

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Filley, Captain Oliver, House (use for publication)

other names/site Samuel B. Pinney Farm; The Villa; LaSalette Villa

2. Location

street & number 130 Mountain Avenue not for publication N/A

city or town Bloomfield vicinity N/A

state Connecticut code CT county Hartford code 003 zip code 06002

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property 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 of certifying official _____ Date _____
Jennifer Aniskovich, Executive Director, Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism
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 commenting or other official _____ Date _____
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

Captain Oliver Filley House
Name of Property

Hartford, CT
County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other, (explain): _____	_____	_____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply) count.)	Category of Property (Check only one box)	Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>5</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	—	— sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	—	— structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	—	— objects
		<u>5</u>	<u>0</u> 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)	Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)
<u>DOMESTIC/single dwelling</u>	<u>DOMESTIC/single dwelling/vacant</u>
<u>AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/agricultural outbuilding</u>	<u>AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/agricultural outbuilding/vacant</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)
MID-19TH CENTURY/Greek Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	<u>Stone</u>
	<u>Brownstone</u>
roof	<u>Asphalt shingle</u>
other	<u>Weatherboard</u>

Narrative Description

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

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Captain Oliver Filley House, Bloomfield, Hartford County, CT

Section 7 Page 1

The Captain Oliver Filley House, an 1834 Greek Revival-style stone building, and its associated fields, orchards and woodland occupy 145 acres on the north side of Mountain Avenue in the Town of Bloomfield (Photograph 1). The house, now scheduled for a major restoration, is part of a farmstead set well back from the road on the slope of a hill (see Exhibit A for site plan). A long unpaved driveway lined with mature spruce trees winds up past the house and the contributing outbuildings (Photographs 2, 3, 4) to continue as a farm road to cultivated fields near the crest of the hill. Once known as Cook's or Pinney's Hill, it has a conical form of glacial drumlin and rises to 365 feet to command a vista that includes Talcott Mountain to the west and Hartford to the southeast. Although adjoining farmland on the north side of the hill and to the east off of Brown Street has been subdivided for residential use, none of the houses are readily visible from the Filley complex.

The four extant contributing outbuildings include a late nineteenth-century barn and corncrib, a barn with an attached shed, which was rebuilt after a fire about 1925, and a 1914 pump house. With the exception of the recently restored pump house, restoration or maintenance of these outbuildings has been deferred. Several other agricultural buildings dating from the early 1900s, including chicken coops and dairy barns with silos and a creamery, are no longer standing.

The thick stone walls of the Filley House were constructed of load-bearing rubblestone overlaid with a multi-colored traprock (basalt) veneer, bordered by large brownstone blocks that serve as quoins (Photographs 6, 7). The traprock stones, which range in size from several feet across to just a few inches, are in various shades of dark red, tan, brown, and black. Brownstone lintels, sills, and quoins detail the windows and doors. Instead of a watertable, the walls rise directly from the rubblestone foundation.

The unusual plan of the house consists of two intersecting wings with gable roofs. The living quarters were located primarily in the taller and narrower west wing. Part of the horizontal cornice is missing from its pedimented gable, but the raking cornice and typical rectangular Greek Revival window opening, now covered with louvers, still remain. Cornice returns detail the gable of the longer and lower minor wing, which had a large open room on the east end, located over a crawl space instead of a full basement. Wooden posts with capitals frame the broad segmental arched-opening to this space, which has been altered over time.¹ Two intermediate posts were in place and the arch filled in and parged with mortar sometime prior to 1885 (see Exhibit B for historic photograph). In the 1930s, the archway was partially enclosed with a wood curtain wall on the left that terminates in a single central post. To the rear, a recessed wall with a door on the right, conceals a concrete staircase to the main cellar on the left.

The primary and secondary entrances to the house are located within a few feet of each other at the inside corner of the wings (Photograph 8). The recessed Greek Revival-style main doorway has a divided light transom, sidelights (now in storage), pilasters with corner blocks, and a four panel-door. The date of the house is carved in the brownstone lintel. The side entrance, also with a four-panel door, is set within a paneled recess. Both doorways were once sheltered by an open, shed-roofed porch, which was demolished c. 1960. As depicted in the c. 1885 photograph, the porch had square posts with capitals, wall pilasters, and a shallow parapet with key blocks. There was no foundation; the posts rested directly on the ground.² One of the doors at the rear of minor wing is located on the second level. Now blocked in, it once was accessed by an outside stairway. When the grade in front of the minor wing was raised by backfilling, the two

¹ The reason for this opening or the functional use of the space has not been documented. There may have been a recessed porch at this location, but the size of the opening, as well as the lack of a cellar here, suggests the possibility that this end of the wing was designed to be an integral carriage house.

² Information about below grade conditions here and elsewhere is taken from "Archaeological Sensitivity Survey: Captain Oliver Filley House, Bloomfield, Connecticut," 1995.

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full height, six-over-nine façade windows were reduced in height by stone infill at the bottom. The present windows, which are in temporary storage, include original six-over-six sash, as well some smaller replacements, mostly from the first level. The window openings once were fitted with louvered blinds, similar to those now found on the blocked windows of the stairwell on the west elevation.

The simply detailed interior features a double-run staircase with a broad landing in the main hallway (Photograph 9; see Exhibit C for floor plans). The balustrade, which has a molded hand rail and slim turned balusters, terminates at a wider turned newel post with a domical cap. Although the staircase has been considered a later Victorian replacement because of the blocked-in windows here, paint analysis indicates that this feature may be original construction.³ Parlors on either side of the hall have bricked-in fireplaces with replacement surrounds (Photographs 10, 11). In the south parlor, there is a supporting lally column in the center of the room. Replacement window and door casings on this level generally consist of plain boards; a few pieces of original trim have beaded edges. Front windows in the minor wing display back-band molding and shouldered lintels (Photograph 12). Walls and ceilings here and on the second floor are in poor condition from moisture damage, with much of the plaster detached or removed from the wood lath.

More original detailing remains on the second floor. In addition to a simple Federal-style fireplace surround in the south parlor chamber (Photograph 13), the casework displays back-band molding. In the minor wing, where the original plan was subdivided by early twentieth-century partitions, the deep window reveals are plastered.

³ The initial paint analysis indicated that the front door and its surround and a molding piece from the stair stringer have the same 15-layer chromochronology. See "Captain Oliver Filley House; Feasibility Study," 1995, p. 38.

Captain Oliver Filley House

Name of Property

Hartford, CT

County and State

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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY/COMMERCE

AGRICULTURE

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1834 - 1956

Significant Dates

1834

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Captain Oliver Filley

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Not known

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.)

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 # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: Wintonbury Historical Society/ Connecticut Historical Society/Connecticut State Library.

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Captain Oliver Filley House, Bloomfield, Hartford County, CT

Section 8 Page 1

Statement of Significance

One of several stone houses in the region, the Captain Oliver Filley House, a vernacular Greek Revival, is distinguished by its exceptional masonry and unusual form and plan. It is also highly significant for its historical association with Captain Filley, a gentlemen farmer and civic leader, who achieved considerable renown as an early nineteenth-century tinware manufacturer with a national distribution market. The Filley property, one of the largest intact farms in Bloomfield, derives additional significance as a microcosm of the agricultural history of Connecticut's upper Central Valley. Now owned by the Town of Bloomfield and protected as open space, it is leased to the Wintonbury Historical Society, which has undertaken the restoration of the house.

Historical Background and Significance

The Town of Bloomfield was once part of the vast area claimed by the proprietors of Windsor. Settled in 1633-1635 by groups from towns in Massachusetts Bay and some who came directly from England, Windsor, along with Hartford and Wethersfield, were the foundation of the Connecticut Colony. By 1700 Windsor had expanded on both sides of the Connecticut River to the outermost limits of the Central Valley. Although there were a few isolated farms in the wilderness to the west near Talcott Mountain after 1660, the year the land there was purchased from Native Americans (probably Mohegans who lived in the region), settlement really began in earnest in the 1730s. At that time the inhabitants of Messenger's Farms, as this area was first known, attended church services in Windsor Center, a 12-mile round trip. In 1734 parishioners were granted winter privileges, i.e., the right have local church services from November through March. Permission for a separate church society, or parish, was granted in 1736. It took the name Wintonbury in recognition that the membership was drawn from the towns of Windsor (31), Farmington (eight), and Simsbury (12). By the time the new parish settled a minister and built their own meetinghouse, some 60 families were members. With some minor adjustments of the borders, the four-square mile parish became the Town of Bloomfield in 1835.

Captain Oliver Filley (1784-1846) was a direct descendant of William Filley, a seventeenth-century Windsor proprietor. His father, Oliver Filley, Sr. bought property in the Wintonbury Parish in 1783. It consisted of two parcels originally granted by "Simsbury Inhabitants" to William and Samuel Case. The first 40 acres, part of the "lyn dividend bettween [sic] Windsor and Simsbury," was described in the deed of 1686 as "...land on the East side of ye Mountains on either side of the hartford path..." (Simsbury Land Records [SLR] 1:44; 1 ½: 178-79). Additional contiguous acreage granted in 1688 ran east to the Windsor line (SLR 1:69). An existing dwelling on that property, built about 1740 by Reuben Case, became the home of Oliver Filley, Sr. and his wife Tabitha Barber, whom he married in 1782. It was located east of the nominated property on present-day Brown Street, which runs in a northerly direction off of Mountain Avenue.

The Filleys had five children, but only three survived to adulthood: Oliver the eldest, Amelia (b. 1792), and Harvey, the youngest, born in 1794. Upon his father's death in 1796, the management of then 93-acre farm fell to 12-year-old Oliver and his mother Tabitha. Tabitha's dower rights in the estate, 49 acres east of the homelot and one-sixth of the dwelling house and barn, were reserved in the final distribution in 1805. The remaining acreage was divided among the children. Harvey received the rest of the barn and Oliver, who had come of age, was awarded the house, less his mother's portion. In May of that year, Oliver married Annis Humphrey of Simsbury and they had seven children between 1806 and 1820. More than 20 years would elapse before all of the heirs deeded over full control of property, but Captain Filley continued to run the family farm. Although agriculture afforded him a very comfortable living, the surviving records show that he also was a successful manufacturer of tinware.

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Industry and Commerce

Oliver Filley's remarkable career as a tin maker is well documented. According to Shirley S. Devoe, a historian of the decorative arts:

More is known about Oliver Filley, his family, and his business than about any other tin-shop owner because of the complete collection of papers, both business and personal, that have been preserved. [A record] of the daily concerns of business and family life in the 'Land of Steady Habits' during the first fifty years of the nineteenth century...[they] have proved valuable in revealing many previously unknown facts about the manufacture of American tinware.⁴

Like many other early industrial entrepreneurs in Connecticut, Filley recognized that the manufacture of common household items had considerable commercial potential. Even though he relied on the traditional business methods of the period, such as the apprentice system, the use of peddlers as a sales force, and the direct involvement of relatives, Filley's genius lay in his more modern organizational and marketing skills.

