

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:	Oregon
COUNTY:	Marion
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY DATE	APR 16 1974

1. NAME	
COMMON:	Aurora Colony Historic District
AND/OR HISTORIC:	

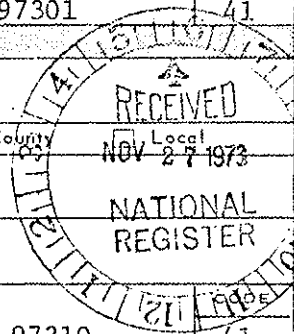
2. LOCATION			
STREET AND NUMBER:			
CITY OR TOWN:		CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:	
Aurora		Oregon Second Congressional Dist. Representative Al Ullman	
STATE	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
Oregon	41	Marion	047

3. CLASSIFICATION			
CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <input type="checkbox"/> Comments

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY			
OWNER'S NAME:		(Head of jurisdiction notified of nomination 2-20-73)	
Mr. C.W. Sager, Mayor of Aurora			
STREET AND NUMBER:			
City Hall			
CITY OR TOWN:	STATE:	CODE	
Aurora	Oregon	97002	

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION			
COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:			
Marion County Courthouse			
STREET AND NUMBER:			
CITY OR TOWN:	STATE:	CODE	
Salem	Oregon	97301	

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS			
TITLE OF SURVEY:			
Statewide Inventory of Historic Sites and Buildings			
DATE OF SURVEY:	<input type="checkbox"/> Federal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State	<input type="checkbox"/> County
1970			
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:			
Parks and Recreation Branch			
STREET AND NUMBER:			
Oregon State Highway Division			
CITY OR TOWN:	STATE:	CODE	
Salem	Oregon	97310	



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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Aurora is located in Marion County on the west bank of the Pudding River about 3 miles south of its confluence with the Willamette River. The original town site was on the east and west slopes of a small valley formed by Mill Creek, a minor tributary of the Pudding River. A dam across the creek provided water power for the mills located in the northeast section of the settlement. The first Colony buildings were on the west bank of the creek. The railroad was located on the east bank of the creek in 1870. Two years later the first plat of Aurora (covering the east side of town only) was recorded with Marion County. The community church site was on the west bank overlooking the town. Streets and roads were established by use patterns, and the town had the general character of a European village. Today, the core of town is bisected by the Southern Pacific Railroad and U.S. Highway 99E.

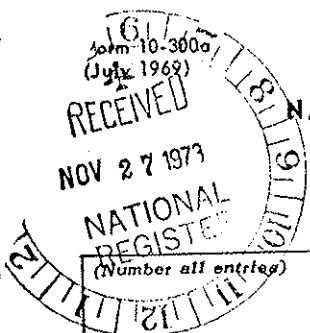
Eighteen major structures which were once part of the Aurora Colony are still standing. Six of these are on former Colony farms in the Aurora vicinity. The remaining twelve are located within the proposed district. Of the eighteen, sixteen were erected as family residences. A majority are still occupied as such. The domestic buildings of the Colony are simple, but they show sound construction and fine workmanship in detail. While plain, the buildings have distinctive character. Although the Colony builders used several structural systems, including vertical plank bearing wall systems, the most commonly used method for the existing structures is the simple stud wall. Sills, plates and large beams were hewn. Studs were generally 4 x 4's in the larger buildings, and either clapboard or shiplap siding was used for exterior wall finish. Typically, the residential structures are rectangular and have two single stack chimneys at the gable ends, straddling the ridge inside the containing walls. Typical attachments are an open porch and enclosed service ell with a shed roof on the rear, and an open porch on the front elevation. Windows are similar in most Colony buildings, having double hung sashes with six lights over six, plain surrounds and slipsills. The eaves generally have a plain boxed cornice and frieze, with a plain projecting verge board under the roof edge on the gable ends. The gable end fenestration often has two small attic windows set to the right and left of the chimney. In proportion and organization the Aurora Colony buildings are often compared with Pennsylvania farm homes of the areas where the Colony had its origin. The interior spaces are organized in a formal plan, including a central stair, slightly offset hall, two rooms on the first floor and two rooms on the second floor. The "living room," or main parlor, was often the larger of the two first story rooms and accounted for a variation in fenestration. Fireplaces in second story rooms are not typical in Colony dwellings.

Need played a direct role in the construction methods used in residential buildings. The earliest structures were of logs or rough-hewn timbers. In the 1860s, with the influx of population to the Aurora Colony, several dwellings were built with plank bearing walls. These structures tended to be smaller than the average Colony dwelling and differed in exterior finish. The later Colony buildings were stylized and to some extent an expression of the success of the Colony. The late Colony dwellings were usually two story structures with stud walls, two fireplaces and

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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COUNTY Marion	
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Aurora Colony Historic District

7. Description - continued (2)

refined exterior detail. All Colony buildings were well made and examples of each of the major types still exist within the district.

There are three buildings standing which were originally non-residential in use. The building known as the "Ox Barn" served as one of the Colony barns until the Colony was dissolved, at which time it was converted to a residence. One of the several Colony meeting halls survives and has recently been restored and adapted for commercial use. The third remaining non-residential building is a small octagonal structure that reportedly was built as a chicken coop for the old Pioneer Hotel. This structure is unusual among the Colony buildings in its octagonal form.

The remaining Colony buildings all have been re-roofed and modified internally. Some have acquired additions. However, despite such changes, most have outwardly retained their original character.

It should be noted that several buildings remain in Aurora which were constructed in the years immediately following dissolution of the Colony. Some of these buildings are expressions of the traditional form used by the Colony.

The Aurora Colony Historic District, as described below, is a large, contiguous district of 150 acres encompassing historic sites and open space as well as historic structures. It is located in portions of Sections 12 and 13 in T. 4 S., R. 1 W. of the Willamette Meridian in Marion County, Oregon. The boundary proposal received the unanimous approval of the full Aurora City Council during a stated meeting on February 5, 1973. The westerly portion of the proposed district, comprising nearly the entire southwest quarter of Section 12, extends beyond the city limits, and is therefore outside of the City's jurisdiction at present. This quarter section is nevertheless a critical element of the district, because it includes the site of the Colony dam and mill pond, scenic and agricultural landscape surrounding the Giesy House, the sites of the Colony Hotel and mills, the Keil Cemetery, the Frederick Keil House and open vistas between these features; and it also includes the sites of Colony founder William Keil's Gros Haus and the Colony Church.

Metes and Bounds Description

Beginning at the southwest corner of Section 12, T 4S, R 1W, WM, thence north along said section line to the 1/4 corner between Sections 11 and 12, thence east approximately 1150 feet to the center of Market Road No. 59, thence southeasterly along said Market Road approximately 830 feet, thence east approximately 1050 feet to a point due north of the intersection of 1st St. and Liberty St. in Aurora, thence south approximately 1020 feet to the intersection of said streets, thence easterly approximately 350 feet to the east city limits line, thence southerly along the east city limits line approximately 820 feet to the center of 3rd St. extended, thence westerly along said street approximately 375 feet to its intersection with Liberty St., thence southerly along



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(July 1969)

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Oregon	
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(Number all entries)

Aurora Colony Historic District

7. Description (3)

the centerline of Liberty St. approximately 150' to a point opposite the south boundary line of the Andrew Snyder House site, thence west approx. 110' to the southwest corner of said property, thence northerly approx. 150' to the center of 3rd St., thence westerly approx. 220' along 3rd St. to its intersection with Main St., thence southerly along Main St. approx. 800' to a point opposite the south line of the R. Miller property, thence westerly approx. 150' to the north-west corner of Block 1 of Snyder's Addition to the city of Aurora, thence southerly along the west line of said block and west line extended to the center line of Bob's St., thence westerly along the center line of Bob's St. approximately 230' to the center line of the Pacific Highway East, thence westerly along the south line of the E. Smith property approximately 425' to the center line of the Southern Pacific Railroad, thence northerly along the center line of said railroad approximately 1250' to the south line of said Section 12, thence west along said section line approximately 1725' to the point of beginning.

8. Significance - continued (2)

colonists arrived by ship via the Isthmus of Panama. The new settlement was known as Aurora Mills and later just Aurora (Aurora was the name of one of Dr. Keil's daughters). Aurora was a thriving community and generally known for hospitality, music, fine food, and high quality craftsmanship. As an experiment in communism and practical Christianity, the Colony was one of the most successful ever attempted. The experiment endured for nearly 40 years. Unlike other communist, religious, or utopian communities of the time, Aurora had, in the words of Robert Hendricks, "no peculiarity of religious belief, or dress, or living conditions or social relations in any way different from that practiced by its neighbors, other than the one fact that its property was held in common." There also was a common treasury.

Dr. Keil died On December 30, 1877. Two and a half years later on August 1, 1881, the colonies in Missouri and the Aurora Colony were legally dissolved and the property was divided among nearly 1000 respective members. Although there was a board of trustees, Dr. Keil's death left the colonies without a strong leader. It was soon evident that leadership was not the only problem. The Oregon and California Railroad came through Aurora in 1870, and the effect of outside influences became an increasing factor within the Colony. In the years before his death, Dr. Keil began making increasing demands upon the young Colony members, first asking that they marry only with other Colony members and later that they not marry at all. These factors, combined with Keil's partial withdrawal from active Colony leadership several years before his death, put the Colony in a state of general social discontent. The economic status of the Colony was very good, however, with about 23,000 acres of farm lands, three towns and several mills. Aurora continued as a stop on the railroad for several years after the Colony was dissolved, but it gradually lost its reputation for "old world" hospitality. In recent years there has been interest in preservation of historic sites and Colony buildings by the Aurora community in general, and in particular by the descendants of former Colony members.

## 8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

☐ Pre-Columbian☐ 16th Century☐ 18th Century☐ 20th Century☐ 15th Century☐ 17th Century☒ 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

1856-1881

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

☐ Aboriginal☐ Education☐ Political☐ Urban Planning☐ Prehistoric☐ Engineering☒ Religion/Phi-☐ Other (Specify)☐ Historic☐ Industry

losophy

☐ Agriculture☐ Invention☐ Science☒ Architecture☐ Landscape☐ Sculpture☐ Art☐ Architecture☐ Social/Human-☐ Commerce☐ Literature

itarian

☐ Communications☐ Military☐ Theater☐ Conservation☐ Music☐ Transportation

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Aurora was the largest of four towns built in the American West by a communal society founded by Dr. William Keil. Keil was born in Prussia in 1812. He and his wife immigrated to New York where they established a successful tailoring shop. Keil had learned the trade in Germany. While in New York, Keil became interested in Christian Reform movements and developed his own interpretation of the New Testament. With only a limited knowledge of English, Keil found it necessary to sell his shop and travel to Pennsylvania where there was a large population of German-speaking people. While preaching near Pittsburg, Keil became acquainted with Andrew and Barbara Giesy and their 15 children. Four of the Giesy sons, Andrew Jr., Christian, Samuel and Henry, became students of Keil's teachings and helped spread the "word" in the Pittsburgh area. By 1844 there was a substantial number of Keil followers, including some former members of the Harmony Colony in Economy, Pennsylvania. Partially because of persecution and the need to be isolated from other basic teachings of the Christian religion, the decision was made to move west. People of all religious backgrounds were accepted into the colony as long as they believed in the basic principle of "love thy neighbor" taught by Keil. Shelby County, Missouri, was the location for Bethel, the first town founded by the communist group. Later, Nineveh was founded about sixty miles from Bethel. The two settlements were comprised of colonists from not only Pennsylvania, but also the Old Northwest, the South, and some directly from Germany.

In 1853, Christian Giesy, who had been active in recruiting colonists for Bethel, was chosen to lead an advance party to the Oregon Territory to look for new town sites. The "spies," as the advance party was called, chose a site on Willapa Bay, north of the mouth of the Columbia in the present State of Washington. In 1855 a large wagon train led by Dr. Keil arrived at the Willapa Bay settlement. In the course of the first few months it was realized that Willapa Bay was too isolated from the existing transportation routes and that a new site should be considered. During the winter of 1855-56 a small party traveled throughout the Willamette Valley in Oregon, finally choosing a site on the Pudding River, about three miles south of its junction with the Willamette River. This site had good water power potential and was on the trail from Oregon City to French Prairie and the upper Willamette Valley. In the spring of 1857 construction was begun on Dr. Keil's house which, when completed, frequently served as a roadhouse for travelers on the overland stage route. During the 1860's three more wagon trains were sent west from the Missouri colonies and about 100

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AURORA COLONY HISTORIC DISTRICT  
Roughly bounded by Cemetery Road, Bobs Avenue and Liberty Street  
Aurora  
Marion County  
Oregon

Control No. 74001696

Listing Date 4-16-74

The purpose of this and the following supplementary pages is to extend the historic period of significance of the Aurora Colony Historic District to include resources that contribute to the visual continuity of the district but were erected following disbanding of the Aurora Cooperative Society in 1881.

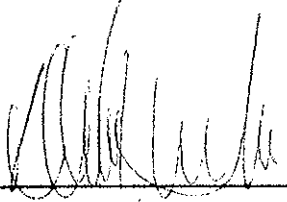
PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE - 1856-1920

The primary period of significance is marked from 1856, when the German-speaking colonists led by Dr. William Keil established their permanent settlement on the West Coast at Aurora in the fertile Willamette Valley. The primary period of significance concludes with dissolution of the Christian communal society in 1881, four years after Dr. Keil's death.

The secondary period of significance follows the Aurora Cooperative Society's disbanding and extends to 1920. Buildings were erected in this period by former members of the Colony, their descendents and others. While "second generation" construction occasionally carried on the traditional Colony idiom, namely simple but distinctively proportioned rectilinear, gable-roofed volumes of frame or plank construction, much of it reflected prevailing architectural fashions of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, including Italianate, Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, and Craftsman Bungalow styles. After 1920, developments such as construction of the Pacific Highway (1933-1934) commenced to alter the rural character of the village, and Aurora evolved as a bustling small-town agricultural trading center not unlike many others in western Oregon.

