

HORACE WEBSTER HOUSE
39 Central Street
Franklin
Merrimack County
New Hampshire

HABS No. NH-222

HABS
NH
7-FRANK,
6-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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

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LOCATION: 39 Central Street, Franklin, Merrimack County, New Hampshire.

USGS Franklin, New Hampshire Quadrangle,
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates:
19.284990.4813065.

PRESENT OWNER: State of New Hampshire.

PRESENT USE: Vacant. To be demolished.

SIGNIFICANCE: The Webster House, built between 1873 and 1875, is a contributing element in the West Franklin historic district, a residential and commercial neighborhood on the west side of the city of Franklin. The modestly-scaled dwelling, with its front-gabled orientation and bracketed entry hood, is representative of Greek Revival-inspired, late-19th century domestic architecture in the district.

I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of Erection: The house was erected between 1873 and 1875 during the ownership of Horace Webster.

2. Architect: Unknown.

3. Original and Subsequent Owners: References are to deeds and other documents in the office of the Registry of Deeds and the Registry of Probate, Merrimack County Administration Building, Concord, New Hampshire.

- 1871 Deed, 19 July 1871, Book 209, p. 149. James A. and Mary J. Clark to James A. Taylor.
- 1873 Deed, 18 October 1873, Book 216, p. 183. James Taylor to Horace Webster.
- 1875 Deed, 12 April 1873, Book 236, p. 20. Horace and Rosetta H. Webster to Dennis Horne.
- 1940 Deed, 27 September 1940, Book 597, p. 236. Della M. Horan, as Administratrix for Dennis Horan (also known as Horne), to Cora B. Foster.
- 1943 Will, 24 February 1943, Probate Record # 43229. Cora B. Foster to Alson Foster.
- 1944 Will, 6 April 1944, Probate Record # 44166. Alson Foster to Florence Foster and Florence Foster Saben.
- 1948 Deed, 2 February 1948, Book 648, p. 370. Florence Foster and Florence Foster Saben to Charles and Flossie Wilkinson.
- 1948 Deed, 7 June 1948, Book 649, p. 238. Charles and Flossie Wilkinson to Carl and Dorothy Glidden.
- 1957 Deed, 8 August 1957, Book 812, p. 512. Carl and Dorothy Glidden to John and Mae McNamara.
- 1966 Foreclosure, 9 August 1966, Book 991, p. 387. John and Mae McNamara to Manchester Savings and Loan.

- 1966 Deed, 8 September 1966, Book 993, p. 220. Manchester Savings and Loan to Martin MacDonald.
- 1978 Deed, 18 October 1978, Book 1333, p. 507. Louis R. MacDonald, administrator for Martin MacDonald, to Robert and Cheryl Labrecque.
- 1986 Deed, 20 August 1986, Book 1586, p. 801. Robert and Cheryl Labrecque to Morway & Rice, Inc.
- 1989 Deed, 15 November 1989, Book 1823, p. 664. Morway & Rice, Inc. to Richard and Carol Morway.

4. Builder, Contractor, Suppliers: Unknown.

5. Original Plans and Construction: No documentary information on the original appearance of the house has been located.

6. Alterations and Additions: The enclosed porch along the east side of the house was added after the original construction.

B. Historical Context

The town of Franklin was incorporated in December 1828 from adjoining portions of four towns (Salisbury, Andover, Sanbornton and Northfield), largely at the behest of those wanting to exploit more fully the manufacturing potential present along the lower Pemigewasset and Winnepesaukee rivers and tributaries thereto (Hurd 1885:310-311).

At the time of incorporation, the principal village then in existence was located on the west bank of the Pemigewasset. This small community had risen around the activities of Ebenezer Eastman, who after coming to this area from Concord in 1797 established a dam and sawmill on Chance Pond Brook, opened a tavern, and commissioned construction of a toll bridge across the Pemigewasset on the road to Sanbornton and Northfield in 1802 (Hurd 1885:310; Nadeau 1978: 8). At the time, the village was part of the town of Salisbury, and was called variously Pemigewasset or "East Village", the latter due to its location within that town (Farmer & Moore 1823:232). In 1824, four years before the creation of the town of Franklin, the village of Pemigewasset boasted a meetinghouse, two stores, a tavern, post office, tannery, several cooper shops and a blacksmith shop. The village's industrial activity was concentrated primarily along Chance Pond brook, which flowed from the "great pond in Andover" (Webster Lake) southeast to the Pemigewasset a short distance above what is now Webster Street. Along the brook were, in 1824, three sawmills, a grist mill, and a blacksmith shop "with

trip-hammers" as well as one unspecified "manufacturing establishment" (McClintock 1880:133).

