

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

**SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD**

NRIS Reference Number: 88001532 Date Listed: 9/22/88

Edwin and Ethel Abernethy House Coos OR  
Property Name County State

Multiple Name \_\_\_\_\_

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This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Patrick Andrus  
Signature of the Keeper

9/22/88  
Date of Action

=====  
**Amended Items in Nomination:**

During a 9/22/88 telephone conversation, Suzie Haylock, Preservation Assistant in the Oregon SHPO, confirmed that Single Dwelling is the current function for this resource and the official record is hereby being amended to reflect this fact. Suzie made this determination following a telephone conversation with the current property owner.

**DISTRIBUTION:**  
National Register property file  
Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

1532

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

RECEIVED

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

AUG 8 1988

NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See National Register Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Abernethy, Edwin and Ethel, House other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number Box 103, Sitkum Route city, town Myrtle Point state Oregon code OR county Coos code 011 zip code 97458

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: private (checked), public-local, public-State, public-Federal. Category of Property: building(s) (checked), district, site, structure, object. Number of Resources within Property: Contributing 1, Noncontributing 1, Total 2. Name of related multiple property listing: N/A. Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: N/A.

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets (checked) does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet. Signature of certifying official: Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer. Date: August 5, 1988.

In my opinion, the property meets (checked) does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet. Signature of commenting or other official: State or Federal agency and bureau.

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is: entered in the National Register (checked), determined eligible for the National Register, determined not eligible for the National Register, removed from the National Register, other (explain:). Signature of the Keeper: Patrick Andrews. Date of Action: 9/22/88.

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/single dwelling  
way station (projected)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/not in use  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Early 20th Century American Movements/  
Craftsman  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick piers, wood posts  
walls wood/weatherboard  
wood/shingles (front gable ends)  
roof asphalt (shingles)  
other concrete (footings)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

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The Abernethy House, built between 1905 and 1922 near Dora, Oregon; was planned as a travelers lodge and guest stop along the historic Coos Bay Military Wagon Road, a road that served as the principal land transportation route between Roseburg and the southern Oregon Coast for over fifty years.

The house is a large, L-shaped structure, 55 feet wide along its south elevation, 80 feet long along the west elevation, 28 feet 8 inches wide at the north elevation, (the top of the long leg of the "L") another 26 feet 4 inches wide on the second north elevation, and an east elevation with lengths of 41 feet and 39 feet. Stylistically, the house is a vernacular version of Craftsman architecture characterized by a high hipped roof with dormers and an inset, encircling veranda. The roadhouse concept was conceived by William Abernethy in 1903. Design and construction of the building was by Edwin Abernethy, William's son. George Abernethy, Oregon's only provisional governor and a prominent businessman in the state's early days, was William's father and Edwin's grandfather. Construction on the building took place over an extended period of time, between 1905 and 1922. The building exterior was completed with 2½ stories of usable interior space, but only the first floor was finished for habitation. As the house stands today it is practically unaltered from its original construction; minor alterations made have been for inclusion of modern utilities and sanitary systems (electricity, running water, sewage disposal). Though planned to function as a travelers lodge, the house never served its original purpose. Instead, Edwin and Ethel Abernethy used the building as a residence, which is its use today.

The Abernethy residence and family property is located in Section 12, Township 28, Range 11, west of the Willamette Meridian, near Dora, Oregon; adjacent to the old Coos Bay Military Wagon Road. The original homestead was 160 acres of land; in the early 1940's a 10 acre easement through the property was granted to the Coos Bay Lumber Co. for access to timber. The property is an original federal homestead grant, certificate no. 1433, application 3092, first deeded to a Mr. James B. Hunt in 1882.

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The house was built facing the Coos Bay Military Wagon Road, a historic roadway that serve as the principal dry-land route to Coos Bay from points inland for over 50 years. The building's location and the property acquisition by the Abernethy family was directly related to the potential of the road being a major thoroughfare to the Bay Area. The structure sits on a spot where the road skirts along the north bank of the east fork of the Coquille River, just west of the settlement of Dora. Slightly west of the building is Steel Creek. Red clay from the banks of this stream was used to make brick for piers supporting the house's upper floors. Behind the house is a small apple orchard, the remnant of James B. Hunt's original planting and homestead. These trees continue to produce an abundance of fruit (see photographs of the building).

The Abernethy House is located near the settlement of Dora, Brewster Valley, isolated in the rugged Oregon Coast Range between Coos Bay and Roseburg. East of the house is the settlement of Sitkum, where the Old Military Wagon Road toll gate and stage stop, the "Halfway House", where located. Mrs. Ethel Abernethy, Edwin Abernethy's wife, grew up in the Sitkum area. Mrs. Abernethy's maiden name was Ethel Laird; the Laird family were among the first settlers in the valley and capitalized on the wagon road by operating a freight hauling business over it. James D. Laird, maintained the wagon road, the tollgate, the Halfway House, later the telegraph lines, and conducted business as a freight hauler over the road. Mr. Laird was Ethel Abernethy's father. The first overland mail service and telegraph lines to Coos Bay came over the wagon road or followed its route. Ethel Abernethy served as the Postmistress of the Sitkum post office for thirty seven years, handling the mail service to and from Coos Bay and for the local inhabitants. Mrs. Abernethy's mother, Belle Laird, was assistant postmistress during a term of service that began in 1917.

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The Abernethy House is a large wood frame structure, built on a post and beam foundation. There are concrete pads underneath the house for the posts to bear on. Brick piers at the exterior, on five sides of the building; support the exterior walls of the building's upper floors. The first floor of the house is raised off the ground approximately three and a half feet; a person can walk in a crouched position underneath the structure. This raised floor construction is similar to construction characteristics in the southern United States, the purpose for the raised floor may of been for the same reason: ventilation underneath the building; summers in the Brewster Valley can be very hot and humid. The brick piers at the perimeter of the house are made of red clay formed and fired on the site. The clay was taken from the banks of nearby Steel Creek. There is a shallow depression in the front yard of the property where local residents indicate the brick were fired. The brick are in a running bond, each pier standing nearly seven feet in height. Eight by eight timber columns sit on top of the piling to support the second and third floors above, which overhang the first floor, creating an eight foot wide patio deck on five sides of the building. The floor deck of the porch is diagonal two by eight Douglas fir planking. The interior floor finish is tongue and groove Douglas fir. The building's walls are two by six Douglas fir studs. Edwin Abernethy was known as a master sawyer, and operated his own sawmill business at Dora. He logged and cut all the wood material, inside and out, for this building; all the timber from the Abernethy property.

