

WATERTOWN ARSENAL BUILDING NO. 117  
Arsenal Street  
Watertown  
Middlesex County  
Massachusetts

HABS No. MA-1009-B

HABS  
MASS  
9-WATO,  
6B -

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
Northeast Region  
Philadelphia Support Office  
U.S. Custom House  
200 Chestnut Street  
Philadelphia, P.A. 19106

HABS  
MASS  
9-WATO,  
6B-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

WATERTOWN ARSENAL, BUILDING NO. 117 HABS No. MA-1009-B

**Location:**

Arsenal Street, Watertown, Middlesex County, Massachusetts

USGS Boston South, MA Quadrangle

Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinate: 19.286210.4595450

**Present Owner:**

U.S. Army Materials Technology Laboratory

Arsenal Street

Watertown, Massachusetts 02172

**Present Use:**

Officer Housing, Former Cow Barn

**Significance:**

Built in 1906 as a cow barn, Building 117 is significant as a reflection of the former agricultural land use in this area of the former Watertown Arsenal's operations. It was converted to housing in 1938 and is a fine example of adaptive reuse. It is a contributing element in the Watertown Arsenal Historic District which is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

## **PART I        DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION**

Building 117, a Cow Barn erected c. 1906 and converted to a picturesque cottage for officer housing in 1938, is located immediately south of the Stable (Building 118, HABS No. MA-1009-C) on the western edge of a large open lawn that was formerly an orchard. The facade faces east with its gable ridge line running north-south. The one-and-one-half-story building rests on a granite ashlar foundation and has red brick bearing walls laid in 5/1 common bond with a brick dentil cornice and eaves, and a brick stringcourse at the half story. The footprint is rectangular, measuring 32 ft. (three-bay front) by 30 ft. (two-bay sides) under a slate gable roof. Three slate gable dormers (front) and two identical rear dormers pierce the cornice line in the gable flanks. An exterior brick chimney rises against the south end-gable wall. Copper gutters and downspouts drain the roof.

The former six-over-six, wood, double-hung sash windows have all been replaced with one-over-one, aluminum double-hung sash with snap-in, six-light muntin grids. Windows are paired on the first story of the facade. All have red tinted concrete lug sills and brick soldier-course lintels. The main entrance, centered in the facade, has a brick soldier-course lintel, wood sill, and wood molded panel door with diamond-pane glazing. The one-bay, one story, open entrance porch has two square, brick corner posts and two brick pilasters with wood capitals that support a plain frieze and a flat, built-up roof. A second entrance at the rear center bay has an identical door under a slate pedimented-gable-roof porch on narrow, square, wood posts. The floors of both porches are cast concrete and checkered pattern concrete tiles. A steel basement bulkhead on a brick foundation is located on the north side.

The interior of Building 117 is laid out as single-family quarters. On the first floor, a central hall contains a straight-run, varnished oak staircase with square balusters and channeled newel. The south parlor runs the width of the house and contains a fireplace centered in the south exterior wall with brick tile hearth and wood surround with shallow panels and curved brackets supporting the mantel. A dining room occupies the northeast portion of the first story, and the kitchen is in the northwest corner. The second floor contains four bedrooms and a bath off the central stairhall. Window and door trim throughout the house is simple, comprised of flanking channel cut molding and plain board tops with molded cornices. Door knobs are clear glass with deeply imbedded clear rosettes. The floors are two-inch hard pine; walls and ceilings are plaster.

The windows, dormers, entrances, chimney, and the interior are the result of the 1938 renovations converting the former Cow Barn to officer housing.

## **PART II        HISTORICAL INFORMATION**

The Cow Barn (formerly Building 916) was built in 1906 and was part of a small agricultural complex in this area of the Arsenal that included the former Stable (Building 118, HABS No. MA-1009-C) and several poultry houses. Cattle housed here grazed on the Arsenal grounds and provided dairy products for residents, as well as offered a bucolic image that contrasted with the industrial qualities of the site. By 1928, the building was no longer being used (Dickson 1928:40). In 1938 it, along with its neighbor Building 118, was renovated as officer's housing under the Works Relief Program at the Arsenal. It is a fine example of the building reuse practiced consistently throughout the Arsenal's history.

## **PART III       SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

### **A.        Plans and Drawings**

Army Materials Technology Laboratory, Facilities Engineering, Watertown, Massachusetts.

**B. Historic Views**

Army Corps of Engineers, New England Division, Waltham, Massachusetts. Photographs (5 volumes: 1944 to 1970).

Army Materials Technology Laboratory, Library, Watertown, Massachusetts. Foster Notebooks, files, and historic photographs (nineteenth century to 1980s).