Beginning in small way with a tin shop on the home farm in 1806,⁵ Filley became one of the largest tinware dealers in the Northeast, eventually serving markets on the western frontier and in Canada. To be able to respond rapidly to an expanding market, Filley set up production and distribution centers outside of the state. Beginning with a branch shop in New Jersey so his peddlers could stock up without returning to Connecticut, he went on to create a far flung network of tin shops with showrooms in Philadelphia, Lansingburg (Troy), New York, and St. Louis. He trained his brother, Harvey, and his brother-in-law and cousin, Augustus Filley (Amelia's husband), to run these establishments, and they were later assisted by their sons. Oliver's sons, Oliver, Marcus, Jay, and John learned the business from the ground up, starting out as peddlers. Together with the several independent peddlers who worked for Filley on shares, they sold tinware all over this vast territory and even competed successfully in the Canadian market. All but Jay went on to take a more active role in the management of the business.

The Filley shops made all manner of household items from tin plate, from large trunks to buckets, lanterns and pots and pans. Although tin making was still a craft, with the various products fashioned and decorated by hand, Filley employed many strategies to maximize production and meet market demands. For example, he trained his workers in the use of the most modern equipment, often buying the rights to the latest shaping and stamping machines. Since tin plate was imported from England until 1830, to keep his shops supplied with the raw material required complex scheduling. After arriving in coastal ports, the boxed plate often was carried by river boats to various Filley shops. For the Bloomfield shop, Filley had the plate shipped up the Connecticut River to Hartford. Orders destined for St. Louis, went sent to New Orleans for transshipment up the Mississippi. Craftsmen and apprentices were traded back and forth as needed. For example, having sold out all of his plain (undecorated) ware in New Jersey, Oliver wrote to his wife asking her to send him Oliver Bronson, a skilled japanner in the Bloomfield shop.⁶ Although most of the decorators were women, often recruited from Berlin, Connecticut, a center for the decorative arts, some male decorators were trained in Filley shops. Among them was Harry Crane, a black laborer in the Bloomfield shop, who was indentured in 1811 at age 17; he later apprenticed as a tinware decorator with Augustus Filley in St. Louis.

⁴ "The Filleys of Bloomfield," *The Art of the Tinsmith* (Exton, Pennsylvania: Schiffer Publishing Limited, 1981), p. 169.

⁵ After the original shop burned down in 1817, Filley converted the old 1740 farmhouse for this purpose, having already built a new Federal-style house across the road.

⁶ Japanned tinware was coated with varnish combined with various colored pigments, a formula that was a closely guarded secret in the tin industry.

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Jay Humphrey Filley (1810-1883) joined the tinare bisness after he finished his education at a private boarding school in Wilbraham, Massachusetts. Writing to his parents in 1832 while peddling tinware in upper New York State, he discussed his future plans.⁷ Acknowledging that "this section of the country presents the most flattering inducements to a young man of ambition," Jay also expressed his willingness to return home to manage the family farm "in any manner that will afford me a living or a compensation for my time and trouble." As an inducement, Oliver was already considering building a new house for his son. Referring to those plans, Jay wrote, "Respecting building - and your judgement [sic] - I can say no more than I have said, however, if you build at all, I certainly would build of stone (punctuation added for clarity). This is all the fashion here." Apparently an agreement was reached for Jay came home to run the farm in 1833. He married Julia Ann Newberry, a local girl, and they moved into the new stone house after it was finished in 1834. Even though they lived here until 1849, his father retained ownership of the property. In fact, the stone house was still part of Captain Filley's estate when he died in 1846.

His son's preference for a stone house may have been a deciding factor, but Captain Filley was well aware of that stone construction was rapidly becoming a popular status symbol for the elites of Bloomfield and neighboring towns.⁸ Indeed, the two stone houses already standing in Bloomfield were built for David Grant (1832), and Francis Gillette (1833), other acknowledged leaders of the community. Furthermore, between 1830 and 1835 six more stylistically similar stone houses were constructed in the region: the Filley House in 1834, one of two more in Bloomfield, along with three in Simsbury, and one in Granby. Common elements included not only traprock and brownstone masonry, but similar Greek Revival doorways and porches. Several of the earlier buildings also display gable fanlights, a holdover from the Federal period.

Grant, Gillette, and Captain Filley were all wealthy farmers, major taxpayers in Wintonbury Parish, and leading members of the Hartford County Agricultural Society. All three served in the General Assembly, Filley first elected in 1817. Gillette later also served as a state senator (his house was listed on the National Register in 1982). In accord with their status, most stone house owners were routinely elected or appointed to local offices, ranging from selectmen to traditional rural positions such as hayward, fence viewer, and tythingman. Captain Oliver Filley's honorific originated from his command of the militia company assigned to defend Hartford during the War of 1812.

Agriculture

An exceptionally detailed level of primary source documentation compiled by the Wintonbury Historical Society, ranging from tax and census records to private account books, letters, and oral histories, provides a fairly complete record of the agricultural history of the Filley Farm. The key phases of this history, which reflect the accommodation of agricultural production to the shifting economics of the market place for more than 150 years, are represented by the half century under Filley management, followed by the stewardship of the Pinney family into the early 1900s, and finally, by the ownership of the Missionaries of LaSalette through much of rest of the twentieth century. In general terms this history encompasses a basic shift in agricultural practice, from extensive to intensive farming. In the antebellum period, as external market forces phased out sheep and then cattle production and depressed the price of grain crops, Connecticut Valley farmers turned to dairying and tobacco, the major sources of farm profits after the Civil War. Despite some farm consolidation, most of Bloomfield's agricultural land remained in production. There were 189 farms in Bloomfield in 1870 (down from 199 in 1860) and, unlike many other rural communities in the state, the nineteenth-century population remained relatively stable. After reaching about 1400 in 1850, it varied little until after 1870, when the population

⁷ Connecticut Historical Society, Filley Family Papers, Box 3, Folder S.

⁸ Edward Stanley, "The Traprock Houses of Bloomfield, Simsbury, and Granby," May 2000.

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dropped to 1308 in the next 20 years. By the early twentieth century, with the increased use of mechanized equipment, as well as more function-specific buildings, large-scale commercial dairying operations and poultry farming predominated.

From the very beginning, Bloomfield farmers, blessed with a loam-rich soil and protected from severe weather by Talcott Mountain on the west, enjoyed a fairly temperate climate and engaged in mixed farming. They had raised cattle and sheep, cultivated land for grain and root crops, and planted extensive apple orchards. Captain Filley's account books prior to the War of 1812 show that, in addition to the usual farm produce, he also did a considerable business selling gin, brandy, and timber to his neighbors.⁹ Between 1808 and 1827 he consolidated and enlarged the property by purchasing his sibling's shares and buying an additional 20-acre contiguous parcel on the north. (His mother's 49-acre parcel was not transferred to him until after her death in 1843 [SLR 36:179]). By 1830 much of his land was cultivated or used for pasture for 22 neat cattle and 70 sheep. Apples, potatoes, corn, oats, and wheat were the major crops. That same year the Hartford County Agricultural Society awarded Filley a silver cup for the best managed farm in the county.

The "stone house farm," as it came to be known, together with the original home farm, prospered under Jay Filley's management until the late 1830s. Faced with the Panic of 1837 and the decline of the American wool market, largely due to the repeal of tariff protection, Jay, like many farmers, experimented with new money crops with mixed results. Correspondence with other landowners in the area, including a member of the Cheney family, silk manufacturers in Manchester, reveals that Jay succumbed to the mulberry craze sweeping Hartford County, planting thousands of saplings between 1837 and 1839. The propagation of mulberry trees to feed silk worms was promoted by the Cheneys, who hoped to reduce their dependence on imported Japanese cocoons. Although the nurserymen prospered, as virtually everyone in the county planted trees, even in small backyards, few trees survived the hard winter of 1839-40, or the blight that followed, and the experiment was abandoned.

Jay was more successful growing tobacco. No longer an experimental crop, tobacco had commercially cultivated in the Central Valley since the 1830s. Although labor intensive, it had higher dollar value per acre than any other field crop. By 1840 Hartford County farms were producing nearly a half million pounds per year and production doubled in the next decade. The size of Filley's crop is not known, but it was large enough to require a tobacco storage barn, which he erected in 1846. The barn was listed as part of his father's estate when it was appraised in 1847. At that time, all of Captain Filley's holdings, including the 93-acre stone house farm, were valued at more than \$12,000. In 1849 Jay and his siblings sold the stone house farm, and Jay moved back to the family's Federal-style farmhouse on the home farm. In later life he moved to Hartford and became a tobacco dealer. In 1874 the Brown Street property was turned over to his son, Louis Jay Filley (1840-1906), a Civil War veteran, but Jay Filley retained the use of the tobacco barn.

Samuel B. Pinney bought the stone house farm in 1854. According to the U.S. Agricultural Census, by 1860, 133 out of his 140 acres were listed as improved land. In addition to labor provided by family members, Pinney paid \$1000 in wages to hired hands, which included the value of the board provided. He raised 6000 pounds of tobacco, making him one of larger growers in town, and also produced 1500 lbs of butter. Rye, oats, and potatoes were his other main crops. Although slightly less tobacco was reported in 1870, Pinney still ranked among the top 18 growers in Bloomfield. Livestock included oxen, a few cows, and pigs, but fully a third of the \$6000 value of Pinney's total farm produce came from raising beef cattle.

In the next decade, with a national railroad system in place and the invention of refrigerated cars, cheaper Western beef and grain flooded Eastern markets. While many Connecticut farmers looked for other sources of income, those situated near the growing cities had a ready market for whole milk and fruit. Although there was a record tobacco crop in

⁹ Account Book of Oliver Filley, Bloomfield, Connecticut, 1807-1809, MS, Filley Papers, Box 1, Folder B, Hartford, Connecticut State Library,

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Bloomfield in 1879, with 27 top growers producing 180,000 pounds, only three of Pinney's acres were used for tobacco. Pinney had turned most of his crop land over to hay fields, pasturage, or orchards. With 39 milch cows, then the largest herd in town, he produced 30,000 gallons of milk annually, either peddled by his son, Frederick, or sent to cheese and butter factories. By this time a rubblestone creamery (now in ruins) was standing on the west side of his farm road. As horses had largely replaced oxen as draft animals, a new horse barn was erected and still stands at the north end of the farm complex. Pinney also had the largest apple orchard in town (1000 bearing trees), but in the absence of modern storage systems, the size and market value of his crop (50 bushels only worth \$5.00) and that of his neighbors was negligible.

