was is difficult to discern from the historical evidence. An index to U.S. Lighthouse Board correspondence at the National Archives indicates that a recommendation was made for the establishment of a stake light in connection with the fog signal as early as April of 1885.

A light signal was in place by June 30, 1894, as the *Report of the Light-House Board* reports the first change to the light -- the lens lantern was partially obscured by the dwelling and was thus raised 5 1/2 feet. Three years later, in 1897, the light was a lens lantern atop a wooden tower -- the first of two wooden towers that preceded the current concrete lighthouse and fog-signal building, replaced the light. It had a square base of approximately 10 feet on each side and vertical post supports with cross bracing and a central support for the light. A steep stairway, which started outside of the tower from a short enclosed platform, ran up to a small landing two-thirds of the way up the tower where a second flight of stairs gave access to the enclosed lantern deck. This tower was replaced with a new open-framed wooden tower in about 1907. In the "Description of Buildings, Premises, Equipment, Etc. at Robinson Point Light-Station, Washington" dated February 26, 1910, this second tower is described as being pyramidal -- 11 feet square at the base and 7 feet at the parapet. Constructed of wood, the "skeleton tower" was painted white and had three stairway landings. It was topped by a lens lantern 22 inches square with a red fixed light.[3] The tower was removed shortly after the concrete lighthouse became operational in 1915.

A light signal was in place by January 1, 1890 -- the Lights of the United States for that year listed the order of light as "Tub'lar lantern" on a white stake exhibiting a fixed red light 30 feet above sea level. By June 30, 1894, the Report of the Light-House Board reports the first change to the light -- the lens lantern was partially obscured by the dwelling and was thus raised 5 1/2 feet. Then in December of 1910, Mr. H.B. Bowermand and Mr. E.C. Gillette took office as the first Chief Constructing Engineer and first Superintendent of Naval Construction, respectively. This marked a new era of construction of lighthouses.

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[3] Form 60, "Description of Buildings, Premises, Equipment, Etc., at Robinson Point Light-Station, Washington, February 26, 1910, 13th Lighthouse District, RG 26, National Archives.

Narrative Statement of Significance: (cont'd)

At Point Robinson, the fog signal and light were combined into a single building. The new building, constructed late in 1914 and commissioned in 1915, was sited between the earlier wooden fog signal building and the wooden light tower. In making a request for the new lighthouse, the Office of the Lighthouse Inspector 17th District stated "Mariners have recently requested the establishment of a flashing light here" and "The President of the Puget sound Navigation Co. has written and urged that the light at Point Robinson be improved ..."[4] Drawings for the construction show the initials "G.K." as the lighthouse designer or draftsman in the signature line. Plans for light stations in Washington State often show different signatures or initials for the various buildings, but the initials "G.K." are not identified on the other plans for Point Robinson Light Station. The new building was constructed of concrete as a single room with the lighthouse tower. The room housed operational equipment, and still does hold more recent equipment. The mechanical equipment has been removed from other lighthouses in the Puget Sound region, and the presence of operation equipment offers a more accurate view of an operational lighthouse at Point Robinson than does the cleared rooms of other lighthouses on Puget Sound.

The lighthouse became operational in 1915. The light, at 31 feet above grade, originally displayed a fourth order flashing lens. Sometime after May of 1918, when a reliable source of electric energy was available to power the light, the lens was replaced with a fifth order fixed Fresnel lens with a white electric occulting light. A recommendation letter submitted to the Bureau states that the illuminating apparatus in use was of greater intensity than required at Point Robinson and recommended transferring it to the Lime Kiln installation.[5]

Fresnel lenses had been the choice for concentration and direction of light since the mid-1800s. Invented by the French physicist Augustin Jean Fresnel, the "lens" for lighthouse uses was actually a multiple array of lenses and prisms surrounding the light source. With the Fresnel optic arrangement directing light, as much as eighty percent of the light from a central source could be transmitted over twenty miles out to sea. The multiple-component Fresnel lens could be built in one location, disassembled, and safely shipped in small sections, and installed even in the confines of a lantern room at the top of a lighthouse tower.

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[4] "Recommendation as to Aids to Navigation, Office of the Lighthouse Inspector, 17th District to the Commissioner of Lighthouses, August 7, 1914, RG26 Entry 50, National Archives.

[5] Office of the Inspector, 17th District to the Commissioner of Lighthouses, May 4, 1918, RG 26 Entry 50, National Archives.

Narrative Statement of Significance: (cont'd)

Several possibilities of flash patterns are possible through adjustments in the spacing of the lenses. With placement of colored glass panels in front of the lenses, a single light could also be made to flash different colors within the sequence. This was a tremendous benefit in situations in which multiple lighthouses were spaced along a shoreline, as in Puget Sound. When each light has its own signature combination of flash rate and color, mariners can exactly pinpoint their location at night by triangulating against the known location of the lights.

A fifth order lens was one of the smallest lens with a height of only 1 foot, 8-inches as compared to the first and second orders which were 7 feet, 10-inches and 6 feet, 1-inch respectively. Fifth order lens were typically used in river navigational lights to mark small shoals and islands in sounds such as Point Robinson, and to mark breakwaters.

The first light source for the lens at Point Robinson was an oil-burning lamp. Weights hanging down into the tower were wound by the lighthouse keeper and made the lamp rotate as the weights descended. The signal of the light in 1915 was three white flashes every ten seconds, and the visibility was 12 miles in clear weather. When the lens was changed, the signal became two flashes every twelve seconds, or more precisely a three second flash followed by a one second eclipse, then a three second flash followed by a five second eclipse. Point Robinson Light is one of only a few lighthouses on the Washington Coast and in Puget Sound that still uses the Fresnel lens as its main operational light.

Along with the Fresnel lens, small boats were an essential part of the equipment at Point Robinson Light Station, where the only access to supplies for building or daily activities was from the water. Today, Vashon-Maury Island still has no bridge access, and automobile traffic comes and goes by ferry. Although the island has limited access, it is only a few miles across the sound to Tacoma and other urban areas and thus for the lighthouse keepers and their families, the isolation of the station could be relieved more easily than at many stations. A boathouse at Point Robinson was built sometime after April 1918 most likely at the same time the 1885 keeper's dwelling was moved and enlarged as the structure occupies the latter's spot. This wooden building measured approximately 30 x 18 feet and was demolished sometime after 1944. The remaining concrete slab and connecting walks give evidence of the location of the boathouse.

Before the light was automated, it was essential to have personnel on-site to tend the lamp and fire up the fog whistle (and later horn) during the frequent mists and fogs of the central Sound.

Narrative Statement of Significance: (cont'd)

The station began operation with only one keeper but an assistant keeper was added by 1902. However, despite repeated requests from the Lighthouse Board, money was not appropriated for a second dwelling until 1906. In 1908 a second keeper's dwelling, "Quarters B", was completed in the Classical Revival style favored by government agencies at that time. The style of the building is typical of government buildings of the period and of lighthouse keeper's dwellings in the area. The plans were used as a pattern for similar structures built in the Northwest as "Quarters B" is identical to the keeper's quarters found at Brown's Point, at the mouth of Commencement Bay. Design and construction documents for Pacific Northwest light stations built from Northern California to Alaska in the late 1800s and early 1900s were produced by the Engineers Office of the 13th (later 17th) Lighthouse District in Portland, Oregon.

While records of the families of the lighthouse keepers have yet to be found what is known are the names and some biographical information on early lighthouse keepers and assistants. Keepers at Point Robinson included Franklin Tucker from June 25, 1885 to November 2, 1887; Charles H. Davis from November 2, 1887 to January 31, 1900 – one of the longest appointed keeper at Point Robinson; Axel Rustad from January 31, 1900 to March 22, 1900 and Gustaf Anderson from April 1,1900 to the early part of 1910. Assistant keepers included Frank E. Wyman from May 1, 1900 to January 14, 1903; Charles E. Baker from January 16, 1903 to August 27, 1903; J. Dumphy; Charles Juston; Charles E. Atherton (who would be appointed keeper after Gustaf Anderson departed); Frank Habble, and William H. Taylor. The *Report of the Commissioner of Lighthouses* for fiscal year 1916 indicates that a W.S. Denning was the keeper and S.B. Morris was the assistant keeper. These men in the course of their work came to the rescue of a family in a disabled boat near the station. From correspondence found at the National Archives, Denning remained keeper as late as 1929 and William H. Froggatt was reported as the assistant keeper in 1935.