The major industrial development of Franklin ultimately centered on an area to the east, known as Franklin Falls, on the Winnepesaukee, bringing with it a concentration of commercial and residential activity. However, the village on the Pemigewasset, also known as "West Village" and Franklin, remained a distinct and viable community through the 19th century. Not only did it have its own, nearby mill privileges, but also the Boston & Maine railroad, which extended its line north to the village in 1846; in addition, due to its location at a major river crossing, it was able to reap economic benefits from passing travelers. In 1855, the community called Franklin still remained the town's "principal village", with two hotels, seven stores, two meetinghouses (Congregationalist and Christian Baptist), a fire house, and an academy (McClintock 1880:133). Its industrial base, as of 1858, included a tanney, forge, foundry, grist mill and wool carding mill (Walling 1858).

By 1880, fourteen firms were listed with premises along Chance Pond Brook, including a sawmill, grist mill, iron foundry, brickmaker, carriage manufacturer, knitting machine factory, needle factory, and wool dyer (McClintock 1880: 137-138). Although the village never boasted the rows of attached brick commercial buildings which were built along Central Street in Franklin Falls, it did have several detached "blocks" from which local merchants purveyed goods and services, such as the brick Pike's Block, Messer's Block, and the Sturtevant Block (Sanborn 1884; Hurd 1892). From such premises, as well as from small building containing both shop areas and residences, the merchants of Franklin village offered such items as boots and shoes, harness and wagon robes, groceries and "India goods", hardware, furniture, and the all-encompassing "general merchandise" (McClintock 1880:140).

As Franklin Falls became more heavily industrialized, and urbanized in the later 19th century, Franklin retained its village character and informal, linear plan along Main Street. Manufacturing tended to cluster in its traditional location along Chance Pond Brook toward the north end of the village, and the south end was primarily residential; between and within these areas, however, the mingling of function (housing, religion, commerce, public services) persisted, although most of the commercial activity was oriented around the west end of the bridge and north to Webster Street (Sanborn 1884, 1892).

Franklin was incorporated as a city in 1894; this change in municipal status was reflected in the village primarily by its designation as "West Franklin". In the 20th century, with the rest of the city, West Franklin experienced industrial and population decline as manufacturers closed or relocated their operations elsewhere. In April 1931, the old covered bridge across the Pemigewasset, known as the Republican bridge and built in 1839 by Boston John Clark to replace the earlier structure, was dismantled, its timber

removed by the city for other uses, and the stone of its piers laid along the riverbanks as riprap. The new bridge, erected by the Eastern States Bridge Company of York, PA and Concord, was named the Daniel Webster bridge by vote of the city council (Franklin Journal Transcript, 16 April 1931, 30 April 1931; City of Franklin, 1930).

The Horace Webster house lot was one of three subdivided from the original James Clark Homestead parcel by James Taylor after his acquisition of the Clark property in 1871. The house was constructed by Horace Webster, a carpenter, who purchased the property from Taylor in 1873 (Shaw 1889). Webster sold the property to Dennis Horne in 1875, shortly after the house was completed.

Dennis Horne was an employee of Papermill No. 2 and later of the Boston and Maine Railroad (Shaw 1888; Courier Steam Press 1894). He continued to reside in the house following his retirement in 1895, along with his daughter Della, a needlemaker at the Franklin Needle Company (Towne & Robie 1895). Although Horne retained ownership until his death in 1940, directories indicate that Horne did not reside in the house after 1912 (Union Pub. Co. 1912). John Uniac, a laborer, and his wife Margaret lived on the premises in 1932, and by 1937 George Burrs, a retiree, and his wife Addie had assumed residence (Manning 1932, 1937, 1939).

Horne's estate sold the property in 1940 to Cora Foster, who lived in the house with her husband, Frank, until her death in 1943. The house changed ownership eight times over the next fifty years, remaining undivided as a single-family rental property.

II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: The free-standing dwelling is a vernacular interpretation of the Greek Revival style, expressed by the wide frieze panels below boxed eaves, cornerboards with simple, board capitals and cornice returns in the gable ends.

2. Condition of Fabric: The house is in fair condition. As a rental property for over fifty years it has not been consistently maintained.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall Dimensions: The main block of the house is an end gabled cottage, 1 1/2 stories in height, three bays wide by four bays deep, measuring 26 by 20 feet. A one story, gabled ell, 12 by 21 feet, is attached to the south (rear) elevation.