In 1913 Frederick Pinney sold the farm to the Missionaries of La Salette, a religious order founded in France in 1852. The first La Salette priests came to Montreal in the late 1800s and by 1892, the order was part of the Hartford Diocese. La Salette College, a seminary, was founded there in 1898. Until a new brick novitiate was constructed at the southeast corner of the Bloomfield property in 1916, the six lay brothers who worked the farm lived in the stone house and had their own chapel in the south parlor. According to federal census of 1920, many of the brothers and priests associated with the farm were of French or French Canadian extraction. As depicted in an early undated photograph, they wore straw hats with low crowns and broad brims, a type commonly worn by priests in France. Other personnel included ten novices (priests in training), all in their 20s, from Canada, Ireland, and several New England states, who apparently came out from the college on a daily or weekly basis to assist with haying and harvesting. Later on they were required to spend a full year at the Bloomfield novitiate. Four French sisters who served as domestics lived in an existing nearby house.

The farm at La Salette Villa, as the property came to be known, was largely self-sufficient, supplying all the food for the order here and in Hartford. Farm goods were transported by horse and wagon until a truck was donated to the order in 1915. Existing buildings were utilized and new buildings and structures were added to the complex in the first few years. Among them was a pump house for the new artesian well. Forging, machinery repair, and furniture making were done on the premises in the extant barn with the attached shed. Potatoes were stored in a bin there until a root cellar was dug at the northwest corner of the house. Hogs were butchered in a separate shed at the rear. The stream along the east side of the farm was dammed for an ice pond and swimming hole (now part of the 1916 novitiate property), with a new icehouse built by the brothers nearby. The spruce trees that now line the driveway were planted at this time.

Only historic records and photographs remain to document the extensive dairy and poultry businesses carried on by La Salette for 50 or more years. By 1920 their modern commercial dairy supplied milk to the college in Hartford and to St. Francis and Hartford hospitals. The first of two large cow barns, which was erected in 1913 across from the existing Pinney horse barn, was destroyed by fire about 1985. A second dairy barn located uphill to the northeast met a similar fate. The 1913 structure was attached to the existing Pinney creamery at the west end, with a large silo on the east end, it was constructed with a cement floor with built-in drainage. A mechanical system was installed for removing cow manure, which was transported by a trolley line to a nearby dumping ground on the property. Some of the walls of the old creamery were rebuilt to accommodate a new and larger stainless steel holding tank for milk. Horse-drawn equipment, including threshers, cutters, and binders, facilitated the harvest of silage corn, grain crops, and hay. Chickens and eggs, pork, fruit, potatoes and other vegetables were raised for La Salette consumption, with the surplus sold in the Hartford market. Three large heated (later insulated) chicken coops once were located in the orchards northwest of the house in the 1930s, a major source of revenue up until 1963, when the coops were torn down. Dairying continued into the early 1970s, with the entire output sold to A.C. Petersen of West Hartford. By this time, lay brothers no longer ran the farm. From the 1960s until 1980, when the farm was sold to developers, managers were hired and they lived with their families in the stone house.

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Captain Oliver Filley House, Bloomfield, Hartford County, CT

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Architectural Significance

The Captain Filley House is a major contributor to the region's distinguished collection of indigenous stone architecture. In an area long known for its wood building tradition, the stone houses of Bloomfield, Simsbury, and Granby are a distinctive presence. All built in a relatively short timeframe of traprock and brownstone, locally available materials, they comprise a remarkably similar group. From the available evidence, the houses themselves and existing records of two owners, they all have been attributed to Goodwin, Terrill, and Downes, itinerant masons who apparently only lived in the area during the period of construction.¹⁰

Despite the obvious similarities, the Filley House is significant in its own right. As the only one in the series to retain its historically rural setting or its farm acreage, it has exceptional site integrity. The splendid isolation of the farmstead on the broad open sweep of a hillside conveys a distinct sense of time and place. Nothing intrudes upon the stark simplicity of the house; no suburban landscaping disturbs the illusion of nineteenth-century farmstead. Furthermore, unlike the other more stylish homes, the Filley House is basically a vernacular stone farmhouse, a "villa" in the European sense, as the La Salette brothers so clearly recognized. Perhaps more notable as folk architecture rather than for its level of style, the Filley House departs from the design and construction conventions exhibited by the other houses to such a degree that it calls into question the assumption that it was built by the same mason.

Massing and design are among the more obvious differences. All of the other stone houses in this group are more stylistically conventional: a major gabled and often pedimented main block and clearly secondary wings or ells. Their porches are original and incorporated into the design. In the Filley House, the extended massing of the minor wing competes for dominance. Furthermore, the porch here was clearly an afterthought, since it covered the dated doorway pediment. The broad archway on the façade of the minor wing is an exceptionally rare architectural element. None of the other stone houses incorporate this feature, which may be unique in Connecticut.

Traprock is an igneous material also known as basalt. Because it breaks at irregular angles, and cannot be quarried like sandstone or laid up in regular courses, as a building material, its use is limited to non-structural veneer. Used today primarily in road construction, it is found in exposed ridges thrust upward by volcanic action. They are found nearby on Talcott Mountain, part of major formation which runs from Holyoke, Massachusetts, down to New Haven, and on smaller parallel ridges like the one in Simsbury that runs down to Bristol. Traprock can be gathered from the talus at the base of these ridges or excavated in rifted area higher up the slopes. It is known that at least two of the stone house owners, Zelah Case and Filley, paid local people to haul traprock down from ledges on or near their properties.

Unfortunately, while other surviving invoices and contracts cover many aspects of the construction of the Filley House, no record has been found of any agreement with a mason.¹¹ Archival sources have yielded an agreement with the finish carpenters, which included the name of the man who drew the plans, a Mr. Stanwood. Payments were made to the suppliers of plaster, lumber, and nails, and to the sawyer. A record also exists of a payment to a neighbor for boarding Filley's masons for four months in 1834, but does not name them.¹² So whether Filley hired Goodwin, Terrill, and Downes, or less experienced local masons may never be known.

While others were responsible for the unusual Filley plan, Mr. Stanwood, or even Filley himself, a mason was responsible for the execution. Of particular interest is the highly decorative quality of the veneer, which exhibits a wider

¹⁰ See Stanley, "The Traprock Houses of Bloomfield".

¹¹ Accounts of Oliver Filley, 1834-1835 (MS), Filley Family Papers, Box 2, Folder H, Hartford, Connecticut Historical Society.

¹² *Ibid.*, John Tyler to Oliver Filley, October 13, 1834.

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range of color and size than any of the other stone houses. Given the physical properties of traprock, the intricate fitting and bonding of these stones to the supporting masonry called for considerable skill. The rest of the masonry, however, includes some surprisingly basic construction anomalies, particularly the lack of a watertable.¹³ This feature, commonly used in residential masonry work even in the colonial period, is found on several others in the group. Furthermore, the inherent structural deficiencies of such a broad shallow archway on the minor wing should have been obvious. Certainly the arch began to fail quite early in the building's history.

Other features that point to a different mason are readily apparent. For example, the quoining blocks do not have the same consistent regular proportion and size common to all the other houses. In addition, the Filley mason also employed massive, irregularly shaped, brownstone blocks at the base of walls, some of them laid with little regard for the grain of the stone. Although little can be made from a comparison of the joints, given the deteriorated condition of the Filley mortar and its subsequent cement re-pointing, there is no evidence of the finely drawn grapevine pointing traditionally used in random ashlar construction that is found on at least two of the other houses.

¹³ Soil backfilled against the base of the façade wall here might hide a watertable, but there is no evidence of this feature on the rest of the building.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Captain Oliver Filley House, Bloomfield, Hartford County, CT

Section Photo Page 1

List of Photographs

Photographer: Cunningham Preservation Associates

Date: 4/06 Negatives on File: SHPO, Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism

1. Captain Oliver Filley House from driveway below, camera facing NW
2. Captain Oliver Filley House, east elevations, camera facing W
3. Captain Oliver Filley House, barns, camera facing NW
4. Captain Oliver Filley House, pump house, camera facing SE
5. Captain Oliver Filley House, east and south wing elevations, camera facing NW
6. Captain Oliver Filley House, south gable and west elevation, major wing, camera facing NE
7. Captain Oliver Filley House, rear and west elevation, camera facing SE
8. Captain Oliver Filley House, doorways at wing intersection, camera facing W
9. Captain Oliver Filley House, main staircase from landing, camera facing SE
10. Captain Oliver Filley House, front (south) parlor, camera facing SE
11. Captain Oliver Filley House, rear (north) parlor, camera facing NE
12. Captain Oliver Filley House, west room in minor wing, camera facing NW
13. Captain Oliver Filley House, north chamber fireplace, second floor, camera facing NE

Captain Oliver Filley House
Name of Property

Hartford, CT
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 144.4

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	_____	_____	_____	3	_____	_____	_____
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____	_____

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 Jan Cunningham, National Register Consultant

organization Cunningham Preservation Associates, LLC date 10/15/06 (Rev.12/08/06)

street & number 37 Orange Road telephone (860) 347 4072

city or town Middletown state CT zip code 06457

Property Owner

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

name Town of Bloomfield
street & number 300 Bloomfield Avenue telephone (860) 769 3500
city or town Bloomfield state CT zip code 06002

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.).

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National Park Service

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Captain Oliver Filley House, Hartford County, CT

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9. Major Bibliographic References*

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* The author is indebted to the Wintonbury Historical Society for sharing the extensive Filley House archive. Researched and compiled by Sharon Steinberg, member of the board and chair of the Filley House Building Committee, it includes copies of most of primary source material located in the depositories listed above. Specific manuscripts selected for reference in the nomination are cited in full in the footnotes.

10. Geographical Data

UTMS (USGS Avon Quad)

1. 18 685440 4634260
2. 18 685950 4634310
3. 18 685910 4634530
4. 18 686180 4634560
5. 18 685930 4633430
6. 18 685560 4633480

Verbal Boundary Description: The nominated property consists of two contiguous parcels described in the Bloomfield Land Records as follows: Volume 534, Page 16-18 (139.30 acres; 11/27/1991) and Volume 649, Page 206 (5.11 acres; 12/29/1994).

Boundary Justification: The boundaries are drawn to encompass all the land and surviving historic buildings associated with the property during its period of significance.

