



THE MONOGRAPH SERIES

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AS SOURCE MATERIAL

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MONOGRAPH THREE

Garrison Houses Along the New England Frontier

BY STUART BARTLETT

Photographs by Arthur C. Haskell

The "Garrison House" of the Northern Colonies was a distinct type developed to meet the needs of the various communities scattered along the border in the period of the King Philip and the several French and Indian Wars. Except the brief unpleasantness, sometimes called the Pequot War, in 1637, and two short periods of Indian raiding in 1642 and '53, most of the local Indian tribes remained on friendly terms with the settlers, until 1675, when King Philip's War broke out in June, in Plymouth County, Massachusetts. This was the first occasion for any general provision being made to protect the lives of the settlers from human enemies, and its real seriousness is indicated by the fact that during the fighting of 1675 through 1677 over six hundred colonists lost their lives, and an even larger number of homes were burned and destroyed; a very considerable drain upon the population and prosperity of the Northern New England settlements at that time.

Following a dozen years of peace, another struggle began—often called King William's War—and continued from about 1688 or '90 to 1697 or '98. The Indians now came from farther afield, and were backed and instigated by the French in Canada. After a brief peace, from 1699 to 1703, Queen Anne's War broke out and waged until July of 1713, followed by another war with the French and Indians, known as Dummer's War, which lasted until the summer of 1726, when peace was signed at Falmouth (Portland) in the summer of that year and lasted for about

twenty years. These same hostilities are, farther north, sometimes known as "Lovewell's War," and cost the colonies £170,000.

Deerfield, on the Connecticut River, is a well known example that shows, in the close clustering of its old houses along one short village street, the effect the Indian threat exerted upon its "community plan"! (Vol. 6, No. 5, *Monograph Series*.)

Settled in 1669, the town street was laid out in 1671. Even as early as 1675, at the outbreak of the Indian Wars, it had a little over a hundred inhabitants, with Hadley and Brookfield, its nearest neighbors, nearly fifty miles away. In 1688 the town was partially fortified, and the Meeting House enclosed by a palisade. This palisade, or stockade, was a type of defense inherited from the Indians themselves and easily arranged in a country so naturally well wooded. Within this area could be gathered the live stock as well as the human beings of the surrounding community. The limits of the stockade could include some brook, spring or well; and often even a part of the garden food supply. Within this enclosed area it was also customary to provide a strong "Block-house" or "Garrison" to shelter better the men, women, and children—giving them space to cook, eat, and sleep under something approaching normal conditions, while a few rough "penthouses" might be provided to help protect the farm stock.

The Garrison House ordinarily had two rooms to a floor and a chimney either in the center or at one or

both ends. When the house was more than one story in height the upper walls might be of logs or plank. Sometimes the house had walls of only one story in height; sometimes there were two stories—in which case the upper always overhung the lower. The walls were built of heavy timber, cut to a usual seven inches thickness, ingeniously fitted together at the angles, and with musketry loopholes in the walls, and often one or two square “portholes” or shuttered openings about 12” by 16”, or thereabouts, upon each front. The roofs seem to have been usually lightly built, with a heavily timbered floor in the attic which was always kept thoroughly covered with ashes or sand so that the lower part of the structure would be less apt to be ignited in case the Indians were able to set fire to the roof by means of their arrows.

Along the northern and western boundaries of the colonies the town records and histories are filled with references as to the methods taken to protect villages and homesteads, requiring all settlers to build only within limited distances of the Garrison Houses or Churches (the first churches were often built as community houses of defense, as well!). A few fortunate communities already had—or were soon to construct—houses of brick which, because of their better resistance to fire, were at once utilized as “Garrisons” or “houses of refuge” by those living nearby. Others arranged to have such houses built, or assisted in their construction, whenever possible, selecting locations upon raised hills or knolls conveniently central to some group of settlers or settlements.

An endeavor was made to have these “Garrisons” occur at regular and fairly close



The Halliday Historic Photograph Co.

**“OLD INDIAN HOUSE” GARRISON,
DEERFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS**

communities. For instance, a “watch-house” was built in Ipswich, near the Meeting House, as late as 1745; and two of the most interesting special buildings done for purposes of defense date from 1732 and 1738, and are still to be seen at Eliot, Maine; comparatively unchanged on the interior, though the exterior has been covered with clapboards and a large barn doorway cut through the closely matched logs of the larger in order to continue its usefulness and adapt it to the more profitable and peaceful pursuit of agriculture!

But these old “log garrisons” are the most indubitable and characteristic product of the problem and the times; the best examples of the architectural adaptation of local materials to a human need; the solution of the vital problem of providing “shelter” — in its most essential form—to the early inhabitants of the settlements in New England.

One of the oldest and most interesting of this group is the log garrison built at Exeter, N. H., by Councillor John Gilman probably between 1655 and '57. He settled in Exeter and in 1647 with his brother Edward built and operated a saw mill at “the Falls,” a few



Photo by W. S. Appleton, 1910

**DAM-DREW-ROUNDS GARRISON,
DOVER, NEW HAMPSHIRE**

[34]

hundred feet from the house. By 1657 he had sawn out and built nearby a two-story house of oak timber seven inches thick. The first story had the logs tenoned into upright corner posts which upheld a bracketed girt, overhanging the first story about ten inches. The floor was laid across the house, using logs about six inches thick and often two feet wide, set close together; and this puncheon floor construction is still to be seen in one room of the dwelling. The sec-

almost two feet below the older portion and raising the second-floor ceiling. At the same time he carried the new cornice and exterior treatment entirely around the structure, raising a new roof above the old and making the top row of glass lights in the new fifteen-light second-story windows above the top of the older window openings in the old "garrison" portion of the building! A part of the plaster wall in the northwest corner room of the old Garrison, and also upon the



