

The Middleton House

Architectural History

505 Newark Rd
Landenberg, PA



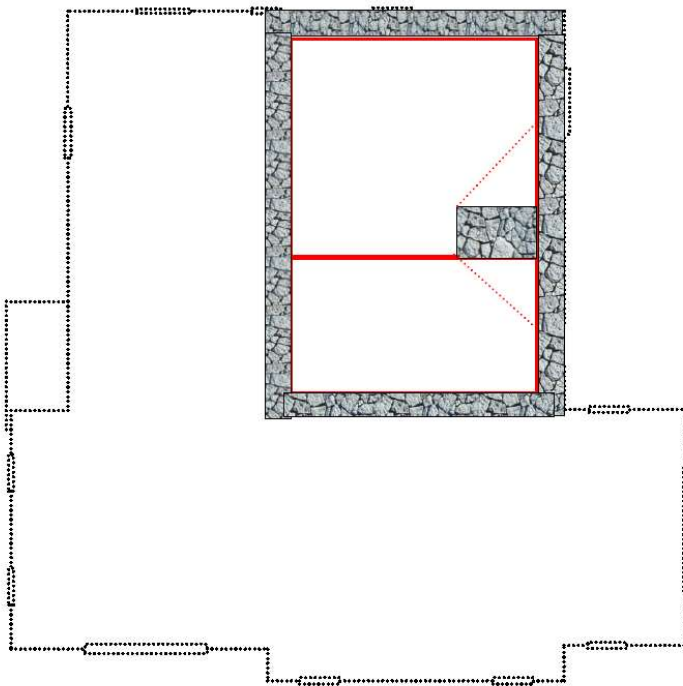
by David Hawk
Historical Narrative by Peg Jones
Photos by Chris Robinson and David Hawk
New Garden Historical Commission

Rev 11/16/2018

In 1712, Gayen Miller received a Penn Grant for 700 acres in the southern part of New Garden Township. In 1725, Miller sold 234 acres of the 700-acre tract to his son, William Miller. In 1769, William Miller sold a portion of those 234 acres, a tract of 70 acres to James Hall. At this time there was no “messuage” or house on the property. In 1783, the earliest tax record for New Garden Township, James Hall is listed as a taxpayer. There was no mention of his house which for tax purposes was probably inconsequential; most likely it was a log house.

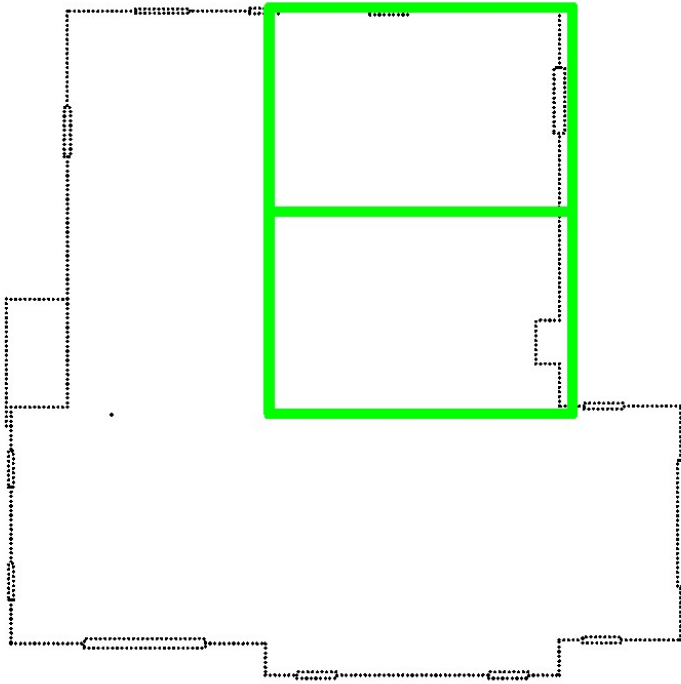
Period I – constructed between 1783 and 1796

In the 1796 tax record James Hall is being taxed for a stone house and a log barn. This would indicate that James Hall built his stone house sometime between 1783 and 1796.



Period I Foundation

The two story stone house had back-to-back corner fireplaces. The first floor joists were logs.



Period I Roofline

The roof ridge ran east-west.

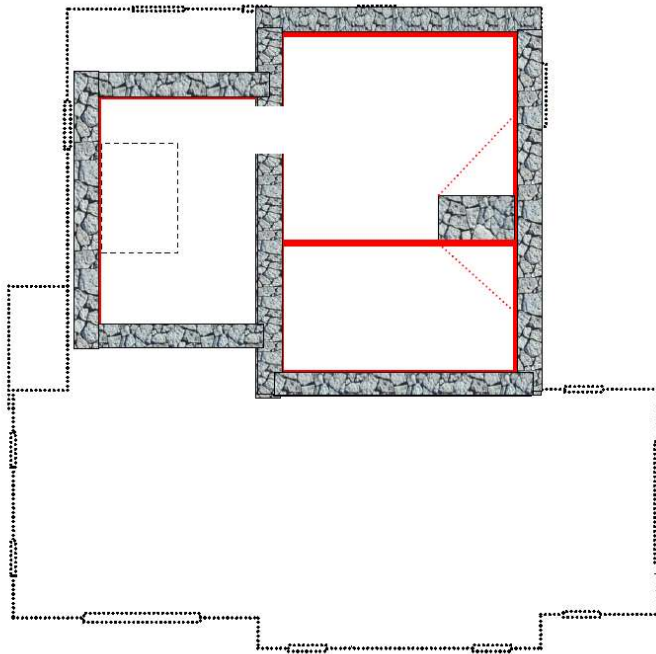


One of the corner fireplaces on the first floor



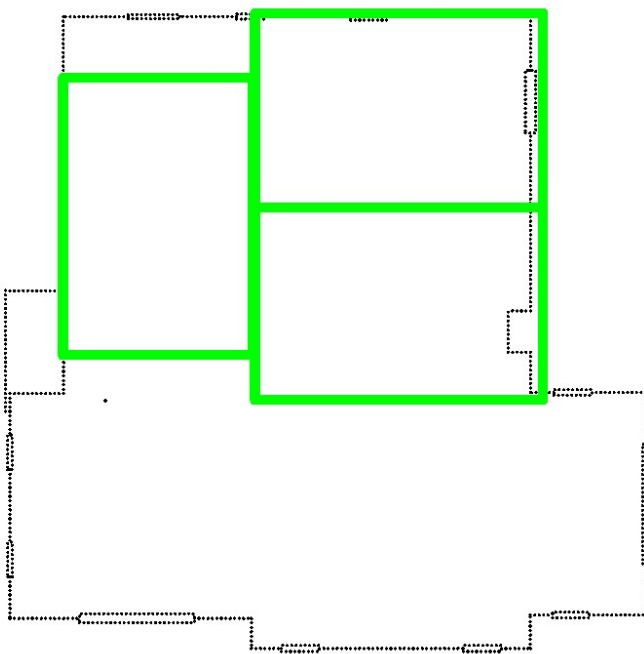
The original basement had log ceiling joists.

