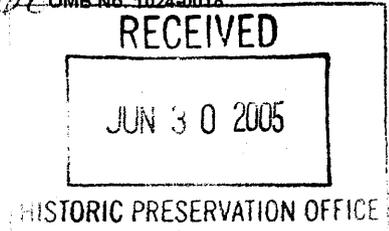
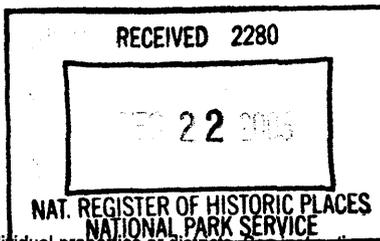


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or 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 an 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 listed in 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 Isaac Pearson House

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number Hobson Avenue at Emeline Avenue not for publication

city or town Hamilton Township vicinity

state New Jersey code NJ county Mercer code 021 zip code 08610

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I 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 meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. See continuation sheet for additional comments.

[Signature] Date 11/10/05

John S. Watson Jr., Assistant Commissioner, Natural & Historic Resources / DSHPO
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____

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:) _____

[Signature] Signature of the Keeper Date of Action 2/1/06

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
1	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC / single dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT / not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Georgian

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone

walls brick

roof wood

other _____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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.)

- 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.
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.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or 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

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Politics / Government

Military

Transportation

Period of Significance

1773 - 1813

Significant Dates

1773

December 14-26, 1776

December 28, 1776

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Pearson, Isaac (1739-1776)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Primary location of additional data

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of repository:

Isaac Pearson House
Name of Property

Mercer Co., NJ
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property 3

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 18 524493 4448430
Zone Easting Northing

3
4 Zone Easting Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Robert Craig
organization NJ Historic Preservation Office, NJ DEP date June 2005
street & number P.O. Box 404 telephone (609) 984-0541
city or town Trenton state NJ zip code 08625-0404

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

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

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Township of Hamilton (Mercer County)
street & number 2090 Greenwood Avenue telephone _____
city or town Hamilton state NJ zip code 08609

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this from to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetIsaac Pearson House
Mercer Co., NJSection number 7 Page 1**DESCRIPTION:**

The Isaac Pearson house is a large, unusually fine, 2-story, 5-bay, double-pile, brick house, with a center-hall plan, built in 1773 in a vernacular interpretation of the Georgian style and in the southern New Jersey patterned brickwork tradition (Photos #1, 2). The date "1 7 7 3" is worked into the west gable, in vitrified headers (Photo #3). The foundation of the house is composed of fieldstone, and a cellar extends under the entire house. Both the south and west elevations have been stuccoed. The north facade is painted, but not stuccoed. The east elevation exhibits rough brick masonry. The house has a gable roof with a ridge that parallels the façade. Two interior end chimneys, one on the east and the other on the west, pierce this ridge and maintain the Georgian symmetry. The roof had originally been of wood shingle, and was reshingled in wood several years ago. Most of the original 1773 interior wood and plasterwork remains intact. Some interior changes of a minor nature were made during the Federal period, and somewhat more extensive but still minor changes were made during the early Victorian era. Replacement windows were installed throughout the house during the second half of the 20th century, but they were installed within the original openings, leaving the original frames intact. Utilities were also added during the 20th century, and other minor changes made.

Setting and Outbuildings

The Pearson house stands on the south-facing bluff that overlooks Interstate 195, Crosswicks Creek, and the Trenton marsh in what is called the White Horse section of Hamilton Township, Mercer County, New Jersey. The house, however, faces northerly, toward U.S. Route 206 (South Broad Street) about a quarter-mile away. Thus its rear elevation overlooks the marsh (Photo #16). It stands on a parcel of approximately three acres—the nominated property—that extends from Hobson Avenue on the west side easterly along the south side of Emaline Avenue from its intersection with Hobson. The alignment of Hobson jogs slightly to the westward as it approaches the Pearson house, and the easterly curb line of Hobson comes within a few feet of the west wall of the house (to photograph the west elevation of the house, one should cross Hobson).

The house as it stands today is missing a kitchen wing that it originally possessed, and it is missing its entire complement of historic outbuildings. Archaeological testing was undertaken on this property during the late 1970s and afterward for the "Trenton complex" highway project, and the results of that testing are explained in published archaeological reports (see the Significance Statement and Major Bibliographic References). The property is currently owned by Hamilton Township. Most, if not all, of the historic outbuildings of the property would have stood on this parcel. The road from Trenton to White Horse that existed in 1773, prior to the creation of South Broad Street along its current alignment, may also have extended through this property, but its precise alignment is not known.

Exterior**North façade**

The north-facing elevation of the house is its front side (Photo #1). The brickwork of this elevation is stuccoed only up to the watertable course, and painted above. The brick is laid in Flemish bond, and although the headers are covered by the paint, judging from their textures they do not appear to be vitrified (Photos #4, 5). This facade, like the south elevation, is symmetrical; it features a first floor entrance in the center bay flanked by two

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windows on either side and five windows across the second story. This entry is accessed by a small concrete porch probably added during the early 20th century. The first floor windows feature splayed, flat arch lintels constructed of limestone or marble (Photo #4). These lintels were undoubtedly expensive, as they were not used for the window lintels of the second story or in the rear elevation. They are each formed apparently from a single piece of stone, and have been carefully cut and tooled to display a keystone flanked by two voussoirs on either side. The second-story window lintels are keystone flat arches constructed inexpensively of wood. One original, wrought iron shutter dog remains in place on a first-story window (Photo #5), but all the original shutter pintles remain. Shutter dogs for the second-story windows are 19th-century replacements, presumably to accommodate 19th-century replacement shutters, now missing. The windows still contain their original wood frames except that the sills have been replaced with early 20th-century brick (1920s?) and that considerable deterioration is evident in some of the frames. As was common during this period, the window frames were constructed with mortise and tenon joints pinned through the face, and these pins are quite evident in the upper corners of the frames. The frames are characteristically finished with a Roman ovolo molding terminated with a querk. As noted above, the window sashes were replaced in the 20th century. Two electric service meters have been installed near the northwest corner, at breast height. An exterior electrical plug has been installed easternmost window.

South elevation

This elevation is finished in a gray, portland-cement stucco (Photo #2). Like the north facade, this elevation presents a 2-story, 5-bay appearance with a single door in the center bay of the first story. A concrete porch of 20th-century construction accesses the entry. The entry door is a 20th-century replacement in the original 18th-century opening that has its original door frame largely intact. At cellar level, a bulkhead entrance into the basement occupies the southwesternmost bay. The present bulkhead doors are constructed of steel and were installed during recent decades. The window sills are stuccoed over. They are probably brick replacement sills under the stucco (judging from the north elevation). There is a stringcourse running under the sills of the second-story windows; that, too, is stuccoed over. This stringcourse suggests that a pent roof was originally present across the south elevation, but the stucco prevents confirmation of this hypothesis. The windows, like those in the north facade, exhibit horizontal 2/2 replacement sash in original window frames. These face-pinned window frames all exhibit their original pintels and original perimeter Roman ovolo moldings. The window lintels in the first story are plain (stuccoed over); those of the second story are splayed, wooden lintels with a keystone flanked by two voussoirs in flat arches. The original cornice has been replaced with a colonial-revival box cornice in wood, not based on any careful research. There are no cellar windows in the south elevation. A rectangular opening has been cut into the south wall between the first and second windows to the left of the front door. A vent with cover has been installed between the door and a flanking window during the second half of the 20th century, suggesting that after the demolition of the kitchen wing, the southeast first floor room was converted for kitchen use. Utility-related connections have also been made through this south wall.

West Elevation

Stucco covers the west end wall of the house, obscuring all detail of the brickwork except the date "1773" worked into the gable with vitrified headers as noted above (Photo #3). Only one window in the first story and two garret windows, one each on either side of the chimney stack, pierce this wall. In addition to the date, this

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end wall features an pent roof at the base of the gable, just below the date. The box cornice is continuous around the corners of the house, but whether this cornice was entirely replaced during the re-roofing several years ago is unclear. The presence of the pent roof and the date in the gable mark this house as an example of patterned brickwork and domestic architecture usually associated with southern New Jersey Quakers (even though its owner was not, himself, a Quaker).

East Elevation

The east elevation is a nearly featureless wall of common brick, roughly cemented (Photo #2). A kitchen wing originally stood attached to this side of the building, but it was long ago demolished, leaving no clear ghost of its size in the masonry. A doorway has been cut into the first story, from the southeast room, but the framing that encloses this doorway is clinched with cut nails, indicating that the doorway is a 19th-century alteration, not an original feature. Whether an original doorway once enabled access from the first story to the kitchen wing would seem entirely likely, but is not apparent. A small cinder-block porch of possibly ca.1950 gives access to this doorway, indicating its continued use in the second half of the 20th century, probably by the last private owner. This also suggests that the demolition of the kitchen wing occurred at that time. Since the cinder block is covered with a thin layer of the same pink stucco that appears on the west elevation wall (underneath the gray stucco outer coat), this may indicate that both layers of stucco were applied during the second half of the 20th century. Two small windows in the garret pierce the brick wall, and their location may indicate some limit to the height of this wing. One small window in the second story lights the transverse passage (see below); it may be a later window resulting from an alteration that may be associated with the demolition of the missing wing.

The Interior**Cellar**

The cellar is accessed down a set of rough, wooden steps that descend under the principal staircase. These steps may be original construction. The basement is divided into north and south halves by a transverse bearing wall constructed of fieldstone. The cellar has a dirt floor. Access from the outside was through a bulkhead on the south side, still very much present, with stone steps and cheek walls and a wood lintel. Twentieth-century plumbing, heating, and electrical equipment were concentrated in the basement. Two stacks support the chimneys of the east end wall. Several of the exposed first-floor joists in the cellar have been replaced during the 20th century, especially underneath the approximate location of the principal staircase. Two doorways in the transverse partition wall are framed with unfinished, heavy oak posts and lintels.

First Story

The first story exhibits a center-hall plan, with a central stair hall flanked by two parlors on the west side and front and rear halls on the east side. The flooring is undoubtedly a wide board flooring, probably like that of the second floor, but has been obscured by the addition of plywood and linoleum over the years. The original ceiling throughout the first story is approximately nine feet above the floor. The effective ceiling height is several inches lower where drop ceilings have been installed. Heating is delivered throughout the house through baseboard units (Photos #6, 7).

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The **center hall** has been modified by the installation of a hall closet during the second half of the 20th century (Photos #6,7). The present stair balustrade and other finish surfaces are of Victorian construction, but the stair, itself may, indeed, be in its original location. Inexpensive 20th-century paneling has been applied to the walls and a suspended ceiling has been installed over the hallway. The south entry door is a late 20th-century replacement; the north (front) entry door is a 2nd-quarter 19th-century replacement, but hung on approx. 30-inch long strap hinges that may be reused from the original door. The door features four horizontal panels with shallow, raised fields and framed at the stiles and rails with unornamented Grecian ovolo moldings. This door has a set-in four-light horizontal transom, also apparently of 18th-century origin, probably original (Photo #6).

The **northwest room** has an original corner fireplace with a fancy, marble fascia around a shallow firebox (Photo #10). The replacement chimney piece (fireplace mantel) is of vaguely Colonial Revival design, but the original 18th-century overmantel paneling is still in place above it. A stovepipe was pierced through this overmantel during the 19th century. The rest of the room exhibits plaster walls over which inexpensive 20th-century paneling was installed. A cheap, 20th-century cornice was installed over this paneling. The presence of an original, 18th-century cornice above the overmantel is suggested, but is disguised by some sort of 20th-century covering. Confirmation of the cornice will require removal of this covering. No other original features are apparent, but a careful dismantling of the 20th-century accretions should be undertaken to determine whether other original features are hidden.

An opening formed in the 20th-century by partial removal of the transverse brick wall between the front and rear rooms gives access from the northwest into the **southwest room**. The wall that originally occupied the space between these two rooms was taken out and 2x4s installed to take up the space. It is unclear what the original configuration of this wall between these rooms was, whether there originally was a door in this location, when this wall was altered, or whether it was altered before these 20th-century changes were made. There's a suggestion in the physical evidence that the wall was taken out at some prior time. In the southwest room a corner fireplace shares the chimney stack that provides the corner fireplace for the northwest room, in good, 3rd-quarter 18th-century fashion. This fireplace is better preserved than its mate, with a hearth of bricks, a shallow firebox as in the northwest room, but without marble facing. The fireplace is surrounded by the original chimney piece. This includes the heavy bolection molding that covers the joint between the firebox and the surrounding paneling. The entire, original overmantel is present, except where a stovepipe was cut through. The hearth is paved with regular common bricks; no special paving bricks were used. An iron plate serves as a lintel in the firebox. There is some evidence that this room served as a kitchen or pantry in the 20th century, because there are some cabinets from that period still in place. The west end wall of the room contains a large window surrounded with an original, large roman ovolo molding like that around the interior window frames of all the other original windows. This window, too, has been replaced, like the others, with horizontal 2/2 sashes. There is a small, possibly original cornice treatment around the entire room. This may be the best preserved of the downstairs rooms.

