

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH0505749

FOR NPS USE ONLY

DATA SHEET

RECEIVED OCT 13 1977

DATE ENTERED FEB 17 1978

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC ~~XXXX~~
Swetman House (AHRS SITE NO. SEW-150)

AND/OR COMMON
Seward "Stucco" Johnson House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
325 Fifth Avenue

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN
Seward

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF
Alaska, at large

STATE
Alaska

CODE
02

COUNTY
Seward

CODE
210

3 CLASSIFICATION

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

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Seward Community Library Board, c/o Mrs. Melvin Deck

STREET & NUMBER
5th and Adams Streets (907) 224-3646

CITY, TOWN
Seward

STATE
Alaska 99664

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. District Recorder

STREET & NUMBER
P.O. Box 596

CITY, TOWN
Seward

STATE
Alaska 99664

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Alaska Heritage Resource Survey (AHRS)

DATE
28 June 1977

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS 619 Warehouse Drive, Suite 210 (907) 274-4676

CITY, TOWN
Anchorage

STATE
Alaska 99501

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MOVED
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		DATE <u>Prior to 1927</u> (circa. 1920)

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Access to this building is available on request to the Librarian of the Seward Memorial Library. It is a free standing frame cottage, finished overall by a coating of stucco. Overall dimensions of the building are 17 feet 6 inches in width by 25 feet in depth. The building is rectangular, with balanced slope roofed extensions front and rear, the one in front covering a half-enclosed and half exposed entranceway, and the one in the rear covering a kitchen pantry. The structure, resting upon a prepared full concrete basement, consists of two floors and an attic, with internal staircases connecting the basement and the first and the second floors. Access to the attic is through an opening in the upper floor ceiling.

The roof is a medium gable with projecting eaves. The roof spine extends from front to rear, and at both ends of the roof there is a matching pair of combination stepped and decorated gables, finished from the roof line down in stucco, a major design feature of the building. The general motif is continued in adornment of the upper section of the front face of the building, above the first-second floor belt line, centering on the two centrally placed matching windows of the master (front) bedroom. The clean line of the roof is interrupted, not unpleasantly, by a shed roof-type dormer, which enhances the living space on the upper floor. The profile and scale create a story-book "gingerbread" cottage, the architectural design gem of the community of Seward.

The front entry is integral to the design. The front portico, with its front sloping roof, provides an open space with roof covering, and a fully enclosed space. This is glass enclosed, for an entryway which serves as an insulating air lock and small porch, or "mud room" for earth soiled footwear.

The main floor itself has a naturally lighted living room extending across the width of the front half of the house, with the stairwell at the right as one enters. The rear of this floor is taken up by the dining area, and by a kitchen with its original cabinetry and utilities installed early in the 20th Century: stove, sink and plumbing hardware. The lighting fixtures in the kitchen, as in the entire house, appear to be original equipment.

The stairway from the first to the second floor, while not of unusual design is economical of the space used and economical of decoration, complimenting the interesting functionalism of the entire house in contrast to the ornamented exterior. The second floor is divided off the eccentric hallway into two rooms and a bathroom. The bathroom, like the kitchen, is functional in design, with original cabinetry, and toilet, sink and bath tub. The bedrooms, used continuously for more than sixty years, have been refinished a number of times. The overall appearance indicates that the occupants exercised a high degree of care for their residence, and the absence of wear and tear is remarkable.

The building has central heat from a furnace located in the basement. Whether this was in the original construction, or was installed when the building was moved to its present site a few years after construction, will require more intensive examination. The occupants have always had running water and electricity from local public utility sources. Total space on the two main floors is approximately 875 square feet, with approximately 700 square feet of living space.