The roof configuration of the building is a variety of elements. There are two main steeply pitched hip roofs covering the basic "L" shape of the structure. The front elevation, the south side, is distinguished by formally-placed gable-roofed sections separated by a central recessed porch at the second story and a dormer with balcony at the attic story. In the tradition of Craftsman architecture, each of the front gables is finished with exposed purlins and vergeboards scalloped at the lower ends.

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On the west elevation, features above the eaves are two shed dormers with three double hung windows in each. The east elevation has one dormer of the same configuration. The north elevation has one small gable dormer and window that looks to be placed by accident. All windows on the residence are double hung and wood frame; again being built on-site with Douglas fir timber. An interesting variation to the repetition of window size and style are the two south elevation first floor windows. The sash units on these windows are unequal in size—the upper unit is one half the size of the lower unit (see photographs). The original roofing material for the building was wood shingles, now covered over with asphalt composition shingles. The roof is the specific area of the building exhibiting damage and failure; several leaks are evident.

The Abernethy House is sheathed with a wood shiplap siding, Douglas fir lumber milled by Edwin Abernethy at his sawmill. The siding is virtually all clear grain, very few knots or flaws are found. The dormers on the south elevation are sided with wood shingles in contrast to the vertical siding found elsewhere. The interior woodwork on the first floor of the structure is vertical clear grain Douglas fir, stained a dark brown. The detailing is in the Craftsman tradition, and the quality of the material and the care of installation makes the wainscot, window trim, and false beam furring attractive. The light fixtures in the finished portion of the house are original fixtures, plain pressed glass globes with a reticulated pattern.

There have been no significant alterations to the building since its initial construction. Electrical service, a sewer system, and running water have been added; minor remodeling has been done to accommodate these utilities. The old well location has been covered up; but the overhead pulley and a metal cup on a nail still mark its location.

The original purpose of the Abernethy House, as conceived by William Abernethy then designed and built by Edwin Abernethy, was to serve as a travelers lodge for people going to and from Coos Bay or Roseburg. The first floor of the building consists of an entrance hallway with stairs to the second floor. Immediately inside the front door one can turn right to enter what was supposed to be the office/lobby. To the left is a large parlour and dining area. A set of free-swinging double doors separates the dining area from the kitchen at the north end of the parlor room. There is a small bedroom to the north of the office/lobby; perhaps so a night clerk could be quickly available for late arriving guests.

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When the Abernethy House was first envisioned by William Abernethy the Coos Bay Military Wagon Road was the principal land route to the Coos Bay area. Edwin Abernethy designed the structure to have numerous guest rooms on the second and third floors. Both these floors were larger in area than the first floor, as the upper stories overhang the lower floor to create the veranda on three sides of the building. The steeply pitched roof with its gable end and shed dormers readily accommodates the third floor, also intended for use as guest rooms.

The two upper floors of the building were never completed. The coming of the railroad to Coos Bay in 1916 via the Siuslaw Valley and the State Highway Department's decision in 1922 to route a highway through Myrtle Point and Coquille, to Coos Bay, spelled doom for the Abernethy family's dream of a successful travelers lodge. The coinciding of the 1922 decision to route Highway 42 through the Coquille Valley instead of over the Wagon Road and the end of construction on the building is not just a coincidence.

The two upper floors are framed in only for structural requirements. There are large piles of lumber stacked on these floors, material needed for completion of construction. The quality of the framing material is easily seen on the two upper floors as the building's structure is all that is seen. There are a few stud partitions in place that indicate the intended room arrangement (see floor plan drawings). It is also interesting to see the brick chimney from the first floor lobby/office fireplace as it rises up and angles back to approach the roof deck. At the roof sheathing the brick stops; the fireplace was never completed, does not extend through the roof, and was never put to use.

On the first floor, where the interior spaces were finished, the quality of Edwin Abernethy's wood cutting and millwork is evident in the vertical clear grain wood wainscot, chairrail, window trim, and false beam trim. All wood trim is stained a dark brown. None of the historic fabric has been altered.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)  
Exploration/Settlement  
Industry  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance  
1905-1922  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates  
1905  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation  
N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person  
N/A

Architect/Builder  
Edwin Abernethy

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Edwin and Ethel Abernethy homestead fronting the old Coos Bay Military Wagon Road at Dora, 17 miles northeast of Myrtle Point in Coos County, Oregon, was built in 1905. George Abernethy, Provisional Governor of Oregon from 1845 to 1849, was no longer living when his son and grandson, William and Edwin Abernethy, came to this location in the Coast Range. Still, George Abernethy's early day Coos County business ventures and speculation over railroad and wagon road routes provides tantalizing background for his son and grandson's arrival on the East Fork of the Coquille River in 1890.

The Coos Bay Military Wagon Road, which had been surveyed in 1869 and built along the East Fork of the Coquille in 1873, was for many years the principal route of travel between the inland commercial settlement of Roseburg and Coos Bay on the coast. The Abernethys' arrival at Dora coincided with a high point in the period when settlers sought the help of State and Federal governments in revestment of title to sections of land originally granted to the wagon road company and subsequently held by the Oregon and California Railroad. Edwin Abernethy's wife, Ethel, was the daughter of James Laird, among the first settlers of the nearby settlement of Sitkum, where Mr. Laird operated an early toll gate, stage stop and freight hauling business.

The two and a half story frame house and prospective way station was photographed in the course of its construction in 1905. While it was intended to serve as a travelers' lodge, only the ground story interior was finished for habitation. The Abernethy place never fulfilled the purpose dreamed of by William Abernethy. William removed to Forest Grove in 1904, before construction commenced. Design and supervision of construction are attributed to Edwin Abernethy (1875-1958), who may be seen at the roofline with two carpenters in the accompanying 1905 view. Edwin Abernethy was the operator of the local sawmill. Basic building materials came from the homestead site and Abernethy's mill. The clay for brick piers of the veranda, for example, is said to have been taken from the banks of Steel Creek, which forms the westerly border of the one-acre area proposed for nomination.