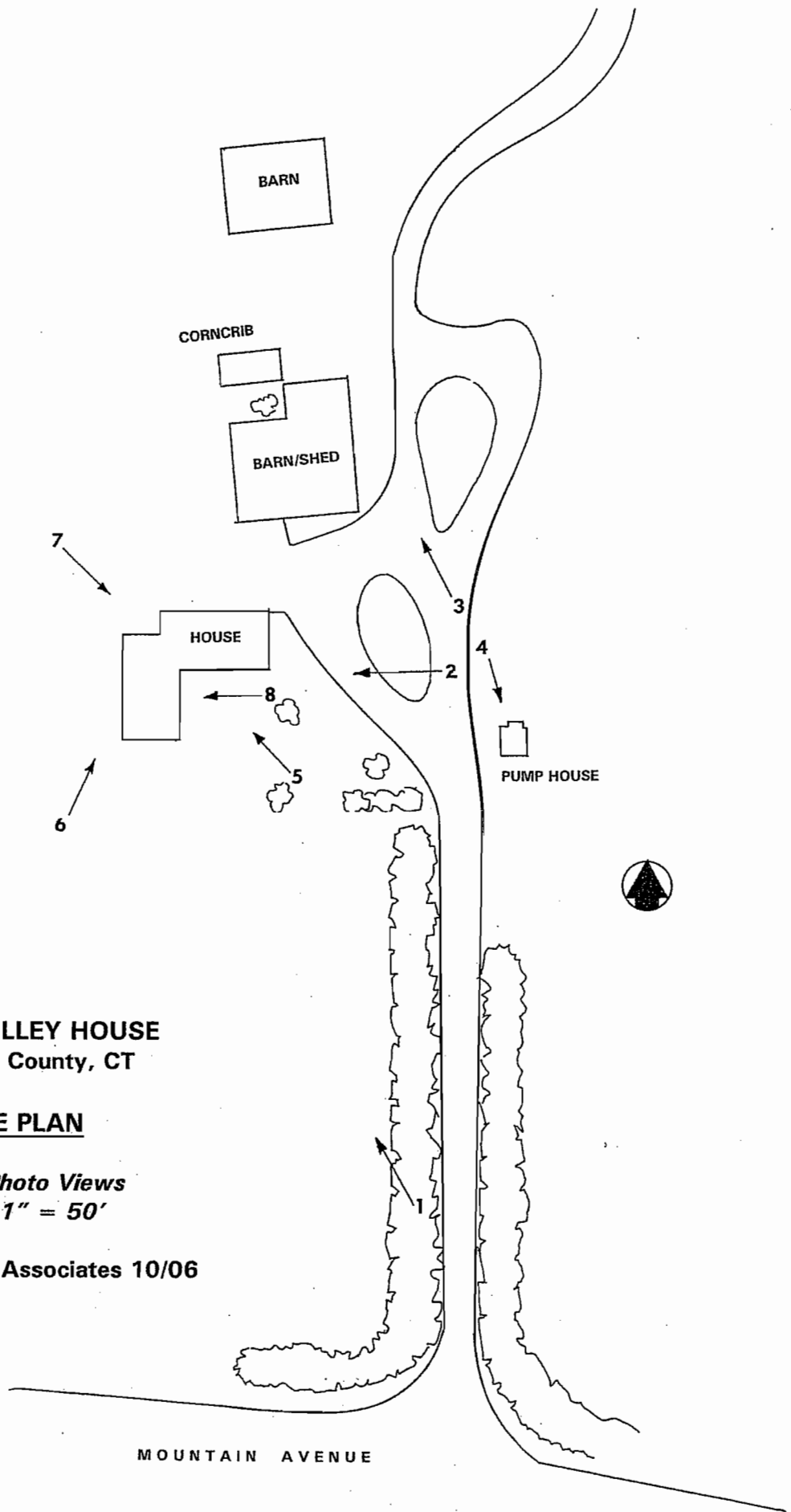


EXHIBIT A

CAPTAIN OLIVER FILLEY HOUSE
Bloomfield, Hartford County, CT

SCHEMATIC SITE PLAN

Numbered Arrows: Photo Views
Approximate Scale: 1" = 50'