The accompanying documentation and inventory data sheets keyed to map numbers are taken from the following source.

AURORA COLONY HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY. Philip Dole and Judith Rees, Historic Preservation Consultants. Prepared with grant assistance from the Historic Preservation Fund made available by the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office. 1985.

  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

March 25, 1990

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National Park Service

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HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE AURORA COLONY

The Aurora Colony Historic District contains the nucleus of a major American communal society which developed during the third quarter of the 19th Century. The only one of its kind in Oregon and the Pacific Northwest, its architecture stands apart in terms of form, detail and stylistic expression. It is the most extensive 19th Century architectural grouping in the Northwest built by people with a Germanic background.

The Aurora Colony, or Aurora Cooperative Society, was the last of a succession of communistic settlements which was developed under the leadership of Dr. William Keil. Keil, who was born in Germany in 1812, began to attract to himself others of Germanic background and similar belief within a decade of his arrival in the United States in 1831. Keil had been trained as a tailor, a trade which he seems to have abandoned early in favor of preaching and the practice of medicine. Although not earned through formal training of professional qualifications as a physician, he was known as "Doctor Keil" for the rest of his life. Keil's group was drawn and held together by his dynamic leadership and preaching. His ideas were based on a fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible. Descriptions of church services recall the revival spirit of the Methodists in the 19th Century, a group which Keil had briefly belonged to.

Following his preaching in the vicinity of Pittsburgh, the earliest people to join up with Keil were a number who had broken away from the Harmony Society of Father Rapp at Economy, Pennsylvania, northwest of Pittsburgh. For a time, Keil and his group lived at Phillipsburg, Pennsylvania before they ventured west to Missouri, and then Oregon. The first colony was established in 1844 in Bethel, Missouri, and a later extension at Nineveh, Missouri; in 1853 at Willapa, Washington Territory; and in 1856 at Aurora, Oregon.

Like many other American communal societies, Keil's colonies were based on community ownership of all property. Those joining gave their worldly goods to the organization and, in return, all their needs were provided for. The architecture in Aurora reflects its communal ownership in its standardization and large scale, as the households usually contained, in addition to family members, a number of single Colony members, both young and old. An expression of the communal society is also evident in the large buildings which contained, within one structure, workshops for a number of trades.

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During Keil's years in Aurora, 1856-1877, the Colony went through great expansion and development; apparently, however, in the face of growing dissatisfaction among the younger members of the Colony. Before 1866, there were no written agreements between Colony members and Keil. In that year, a brief document was written to accompany the formal transfer of leadership from Dr. Keil to seven men, all apparently staunch supporters of Keil.

Although the greatest period of expansion and architectural accomplishments followed the signing of the agreement, the agreement did not change or modify the long established practices of the Colony in any way or Keil's evident involvement. Following Keil's death in December 1877, another group was formed to administer the Colony's property and eventually the disbanding of the Colony. In 1881, the Colony was dissolved and all property divided among the former members.

#### **EVOLUTION OF AURORA'S BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

Aurora is sited on the eastern edge of an extensive prairie in Marion County. flowing northeast across White's quarter section, Mill Creek's meandering streambed has formed a low valley about 1,000 feet wide which is flanked by higher elevations of land. In about 1850, White constructed a dam and then saw and grist mills in this valley. Later, the Colony constructed its buildings on the sloping edges of the valley, first its administrative and social institution on the hills to the northwest and, then later, its industries, business buildings and the village on the flatter rise to the southeast.

The existing Historic District lies almost entirely within the first purchase of land made by Keil in Marion County, Oregon. On June 10, 1856, he purchased 160 acres from George F. White, which constituted White's Donation Land Claim of one-quarter section. The southeast corner of the Donation Land Claim is just east of the intersection of Third and Liberty Streets; the northwest corner is about 600 feet north of the Keil Family Cemetery (Resource #22). The northeast corner of the Donation Land Claim is not included within the current boundaries of the Historic District. It contains the sites of the second Colony School, the Colony Grist Mill and a complex of workshops including the Cooper's and Tin Smith's Shops.



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On June 11, 1856, the day after purchasing White's Donation Land Claim, Keil bought David and Anna Maria Smith's Donation Land Claim of 320 acres. The Smith Claim consisted of two quarter sections; the eastern quarter section was directly south of the land formerly owned by George White. At the time of the purchase apparently, no buildings existed on the claim. Later, during the Colony period, the Giesy-Kraus House (Resource #108), the Mohler House (Resource #122) and the Snyder House (Resource #99) were all located on this quarter section, as well as the Colony's Mill Pond and Dam, constructed in 1867. Although the Smith Claim contains several important Colony period sites, the Historic District extends only into the eastern quarter section to include the Snyder House, just south of Third Street, and the Mohler House, on Highway 99-E near Bob's Street. In the southwest corner of Smith's adjoining quarter sections, lies the Aurora Cemetary; it was known as the "general cemetary" to distinguish it from the other, more exclusive Colony period burial ground for members of the Keil family.

The community at Aurora Mills developed in two phases during the Colony period, from 1856 to 1881. During the first phase (1856-1863), the population was small, numbering no more than 50 inhabitants. in the early summer of 1856, a dozen or more men arrived with Keil. The colonists used the buildings George White had constructed. White's small log cabin, which the colonists first lived in, sat just west of the sawmill close to the northern edge of Ehlen Road; the grist mill was located several hundred feet further north, and the millpond was located south of Ehlen Road. In the early years, the sawmill apparently provided the Aurora Cooperative Society with its main source of income. Logs were supplied to the mill as Aurora's heavily wooded site was cleared for agriculture and other Colony requirements.

It is assumed that the first arrivals immediately built other primitive structures for the colonists who were expected to arrive soon from Willapa and Portland. The first buildings the

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colonists constructed were probably of logs and built west of White's structures in a concentrated group on the "Point". The "Point" was a sloping elevated site bordering the flood plain to the northwest, a few hundred yards from the mills. It is located at the northwest corner of the junction of Ehlen and Airport Roads, then known as French Prairie Road and Boones Ferry Road, respectively. The most important of the new Colony buildings was the huge, hewn log, "das Grosse Haus" that was built for Dr. Keil in about 1859 and was destroyed by fire in 1906. Marking the end of the first phase of Colony development is the arrival of the large group of immigrants in the fall of 1863 and construction of the John Giesy House, completed in 1864-65. The Giesy House may be the oldest surviving Colony period building. It and its outbuildings are located directly across from the site of the enclave of Keil buildings on the Point, a suitable location for the man who managed the grist mill and was one of the most important leaders in the community.

The second phase of Colony development lasted from 1863 until the dissolution of the Colony in 1881. The three migrations of 1863, 1865 and 1867 greatly increased Aurora's population; they numbered about 200, 75 and 50, respectively. the great influx of colonists not only required residences, but also specialized buildings for the many trades and craftsmen. Within this group of colonists there were many representatives of the building trades which performed this construction. Although in the fall of 1863 the only building activity mentioned in the area of the present village was the construction of the Hotel and a bridge across the Pudding River, by 1870 residences for a dozen households had been constructed within the village and the immediate vicinity. Some households resided in the Hotel and in the workshop buildings. Some of the newcomers also settled on newly acquired outlying farms in Marion and Clackamas Counties. In 1865, the landholdings in Marion County amounted to 1,440 acres, and by the 1870's the acreage had increased about ten-fold.

The extensive construction which followed the mid-1860's coincided with the major shift in the administration of the Colony, from Dr. William Keil to the seven trustees. A number of the developments were industrial; beginning in 1867 a new dam was constructed several hundred yards south of White's old millpond, greatly improving the waterhead. It appears the alignment of the railroad constructed in 1869-70 through Aurora was known long before its actual construction, as the millrace parallels the alignment and the new sawmill, woolen mill and grist mill constructed soon after were all placed close to the future railroad right-of-way.

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The Hotel, built in 1863-67, was the first structure whose position adjoined the alignment later taken by the railroad. In addition to serving as a commercial hotel with a famous dining room, the Hotel also served as a residence for colonists. Before the construction of the railroad, the Hotel served as a stage stop on the stage road which passed right in front of it. The road later became Aurora's Main Street and a number of commercial buildings were constructed along it in the 1870's. Some of these were part of the Colony's private enterprise system, such as the building which housed the Colony Members' Supply Store (Resource #94), but a number catered to both the colonists and the general public: the F. Keil & Co. General Merchandise Store (Resource #88), the Geisy Drugstore (Resource #75), and the Railroad Station (resource #53). In 1872, the plat of "Aurora" was recorded in the Marion County Courthouse. In that same year, distribution of Colony property was made, including rural acreage as well as village lots. Which village houses existed before that date is not known, although it appears that the Andrew Voght House on First Street (Resource #77) and the Leonard Will House on Main Street (Resource #101) were built in the mid-1860's. However, it appears that a number of other houses were built after the distribution of lots; the William Fry House (Resource #61) is one example.

In 1873, Nordhoff described the houses as being factory-like, the village disorderly and rather unimaginative or not tasteful -- he objected to the use of a grid layout. However, other visitors spoke of the neatness. The layout did provide for unusually wide streets which had no curbs. At a later date, Main Street at least had boardwalks, while other streets had footpaths in the grass verges. Where buildings were enclosed by picket fences, their yards were distinguished from the street; in unfenced yards, the spaces merged. Today, streets which are representative of Aurora's 19th Century character are Liberty Street south of Highway 99-E, and Second Street between the F. Keil & Co. Store and the William Fry House.

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The village had an order and pervasive pattern. Buildings for trade and business activities were regularly and widely dispersed throughout the village. The location of the Ox Barn is representative of this. The typical residential complex included several outbuildings: a small barn, a woodshed, a wash house and often a shop building. The house and its lot with vegetable garden, enclosures for stock, piles of firewood and materials related to the specific trade carried on in the shop, had an utilitarian character. The houses were regularly spaced and, apparently without exception, stood on the corner with no more than two houses to a block; however, not every corner had a house. It appears that Colony period public and commercial buildings in the village were also sited on corners, with the exception of the Martin Giesy Drugstore (Resource #75), which sat near the center of its block.

Up into the 1890's few substantive changes appear to have occurred within the village. However, by the late 19th Century, photographs show an increase in commercial and public buildings, especially along Main Street. Stylistically and functionally, the singular, more focal character of the utopian center was transformed into a typical small Oregon town. Through the years, individual buildings have been lost to fire and owners' changing needs. However, the most destructive impact was the State Highway construction in 1933 and 1934, which caused the demolition of several major Colony period buildings and cut a swath diagonally through the original grid layout of the village.

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**DATING AURORA COLONY BUILDINGS**

There is little information available to assist in arriving at dates for building construction during the Colony period. Communal ownership obscures conventional sources of information and there is little oral tradition that is applicable. However, the 1860 and 1870 censuses and the 1867 and 1872 directories have provided some assistance in dating buildings of the Colony period.

Within the boundaries of the Historic District, the 1860 census appears to list only two households of Colony members, William Keil's and Henry Snyder, Sr.'s. Both contained immediate family members as well as other adult male and female Colony members. The Keil household numbered 19 and the Snyder household numbered 11. It is assumed that these two households lived in log structures which are frequently mentioned as standing on the "Point" and included Dr. Keil's "das Grosse Haus". The 1860 census also lists several families who had been members of the Bethel Colony, but did not join the cooperative in Aurora. It appears that all of these families lived outside the Historic District boundaries; they include the households of Christian Boehringer, Henry Hager, and William Keil's brothers, Charles and Frederick. This tends to indicate that there were no residential buildings within the village until after 1860. It appears that little construction occurred before 1864-1865 and that no buildings constructed prior to that date survive.

Definite construction dates are known for only five surviving Colony period buildings: John Giesy House (Resource #46), 1864-1865; Frederick Keil House (Resource #10), about 1870; F. Keil & Company General Merchandise Store (Resource #88), 1870-1871; William Fry House (Resource #61), 1874; and George Steinbach Log House (Resource #106), 1876. A number of other surviving Colony period buildings have characteristics similar to these buildings; based on this, a construction date of circa 1870 has been assigned to indicate that they were probably built between 1864 and 1875. A few buildings, with characteristics which indicate a slightly later construction date, have been assigned a date of circa 1875.



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Two important Colony buildings are very problematic in regard to construction dates: the Ox Barn (Resource #105) and the Octagon Building (Resource #50). Their present appearance, materials and details are typical of construction in the 1880's or later. However, the oral traditions which associated these buildings with the Colony period merit serious consideration and, in respect for these traditions, these two buildings have been given a construction date of circa 1880.

**AURORA'S ARCHITECTURAL IDIOM**

The Colony Period House

One kind of house, in general form and character, was built in the village of Aurora from about 1864 to 1881, during the Colony period. The farm houses built outside the village were also of this kind, although the farm houses tended to be larger. The typical house can be described as follows:

The gable roof house is sided with its eaves parallel to the street. It has a three-bay front facade and is two bays in depth, about 35 feet long and 20 feet deep. One and a half to two stories in height, it usually has windows on the second floor front facade. The attic ends may have two fixed, six-light sash windows. Each gable end contains an interior brick chimney, but of unequal sizes, one for a stove and the other for a fireplace. A one-story lean-to, containing an open porch and enclosed room, extends across the full length of the rear facade. The main body of the house has two rooms on the main floor, and two on the second. The house seldom has a front porch, although most surviving houses have porches which were added later, during the post-Colony period. The continuous or pier foundation is constructed of brick and an exterior staircase with brick walls usually provides access to a full basement.