See continuation sheet

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### 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 # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

### Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property approximately one Sitkum, Oregon 1:62500

### UTM References

A 

<u>10</u>	<u>421950</u>	<u>4778575</u>
Zone	Easting	Northing

C 


B 

Zone	Easting	Northing

D 


See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated area is located in the SW $\frac{1}{4}$  Section 12, Township 28S, Range 11W, Willamette Meridian, in Coos County, Oregon. It is described as follows:

See continuation sheet

**Boundary Justification** The boundary of the nominated area of approximately one acre is drawn to include the commodious dwelling place built and occupied by Edwin and Ethel Abernethy from 1905 onward. The area encompasses the building's immediate grounds and, to the rear of the house, remnants of an old apple orchard. It has frontages on Steel Creek and the historic Coos Bay Military Wagon Road and contains a small, detached open shed, a non-contributing feature. The house is counted as the sole contributing feature.

See continuation sheet

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Randal S. Saunders

organization Randal S. Saunders, Architect date March 15, 1988

street & number 1235 Mt. Hood Avenue (PO Box 574) telephone (503) 982-1211

city or town Woodburn state Oregon zip code 97071

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Stylistically, the house is a vernacular version of Craftsman architecture having a high hipped roof, shed and gable-roofed dormers, and the hostler's hallmark, a generous veranda. Plans for renting the upper stories as travelers' lodgings faded utterly when the wagon road was eclipsed, first by more convenient rail connections to the coast in 1916 and, finally, in 1922 when the highway to the coast was constructed following the Middle Fork of the Coquille from Winston and Camas Valley.

Both the exterior of the house, which is enclosed with shiplap siding and shingles in front gable ends, and the interior millwork convey the quality of Abernethy's manufactory. The homestead is clearly the largest and best preserved of local landmarks remaining to exhibit the output of the area's only historic industrial enterprise. As such, it is significant under Criterion A in the categories of settlement and industry. Abernethy's sawmill itself has long since disappeared from the scene.

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The Abernethy House, and the property upon which it is located, are worthy of placement on the National Register of Historic Places because of the structure's association with events that have made a contribution to the broad patterns of our history. The history of the building is directly related to the adjacent Coos Bay Military Wagon Road. The ownership of the building and land by the Abernethy family, a pioneering and entrepreneurial legacy in Oregon, is also historically noteworthy. Also associated with the property and surrounding area is the Laird family. Edwin Abernethy married Ethel Laird, whose grandfather and father pioneered the commercial use of the wagon road with their freight service, maintained the road, and maintained the services/utilities related to it.

The Abernethy House embodies historic fabric that is original native materials, taken from the property and used to construct the building. Edwin Abernethy, designer and builder of the structure, was renowned as a master sawyer. The quality of the wood and mastery of its cutting are evident upon the House. The red brick pilasters were made from clay taken from the banks of Steel Creek, adjacent to the building site, and fired in a kiln built in the front yard. The building is significant and distinguishable in its setting mostly due to its size, shape, and siting; rather than any significant architectural style. There are several elements, such as the wrap-around porch, brick piers, uneven sash front windows, raised foundation, and physical mass that give the building a unique appearance quite different from a residence or farm structure.

Nathan Douthit, History professor at Southwestern Oregon Community College states, in his most recent book on the history of the South Coast, that the Abernethy House is the only historic building of any significance that remains visible along the Coos Bay Military Road route.

The Abernethy family, particularly William and Edwin Abernethy, are directly associated with the house and property. George Abernethy, William's father and Edwin's grandfather, may also have been familiar with the Brewster Valley.

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George Abernethy came to Oregon in 1839 as a steward for the Methodist Mission organization in the Willamette Valley. His background as an accountant and contacts gained while serving as Mission steward led George to become one of Oregon's first bona-fide businessmen, dealing first in mercantile goods, then grain, lumber, and shipping of those commodities. Mr. Abernethy also served as the first provisional governor of Oregon.

One of George Abernethy's business ventures, among many, was a packet line for shipping of products between Portland and San Francisco. Old title and deed records from Coos County indicate that George had title to and a financial interest in the Eastport coal mines, later to be known as the Libby coal mines, south of present day Coos Bay. Mr. Abernethy held this interest in the mid 1850's and early 1860's. It is possible that one commodity his packet line was shipping to San Francisco was coal. Mr. Abernethy's acumen as a politician may have afforded him fore knowledge of the Federal Government's plans to survey a military wagon road from Coos Bay to Roseburg, a task that was initiated in 1862 and finished in 1869. These two things lead to conjecture that George Abernethy was aware of the Dora area or Brewster Valley because of the proposed military wagon road and the coal mining potential if the region.

William Abernethy, George's son and Edwin Abernethy's father, was in business with George Abernethy, promoting/providing shipping and merchandise wholesaling services. William was an entrepreneur, just like his father, though the reputation of both appears to be less than polished. William was schooled at Willamette University, James McEllicott School, Phillips Academy, and Yale University. William was a young boy when he came to Oregon with his parents in 1839. Later, he was the self-pronounced "oldest Oregon Pioneer" alive while residing at the Dora property. He first worked for his father as a clerk then became a business partner. William ran a freight service in The Dalles, owned a farm along the Willamette river across from present day Milwaukee, and operated a grocery business in Portland. While residing at the farm property beside the Willamette River he became an advocate for the creation of the Oregon State Fair and worked for several years on its formation and founding in Clackamas County. William is the namesake of Abernethy Heights, an old Portland area residential district. Eventually William and his family left the Portland area to reside near Dora in 1890, a move that occurred after the sale of his farm property.

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In 1862, while in The Dalles, William Abernethy married Sarah Gray. Sarah was the daughter of William H. Gray who came to Oregon with Dr. Marcus Whitman in 1836. Sarah was born near Salem and grew up in Oregon. When the Abernethy family moved to Dora in 1890 the property was purchased from Henry C. Hodges and the title was in the name of Sarah Abernethy. Mrs. Abernethy's legal ownership of the land is not unusual. It is known that both George and William Abernethy were not reputed for their business integrity. Perhaps William was trying to protect his financial interests by purchasing the property in his wife's name. Deed records indicate that William never was the title holder for the land. Deed records indicate Sara Abernethy was the property title holder for a very short time and that construction on the house began before the Abernethy family was listed as property owners.