Cunningham Preservation Associates 10/06

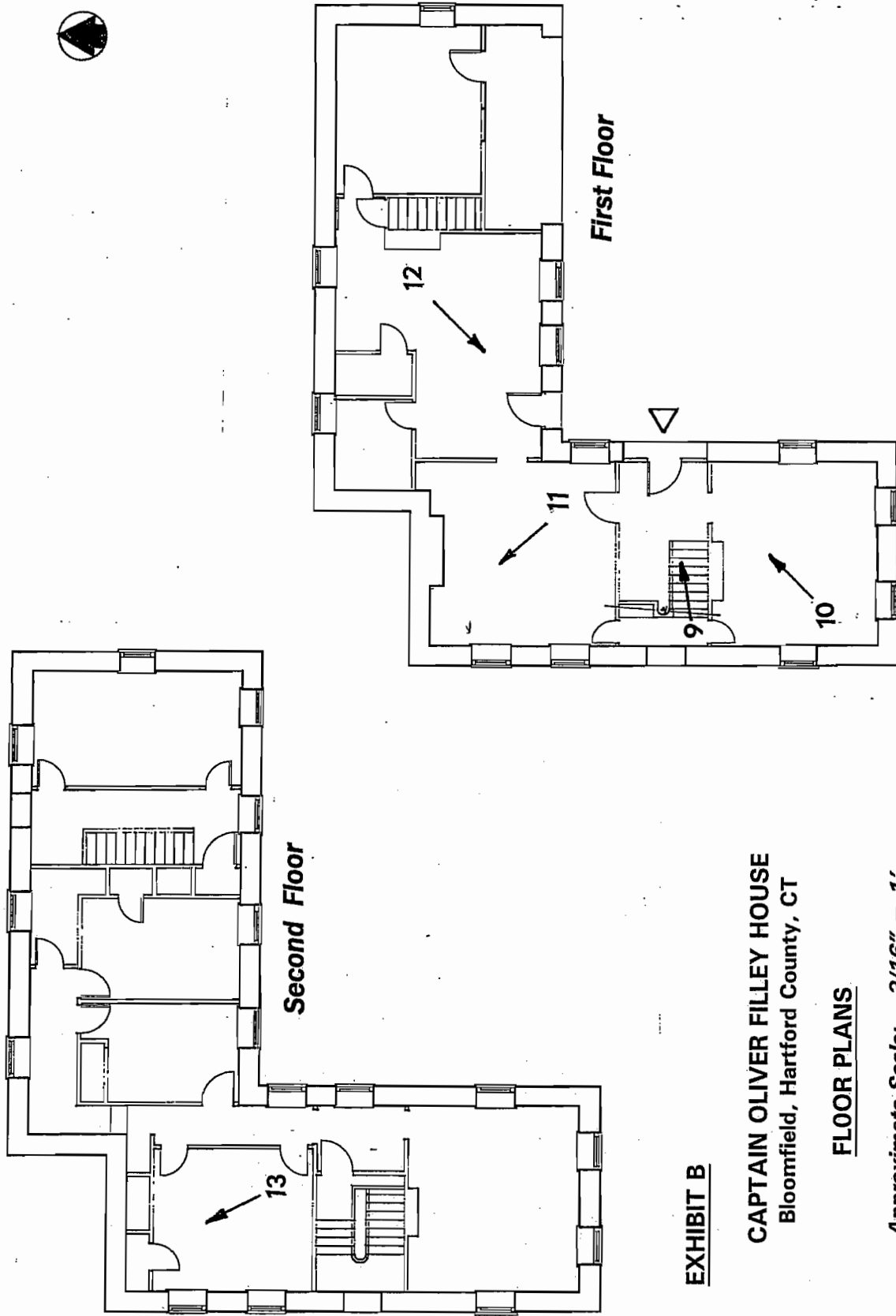


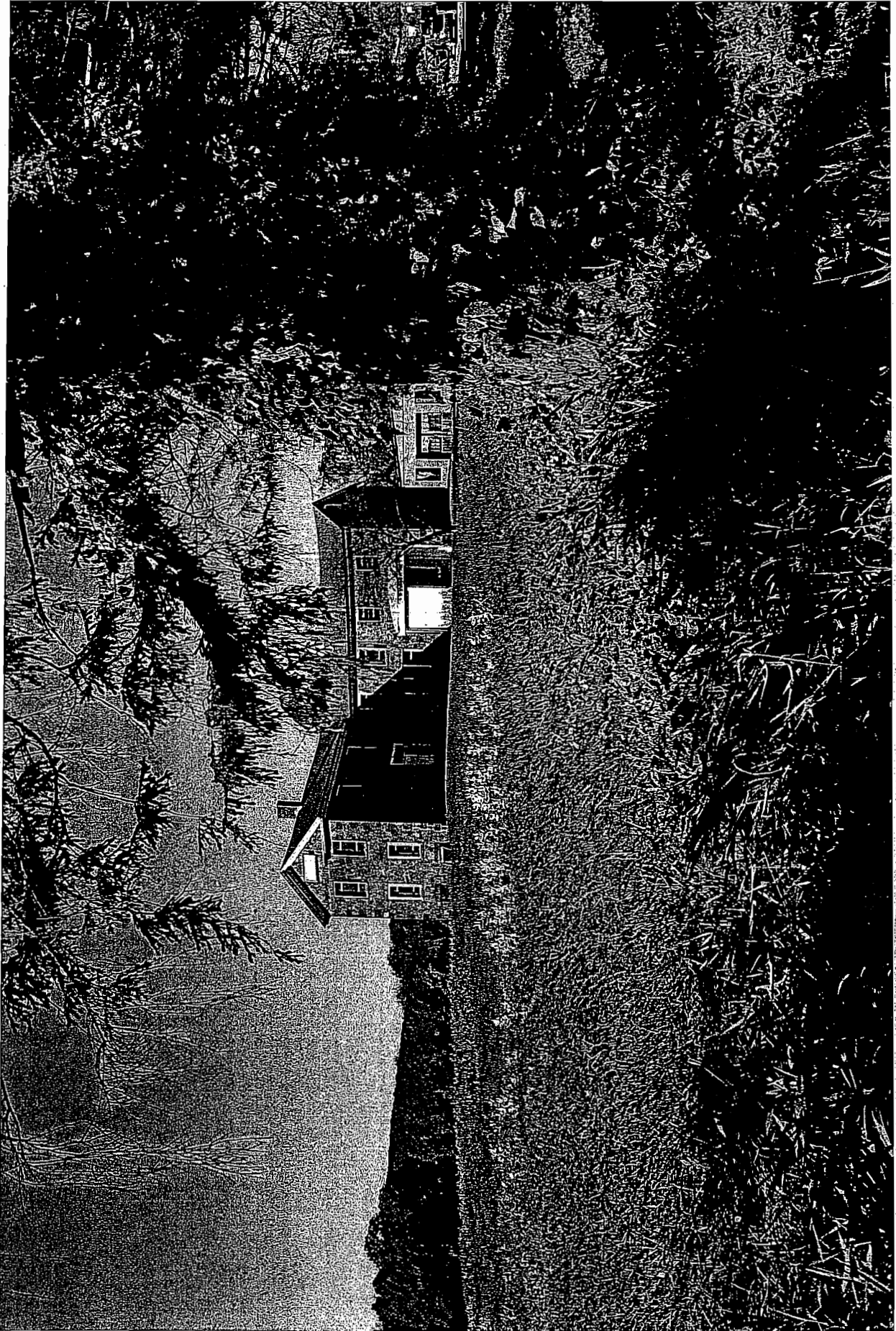
EXHIBIT B

CAPTAIN OLIVER FILLEY HOUSE
 Bloomfield, Hartford County, CT

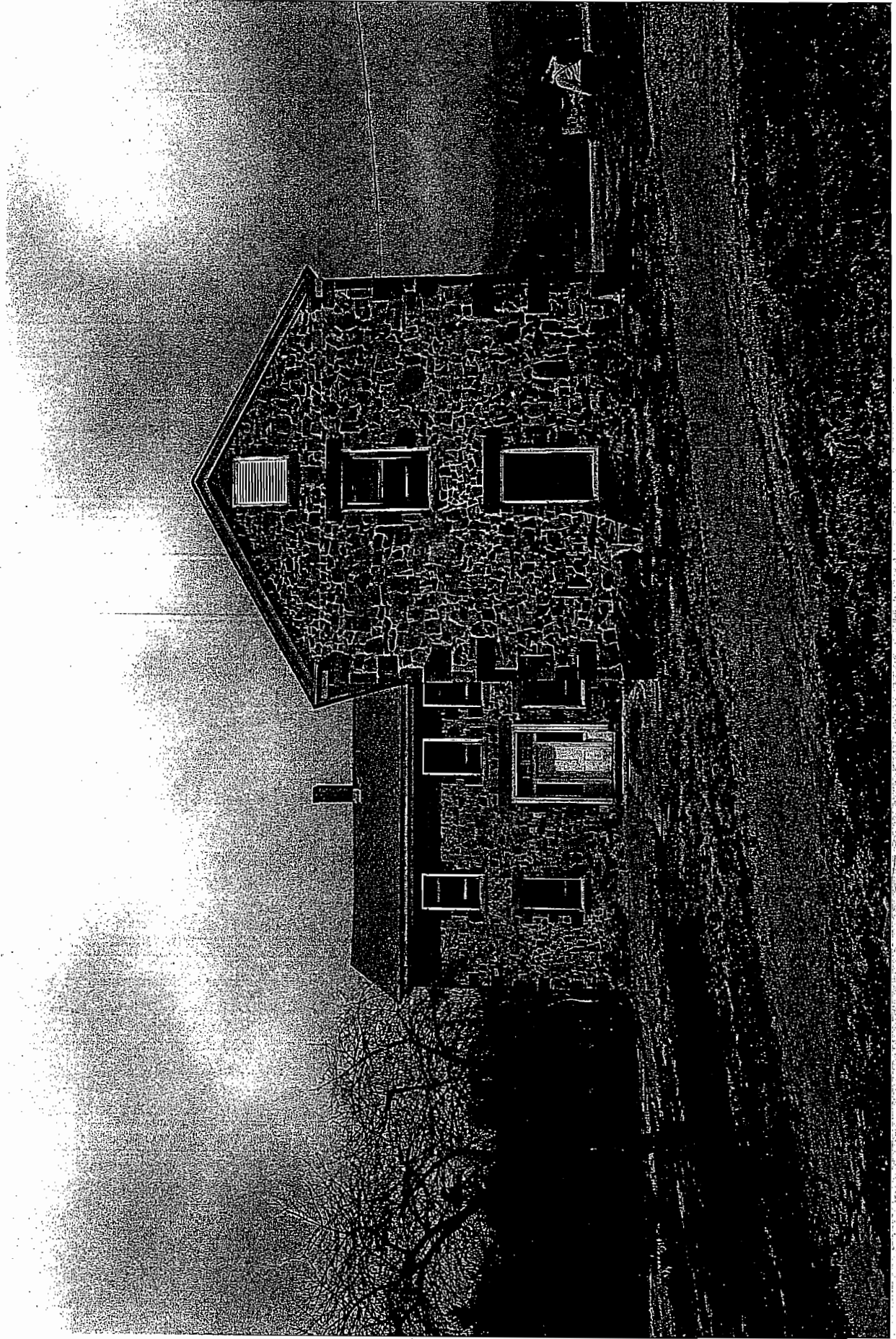
FLOOR PLANS

Approximate Scale: 3/16" = 1'
Numbered Arrows: Photo Views

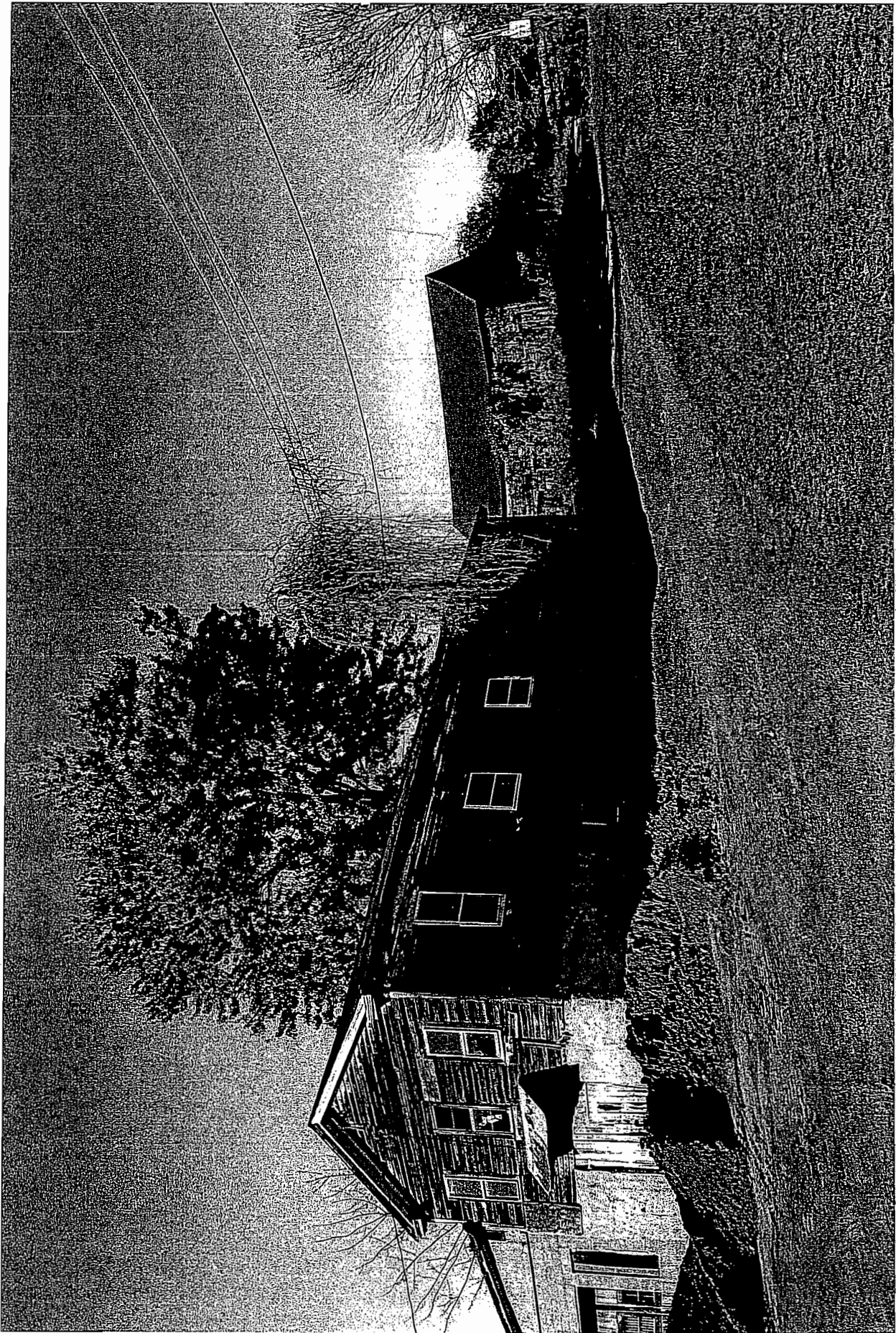
Cunningham Preservation Associates, 10/06



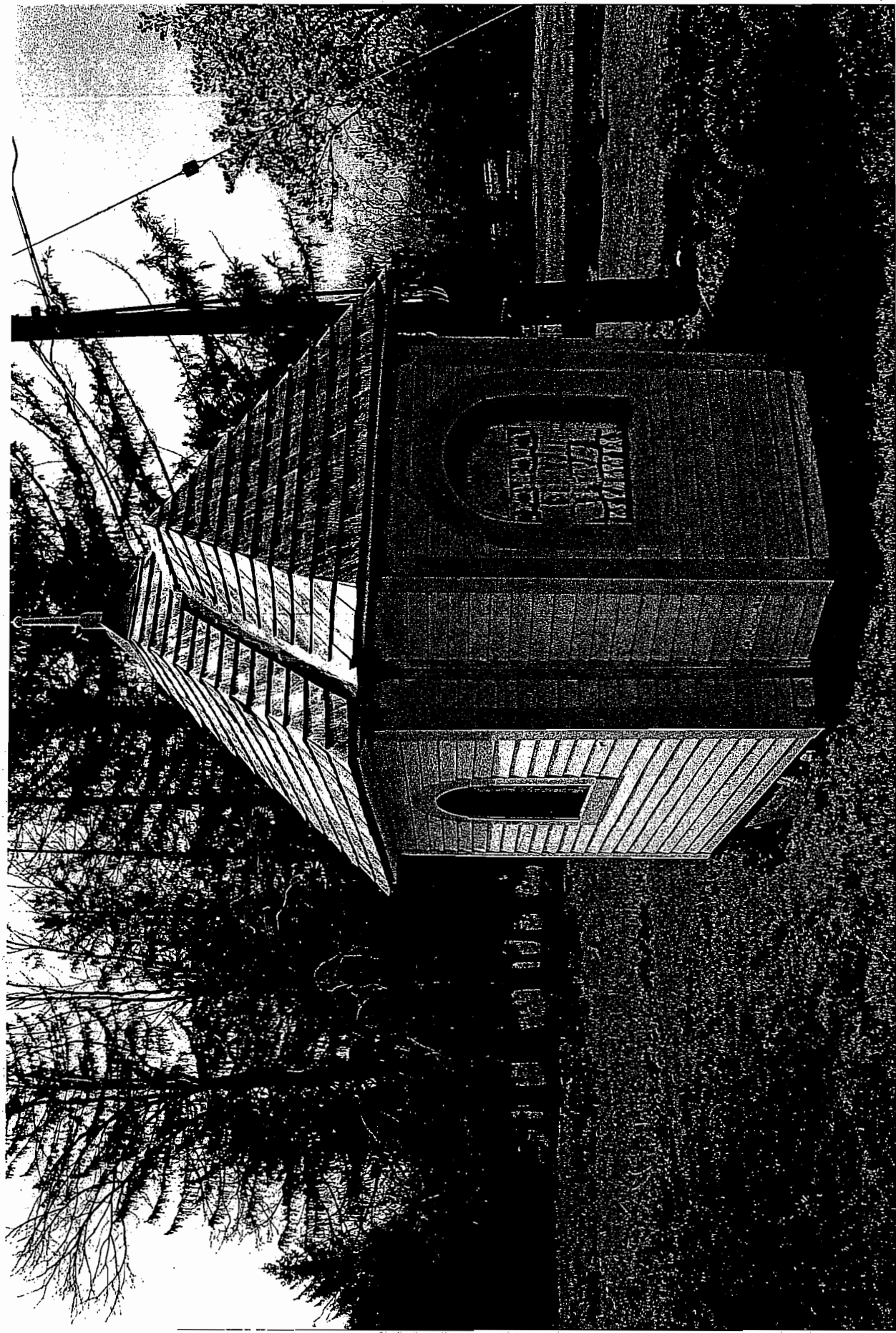
1. Captain Oliver Filley House from driveway below, camera facing NW