In the southwesterly corner of the room, one wall of the room is an 18th-century corner cupboard, divided into upper and lower closets (Photos #8, 9). The top closet includes a three-panel door with raised, fielded panels. It's held with L-shaped strap hinges that are butted on the left side, top and bottom (butt-L hinges). The bottom

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closet has a single-panel door is also held by butt-L hinges. (These are, in effect, transitional between the "H-L" hinges that were previously popular and the butt hinges that would become popular during the Federal era). The latch hardware for the closet doors is brass and probably of 20th-century make. There is no physical hint of what the original closet door handles were, but small knobs seem likely. The top closet contains five shelves (including the bottom) with a double bead on the shelf edge, but the shelves are simply triangular in shape, and unscaloped. The top closet door has three hooks on the inside of the second rail and the ghost of a rim lock. The lower closet has a ghost of a missing rim lock, seemingly the mate of the one above.

The southwestern room also has an original cornice running all the way around the room. The east wall exhibits unclear evidence of its history, evidently having been altered in the 20th century, but with a sequence of alterations and for purposes that are not entirely clear. This wall deserves further investigation. (One speculation is that the east end of the room may have been altered to accommodate a moving of the staircase in the 19th century from a different original location to its current position, but there is no convincing evidence that the stair was moved. There are two openings from the southwest room into the hallway and to the basement steps.

The **northeast room** shows evidence of many changes, including some 19th-century changes to the window frames, probably in the Victorian era. A late 20th-century dropped ceiling covers a higher ceiling (probably the original ceiling) and this recent installation will need to be removed to investigate whether an original cornice is still present in this room. A chimney in the east wall projects into the room and faces the door from the stairhall. It has a firebox that is finished with a marble (or faux marble) fascia and probably dates from the late Federal period or the Greek Revival era (Photo #11). It appears to be complete with outer paneling from that period.

The firebox is fitted with a fancy, Federal-style, cast iron firebox liner (Photo #11), worn, but still of a recognizable pattern (acanthus leaves?). There are no breast closets. The walls are covered in late 20th-century cheap paneling. The door from the stairhall is finished with 19th-century Greek Revival (probably) molding profile with a double architrave (**ck**) motif with corner blocks that display a Grecian ovolo molding within the block. The baseboard also has a Grecian ovolo molding, indicating that the entire room was refurbished during the Greek Revival period. Its original appearance is not evident from the physical evidence currently available. There is an opening between the northeast and southeast rooms, apparently also of 19th-century construction.

The **southeast room** has a similar fireplace, partly disfigured by 20th-century alterations. It does not have a fancy firebox liner, but may once have had. The floor has been built up with linoleum and possibly plywood. Baseboard heating units extends along the perimeter of the room, as elsewhere in the house. The doorway from the hall is original, but the door, itself, is also of the same four-panel construction as the front door previously described.

The stairway is a mid-19th-century staircase, with a balustrade featuring an elliptical handrail, a Italianate newel post with a tapered, octagonal shaft, a mortgage button (Photo #7). The balusters are turned from top to bottom ... There is a landing sixteen steps above the floor, at about 80 percent of the distance between the floors, at

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which the direction of the stair makes two 90-degree turns before climbing a few more steps to the second floor. The landing is lit by the middle, second-story window.

Second Story

The second story also possesses nine-foot-high ceilings. In the second story, the center hall is truncated by the original northeast room, which originally extended in a transverse direction to the northwest room. Part of this space has been reconfigured for a pair of closets along the wall between the northeast and northwest rooms (see second floor plan). From the upstairs hall, doors open into a closet and into four bedchambers (Photo #12). The original flooring can be seen in this upstairs hall, a wide but random-width flooring of usually seven to eleven inches.

The **southwest room** is entered through its original door from the hall. This room has a 20th-century clothes closet built out from the southwest corner. The northwest corner has its complete original fireplace, with hearth, firebox, its molded surround and its overmantel paneling. Original, square paving bricks survive in this hearth (Photo #13). Such bricks were a fine and fancy touch, usually seen only in the better houses of this period. The floor has been built up with plywood. A cornice extends around the room; it may be original or may not. The door from the hallway into the southwest room is probably the original door into this room. Like most of the doors on this floor, it is a six-panel interior door with raised, fielded paneling, currently painted a dull brown. The original latching hardware is gone and the original hinges were replaced in the 19th century with a pair of two-cylinder butt hinges, leaving a ghost behind. A passage has been cut into the partition wall between the southwest and northwest rooms sometime in the 20th century, as was done on the first floor.

The **northwest room** features an original corner fireplace in the southwest corner. It contains a shallow firebox with regular 18th-century common brick (not a fancy treatment) used in the hearth, a wrought iron lintel supporting a brick flat arch, and the original wood moldings surround the firebox. Above the firebox and flanking it, however, where one might expect overmantel paneling, a stone veneer (or possibly a fake stone veneer) has been installed, set in cement. A door in the northeast corner of this room accesses a closet (one of the two noted above) constructed probably during the 19th century, within space that was probably originally the end of the northeast bedchamber. The closet shows evidence of having been fabricated with cut nails. The doorway into the northwest room from the center hall is a late 19th-century replacement door hung on butt hinges and other Victorian-era hardware. It provides access to the other 19th-century closet constructed within space taken from the northeast room.

The bedroom at the north end of the center hall—the **northeast room**--is accessed through an original opening, which indicates that it accessed what was an original room of the house. The door into this room is an original, 18th-century, six-panel door, without its butt-L hinges. It is currently hung on 20th-century butt hinges, but ghosts remain from the original hardware. A 19th-century door knob that it once possessed is also missing.

This bedroom is currently small, but once evidently extended to the northeast corner of the floor (see below). This room contains an original two-panel closet door, but in an opening that is suspect, seemingly having been altered. This closet door was originally supported on a pair of butt-L hinges, the ghosts of which are plainly

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visible. The closet that the door provides access to is apparently original; in it there are hand-headed nails (but unclear whether they are cut nails or wrought nails).

The **southeast room** is an original room, with its original doorway from the hall and its original 6-panel door like the others already described. It evidently was the principal bedchamber and is the best-preserved of the upstairs rooms. The room still possesses its original cornice and its entire original fireplace panel wall (Photo #14). The fireplace opening is flanked by large closets on both sides with original doors. There has been some deterioration of the wood paneling in the southeast corner of the room, near the window, which offers the wood no protection from sunlight streaming in.

A chair rail extends around the sides of the room; it may be either original or a 19th-century replacement. The age of the existing baseboard also deserves to be questioned. The doors are carried on butt-L hinges, and some of the hinges are held in place with screws of undetermined age. The firebox is shallow and been built out a couple of times, and is currently finished with a white brick veneer set in cement. The hearth is finished with original, square hearth bricks that have almost a red glazed finish.

A 19th-century four-panel door set into a Victorian period opening occupies the northeast corner of this southeast room. This opening accesses a short, **transverse passage** that gives access to the original door to the attic and the attic stair. This passage is positioned between the southeast room and the northeast room. Four steps lead up to the door to the attic. This door is original, a board-and-batten door, with one wide and two relatively narrow boards. It is held by an original wooden, hand-carved latch, and the door is held with two original H-L hinges (no need for the fancier, more stylish, butt-L hinges here).

The northeast corner room was in recent decades a bathroom. This was probably originally a small bedroom and possibly was one with the adjacent room that contains the 18th-century closet. A partition has set off this corner room at least since the 19th century, but there do not appear to be any 18th-century indicators of a partition. There is still a firebox in the original chimney and possibly some evidence of original finish treatments. The ceiling in this northeast room was replastered in the 19th century and a suspended ceiling was added in the 20th century when the room was converted to a bathroom.

Garret

Beyond the attic door in the transverse passage, the stair to the garret, or attic, is a straight flight, with several additional steps. The north side wall of this closed staircase is finished with rough 1+1/2-inch boards, some of which still show bark or wane edges right out of the sawmill (no need for finish treatment in this location). The south side wall is the brick, transverse wall that runs up through both sides of the house. A railing at the top of the stair appears to have been fashioned with old materials but fastened with wire nails.

The garret is a single, open space (Photo #15). The rafters are a combination of original rafters, and new wood rafters of the same sectional dimensions, used in the two ends of the roof nearest the chimneys. These new rafters were installed during the re-roofing of the house several years ago. This re-roofing job did away with the original furring strips and the original shingles, which had remained in place under later layers of roofing. One

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original shingle was secured during this re-roofing project. Later testing revealed that the wood species used was baldcypress (*Taxodium distichum*), an unusual and probably expensive shingle at the time of installation. The original shingles were two feet long, hand planed, and were set with a ratio of 2.5:1 (length to exposure), or about 9 and a quarter inches exposed, and the original battens or furring strips were spaced to foster this exposure. This was not understood by the contractor who undertook the recent reroofing, who unnecessarily removed these furring strips and installed new ones set to an 8-inch reveal pattern that is not historically correct for this house. The new shingles are also narrower on average than the original shingles were, by about one-quarter to one-third (the salvaged shingle, which was observed to be of about average width). There are no collar beams or other ties. The roof is supported on fairly stout and fairly closely spaced common rafters from plate to apex. During the reroofing, 2x4 lumber was used to provide some additional transverse support for the rafters.

The openings on the west end are original but filled with fixed louvered sash and there is a considerable amount of deterioration that will require repair. The original windows were probably single, hinged casements of six lights. The chimney on the west end ascends straight without corbeling. The two chimney stacks of the east end corbel together. There are two original openings on this end also, which probably held four-light casement windows that are no longer present. The masonry and carpentry elements here will also require considerable repair.

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Mercer Co., NJSection number 8 Page 1**SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT:**

Built in 1773, the Pearson house was the home of Isaac Pearson, an important political figure in Burlington County and leader of the Burlington County delegation to the New Jersey Provincial Congress in 1775-76. As the colonial period drew to a close, he was Nottingham Township's most successful officeholder. He was a leader of the congress when its objective was to protest to the British Crown for redress of grievances, but he was defeated for re-election in the spring of 1776, when public opinion turned decisively toward independence, a goal he evidently did not share. Pearson (1739-1776) was a conservative Anglican who held office under appointment from the royal governor, and he was thought by some tories to be a tory himself, but he was cautious and evidently took no immediate position. He was killed by Continental Army soldiers two days after the battle of Trenton, before he could make his true position known. In the circumstances of his life and death, he was, symbolically at least, a larger figure in the American Revolution than he has ever been given credit for being, for his experience, perhaps more than anyone else's, distills the essence of what it meant as a civilian to be caught up in Trenton's "ten crucial days," when the fledgling United States came as close as it ever would to losing the Revolution. The nominated property possesses statewide significance under National Register criterion B in the area of politics and government for its association with Pearson, and local significance under criterion A for association with the Hessian occupation of Trenton and Bordentown. It also meets criterion C for local architectural significance as an outstanding example of the blending of a vernacular Georgian farmhouse with the southern New Jersey patterned brickwork tradition.

Background History¹

The land that today contains the Isaac Pearson house started out as part of a farm, actually two farms that Isaac Pearson's father, Robert Pearson II bought in 1716 and 1723 and merged together. One was the Rogers-Atkinson farm and the other was the Schooley-Lambert-Tindall farm. From the 1680s until the 1840s, this land was part of Nottingham Township in Burlington County. Today it forms part of the western edge of Hamilton Township in Mercer County.²

When they first came to America, the Pearsons were Quakers—members of the Society of Friends—but in the 1690s a schism in the Quaker movement led by Scottish Quaker George Keith led many to embrace Church of England, or Anglican, worship. For the rest of the colonial period, the Pearsons of Nottingham Township would continue in the Anglican faith, and when a church congregation in Trenton was begun, the Pearsons and members of some of the other families of Nottingham joined the congregation.³ It would eventually become consecrated as Saint Michael's Church, and in the 1740s it would build a house of worship on Queen Street (now North Broad) in the emerging town of Trenton.⁴ The Pearsons would become leaders among the parishioners. Robert Pearson II became a member of the vestry, the parish's governing body, as would his sons Robert III and Isaac, the subject of this narrative. Isaac would serve several terms as a vestryman, and two years as church warden.⁵ When the Revolutionary war began, the Pearsons' Anglicanism would cause some to question which side they would choose in the conflict. Isaac Pearson did not live long enough to give a full answer.

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Mercer Co., NJSection number 8 Page 2**Pearson's Early Life and His Career**

Isaac Pearson was born in 1739, one of a pair of twins.⁶ He and his brother Robert were raised in what became known as the White Horse section of Nottingham Township on his father's farm that Isaac would later inherit, in a frame house that stood, according to the archaeologists, on the face of where the bluff then stood overlooking the marsh, not far from the present house. In 1753 his father died. After a re-survey of his father's lands in 1755, Isaac, then sixteen, inherited the very large farm on which his house stands, while his twin brother Robert received a legacy of other lands. For some time, however, they continued to live together in their parents' house. The twins inherited a very sizeable estate. Isaac's share came to nearly 900 acres. In 1756, the executors of the estate bought rights to an additional 123 acres to bring it to just over 1,000 acres. There may have been an underlying political motive behind this purchase. Under the colonial laws of New Jersey, with a holding of 1,000 acres a man could run for a seat in the colonial legislature, the New Jersey Assembly.⁷ Even before this purchase, Isaac's share of the estate probably represented the largest single landholding in Nottingham Township; after the purchase it would be.⁸ Perhaps he was already being readied for a career of public officeholding.