Over the years the keepers and their families constructed several small functional buildings at Point Robinson for use. Historic photographs and station journals indicate the presence of a chicken house and yard, a fruit locker, a paint and carpenter shop, a pump house and wooden water storage tank, and a couple of garages in addition to the 1919 garage that exists today. A plot of land near the dwelling was at one time fenced off for a garden.

In the late 1930s the Works Progress Administration was employed to sluice dirt from the hill behind the lighthouse to fill in the marsh, which was reported to breed mosquitoes and add more

Narrative Statement of Significance: (cont'd)

beachfront to Point Robinson. A hand written note on correspondence regarding the project states: "Rec this be done. This situation has been a problem at Robinson Point for years ... this recommendation would remove a menace to health at this station.[6] They also built an erosion control feature using large rocks at the shoreline.

In 1939 the Lighthouse Service was disbanded and all navigational aids were added to the responsibilities of the U.S. Coast Guard. Under the jurisdiction of the Coast Guard several changes took place at Point Robinson. Circa 1960 11 acres at Point Robinson was declared surplus property and eventually transferred to King County to be used as a park. In 1978, the Coast Guard automated the lighthouse and the last resident keepers left the station in the late 1980's. Later, the Coast Guard began negotiations to outlease the buildings, and in 1997, the Vashon Park District obtained a permit to use the light station for museum purposes.

In addition, over the last 20 years, the Coast Guard has placed several antennae and other structures on and around the light station. The radar tower is one of several facilities around Puget Sound that are linked to the U.S. Coast Guard control center at Pier 36 in Seattle. In 1998 licenses for wireless antenna and permits for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association and Western Administrative Support Center for a 21-foot mast for recording scientific information at Point Robinson were issued. These structures are considered noncontributing to the historic significance of the light station.

In closing, the Point Robinson Light Station is an almost completely intact example of a Pacific Northwest light station, which includes the lighthouse and the domestic and functional buildings that supported it. The lighthouse itself contains equipment from the period before the automation of operation and still uses the Fresnel lens to direct the light signal. The degree of preservation of the entire building complex found at Robinson Point is rare in the Puget Sound area and in Washington State. All of the remaining buildings at Point Robinson Light Station, along with the evidence of those that have been removed or covered over are necessary to understand the functioning of the light station in the decades prior to automation.

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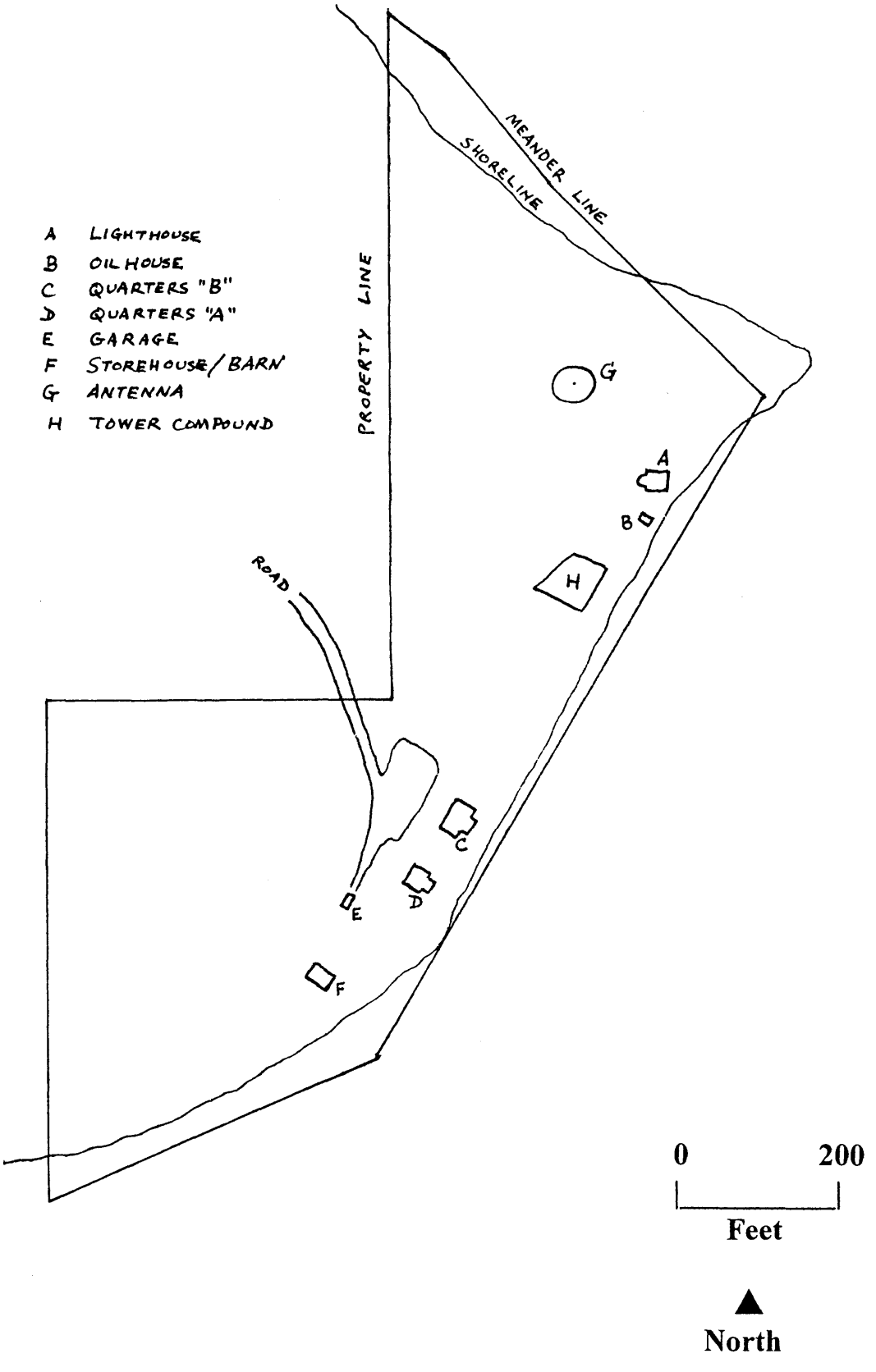
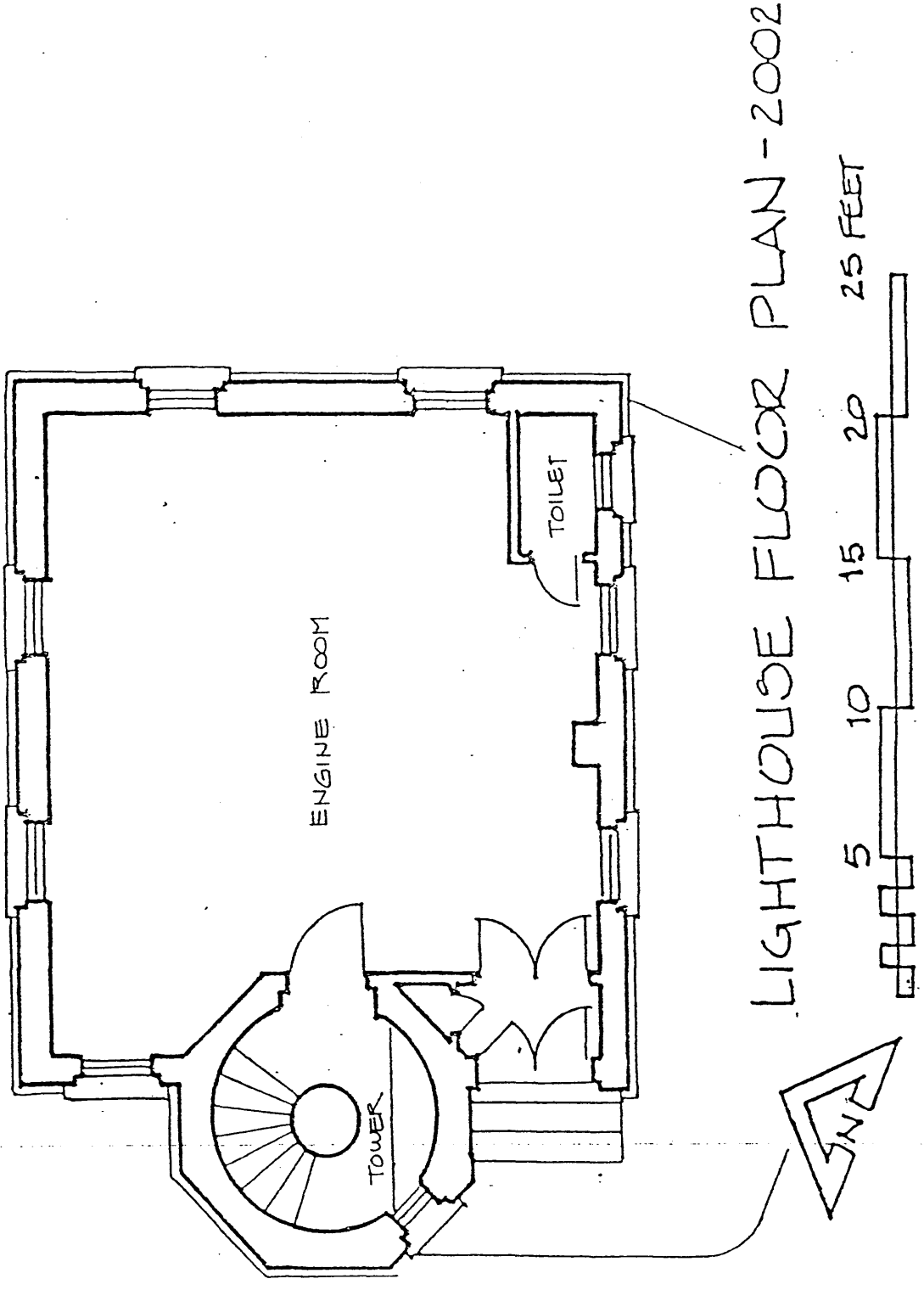
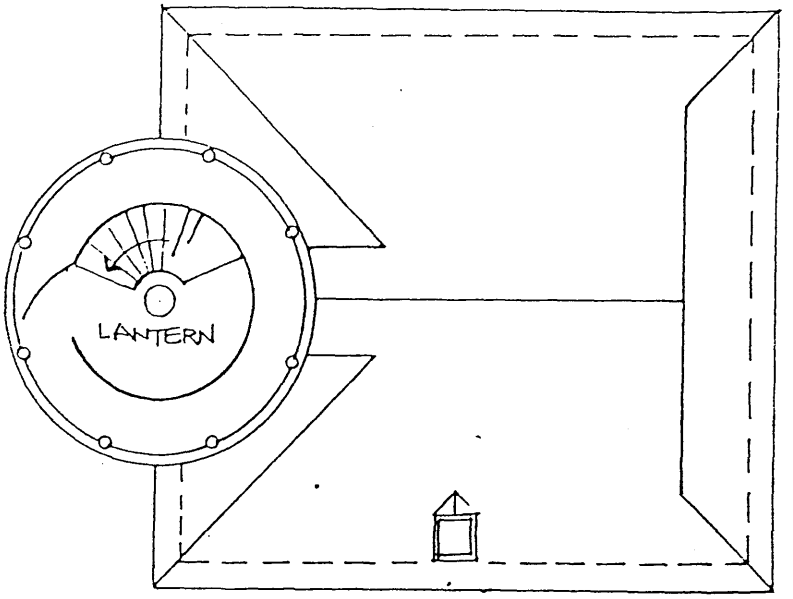
[6] E.C. Merrill, Superintendent of Lighthouses to Commissioner of Lighthouses, May 26, 1938, RG 26, National Archives.

