

MIMA.048 c.1

401530

HISTORIC STRUCTURES REPORT: PART I,  
EBENEZER FISKE HOUSE, BUILDING #2

406/131965

**APPROVAL SHEET**

RECOMMENDED *Clavin W. Small* DATE *8/14/64*  
Superintendent

RECOMMENDED *Eugene K. DeSlets* DATE *8/31/64*  
*acting* Chief, EODC

RECOMMENDED *Allen T. Edmunds* DATE *9/23/64*  
*acting* Regional Director

APPROVED *J. E. H. Jensen* DATE *10/27/64*  
Director

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RESOURCES, NARO

HISTORIC STRUCTURES REPORT

PART I

HISTORICAL DATA SECTION

EBENEZER FISKE HOUSE

BUILDING #2

Prepared by: Robert D. Ronsheim  
Historian

Date: July, 1964

## Historical Data Section

### EBENEZER FISKE HOUSE, Historic Structures Report, Part I, Historical Data Section.

The certainties for houses on the Fiske Farm in Lexington are that there was a house in 1710 which was gone by 1721; that there was another house by 1729; that a house which stood in 1775 lasted through 1799 at least; that an old house was taken down before the 1852 assessment and that a new house was built. Although few of the tax records since that year have been checked, it is certain that that house stood until recently. It is also certain that the exposed cellar hole was the site for the last house. No other cellar hole is known. It has been assumed that this is the site of the 1775 house. This has been local tradition. In fact, tradition said that what we know to be an 1852 house was the 1775 house. The uncertainty concerns the relation of the existing cellar hole to the 1775 house. Was all of the foundation used or was only a part of it used for the early house, and the rest constructed for the 1852 house?

In the absence of measurements for the 1775 house, indirect methods must be used to throw light on this question. The inventory of Benjamin Fiske's estate made in 1786 mentioned an east lower room, a bedroom in the southeast part of the house, an east chamber and a kitchen chamber. His widow was given the easterly end of the mansion house with half of the cellar at the southerly corner, and the easterly division of the cellar adjoining to it. The easterly end of the house was to extend to the middle of the chimney except the chamber over the bedroom at

the southern corner of the house and kitchen.

This information is hard to interpret. The house is not on a north-south axis, and we do not know that all the rooms of the house have been mentioned. It does not seem possible, however, to fit all these rooms and these directions into a house with but two rooms on a floor. Thus, it appears that the major portion of the foundation was used in 1775. This conclusion would also make it possible to consider the extreme northwest portion of the foundation to be for the kitchen built between 1786 and 1799.

Other facts point to the same conclusion. Ebenezer Fiske was a relatively well-to-do man for Lexington, being in the top 10% of the real estate assessment of 1771. He was also an innholder from at least 1761 through 1765. And when the value of the house in question is compared with known houses of about the same age - i.e. built about the middle of the 18th century, which are too large for the small portion of the foundation they appear to be comparable.

At the very least the probability is that the main portion of the foundation which runs about northeast to southwest, and the first room in back of it, were in use in 1775. It should all be stabilized in such a manner that it can be exhibited as an interpretive location.

ILLUSTRATION NO. 1

Ebenezer Fiske Foundation

The distant wall was the front wall of the house. The collapsed area is visible to the left of the framing which is against the wall. The walls in the foreground are the foundation for what is thought to be the kitchen or kitchens of the house.



HISTORIC STRUCTURES REPORT

PART I

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA SECTION

EBENEZER FISKE HOUSE

BUILDING #2

Prepared by: (SGD.) EDWIN W. SMALE  
Superintendent

Date: July, 1964

Administrative Data

All that remains of the Ebenezer Fiske House, Building #2, are the cellar hole and the stone foundation walls of dry wall construction. It is proposed that these be properly drained, stabilized and protected preparatory to their exhibition to the public as part of the historic scene. When they are so exhibited, they will require only minimum maintenance by the Park personnel, which will be provided out of the regular budget.

Proposed Construction Activity is as Follows: To keep the cellar hole free of water and prevent the undermining of the foundation walls, it is proposed to install a drain near the southeast wall of the cellar which will carry the water under the wall and about 80° southeast to feed into a culvert. Earth fill will raise the floor to an earlier level. It will then be packed and sloped slightly to ensure proper drainage.

To stabilize the stone foundation walls, mortar will be inserted into the wall to fill all the cavities and any excess will be removed, so that none shows on the surface and the appearance of dry wall construction is maintained. In the process it will be necessary to remove remaining pieces of later mortar, which will not be replaced. Some modern pipes will also be removed from the wall. Where any of the wall has collapsed, it will be rebuilt to present the same appearance as the rest of the foundation walls.

For the protection of the public, a barrier will be erected around, and at a slight distance from, the perimeter of the cellar hole.

It is estimated that the proposed construction activity will cost \$4,000.