In 1760, Pearson and his brother reached the age of twenty-one. A year later he married Elizabeth Smith, probably the daughter of a Gilbert Smith, whose name appears on the marriage bond. Isaac's first public service came the following year, when in July 1761 he was chosen at a Nottingham Township meeting to serve on a committee to investigate the accounts of "the officers belonging to the town," and to "raise such sums of money" [ie. taxes] as were needed for township purposes.⁹ The committee had an auditing function, to review the accounts brought in by the past year's local officeholders. It also had an assessment responsibility, to levy the local taxes on Nottingham citizens. He would be elected again in 1764, his twin brother Robert was chosen the following year, then from 1766 through 1772 he was elected to this committee in every year except 1771.¹⁰

In 1762 Isaac was named one of Nottingham's two overseers of the highways, and it was with respect to roads and bridges that he would first distinguish himself. One of the major local issues was to ensure the state of repair of the bridge over the Assanpink Creek at the Trenton mills. That year the township dug into the pockets of its citizens to raise thirty pounds toward replacing the Trenton bridge. In the latter 1750s, this bridge, then built of timber, was in a dangerous state of disrepair.¹¹ Quick fixes bought a few more years, but a replacement was needed and what was agreed upon was to build a "stone bridge" or stone-arch bridge. Timber bridges, usually fashioned of oak timbers and planks supported on stone piers and abutments, were cheap to build but they had a short life span, often only ten to fifteen years and seldom as many as twenty before public safety required a complete replacement of the deck and stringers.¹² Stone bridges, however, were permanent, would never wear out and require almost no maintenance, but they were extremely expensive. For the cost of building one stone bridge from scratch, the freeholders could have probably built ten timber bridges or repaired twenty. Which meant that few of them were built at all, and only those for which there was a good reason. Although stone bridges had been built even in ancient Roman times, in the 1760s only a handful of them existed in New Jersey.¹³

It would be three more years before the Trenton bridge would be replaced. Meanwhile in 1763, Robert and Isaac Pearson were named in a provincial statute to be Nottingham's two members of a four-man commission to oversee construction of a timber drawbridge over Crosswicks Creek (on the site where US Route 206 crosses

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the creek today).¹⁴ This was to be paid for, however, by voluntary subscription, and it was the responsibility of the commissioners to raise the money. The bridge was needed to shorten the travel time between Trenton and Bordentown. The money was raised and the drawbridge promptly built. The other two commissioners were older and more experienced men, Joseph Borden of Bordentown and William Emley, but because the drawbridge was to be constructed at the edge of Isaac Pearson's farm, he would have been the logical person to take the leading role in overseeing construction.

Isaac Pearson was also elected Nottingham's tax collector in 1763, which may have made raising subscriptions for the drawbridge easier. He and his brother were already paying the largest tax of any of Nottingham's citizens¹⁵, so it may have made sense to the town fathers to allow this young man to collect the tax money from everyone. Meanwhile, both men were gaining an education in township governance as they moved from office to office. His brother Robert was named collector in 1764, but Isaac was retained on the standing township committee. The following year they alternated again, with Isaac taking over the collector duties and Robert returning to the township committee. Also in 1765, Isaac sampled another township office when he performed the duties of overseer of the poor.¹⁶

Isaac evidently had the greater aspirations, and he gradually began to distinguish himself with higher offices by which he distanced himself from his brother. He was also more likely to hold multiple offices at the same time. In 1766 he was again named to the Nottingham standing committee and was chosen for the first time to be township clerk. He would continue as clerk through at least 1772. In 1765 he was also chosen by Nottingham Township to be its manager to supervise the construction of the stone-arch bridge in Trenton over the Assunpink (today South Broad Street).¹⁷ As already noted, the condition of this bridge had been a festering issue since the 1750s at least. Isaac's position as tax collector and his work on the drawbridge over Crosswicks Creek must have commended him for this assignment. Pearson petitioned the Assembly in February 1764 for a statute to compel Hunterdon County to join in the project, to which the legislature eventually complied¹⁸. Construction of the new bridge was an important assignment because the bridge was vital to everyday life for Trenton and Nottingham alike. In addition, it was on the main route between Philadelphia and New York City and its stage traffic was growing in importance every year. Likewise it bore a heavy freight of wagons headed for the Trenton ferry and the Philadelphia market. Its importance to Nottingham was so great that once when it needed repair, the overseer of the highway was authorized to repair the bridge immediately, even if he had to borrow money at interest to do so.¹⁹ Few pieces of the public's business could claim that level of urgency.

Hunterdon County was not unaware of the importance of the bridge, however, and had spent nearly eleven pounds in its own repairs of the bridge since the spring of 1763. In May 1764 the Hunterdon freeholders at their annual meeting voted 10 to 4 to accept a two-thirds cost share for a new Trenton bridge and to raise 270 pounds in additional taxes by the following November, evidently estimating that a new bridge would cost about 400 pounds.²⁰ The new bridge was built under terms dictated by a law enacted the following year by the legislature.²¹ The Assembly adopted the funding formula that Hunterdon had already agreed to, which placed the other one-third share on Nottingham Township, not on Burlington County as a whole. Nottingham also was to receive credit for the thirty pounds it had already spent on work on its end of the bridge. Similar cost-sharing arrangements had already been imposed on Middlesex and Somerset counties for the project to construct the Bound Brook stone-arch bridge in 1730, and would be again for other expensive bridges. Counties, reluctant to

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spend money on bridges that were not fully their own, would sometimes cooperate only when compelled to do so by legislation.²² The 1765 law named only two of the three men that Hunterdon had selected as managers for the project, Thomas Barnes and Abraham Hunt, who were Trenton merchants. Pearson was the only manager named in the act to represent Nottingham. Thus the number of managers for each side reflected the funding formula. These men were not strangers to one another, and Pearson probably felt very congenial about the naming of Hunt, for Hunt had recently married one of Pearson's sisters. Thus the two men were brothers-in-law. They were three men drawn from the local elite.²³ To ensure that they constructed the bridge and stuck to the bargain, however, the act named five commissioners to oversee the managers.

In 1766, Isaac was elected a chosen freeholder at the annual township meeting that March.²⁴ Like today, the chosen freeholder was a county office, but in the eighteenth century chosen freeholders were selected by township voters during their annual meetings, not elected at large throughout an entire county. County governments were managed by a body called the "board of justices and freeholders"—the forerunner of today's boards of chosen freeholders—but it differed from the modern freeholder boards because it included at least three of the county's justices of the peace as well as all of the chosen freeholders.²⁵ Isaac's experience would have been a good fit on this board, because one of the board's most important duties—and which took up the bulk of its time—was the repair and replacement of highway bridges. All bridges except the very tiniest were the responsibility of the county freeholders to maintain, even though the roads that connected them were under township maintenance. It must have made for improved coordination, then, that while Isaac was on the county freeholder board, his brother Robert was named one of Nottingham's overseers of the highways for 1766.²⁶

In March 1767 Nottingham held its annual township meeting at the "house" of Isaac Pearson. In the colonial period, townships as a rule did not have municipal buildings of their own. Instead they typically held their meetings in one of the licensed taverns in their township. In this case, the building being referred to was not the present house, which would not be under construction for several more years. Rather, this township minute may be a clue to the history of the White Horse tavern. With the drawbridge in operation, the route through Pearson's farm was becoming more important, more heavily used. As a result, construction of a tavern at what became known as White Horse (in the vicinity of the White Horse Circle on Route 206) would likely have been wanted. Pearson had the tavern built in 1765, according to Helen West's 1954 history of Hamilton Township.²⁷ Pearson continued to own the property on which the tavern was built until his death, but he would not himself have run the tavern on a daily basis. Many taverns were rental properties, with the tavernkeeper paying rent to the owner. Pearson evidently leased out his tavern. Historians have had some difficulty piecing together a list of Pearson's tavernkeepers, but apparently they haven't considered the evidence of the township minutes themselves. In 1759 Nottingham began a practice of alternating the location of its annual March meeting between two different parts of the township, to be fairer to outlying residents. James White's tavern was the most frequently chosen, used chiefly in the even-numbered years between 1760 and 1770.²⁸ Pearson's next turn to host the meeting after 1767 would have come in 1769, when the minutes state that the annual meeting was held at the house of Michael Nowlands, and again in 1771, when he is referred to more specifically as "Michael Nowlands at the White Horse."²⁹ Thus Nowlands may have rented the tavern from Pearson in this period.

1767 was also a memorable year in Pearson's life because he was at the peak of his plural officeholding. He was again picked to be Nottingham's chosen freeholder, he was kept on the township standing committee, and

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he was held in his position as township clerk.³⁰ In June that year he also received a commission from Governor William Franklin to become one of Burlington County's justices of the peace.³¹ It was his first appointment to public office by the Royal governor. He was one of twenty persons named in the commission, which covered all of the county's justices. The justice of the peace was an office that might be described as part local administrator and part local judge, but the justices also sat on the board of justices and freeholders, which made a justice of the peace a county officer as well. The board had a strange and complex quorum requirement. In order to function as a board, at least three of the justices had to be present at its meetings along with the chosen freeholders, and of the three who attended, at least one had to come from a more select list of ten justices who were specifically named for this purpose in the commission. Pearson was also one of this more select group of ten justices, at least one of whom had to attend these meetings. Such justices were said to be "of the quorum."³² As a result of how these boards were composed, once Pearson became a justice, he no longer continued to be elected a chosen freeholder by Nottingham Township. This mechanism apparently assured the governor some influence in county deliberations, but it made Pearson an appointed, rather than an elected, member of the board. To become a justice would have been a promotion from chosen freeholder, and he probably would have enjoyed a sizeable income from his new post. The New Jersey colonial assembly frequently tinkered with the laws concerning justices, and by the end of the colonial period, a justice was tasked with dozens of distinct responsibilities. Justices issues writs for election of local officials and appointed local officials such as tax assessor or collector if vacancies occurred in these positions. Justices adjudicated small civil suits, various minor misdemeanors, and cases involving the poor laws. Justices also enforced statutory regulations concerning flour, timber, hunting, liquor, and slaves. For nearly any action a justice was required to take he was entitled to charge a fee that might run from pennies to shillings depending upon how difficult or time consuming it was.³³ Pearson would continue in the position of justice, until 1776, but the work he performed in that role will likely remain largely unknown, for apparently the dockets he was required to keep to detail his actions have not turned up.

The big issue for the freeholders in 1767 was the insufficiency of the county jail in Burlington. The board voted to fund repairs to the existing jail while also building a new jail.³⁴ This project, like others that the board would carry out, was entrusted to "managers," usually chosen from among the board members, and this project would take a couple of years to complete. The board in 1767 voted to resurvey the boundary line between Springfield and Mansfield Townships, and it also voted to require township assessors to hand in a duplicate of their assessment lists to the county collector.³⁵

The freeholders would hold an annual meeting during the second or third week of May. They would convene at the county courthouse, take and record the attendance, ensure that they had a quorum for the conduct of business, and then they would promptly adjourn to a local tavern, where the real meeting would begin in earnest. In 1768, for example, they adjourned to the "house" of David Clayton.³⁶ That year five justices attended the meeting, including Pearson, even though he was not "of the quorum" this time. Still struggling through the jail construction project, the board instituted another modest, good-government reform, voting to require managers of building projects henceforth to inspect deliveries of building materials and determine that the materials were "good and sufficient for [their] purpose," before payment was requested from the county collector.³⁷

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The next year, May 1769, Pearson again attended, but neither of Nottingham's two chosen freeholders showed up. The county collector, Daniel Ellis, was re-elected to the post for another year.³⁸ The county sheriff, Thomas Rodman, had advanced much of the money to get the jail built, relying on reimbursements from Ellis.³⁹ The jail project continued until 1770, when the board directed that stocks and a whipping post be constructed. Ellis, the collector, and Thomas Pryor, Jr., were elected managers to finish the jail project. The board also voted to allow Sarah Campion to remain as the live-in caretaker for the courthouse, and they gave her permission to have an oven built in her quarters there, at her own expense.⁴⁰

One of the annual duties of the board was to pay its share of the colony-wide "Sinking Fund Tax." New Jersey had issued a stream of paper money to help fight the Seven Years War with, and those notes had to be withdrawn and canceled, or "sunk," on a regular basis each year. The board received from the treasurer of the Western Division of New Jersey, Samuel Smith, Esq. (for administrative reasons, New Jersey had two colonial treasurers), a large amount of currency to be sunk. To ensure that the treasurer wasn't cheating, by taking bills that should have been sunk and spending them instead for his personal benefit, the freeholders would take scissors to the bills to be canceled, cut out a specified portion of each one, carefully add up the values of the notes thus canceled, bundle them up and place them into a cloth bag that was sewn shut and stamped with the seals of the justices and the freeholders, and given back to the treasurer. Thus the treasurer would be easily able to show how much of the paper money had been sunk, when his own accounts were audited.

This was a routine procedure by the late-1760s, but every bill that was sunk shrank the money supply. By 1770, the tight money was causing problems. At its May meeting that year, the board appointed the collector, Ellis, along with Pearson and Anthony Sykes to be a committee "to draw up a Memorial to the Assembly Setting Forth the hardships this County Labours under in Transacting the Public Business according to Laws."⁴¹

The following year, 1771, no one showed up from Nottingham for the May meeting. At that meeting, Robert Smith, Esq., one of the justices, proposed a series of thirteen rules of etiquette and procedure by which board meetings were to be governed. These "Robert's" rules were promptly approved by the board and spread upon the minutes.⁴² The minutes state that the board met again, out of season, so to speak, in January 1772. They were summoned evidently to decide whether to offer medical care to a man named William Read, described as a "County Labourer," who was also accused of murder. Read had contracted some "foul disease," and the board was concerned that he might die before his trial. This was the first time that a decision was reflected in the minutes by a roll-call vote. Only the names of the freeholders were called, however; they voted 13 to 5 in favor of paying for the doctor. The four justices who attended the meeting, including Pearson, were not included in this poll. But after the freeholders approved the measure, the minutes state that the justices all concurred in this humanitarian gesture.⁴³

In August 1772, Isaac Pearson was promoted again. This time he was appointed by Governor Franklin to serve for a special three-month term as one of several judges of the Burlington County court of oyer and terminer.⁴⁴ This was an important assignment, given primarily to a hand-picked number of the county's justices of the peace. The oyer and terminer courts were sessions held to try the most serious criminal cases, including murder. A court of oyer and terminer could impose the death penalty for various high crimes. Horse stealing had already been a capital crime, for example, but in 1772, the year of Pearson's appointment, the legislature gave oyer and

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terminer courts a measure of discretion in meting out lesser punishment to horse thieves, especially first-time offenders. In 1774, the legislature added counterfeiting to the oyer and terminer caseload. Sessions were held in each county usually once or twice a year, and they were presided over by the chief justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court or by an associate justice, joined by justices from the county involved. Serving on this court would have allowed Pearson to continue as a justice of the peace for Nottingham Township, but from the time of his appointment he seems to have paid little further attention to the board of justices and freeholders.