Period II – constructed before 1820?



Period II Foundation

A small kitchen addition was added over a basement and root cellar. A doorway was opened between the original basement and the new basement.



Period II Roofline

A new first-story level roof would have covered the small kitchen.



The wall between the basement below the small kitchen and the original basement as viewed from the small kitchen side (note doorway into original basement at left).

This side of the wall would have been buried when the original house was built. The plastered over bulge in this wall suggests that the small kitchen was constructed after the original house since the finish would have been better if it were meant to be exposed rather than buried.

Note also the indication of stairs leading up to the kitchen area in the plaster above the bulge. It is not known at what period these were used.



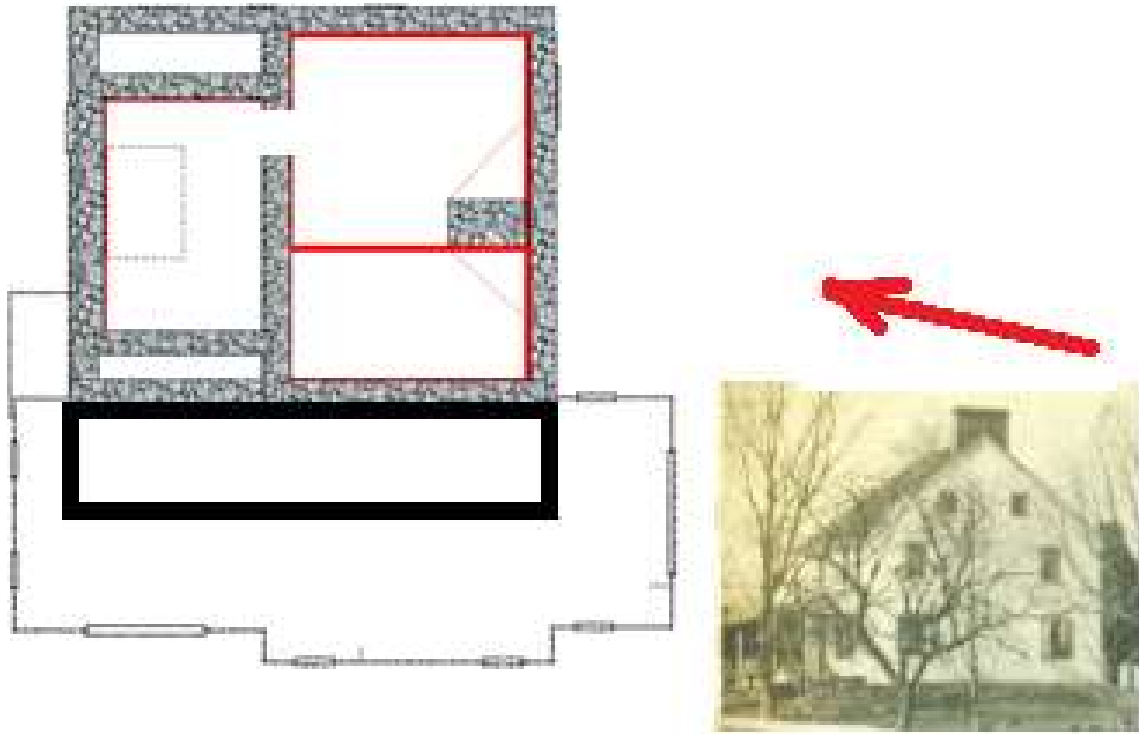
The root cellar viewed from the bottom of the root cellar stairs

Period III – constructed between 1820 and 1850?

In 1810, James Hall sold his 64½ acre farmstead to Abner Wilson who in 1848 willed it to his son, Chandler Wilson. The property was subsequently sold to Francis Thompson in 1864 and to Andrew Taylor in 1868.



The “1880” view of the house and barn. The 1883 Breou’s Farm Atlas shows the barn north of the house, thus this photograph was taken from the east. The horses and wagon are driving south along what is now Newark Rd.

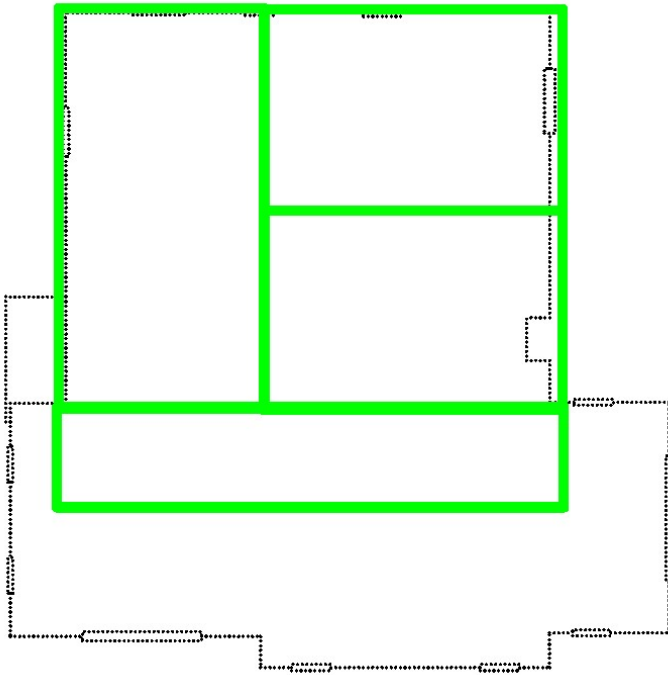


Period III Foundation
 showing location of south porch
 (red arrow show vantage point of “1880” photo)

The small one-story kitchen was expanded to the full width of the east wall of the house. The basement underneath the kitchen area stayed the same, but new foundations were laid just beyond the old basement walls. The spaces between the old basement walls and the new foundations were left as crawlspace.

The house from the vantage point shown in the “1880” photograph would have looked very much like the original Period I house. The original chimney for the corner fireplaces can be seen.

A porch can be seen on the south side of the house. All the tree limbs in the photo obscure this, but it seems that the porch runs deeper than the original house (as indicated by the length of the second story roof line). It probably ran to the back wall of the one-story expanded kitchen.



Period III Roofline

The original roof was unaltered. The expanded kitchen would have had its own roof at the first-story level. There was also a roof over the south porch.



The construction date for Period III is thought to be between 1820 and 1850 based on the presence of a bull-nose window on the west wall of the expanded kitchen. This is the only bull-nose window in the house. We believe bull-nose windows were popular in the area between 1820 and 1850.

Period IV – between 1880 and 1888?



The “1888” photo of the house.