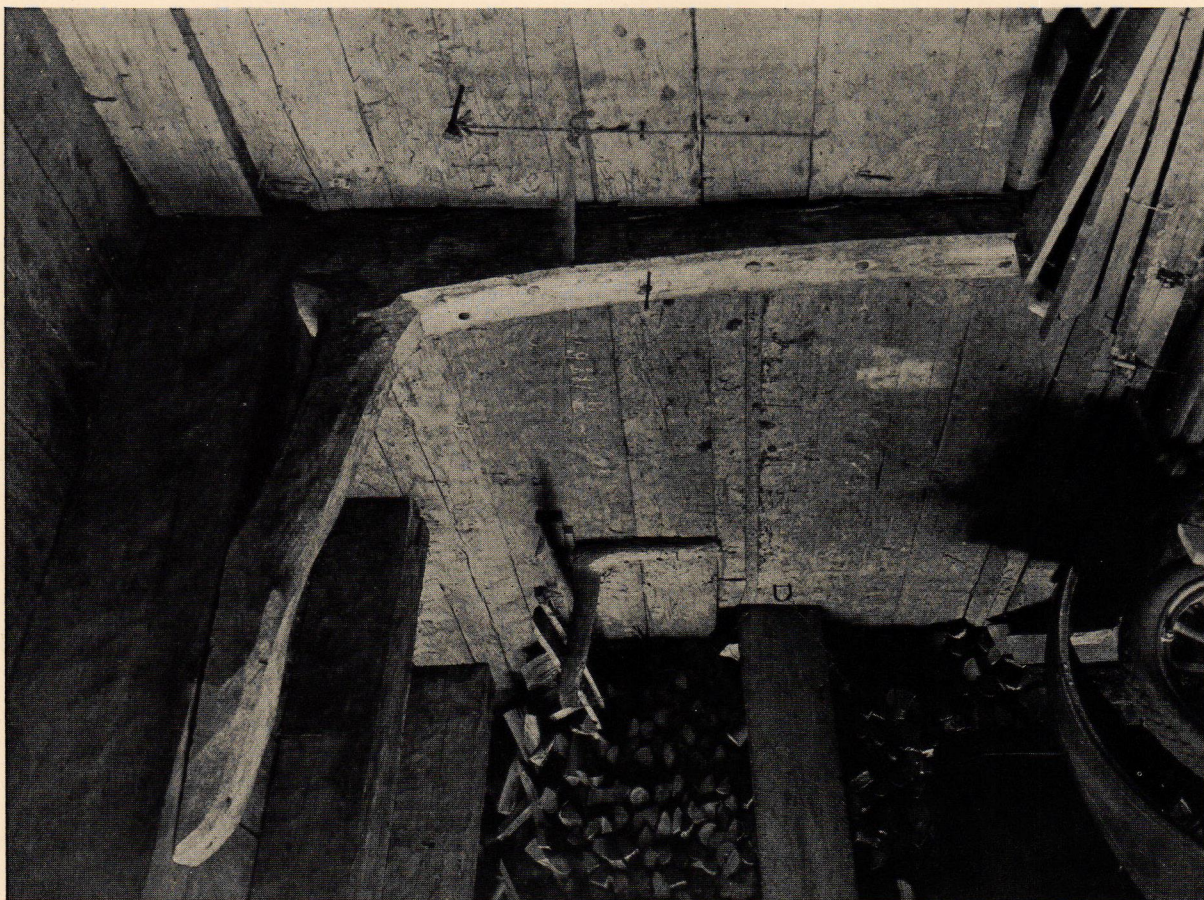
THE FROST FARM WITH GARRISON HOUSE AT REAR, EAST ELIOT, MAINE

ond story wall was built of timber of the same thickness, but the corners were dovetailed together. The story heights were low (about 6'-6"), and if the structure originally had a central chimney, it has now disappeared. A staircase has replaced the probable early steep ladder, and evidence has existed that indicates the entrance doorway was originally protected by a sliding grill or portcullis.

By about 1750 Councillor Peter Gilman had built on an ell across the west end to entertain John Wentworth, the last of the Colonial Governors, and increased the new story heights by lowering the first floor

newer stairway, has been removed so that the old timber wall of the early dwelling is exposed. The second-story room of the new ell is panelled on all four sides, although some of the rooms in the older portion contain panelled ends of earlier design and execution. In 1796, when Daniel Webster was fourteen years old and came to Exeter to study at the Academy, he lived in the rooms in the second floor, northwest corner, of the Garrison part of the dwelling, which was then known as the "Clifford" house. Another Garrison stood a short distance away on "the plains," the Janvrin Garrison, built in 1680 or earlier, but it has

[35]

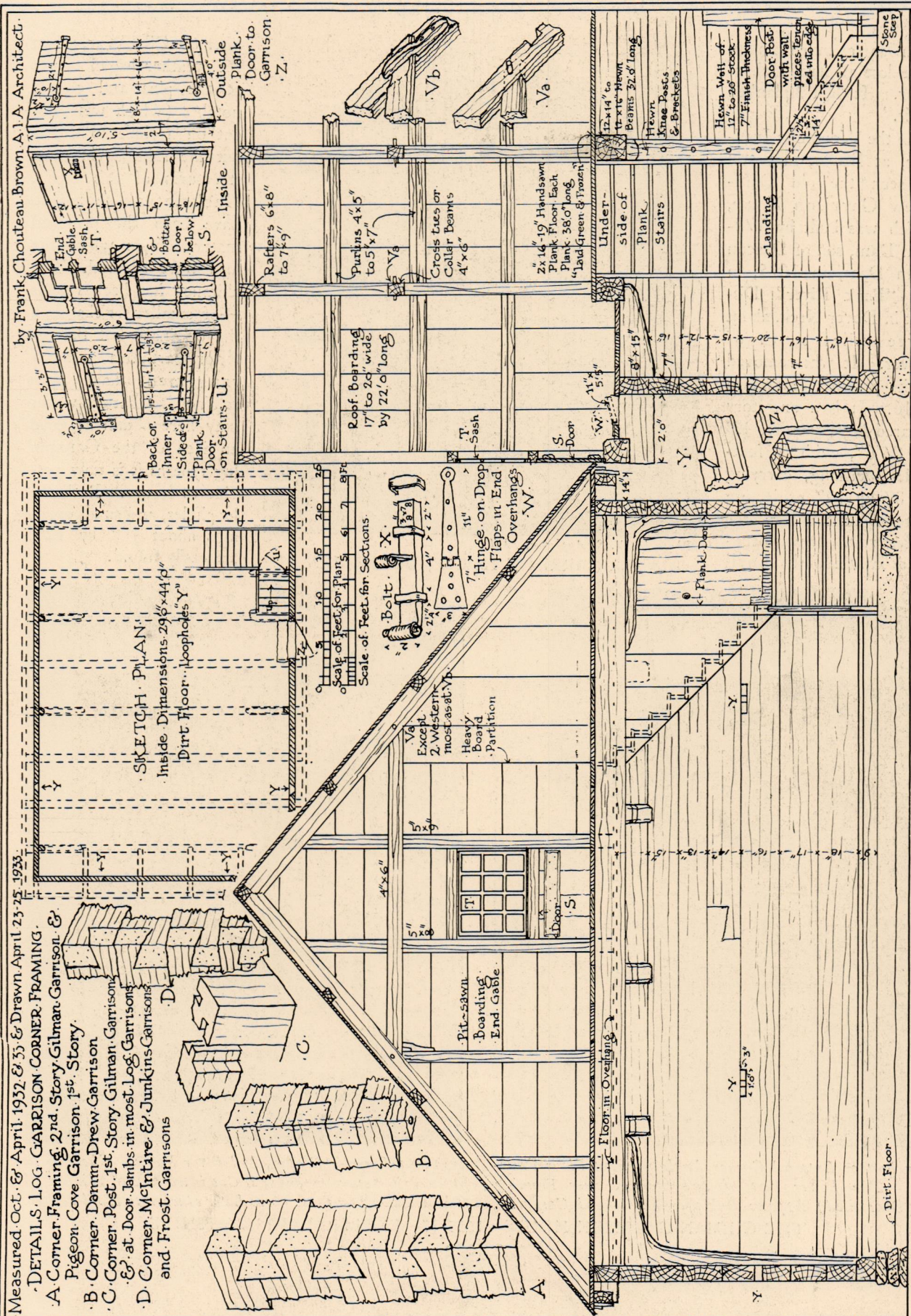


Plank Stairs and Door, Framing, etc. (See Measured Drawing Below)
THE MAJOR CHARLES FROST GARRISON HOUSE—1738—EAST ELIOT, MAINE

Measured Oct. & April 1932 & 35 & Drawn April 23-25 1933.