The proposed work will be financed from an approved PCP and authorized funds.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PROJECT CONSTRUCTION PROPOSAL

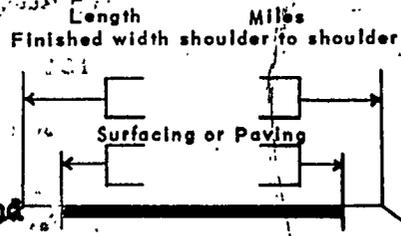
1. Statement of requirements, proposed work and construction data, justification, etc. (Use additional sheets as necessary.)

**Requirements:** Stabilization of the cellar and foundations of the Ebenezer Fiske House.

**Proposed Work:** Historical, architectural, and archeological research necessary for the preparation of the Historic Structure Reports, Parts I and II, and the preparation of the appropriate sections of these reports.

Recording of existing conditions. Based on the data gathered from the above, rehabilitate the cellar and foundation walls to preserve these remaining sections of this 1775 house.

**Justification:** The house site is close to the "Battle Road" and was part of the scene in 1775. The house played a role in the battle events around Fiske Hill. The existing cellar remains, properly protected, can serve as an interpretive device for the story at this locality within the Park.



2. Land Status (if Govt.-owned, what agency), Water Rights, Research, Etc.

Government-owned, National Park Service.

Data Prepared by (Name, Title & Date)

Russell V. Keune  
Architect 5-1-63  
Robert D. Housheim  
Historian 5-1-63

4. Cross-reference PCP's to this Project: N-2

5. Construction by:  
Day Labor  Contract   
Work supervised by:  
Park  Reg.  Design Office

6. CLASS ESTIMATE

Construction.....	\$ 9,700 *
Plans, Surveys, & Supervision.....	1,400
Contingencies.....	600
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>	<b>11,700</b>
Research Exhibits, Audio-Visual Installations, etc.....	2,100 **
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 13,800</b>

7. DISTRIBUTION OF COPIES

No	To

8. Recommended by Park Office (Signature, title, date)

Edwin W. Small, Superintendent, Signed Edwin W. Small 5-3-63

9. Approved by Regional Office (Signature, title, date)

Signed Ronald F. Lee 6-13-63

10. Reviewed by D&C Field Office (Signature, Title, Date)

(Signed)

Vincent N. Mauro, Actg. Proj. Control Officer, EODC 7-26-63

11. Location within Area or Termini

Lexington, Unit "A"

12. Master Plan No.

13. Bldg. or Rt. # and Sec.

14. Region 15. Park

east Minute Man National Historical Park Project

Lex-1

Stabilization of the Cellar and Foundation of the Ebenezer Fiske House. Middlesex (County) Massachusetts (State)

17. PCP Index No.

18. P. S. & S. by BPR  NPS

- CLASS  (A) - Estimate based on working drawings  
 CLASS  (B) - Estimate based on preliminary plans  
 CLASS  (C) - Estimate based on similar facilities in other parks

BBL  
 B-3-MMA  
 B-4-MMA

**ESTIMATE**

Item	Quantity	Cost
<b>Stabilization Work:</b>		<b>\$ 9,700 *</b>
<b>Research:</b>		
Historical Research	700	
Architectural Research	800	
Archeological Research	600	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,100</b>	
<b>NOTES</b>		
* This figure does not include reconstruction of the house.		
** Exhibits and audio-visual installations cannot be estimated until a determination is made for the final use of the structure.		
** A portion of this figure in the amount of \$650 was for architectural research already performed under Work Order No. B-3-MMA, 1962 fiscal year programmed funds, and \$150 for architectural research under Work Order No. B-4-MMA, 1963 fiscal year programmed funds.		
<b>Estimate Totals</b>		
Construction.....		<b>\$ 9,700 *</b>
Plans, Surveys, and Supervision.....		<b>\$ 1,400</b>
Contingencies.....		<b>\$ 600</b>
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>		<b>\$ 11,700</b>
Exhibits, Aud.-Vis. Installations, Etc.....		<b>\$ 2,100 **</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>		<b>\$ 13,800</b>

**HISTORIC STRUCTURES REPORT**

**PART I**

**ON**

**BUILDING NUMBER LEX-1**

**THE EBENEZER FISKE HOUSE**

**Massachusetts Avenue**

**Lexington 73, Massachusetts**

**Minute Man National Historical Park Project**

**Architectural Data Section**

**Prepared by**

**Russell V. Keene**

**Architect**

**March, 1963**

**United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service  
Eastern Office, Design and Construction**

HISTORIC STRUCTURES REPORT

PART I

ON

BUILDING NUMBER LEX-1

THE BREWSTER FISKE HOUSE

Minute Man National Historical Park Project

A P P R O V A L   S H E E T

RECOMMENDED

\_\_\_\_\_  
Superintendent Date \_\_\_\_\_

*Robert G. Hall*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Robert G. Hall Date 3-4-68  
Chief, NODC

\_\_\_\_\_  
Regional Director, Northeast Region Date \_\_\_\_\_

APPROVED

\_\_\_\_\_  
Director Date \_\_\_\_\_

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## I. FOREWORD

The eighteenth century structure known as the Ebenezer Fiske House no longer stands. In a conversation with Mr. Martin Bashian of Lexington, Massachusetts, October 1962, Mr. Bashian informed us that he dismantled the house in 1955-56.