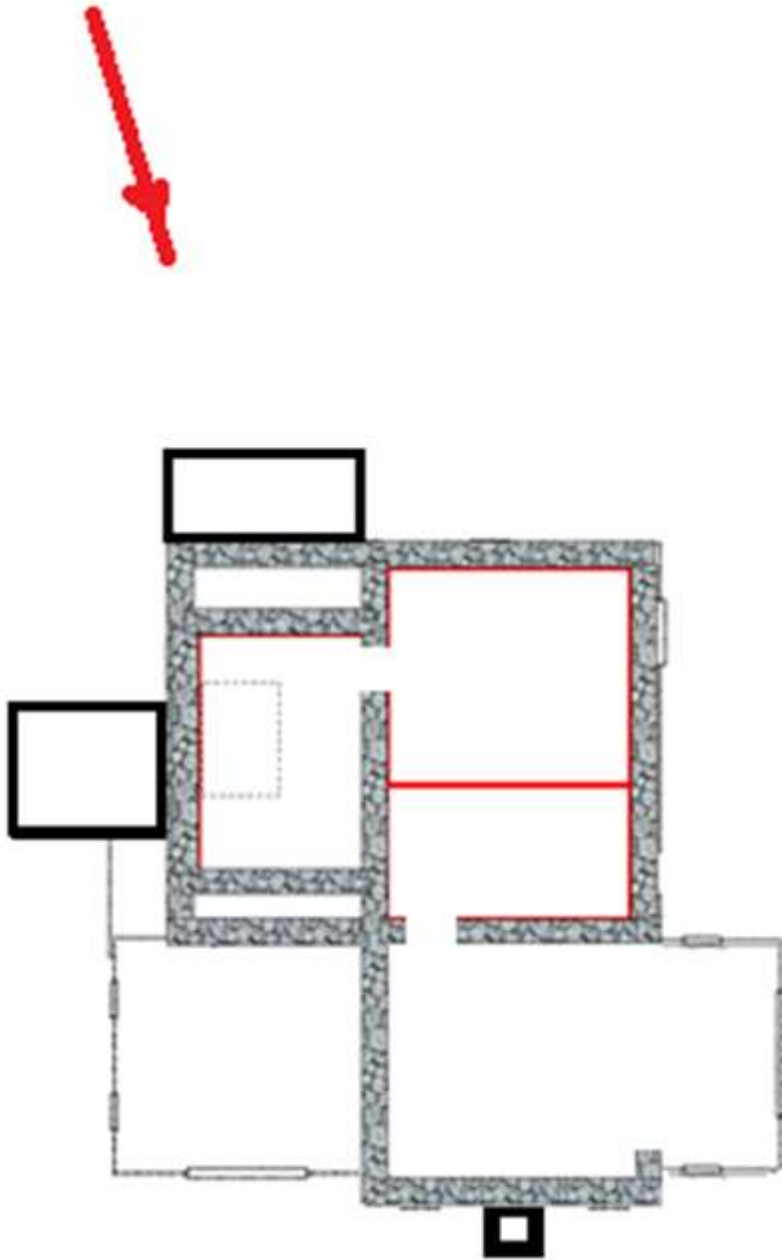
The “1888” photo was taken from north side of the house slightly to the west. The front part of the house to the left retains its original appearance - the roofline ridge still runs east-west and the original chimney for the corner fire places is still there. The expanded one-story kitchen from Period III is shown. It has two doorways and a small porch. The northern wall of the expanded kitchen appears to have wooden siding. The western wall of the expanded kitchen does not have wood siding and is probably be stucco over stone.



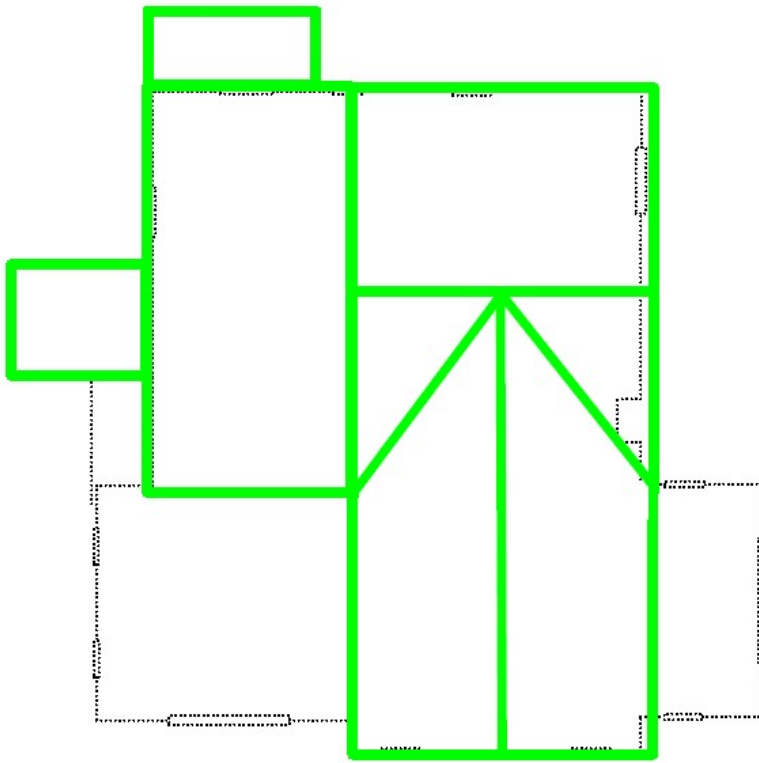
An enlargement of a portion of this photograph shows some interesting details:

1. There is a small lean-to addition approximately where the breezeway is now.
2. There is a new two-story addition extending the house to the south.
3. There is a very tall structure, possibly a chimney.

Although it cannot be seen in this photo, the surviving foundation suggests that the two-story addition was probably the same width as the southern wall of the original house and its roofline probably ran north-south since no gable can be seen in this photo.



Period IV Foundation
showing southern extension footprint,
tall chimney, lean-to addition and kitchen entry porch
(red arrow indicates vantage point for “1888” photo)



Period IV Roofline

The original roof with its east-west ridge would still have still been in place as was the first-story roof over the expanded kitchen. The roof over the southern addition would have had a north-south ridge line cut into the original Period I roof. There were also first-story level roofs over the lean-to and the kitchen porch.

Period V – Constructed 1894

Evan Shortlidge was the purchaser in 1883 that then sold the farm 1889, to his brother, Swithin Shortlidge. Swithin Shortlidge, with a family of seven children, needed a house larger than the existing stone farmhouse. In 1894, it was reported in the Daily Local News that Swithin Shortlidge....