DETAILS LOG GARRISON CORNER FRAMING.

- A. Corner Framing, 2nd. Story Gilman Garrison & Pigeon Cove Garrison, 1st. Story.
- B. Corner. Damm-Drew Garrison.
- C. Corner. Post. 1st. Story Gilman Garrison.
- D. at Door Jambs in most Log Garrisons
- E. Corner McIntire & Junkins Garrisons and Frost Garrisons



SECTIONS PLAN & STRUCTURAL DETAILS OF THE LARGER OF THE TWO GARRISONS 1738 (THE SMALLER BUILT IN 1732) OF MAJOR CHARLES FROST AT EAST ELIOT MAINE

been so changed as to have lost all its old character. It had "planked walls."

In the Woodman Institute, at Dover, may still be seen the old Dam-Drew Garrison House, which was built by William Dam, son of Deacon John Dam, in 1675, in the "Back River" District in Dover Neck, about three miles south of Dover. It was removed to its present location in 1916. It is a one-story squared-log structure, 42' by 24'6", with a foot-wide overhang, carrying an 8" by 19" projecting plate against which the rafters rest. It was occupied continuously until

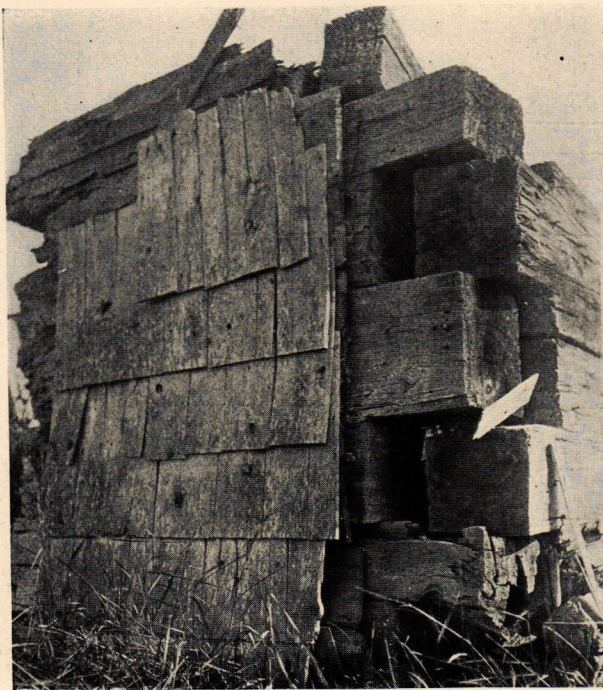
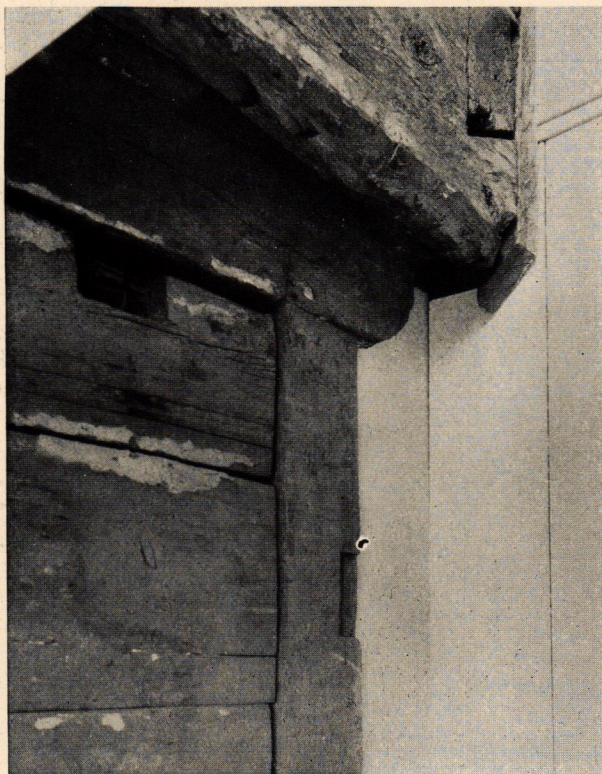


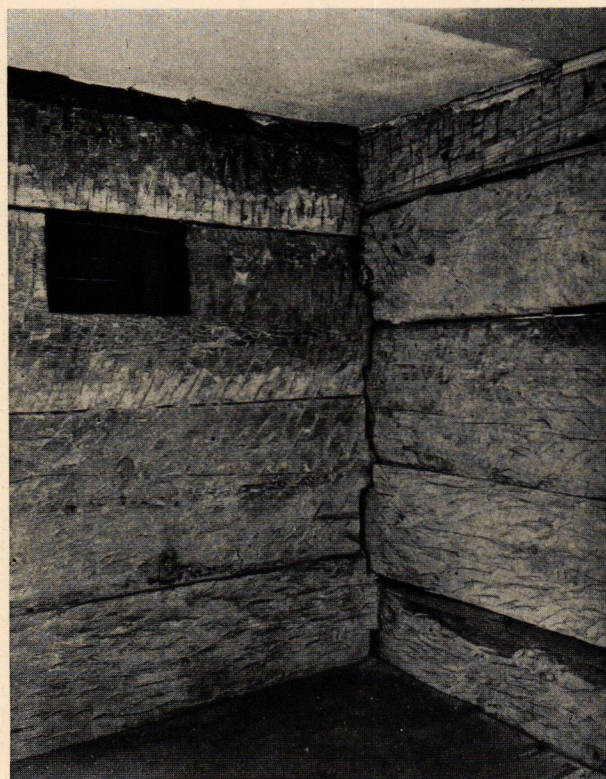
Photo by W. S. Appleton, 1911

BUNKER GARRISON HOUSE, DURHAM, N. H.

after the Civil War, when the weather began to get at the pins and corner notches (which were not cut on a slope to throw out the rain, as in most structures of this type). Hackmatack seems to have been the principal material from which the logs were squared. The chimney has been rebuilt—of smaller bricks than the original—but the interior partitions and arrangement have been retained, so that the visitor may here obtain as good an idea of the Garrison log type as it is now possible to secure. Both the loopholes, and small openings about 10" by 12", are easily found.