2. Captain Oliver Filley House, east elevations, camera facing W



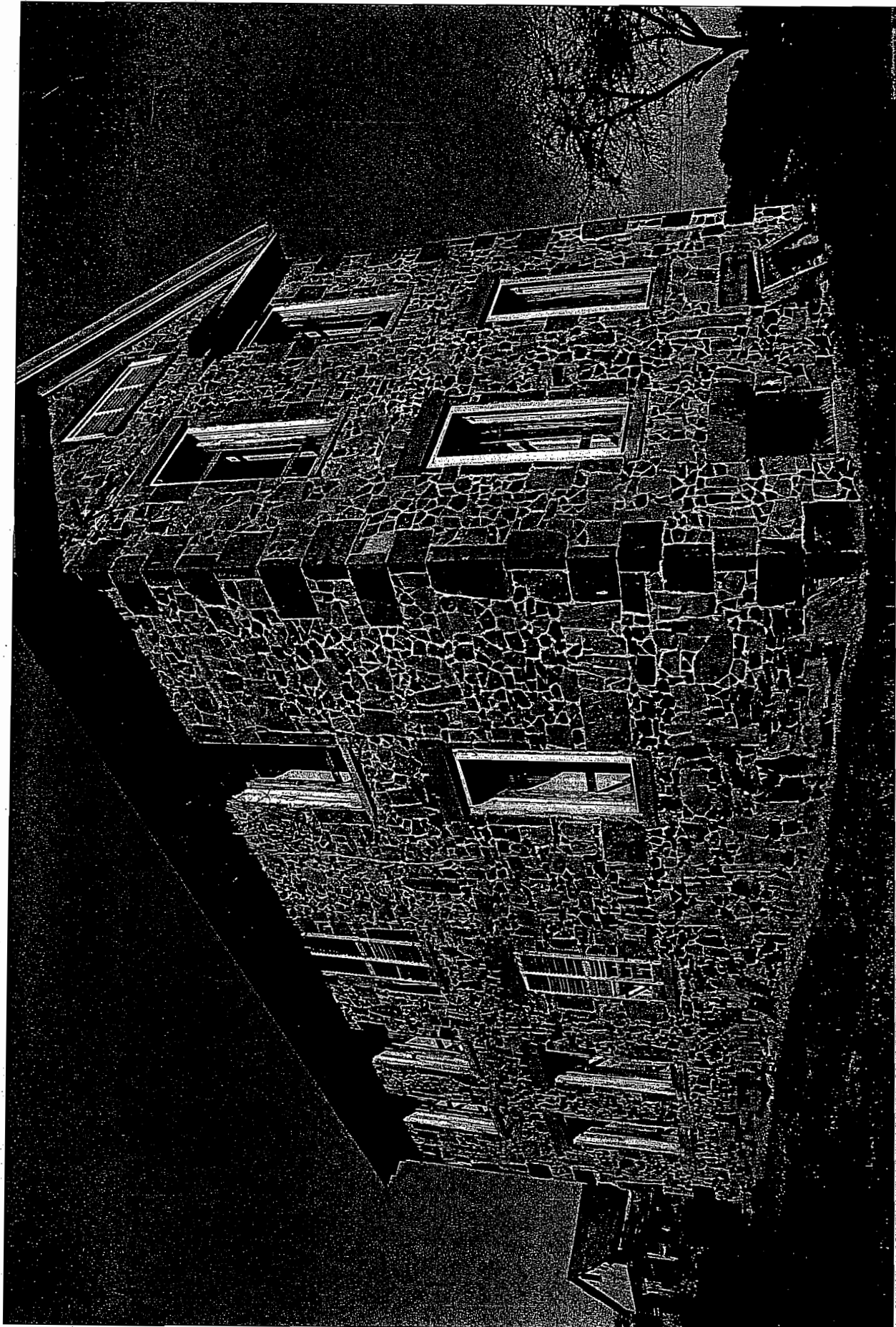
3. Captain Oliver Filley House, barns, camera facing NW



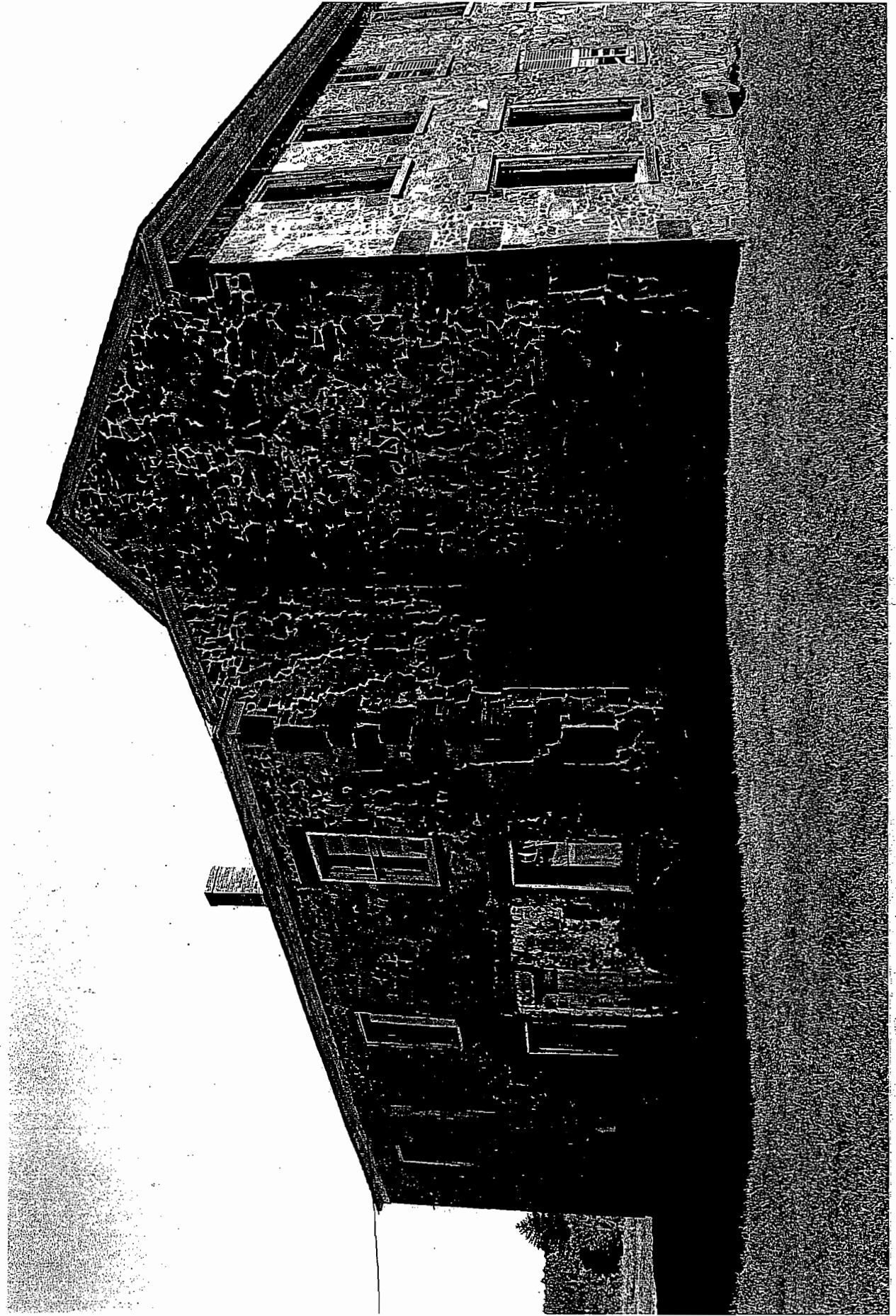
4. Captain Oliver Filley House, pump house, camera facing SE