The National Park Service received title to this property on July 31, 1961. Preliminary site clearing was done during the summer of 1962 and some loose architectural artifacts found at the site were removed.

The park historian, Mr. Ronsheim gathered some material relating to this house while doing research on Building Number Lex-3 The Jacob Whittmore House.

Documented architectural information referring to the Fiske House is not abundant.

Russell V. Keane  
Architect  
March 1963

## II. GENERAL

The Fiske House was built prior to 1775; a positive date of construction has not been determined. In 1775, this house comprised a part of the farm of Ebenezer Fiske, located in the southwestern part of Lexington. It played a notable role in the events of April 19, 1775, when entered by British stragglers on their retreat towards Lexington and pillaged.<sup>1</sup>

The house also stood as a witness to the memorable encounter at the Fiske Well, between James Hayward of Acton and a British soldier in which the soldier was killed and Hayward mortally wounded.<sup>2</sup> This incident is commemorated by a stone tablet on ground close to the house site which is owned and maintained by the Lexington Historical Society. The portion of the Fiske Farm that survives will be the most easterly property within Unit A of the projected park.

The only visible remains of the former farm are the stone foundations of the house and a barn together with remnants of stone walls. The land is now overgrown with trees and vegetation.

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<sup>1</sup>Interim Report of the Boston National Historic Sites Commission Pertaining to the Lexington-Concord Battle Road, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1959, p. 52.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 53.

Mr. Bashian is of the opinion that the front portion of the house was the original structure. Alterations to the house had been made, especially at the rear (see Illustration No. 1). He also recalled that there had been a fire in the house, but did not know the exact date. The fire did not gut the house, but damaged portions of it.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Bashian, op. cit.

**III. PRESENT STATUS**

The property is owned by the United States Department of the Interior and is situated within the boundaries of Minute Man National Historical Park.

#### IV. DESCRIPTION OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

##### A. Site

The house site is located near the eastern base of Fiske Hill and is just west of the point where Massachusetts Avenue passes over the circumferential highway, Route 128. Here Massachusetts Avenue is believed to coincide with what is also known historically as the "Battle Road," the road from Lexington to Concord used by the British on April 19, 1775 (see Illustration No. 4).

The existing ground cover has no known historical significance. From the remaining granite steps, walks and the cellar outline, it would appear that the front of the house faced the southeast.

##### B. Foundation

The house foundation walls are built of random stone ashlar, which was originally laid up dry and later pargeted. In plan, the rectangular front portion of the cellar measures approximately 18' x 36' with a rear ell measuring approximately 18' square which is centered on the front portion. The top of the foundation walls above grade have some sections of granite facing remaining in place; other sections have fallen into the cellar (see Illustration No. 2). The remains of early exterior stone cellar steps are visible in the southwest corner of the foundation; in

later years these were closed off by another wall added in the cellar. An extensive amount of rubble presently obscures the cellar floor; numerous broken brick remain serving to indicate the existence of fireplaces and chimneys.

To the rear of the foundations discussed above there is another foundation which appears to be a cellar, added perhaps to the front portion at a later date. These rubble stone walls are in a much poorer condition than those of the front and will require further investigation to determine their date of construction and purpose (see Illustration No. 3). The addition of these walls may have occurred during the period of Dudley's ownership when considerable alterations were made to the house.<sup>4</sup>

### C. Architectural Material From Dismantled House

#### 1. Stored in Park

Following the clearing of the cellar, loose architectural material remaining at the site was removed, tagged and stored in a park facility for future reference. This material consists of the following items: (1) decayed fragments of the mortise and tenon framing system, (2) assorted fragments of wood clapboards and shingles, (3) charred remnants

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<sup>4</sup>Worthen, Edwin, Southwest Part of Lexington. (Typescript paper loaned by his son, Mr. Edwin B. Worthen to Mr. R. Ronsheim, MMNHPP).

of boards, and (4) fragments of window sash and jambs.

2. Owned by Mr. Bashian

This material was placed on an adjacent lot by the gentlemen who dismantled the house in anticipation of erecting another house and incorporating some of this material into the new structure. Neither this material nor the land on which it is stored are yet the property of the National Park Service.