Pearson's House

In 1773, Pearson undertook to have a new house built for himself and his family. It still stands well-preserved on its original site at a slight bend of today's Hobson Avenue, just north of the bridge over Interstate Route 195. The residential neighborhood that surrounds the house today was Isaac Pearson's farm in the 18th century. His home is an extraordinary building in the southern New Jersey patterned brickwork tradition. It is a vernacular expression of the "Georgian" architectural style, a fine example of what was the reigning style in America. It was built of brick, the most expensive building material that was commonly available. It is symmetrical in elevation and nearly so in plan, with a central stairhall flanked by two rooms on either side (two halls and two parlors—front and back) on the first floor, with a full cellar underneath, and a second story with four bedchambers. Together with a sizeable kitchen wing that is now missing, these features marked this building as the type of house that a person of means would aspire to own. Pearson, with his income as a justice added to his income as a gentleman farmer, was one of the very few in Nottingham Township who had the money to afford it.

The house is loaded with unusual refinements. Most of its original, fine, interior woodwork remains intact, even though some elements have been replaced. Numerals fashioned from vitrified bricks in the west gable form "1773," representing the year that the walls went up. These numerals appear to be the only decorative use of vitrified bricks in the house (the stringcourse on the south elevation is another possibility, but it is covered with stucco and cannot be examined). The brickwork of the facade is laid in Flemish bond, but the headers are plain. This feature—Flemish bond with plain headers—is in line with the emerging fashion among finer houses that would become typical after the Revolution with the rise of the Federal style. The popularity of Flemish bond with vitrified, or "glazed," headers was already on the wane, and that building practice would disappear in the 1790s. A pent roof extends from front to rear, just below these numerals. Pent roofs, or pentices, were a vernacular feature not found on the most formal Georgian houses. Rather they had been popular in the north midlands of England from whence most of the Quaker settlers had come nearly a hundred years before. As a result, pent roofs were common features in the Quaker architecture of southern New Jersey. An original pent roof from the 18th century, such as the one on the Pearson house may be, is an increasingly rare survival.

No specific information about the construction of this house has yet turned up, but such records may still exist, and might someday reveal who the masons and carpenters were who built it, and how much it cost. It was, by any reckoning, an expensive house. The likelihood is that it cost much more than 1,000 pounds in the New Jersey money of the period, probably more than most gristmills cost to build at that time. A large house such as Pearson's would have probably taken a year or longer to complete, so construction probably continued at least into 1774. The property also had a large barn and would have had a full complement of outbuildings. Isaac Pearson must have spent heavily for their construction, and took extra pains with many of the features of the

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house. When a new wood-shingle roof was installed in 2000, one of the original shingles was retrieved and tested. The USDA Wood Products Laboratory in Wisconsin identified the wood species as baldcypress (*Taxodium distichum*).⁴⁵ Few baldcypress grow in New Jersey today, and in the 18th century it would not have been found north of Cumberland or Salem counties. In other words, Pearson went the extra mile, literally, for his roof shingles, in a regional trade that suggests he acted through an unidentified Philadelphia supplier.

Another fine touch is found over the first-story windows. The only building material more expensive than brick—much more expensive—was cut stone, and the longer the piece of cut stone the more expensive it was. The first-story window lintels, and the one over the door, are shaped from single pieces of limestone or marble, hand cut, beveled, and tooled on the face to resemble keystone flat arches, as if several pieces of stone were combined. In less expensively-built houses, wood or roughly-shaped sandstone would have been used in keystone lintels. Wood is, in fact, used in the second-story lintels of both the facade and the rear elevation. The chimneys are another feature bearing details that set this house apart from its contemporaries. A common chimney that would be found on almost any farmhouse would have risen with a simple rectangular stack straight up from the point where it pierced the roof, extending up to a simple cap of one or two courses of corbeled brick. Only in the best houses was there any effort at all for a sculptural effect. In the Pearson house, the west chimney tapers slightly inward and displays extra bands of original corbeling at the top. The extra effort that this required in construction—like the extra effort in placing the date in the gable—was made for a client who must have understood the appearance that it would make. The east chimney still has the taper and probably once also had the corbeling, but the uppermost few courses of brick have been removed.

Structurally, the house was built with a transverse masonry bearing wall in the cellar that rises between the halls and the parlors respectively up through the second floor between the bedchambers to the level of the attic floor. This was a feature that some brick houses of the period possessed that were two rooms deep, and it was a feature that would have added both to the strength of the building and to its cost. The position of the attic stair along the transverse wall, and the short, transverse passage that accesses it, foreshadow the more complex floor plans that would become common in large houses of the Federal period after the Revolution.

The interior woodwork was also executed with an above-average level of fineness. The original interior door openings on both the first and second stories are finished with architrave surrounds that are more finely molded than those that were generally fabricated for the houses of prosperous farmers that were built in rural New Jersey before the Revolution. Some of the rooms also feature molded cornices, either around the entire room or at the top of paneled walls. The paneling in the principal bedchamber is completely intact and occupies the entire east wall of the room. It is the largest and finest piece of paneling in the house, featuring a fireplace with original molded surround, overmantel paneling, and two flanking, full-size closets. This must have doubtless been the bedchamber of Isaac and Elizabeth Pearson, as it is the finest of the upstairs rooms. Whether these surfaces were originally painted, and in what colors, awaits a future forensic investigation.

Even miscellaneous features of the house reflect an extra level of care in the construction or an additional nod to fashion. Some of the door hinges are of the butt-L form, a more fashionable type than the H-L hinges that were widely used during the period. And at least two of the hearths still retain the shallow, square, fancy, hearth bricks with which they were originally tiled. In one hearth they appear to have been either painted a red ochre

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color or glazed. Hearths were usually tiled with ordinary, unpainted common bricks in this period, even in many of the finer houses.

Of all of the houses that are known to have stood in Nottingham Township during the colonial period, only the Trent house (in the part of Nottingham now within the city limits of Trenton) surpasses it architecturally, and no others are now known to have rivaled it. The Trent house had been built two generations before, largely between 1719 and 1721, for the family of William Trent, New Jersey's chief justice and a major Philadelphia merchant who moved in much loftier social circles that included James Logan and William Penn. Pearson, in comparison, was a local justice of the peace, and he could sit in judgment at an oyer-and-terminer court with a chief justice, but only as a junior member of the panel. Trent's fortune was derived from Atlantic trading; Pearson's was generated locally. That distinction, more than any other, explains the differences between the two men's houses. Still, in the part of Nottingham that would later become Hamilton Township, Pearson's house was probably the finest house built for anyone up to that time.

His house was built when Isaac Pearson was 34 years old. He was married, his eldest child was about ten years old, and he was a successful gentleman farmer, businessman, and public official. He had risen from overseer of the highways to township clerk, to chosen freeholder, to justice of the peace, to county judge. He was already known throughout the county's public sphere, and was a rising star among its political figures. He was Nottingham Township's most successful officeholder. Now he had a house to match his position, one that was the equal, at least, of almost any in southern or central New Jersey. For part of the next two years, Pearson played host to the Rev. George Panton, the new rector of St. Michael's Church in Trenton, who arrived in the rectorship in 1773, when the house would have been under construction.⁴⁶

Toward the Revolution

He would not have long to enjoy his new home. After the Stamp Act crisis of 1765 ended, Britain imposed other import duties and the colonies followed by organizing non-importation campaigns. It was in this period that Pearson's service to the Revolutionary-era protests evidently began. It was one thing to get merchants to pledge not to import or sell British goods; it was another to get them to make good on their promises. Non-importation agreements had to be enforced. In 1770, Pearson, while justice of the peace, was named to a committee to "inspect into the trade" in the Bordentown area.⁴⁷ This would not have been a mere weights-and-measures exercise; the committee must have been checking whether merchants were cheating on the non-importation agreement.

Isaac Pearson began to ride the wave of popular outrage over British retaliation against Boston. On July 20, 1774, he chaired a meeting of Burlington County citizens that resolved to support the call for a congress of all the colonies, and appealed to the legislature to send a New Jersey delegation.⁴⁸ In the fall of 1774, the first Continental Congress, meeting in Philadelphia, requested that every province and every county and town form committees of observation and correspondence, to help unify the colonies in support of whatever measures were to be taken to assist the people of Boston, where the port had been closed by the British navy after the Boston Tea Party of December 1773. On February 14, 1775, inhabitants of the city and county of Burlington met and appointed a committee of observation.⁴⁹ Isaac Pearson was one of its 33 members. He remained a member of this committee for the next few months while similar committees were formed across New Jersey.

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Meanwhile, in late January 1775, property owners in Nottingham Township signed a petition to the New Jersey Assembly, urging reconciliation with Britain.⁵⁰ Forty-three men signed this petition, including both Isaac Pearson and his brother Robert. Neither seems to have originated the petition, however, which may have been the work of Reverend Panton. The petitioners said that they feared the outbreak of a civil war, which they felt the direction of events was leading to. They urged a negotiation and even allowed that colonists should pay some portion of the costs associated with imperial defense, provided that their share was affordable. These were very conservative views, even at the beginning of 1775. The petition produced no significant result.

Pearson in the Provincial Congress

That's where matters stood in late April 1775, when the news of the battles of Lexington and Concord reached New Jersey. Newark reacted to the news quickly, suggesting that militia captains start drilling their companies not less than once each week, to hasten their readiness. Within a few days, the Princeton committee of correspondence issued a call for a provincial congress to convene on May 5th, and for each county to elect delegates to attend that congress. On May 2nd, Pearson was named with at least nine others to a committee called the "New Jersey Provincial Committee of Correspondence."⁵¹ Apparently this committee helped organize the provincial congress that was soon to follow. This foreshadowed the leadership roles he would play within the congress.

The provincial congress was convened on May 23rd, 1775. Pearson had been elected one of five delegates from Burlington County.⁵² He attended both the first session which lasted into June 1775 and a second session in August. Among the congress's accomplishments was the raising of a ten thousand-pound tax on the colony to fund its work. Its principal focus was to build up the armed militias of the colony and to bring them under the congress's control. The congress aimed to establish "minute man" companies in each county, modeled on the town-based minuteman companies that had performed well in New England. Burlington County, for example, was assigned to raise five such companies.⁵³ The congress also set requirements for their establishment.

In the aftermath of the first session of the congress, Pearson took stock of his situation and took at least one precaution. In July 1775 he wrote out a last will and testament, which would be proved many years after his death.⁵⁴ In the context of the times it must have been a prudent thing to do. The state of public affairs was deteriorating dangerously, and the civil war that Pearson and other Nottingham Township men had warned of just six months before was coming to pass. Pearson had a wife to consider—Elizabeth—and several children, the eldest of whom was entering the teen years. He had large landholdings and he had his fine, new house, which had been started only two years before and which he had probably been occupying for only little more than one year. His will was witnessed by Reverend Panton, who, as noted above, boarded with the Pearsons for some considerable portion of the two years he was rector of Trenton.

On August 17th, when the congress adjourned, Pearson was named to a select group of eleven delegates who formed a "Committee of Safety" to act during the recess.⁵⁵ In the event of necessity, this committee could call the congress back into session. On August 30th the committee considered how to respond to vacancies in militia companies due to the promotion of their officers. The following day the committee resolved that due to increasing horse stealing and other robberies and many servants running away from their masters, that "it be

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recommended to the good people of this Province, that they do strictly examine all suspicious persons passing to and fro through the different parts thereof"⁵⁶ Two weeks later the committee ordered two of its members to arrange with Isaac Collins, the Burlington printer, to print the proceedings of both the congress and the committee of safety. On September 6th, Pearson issued a notice of election to be held later that month for delegates to the next session of the congress. In the notice, he is identified as "Chairman of the Burlington County Deputies" (members of the Burlington County delegation).⁵⁷

The congress postponed the date of its reconvening until October 3rd. Isaac Pearson was again elected one of the five delegates from Burlington County.⁵⁸ Careful attention was paid this time to the delegates' certificates of election. Soon some Monmouth County citizens petitioned the congress challenging the legitimacy of their delegation. Burlington County was one of three counties that voted to unseat the Monmouth delegation, but the resolution was defeated nine counties to three.⁵⁹ Pearson's own view of the controversy was not recorded. Some inhabitants of Nottingham Township petitioned the congress to be allowed to join a troop of light horse that was being raised in Trenton. The minutes do not show whether Pearson supported the cause of his fellow Nottingham residents, but the congress gave a qualified approval two weeks later.⁶⁰

Once again, Pearson was an active and leading member. On October 6th, he and four other delegates were named to serve on a committee to examine the returns of the minuteman companies and the rosters of their officers.⁶¹ Pearson was the first of the committee members to be named, which suggests the possibility that he headed the committee. This was an important assignment and evidently a continuing responsibility. Because the creation of these militia companies was authorized by the congress and because the officers would receive their commissions from the congress, it was important to determine that the companies were capably led by persons who would support both the provincial congress and the Continental Congress. On October 7th, Pearson's committee (if it can be so called) reported to the congress that it had reviewed the rolls of three minute man companies, found them in accordance with the congress's previous instructions, and advised that commissions should be issued to their officers.⁶² Additional commissions for other companies were approved on subsequent days, which means that the committee must have continued to meet. On October 17th, 1775, the congress named Pearson as it formed another committee of five delegates to draft an ordinance to compel the payment of the ten thousand-pound tax by those persons refusing to pay.⁶³ Such refusals constituted a direct rejection of the authority of the congress, and if they became widespread, they would have undermined the fiscal support needed for the militia companies.