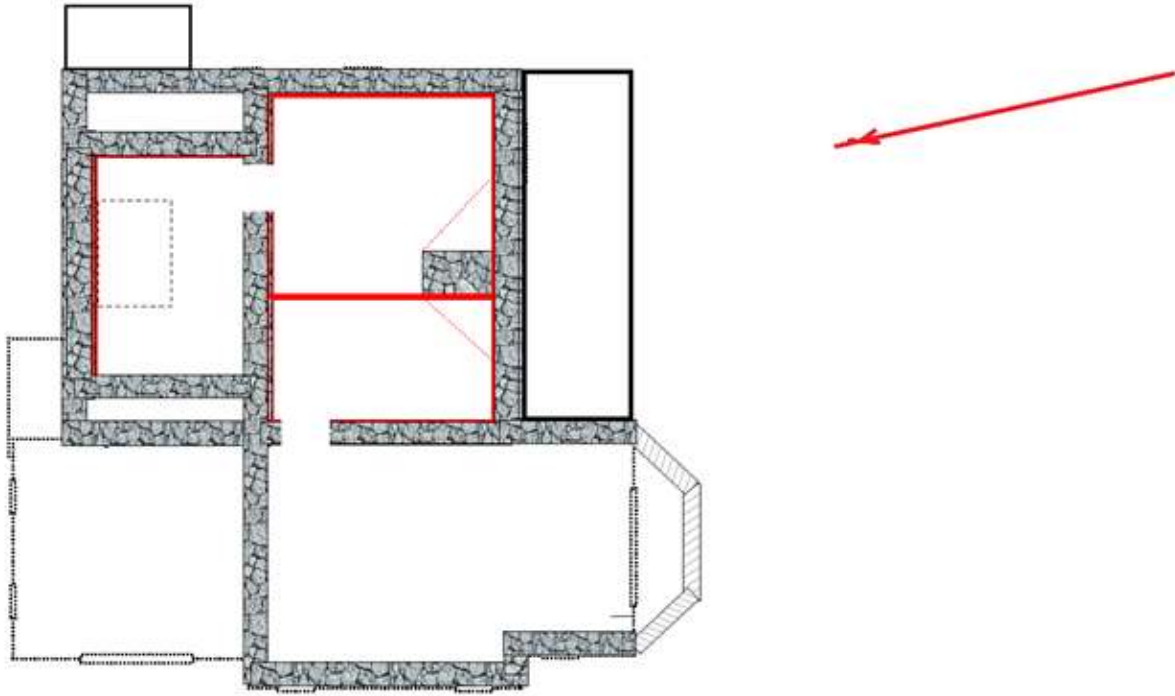
“has entirely remodeled his house, building a brick addition. The new house is of brick, cemented, and has 13 large rooms, finished in chestnut and oak. Water will be supplied by means of a wind engine. When completed Mr. Shortlidge will have one of the finest and most commodious residences in that section.”



The "1894" Photo

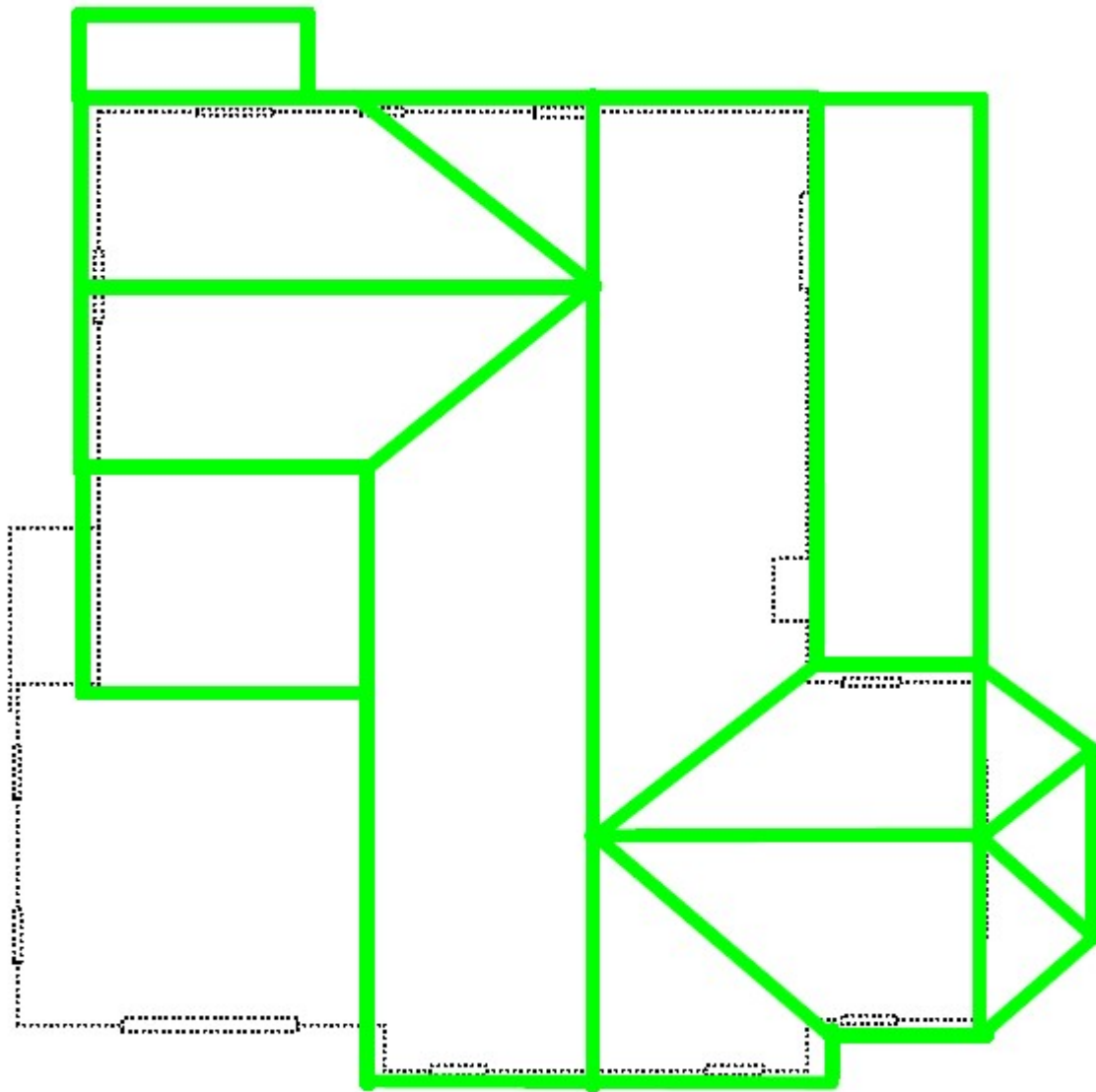
The "1894" photo was dated July 29, 1913 and was taken from slightly north of due east and shows the results of the 1894 construction episode.