A visual survey of this remaining material revealed the following items of interest: A sizable quantity of whole and broken brick were found piled together, two types of which were discernible. One type is that commonly found in local chimney construction, and the other of a type used in nogging exterior walls of early houses. The first of these two types measures 1-3/4" x 3-3/4" x 7-1/2", while the second type measures 2-1/4" x 4" x 8" and is of a softer quality than the first. At the same site an assorted quantity of wood mortise and tenon framing members can be seen. Outside of a few relatively wide boards, the remainder of the material appears to date from later remodelings or additions to the house. Once this property is acquired by the park project, the material on it should be carefully screened for any additional material which may date from the eighteenth century house. During the process of dismantling the house, Mr.

Bashian retained portions of the fabric from the original house and also made sketches of certain details of the front portion of the house which he wished to incorporate in his new home. He still has these items in his possession together with an early 1890 photograph of the house.<sup>5</sup> We regret that these items are not available for our use at this time.

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<sup>5</sup>Bashian, op.cit.

## V. THE HOUSE OF 1775

The most valuable documentary evidence brought to light regarding the physical aspects of this house consists of five documents found by Mr. Ronsheim. They are: (1) Will of Ebenezer Fiske, February 10, 1777,<sup>6</sup> (2) Inventory, April 14, 1777,<sup>7</sup> (3) Inventory, April 11, 1785,<sup>8</sup> (4) Appraisal of Real Estate of the late Benjamin Fiske, March 27, 1786,<sup>9</sup> and (5) Administratrix Account, November 11, 1794.<sup>10</sup> By piecing together the references to the physical aspects of the house contained in these documents and comparing them with standing examples of structures of similar size, one can begin to develop a semblance of the eighteenth century character of the Ebenezer Fiske House. From information available at this time, it would appear that the Fiske House of 1775 consisted of a two-story wood structure, with a mortise and tenon frame, collar and garret. It was rectangular in plan with one room to either side of a central brick chimney and had a kitchen ell to the rear. The conjectural floor plans were prepared by the author and in no way are intended to serve as a final scheme; they may be revised by information which may become available at a later date (see Illustration No. 5).

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<sup>6</sup> Middlesex County Probate Records, #7573, item #1, Bk. 57, p. 286

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., #7573, item #4, Bk. 57, p. 352

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., #7554, item #2

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., #7554, item #4 & 5, Bk. 69, p. 52

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., #7554, item #9, Bk. 80, p. 7

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

The house material which is currently owned by Mr. Bashian should be carefully screened once the land upon which it is stored is acquired by the park project. Every possible attempt should be made to review with Mr. Bashian the material he has in his possession and to record his recollections of the house prior to his dismantling it.

Following approval of both the Historical and Architectural Data Sections, Part I, it is recommended that an archeological survey be conducted to clean the cellar. The walls should be stabilized once this project is completed.

ILLUSTRATION NO. 1

View from east, taken about 1880

Note: Front portion of house reportedly original section. Alterations to rear. Noted on rear of photograph: "This is the Dudley (formerly Simpson) house on Mass. Ave. opp. Wood St. taken about 1880. In this yard is the 'Hayward' pump."

Photo: Original owned by Lexington Historical Society. Copies used through permission of the Society.

Copy Neg. No. EODC 3903



ILLUSTRATION NO. 2

Front portion of house foundation remains.

Note: View from east, overgrown base, random stone walls and remains of granite facing.

Photo: Jack Boucher, 1962  
Copy Neg. No. EODC 3904



ILLUSTRATION NO. 3

Rear portion of house foundation remains.

Note: View from east, overgrown base, random stone walls.