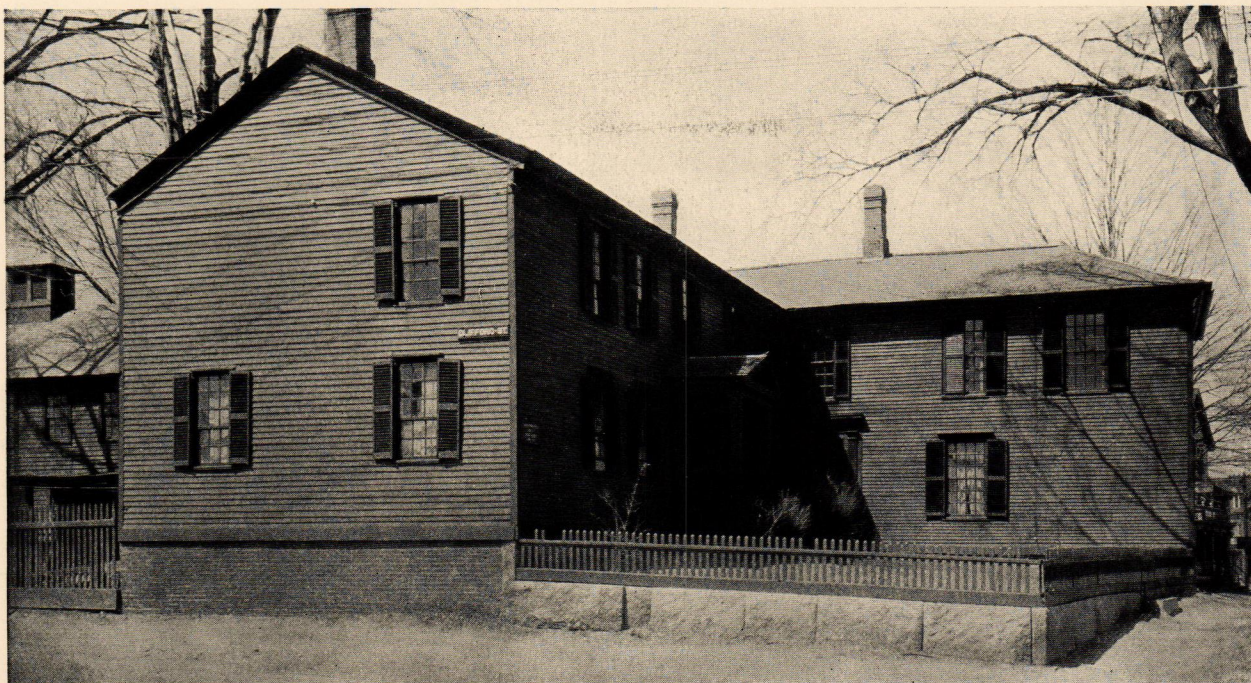
Log Post or External Corner Angle of First Floor Framing. The Lower Part of 2nd Story Corner Framing (Dovetailed) Appears at Upper Right-hand Corner.



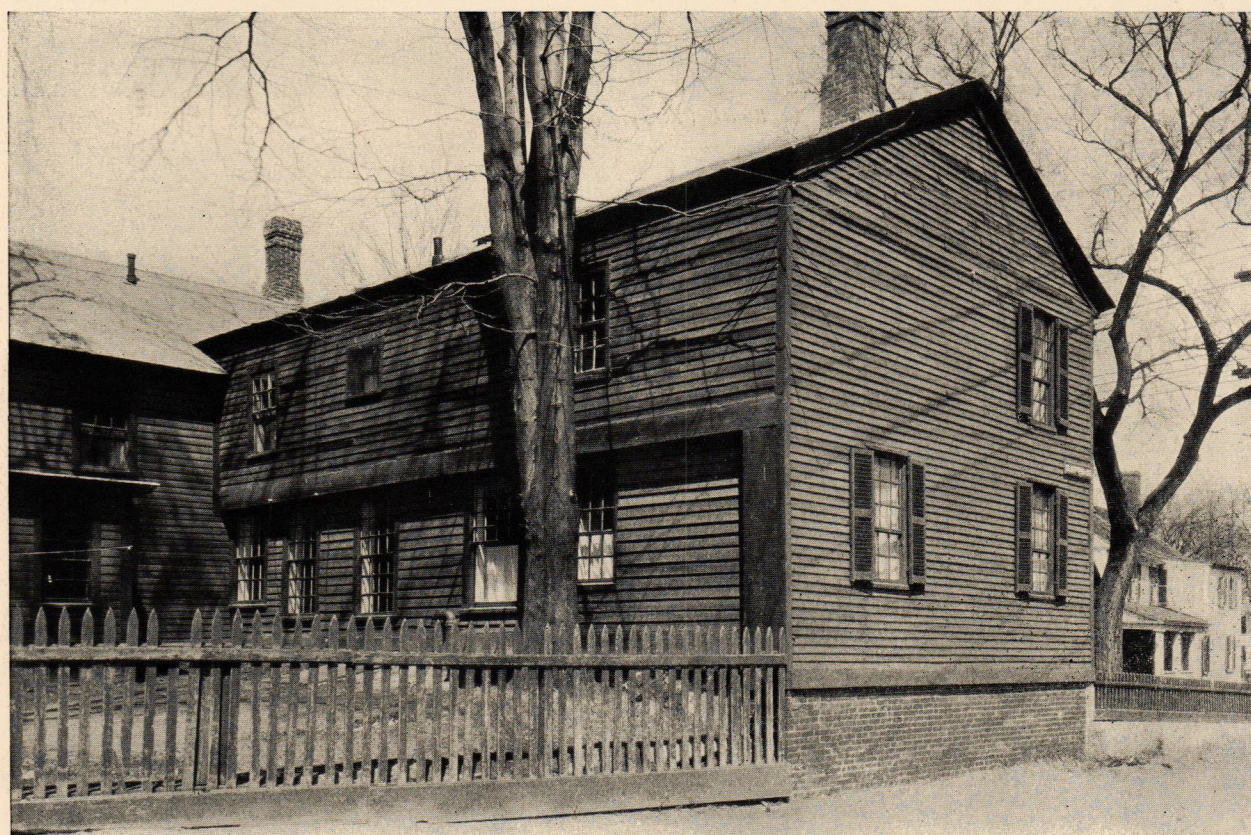
Inside of Exterior Corner, 2nd Floor Room. The Log in Which the Square Opening is Cut is About 21" High x 7" Thick. Sawn Log Faces Were Later Hacked to Hold Plaster.

THE GILMAN GARRISON HOUSE—1655-57—EXETER, NEW HAMPSHIRE

[38]



Original Log Garrison Portion at Left. The 1750 Wing Shows Projected Beyond at Right.