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The typical house is predominantly 18th Century in character. It has white painted, horizontal weatherboarding. There may be a pronounced asymmetry in the position of its "central" front door, which usually has a transom and is sometimes double-leafed. The house rarely has Classical detailing and curvilinear moldings in its exterior finish. However, it always has six-over-six, double-hung sash windows which are smaller in size on the second story than on the first. The window surrounds are flat boards and the head is capped with a flat projecting, rectangular cap about a half-inch square.

The characteristic eave detailing is utilitarian. The front eave is boxed with its soffit perpendicular to the house wall, in contrast to the eave at the rake, which is open. The rake eave has a projection of a foot, and a suspended fascia. The soffit is deeply recessed and made of a painted board set directly against the roof sheathing. The intersection of the rake with the ends of the front facade boxed soffit and fascia is often resolved by carrying the horizontal line a foot or so around the end of the house. This produces a triangular boxed element which has no moldings. It is utilitarian in character and in placement makes no reference to a Classically detailed eave return. This eave intersection is one of the most characteristic details of Aurora Colony architecture, almost exclusive in Oregon to that group's building. Occasionally, just below the eave intersection, a few houses also have a residual, two dimensional version of a Classical eave return. It consists of the architrave board, but not the cornice, carried around from the front facade. At its simplest, it is one flat board set flush with the surface of the siding, as on the Frederick Keil House (Resource #10). A more complex assembly consists of two or three graduated rectangular boards as a cap which is a continuation of the bed moldings, such as on the Charles Snyder House (Resource #99). This unorthodox but pleasing version of Classical detailing is rarely found in Oregon outside the Colony territory.

A common exception to horizontal weatherboarding is the use of vertical boards and battens. The vertical board and batten house is of single wall "box" construction. However, it should be noted that some box constructed houses in Aurora are covered with horizontal weatherboarding.

A remarkable quality of the Colony period Aurora house is that, contrary to the general impression, it can be said that no two are alike. Within a very conservative and limited vocabulary, and with the distinct expression of only one or two builders, each house is rather easily distinguished from all others.

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Continuation Sheet

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The Post-Colony Period House

For a generation following the death of Dr. William Keil in 1877, the general characteristics of the typical Colony period house survived in post-Colony period houses built for Colony members and their descendents. The post-Colony house is easily distinguished from its predecessor by the following modifications which characterize it:

The house is sided with shiplap. Its two interior brick chimneys are the same size, the smaller stove type, and each has a base, shaft and pronounced bands of corbelling forming the cap. The front door bay is covered with a small hip roof porch detailed with turned posts and jigsaw brackets. Post-Colony eave detailing lacks the distinctive utilitarian eave and rake construction of the Colony period with its total absence of molding and Classical elements. There are moldings at the crown and bed of the eave assembly and on the horizontal caps of openings. The windows are one-over-one, double-hung sash. At the rear of the house there is a one or two-story kitchen wing enclosing two to three rooms. It has a third stove chimney, porches with shed roofs, and often a pantry within the porch area.

The building has a tall and light character which is in contrast to the rather squatty and heavy sense of the typical Colony period house. The detailing and moldings have the sharper, more attenuated attributes of late Gothic, rather than the attributes of the Classical.

It is not surprising that these architecturally conservative houses were usually the first homes of individuals who had played a major role in the Colony during Dr. Keil's lifetime. The following post-Colony houses conform to this trend: Jacob Miller House (Resource #81), Samuel Giesy House (Resource #91), William Miley House (Resource #117), and George Miller House (Resource #136).

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Continuation Sheet**

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**CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM**

The properties surveyed within the boundaries of the Aurora Colony Historic District have been classified into six categories:

Primary Significant: Buildings that were constructed by Colony members before the Colony's dissolution in 1881, and buildings that were built by Colony members after 1881 but reflect the Aurora Colony's architectural idiom. There are thirteen buildings and the Keil Cemetery classified as "Primary Significant".

Secondary Significant: Buildings that were constructed after dissolution of the Colony in 1881 by Colony members, descendants and others which do not reflect the Aurora Colony's architectural idiom. These buildings reflect the typical building patterns found in Oregon from the 1880's to the 1920's, and include the following styles: Italianate, Queen Anne Victorian, and Bungalow. There are 20 buildings classified as "Secondary Significant".

Historic Non-Contributing: Buildings that were built during the historic period and would typically be classified as Primary or Secondary Significant, but have been so extensively altered that their character-defining elements (siding, windows, form, detailing, etc.) are no longer intact. There are nineteen properties classified as "Historic Non-Contributing". If the original integrity of these buildings was restored, three would be classified as "Primary Significant" and sixteen as "Secondary Significant".

Compatible Non-Contributing: Buildings that were constructed after the 1920's and Aurora's secondary period of development, and are compatible architecturally (scale, materials, siting, use, etc.) with the Significant structures and the historic character of the district. There are three properties classified as "Compatible Non-Contributing".

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Continuation Sheet**

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Non-Compatible Non-Contributing: Buildings that were constructed after the 1920's and Aurora's secondary period of development, and are not compatible architecturally (scale, materials, siting, use, etc.) with the Significant structures and the historic character of the district. Typically, these buildings are Suburban Ranch style houses built after 1950, or highway oriented, commercial buildings. There are 33 properties classified as "Non-Compatible Non-Contributing".

Vacant: Properties that have no buildings or structures sited on them, including alleys, parking lots, remnant parcels left over from the realignment of Highway 99-E, pasture land and woodlands. There are 54 properties classified as "Vacant".



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Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 16Archeological Studies of Colony Period Sites

Within the present historic district boundaries, several sites offer potential for historic archeological studies of Colony period architecture, building materials, and aspects of material culture. Most of the sites in the following list are unique, as they were locations of important and specialized Colony activities that are no longer represented by surviving Colony period buildings.

<u>Resource No.</u>	<u>Site</u>
7A	Aurora Colony Church
9A	Carpentry Finishing Shop
12B	William Keil House, first Emmanuel Keil House and outbuildings
27A	Spinning and Lumber Mills
30A	Colony Mills and Office
33A	Sawmill Log Pond
37A	Old Aurora Hall
39A	Mill Creek Bridges
40A	White's Sawmill
44A	White's Grist Mill
48A	White's Dam and Millpond
50A	Aurora Colony Hotel, Octagon Building and outbuildings

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<u>Resource No.</u>	<u>Site</u>
57A	William Fry's Blacksmith Shop
75A	Martin Giesy's Drugstore
77A	Andrew Voght House
94A	Aurora Colony Store and Workshop and Andrew Giesy House
101A	Leonard Will House

Historic archeological investigations of these sites are recommended, as they would provide information about the entire community. A number of sites contain a complex of buildings and the spaces around and between buildings may have a high yield of artifacts because of the intensive, functional uses made of these areas. Building complexes have consisted of buildings related to a specialized use or trade and residential buildings with supportive outbuildings, including small scale agricultural structures. Unfortunately, most of the sites have been disturbed through repeated plowing or through grade changes for the construction of parking lots or roads. However, even in these cases, artifacts may survive, as most residential buildings had basements of brick or board construction. Almost all of the identified archeological sites are vacant and few had more than one Colony building constructed on any specific site.

Sources which will be helpful in providing more detailed information on the location of Colony period sites are:

- o Photographic overviews of Aurora, especially the circa 1889 panoramic view;
- o 1922 Sanborn Map;
- o State Highway Plans for the Pacific Highway, Project Number E-7A, December 1932, and Mill Creek Bridge, Project Number NRS 231, January 1934.

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## GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Latitude and Longitude Coordinates  
Defining a Rectangle Locating the Property

LATITUDE			LONGITUDE		
Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
45	14	16	122	45	47
43	14	16	122	45	04
45	13	38	122	45	04
43	13	38	122	45	47

Latitude and Longitude Coordinates  
Defining the Center Point of a Property  
of Less Than Ten Acres

LATITUDE			LONGITUDE		
Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
0			0		

Approximate Acreage of Nominated Property: ca. 150 acres

States and Counties for Properties Overlapping State or County

CODE	COUNTY	CODE

Prepared by

Paul B. Hartwig, Assistant Park Historian  
Based on material prepared by Dale Morrow, temporary assistant

Oregon State Highway Division  
November 1973

Address

State Highway Building  
Salem  
Oregon 97310  
41

State Liaison Officer Certification

I, the undersigned State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-663), hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been selected according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended significance of this nomination is:

National ☐ State ☒ Local ☐

Director of Transportation

11/10/73

National Register Verification

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 4/16/74

ATTEST: George F. Emery  
Keeper of The National Register

Date April 10, 1974

SW 10/518600  
5008005  
0609005  
NW 10/518590  
5009000

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

HR NE 10/519520  
5009200  
0609200  
SE 10/519530  
5005000

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 1

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 2

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National Park Service

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Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 3

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"Map of Aurora Colony, Aurora, Marion Co., Oregon. Period about 1860-1870:. Redrawn by Clark M. Will from sketch made by George Wolfer, December 1924.

Mill Creek Bridge, Beaverton-Aurora Highway, Marion County.  
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Photographs: Historic photographs courtesy of the Ox Barn Museum; cover photograph and Resource #30, the Oregon Historical Society; other photographs, Judith Rees.

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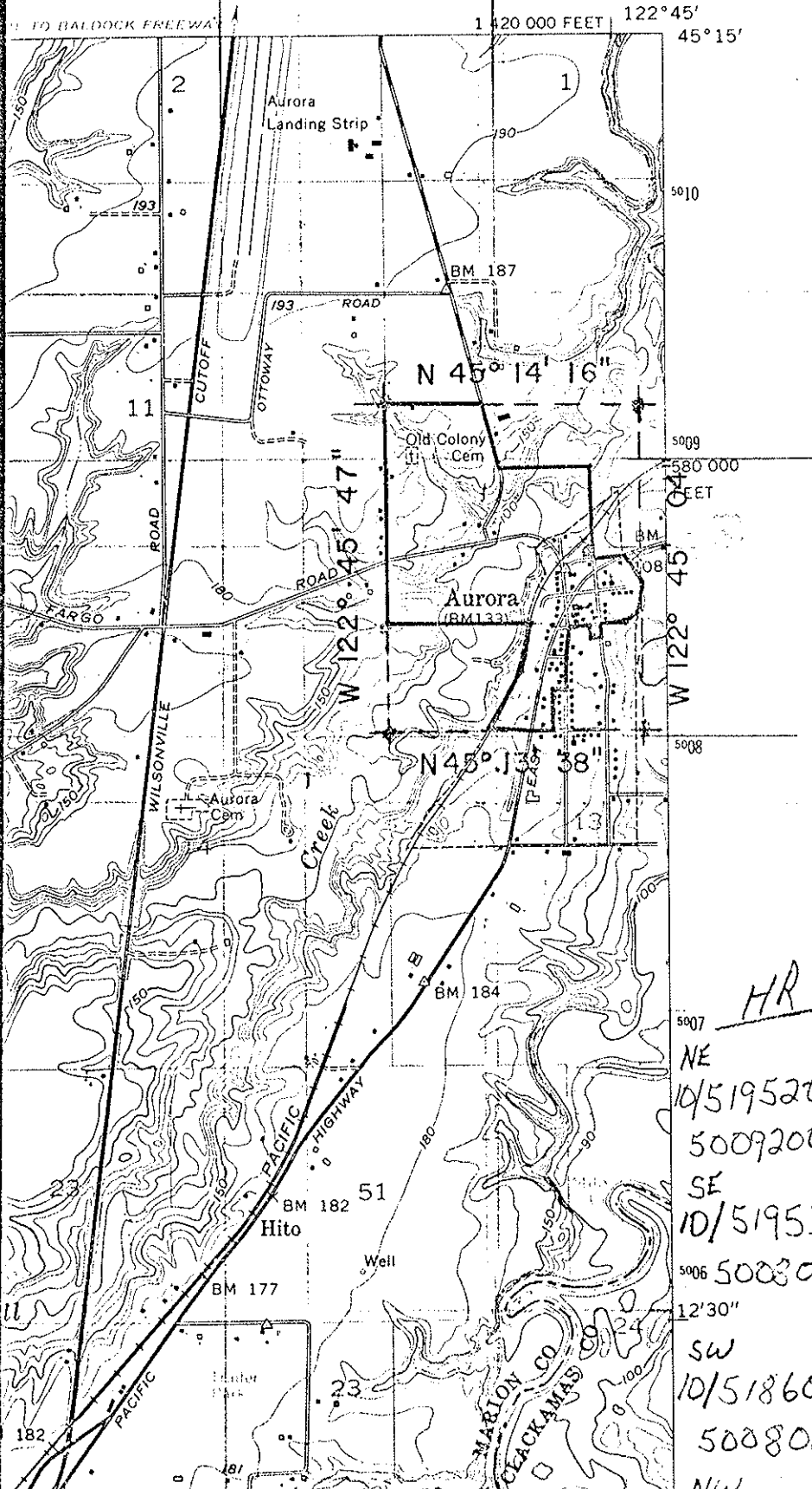
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Will, Clark M. Clark Moor Wier Will, Papers. Coll 62, Sc. 62. Seven boxes. Newspaper clippings scrapbook. Special Collections, University of Oregon Library.