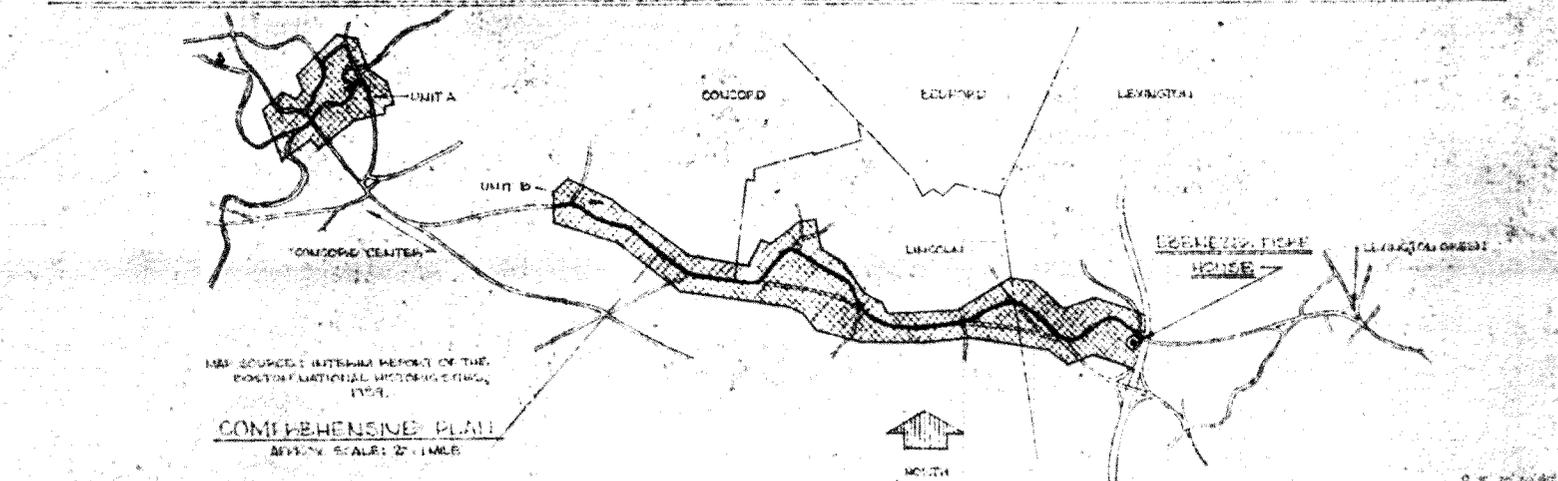
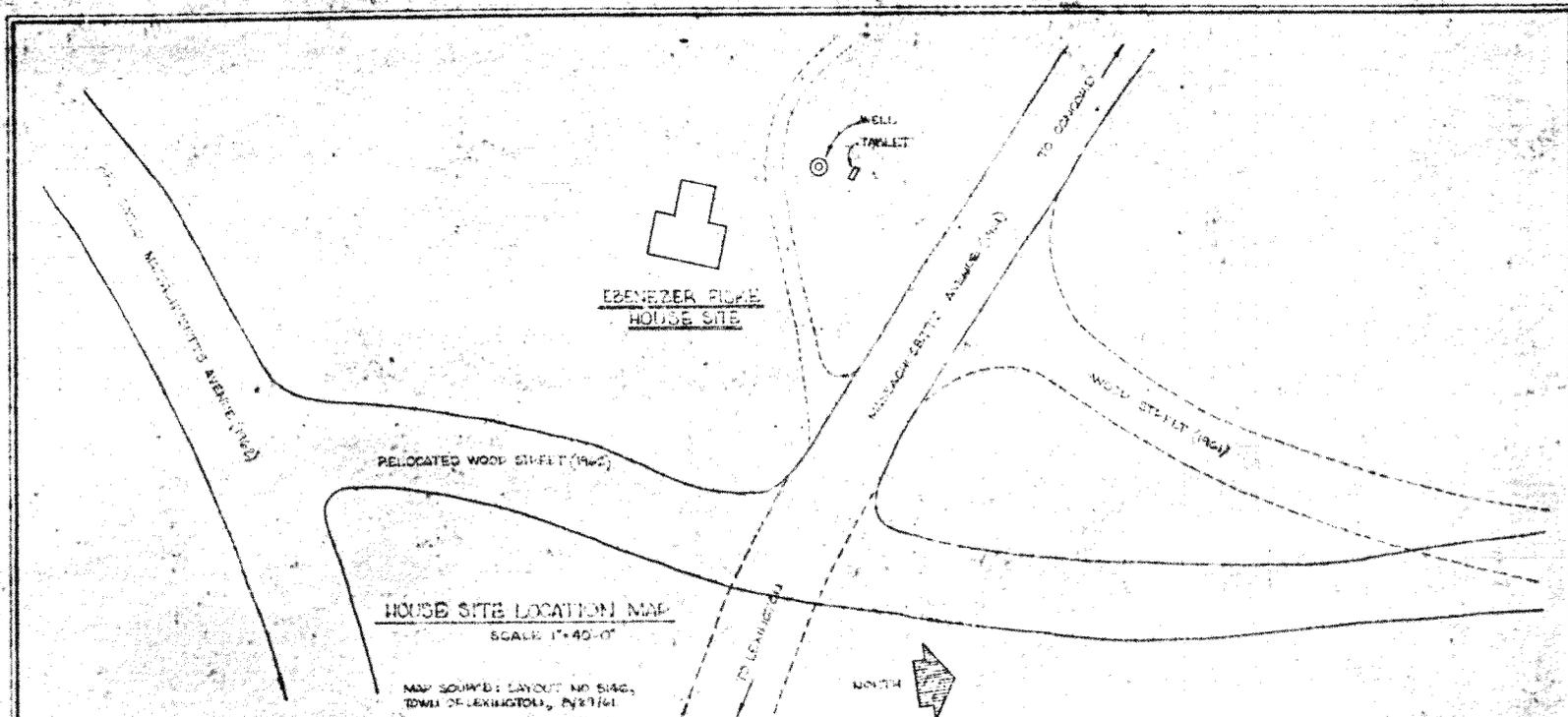
Photo: Jack Boucher, 1962  
Copy Neg. No. RDC 3905



ILLUSTRATION NO. 4

Location Plans

Delineator: Russell V. Keune, 1962



D. V. FINE, D.E.L.

LAND USE PLAN NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDS PROGRAM  
 BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT, LAND USE PLAN, 1962  
 UNDER DIRECTION OF UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, BRANCH OF PLANS AND DESIGN

NAME OF STRUCTURE  
**THE EBENEZER FISKE HOUSE**  
 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE — LEWISTON — LINCOLN COUNTY — MASSACHUSETTS

SURVEY NO.