2. Foundations: The foundation of the house appears to have been relaid in the early twentieth century. The main block of the house presently rests on a poured concrete foundation, enclosing a full basement, textured on the exterior to resemble rusticated stone. The ell retains its original foundation of large rubble stone and partial basement, although this foundation, too, has been patched in places with concrete.

3. Walls: The exterior walls are sheathed with narrow clapboards.

4. Structural System: The Webster House is framed with circular-sawn, dimensional lumber.

5. Porches, Stoops, etc.: The concrete stoop at the facade entrance is sheltered by a flat-roofed hood supported on Italianate brackets. An enclosed, shed-roofed porch, resting on a concrete slab foundation, extends along the east side of the main block. A bank of six aluminum windows dominate the east wall of the porch.

6. Chimneys: A brick chimney in the main block is located slightly to the rear of center and just east of the roof ridge. A second brick chimney is centered on the ell roof, also just east of the ridge.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and Doors: The main entrance, located in the eastern bay of the facade, is filled with a simple, mid-nineteenth century door with a large glass panel set above four recessed panels. The door has lacquered wood knobs and cast iron hardware. Side entrances in the east wall of the ell and inside the side porch are filled with modern wood doors.

b. Windows: The regularly spaced window openings are filled with 2/2 double-hung sash set in plain plank surrounds, topped with simple, molded ledges. Modern triple-track storm windows have been installed over the exterior of the windows.

8. Roof:

a. Shape: The house has a front-gabled roof with a gabled ell. A shed-roofed porch is located along the east side of the main block. All three roof surfaces are sheathed with asphalt shingles.

b. Cornice, Eaves: A wide frieze panel runs the length of the house below wide boxed eaves. The ends of the frieze are terminated by cornerboards with simple board capitals and cornice returns in the gable ends.

c. Dormers, Cupolas, Towers: None present.

C. Description of Interior

1. Floor Plans: See floor plans for existing room arrangement. The original, three-room plan of the first floor of the main block has been altered slightly by the creation of a bathroom at the west end of the rear room. The plan of the second story appears to be unaltered.

2. Stairways: See sketch plan for the position of stairs. The second floor is accessed via a straight run stair along the eastern wall of the front hall. The stair has a turned newel post and turned balusters. Narrow, steep ladder-stairs set perpendicular to the south wall of the second story lead to the attic.

3. Flooring: The original wide board flooring is intact in the second story. On the first story carpet and linoleum obscure the original surfaces.

4. Wall and Ceiling Finish: Horsehair plaster, applied to wide riven lath, attached to the framing members by square-headed nails, sheathes the walls of the second floor. The original wall and ceiling surfaces of the first floor rooms have been obscured by the application of modern wallpaper and plywood panelling. Sheetrock and pressboard have been applied to ceilings throughout the house.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and Doors: The doors are set in unadorned, plank surrounds. Original doors, where extant, have four vertical panels. One door on the second floor retains a bean-shaped thumb latch, and the remainder have brass or porcelain knobs set in brass escutcheon plates. A few modern, hollow-core doors are scattered throughout the house.

b. Windows: All of the windows are set in unadorned, plank surrounds.

6. Decorative Features and Trim: Much of the original interior detail has been removed or obscured. Overall the second story remains more intact than the first due to the retention of the original wide board floors and plaster walls. Possibly original wallpaper, applied directly to the plaster, was extant on the stair wall. This mid- to late-nineteenth century wallpaper is an American-made pulp paper drum-imprinted with a baroque design.

7. Mechanical Equipment:

a. Heating: A circular, metal floor grate, centered in the second story hallway, suggests that the house was constructed with some form of central heating.

The original system has been replaced with modern baseboard heating throughout the house.

- b. Lighting: No original lighting fixtures remain extant.
- c. Plumbing: No original plumbing fixtures remain extant.

D. Site

1. General Setting and Orientation: The Webster house is located on the south side of Central Street in the West Franklin village of the City of Franklin. It is immediately east of the east end of the Daniel Webster Bridge and the Pemigewasset River. Many of the neighboring houses along Central Street are of the same vintage as the Webster house, and the two immediately to the east were subdivided from the Clark Homestead at the same time as the Webster parcel, between 1873 and 1875.

2. Landscape Design: Set close to the road with a driveway east of the house, the property has no designed landscape. There is very little front yard, and immediately behind the main block of the house the wooded ground drops down toward the river bank.