Another interesting coincidence is the arrival of the Abernethy family at Dora roughly coinciding with the Central Pacific Railroad conglomerate's (Crocker, Huntington, Stanford, and Hopkins) complete acquisition of property holdings along the road, the lands never sold by the original wagon road development group. There were rumors at the time of a railroad line being built along the wagon road route. Eventually the California conglomerate turned the property back to the government; now the timber and property is administered by the Bureau of Land Management.

A 1902 newspaper article sheds some light on William Abernethy's thoughts about the Coos Bay Military Wagon Road and the forthcoming building along it:

William Abernethy, of Dora, Coos County, who is in Portland on business, considers himself the oldest living Oregon Pioneer and in accordance with custom expects to head the procession of Oregon Pioneers at the celebration June 18. "I came here with my parents in 1839", Mr. Abernethy said at the St. Charles today, "and that was two years before the first emigrant train arrived overland. Our family left Illinois in 1839, traveling by dead-ox wagon and canal boat to New York. We left New York City in October 1839 on board a full rigged clipper ship and rounded Cape Horn, after stopping a couple of days at Rio de Janeiro for provisions. On the Pacific side we stopped at Valparaiso. Then our ship took a westerly course and we dropped anchor at Honolulu, where some passengers disembarked. There was no San Francisco then, so our ship headed for the mouth of the Columbia River. We arrived at Vancouver in June, 1840 and I thought it was the prettiest place I ever saw- I think so yet.

Our family finally settled down near Oregon City, and my father helped build the first sawmill erected in Oregon. The old house in which we lived still stands. It was built of sawn lumber and is in good preservation yet".

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Mr. Abernethy, now a well preserved man of over 70, is running a farm near Dora, adjacent to Coos Bay. He, like the rest of the people over there feels the necessity of closer connection with Portland and to that end will confer with parties in this city as to the practicality of construction an electric road from Empire City to Roseburg. "This road would pay big interest on its cost from the time of its completion", he said; "and there is no good reason why capital can not be interested in the project. Coos County now has to do all its business with San Francisco, although we naturally prefer to deal with Portland. San Francisco people have no interest in us further than to obtain the product of our lumber mills, fruit farms and dairies, and to sell us merchandise in return. If Spreckels, the sugar king, so desired, he could easily give us an outlet to Roseburg by completion of his railroad to Myrtle Point, but such is evidently not his intention, so Coos County's interests continue to languish. The total output of lumber, dairy products, and fruit shipped from Coos Bay annually would startle Portland people if the correct figures could be obtained and Portland should get the larger proportion of this if we had rail connection with Roseburg. What I want to do is find the cost of constructing and equipping an electric line, and we will then see what Coos County people can do toward assisting outside capital in the enterprise. We have ample water power to waste along the Coquille River, so the cost of maintenance will be light after the road is put in operation. Such a road would open up a country rich in varied resources, and add vastly to our population and wealth, as well as to the dividends of the stockholders".

Edwin Abernethy went to the family homestead with his parents in 1890, at the age of sixteen. His father returned to the Portland area, Forest Grove, in 1904. In 1905 Edwin began construction on the travelers lodge. The structure as it stands today was built under Edwin's guidance between 1905 and 1922. Edwin operated a sawmill at Dora; it was from this sawmill that he milled planking for the wagon road in order to improve its usability and allow for automobiles travel over it. In 1907 he accompanied the first auto to traverse the route, acting as a trouble-shooter over rough spots in the road and to photograph the scenery along the way.

Edwin courted Ethel Laird, who lived with her parents at the Halfway house in Sitkum, for thirteen years, from 1909 to 1922. They were married in 1922 and construction on the house ended that year. Ethel Abernethy prior to and after her marriage, acted as the postmistress for the Dora and Sitkum area, also making sure that mail traveling the overland route to Coos Bay reached its destination.

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Edwin Abernethy died in 1958. Ethel Abernethy passed away in 1979. Between the end of construction in 1922 and Mrs. Abernethy's death the house has remained intact, in the same place, in reasonable condition, and in use as a residence. Built on entrepreneurial spirit and dreams, the building, sometimes referred to as "The Seven Gables", never functioned as a travelers lodge but instead served as a residence for Mr. and Mrs. Abernethy. Since Mrs. Abernethy's death the building has been looked after by a caretaker and the property title has been in the hands of trustee, members of the Laird family.

William Abernethy dreamed the idea of a travelers lodge, Edwin Abernethy implemented the idea, in the entrepreneurial spirit of his father and grandfather, but the reality of changing times, different modes of transportation, and the likelihood of the wagon road being superseded by a new highway route ended the dream of the Abernethy family.

The purpose of the Abernethy House, conceived by William Abernethy in 1903 and designed/built by Edwin Abernethy between 1905 and 1922, was that of a travelers lodge for vehicular or railroad traffic passing over the Coos Bay Military Wagon Road. Though construction of the exterior and first floor was completed in 1922, the upper two floors of the building were never finished. The first floor was completed in order for the structure to act as a residence for Edwin and Ethel Abernethy. The house was built over a period of 17 years, beginning in 1905. The end of construction coincides with the state highway department's plans and surveying for the present day route of state highway 42. The coming of the railroad to Coos Bay/North Bend from Eugene in 1916 also spelled doom on the future of the wagon road which in turn ended the anticipated need for a travelers lodge.

The building sets on an elevated foundation of concrete pads, brick pilasters, and post and beam framing. There is a patio along three of the building elevations. The structure is quite massive and an obvious deviation from the "typical" homes one sees along the wagon road route. The first floor contains a kitchen, bathroom, parlour, main hallway, master bedroom, and a second bedroom. The start of what was to be a grand stairway travels up from the main hallway to the second and third floors. The upper floors were intended to be guest rooms for travelers staying at the lodge.

At this time the Abernethy House remains in the legal hands of Edwin and Ethel's relatives. The current owner intends to use the building as a residence with possible future use as a bed and breakfast facility, a use very similar to its original intent.

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William Abernethy, who came to the Dora homestead in 1890, dreamed up the concept of a travelers lodge in 1903. Edwin Abernethy designed the building, cut the lumber for its construction, and then supervised its construction. Construction occurred over 17 years, from 1905 to 1922. Lumber and brick used for construction were taken from the property.