HISTORIC AMERICAN  
 BUILDINGS SURVEY  
 SHEET 1 OF 1 SHEETS

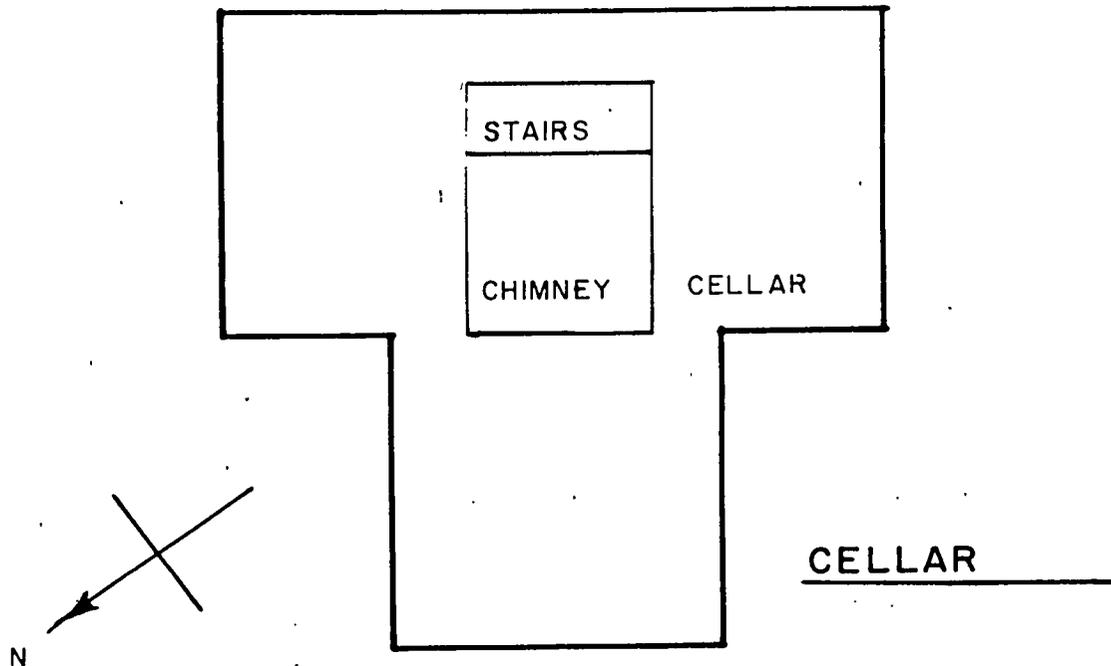
Author of drawing  
Date drawn

0" = 20' 0" 1/4"  
 1" = 40' 0"  
 0" = 100' 0" 1/2"  
 1" = 200' 0"