There is a new turret on the SE corner of the house. There is a front porch and an entryway on the east side of the original house. A brick second story has been added above the old expanded kitchen, and there is a small porch over the entryway to the kitchen.



Period V Foundation
showing footprint of turret,
front porch and kitchen porch
(red arrow shows vantage point for “1894” photo)

Astonishingly, it appears that the entire two-story back stone wall of the original house and southern extension was removed during this renovation. The back one-story stone wall of the expanded kitchen remained.



Period V Roofline

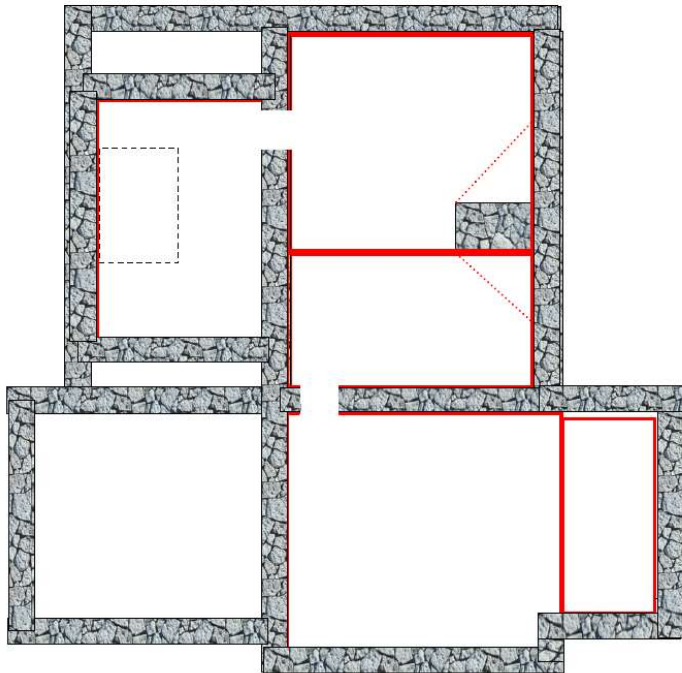
The second story roof was extensively altered (and possibly completely replaced). The north-south ridgeline from the Period IV addition was been extended over the original part of the house. The ridgeline for the two additions run east-west. The chimney for the corner fireplaces was removed. First story level roofs cover the kitchen and east side porches.



The north side gable over the original part of the house was been added at this time, and the original east gable was removed along with the chimney for the corner fireplaces. It is not understood why this gable was constructed of stone when the other Period V work was done in brick.

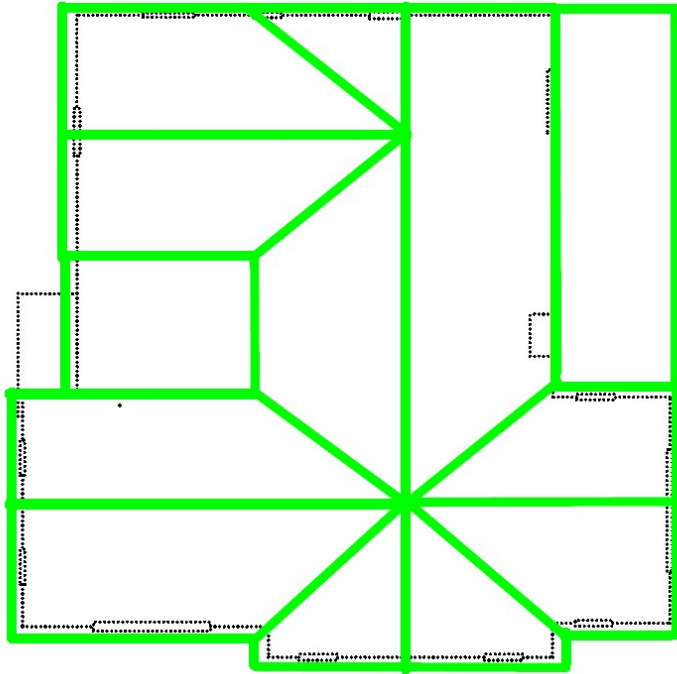
Period VI – Constructed 1920s or 1930s(?)

The Shortlidge family lived in their enlarged house until the farm was sold to Leon Hagerty in 1920. Leon Hagerty owned the farm until the mid-1930's when he sold it to Paul Middleton. The Middleton family owned the property for over 80 years. The Middletons had a family complex occupying this house, the house to the north and the house to the south for four generations.



Period VI Foundation
showing total footprint of new south wing

The southern wing of the house was expanded west from the back of the original house to beyond the expanded kitchen. The front turret disappeared. The entire wing is of brick construction. Today's west-side second floor bathroom, located between the Period V addition on the north, and the new southern wing extension, was probably also added at this time. Most of the interior finish of the house probably dates from this renovation.



Period VI Roofline

The new south west addition roofline runs east-west. A slightly sloped flat roof covers the new second story western bathroom.