POINT ROBINSON LIGHT STATION DISTRICT KING COUNTY, WA

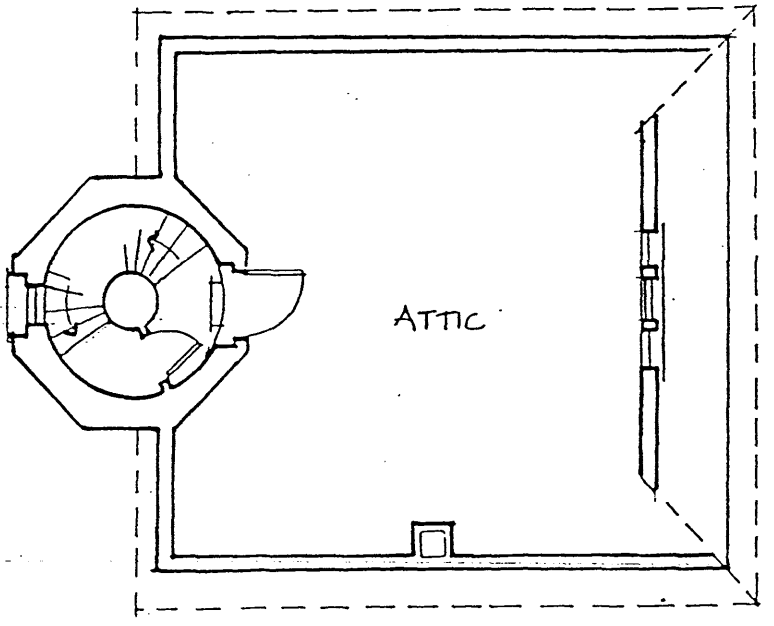




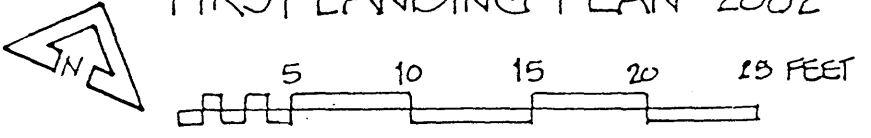
Floor Plan of Lighthouse.