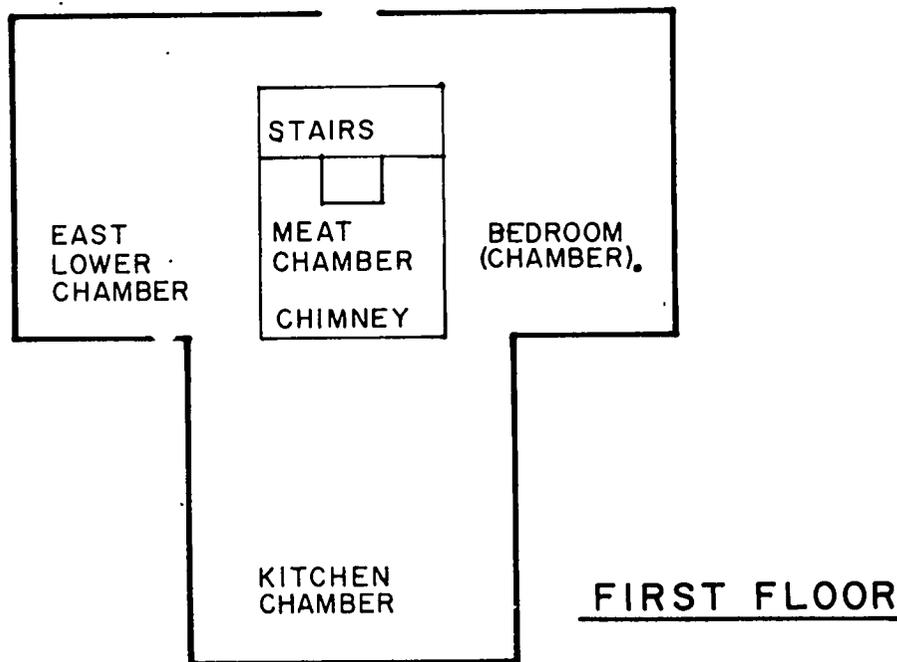
ILLUSTRATION NO. 5

Conjectural Floor Plans

Delineator: Russell V. Keume, 1962

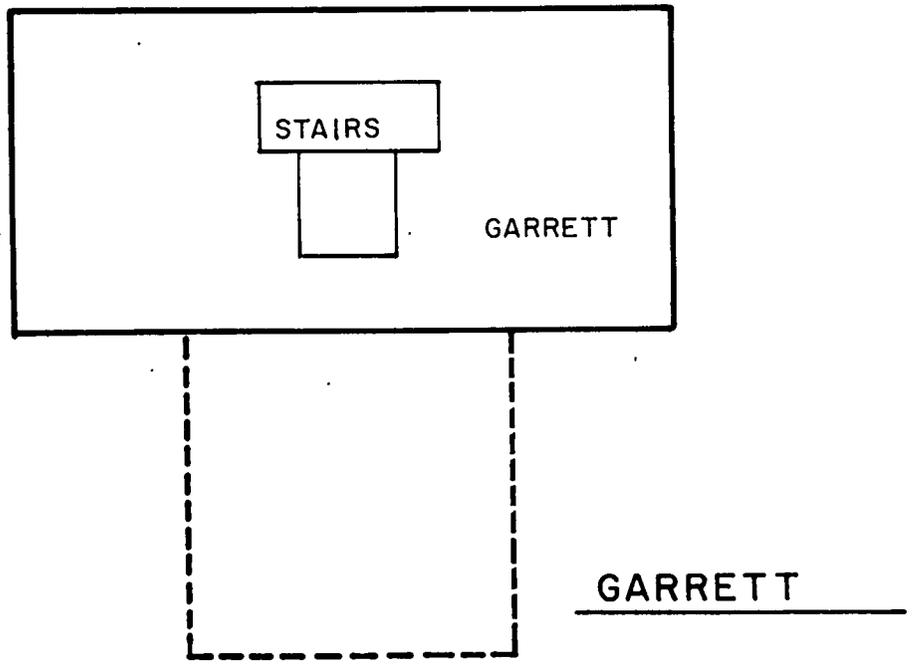
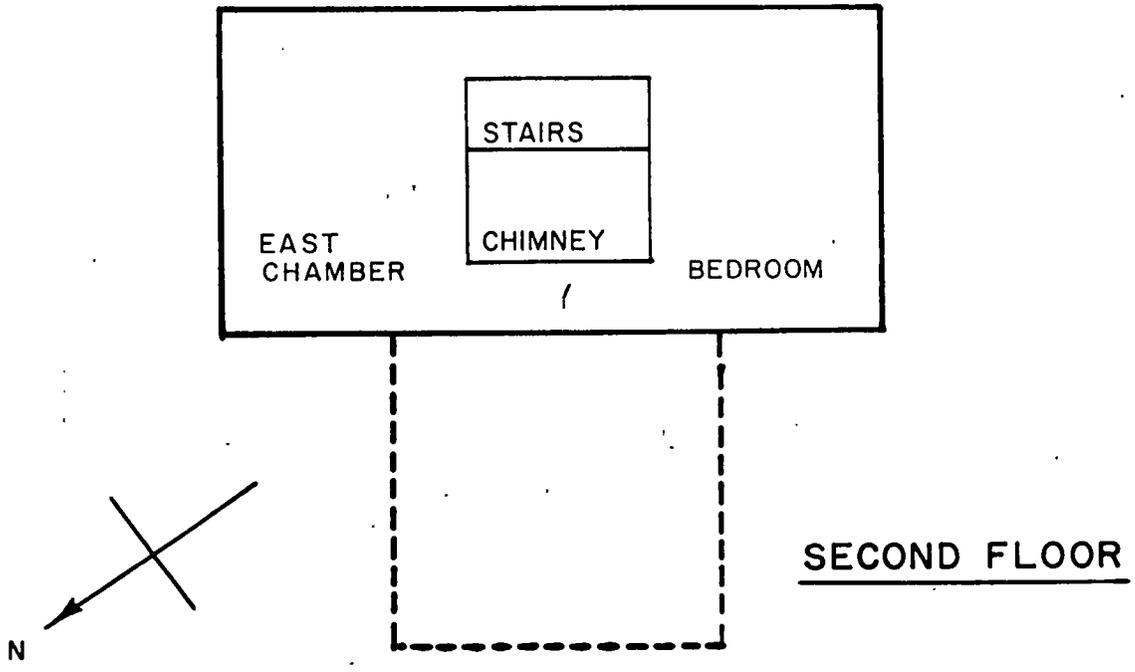


FRONT DOOR



NO SCALE

ALL REFERENCES ON PLANS ARE THOSE  
FOUND IN DOCUMENTS SIGHTED ON P.