This building and the homestead property are one of the few intact physical remnants left that specifically pertain to the Coos Bay Military Wagon Road, a historical entity unto itself. The building is the only remnant giving testimony to the business acumen and entrepreneurial spirit of the Abernethy family and their impact upon the State of Oregon. George, William, and Edwin all exhibited the pioneering spirit that spurred the growth of this state. There are several unsubstantiated "hunches" about the Abernethy family's activities previously mentioned in this document. One is that George Abernethy, with his coal mining interest in the Coos Bay area, could and should of been aware of the coal mining potential of the Dora area and by virtue of his political activities been aware of the Federal Government's plans for a military wagon road from Roseburg to Coos Bay.

William could have easily been aware of rumors that a railroad line was to follow the road, rumors spurred on by the Central Pacific Railroad's acquisition of the financial interests in the wagon road route. Later, a year or two before construction began on the house, he was advocating the construction of an "electric road" along the wagon road to establish closer business ties to Portland. William may have also been seeking a "getaway" location to escape from business dealings; one possible reason why the property ownership was always in the name of non-family members or Sarah Abernethy. Edwin pursued his father's idea of a travelers lodge along the wagon road in anticipation of either railroad or automobile use over the route. The advent of other transportation routes reduced the significance of the Wagon Road and ended the validity of the travelers lodge idea.

The historical significance of the Abernethy House, besides ownership by the Abernethy family, is tied to the structure's location beside the Coos Bay Military Wagon Road. The road is still a functioning transportation route. In the early 1870's, upon its completion, until the early 1920's this road was the principal overland route to Coos Bay. It was along this road that mail service and telegraph service first came to Coos Bay. The shady financing scheme for developing the road is a history unto itself; suffice to say that the passing of the road's proprietorship from company to company and then back to the government leaves it being unique in that today the road right-of-way is administered by the Bureau of Land Management.

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OREGON ARGONAUTS: MERCHANT ADVENTURES ON THE WESTERN FRONTIER, by Arthur L. Throckmorton.

OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY REPORTS, volumes 1, 8, 19, 26, 27, 31, 38, 39, 42, 43, and 45-49.

EDEN SEEKERS: THE SETTLEMENT OF OREGON, 1818-1862; by Malcolm Clark, Jr., copyright: 1981.

DICTIONARY OF OREGON HISTORY, by Howard McKinley Corning, copyright: 1956.

EARLY PORTLAND: STUMP TOWN TRIUMPHANT, by Eugene E. Snyder.

PIONEERS AND INCIDENTS OF THE UPPER COQUILLE VALLEY, by Alice H. Woldridge, copyright: 1971.

"Roadhouse Builder Lost Gamble to Auto", by Ken Belieu, Portland OREGONIAN, September 11, 1973.

A HISTORY OF OREGON, 1792-1849; by W.H. Gray, copyright: 1870.

THE CENTENNIAL HISTORY OF OREGON 1811-1911, (biographical) by Joseph Gaston, copyright: 1912.

A CENTURY OF COOS AND CURRY COUNTY HISTORY, by Peterson & Powers, copyright: 1952.

DODGE'S HISTORY OF COOS AND CURRY COUNTIES.

HISTORY OF THE SITKUM HALFWAY HOUSE, by Ivan Laird; as told to George H. Seeley.

HISTORY OF THE COOS BAY WAGON ROAD, by Elsie Waglarz (magazine article).

COOS BAY WAGON ROAD, by James W. Harrison, 1951.

THE COOS BAY WAGON ROAD, by JoAnne Perrott Metcalfe, Coast Magazine.

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REMINISCENCES OF PIONEER DAYS IN THE VICINITIES OF SITKUM, MCKINLEY, AND LEE; constructed entirely from memory, October 1941, by R.E. Mast.

Tape recorded conversation between Shannon Mueller and JoAnne Perrott Metcalfe, 1976.

"The Founding of Portland", by Henry E. Reed, Portland OREGONIAN, February 2, 1930.

A GUIDE TO OREGON SOUTH COAST HISTORY, by Nathan Douthit, History professor at Southwestern Oregon Community College, copyright: 1986.

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Beginning at the point of intersection of the north edge of Myrtle Point-Sitkum County Road No. 1 (Coos Bay Military Wagon Road) and the east bank of Steel Creek, thence north along the east bank of Steel Creek 208.7 feet at N 0° 12' E, thence east 208.7 feet at E 0° 12' S, thence south 208.7 feet at S 0° 12' W, thence west along the northerly edge of said Myrtle Point-Sitkum County Road to the point of beginning, containing in all one acre, more or less.