Aerial view of the Middleton farm buildings, house is on left



First floor living room
SE corner



Plastered Attic
Southern Addition



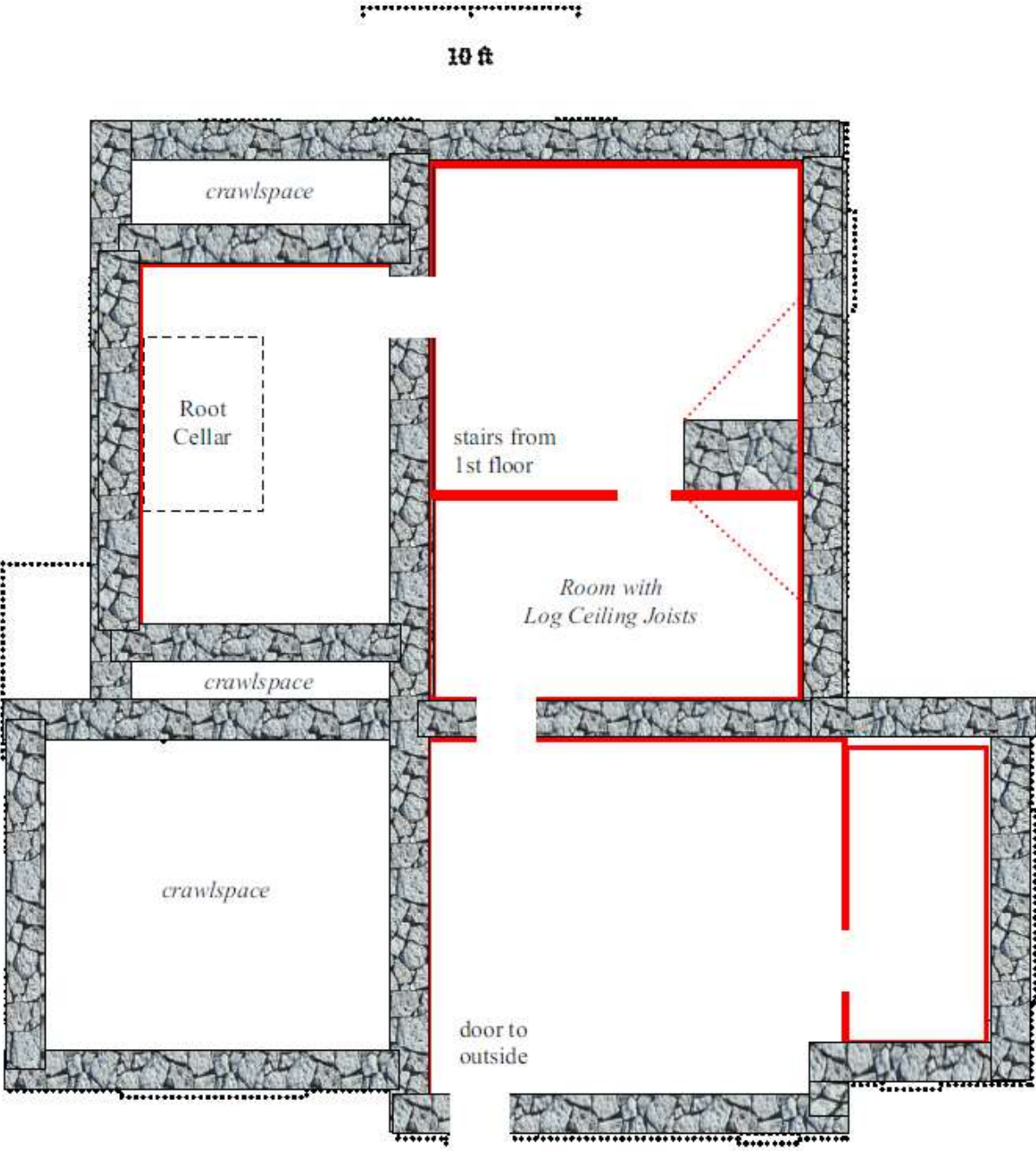
Stairs descending to
Period I Basement



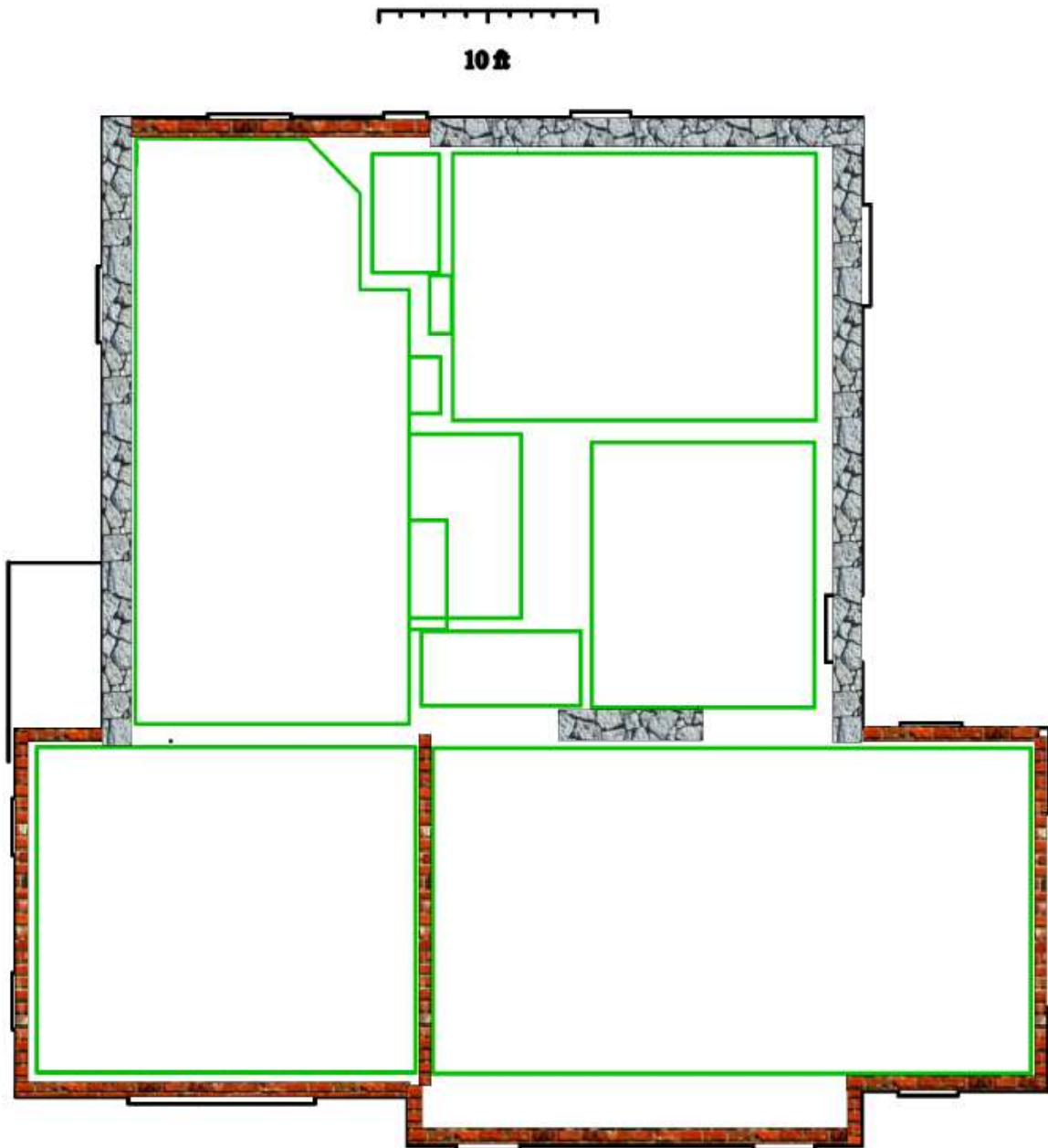
Stairway to Second Floor

Appendix A – Architectural Drawings

Basement

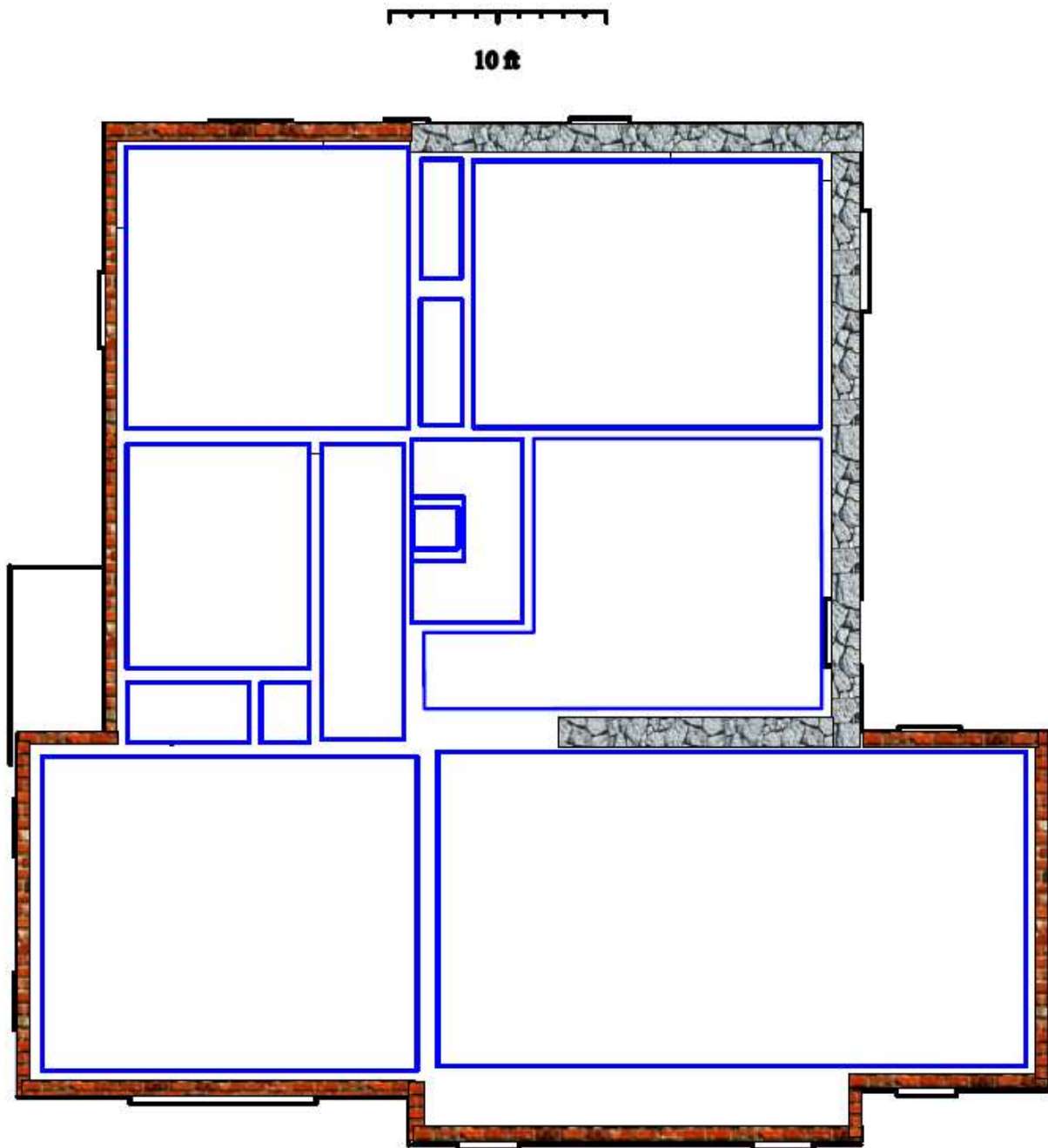