NO SCALE

ALL REFERENCES ON PLANS ARE THOSE FOUND IN DOCUMENTS SIGHTED ON P.

MIMA.048.c.1  
401530



UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Minute Man National Historical Park Project  
1400 Post Office & Courthouse  
Boston 9, Massachusetts

March 15, 1963

REGION FIVE		Initial
MAR 18 1963		and
		Date
Reg. Director		
Asst. to Reg. Dir.		
Property Sec.		
Asst. Dir. - Adm.		
Fin. & Prop.		
Land & Water		
Planning		
Asst. Dir. - Civ.		
Histor. Arch.		
Nat. History		
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Rec. Res. Surveys		

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RESOURCES, NARO

Memorandum

To: Regional Director, Northeast Region  
From: Superintendent  
Subject: Historic Structures Reports

*typed by J. Brooks*

Your memorandum of March 13 indicates that your office has received copies of the Architectural Data Section for the Ebenezer Fiske House (no longer standing) prepared by Architect R. V. Keune, EODC. Recent memoranda from your office and EODC also indicate copies of the Architectural Data Sections of Historic Structures Reports for the Joshua Brooks House and Josiah Nelson House as well as the Whittemore-Muzzey House have been received.

*Whittemore/Muzzey  
H3  
due  
Apr. 30*

As considerably more research and work is involved in attempting to solve some of the puzzles in the Historical Data Sections, it should not be assumed that the preparation of these sections will necessarily keep pace with submission of the Architectural Data Sections. For your information, however, we can advise that the Historical Data Section of the Whittemore-Muzzey House is now being typed and should be ready for submission within another month.

Historian Sullivan began his assignment on the Joshua Brooks House only last month and as yet it is impossible to predict when the Historical Data Section for this structure may be ready. Some puzzles are already being encountered.

*- E. Fiske Hs.*

As soon as Historian Ronsheim finishes work currently being done on an Interim Historical Base Map, he will be able to proceed with the Historical Data Section on the Ebenezer Fiske House. Subsequent to this, either Mr. Ronsheim or Mr. Sullivan, or both will get into the problems of the structures associated with the Nelson Family, including the Josiah Nelson House. All of these projects are listed and will be noted by referring to the most recent Research Program Priority List and Project Reports transmitted January 23, 1963.

*- J. Nelson  
Hs.*

Needless to say, the preparation of Administrative Data Sections must await the opportunity to digest and draw conclusions from both the Architectural and Historical Data Sections.

*Edwin W. Small*

Edwin W. Small  
Superintendent

Northeast Region  
143 South Third Street  
Philadelphia 6, Pa.

H30

March 13, 1963

*J.H. Cotton*  
3/12  
*Cramer*  
3/13/63

**Memorandum**

**To:** Superintendent, Minute Man  
**From:** Regional Director  
**Subject:** Preparation of Historic Structures Report, Part I,  
Fiske House

This office has received copies of an Architectural Data Section prepared by Architect R. V. Keuns, EODC, for the Ebenezer Fiske House.

If you will prepare the Historical Data and Administrative Data Sections to accompany and transmit four copies of each to this office, we will assemble the report and distribute it.

Please let us know when these sections may be expected.

(Sgd.) Ronald F. Lee

Regional Director

MHNelligan/bg  
General ✓  
Daily  
Area



UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Eastern Office, Design and Construction  
Philadelphia 6, Pa.

IN REPLY REFER TO:

H30-H

March 4, 1963

REGION FIVE		Initial
MAR 5 1963		Date
Reg. Director		
Asst. to RD (PA)		
Program Coord.		
Asst. Reg. Director		
Finance & Proc.		
Land & Water		
Personnel		
Asst. Reg. Director		
History		
Public Affairs		
Records		
Asst. Reg. Director		
Co-op Affairs		
Plan. & Insp. Div.		
Res. Surveys		

Memorandum

To: Regional Director, Northeast Region

From: Chief Architect, EODC

Subject: Historic Structures Report, The Ebenezer  
Fiske House, Minute Man

Enclosed for your review and distribution are two copies of the Architectural Data Section, Historic Structures Report, Part I, The Ebenezer Fiske House, Minute Man NHP.

This section of the report was signed by Chief Hall this date.

*posted by*

By copy of this memorandum, a copy of the report is being forwarded to the Superintendent for his comments.

Robert E. Smith

By: Donald F. Benson  
Donald F. Benson, Acting

Enclosure (in duplicate)

cc:

Supt., Minute Man w/copy of report  
Architect Keune, Minute Man, w/copy of report