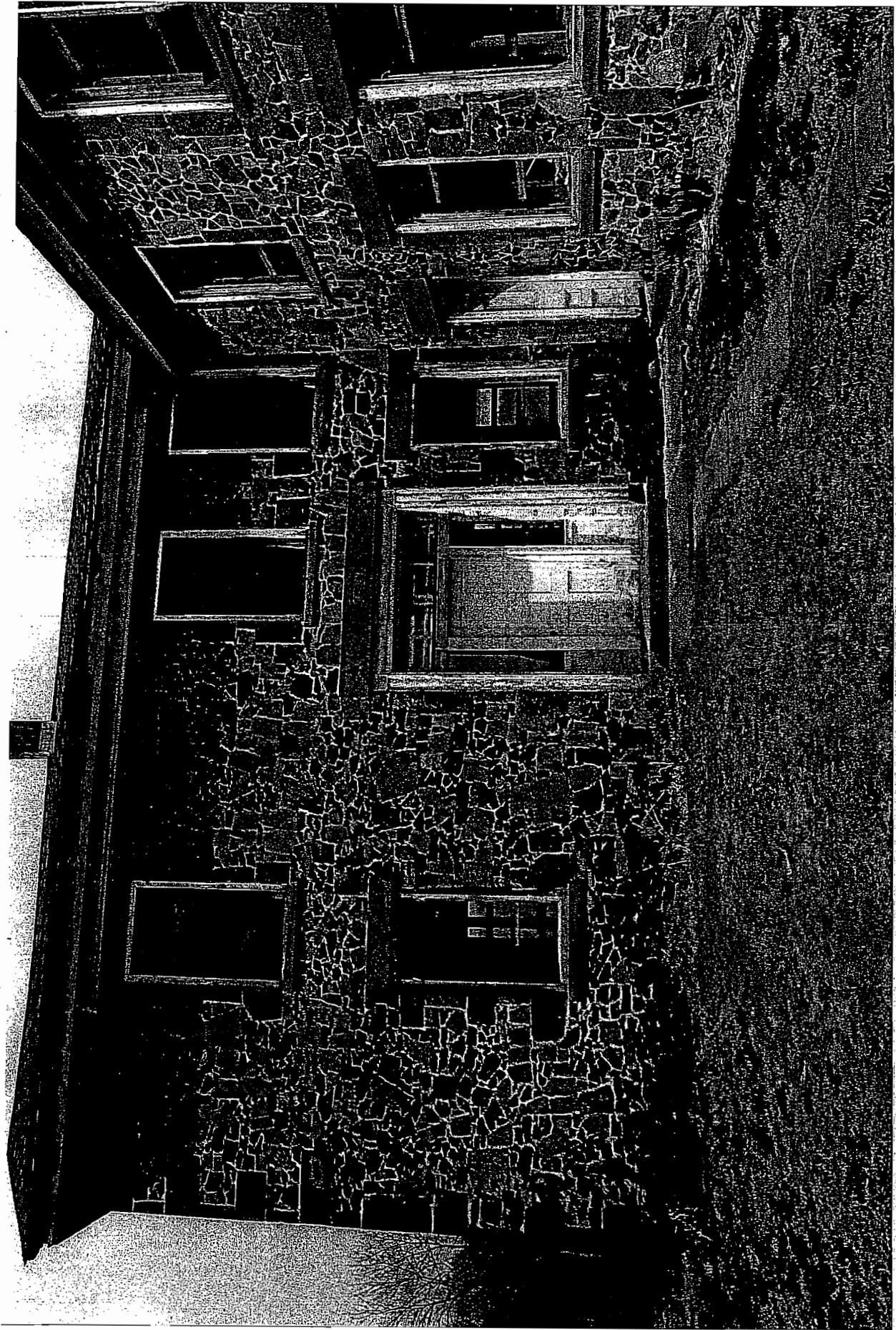
5. Captain Oliver Filley House, east and south wing elevations, camera facing NW



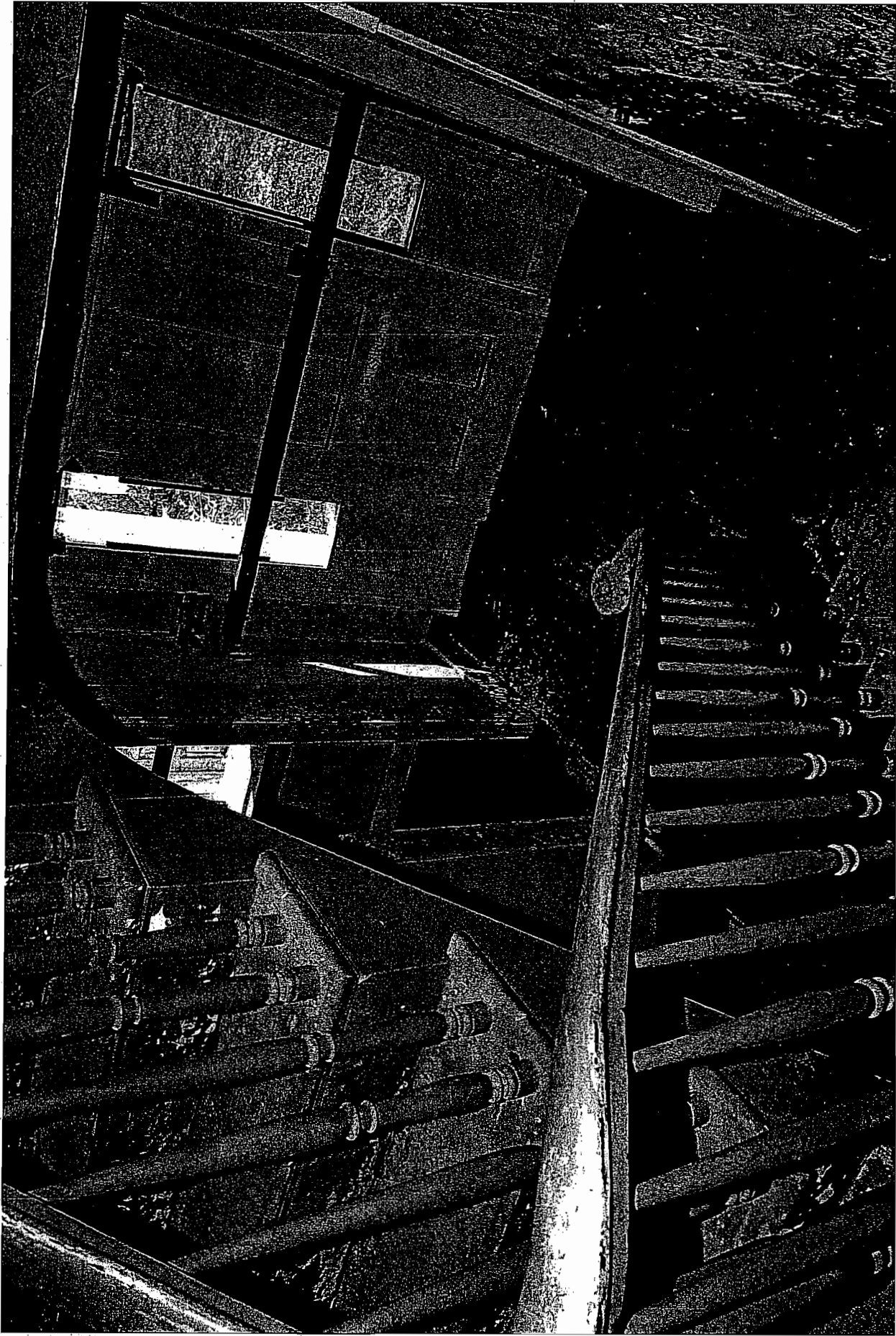
6. Captain Oliver Filley House, south gable and west elevation, major wing, camera facing NE



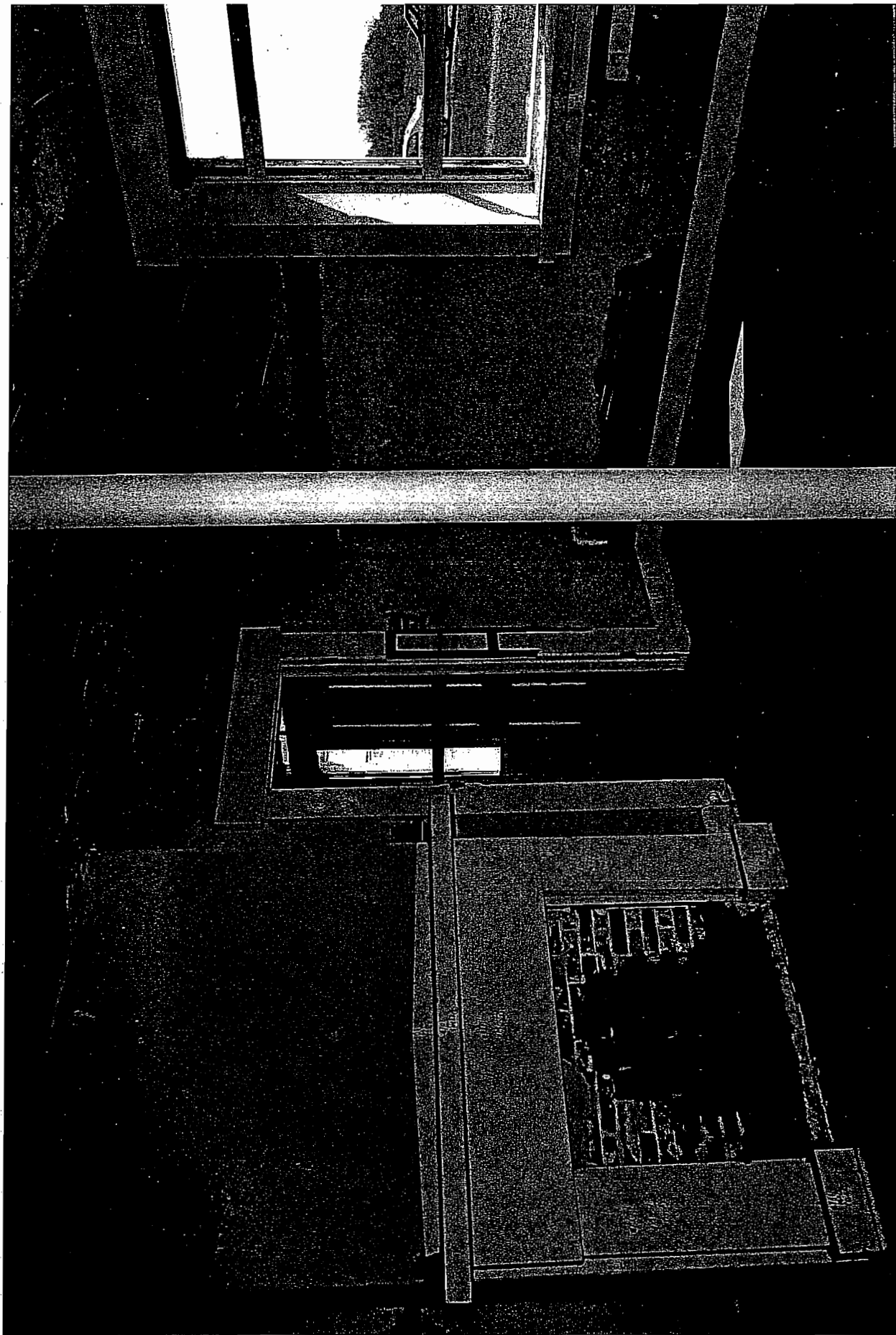
7. Captain Oliver Filley House, rear and west elevation, camera facing SE