On October 17th and 18th, the congress took up the issue of Reverend Jonathan Odell, the Anglican priest of St. Mary's Church in Burlington City, and even took the step of calling Odell to appear before them. The congress was responding to a letter it had received from the Pennsylvania committee of correspondence asking New Jersey to investigate Odell's recent statements and conduct, for he had gotten himself into trouble in Pennsylvania over some remarks he made there. Odell got off easy, this time. The congress concluded that even though he philosophically opposed all measures taken by the provincial and Continental congresses, he had merely expressed his opinions on these matters and had not taken any overt act.⁶⁴ How Pearson, himself, felt about an Anglican rector being grilled the minutes do not record, but he must have felt a strong sense of concern. As a vestryman of St. Michael's Anglican church in Trenton and a county judge in Burlington, Pearson certainly must have been well acquainted with Odell and would have looked upon him as a leader of his

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own faith. Although the minutes do not record any input from Pearson on this issue, the congress nonetheless reached a resolution in this matter that one might imagine was a compromise that Pearson could easily accept and might even have argued for.

The congress took two other major steps during this session. It authorized the emission of £30,000 in bills of credit—the paper currency or “proclamation” money that comprised the bulk of the circulating medium in New Jersey.⁶⁵ The Assembly had passed a law in 1774 authorizing £40,000, but that law contained the suspending clause that Britain required of all colonial paper money laws, and the bills had not yet been issued.⁶⁶ The congress wanted to loosen the money supply to make it easier for citizens to pay the £10,000 tax. Leaders knew that it would be a popular move, and that it would further undercut the colonial Assembly. The congress’s other step was even more ominous. It voted to buy 3,000 stands of arms, ten tons of gunpowder and other munitions.⁶⁷ Although no public body was openly advocating independence from Britain, the effect of the congress’s actions was to move New Jersey toward a *de facto* autonomy.

At the end of October 1775, the congress named a new committee of safety, with eleven members plus the president and vice-president of the congress. Once again, Pearson was named to this committee.⁶⁸ It was an important time to serve. The congress had voted a long recess, intending to reconvene the following April, subject, of course, to being called back sooner by the committee. So the committee possessed considerable power, and as events turned, would need to use it. The Assembly—the legitimate legislature of the colony—was called by Governor Franklin and met for its final productive session in November. Pushed by petitions to discourage independence, including one from 48 property owners of Burlington County (Pearson did not sign it),⁶⁹ the Assembly stated flatly, “reports of Independency, in the apprehension of this House, are groundless.”⁷⁰ Less than two months later, Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense* appeared in the colonies.

The committee of safety called the congress back into session at the end of January 1776. Once again, Pearson was a member of the Burlington County slate that was elected.⁷¹ For Pearson, it was the final time he would be elected to a public office. He continued to occupy the lesser offices that he still held, but this would be his last term in the congress. The tone of this winter session was different, more tense and hostile. The committee of safety had ordered a guard to surround the residence of Governor Franklin in January, threatening to arrest him, but then backed off. The congress in February sent militia to Bergen County to help build defenses for New York and New Jersey. The Assembly the previous November had voted that single men who were living at home should pay a tax. These men were already serving in the militia, and now they were going to be taxed, yet most of them probably lacked the freehold property qualification to vote. To remedy the unfairness of this situation, the congress in February 1776 voted that henceforth inhabitants who were worth £50 in proclamation money would be eligible to vote if they had resided in New Jersey for one year. For the first time in New Jersey, voters would not need to be landowners.⁷² It is not clear how many people at once took advantage of this historic broadening of the franchise, but these terms would be used the next time the congress was elected, and they would be incorporated into the New Jersey constitution later in the year.

With Tom Paine’s *Common Sense* on everyone’s mind, the spring of 1776 became the moment to debate the question of independence. The provincial congress set a date in May for a referendum on the question.⁷³ This time, the new, relaxed suffrage rules would apply. No evidence has emerged to show if Pearson worked to

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persuade people to oppose independence, but he evidently did not support it. Meanwhile, patriot militias were disarming Tories, who in some places were forming militias of their own. In some places justices of the peace were being arrested. The next election for the provincial congress took place in June 1776. It would seem likely that Pearson would have stood as a candidate on a county-wide slate in this voting, but he was not elected. Some within the county evidently felt that irregularities marred the voting, but no successful challenge to the results was mounted, and Burlington presented a completely new five-man delegation, who were independence supporters.⁷⁴

July – December 1776

The first week of July 1776 was one of the most remarkable moments in American history. New Jersey's provincial congress—now without Isaac Pearson—approved a new constitution for an independent New Jersey on July 2nd. In Philadelphia, the Declaration of Independence was approved on July 4th. The Declaration was hastily printed in Philadelphia and was read in Trenton on July 8th.⁷⁵ The war, previously limited to Massachusetts and Quebec, was being brought in abundance to New York and New Jersey. The British began to land troops and supplies on Staten Island that same week. For Pearson the moment must have been bittersweet. Out of office, he took no part in the final takeover of New Jersey government by the provincial congress and no part in its decision to support independence. No one from Burlington County was included in the new, New Jersey delegation to the Continental Congress. Pearson, an Anglican himself, must have been dismayed when three weeks before, governor William Franklin, New Jersey's highest-ranking Anglican, was arrested and brought to the provincial congress for questioning and then imprisonment. We don't know whether Pearson attended the public reading of the Declaration in Trenton. The one thing known of his whereabouts that first week in July is that on July 7th, a day before the reading, he attended a meeting of the vestry of St. Michael's Church in Trenton, at which the vestrymen decided to lock the doors of the church for what would turn out to be the duration of the war. The nature of the times, they concluded, was such that they could not ensure the physical safety of their rector, Panton, or even of parishioners, if worship services continued. Since Pearson and the rector spent a good deal of time together, Pearson must have felt concerned for his own physical safety as well.⁷⁶

The last six months of 1776 are nearly a blank page as far as knowledge of Pearson is concerned. Nearly all of what is known dates from December. By December 1776 there were plenty of reasons for a Loyalist to feel vindicated and a supporter of independence to feel a mounting sense of panic. With one military defeat following another, the Continental Army was pushed out of New York and then across New Jersey. As December began, the army reached Trenton. Soon the Americans were commandeering all private boats for many miles up and down the river.⁷⁷ Pearson probably would have been affected by this action. His property backed up to Crosswicks Creek and the Trenton marsh. He had his own landing on the creek, so it seems deducible that whatever boats he had would have been taken at this time. We don't know what he thought or felt about this, but it may have been his own first loss to the war effort. More would come later.

The Americans began leaving Trenton on December 7th and the British arrived on the 8th.⁷⁸ On the 14th, they left a brigade of Hessians to occupy Trenton, three regiments and about 1500 men, and another Hessian force of roughly equal size to take Bordentown. The latter force marched through Trenton to White Horse, past Pearson's house and tavern, and passed over the Crosswicks Creek drawbridge enroute to Bordentown. A 100-

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man detachment from the Trenton force was promptly stationed at White Horse to guard the drawbridge to protect communications with Bordentown. These men encamped in the houses of the neighborhood, undoubtedly including both Pearson's tavern and his own house.⁷⁹ When the Hessians came, they seized a wagon that Pearson owned and impressed into service a laborer who worked for the Pearsons as a driver. During the two weeks that they kept the wagon, they also took a set of harness that they never returned and twelve "fat sheep," undoubtedly to slaughter them to feed their men. These were merely a few large items that Pearson's widow would later remember; what other items they lost are not recorded.⁸⁰ If they had lost nothing else it would have been unusual, given an established reputation for plunder that surrounded the Hessians in America.⁸¹ Most farms lost their fences in this period, for example, and any other loose lumber—outbuildings even had their clapboards lifted—as the troops scavenged for wood to maintain campfires. Houses abandoned by their owners were likely to be stripped.

The Battle of Trenton and Its Aftermath

When General Washington led 2,400 men in his attack on Trenton on December 26th, his surprising success must have astonished Pearson as well. The Americans captured or killed two-thirds of the Hessian force, but the other third managed to escape the American encirclement and retreated to Bordentown with the news.⁸² Once again, they would have crossed Pearson's farm and passed close to his house. Perhaps this time they were in too much of a hurry to take anything. From them Pearson would have learned that the Continental army had taken Trenton. Once again he would have been reminded even more powerfully that he was caught between two military forces, only *this* time they were enemies to one another. In fact, Pearson found himself about half-way between Trenton and Bordentown. If part of the American force came out to take back the drawbridge, they might well make a battlefield of Pearson's farm, and very soon. The remnants of Rall's brigade that reached White Horse, almost 300 men, left the drawbridge detachment in place and proceeded to Bordentown. The Hessian commander there briefly sent a brigade to reinforce the drawbridge and to reconnoiter, but after staying there for a few hours in the afternoon, the entire force was ordered back to Bordentown. So by the evening of the 26th there were no Hessians at White Horse for the first time in nearly two weeks.⁸³

The Final Ride

Pearson must have thought his situation was still desperate, or else he never would have taken off when he did, leaving home on December 28th for what would be the final time. Where he was going and why have never been known with certainty, but local traditions that were reported in the 19th century assert that he was seeking protection for himself and his family and property. In the absence of direct evidence, it seems likely that he made his decision to leave after the Hessian withdrawal, and took the day of the 27th to prepare. Amid an atmosphere of swirling rumors, he probably learned on the 27th that the Continental Army had evacuated Trenton within a few hours of taking the town. So if he had wanted to travel, this would have looked like a window of opportunity. All of a sudden, the regiments in Trenton, the brigade in Bordentown, and the detachment at White Horse were all gone at the same time. He must have thought that this relaxation would not last and chosen the following day to act. But Saturday, December 28th, 1776, was no ordinary day. It was also not an occasion fit for travel, and for Pearson it would have tragic consequences. It snowed heavily that morning, yielding six inches according to one weather record in the region.⁸⁴ Then it stopped snowing and turned bitterly cold in the afternoon, much colder than when the Americans had attacked Trenton two days before. If Pearson had waited until the snow stopped before setting out, that fact alone would have sealed his

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chances of reaching New Brunswick, one of the places where he was said to be going. What might under warmer circumstances have been a one-day ride became an overnight affair. But wherever Pearson was heading, he never got there. He was discovered in Hightstown late that afternoon or that evening by an advance party of Continental troops who shot him, claiming he was trying to escape. He was probably killed instantly. His body was brought to a tavern in Allentown the following afternoon, the 29th.⁸⁵ From there he was carted home and buried in the Pearson family burying ground.

Was Pearson a Loyalist ?

Hamilton Township historians have struggled ever since with this question: was Isaac Pearson a Loyalist? In 1979, historians involved in an archaeological study of Pearson's farm essentially accepted that he was, but did not provide demonstrable proof. Nearer in time to the events, however, nineteenth-century local historians Joseph H. West of Hamilton and Charles R. Hutchinson of Allentown also wrote about Pearson, but left the question of his allegiance open. West told Hutchinson, "unless he [Pearson] had done something which has not been handed down to us, he could not properly be called a Tory."⁸⁶ Even at the time of Pearson's death he did not go unnoticed. The rumors and the word-of-mouth didn't take long even to reach New York City, where the Tory printer Rivington noted Pearson's death in the January 13, 1777 issue of his newspaper.⁸⁷ He related what he must have heard, although his source is unknown. Rivington wrote incorrectly that Pearson had died the previous week (it was actually more than two weeks before), that he was killed by "rebellious banditti" (editorial license) and that he was attempting to reach New York, not New Brunswick at the time. The last claim, if true, would have been very damaging to Pearson's reputation among Americans, if it could be confirmed, because that would have marked him in almost everyone's eyes as a Loyalist, but no one else who might have known claimed Pearson was headed for New York.