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 type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" 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 1916

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Built by Gerhard Johnson

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Swetman house embodies distinctive characteristics of its type and period and is a significant accomplishment in American building design and construction. The building exemplifies the inspired work of Gerhard Johnson, a previously unheralded artist, craftsman, and housebuilder. It is evidence of his mastery of the skill, rarely seen in this part of the world, of applying a permanent type of stucco to a frame structure, so that the result produced is a dual accomplishment in the building arts and in the arts of design. In addition, the families who have lived in this house were associated with most of the people and events that mark the first three quarters of this century in southcentral Alaska, including the birth and growth of the communities of Seward and Anchorage, and the building of the Alaska Northern and the Alaska Central Railways, and, finally, the Alaska Railroad. Swetman was a founder of the banking businesses that have grown into the two dominant financial institutions in Alaska, The National Bank of Alaska and the First National Bank of Anchorage, both of which sprang from original roots in Seward. As its primary significance, however, the cottage stands alone, both for its artistic design and for the integrity of its construction.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE:

This cottage was built by Gerhard Johnson. He is reputed to have come to Seward from New York City, early in this century, already an experienced builder. John Paulsteiner, a Seward craftsman and businessman knew Johnson well from 1917 until Johnson's death in 1940, and characterized him as ". . . a master craftsman in his line. Every single job he did in Seward and Anchorage shows his craftsmanship. . ." Much of the construction work he carried out during the founding period of Anchorage was for Oscar Anderson, one of the more important and successful Anchorage men of the founding period.

A mark of many Johnson-built buildings was his finish coat of stucco over wooden siding. His buildings were usually of clean lines, and functional, and his stucco stayed in place, surviving the tests of time and sub-Arctic weather. His skill with the trowel led to his popular nickname of "Stucco" Johnson.

In 1916 Johnson built this cottage on a steep grade near the local dairy farm, north of town. Elwyn Swetman, local pharmacist, and a member of founding group of the local banks, purchased the house with the proviso that it be moved to his lot, where it now stands. Johnson and the Alaska Transfer Company put in a deadman and slid the house down the hill to level ground.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(See Continuation Sheet)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	⁰⁶ 04	364500	6665 ³⁰⁰ 275	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

South 1/2 of lot 6, all of lots 7 and 8, block 16, Original Seward Townsite.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE	Alfred Mongin, Architectural Historian	DATE	June 30, 1977
ORGANIZATION	Alaska Division of Parks	DATE	(907) 274-4676
STREET & NUMBER	619 Warehouse Drive, Suite 210	TELEPHONE	
CITY OR TOWN	Anchorage	STATE	Alaska 99501

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE LOCAL

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

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE *William Shanahan*

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer DATE September 30, 1977

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER	
<i>Robert B. Rettig</i>	DATE 2/17/78
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION	KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER
ATTEST: <i>Charles [Signature]</i>	DATE 2-14-78
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	

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The house has stood at this location since sometime prior to 1927. It was built by Gerhard Johnson in 1916 on a steeply graded site against the mountain side in the vicinity of the Leirer Dairy Farm property, west of the present Seward Small Boat Harbor. It remains in its original natural stucco color, with red roof and light green trim.

A few years after 1916 Johnson sold his house to Elwyn Swetman, the town pharmacist. Johnson moved the house from its construction site to its present location then put it in condition for the Swetman family. The Swetman family lived in the house from then until the deaths, successively, of Mr. and, then, recently, Mrs. Swetman. Mrs. Swetman bequeathed the property to the Seward Library Board for preservation and exhibition as a period house.

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"Almost at the bottom of the hill," wrote John Paulsteiner, "it turned sideways. They straightened the house and set it on Swetmann's lot. . ."

The interior arrangement, while well planned for family use, is not unique, but is pleasant, well lighted by windows, liveable, and makes efficient use of the space available. For its time it provided more square footage than most residences, even though it is about half the size of the average one-family unit built today. The Swetman family lived in the house for more than half a century, and has left the property, by will, to the Seward Public Library Board, to be open to the public as an historic house museum.

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Darling, Mrs. O.E., Manuscript Collection, Seward.

Hoy, H. Everett, "Seward -- Gateway to the Kenai Empire," Alaska Life, January 1915, page 9.

Interview: Mrs. Melvin Deck, Librarian, Seward Public Library, by Alfred Mongin, May 1977.

Interview: Aron Wicklund, Seward, by Alfred Mongin, May 1977.