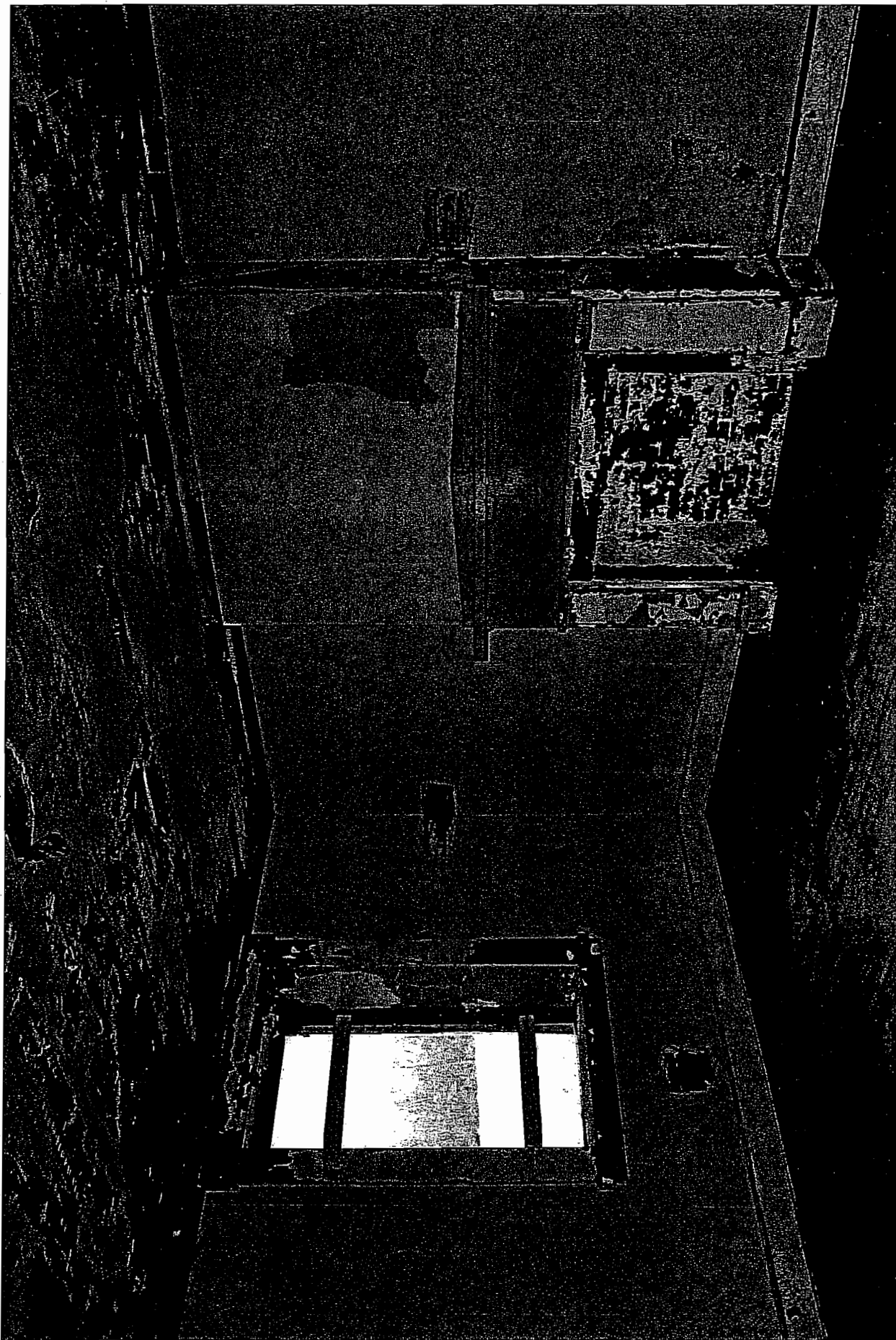
8. Captain Oliver Filley House, doorways at wing intersection, camera facing W



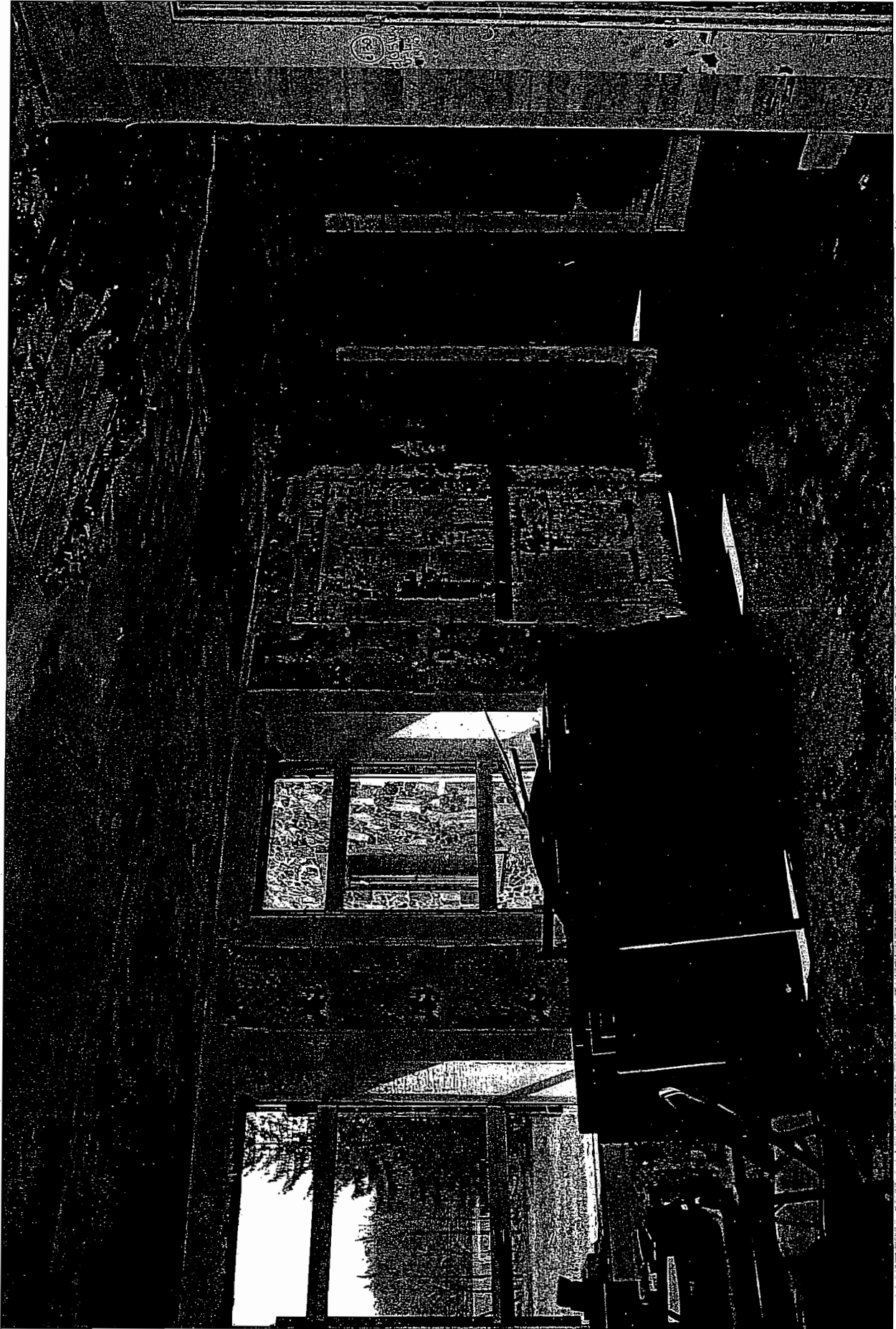
9. Captain Oliver Filley House, main staircase from landing, camera facing SE



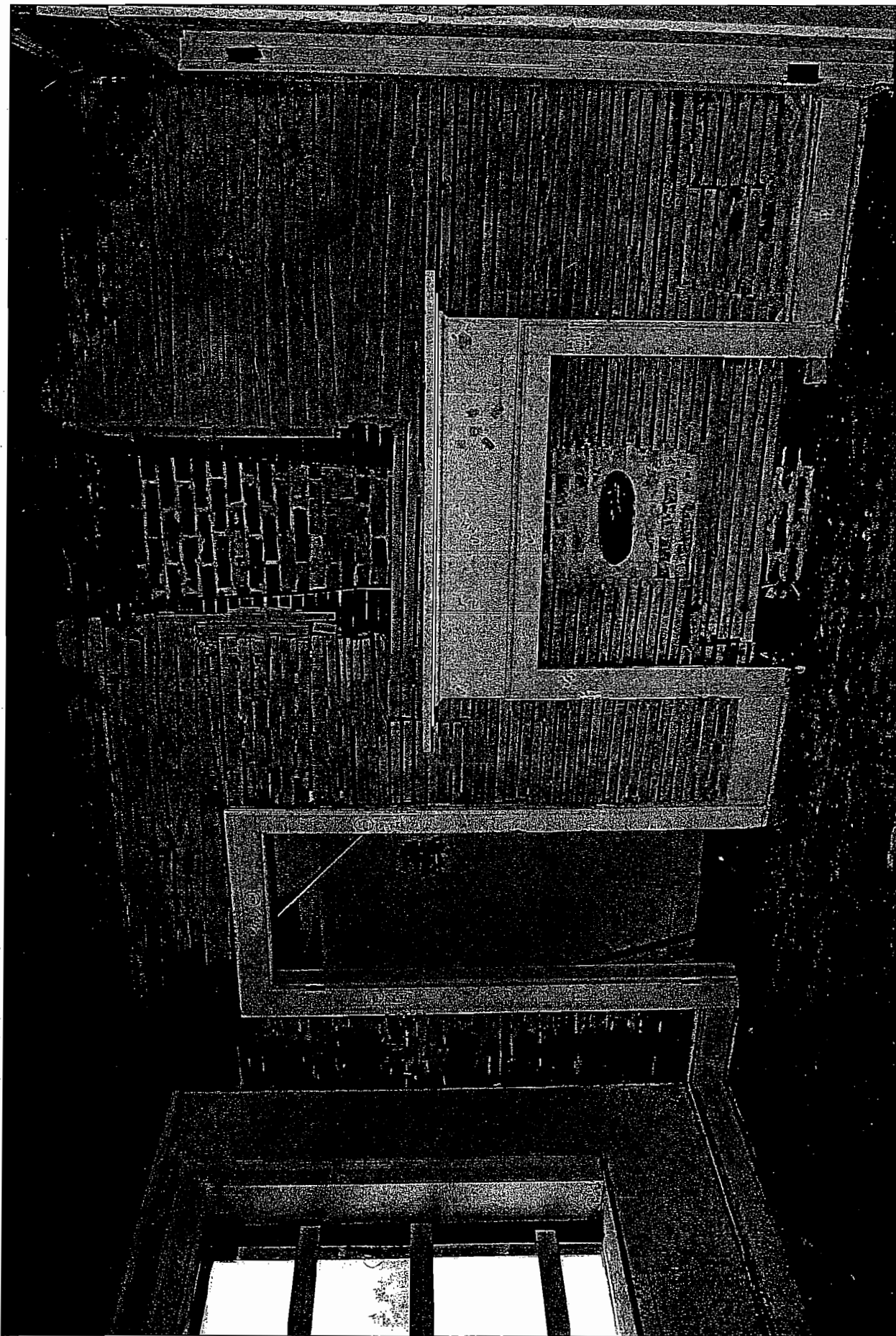
10. Captain Oliver Filley House, front (south) parlor, camera facing SE



11. Captain Oliver Filley House, rear (north) parlor, camera facing NE



12. Captain Oliver Filley House, west room in minor wing, camera facing NW



13. Captain Oliver Filley House, north chamber fireplace, second floor, camera facing NE