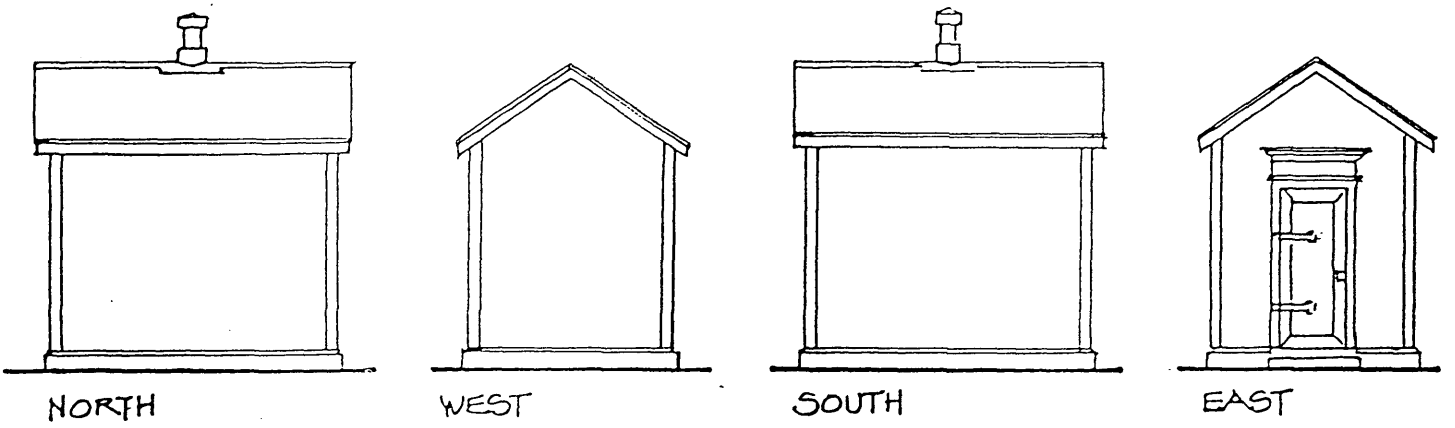


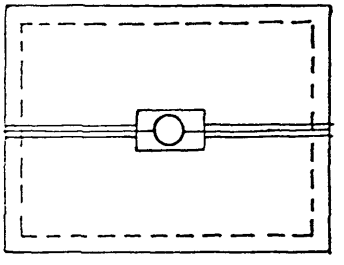
LANTERN PLAN - 2002



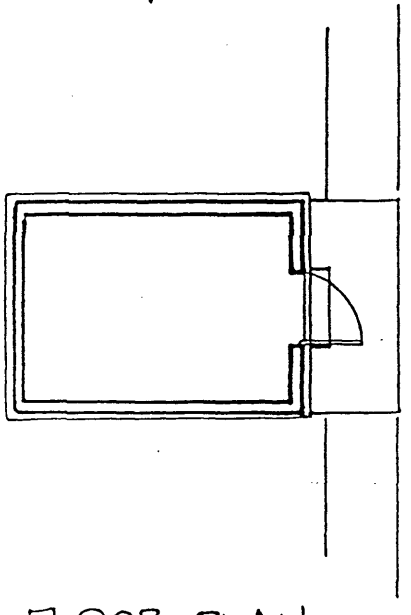
FIRST LANDING PLAN - 2002



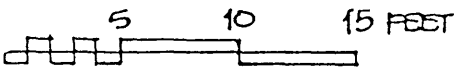


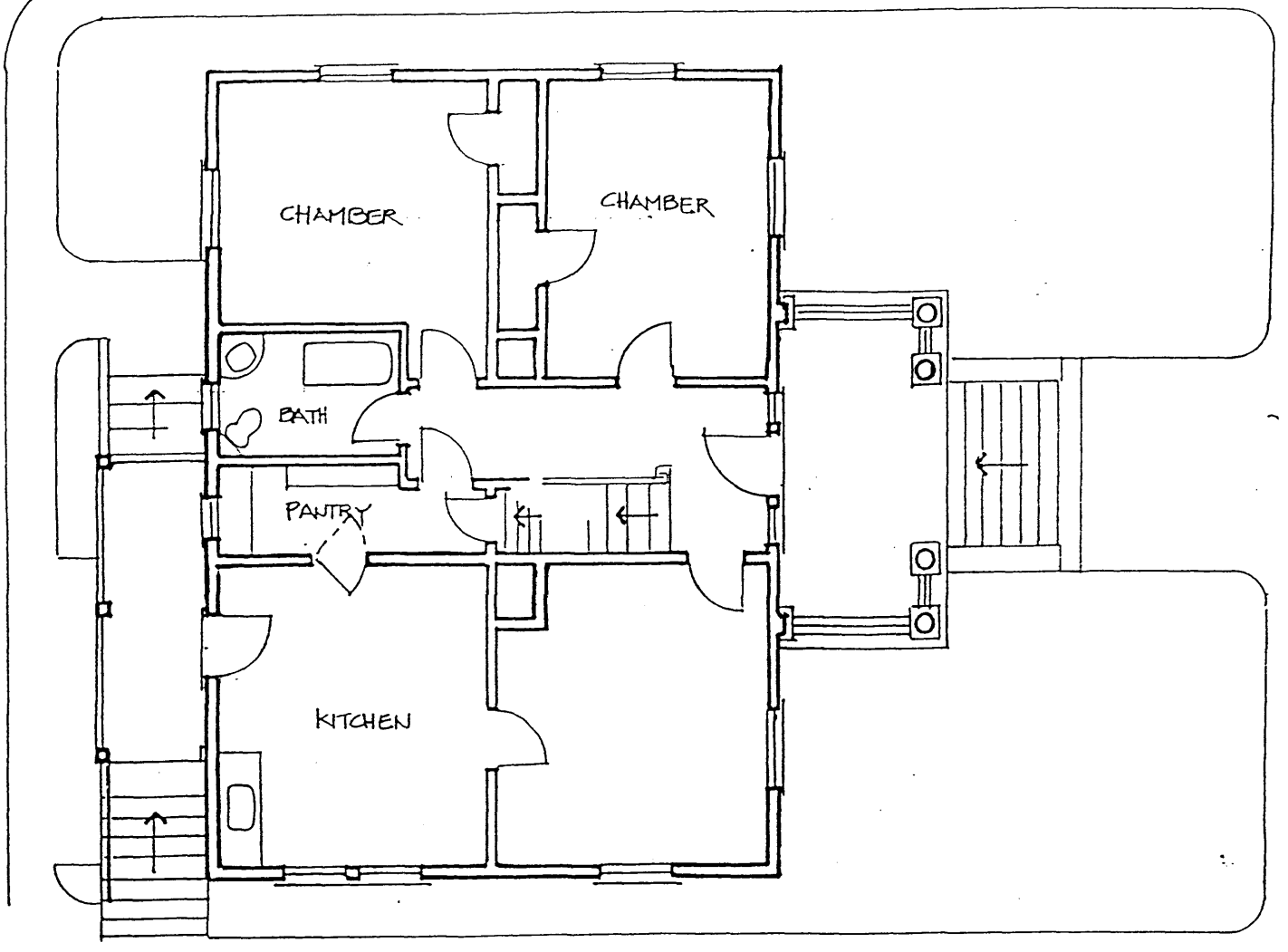