First Floor



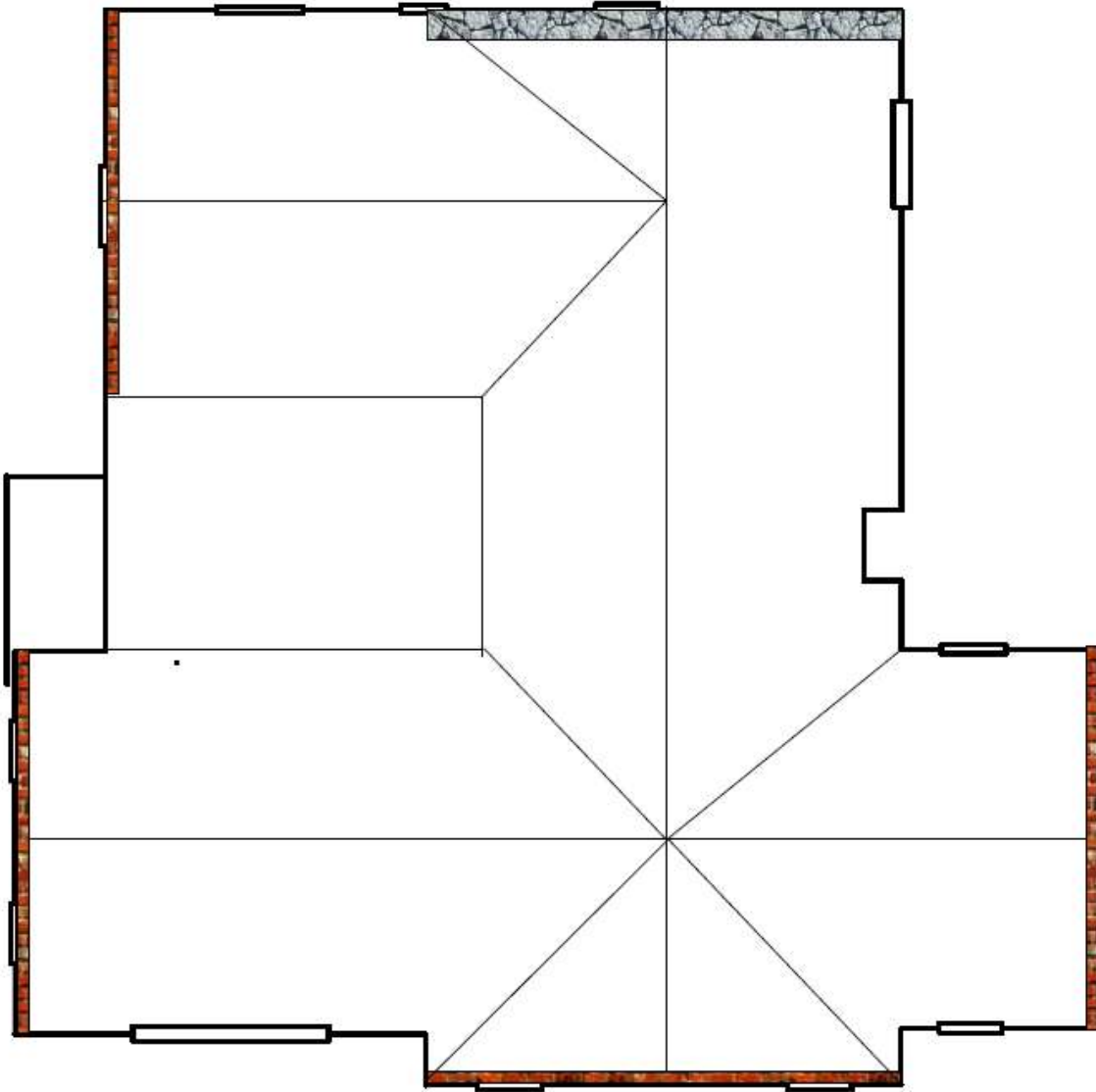
On the first floor the northern, eastern, and a portion of the southern Period I stone walls are still present today. The stone western wall of the Period III expanded kitchen with the bull nose window also survives. The northern wall of the expanded kitchen is now brick. The entire southern addition is also brick.