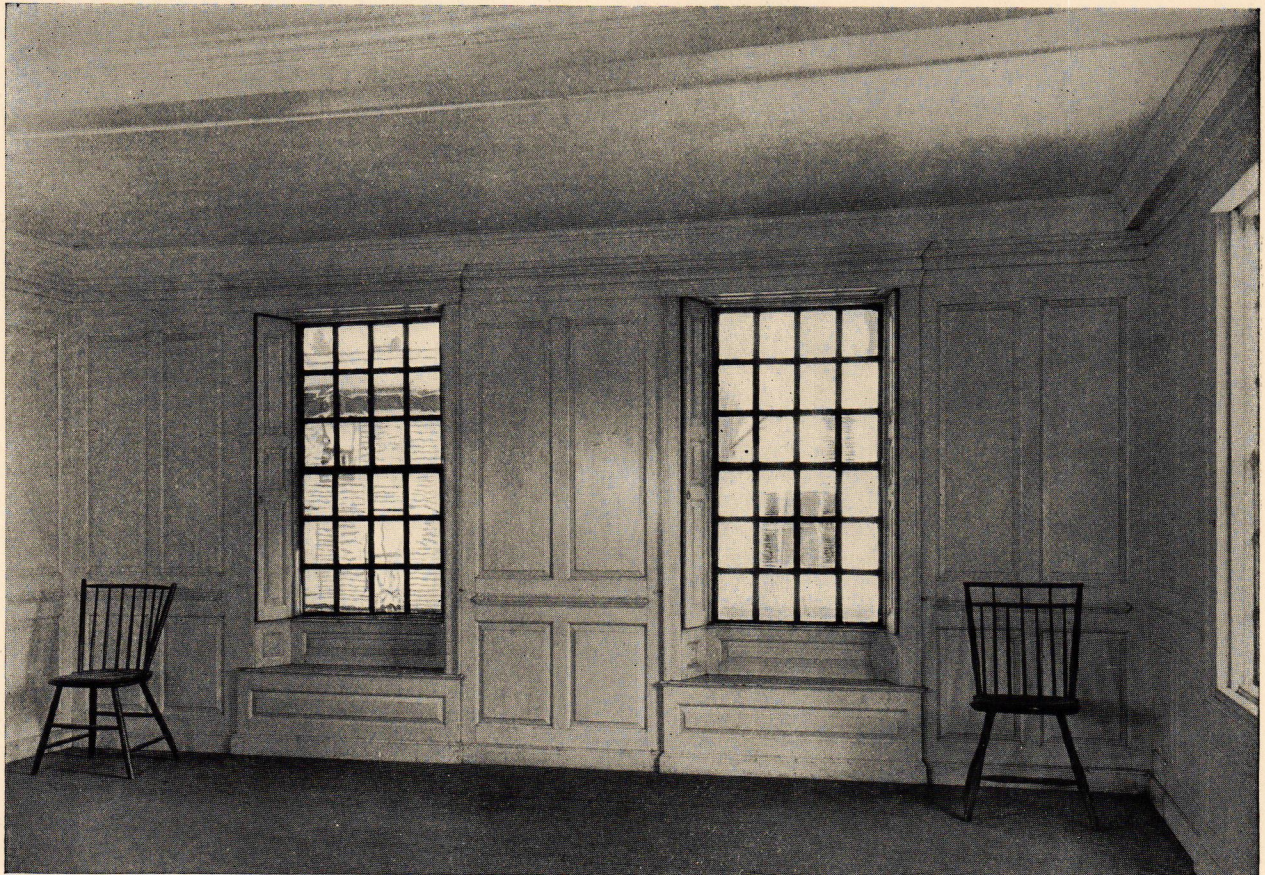
Rear View of Original Log Garrison Portion.

THE GILMAN GARRISON HOUSE—1655-57—EXETER, NEW HAMPSHIRE

[39]

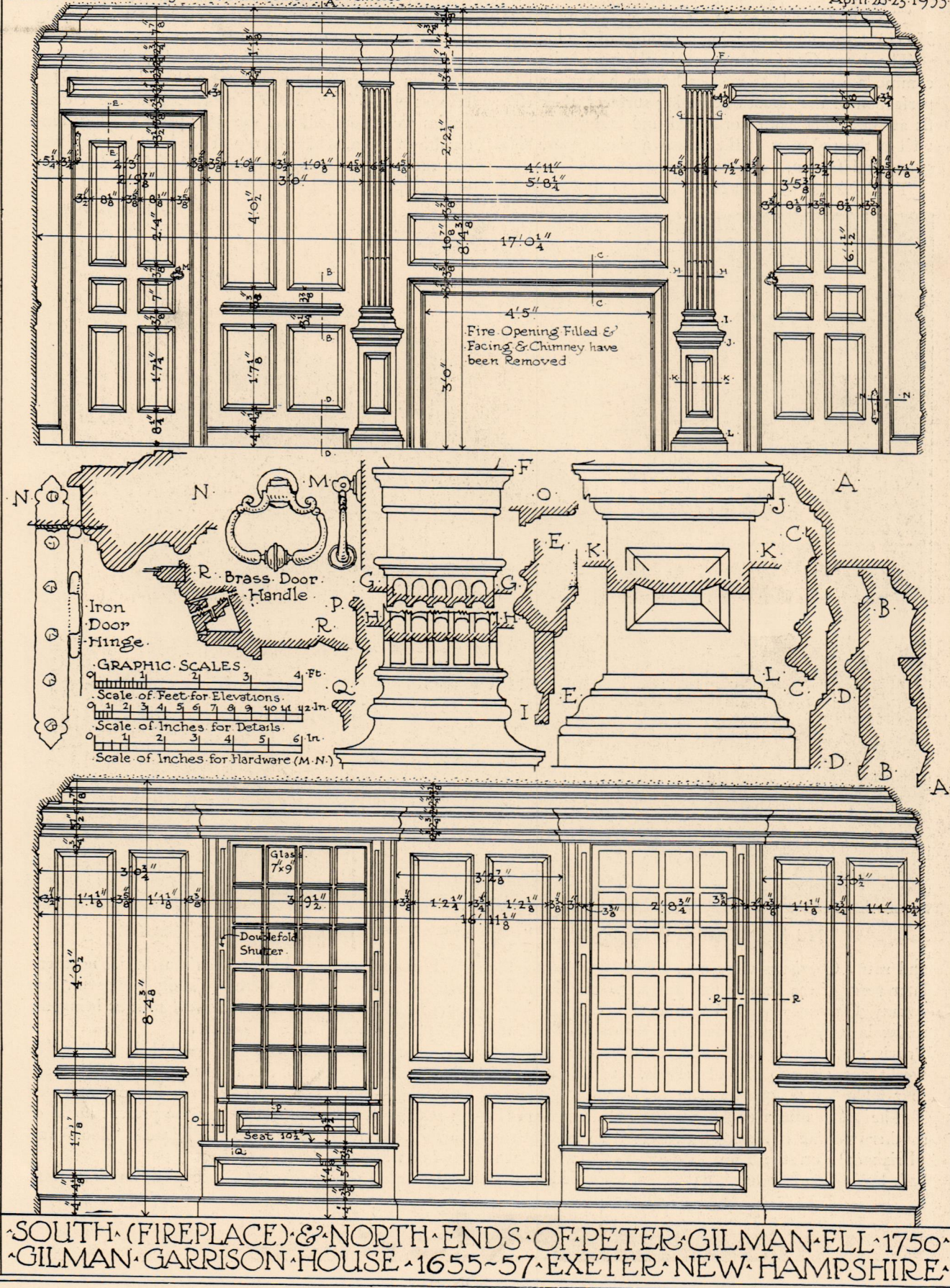


South (Fireplace) End.