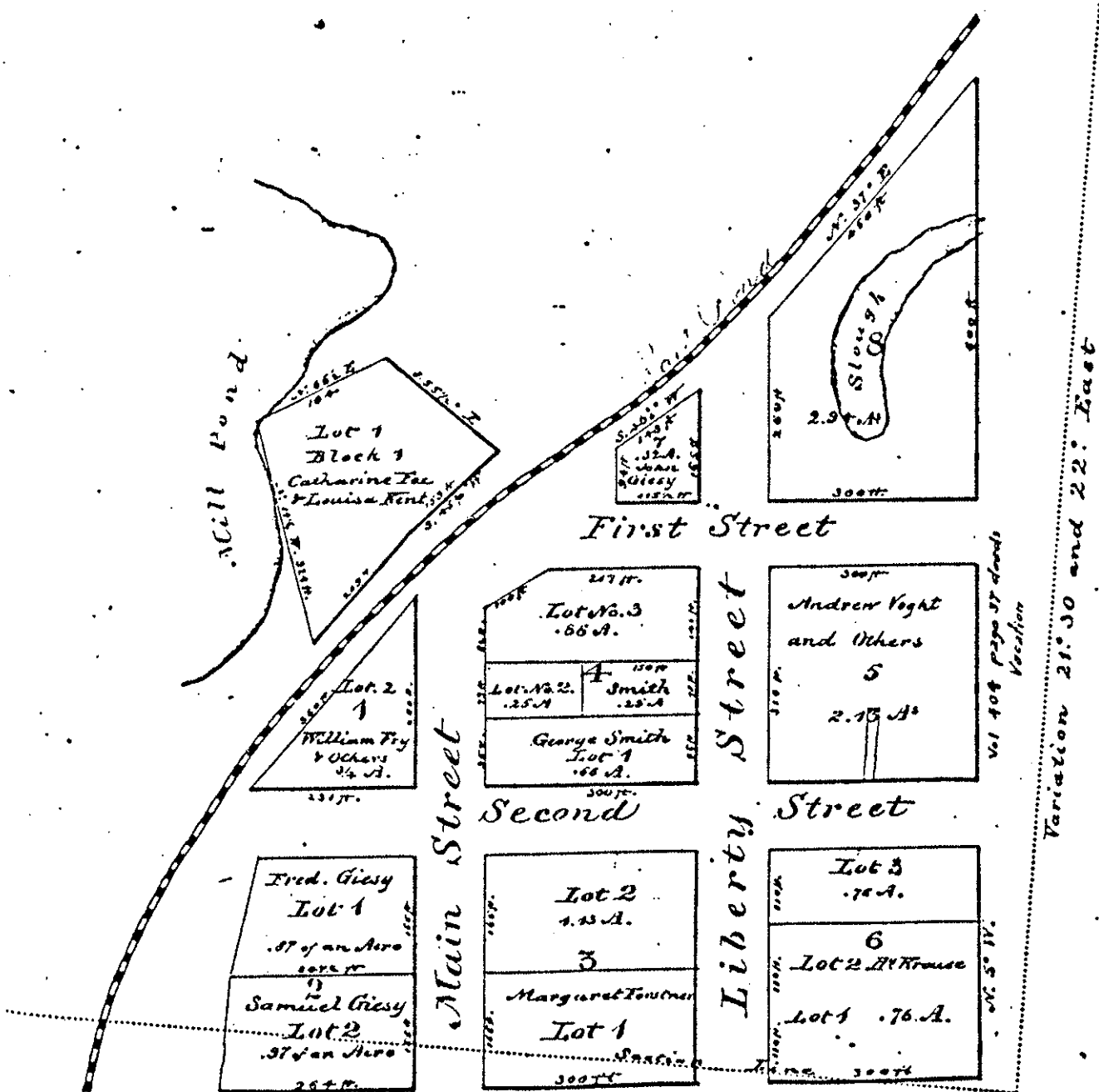
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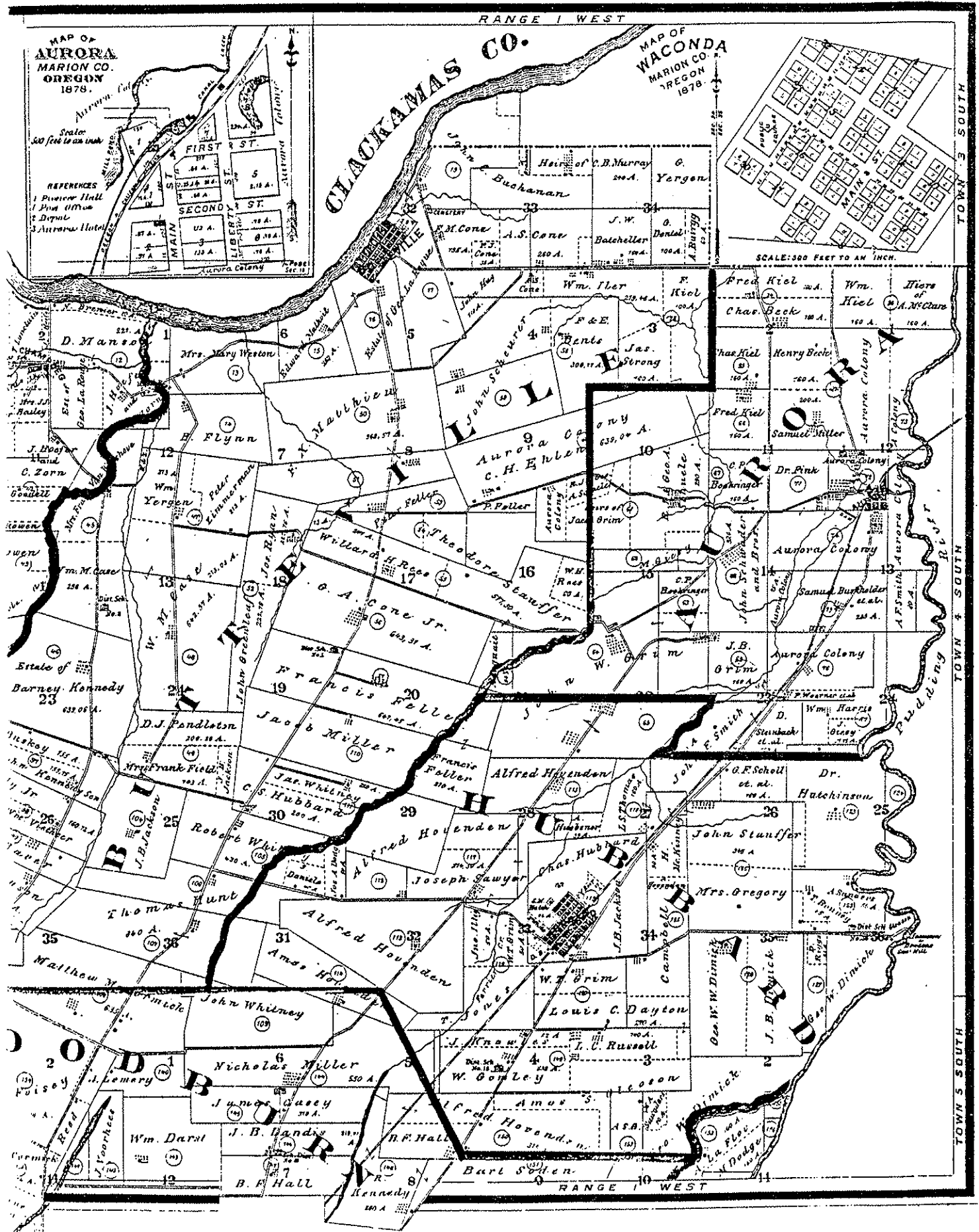


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# Map of Aurora



(Original) On a scale of 100 ft. to 1 inch.







DATA FROM THE AURORA COLONY HISTORIC DISTRICT

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PROPOSED BOUNDARY  
AURORA COLONY HISTORIC DISTRICT

Primary Features

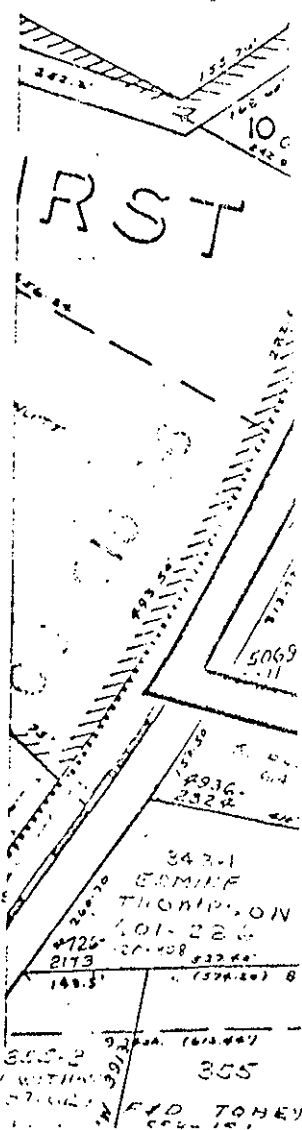
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2. Giesy (Emma Wagner) House, or "Kraus House"
3. Steinbach Log Cabin
4. Keil Cemetery
5. Snyder (Andrew) House
6. Snyder House
7. Fry (William) House
8. Smith (Stephen) House
9. Small Board and Batten House
10. Octagonal Building
11. Colony Store and Hall (Aurora Food Market)
12. Keil (Frederick) House, synonymous with Elias Keil House
13. Giesy (John) House
14. Miller (Jacob) House
15. Miller House
16. Colony Hotel Site
17. Colony Dam and Mill Pond Site
18. "California" Store Front
19. Sites of Colony Spinning, Lumber and Grist Mills
20. Site of Wilhelm Keil's Gros Haus
21. Site of Aurora Colony Church

269

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(C.M. & E.L. 2111)  
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ROAD

MARKET

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1739-1897

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21

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- Proposed Historic District Boundary

SECTION 13 & 14

SECTION 12 & 13

SEE 12-4-1W

SECOND

SOUTHERN

# THIRD

# AURORA

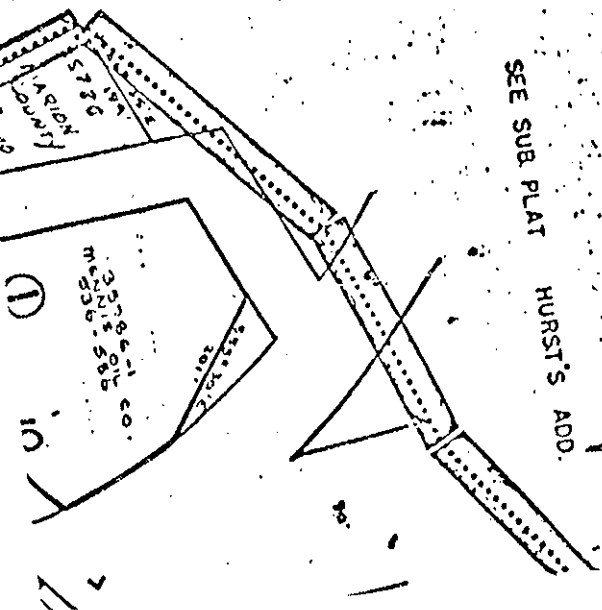
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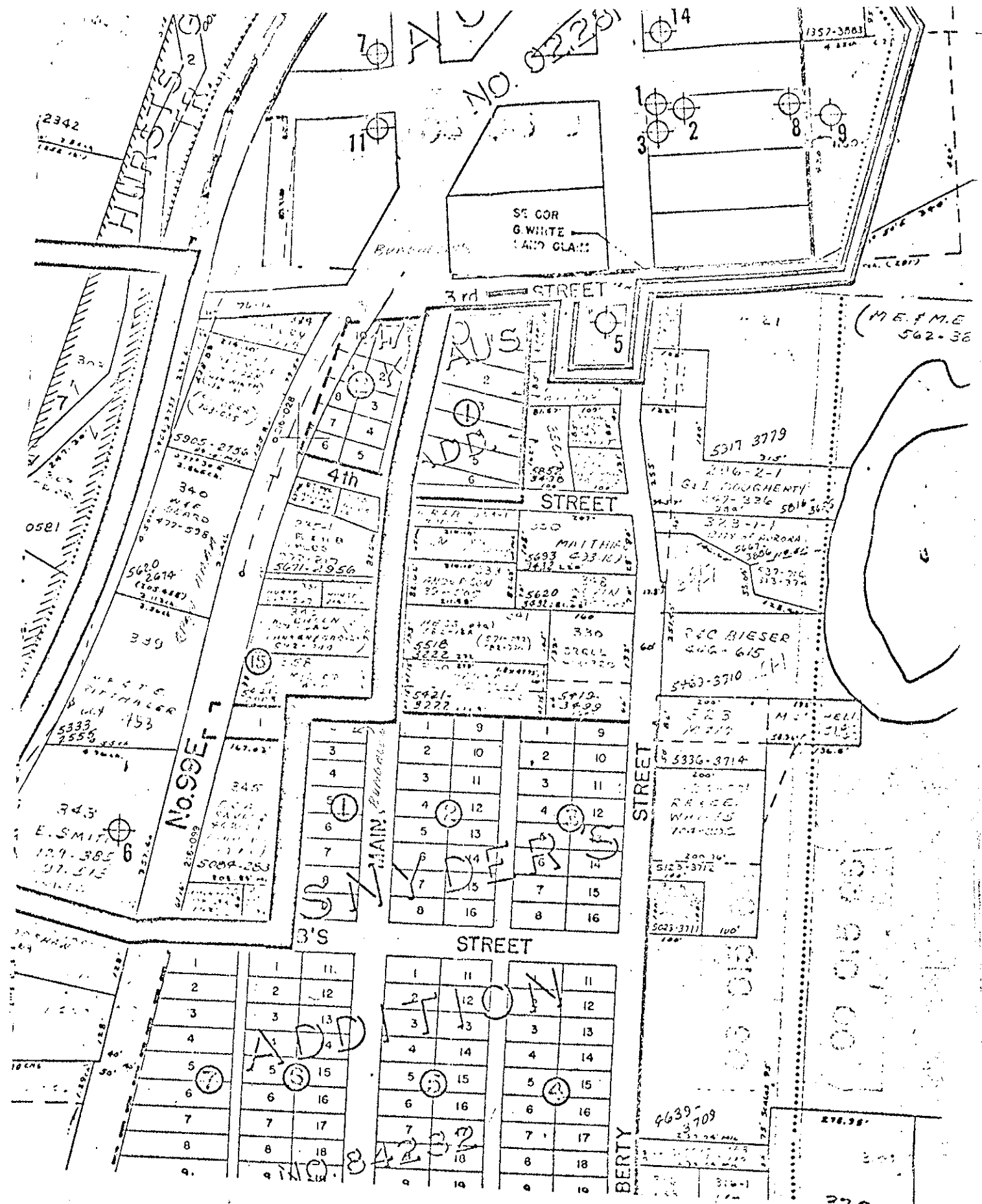
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SEE SUB PLAT HURST'S ADD.