Army Materials Technology Laboratory, Photo Lab, Watertown, Massachusetts.

**C. Bibliography**

Adams, Virginia H.

1992 Historic American Engineering Record Addendum to Watertown Arsenal: HAER Nos. MA-20-C, D, E, F, G, and Documentation for Watertown Arsenal: HAER Nos. MA-20-R, S, T, U (NPS # 601). Prepared for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New England Division, Waltham, MA and the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, DC.

Baylies, Libby

1982 *Watertown Arsenal (Gun Carriage Manufacturing Complex) Draft National Register of Historic Places Nomination*. Unpublished typescript. Watertown: Army Materials Technology Laboratory, Library.

Burns, Libby Baylies and Betsey Bahr

1982 Historic American Buildings Survey of the United States Army Materials and Mechanics Research Center, Watertown, Massachusetts HAER No. MA-20. Washington, D.C.: Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

Dickson, Tracy C.

1928 *History of Watertown Arsenal, Watertown, Massachusetts*. Unpublished typescript. Watertown: Army Materials Technology Laboratory, Library.

Dobbs, Judy

1977 A History of the Watertown Arsenal 1816-1967. Watertown: Army Materials and Mechanics Research Center.

E.G. & G. Idaho, Inc.

1988 USATHAMA (U.S. Army Toxic and Hazardous Materials Agency) Preliminary Assessment/Site Inspection for the Army Materials Technology Laboratory. Idaho Falls: Idaho National Engineering Laboratory.

Foster, Laurence S.

1965 *U.S. Army Materials Research Agency Annual Historical Summary, 1 July 1964 -30 June 1965*. Unpublished manuscript. Watertown: Technical Information Center, AMRA, 15 August 1965.

Mather, John

1942 *History of the Watertown Arsenal*. Unpublished typescript. Foster Notebook. Watertown: Army Materials Technology Laboratory, Library.

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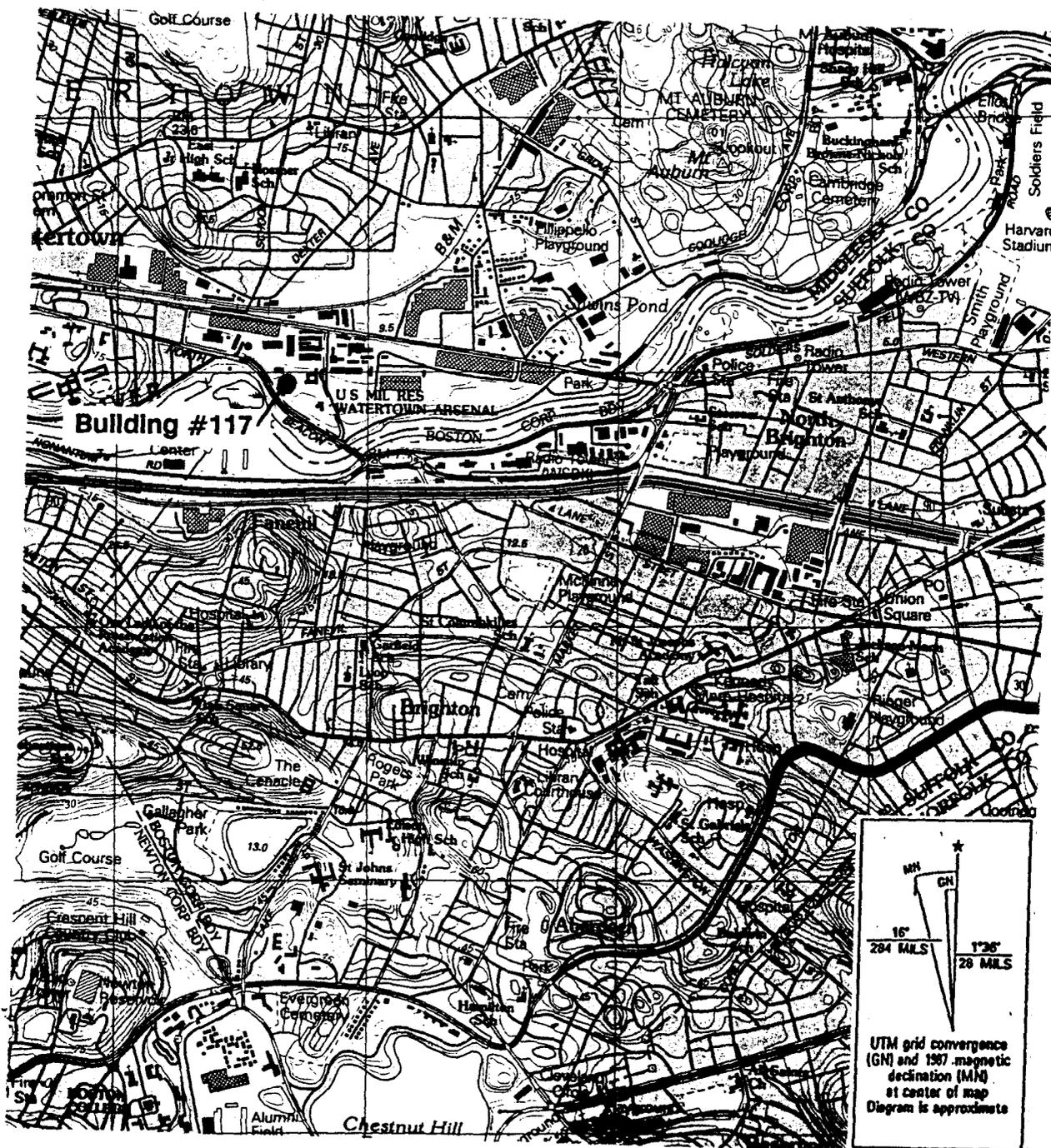
For additional sources, consult Burns and Bahr 1982, previously submitted to the Library of Congress as HABS/HAER documentation for Watertown Arsenal, HAER No. MA-20.