ROOF PLAN



FLOOR PLAN





FIRST FLOOR PLAN - 1908

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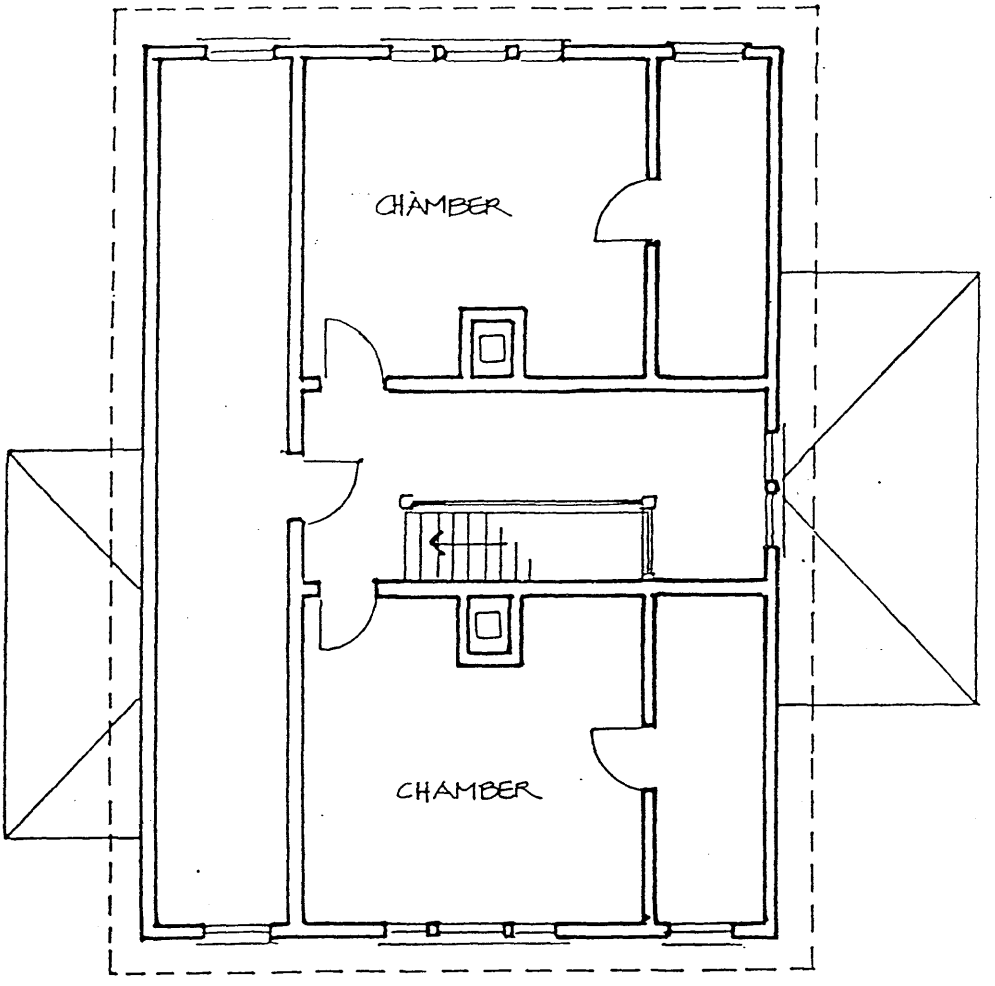
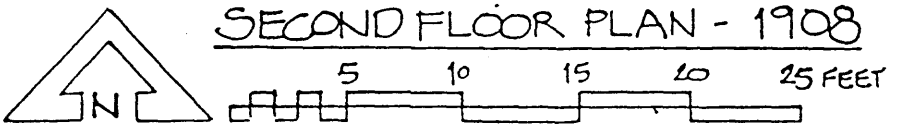
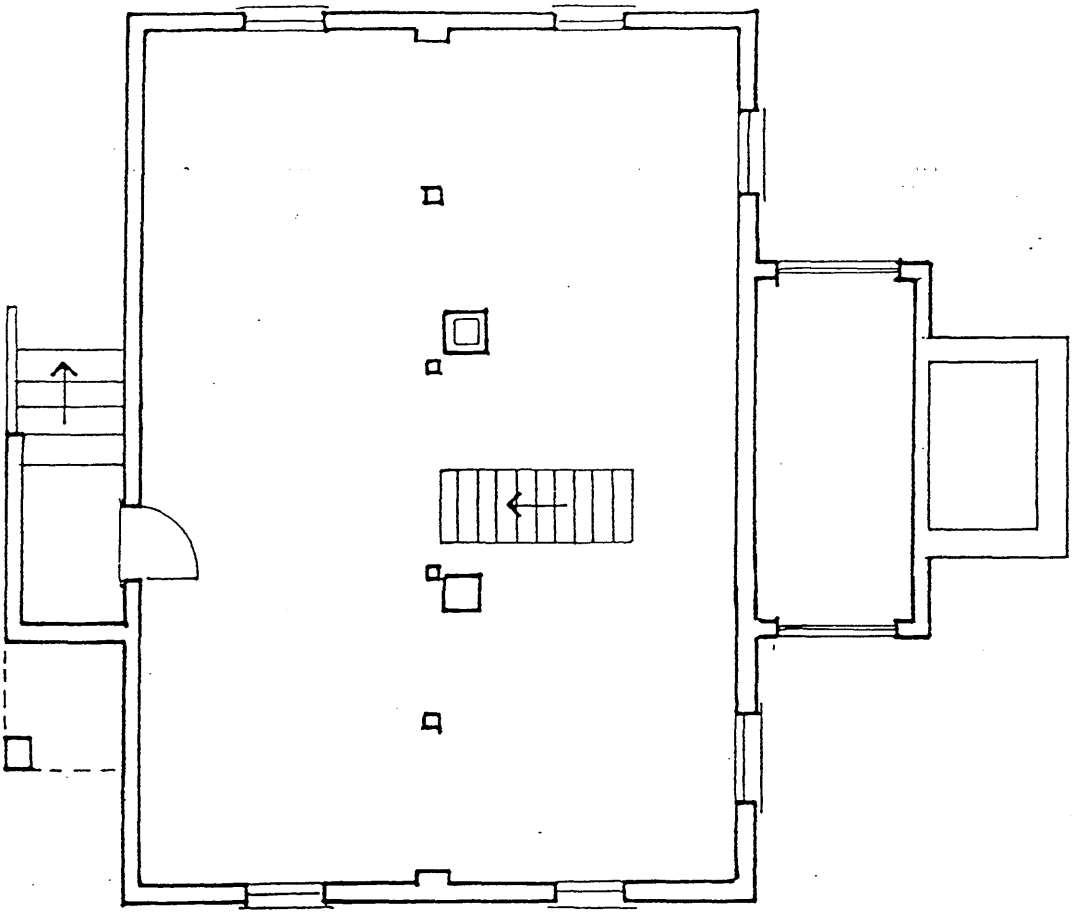
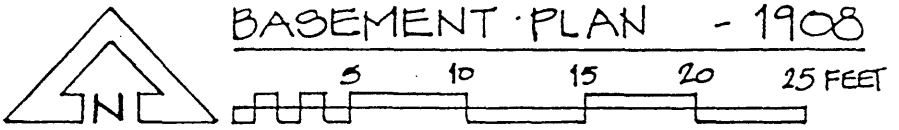