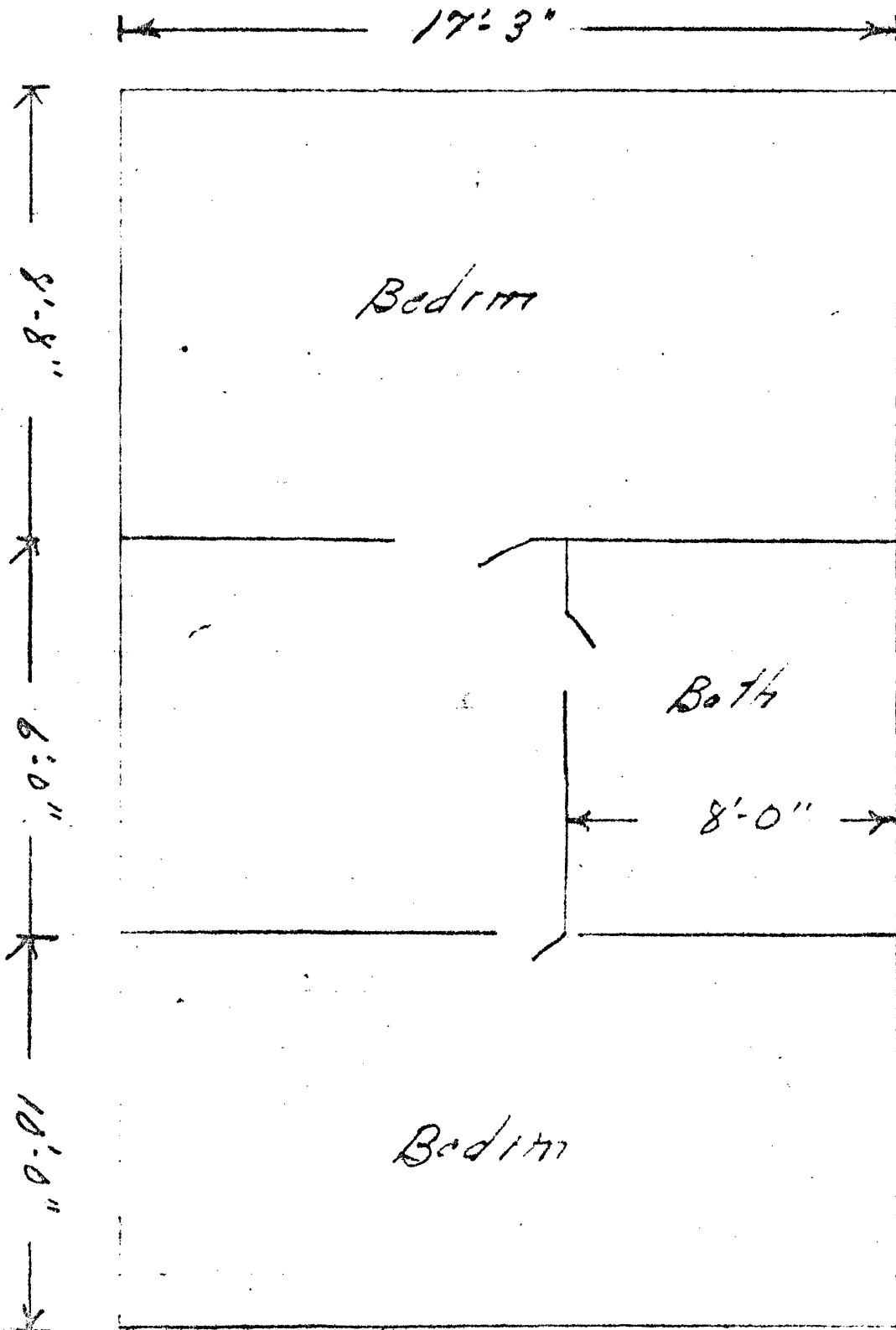
Interview: Mrs. Pat Williams, Seward, by Alfred Mongin, May 1977.

Paulsteiner, John, Seward Alaska, the Sinful Town on Resurrection Bay. n.p. 1975.

Parker, Harry, Charles Merrick Gay, and John W. MacGuire, Materials and Methods of Architectural Construction. 3rd Edition. N.Y. John Wiley, 1932, 1958. Pages 236-238, 299-300.