PETER GILMAN ELL—1750—GILMAN GARRISON HOUSE, EXETER, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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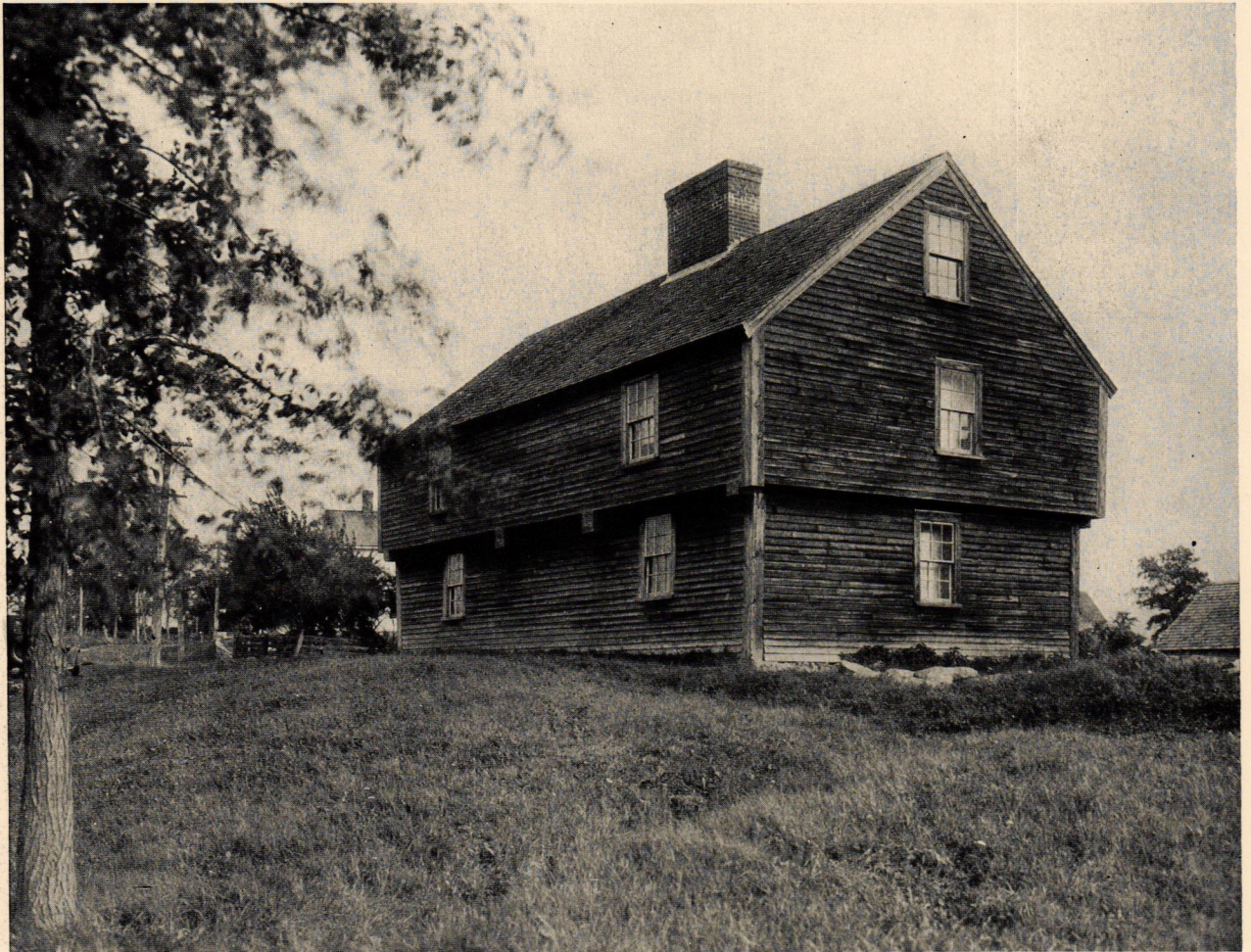
The Frost Garrisons, at East Eliot, Maine (Pages 35-37), are the latest existing structures of the log type.

The large Garrison was evidently intended to accommodate animals as well as human beings, and the perfection of the smooth hewn log surfaces, their close fit at the joints, both horizontal and end joinings, as well as the tightness of the pit-sawn plank floor, "laid green and frozen," are most remarkable today.

This section was especially open to Indian raids,

family. The corners were dovetailed, with sloping surfaces to throw out the water.

Another two-story garrison nearby, the Bunker Garrison (Page 38), was measured as late as 1910. It was 40'-6" by 20'-9" outside, and the corner angles were notched, and the door posts had logs tenoned into them, while the top of the low doorway was cut into a slight segment of an arch in the under edge of the caplog.



THE MCINTIRE GARRISON HOUSE—1640-45—SCOTLAND, NEAR YORK, MAINE

and many Garrisons were maintained here during the later years of the French and Indian wars. In 1695, twenty Garrisons were listed in Durham as being maintained by the authorities, and each soldier cost the Province at the rate of £3, s.12, d.0 board for eighteen weeks, according to the old records, while from one to four soldiers were quartered in each of the Garrisons.

The only other easily recognizable Garrison in southern Maine is the McIntire Garrison at Scotland (Brixham), on the Eliot side of York, which was built by Micum McIntire, and is still preserved by that

There are many old brick Garrisons in this northern section, some of which were originally built with that purpose in mind, and others adapted to it as being the "most defensible" in their locality.

Thomas Duston, who had settled in Kittery in 1654, afterwards removed to the top of a hill outside Haverhill—then Pentucket—where he experimented in making bricks, finally building the present house of them some time during 1696-97, with "floors and roof of white oak."

Haverhill, Massachusetts, occupied an important

[42]

point on what remained the northern frontier of the New England colonies for nearly seventy years. The town records of 1690 show the appointment of six Garrison houses, and four "houses of refuge."

In describing the characteristics of the houses located in that vicinity, Mirick writes: "Most of the garrisons and two of the houses of refuge—those belonging to Joseph and Nathaniel Peaslee—were built of brick, and were two stories high; those that were not built of this

entered the chamber with the help of a ladder instead of stairs so that the inmates could retreat into them and take it up if the basement-story should be taken by the enemy. Their fireplaces were of such enormous sizes that they could burn their wood, sled-length, very conveniently, and the ovens opened on the outside of the building, generally at one end."