Second Floor



The northern, eastern, and much of the original southern stone wall from period I are still present. The entire southern wing is brick, as is the second story addition over the expanded kitchen.

Attic



The north gable is stone, all others are brick.

APPENDIX B - Photographic Evidence

Three reprints of old photographs were found in the attic. Middleton family tradition is that all of them are of this house. The reprints all appear to be of the same age and are dated in pencil on the back in the same handwriting. We don't know who wrote the inscribed dates or how the dates were determined. It is possible that these photos may have been part of a previous attempt to document the house.



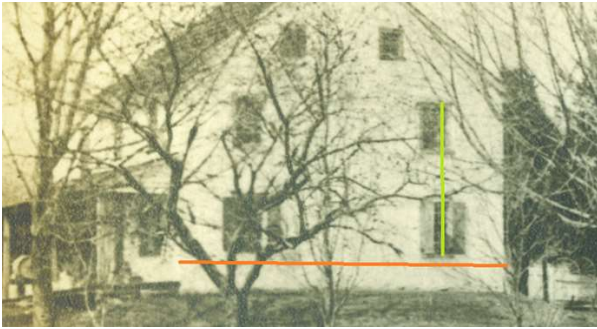
The "1894" photo is inscribed on the front "July 29, 1913" which would have been when the photo was taken. 1894 is one of our known construction episodes from the Daily Local News article.

This report uses the dates written on the back of these photographs extensively even though we have no further evidence to support their validity.

The three photographs are so different that it seemed prudent to do a "sanity check" as to whether they were indeed all of the same house. This was done by comparing proportions of features in the photographs with what should be the same features of the house today. The proportions were determined by counting pixels in the photographs.

Is “1880” a photo of the Middleton house?

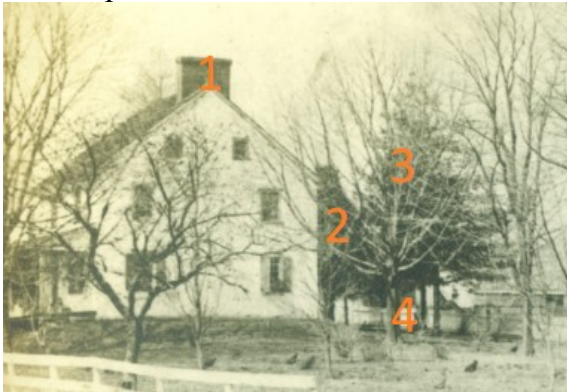
There are some obvious dissimilarities. The roofline is oriented differently, the windows are narrower, and there is a window where the front doorway is now. However the photo does show the now-missing chimney for the two back-to-back corner fireplaces.



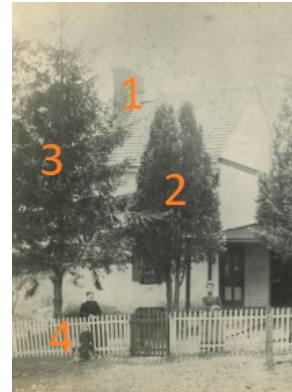
The orange lines show the width of the original house, and the green lines show the distance from the top of the second floor window to the sill of the first floor window. Counting pixels, the ratio of the length of these lines is 2.15:1 and 2.17:1, a fairly close agreement (better than deserved given the different camera angles and the obscuring shrubbery).

Are the “1880” and “1888” photos of the same house?

The 1880 photo would be from the east and the 1888 photo would be from the north.



Detail of “1880” photo

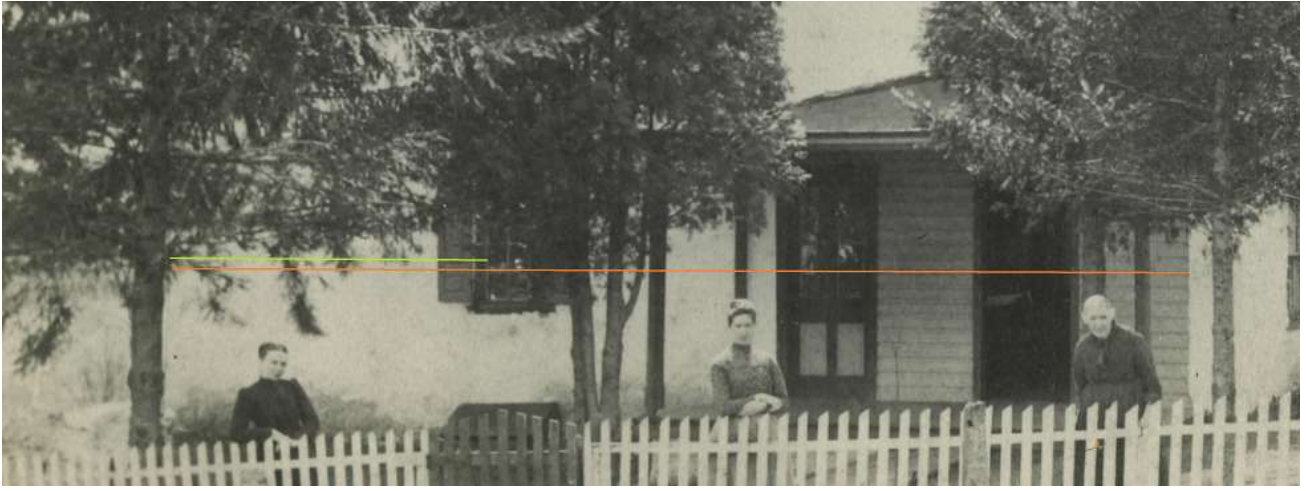


Detail of “1888” photo

The photos have the following similarities:

1. The chimney looks similar.
2. The tree looks similar (it might be my imagination, but the “1880” version of the tree looks slightly shorter than the “1888” version which may somewhat collaborate the 8-year difference in the inscribed dates).
3. The other tree looks similar.
4. The fence looks similar.

Is “1888” a photo of the Middleton house?



The green line in both of the above drawings is the distance from the NE corner of the house to the left side of the opening for the window in the den. The orange line is the distance from the NE corner to the NW corner. The measured lengths of the distances are 128” and 419” for a ratio of 3.27:1. Counting pixels on the old photograph, the ratio is 3.26:1.

All this tends to confirm that the three old photos are indeed of the Middleton House.