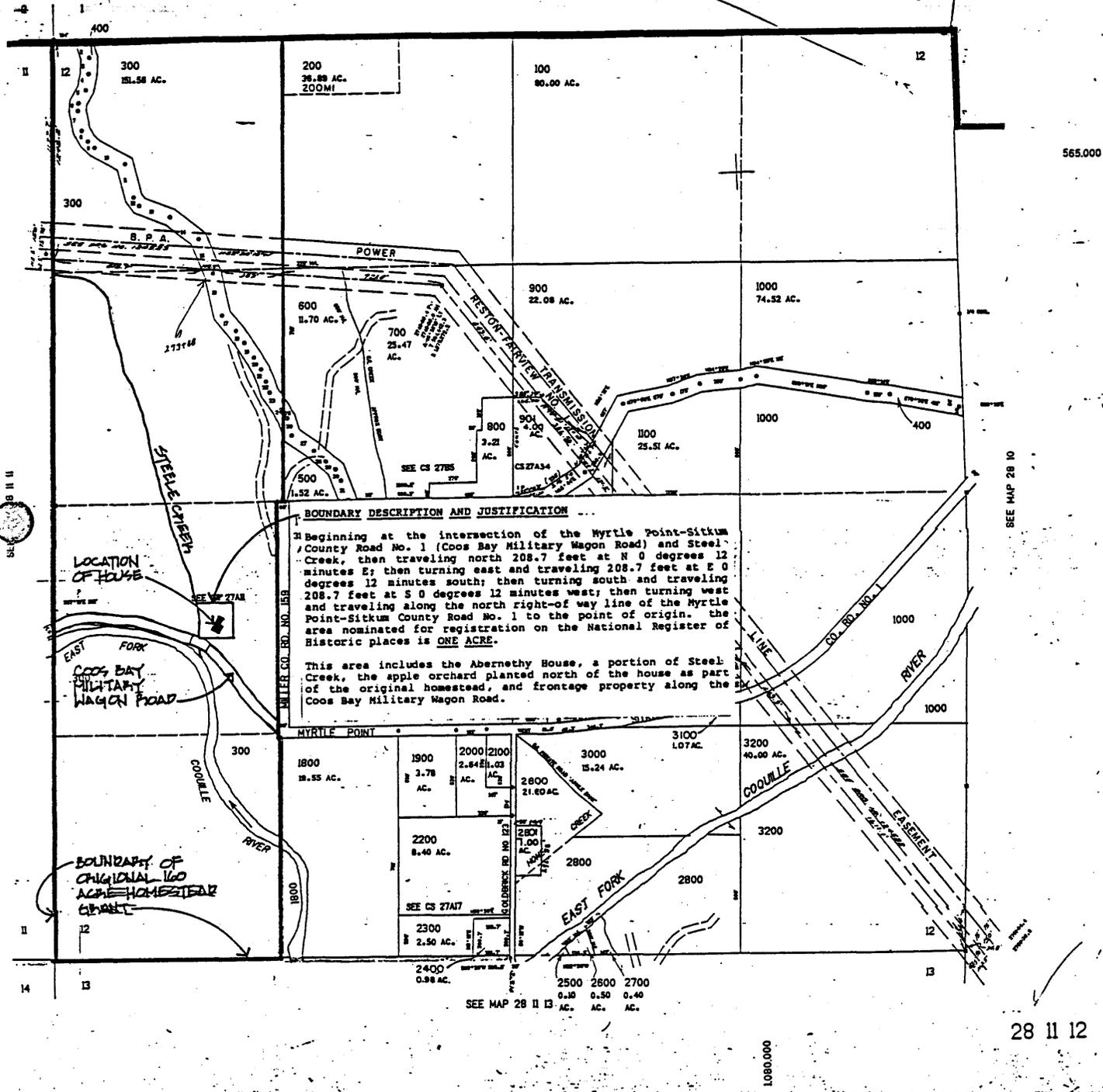
SECTION 12 T-28S. R.11W. W.M.  
COOS COUNTY

28 11 12

THIS MAP WAS PREPARED FOR  
ASSESSMENT PURPOSE ONLY.

1"=400'  
SEE MAP 28 11

CANCELLED  
1501  
2900  
2802

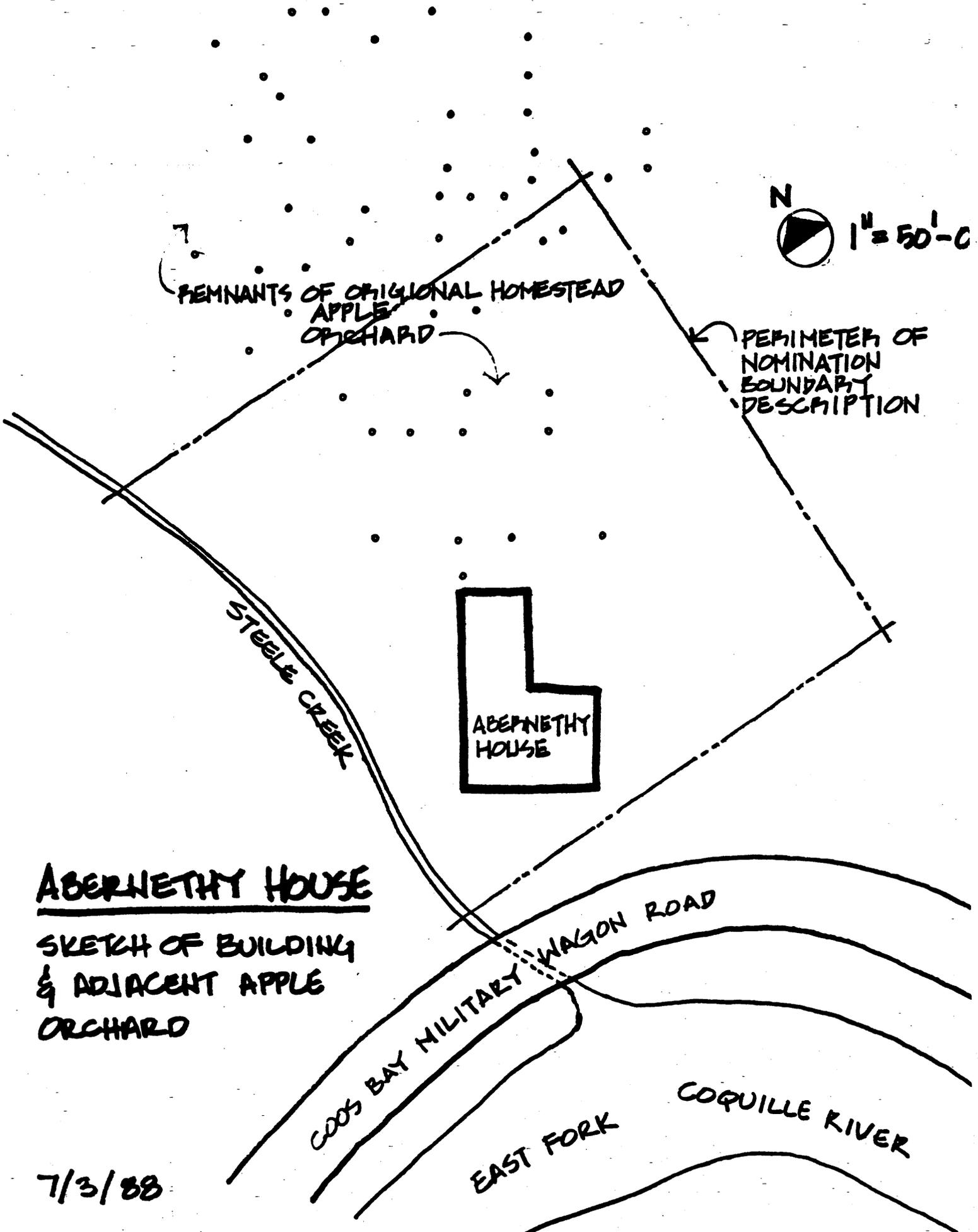


SEE MAP 28 10

SEE MAP 28 11 13

28 11 12

1080.000



REMNANTS OF ORIGINAL HOMESTEAD  
APPLE ORCHARD

N  
1" = 50'-0"