This description well applies to the Hazzen-Spiller house, a listed Garrison, built in 1724, about three-



THE DICKENSON-PILLSBURY-WITHAM GARRISON HOUSE—1700—GEORGETOWN, MASS.

material had a single laying of it between the outer and the inner walls. They had but one outside door, which was often so small that but one person could enter at a time; their windows were about two feet and a half in length, eighteen inches in breadth, and were secured on the inside with iron bars. Their glass was very small, cut in the shape of a diamond, was extremely thick, and fastened in with lead instead of putty. There were generally but two rooms in the basement (first) story, and tradition says that they

quarters of a mile below the center of the town.

The Dickenson-Pillsbury-Witham House, built on a knoll beside the road in Georgetown, near the Rowley line, previous to 1700, is described in an early family record, as follows: "It was built in the time of the Indian depredations. My great-grandmother occupied it in the time of the Indians. It was lined from the sill to the girth with bricks between the plastering and the boards. There were doors outside the windows to shut at night. The outside doors were

barred inside. One night the Indians came and attacked the house, making an attempt to cut the outside (doors) down to get into the house. My great-grandmother took a pail of scalding water, went upstairs, and poured it onto their heads, and they were glad to retire." J. L. Ewell, in his *Story of Byfield, a New England Parish*, further adds: "In these houses, the second story frequently projected over the lower one for defense against the Indian, and the roof ran down

a beautifully carved wooden latch on the great cellar door, a crane five or six feet long attached to a great beam in the ceiling to swing out and hold candlesticks suspended by trammels and wooden partitions dressed of old with blue clay and skim milk in lieu of paint." This original surfacing can still be seen on portions of the woodwork in this room shown below.

Paul Pillsbury, one of its inhabitants, in the war of 1812, shouldered and carried a cannon weighing seven



THE DICKENSON-PILLSBURY-WITHAM HOUSE—1700—GEORGETOWN, MASSACHUSETTS

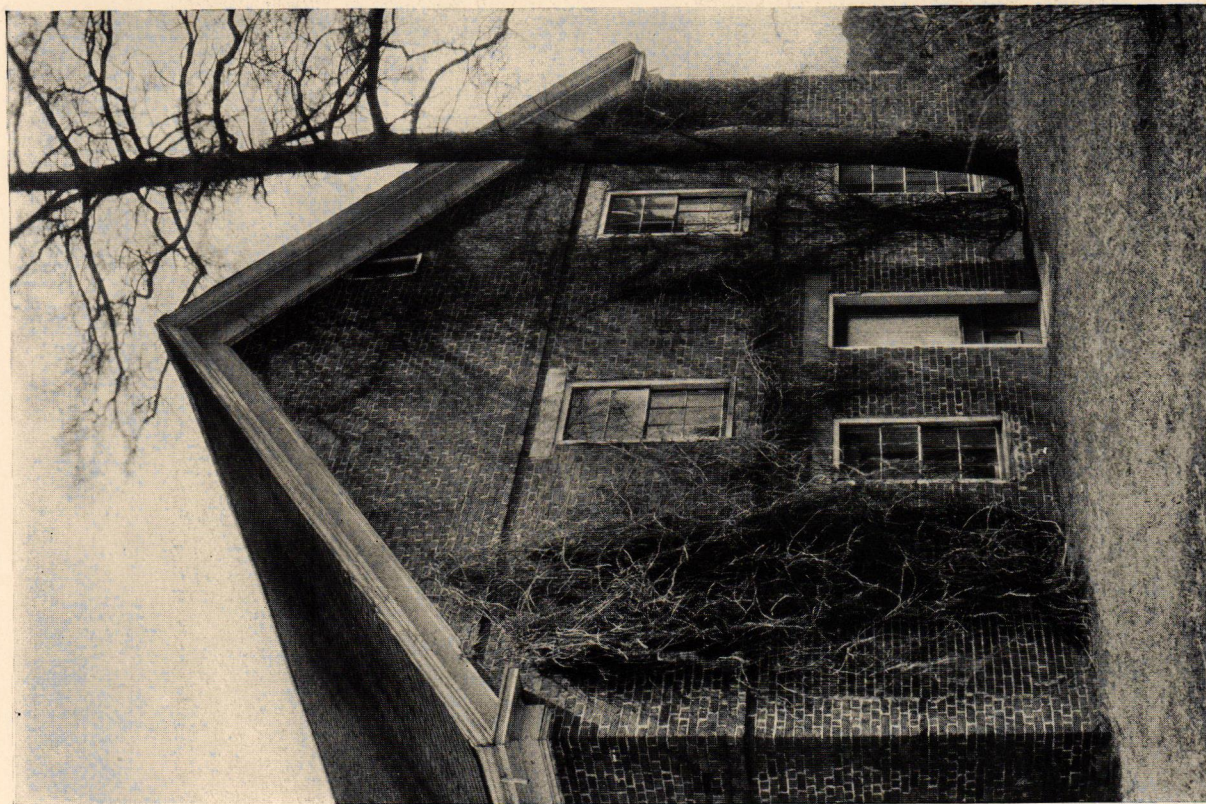
to the lower story in the rear, making a back 'linter' (lean-to). In the huge chimney was the bench where the family could sit cozily and watch the great fire of logs or read by its light. Mr. Witham's house is probably an heirloom from the seventeenth century. Its architecture closely resembles that of the old house on Kent's Island, not now standing, that was said to have been built in 1653. The large living room has a huge fireplace in which two cook-stoves stand side by side,

hundred pounds. He invented in this house the "peg machine" that revolutionized the shoe business in New England, selling pegs for eight cents a quart or \$2.00 a bushel—that formerly had to be painfully split and whittled by hand out of maple by the shoe makers. The first cut nails were also made nearby, in a factory on the Parker River, where were also the first cotton and woolen mills in America, dating from 1636, and the first fulling mill, from 1643.