**PART IV      PROJECT INFORMATION**

The Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc. (PAL Inc.) was retained by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New England Division to prepare HABS and HAER documentation for the Watertown Arsenal. The documentation was conducted in April, May, and June 1995 by the PAL Inc. project team including Virginia H. Adams, Senior Architectural Historian, Catherine Vieth, Assistant Architectural Historian, and Maureen A. Cavanaugh, Preservation Planner. The large format photography was completed in May and June 1995 by Robert Brewster of Warren Jagger Photography, Inc., Providence, Rhode Island.

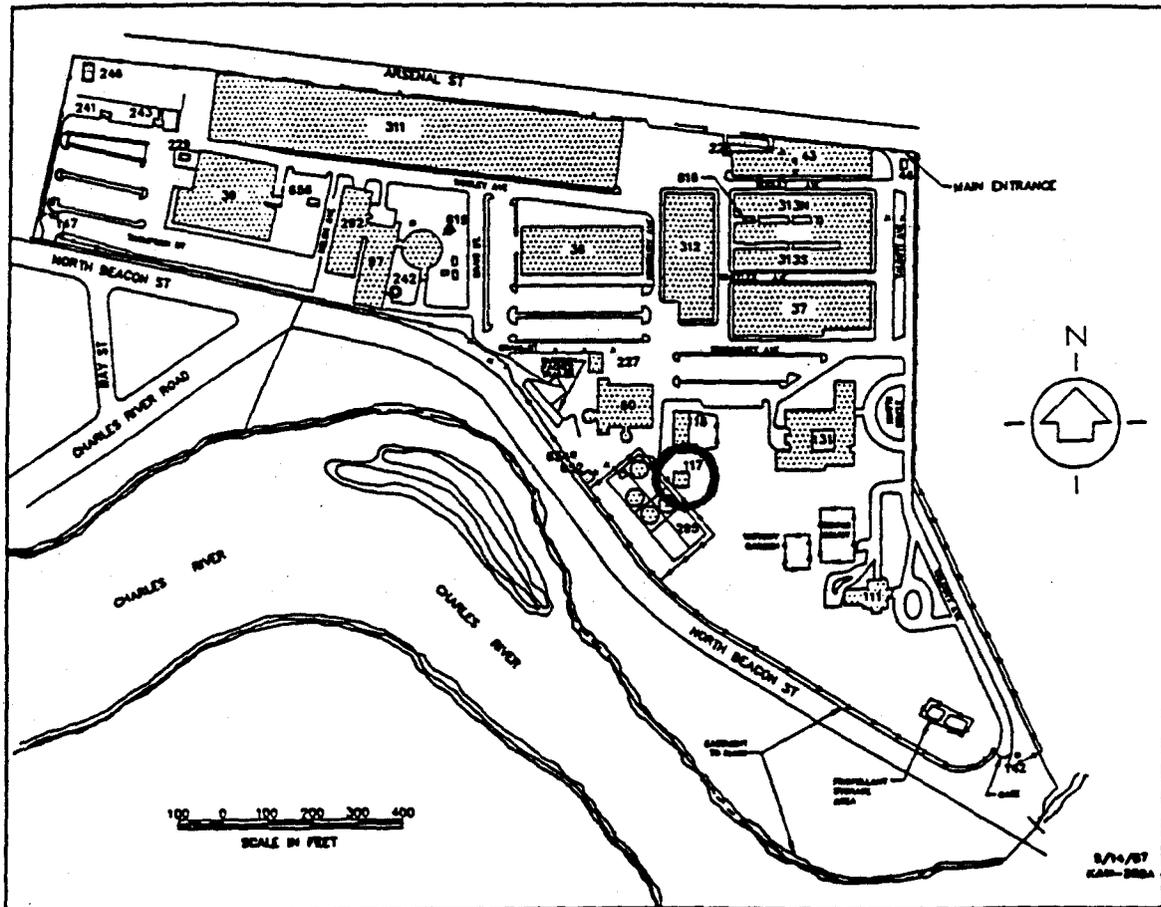
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LOCATION MAP (USGS BOSTON SOUTH, MA)  
Scale: 1:25,000