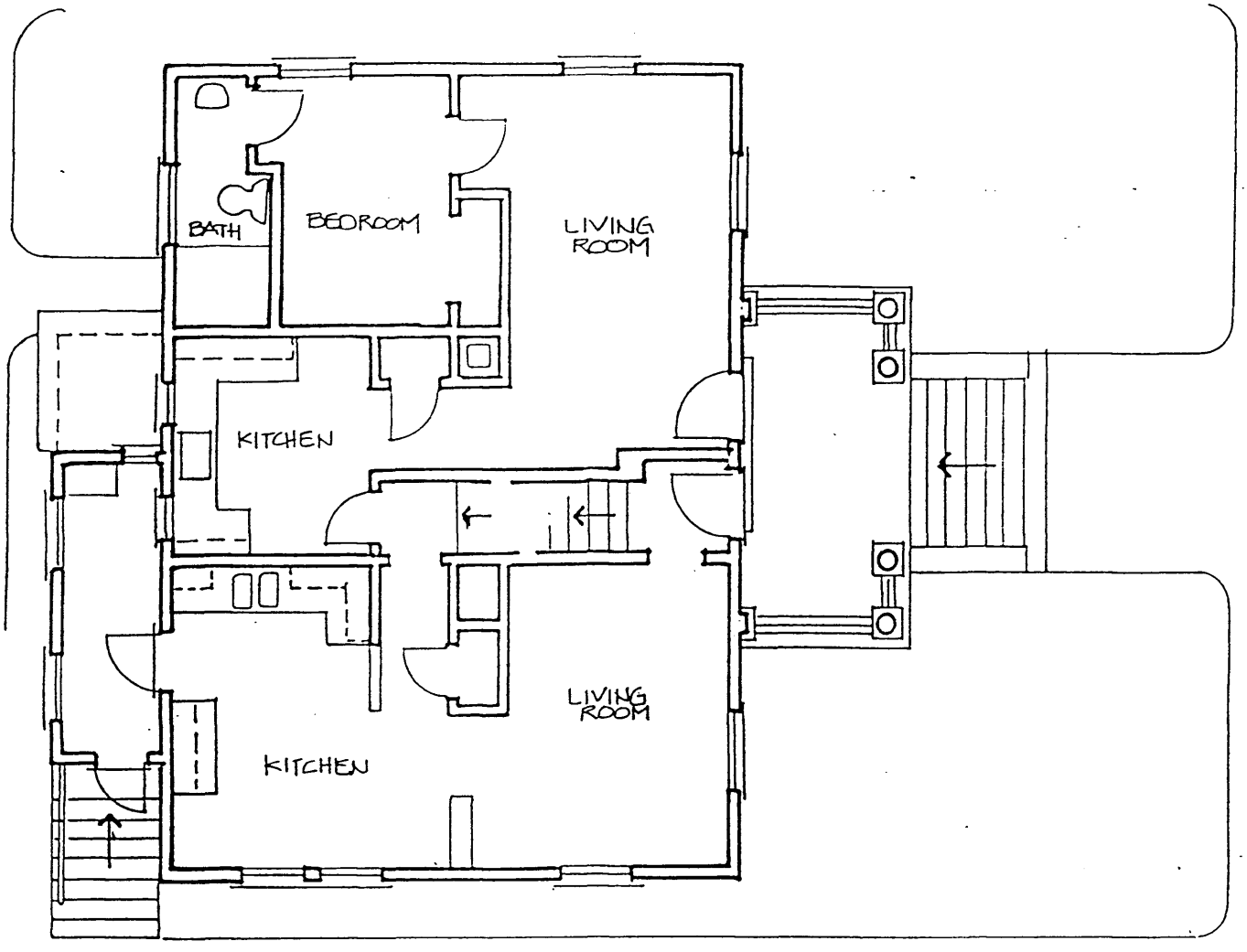
SECOND FLOOR PLAN - 1908



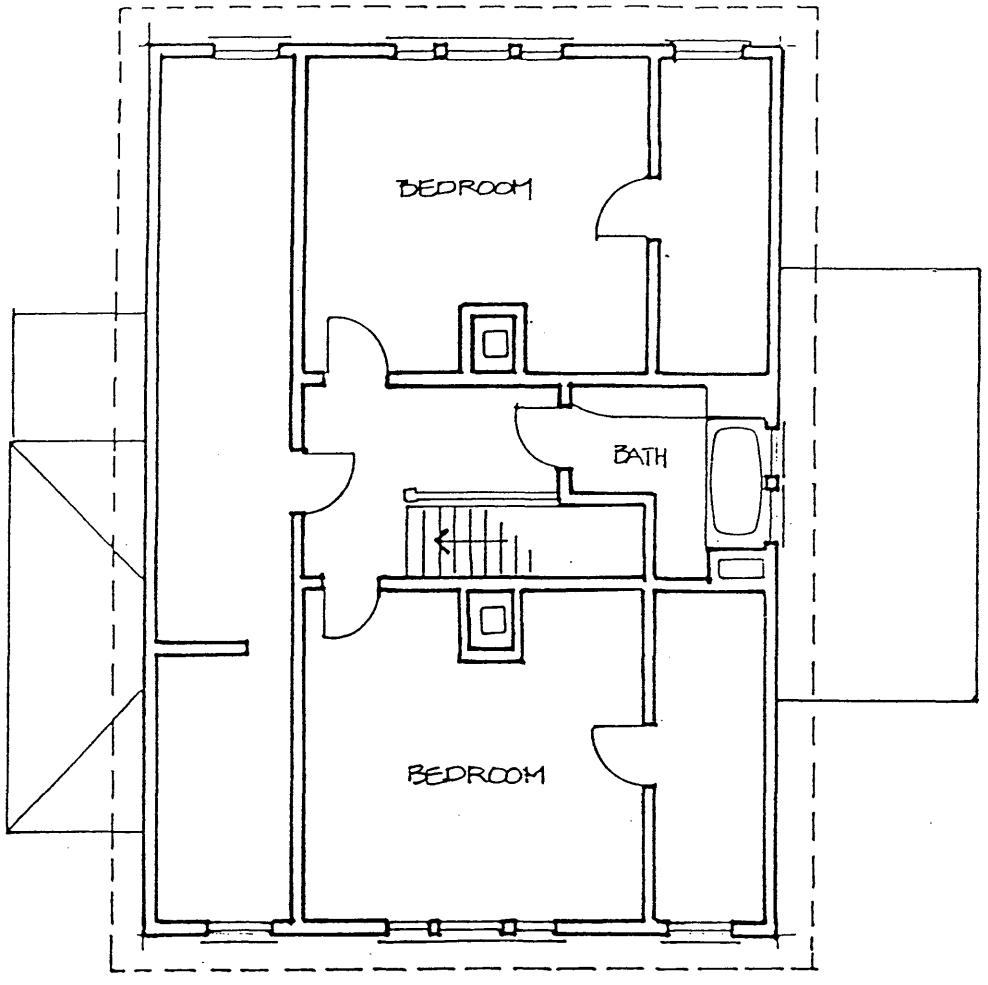


BASEMENT PLAN - 1908





FIRST FLOOR PLAN - 2002



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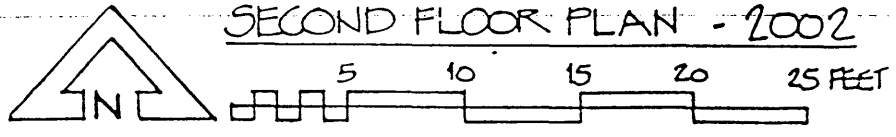