3. Outbuildings: A small, early-twentieth century garage is located behind the house at the end of the driveway. It is of frame construction with clapboarded exterior. The asphalt-shingled gable roof has partial cornice returns. The double-leaf door is fashioned from beaded board.

III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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- 1942 Manning's Franklin, Tilton-Northfield, Belmont, Boscawen, Canterbury (NH) Directory. H.A. Manning Co., Springfield, Massachusetts.
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Union Publishing Co.

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1926 Lothrop's City of Franklin, New Hampshire Directory. Union Publishing
Co., Boston.

1929 Lothrop's City of Franklin, New Hampshire Directory. Union Publishing
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Walling, Henry

1858 Map of Merrimack County, New Hampshire. Smith & Peavey, New York.

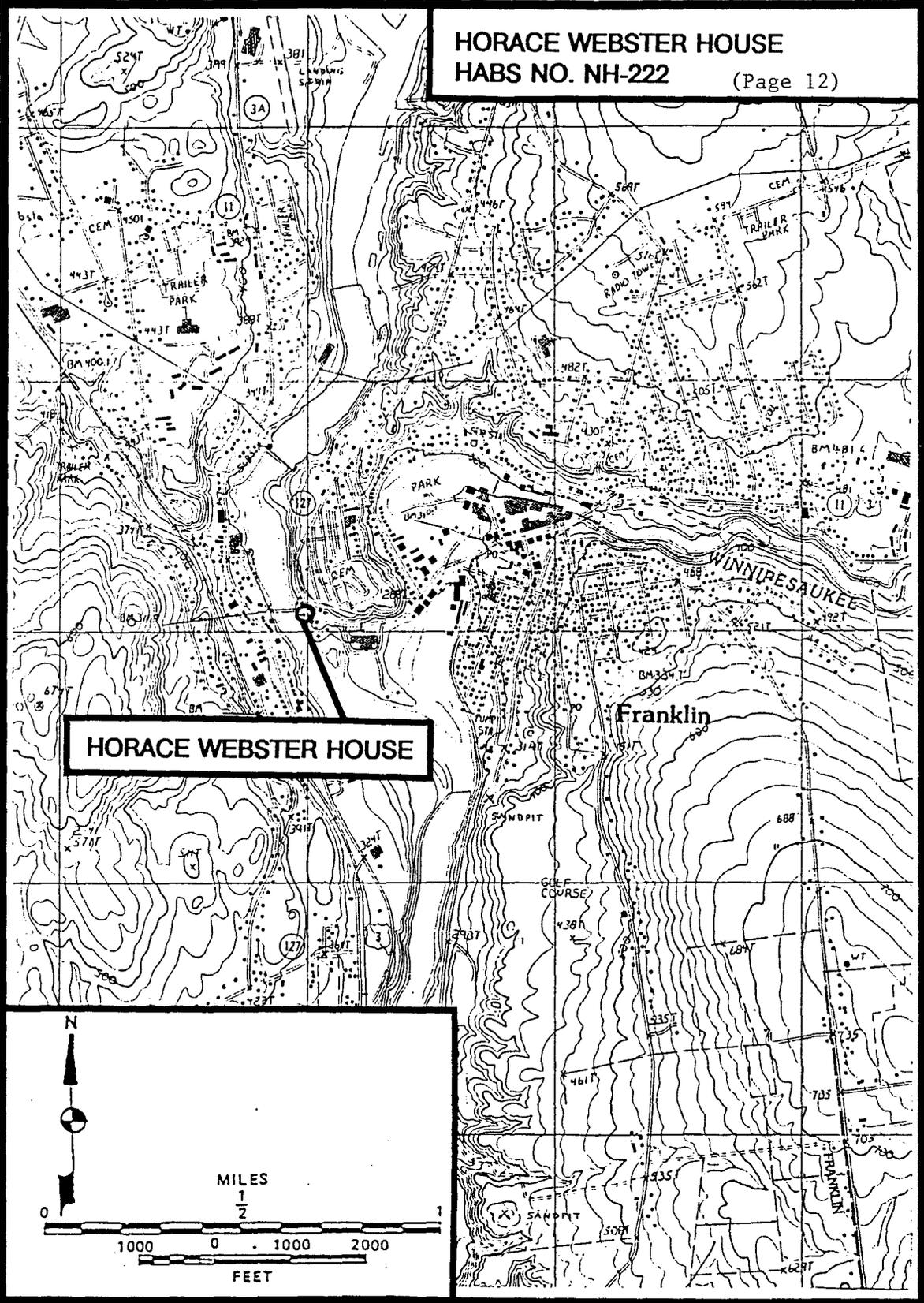
IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Horace Webster House was recorded in October, 1991, by the Cultural Resource Group of Louis Berger & Associates, Inc., East Orange, New Jersey, for the New Hampshire Department of Transportation, Concord, New Hampshire. The documentation was undertaken pursuant to a Memorandum of Agreement between the Federal Highway Administration, the New Hampshire Department of Transportation, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. The project for which the MOA has been prepared is the replacement of the Daniel Webster Bridge over the Pemigewasset River and redesign at the intersection of Central Street with Main Street (U.S. Route 3). The project team included: Martha H. Bowers, Project Coordinator; Elizabeth Rosin, Architectural Historian; and Rob Tucher, Photographer.