Some others thought he was a Loyalist, too. William Smith, a fellow member of the provincial congress who did become a Loyalist, left for New York, and would have his property confiscated. He wrote to British authorities after the end of the war that he thought Pearson to be like-minded to himself, and he gave an affidavit that lends credence to the belief that Pearson did not support independence and was opposed to much of what the "whig party" in the congress was up to.⁸⁸ But one legislator, talking to a fellow legislator about what their political opponents were attempting does not make Pearson a Loyalist, either—a conservative, yes, a Loyalist, no. And finally the Reverend George Panton. After the war he told the British authorities that during the two years that he was rector of St. Michael's church, he boarded with Pearson, and that he firmly believed that Pearson was loyal to Britain.⁸⁹ But he also admitted that he had left Trenton for New York City once the church had been closed in July 1776; thus he had not been present during the last six months of Pearson's life, when any decision by Pearson to take sides in the conflict—if he made such a decision—would have crystallized. And Pearson also fit the profile of a Loyalist. His Anglicanism, as already noted, would have been one strike against him to many people. And as a justice of the peace he held an office of profit under royal appointment, another fact that would have led him to prefer the *status quo ante*.⁹⁰

But it would have been hard to find anyone that winter who was objective. It would have been self-serving of Loyalists like Rivington to claim Pearson as one of their own, such a prominent man who'd previously been so well regarded and so closely associated with the rebel movement. But equally self-serving, perhaps, was the family recollection in the 19th century, which held that Pearson had not been a Loyalist but rather a timid patriot

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who in the circumstances of the moment sought a protection for himself and his family. His family believed he was headed to New Brunswick. Did Pearson lie to his family about where he was going? Seems unlikely. And where's the smoking gun? None of those who claimed that Pearson was a Loyalist ever advanced a single claim that he committed any overt act to help the King's army put down the rebellion. He never joined a Loyalist militia. Never crossed the lines into New York City, and never did any spying, as far as we can tell. He seems never to have struck New Jersey's tory hunters as disloyal or dangerous, and the government never took any official action against him. He was never called before any committee for questioning, as far as we know, and his property was never confiscated. The truth is that we may never know which way Pearson would have turned out. He simply did not live long enough to make his posture known. Would he have become a Loyalist if he had lived? It seems quite doubtful. He had too much to protect and the opportunity to support the King would never again be so favorable. Would he have become a loud supporter of independence and the United States? Maybe not. My own view is that he would have remained quiet during the war and afterward would have continued a distinguished career.

Subsequent History of the House

The history of the property after Pearson's death is considered in great length in the "Historic Sites" Report (Report 12) of the Trenton Complex Archaeology project, from which the following is a summary. After Pearson's death, his widow Elizabeth retained control of the property. For reasons that still remain unexplained, Pearson's will, written in 1775, remained unprobated until 1798. Under its terms, Isaac's son William was to receive half of the property when he reached 21 years of age, and that Elizabeth would retain control of the other half during her lifetime. Both continued to share the Pearson house. In 1802, after Elizabeth's death, William was named sole administrator of Isaac's estate, and thus cemented his ownership.

By the time William Pearson finally gained full ownership of the property, he had already retraced some of his father's footsteps in politics. He represented Burlington County in the New Jersey Assembly in 1801, 1802, 1813, and 1819. And in 1813 he served on Governor Aaron Ogden's staff, according to Report 12. (Thus it would appear likely that William Pearson was responsible for the minor, Federal-style modifications to the Pearson house, including those of the first-floor fireplaces.) As Aaron Ogden was a Federalist, it would seem that if William Pearson had served him, then Pearson must also have been a Federalist, which suggests that he inherited something of his father's conservative temperament, and that his father's equivocation in 1776 was no bar to his own political service a generation later. William kept the property until his death in 1835, even though he evidently lived in Bordentown during his final years.

The property then passed to his daughter Mary Pearson, who soon afterward married Thomas Mifflin Hopkinson of Burlington County. They were childless, however, and having no heir to leave the property to, Mary ordered the property to be sold in 1857. Peter Decou bought the property for \$18,000, which still contained 287 acres. Decou and his wife Mary had eight children, and five of them were still living on the property in 1860. Decou died in 1876, leaving the farm to his surviving children. An inventory of the house was taken at this time, enumerating the contents room by room. This inventory gives a sense of the now-missing service wing to the east, which was still standing at that time.

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The Decou heirs continued to hold it jointly for a decade, then it passed to Charles Decou, one of Peter's sons. He held the property, now reduced to 156 acres, for another ten years until his death in 1898. His executors then held the property until 1907. A Frances Green, of Trenton, bought the house with only 40 acres attached to it, and sold that in 1909 to the trustee for the Independent Brick Company of Trenton. That company operated two brickyards in the lowland areas of the property into the 1930s. The property then passed to the heirs of a Lewis Thompson. In the 1940s, during their ownership, the kitchen or service wing was demolished, and in 1950 a fire substantially destroyed the large, 3-story barn that stood to the east of the house. A portion of the first story of the barn remained standing.

In 1950 Carney Rose bought the Pearson house. He was still the owner during the 1970s and early 1980s when the investigations for the Trenton Complex archaeology project were carried out. Rose continued to own the property until he sold it to Hamilton Township in 2000. During the first year of the township's ownership, the original wood-shingle roof was removed from the house and a new wood-shingle roof was installed. In 2004, Hamilton Township had the remains of the barn demolished. An inspection undertaken before demolition, however, revealed that this barn dated from the middle of the 19th century, and not from Isaac Pearson's time.

¹ A Note on Sources: This narrative rests largely on the research of others about the life of Isaac Pearson. The most important effort in this regard has been the work of the historians and archaeologists who worked in the late 1970s and early 1980s for the "Trenton complex" archaeology project. This project consisted of contract archaeology services performed in advance of the construction of the complex of highways (Interstates 195 and 295 and NJ State Highways 29 and 129) known as the "Trenton complex." The massive reports include an entire volume (Report 12) that focuses on several historic period sites and buildings that were included within the scope of the investigations. The Isaac Pearson house and its associated archaeology take up an entire, long chapter in this volume. There is relatively little now known about Pearson that this team of historians did not find and analyze. This narrative adds some new material regarding the architecture of Pearson's house, some new findings and additional perspective regarding his public service, and some information about Pearson's relationship with George Panton. In addition, considerable new material about Pearson's death in Hightstown was left out of this narrative because it is not germane to this nomination.

Other, earlier treatments of Pearson are less comprehensive but still useful. Helen Almy West wrote a history of Hamilton Township that was published in 1954, which included a brief chapter about Pearson and his house. Charles R. Hutchinson of Allentown, whose own massive and largely unpublished writings on local history extend at least from the 1870s until his death in 1927, was also interested in Pearson. His writings include important quotes from a fellow local historian and contemporary, Joseph H. West of Hamilton Square, NJ, that reveal much about how Pearson was looked upon during the 19th century and what the local traditions surrounding his death were. William M. Dwyer, in his book *The Day is Ours!*, mistakenly thought Pearson was an old man in 1776 (he was 37), but he did contribute that Captain Thomas Rodney of Delaware was an important witness concerning the events surrounding Pearson's death.

² Trenton Complex Archaeology, Report 12 (hereafter simply "*Trenton Complex Archaeology*"), chapter 5 (Tindall-Pearson farm), esp. 170-207.

³ *Ibid.*, 184.

⁴ Hamilton Schuyler, *A History of Saint Michael's Church, Trenton* (Princeton, NJ: 1926): 27, 42-46.

⁵ Schuyler, 103-104; *Trenton Complex Archaeology*, 189.

⁶ *Trenton Complex Archaeology*, 188.

⁷ Donald L. Kemmerer, *Path to Freedom: The Struggle for Self-Government in Colonial New Jersey, 1703-1776* (Princeton, NJ: 1940): 18, 37, 80-81. The requirement was softened somewhat in 1705 to require a candidate for office to own real and personal property worth five hundred pounds. Pearson amply met the requirement.

⁸ *Nottingham Township Minute Book, 1692-1710, 1752-1772*, [Trenton, NJ: 1940], Reprinted by Trenton Historical Society (originally appeared serially in *Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society*, January, April, and July 1940) [hereafter *Nottingham Township Minutes*]: 36-38.

⁹ *Nottingham Township Minutes*, 33-34.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 39, 40, 42-48.

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¹¹ Ibid., 22, 23, 26, 27.

¹² These conclusions about the low durability of timber bridges and about the cost comparisons that follow are based on this author's extensive examination of county freeholder minutes of Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex, and Somerset counties.

¹³ Bound Brook had two stone-arch bridges, Elizabethtown had one, and the one over the Assanpink was Trenton's first. Princeton's first was built over the Stony Brook in 1791-92, and one over the Millstone River at Kingston was built in 1798-99. Southwestern New Jersey also had a tradition of brick-arch bridges with stone spandrel walls, beginning in the 1680s and continuing into the 19th century.

¹⁴ *New Jersey Archives*, 3rd Series, 4:244. No account of the construction of the drawbridge is known, but it is referred to in subsequent years.

¹⁵ *Nottingham Township Minutes*, 36-38.

¹⁶ Ibid., 40.

¹⁷ *NJA*, 3rd Series, 4:350.

¹⁸ Petition of Isaac Pearson, February 16, 1764, in *Petitions and Other Papers Related to Bridges, Canals, Dams, and Ferries*, NJ State Archives, Trenton, NJ [hereafter NJSA].

¹⁹ *Nottingham Township Minutes*, 27-29. The best discussion of the growing stage traffic remains Wheaton J. Lane, *From Indian Trail to Iron Horse: Travel and Transportation in New Jersey, 1620-1820* (Princeton, NJ: 1939).

²⁰ Hunterdon County Freeholder Minutes, May 9, 1764, Hunterdon Co. Clerk's Office, Flemington, NJ.

²¹ *NJA*, 3rd Series, 4:350-351.

²² For the Bound Brook bridges, see *NJA*, 3rd Series, 2:384 and 2:408-409. The Bound Brook, Stony Brook, and Kingston bridges were all built with cost sharing between Middlesex and Somerset counties. The best overall source on the Trenton bridge is Hunter Research Associates, Inc. "South Broad Street Bridge: Cultural Resource Assessment." January 2003, prepared for the New Jersey Department of Transportation and Vollmer Associates LLP, copy in New Jersey Historic Preservation Office, NJDEP, Trenton [hereafter HPO].

²³ Hunt has recently become the subject of a work of historical fiction; see Michael A. Davis, *The Trial of Lt. Colonel Abraham Hunt, September 22, 1777, Trenton, New Jersey* (Ex-Libris: 2001).

²⁴ *Nottingham Township minutes*, 42.

²⁵ For a further explanation of the roles and responsibilities of the chosen freeholders, see *NJA*, 3rd Series, 5:485, 493 et passim.

²⁶ *Nottingham Township Minutes*, 42.

²⁷ West, *History of Hamilton Township*, 103-105.

²⁸ *Nottingham Township Minutes*. For the site of an annual township meeting, see both the minute for that meeting and the minute for the previous year's annual meeting.

²⁹ Ibid., 46.

³⁰ Ibid., 43.

³¹ *Commissions*, vol. AAA, p.430. NJSA.

³² Ibid.

³³ The legislature tinkered frequently with the laws governing justices, adding new responsibilities as the years passed; see *NJA*, 3rd Series, 5:492-493.

³⁴ Burlington County Board of Justices and Freeholders, Minute Book, 1722-1790, p.243. Microfilm copy, RUL.

³⁵ Ibid., 245-246.

³⁶ Ibid., 246.

³⁷ Ibid., 247.

³⁸ Ibid., 253.

³⁹ Ibid., 261.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 268.

⁴¹ Ibid., 269.

⁴² Ibid., 270-271.

⁴³ Ibid., 276.

⁴⁴ *Commissions*, vol. AB, p.114, NJSA.

⁴⁵ See letter of Edward A. Lempicki, Chief, NJ Forest Service, to Alex Wiedenhoft, USDA Forest Products Laboratory, December 5, 2002, copy in author's files.

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- ⁴⁶ Schuyler, 78-79; E. Alfred Jones, *The Loyalists of New Jersey, Their Memorials, Petitions, etc. From English Records*, vol. 10, "Collections of the New Jersey Historical Society (Newark, NJ: 1927): 168.
- ⁴⁷ *Trenton Complex Archaeology*, 189-190.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 192.
- ⁴⁹ *Minutes of the Provincial Congress and the Council of Safety of New Jersey* (Trenton, NJ: 1879): 52 [hereafter *Provincial Congress*].
- ⁵⁰ Petition of ... Nottingham Township, January 1775, NJSA, reproduced in Larry Gerlach, *New Jersey in the American Revolution: A Documentary History* (Trenton, NJ: 1975):115-116.
- ⁵¹ *Provincial Congress*, 101, 108.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, 170, 184.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*, 190.
- ⁵⁴ Burlington County Wills, 12057C, NJSA.
- ⁵⁵ *Provincial Congress*, 194.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 195-196.
- ⁵⁷ *Trenton Complex Archaeology*, 192.
- ⁵⁸ *Provincial Congress*, 197, 199.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 206-207.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 200, 219-220.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 201.
- ⁶² *Ibid.*, 201-202.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*, 218.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 218-219.
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 230.
- ⁶⁶ *NJA*, 3rd Series, 5:212-234.
- ⁶⁷ *Provincial Congress*, 229.
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 254.
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 292, 298. The original manuscript of the petition is held by NJSA.
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 300.
- ⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 325, 335.
- ⁷² *Ibid.*, 373.
- ⁷³ Larry R. Gerlach, *Prologue to Independence: New Jersey in the Coming of the American Revolution* (Trenton, NJ: 1976): xxx.
- ⁷⁴ *Provincial Congress*, xxx.
- ⁷⁵ Dennis P. Ryan, *New Jersey in the American Revolution, 1763-1783: A Chronology* (Trenton, NJ: 1974): 30-32.
- ⁷⁶ Schuyler, 75; Saint Michael's Episcopal Church minute book (transcribed by Carlos Godfrey), typescript copy, Trenton Public Library [TPL], Trenton, NJ.
- ⁷⁷ William S. Stryker, *Battles of Trenton and Princeton* (New York: 1898; reprinted 2000): 15, 28; *Trenton Complex Archaeology*, 45-46.
- ⁷⁸ Stryker, 27-28.
- ⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 40-42, 382. Stryker, in describing this detachment, stated that it was commanded by a captain, who was supported by three lieutenants and 82 non-commissioned officers and enlisted men. This detachment was rotated back to Trenton every 48 hours, so it was successively led by several different captains. On December 26th, the captain in charge was Heinrich Ludwig Boking, who "with one non-commissioned officer and twenty men," occupied three farmhouses, "on the road to Trenton ... about a quarter of a mile north from the drawbridge." The location of Pearson's house fits this description nearly perfectly. Since Pearson's house was the finest one in the neighborhood, it seems likely that the succession of captains who commanded this detachment would have chosen it for their own lodging and that of some of their men. Pearson's own last will and testament (Burlington County Wills, 12057C) also indicates the presence of two other houses on his property in addition to his own. It may be that these were the houses that Stryker referred to.
- ⁸⁰ Revolutionary War Damage Claims, Burlington County, p.4, no.45 (Elizabeth Pearson), NJSA.
- ⁸¹ David Hackett Fischer, *Washington's Crossing* (New York: 2003): 62-63 et passim, provides an extensive discussion of Hessian plundering, its extent, the reasons for it, and the attitudes of officers and soldiers toward it.
- ⁸² Stryker, 218, 234, 366.