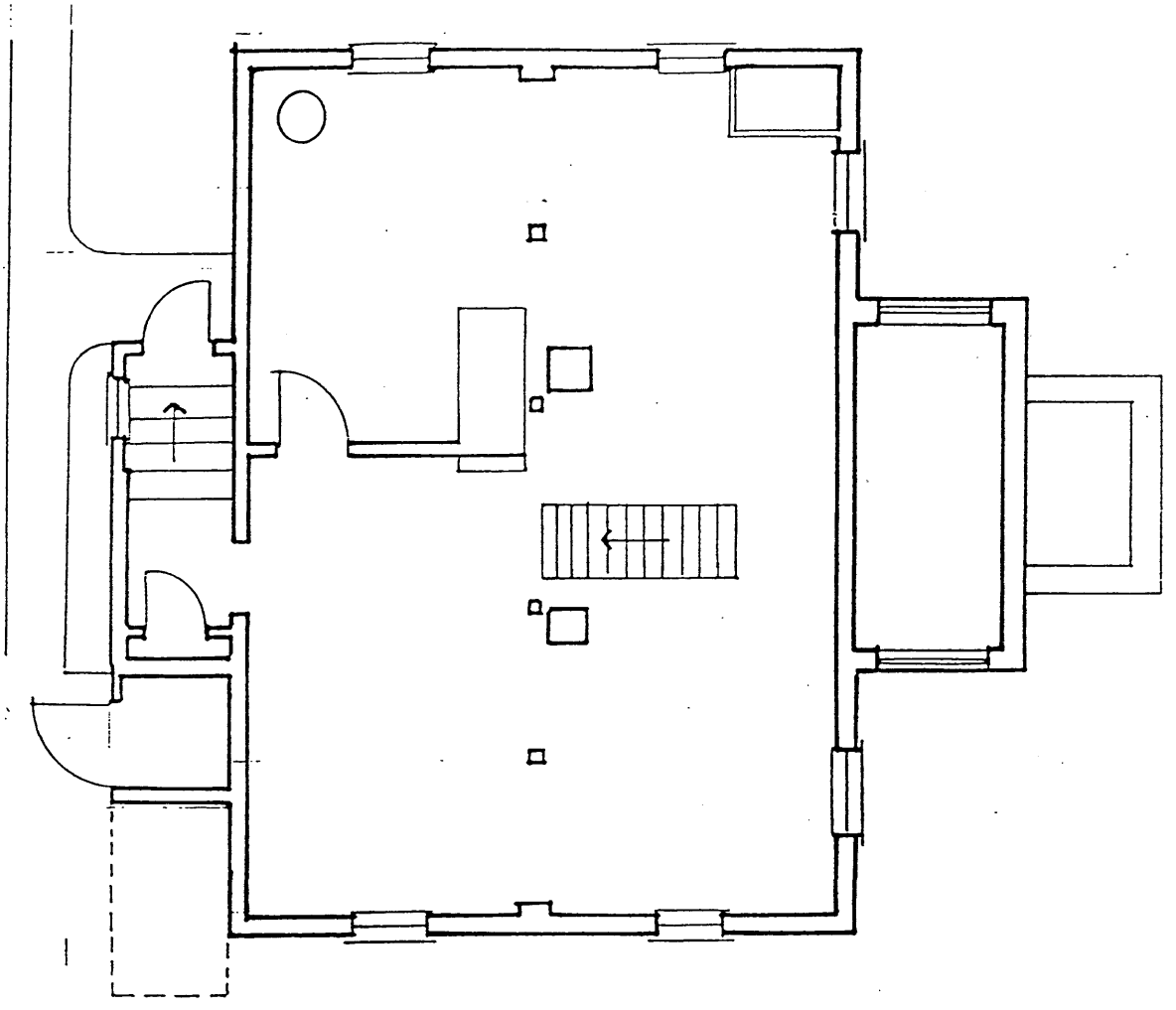

BASEMENT PLAN - 2002

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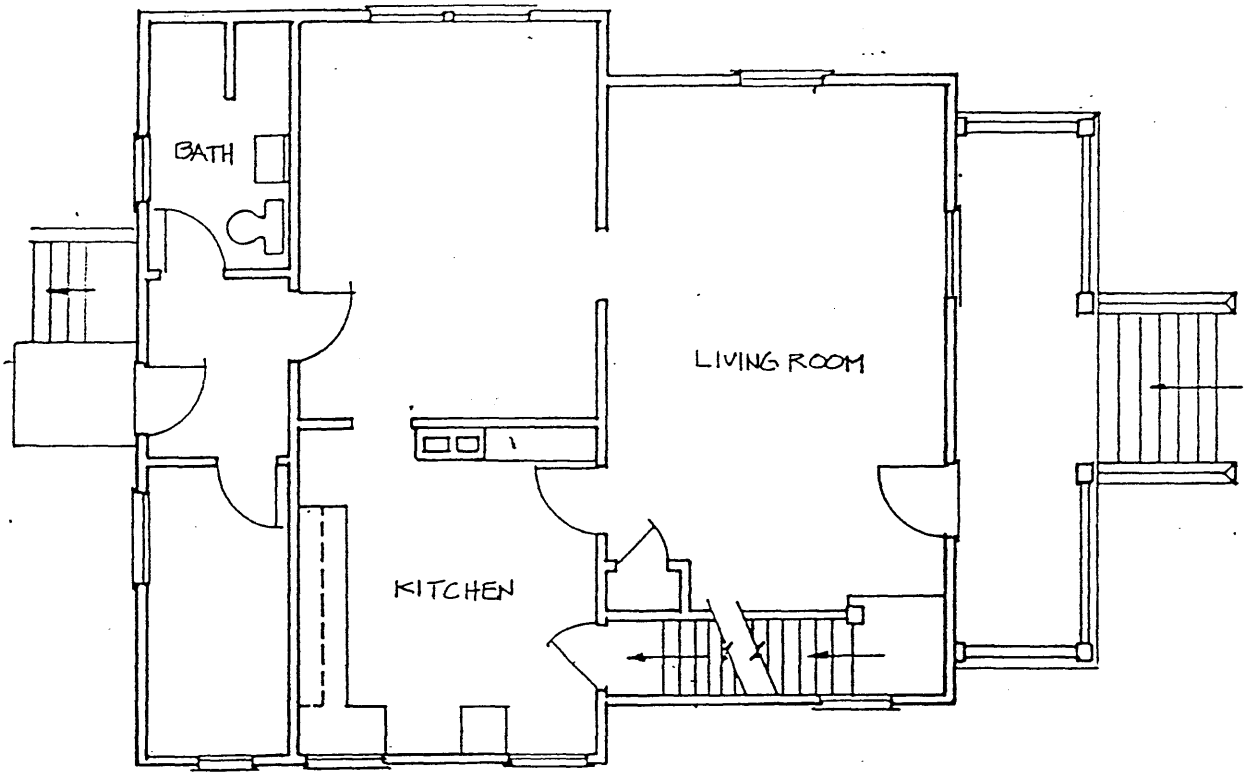
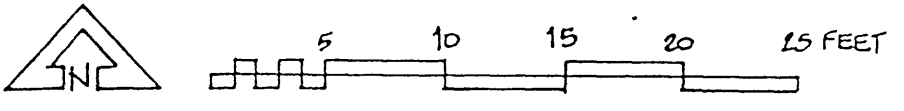
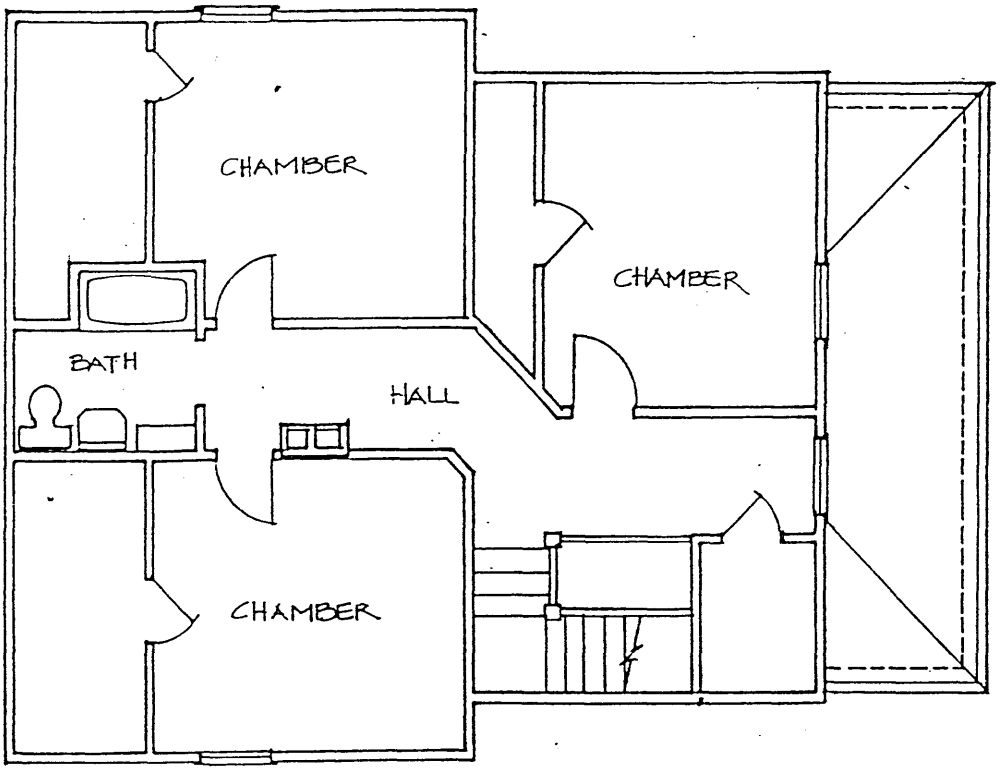


QUARTERS · A
FIRST FLOOR PLAN 1917





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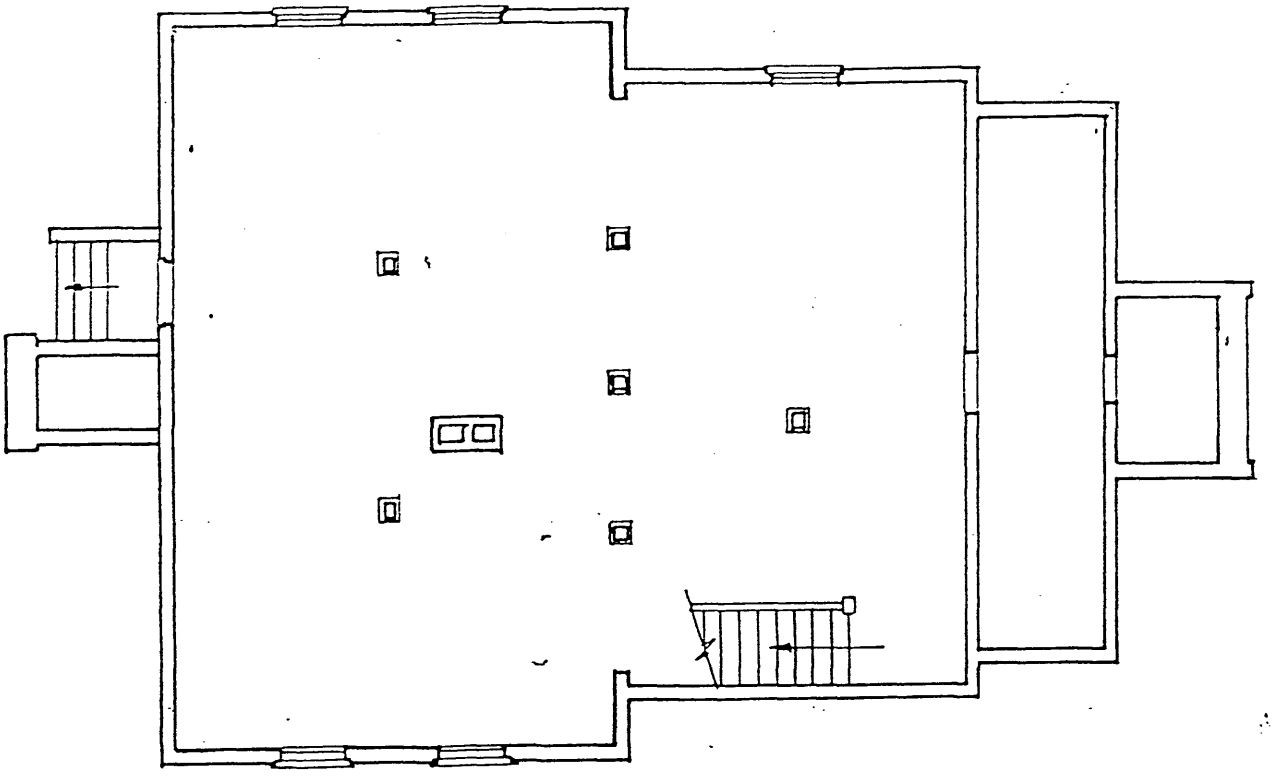
SECOND FLOOR PLAN 1917