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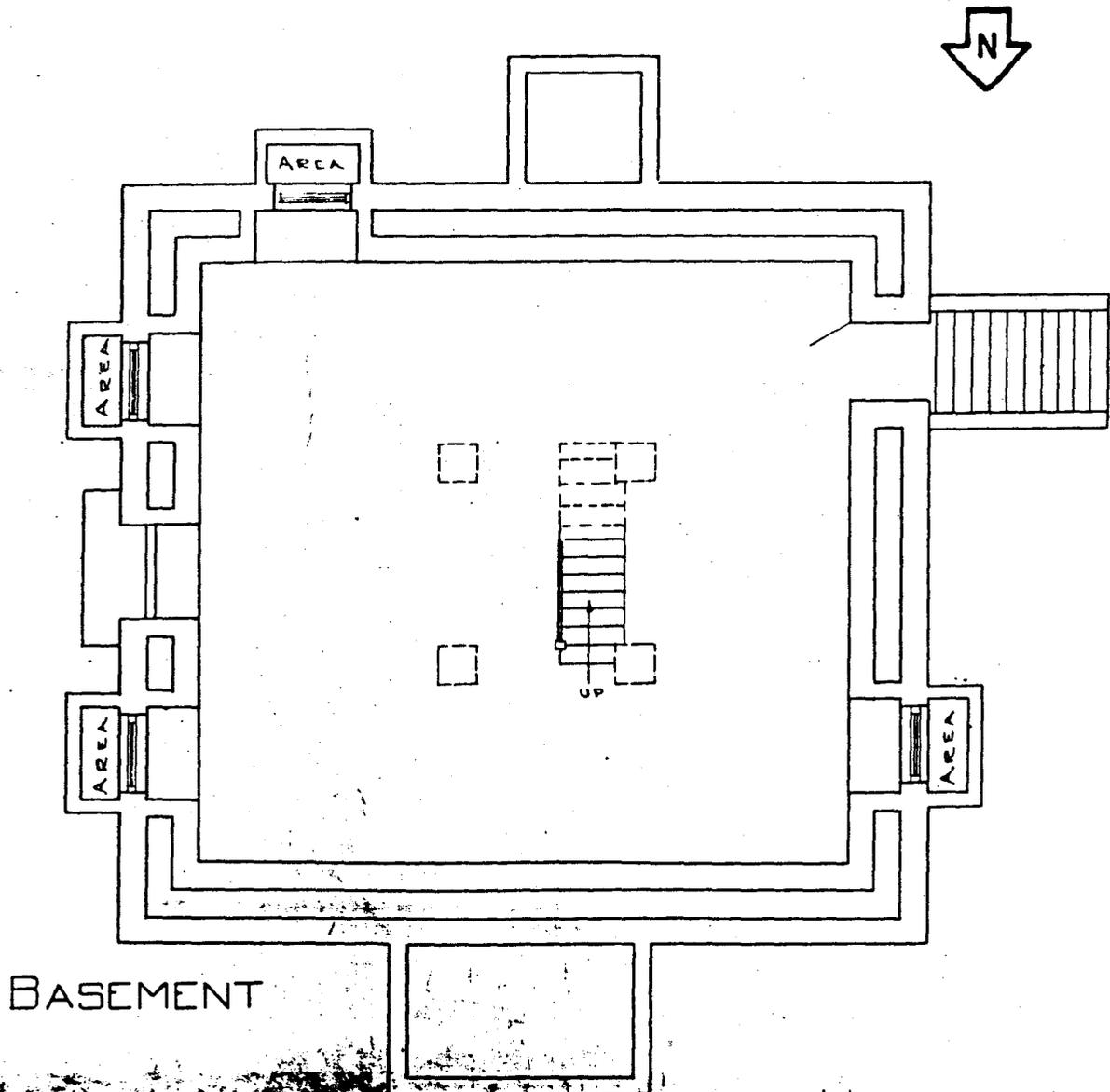
LOCATION WITHIN WATERTOWN ARSENAL  
(Source: E.G. & G. USATHAMA report, 1988)