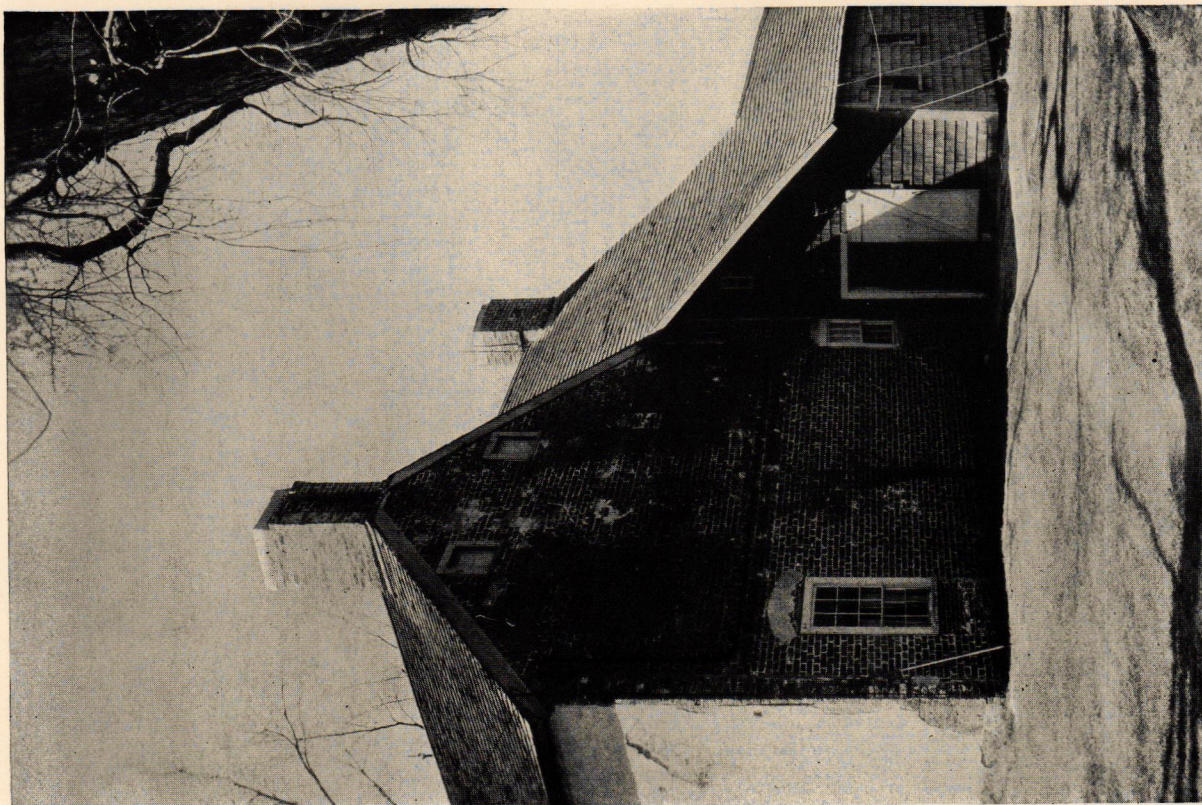


THE NATHANIEL PEASLEE GARRISON HOUSE—1675-80—WEST NEWBURY, MASSACHUSETTS

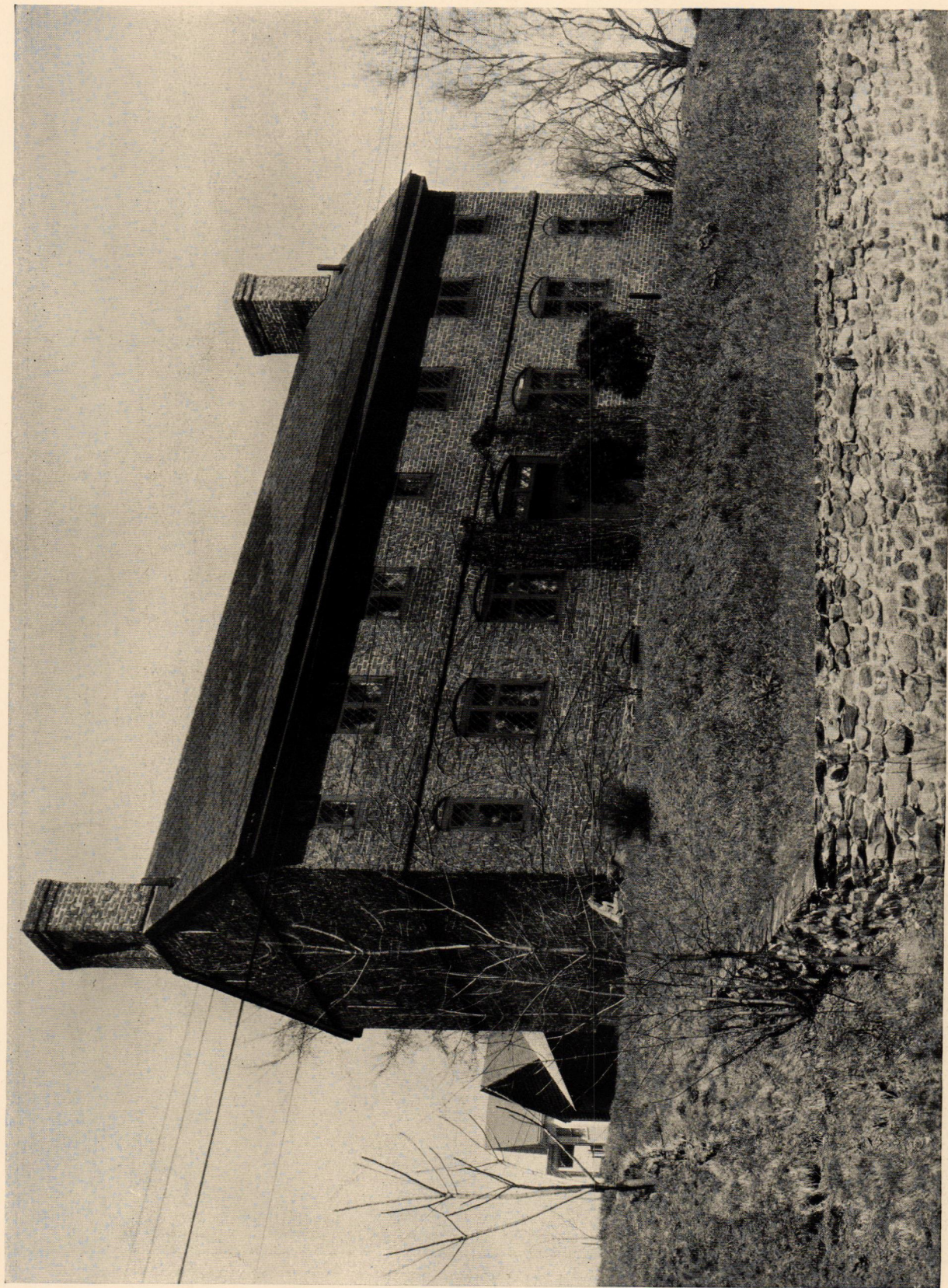
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Only One of the Old Windows Remains in the Attic of the Front Gable.
DUSTON GARRISON HOUSE—1696-97—HAVERHILL, MASS.



General View Shown on Page 32, Monograph Two.
JOSEPH PEASLEE GARRISON—1675—ROCK VILLAGE, MASS.



(Building Restored in 1917)
THE HAZZEN-SPILLER GARRISON HOUSE—1724—HAVERHILL, MASSACHUSETTS

[47]



GARRISON HOUSE PORTION—WITCH HOUSE, PIGEON COVE, MASSACHUSETTS

[48]