Top floor

(upstairs)

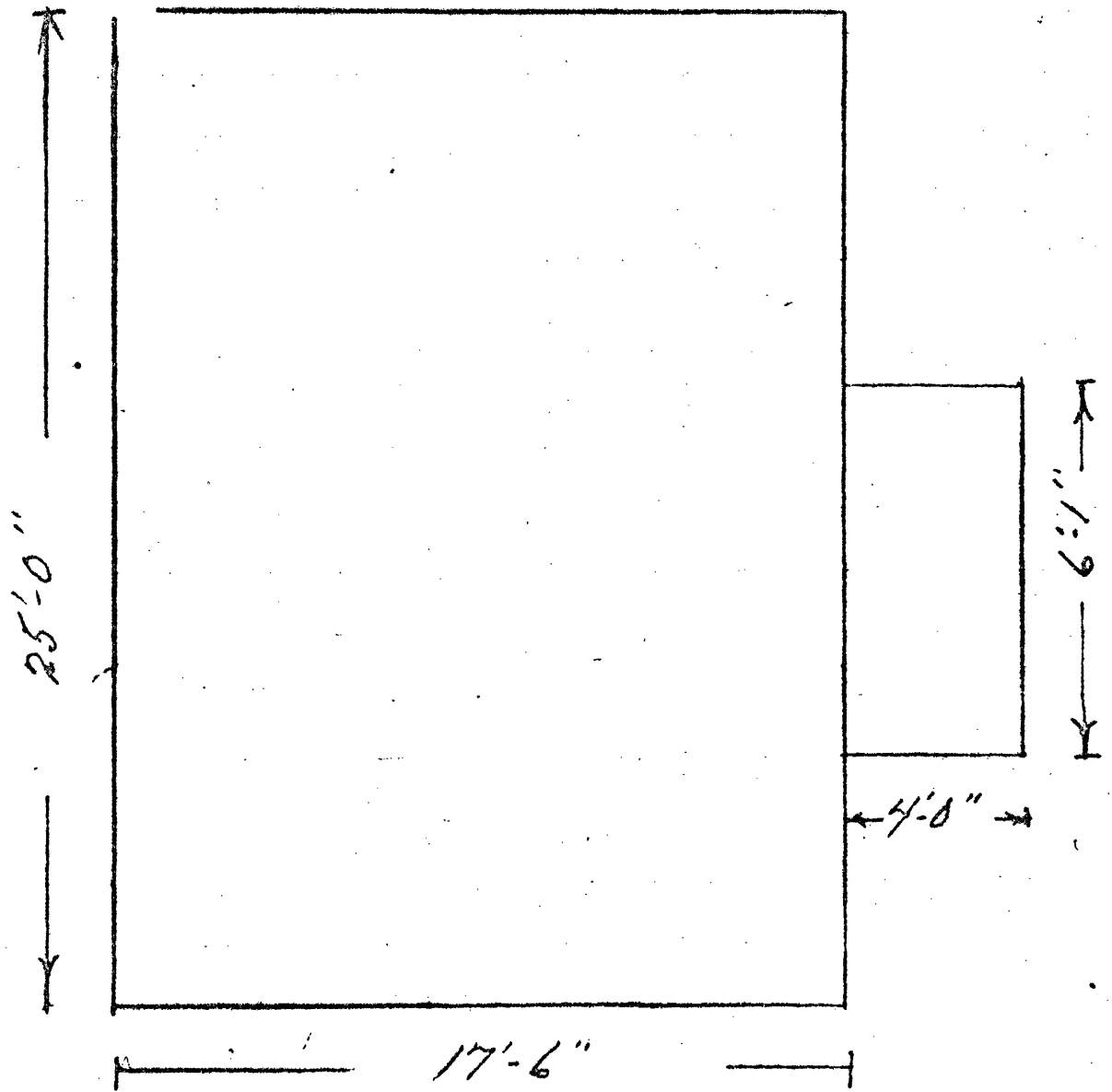


4'-4" ceiling

Swetman House

Sweetman House

Basement



Not to scale

7'-0" ceiling



FEB 17 1978

Sweetman House

Floor Plans (5)

First Floor