AURORA DETAIL MAP  
SIGNIFICANT FEATURES IN PROPOSED DISTRICT

1. Ox Barn
2. Giesy (Emma Wagner) House-"Kraus House"
3. Steinhach Log Cabin





MAP 12 4 1W

9. Small Board and Batten House

STREET

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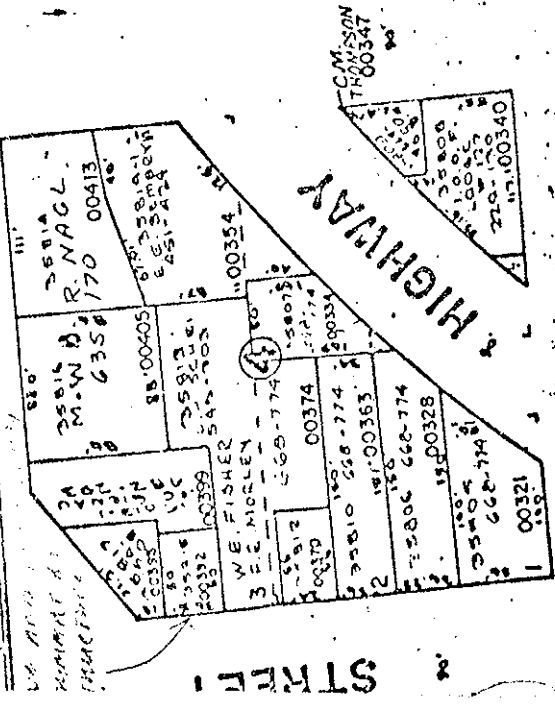
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SEE MAP 12 4 1W

MAP 12 4 1W

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MAP 13 4 IW

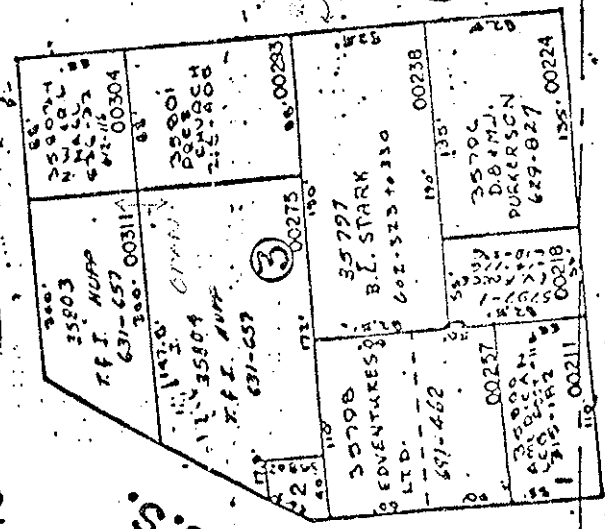


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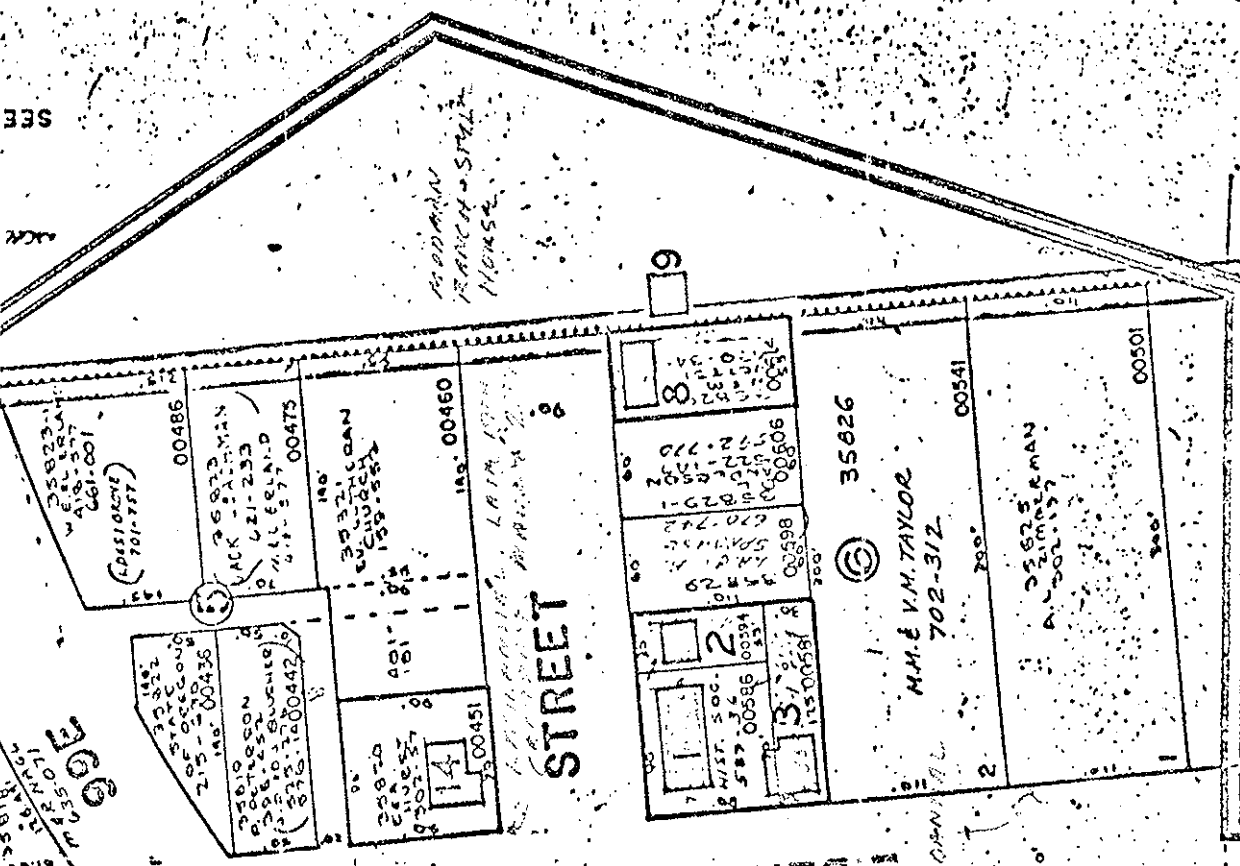
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STREET

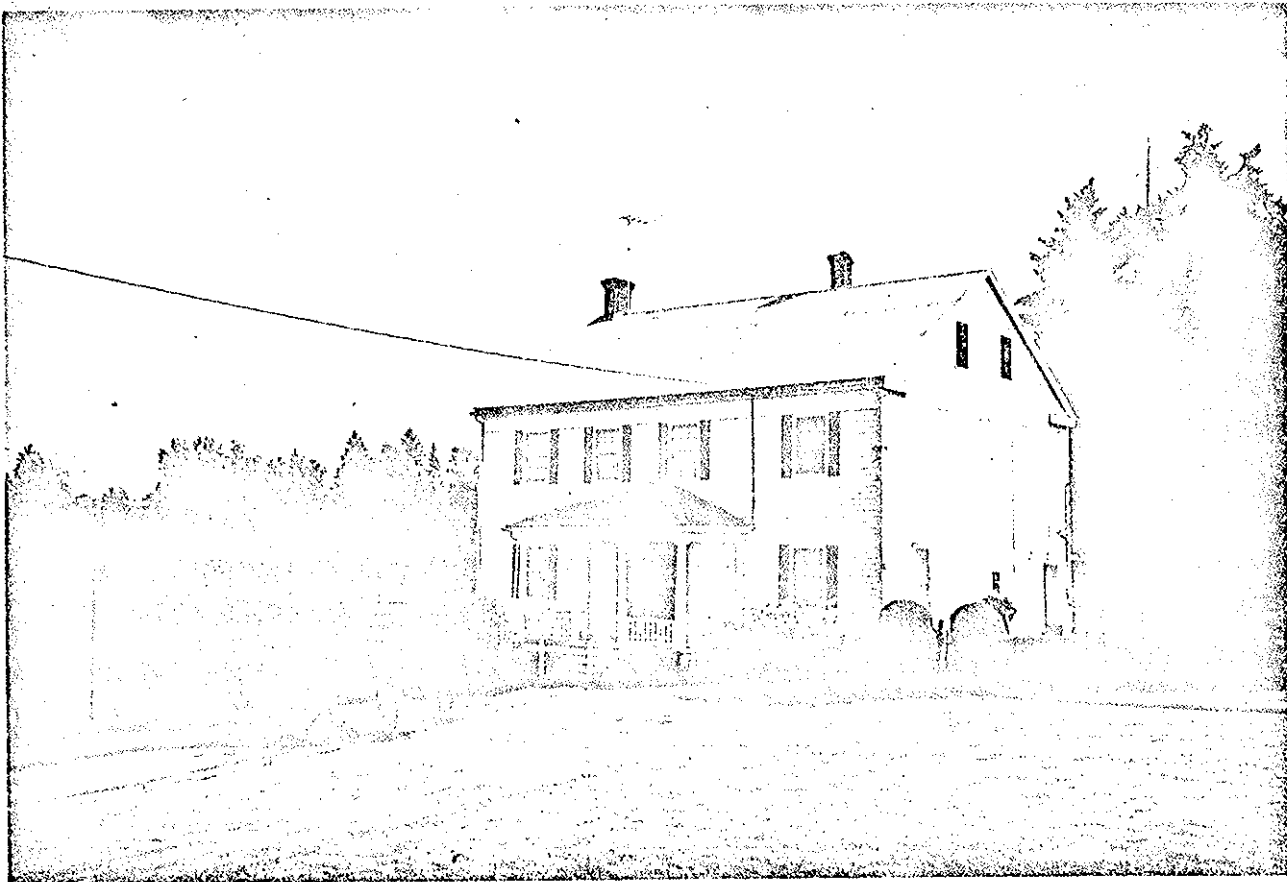
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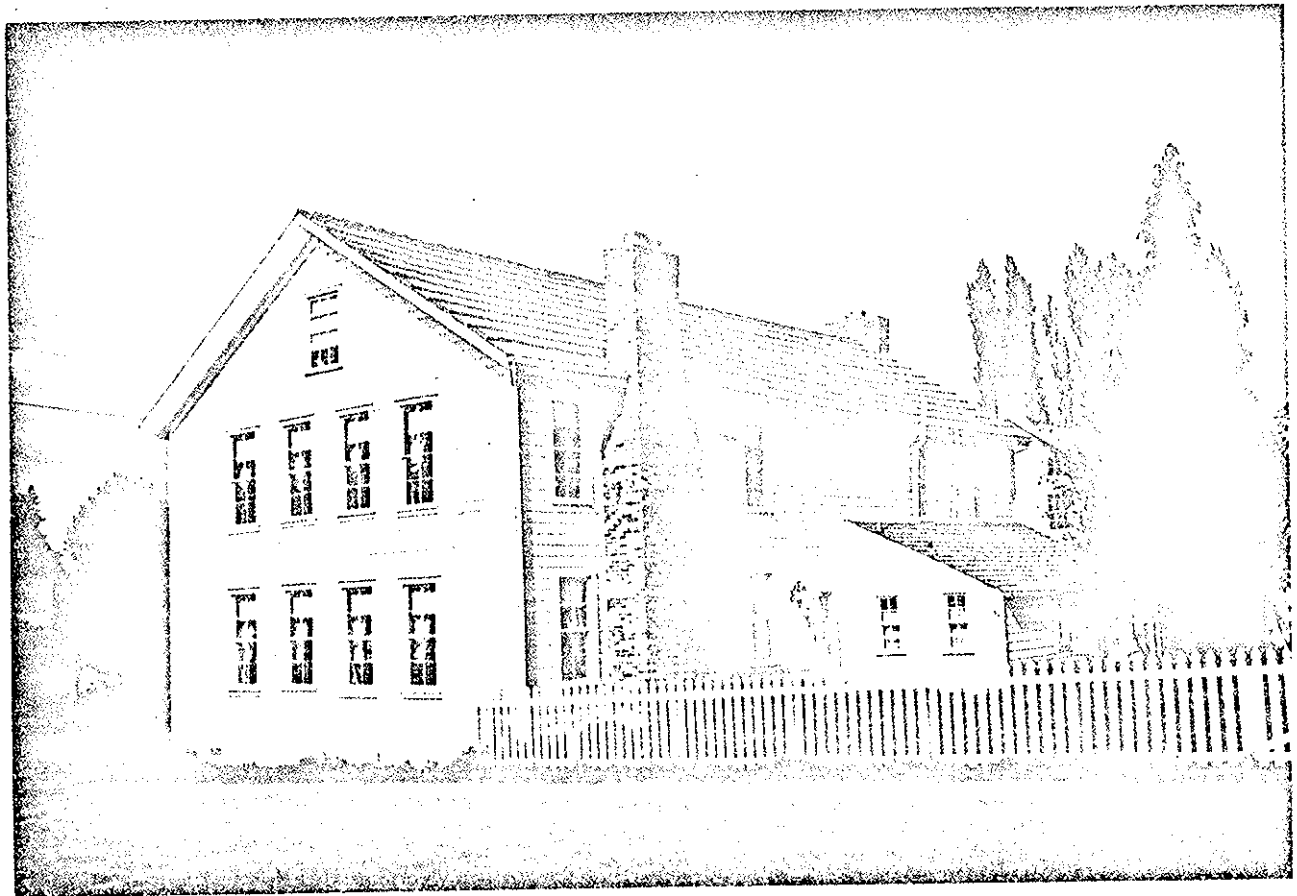
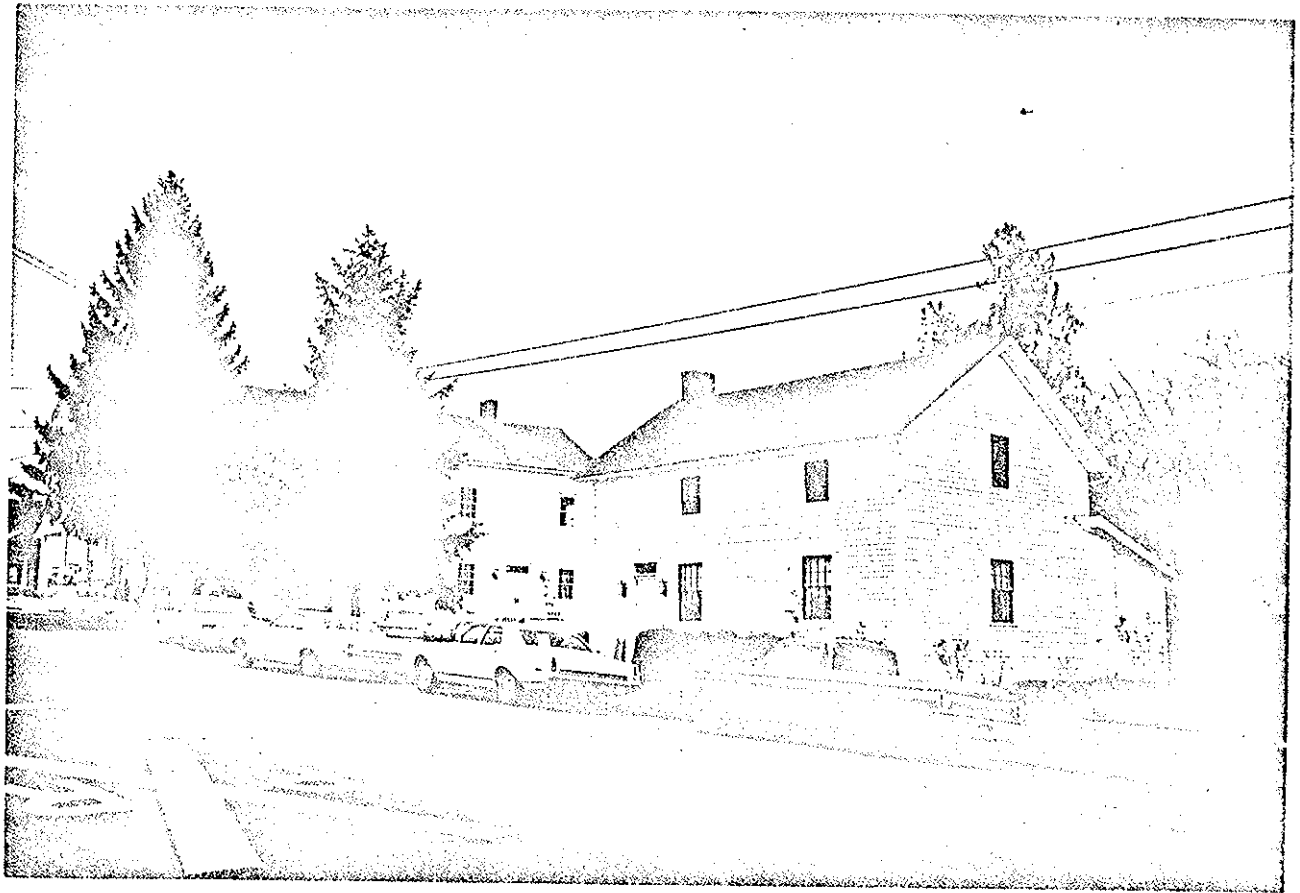