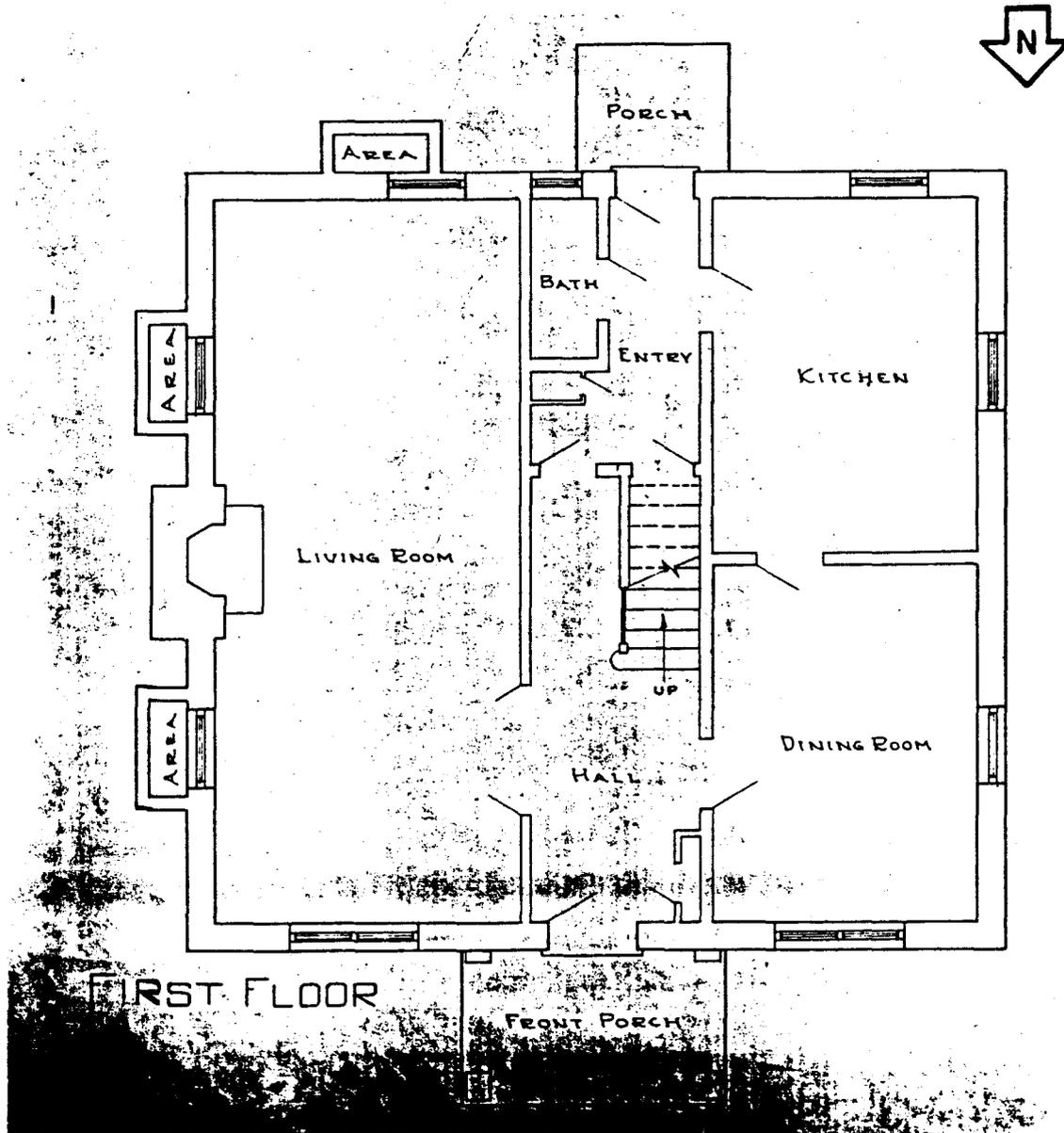
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**BASEMENT PLAN**

(Source: Drawing AA-Q-34178, Sheet 7 [ca. 1938])



**FIRST FLOOR PLAN**  
(Source: Drawing AA-Q-34178, Sheet 7 [ca. 1938])



**SECOND FLOOR PLAN**  
(Source: Drawing AA-Q-34178, Sheet 7 [ca. 1938])