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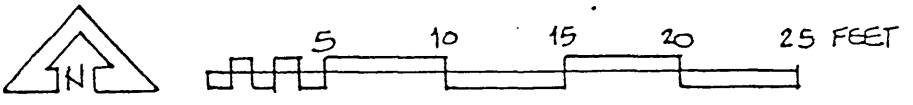
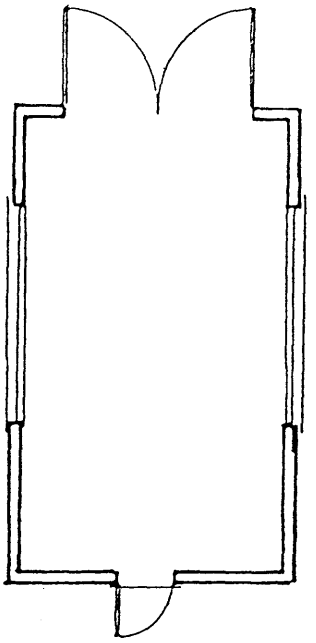
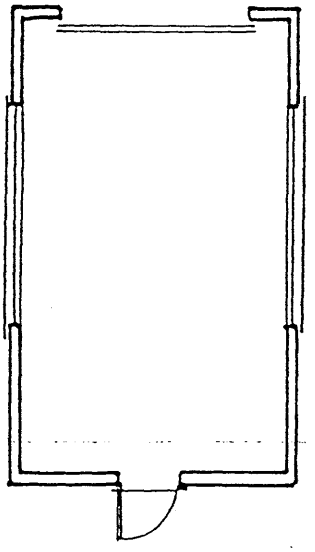
BASEMENT PLAN 1917

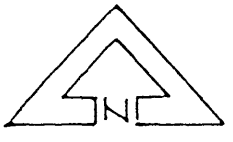




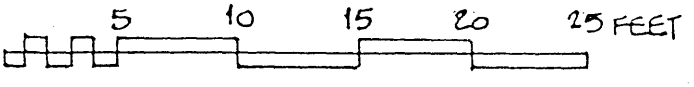
1919 FLOOR PLAN

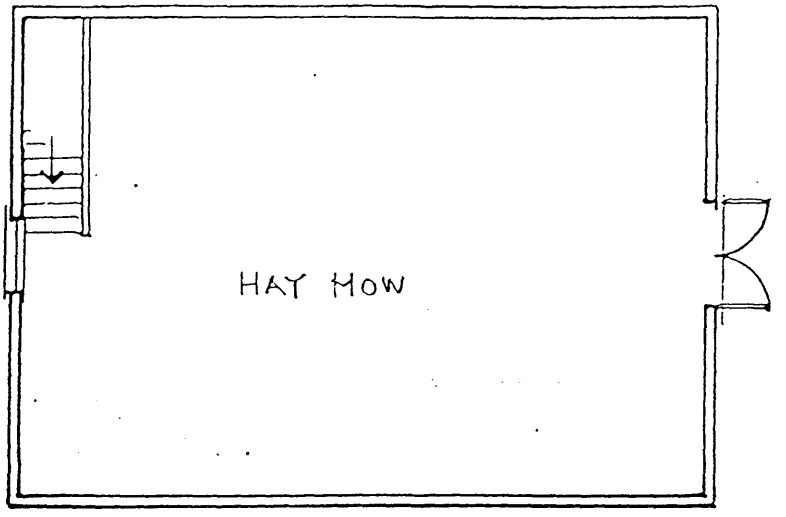


2002 FLOOR PLAN

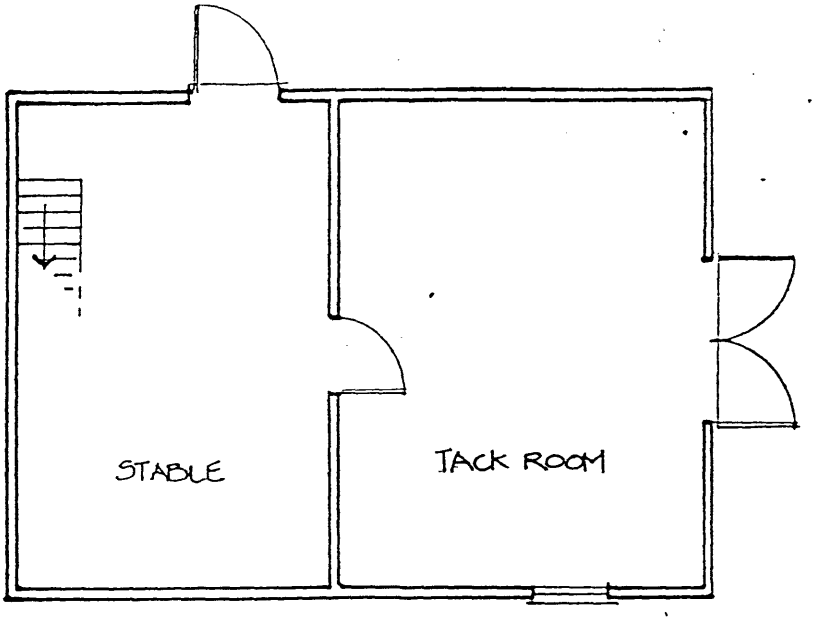


GARAGE



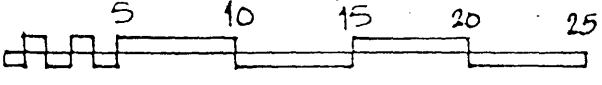


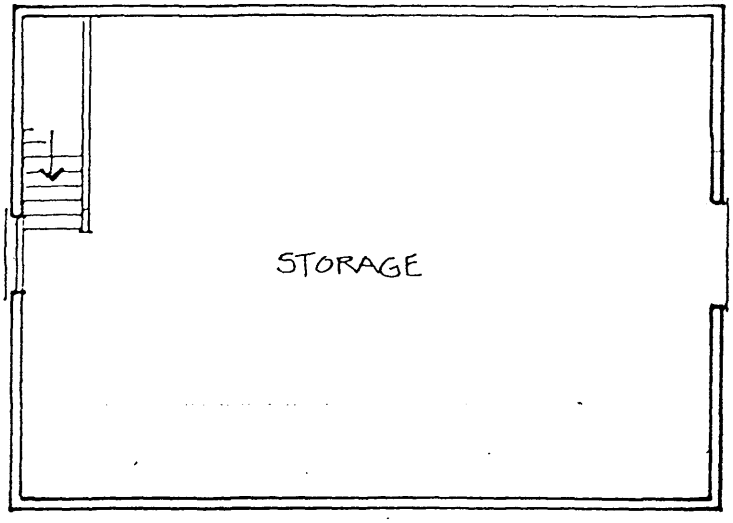
HAY MOW PLAN



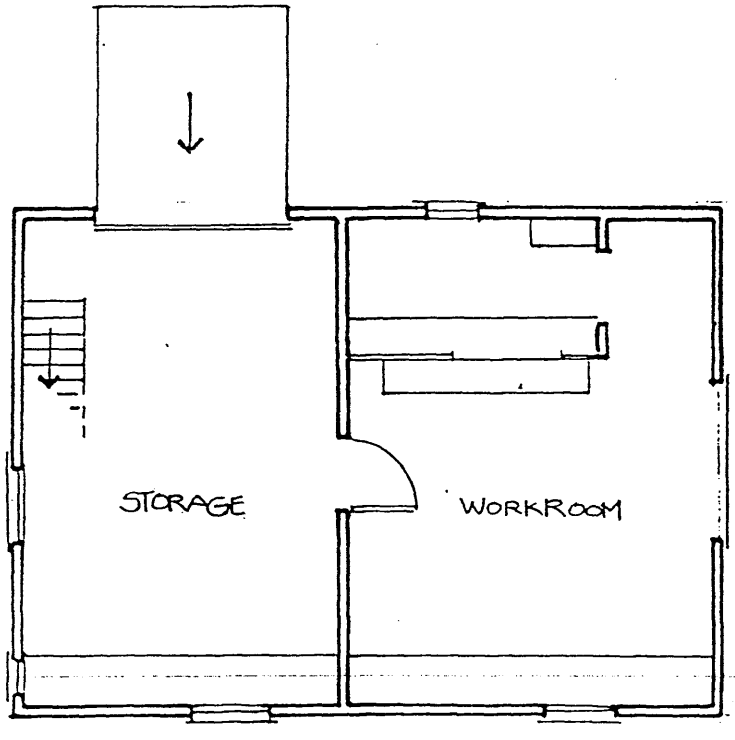
GROUND FLOOR PLAN

STOREHOUSE/BARN - c.1887

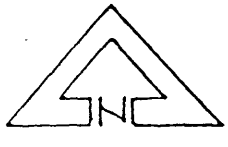




HAY MOW PLAN



GROUND FLOOR PLAN



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