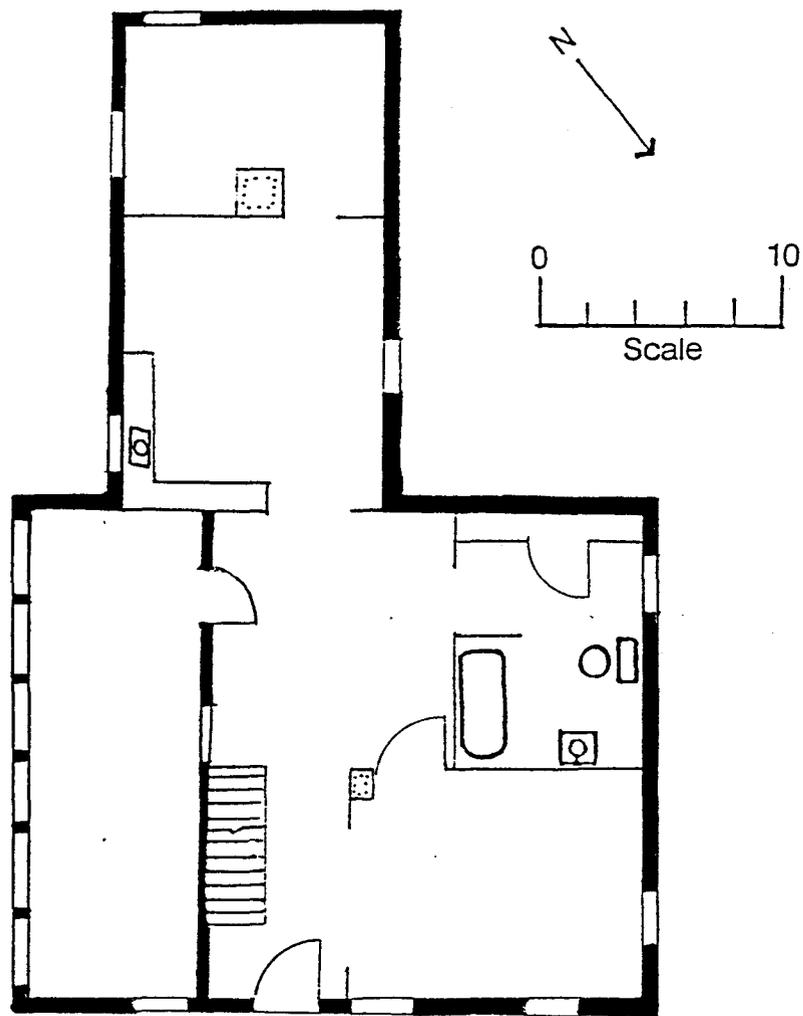
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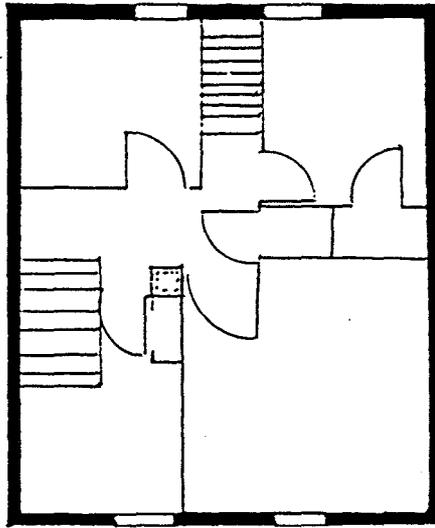
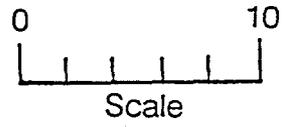
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SOURCE: USGS 7.5 Minute Series Franklin, N.H. Quadrangle
(Preliminary Edition 1987)



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



SECOND FLOOR PLAN