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⁸³ Ibid., 190, 377.

⁸⁴ Fischer, *Washington's Crossing*, 399-403.

⁸⁵ See the entry for December 29, 1776 in *Diary of Captain Thomas Rodney, 1776-1777* (Wilmington, DE: 1888); letter of Thomas Rodney to Caesar Rodney, December 30, 1776, in George Herbert Ryden (ed.), *Letters to and from Caesar Rodney, 1756-1784* (New York: 1970): 151-152.

⁸⁶ Charles R. Hutchinson Papers, vol. 4, pp.116-117, Item no. 1192, New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, NJ. Microfilm copy available at Allentown [NJ] Public Library and at Monmouth County Historical Association, Freehold, NJ. Helen A. West continued in 1954 to express the ambivalent point of view that came down through her family; see her *History*, 16-17.

⁸⁷ *Trenton Complex Archaeology*, 193.

⁸⁸ Jones, *Loyalists of New Jersey*, 201.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 168-169.

⁹⁰ See Dennis P. Ryan, *New Jersey's Loyalists*, New Jersey's Revolutionary Experience, no. 20 (Trenton, NJ: 1975).

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VERBAL BOUNDARY STATEMENT

The nominated property consists of Block S-484, Lot 68 as shown on the accompanying survey of the property, excepting and excluding a the area of a 40-foot-wide utility and access easement that runs along the easterly line of Lot 68. The nominated property consists of approximately 3 acres and is bounded on the west by the easterly line of Hobson Avenue, on the north by the southerly line of Emeline Avenue, and on the south by the right-of-way of Interstate Route 195.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION STATEMENT

The nominated property consists of the remaining lot on which the Isaac Pearson house stands. It is the sole parcel still associated with the Pearson house and it apparently encompasses the locations where the Pearson barn and other outbuildings associated with the house once stood. Thus any archaeological remains of these buildings that may still be present should also be encompassed within the bounds of the nominated property. All other lands that Isaac Pearson owned have been parceled off since the 18th century.

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Black-and-White Photographs

The exterior black-and-white photographs were taken in May 2005. The interior photos were taken in 2001 and 2002, but they still reflect current conditions. All photos were taken by the author and remain in the author's possession.

Description

- No. 1 North facade
- No. 2 View of South elevation and East end
- No. 3 View of West elevation and part of South elevation
- No. 4 North facade, detail of typical first-story window, with stone flat-arch lintel
- No. 5 North facade, detail of brickwork showing original shutter dog
- No. 6 Interior, first-story center stairhall, facing front door
- No. 7 Interior, first-story center stairhall, facing rear door
- No. 8 Interior, first-story, southwest room, corner cabinet (door closed)
- No. 9 Interior, first-story, southwest room, corner cabinet (door open)
- No. 10 Interior, first-story, northwest room, fireplace and overmantel paneling
- No. 11 Interior, first-story, front hall, detail of hearth, showing marble and Federal style fireback
- No. 12 Interior, second-story center hall, facing north
- No. 13 Interior, second-story, southwest room, detail of hearth showing square paving bricks
- No. 14 Interior, second-story, southeast bedchamber, paneled east wall
- No. 15 Interior, garret, facing west
- No. 16 View from house, toward southeast (site of recently-demolished barn in middle ground)

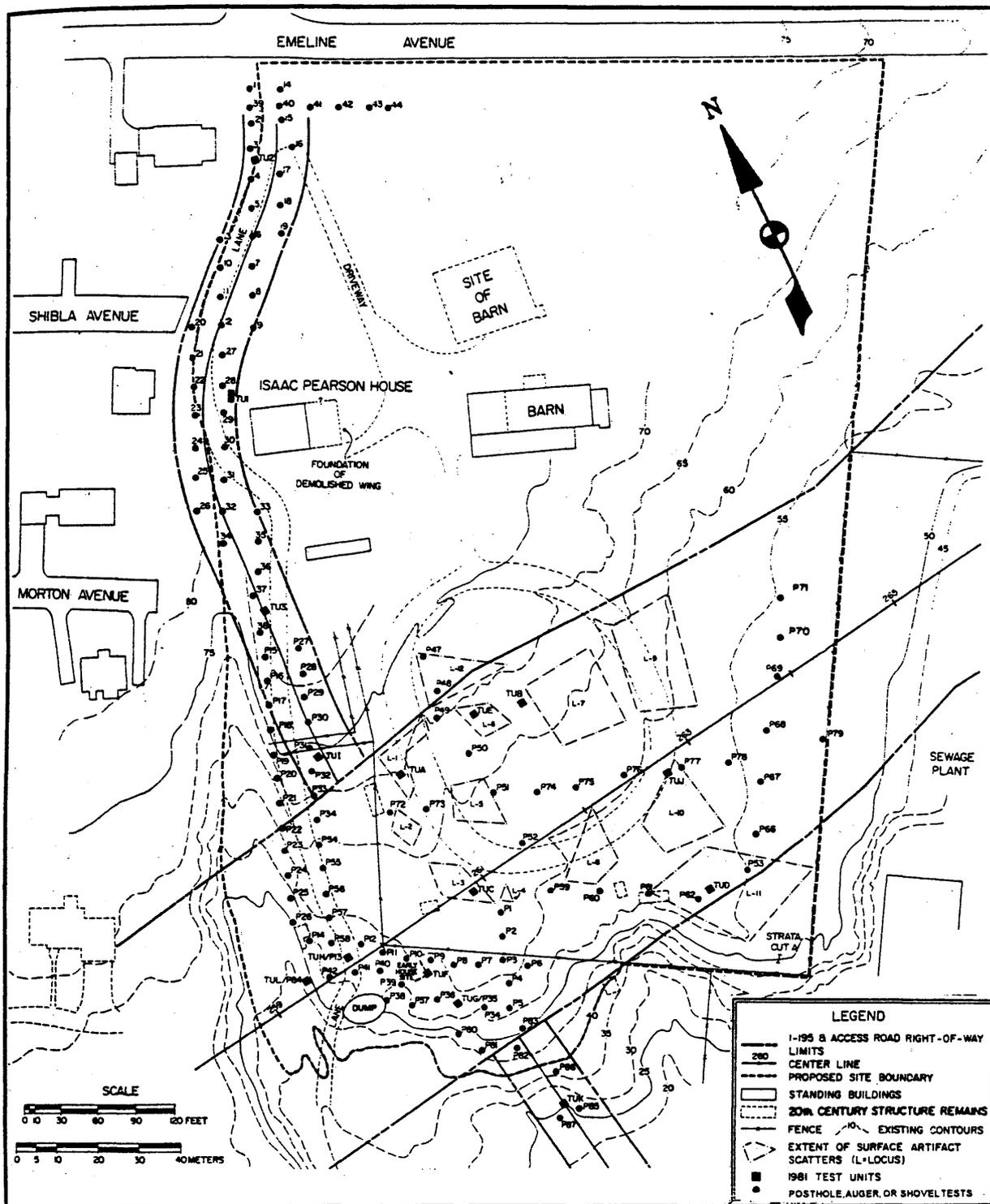


Figure 25. Tindall/Pearson Farmstead (Site 28Me106), Site Plan.

Nevertheless, the surface collection, in combination with the 44 posthole and auger tests excavated by the historic field crew and the 81 posthole and auger tests excavated by the prehistoric field crew, provided thorough

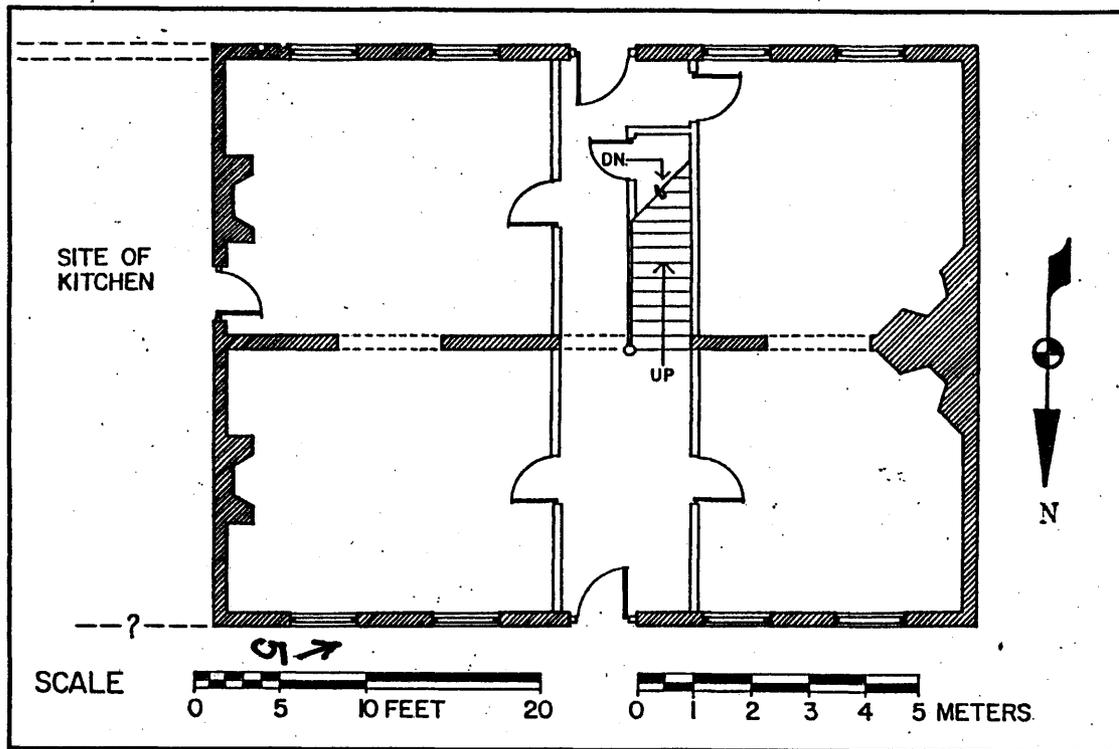


Figure 26. Tindall/Pearson Farmstead (Site 28Me106), House Plan, First Floor.

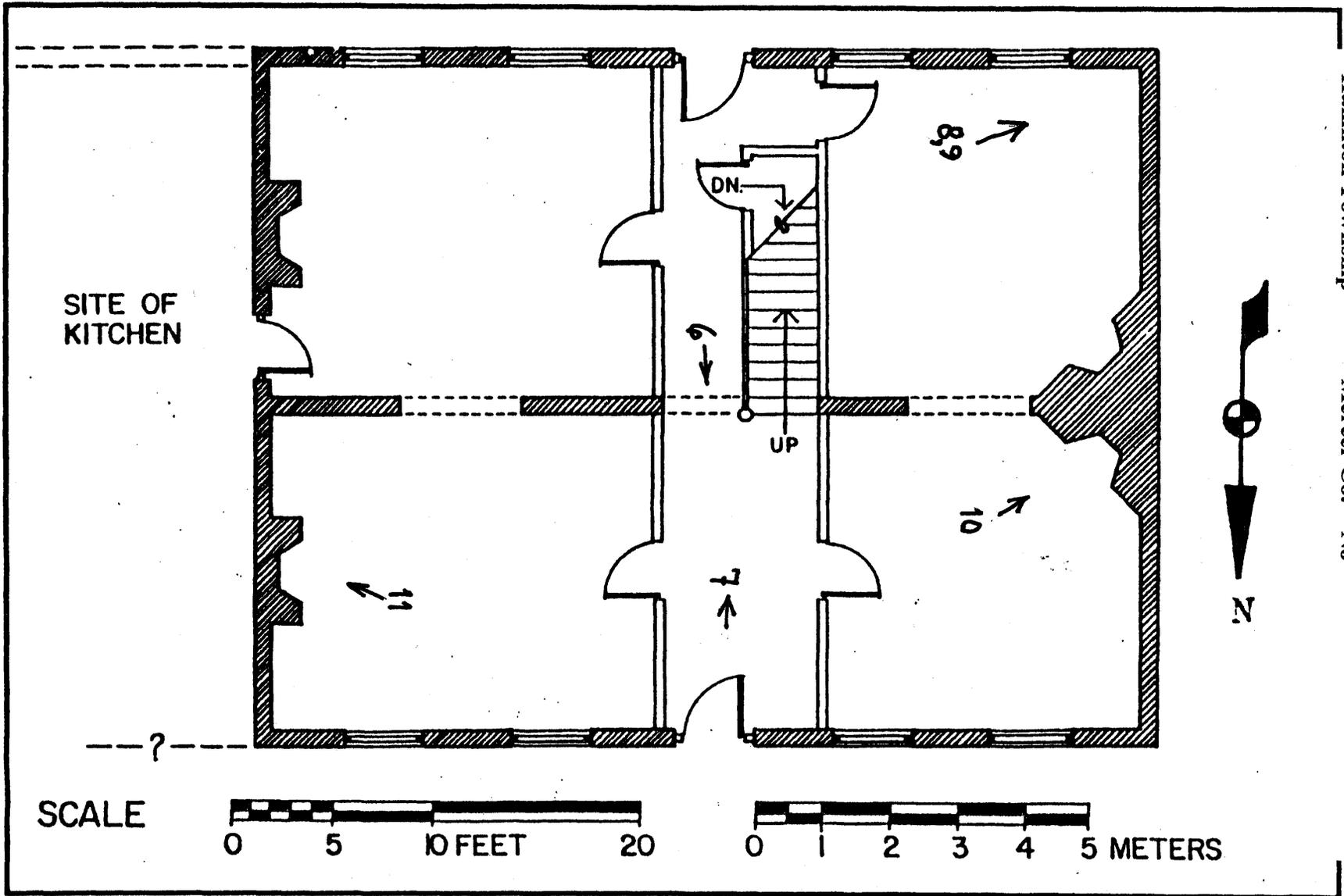
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Photo Locations - Exterior views



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Isaac Pearson House - Photo Locations - Interior views
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Figure 26. Tindall/Pearson Farmstead (Site 28Me106), House Plan, First Floor.