PERIMETER OF  
NOMINATION  
BOUNDARY  
DESCRIPTION

STEELE CREEK

ABERNETHY  
HOUSE

ABERNETHY HOUSE

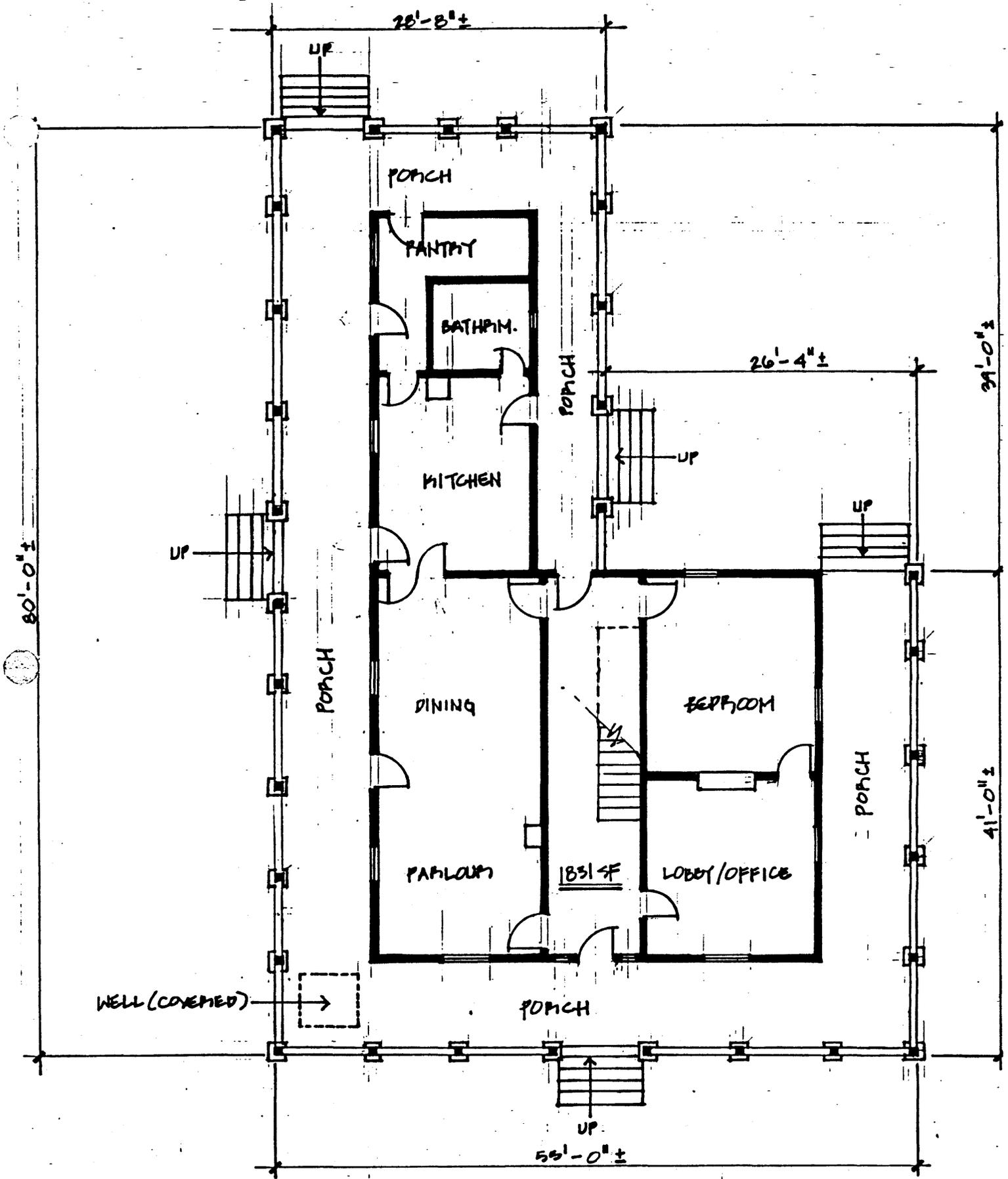
SKETCH OF BUILDING  
& ADJACENT APPLE  
ORCHARD