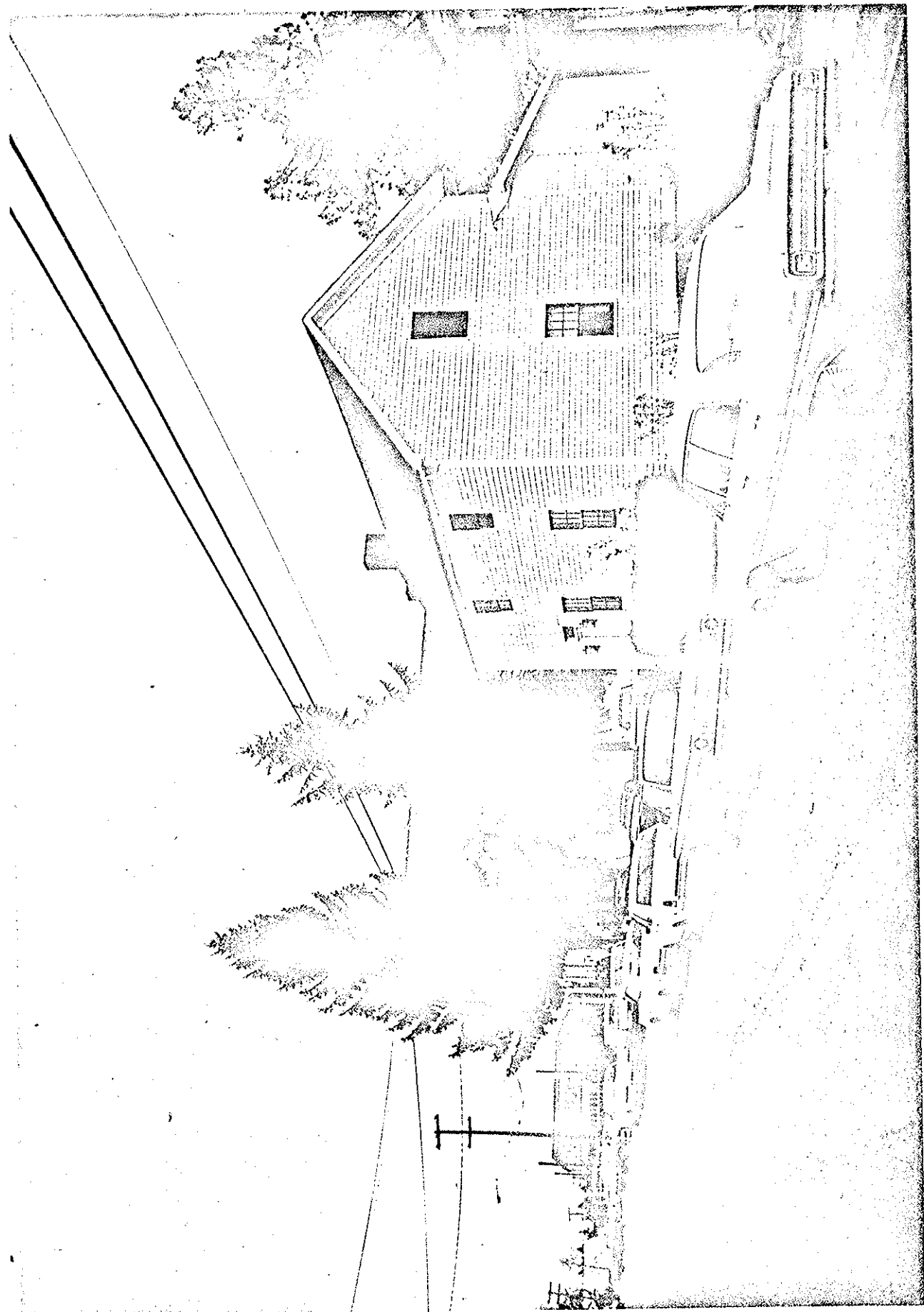
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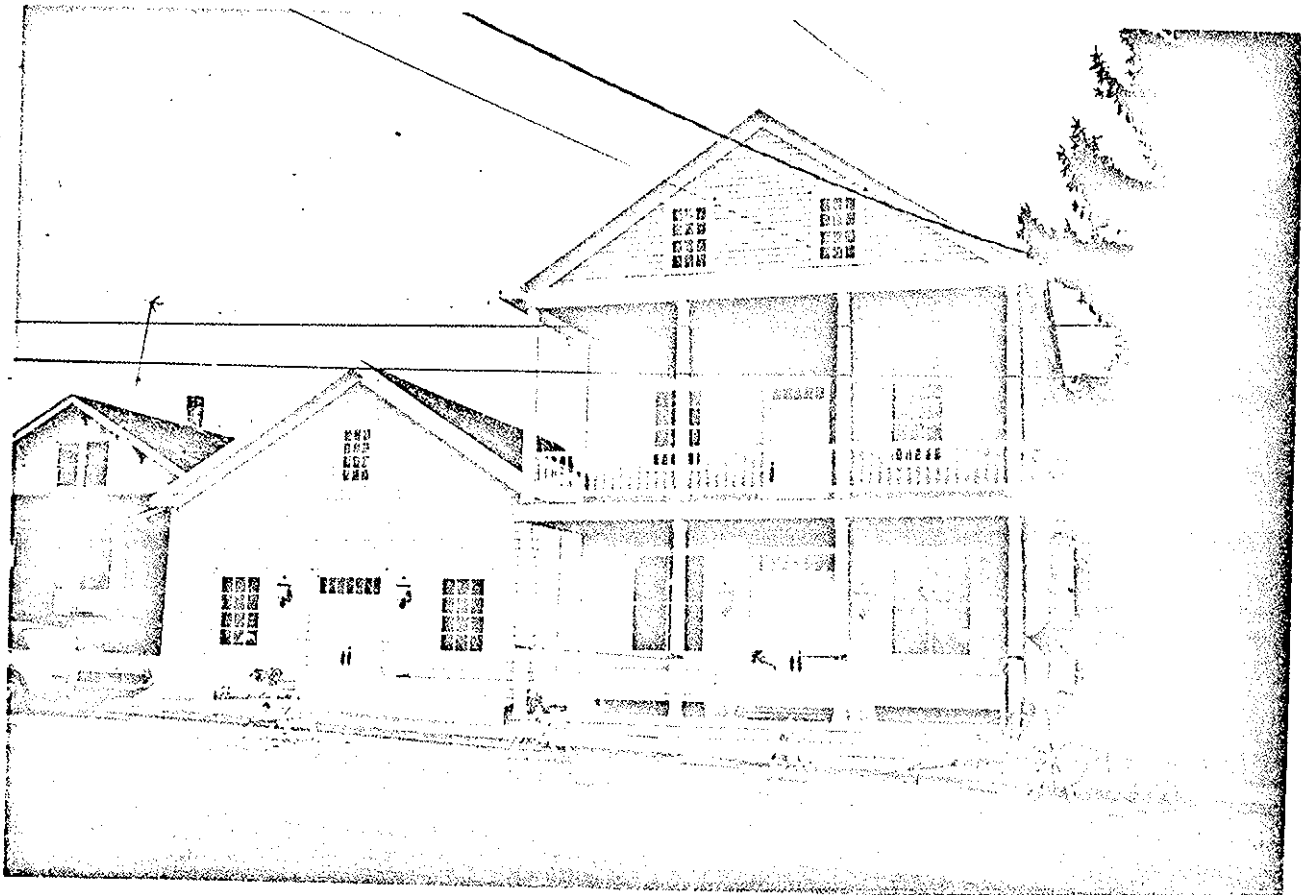
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PLAT NO. 022  
AURORA