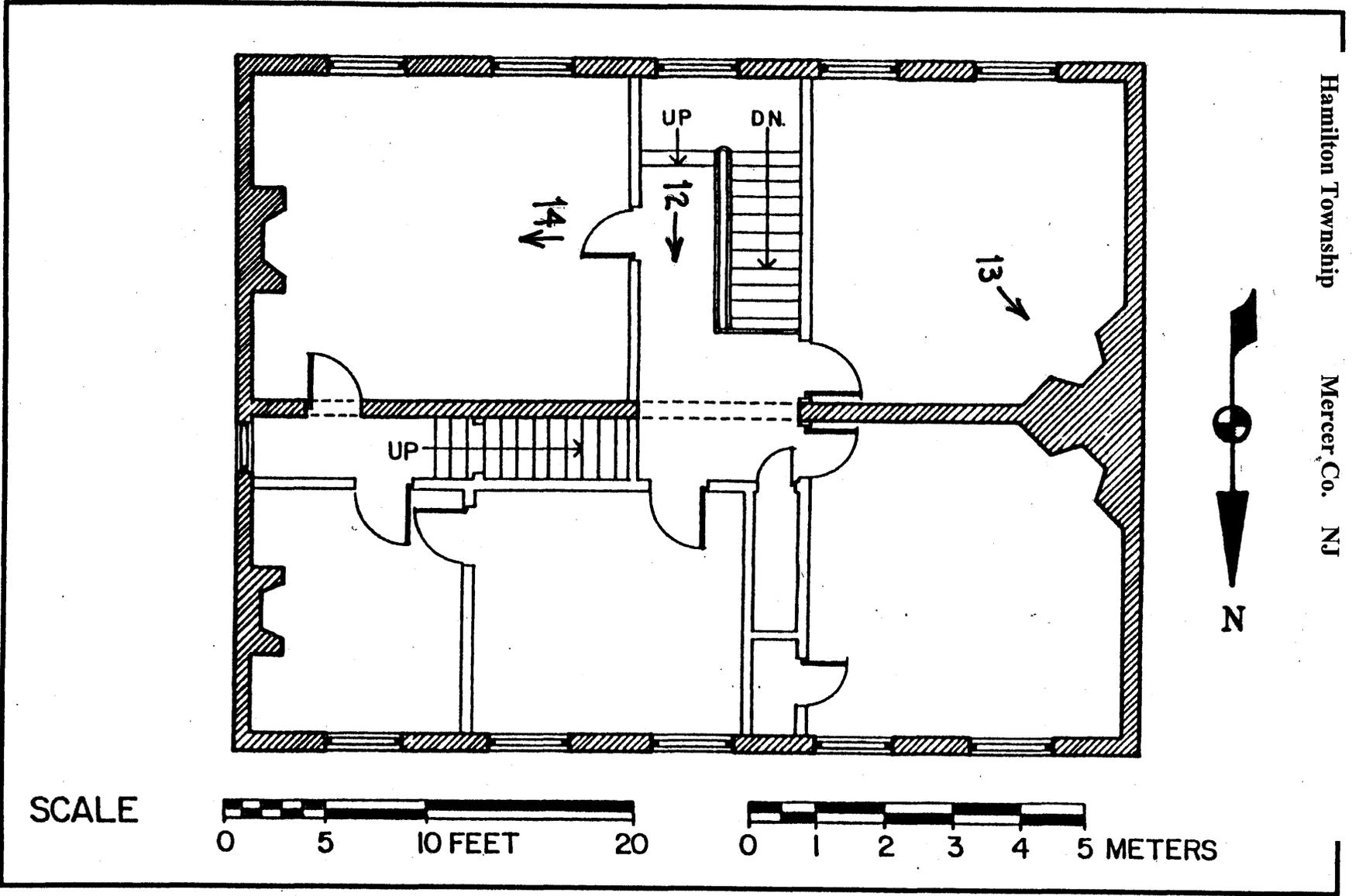


Figure 27. Tindall/Pearson Farmstead (Site 28Me106), House Plan, Second Floor.

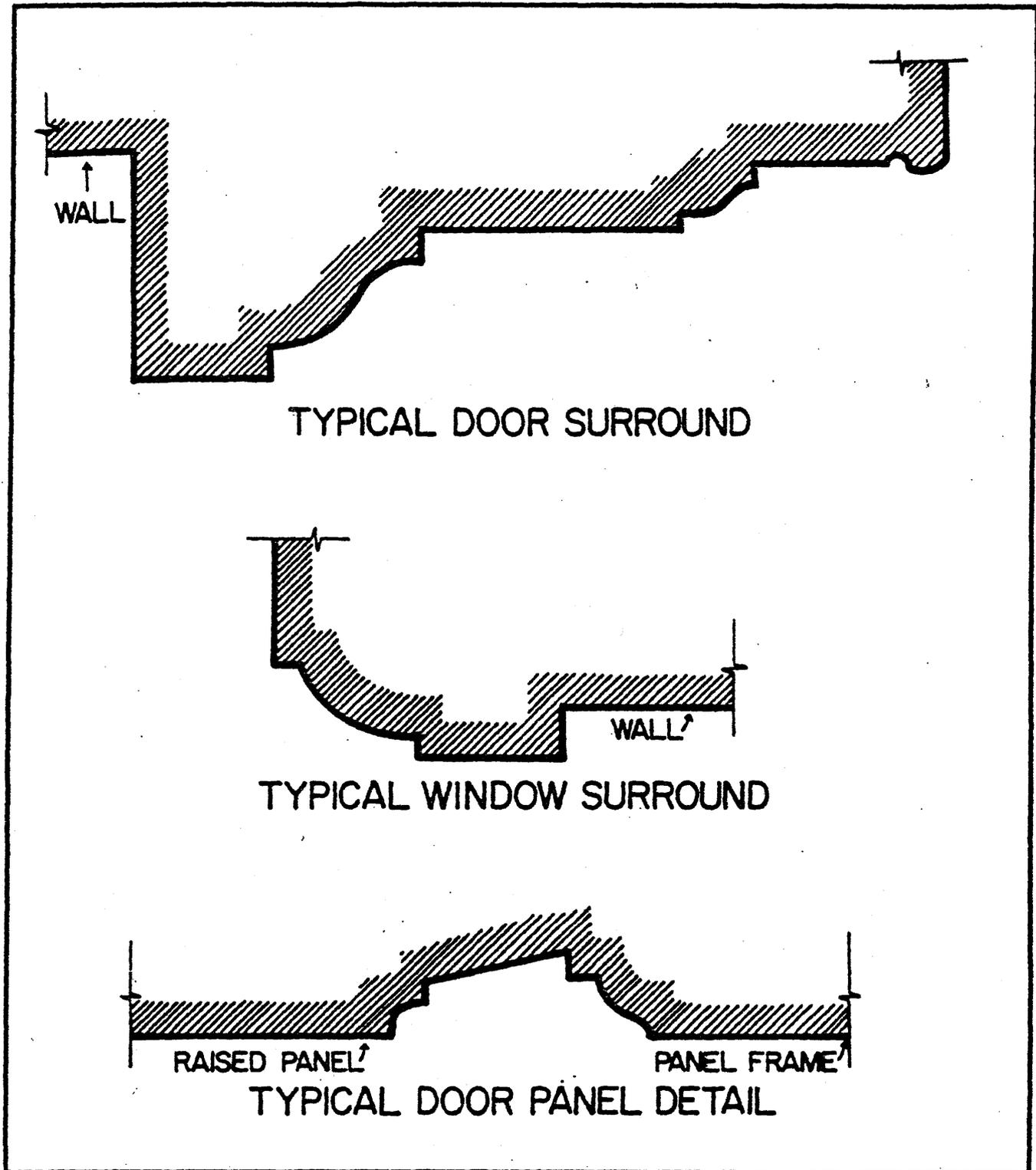
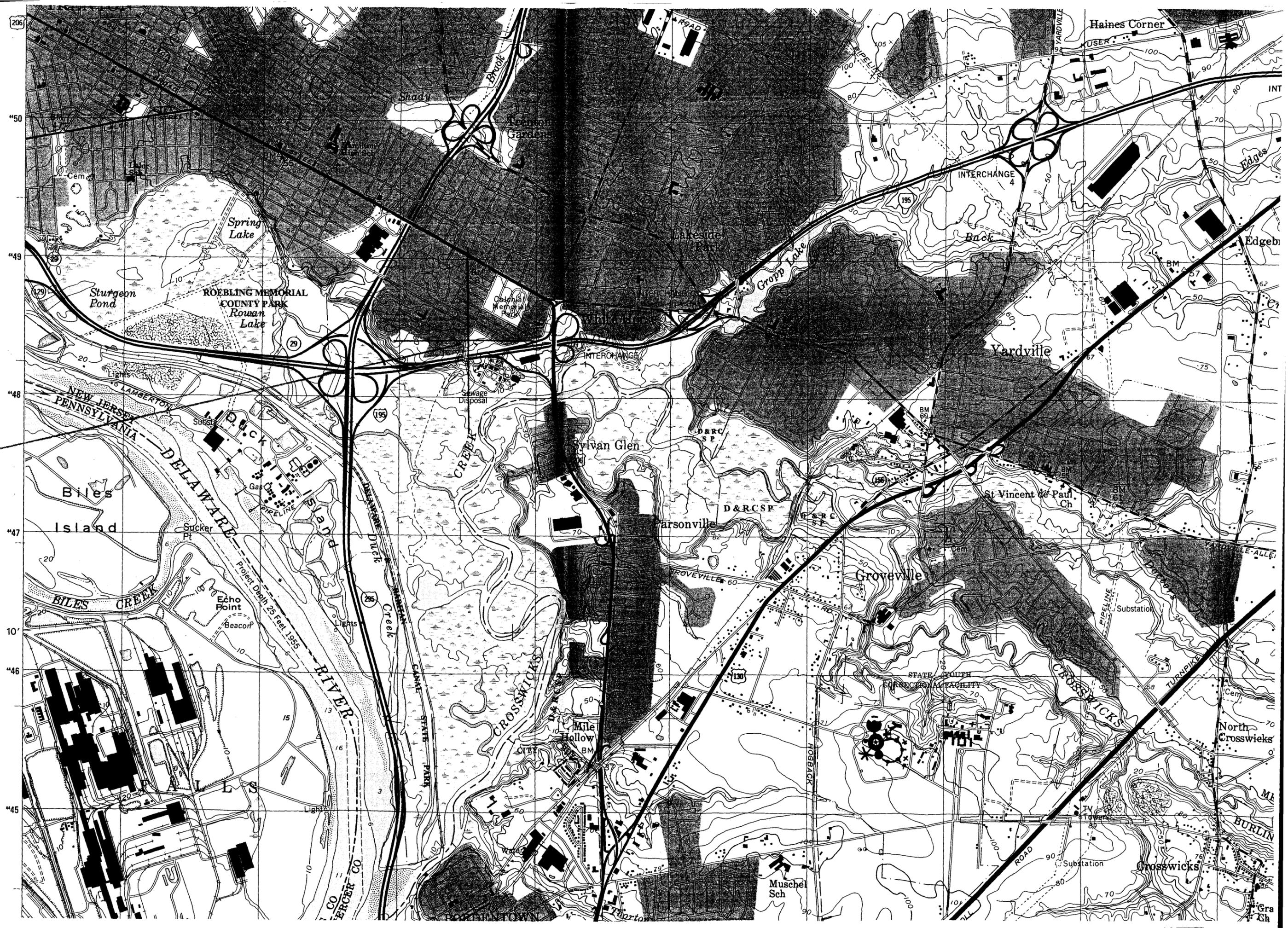


Figure 28. Tindall/Pearson Farmstead (Site 28Me106), House, Interior Molding Profiles.

ISAAC PEARSON
HOUSE



Isaac Pearson House

Hamilton Township
Mercer Co., NJ

Site Plan