COOS BAY MILITARY WAGON ROAD

EAST FORK

COQUILLE RIVER

7/3/88

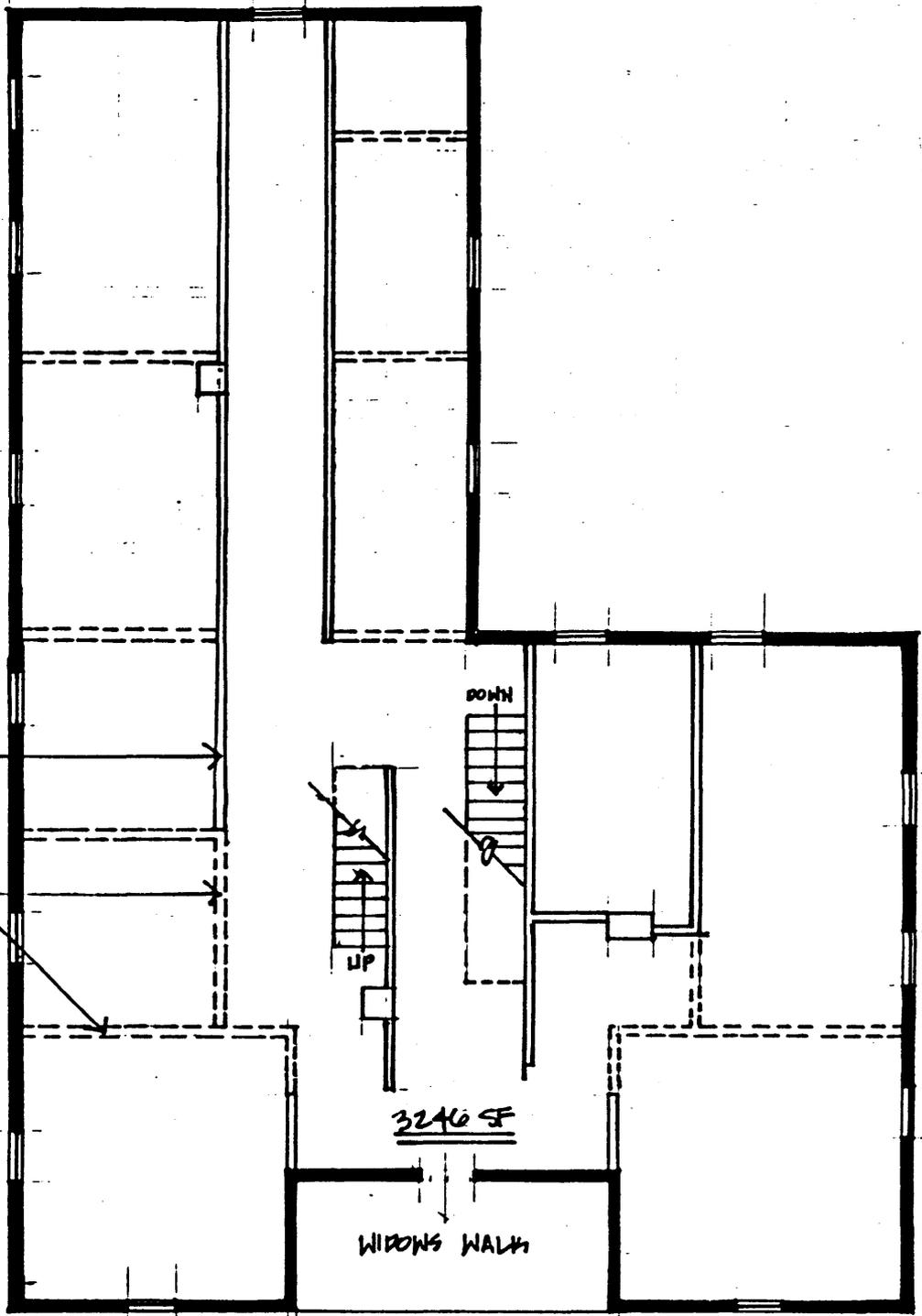


FIRST FLOOR PLAN

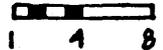


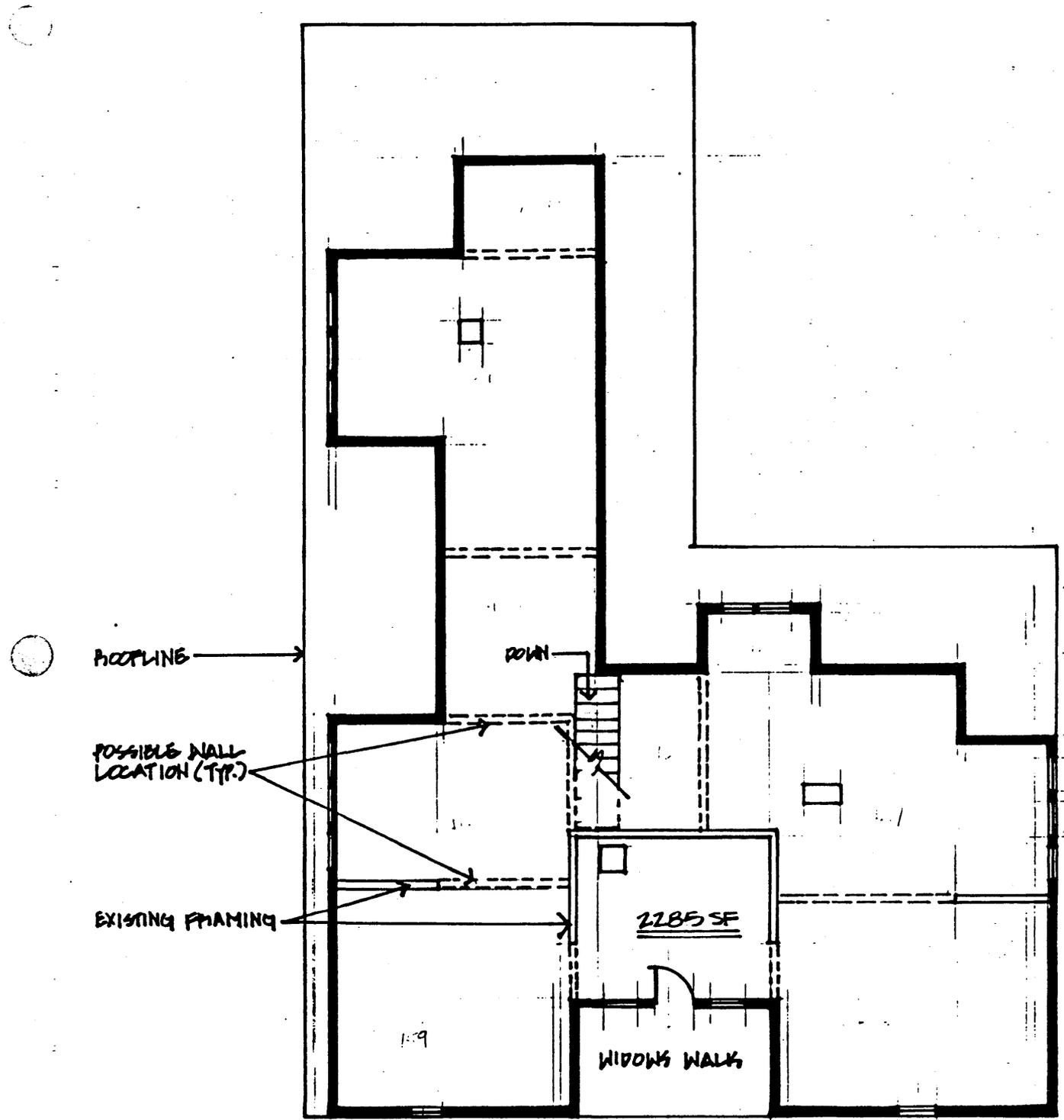
EXISTING FRAMING

POSSIBLE WALL LOCATION (TYP.)



SECOND FLOOR PLAN





THIRD FLOOR PLAN