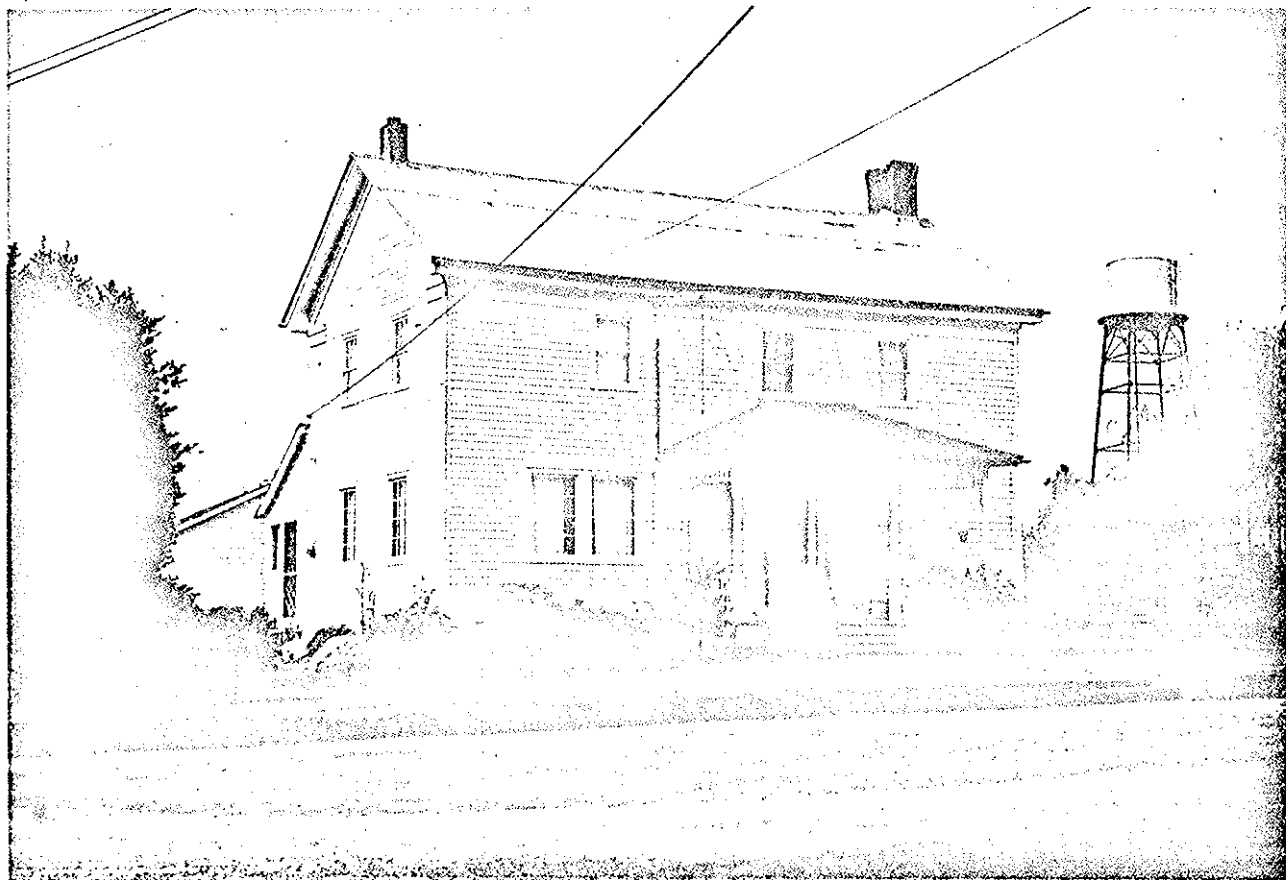
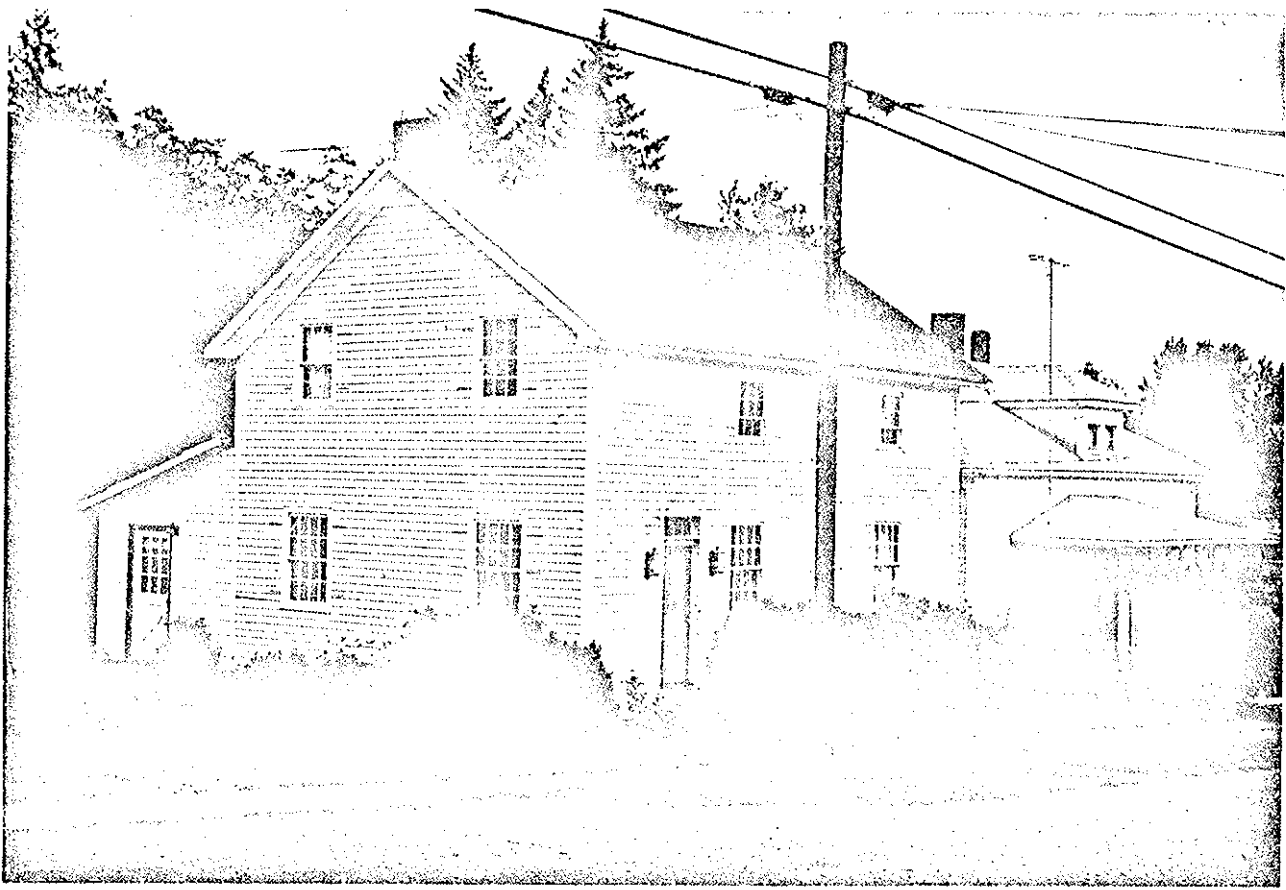


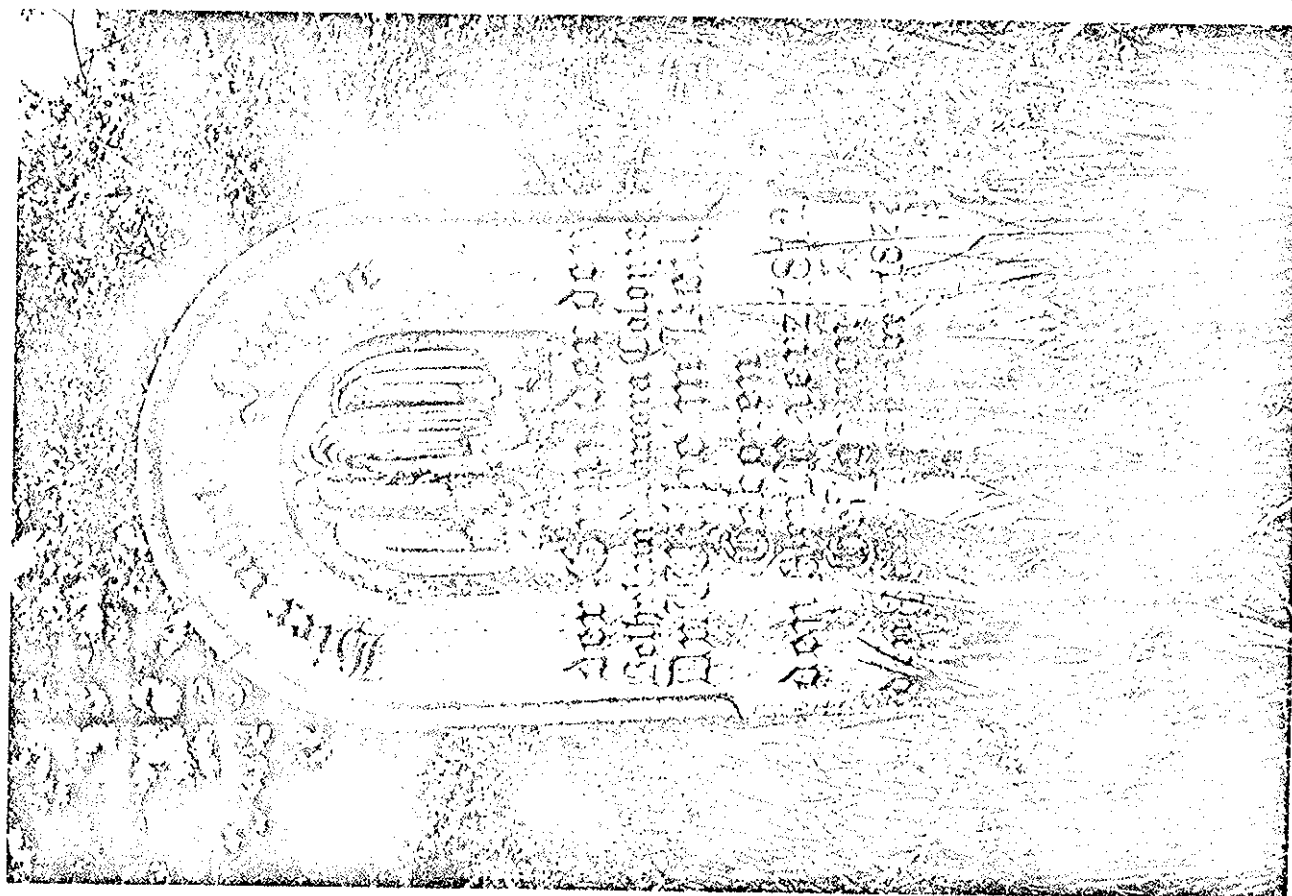
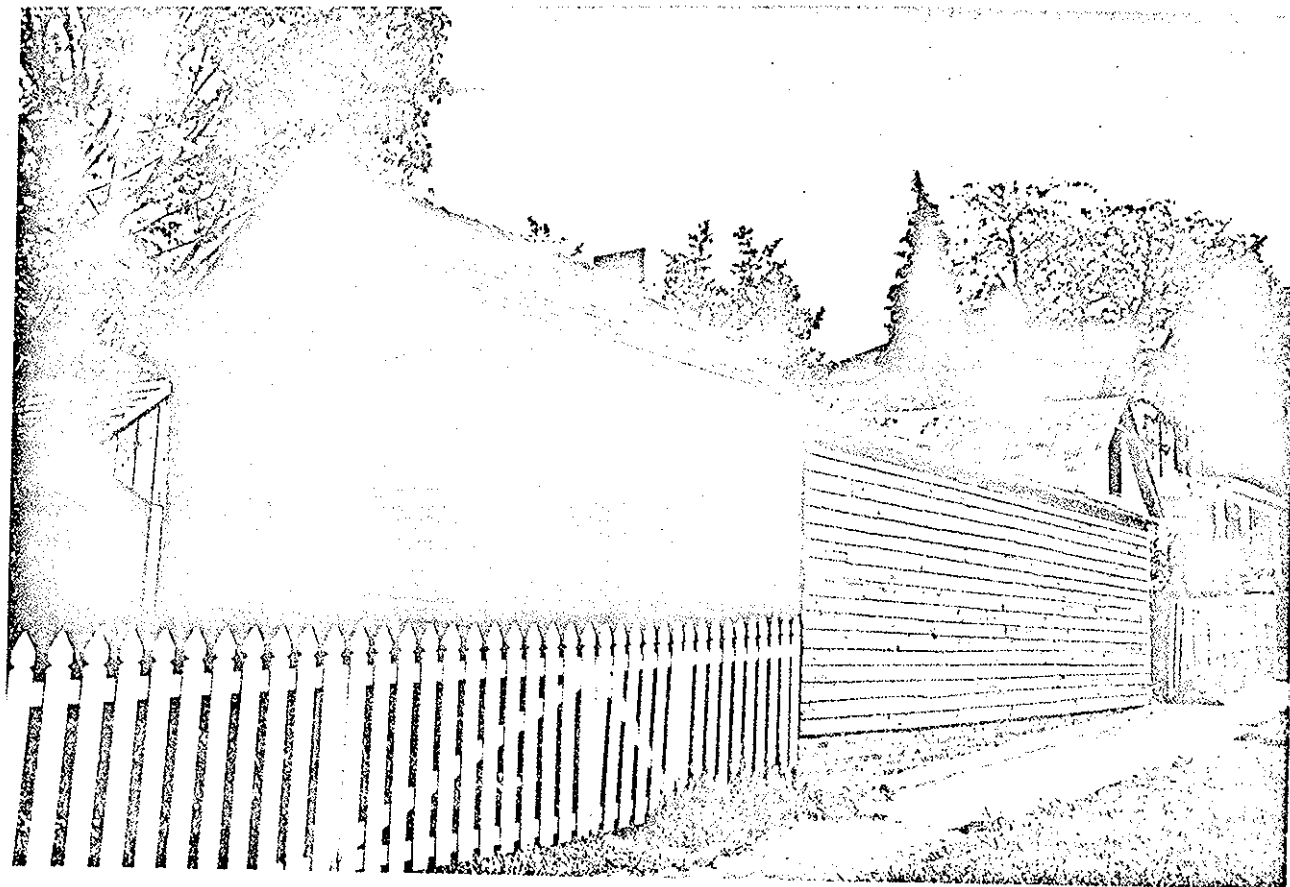








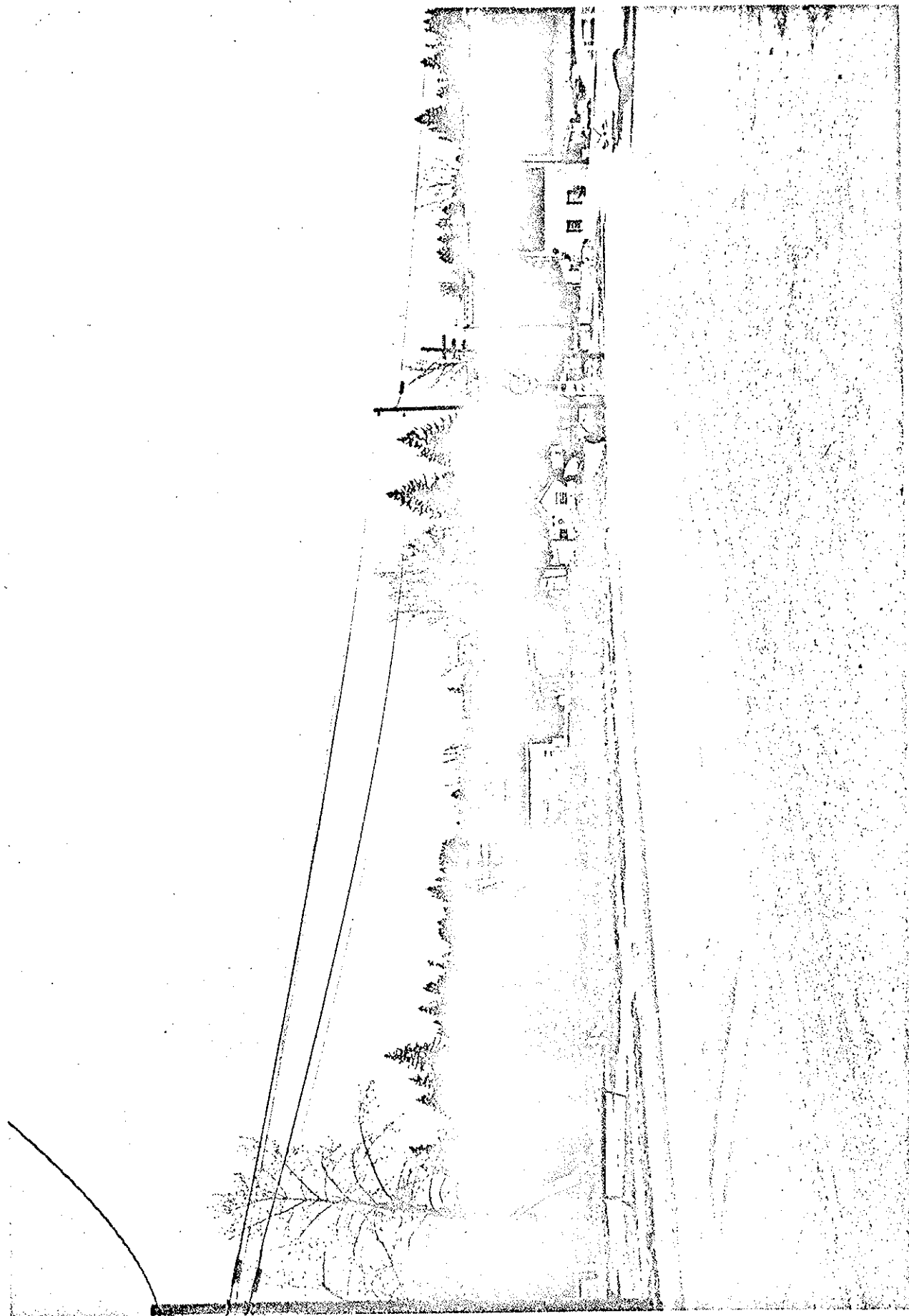


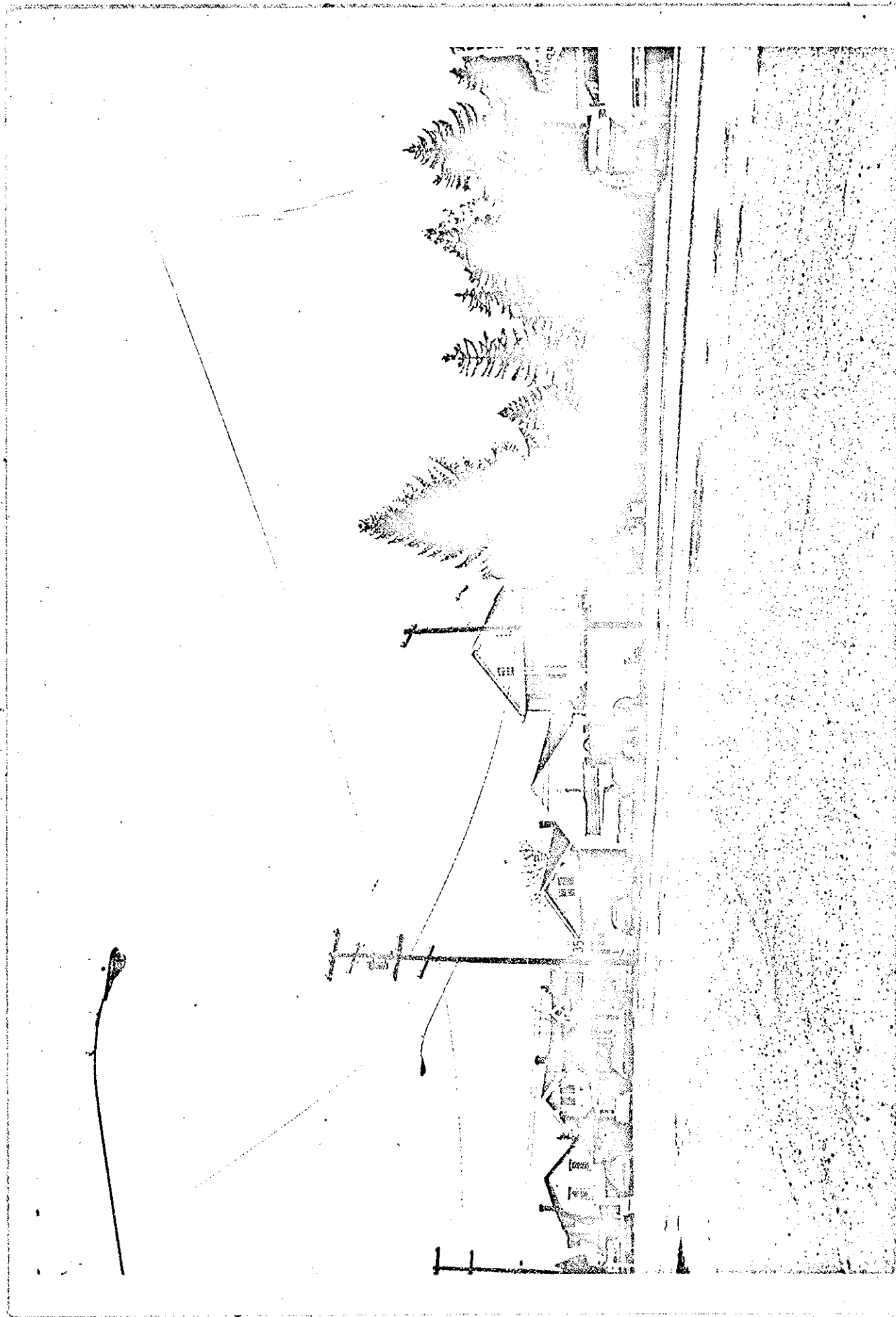


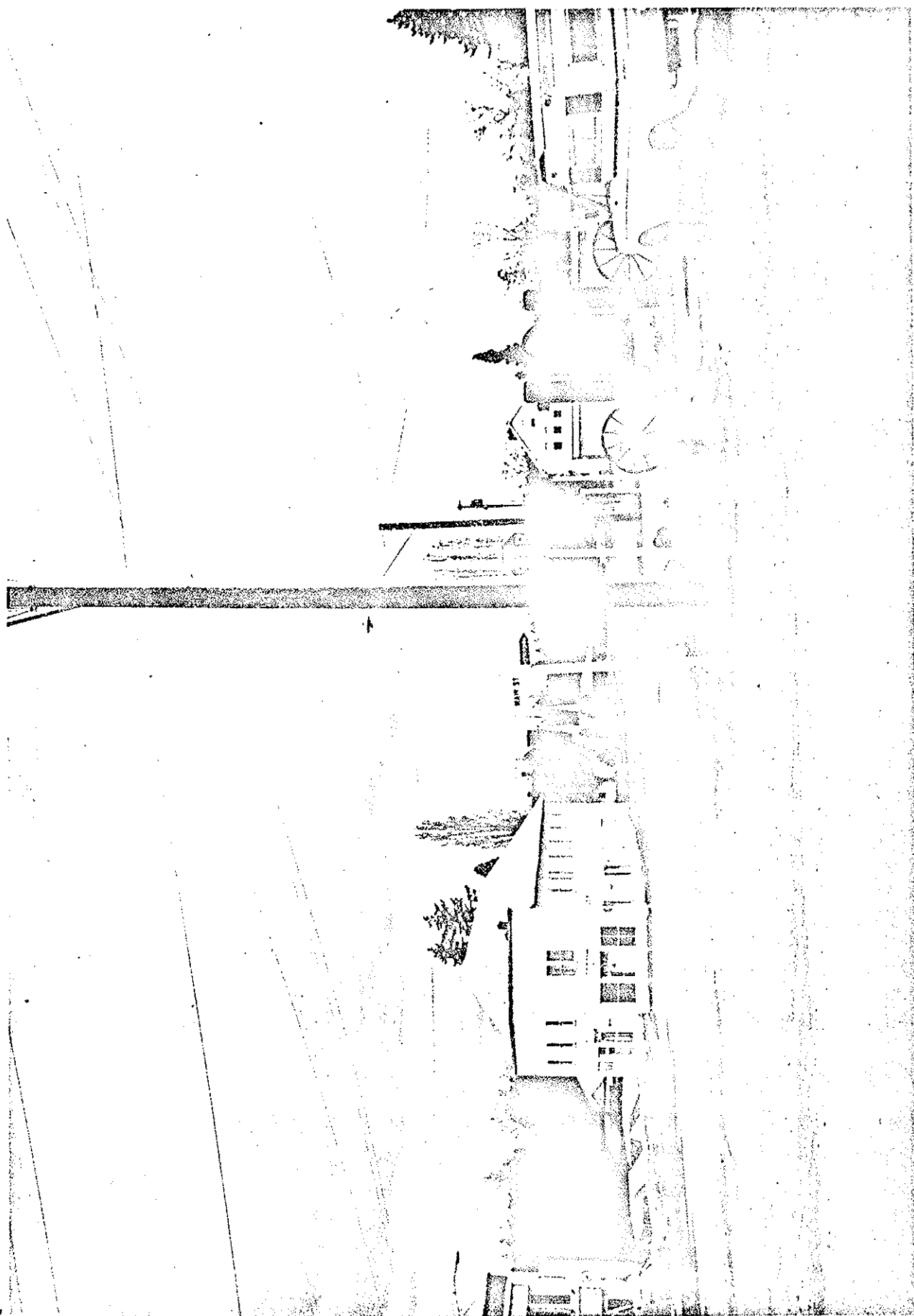


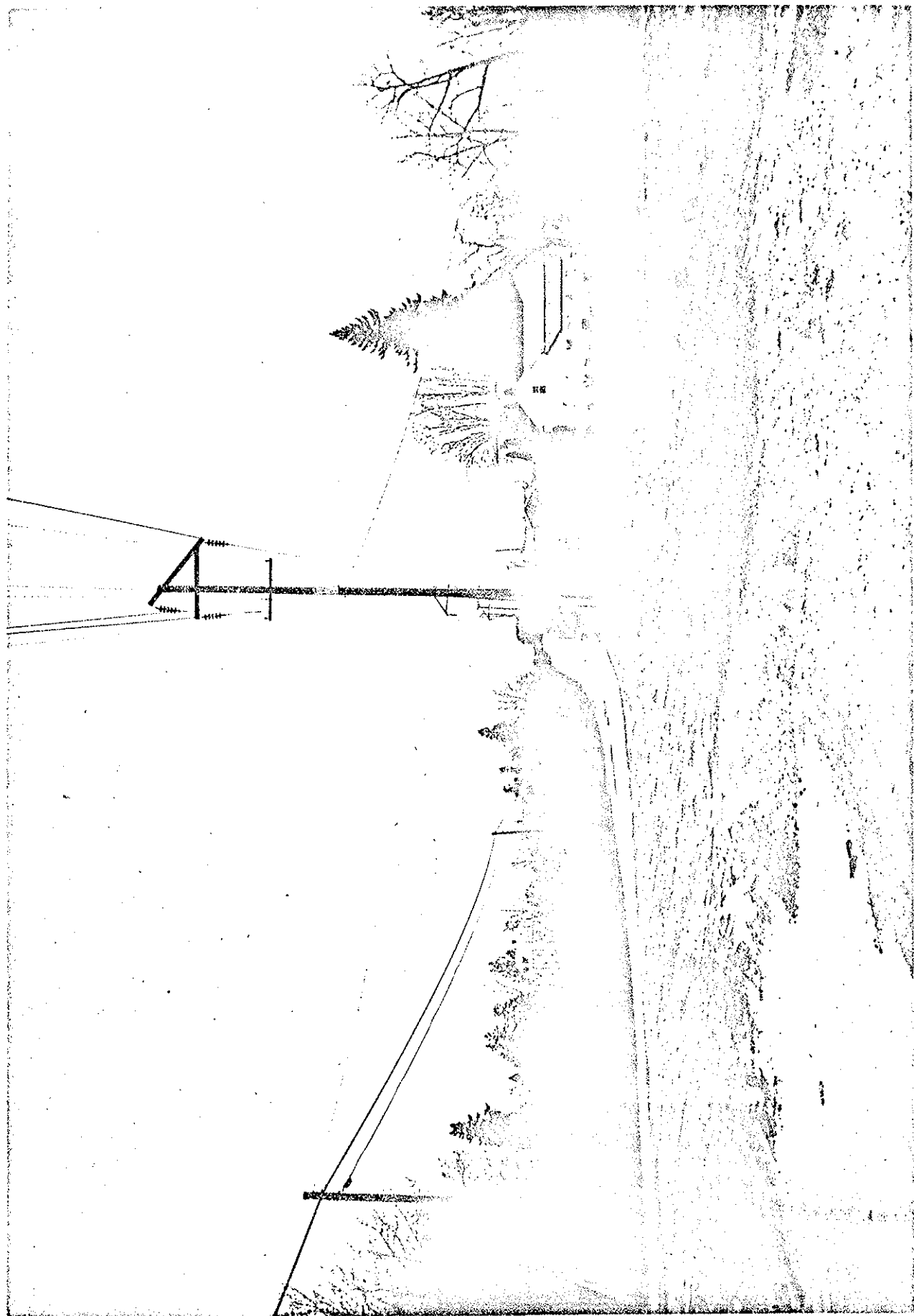












# AURORA COLONY HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY

