

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Registration FormRECEIVED
JUL 23 1990NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Pierce Still Houseother names/site number Still House

2. Location

street & number 2400 Tilden Street N.W.☐ not for publication N/Acity, town Washington☐ vicinity N/Astate district of Columbia code DCcounty N/Acode DC 001 zip code 20008

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

☒ private☐ public-local☐ public-State☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

☒ building(s)☐ district☐ site☐ structure☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

112

Noncontributing

 buildings sites structures objects Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/ANumber of contributing resources previously
listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this
☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the
National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Carol B. Thompson
Signature of certifying official State Historic Preservation Officer

7/2/90
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

☒ entered in the National Register.☐ See continuation sheet.☐ determined eligible for the NationalRegister. ☐ See continuation sheet.☐ determined not eligible for the

National Register.

☐ removed from the National Register.☐ other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture/ Processing

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/ Single Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Early Republic

Other: Vernacular farm building

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone, concrete

walls Stone, wood, brick, stucco

roof Cedar shingles, slate

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

A. General Description

The original 1811 distillery building for the Isaac Pierce homestead is a rectangular two-story rough cut stone building with a gable ended wooden shingle roof. It is still visually linked to the context in which it was built, since to the east of the distillery building the original mill and stone barn can still be observed, and to the west is the stone spring house originally belonging to the same property. The 178-year-old Still House has a number of additions to the northwest, that date from its conversion to a residence in 1924.

B. Site

Located at 2400 Tilden St., N.W., in a residential area of the District of Columbia directly west of Rock Creek Park. It is within the valley of the creek that is heavily wooded and hilly. The property is bound on the north by Tilden St., N.W., and to the east by Shoemaker St., N.W. To the west lay the grounds of the Pierce Shoemaker property, once also part of the Pierce Plantation and to the south lay the grounds of the Hungarian Embassy. The site is marked on the west, south, and east by a modern chain link fence, and on the Tilden Street side by various stone retaining walls and earth berms. FIGURE # 1 & # 2.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☒ statewide ☐ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☐ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

Architecture

1811 - 1924

1811, 1851

Exploration - Settlement

1892, 1924

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Pierce, Isaac

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

A. Introduction.

The Still House has a local architectural significance as a representative example of a stone structure which originally formed part of a working mill and homestead of the early 1800s. Its exterior is a rare and almost intact example of a vernacular farm building which was built to be a distillery and later-- until its early 20th century conversion to a residence--was used as a barn. It is a rare example that reflect the rural character of this locale in early 19th century style. Several related structures constructed by the same builder survived and are adjacent to the Still House.

B. History of the Property

The Still House is primarily composed of a structure dating to 1811 and built as part of the Isaac Pierce Settlement along Rock Creek. Mr. Pierce was a land owner who had extensive holdings in this northwest section of the District of Columbia. The stone structure was originally built as a whiskey distillery, part of the Pierce Mill complex [*3]. FIGURES # 5, # 6 & # 7. The Still House is located southeast of the 1801

☒ See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Interviews:

National Park Service: Strach, Stephen G., Lead Park Ranger; and Hazen, Ted, miller; of Pierce Mill, Washington, D.C., December 2, 1988.

Sussman, Dr. Bernard J., present owner of the Still House; December 15, 1988.

Clark, James R., former owner of Still House; February 22, 1989.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

☒ See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☒ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other

Specify repository: National Archives,
Library of Congress,
Martin Luther King Library

The Historical Society of Washington, D.C.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property approximately 1/20 of one acre

UTM References

A

1	8
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3	2	2	0	8	0
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4	3	1	1	9	4	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The Still House compromises 0.26 acres and occupies Square 2231, Lot 803 in Northwest Washington, D.C. Please refer to FIGURE # 2.

☒ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary selected for the Still House is the currant property which was determined by the subdivision of the Pierce Shoemaker property in 1924 and the sale of the Still House to Dr. & Mrs. Kerr.

☐ See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By FRANCISCO J. MENENDEZ & CHARLES A. SZORADI

name/title (reviewed by RUSSELL V. KEUNE AIA, US/ICOMOS & CHARLES SZORADI AIA)

organization CHARLES SZORADI AIA Architect

date Sep. 1, 1989

street & number 128 G Street SW

telephone 202/ 488-1557

city or town Washington

state DC

zip code 20024

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Still House
Washington, D.C.Section number 7 Page 2**C. Building Description**

The original distillery building measures approx. 30ft x 45ft in plan, and it rises to three stories at the peak of its gable roof running north and south. The walls are of rough cut, regular stone courses, and the roof is of wooden shingles. A chimney is located at each gable end, and the roof eaves, though not prominent, project enough to show the open rafter ends. Copper gutters are located along both eaves with downspouts at each corner. The roof rafters and trusses are original to the building and similar in design to those found in the nearby mill and barn.

The north facade which faces Tilden Street, is an irregular two bay composition. It has one attic window, two windows at the second level, and two windows and a door at ground level. The ground level windows are of two different sizes; the one closest to the door is a single casement window while the other windows on this facade are all double casements. All the windows have operable wooden shutters which were added during the residential conversion. The street-facing door is made of wooden boards and is protected by a half-hipped wood shingle roof which is supported by two simple wooden posts. Directly below the peak of the gable is a stone inscribed with "1811 BIP." The date signifies the year of construction and the letters could signify "Built by Isaac Pierce" or "Betsie and Isaac Pierce."

The second floor of the east facade has three roughly equally spaced double casement windows with wooden shutters. At the ground level, there is an 8-paned glass door below the central 2nd floor window. This door is protected by an open gable roof supported by wooden brackets. Below each of the two lateral 2nd floor windows is a

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 3

Still House
Washington, D.C.

double casement, wood shuttered window on the ground level. There is an additional window at the ground level, near the southeast corner.

The south elevation is comprised of a gable end facade of two stories plus the attic. At ground level, there is a screened porch of wood and brick which dates to 1924 and is located toward the west corner. Near the eastern corner is a double, glazed door which was inserted within an original pre-existing opening of the Still House. The door leads to a paved terrace. On the second floor, the two existing windows occupy the original openings found on the distillery building. FIGURES # 5 & # 6. A double chimney is centered at the roof ridge and runs along the interior of the gable end wall. Copper downspouts, come down from the roof eaves at each corner of the south facade.

The two-story west facade is three bays wide, that are approximately equal in width. The center bay, is recessed by 6 inches from the flanking bays, and abuts the one-story wing addition. On the west side of the second floor there is a total of four windows: one double casement window with wooden shutters on each of the two flanking bays, two square windows at the middle bay, and one small dormer window at the attic. At ground level a wooden door is located close to the northwest corner.

An original basement sits under part of the first floor. It contains a spring whose waters were used by Isaac Pierce in producing brandy and whiskey. Today the spring drains into the storm drain.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 7 Page 4Still House
Washington, D.C.

When the original distillery was converted into a residence, a straight run wooden stair was placed near to the center, running perpendicular to the roof ridge line. The large living room takes up about two-third of the first floor plan with a large fireplace at the southwest end. The northeastern part was divided into an entry hall and a study. The study has a smaller fireplace at the northeast end wall. FIGURE # 8.

Four bedrooms are on the second-floor level, each occupying roughly a corner of the plan, along with two bathrooms on the west side. There is a central T-shaped hall running north and south, with its "cross bar" at the northern end. A set of stairs coming from below, and another going up to the attic, open onto this hallway. The larger bedroom, located at the southeastern corner, has a fireplace in the southwestern corner, roughly above the living room fireplace.

The one-story wing addition of 1924, which was built in the English Tudor style with half-timbering herringbone brick infill, serves as a connection to the slightly larger 1-1/2 story addition to the west. This building has stuccoed walls on the first floor and wood siding above with a gable roof running perpendicular to Tilden Street. It contains a massive brick chimney that divides the two parts of the wing. Both of these additions have wood shingle roofs that match the roof of the Still House.

A two section garage of more recent construction is further to the west joining the larger one-storey addition of 1924. The garage has two overhead doors and slate roof sloping down towards the street. The west half of the roof is stepped up, following the grade of the terrain.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 5Still House
Washington, D.C.

Although different in styles, the series of additions with their variable orientation and massing, seem quite compatible with the much more prominent Still House building of Isaac Pierce, and harmonize with the rustic appearance of the original building.

D. Specific Features

The interior of the Still House retains a number of original features, despite the 1924 alterations. What had been the hand-hewn floor planking of the loft was preserved and reused as flooring for the living room of the house. The most notable feature of the first floor are the two large beams, running east to west that supports the second floor and are visible from the living room, entry hall and study. The large living room fireplace occupies the approximate location of the original fireplace of the Still House. FIGURE # 8. At the time of the 1924 renovation, a mantel shelf made with wood from the pre-1814 U.S. Capitol, was installed. [*2] Between this fireplace and the southwest corner is a small door giving access to the screened porch of the south elevation.

In the attic the notable features are the large exposed original wood roof trusses with their wooden pegs and hand made nails. [*1]

The one-story 1924 addition to the west contains the large dining room. The most notable feature of this room is the west end with a large brick fireplace with its fossil hearth stones. To the north of the massive fireplace is the connecting doorway leading to the kitchen and garages addition further to the west.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 6

Still House
Washington, D.C.

E. Conclusion

Even though the original distillery has been expanded and has undergone substantial interior alterations, the major alterations were within the building and its exterior appearance has not been compromised but retained a high degree of its historic character and integrity. The Still House remains visually related to the nearby stone mill and barn buildings, all of which were once part of the Pierce property. FIGURES # 5 # 6 & # 7.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Still House
Washington, D.C.

Section number 8 Page 2

spring house and west of the 1820 mill and barn built by Mr. Pierce, all of which are part of Rock Creek Park and are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. In the context of the other Pierce structures, it is one of the few structures left from the early settlement of the District, in an area that has significantly evolved. FIGURE # 1. Of the approximately eight mills existing along the creek in the early 1800s, the Pierce Mill and its related structures is the only one that remained. More importantly, the location of the Pierce complex, being a few miles north of the busy port of Georgetown, where most of the other mills were located, indicates that this mill was oriented toward a more local trade and was not dependent upon the commercial traffic of Georgetown.

The blue stones used for the distillery building came from the upper Potomac River area. It was with these stones that Isaac Pierce built the distillery in 1811. The distillery, or "Still House," predates the existing Pierce Mill. When Isaac Pierce bought the property, it contained an older mill located slightly to the north of the present mill. In 1820, nine years after building the distillery, he built the present mill. Isaac Pierce died in 1841, leaving the bulk of his estate to his son, Abner Pierce. Upon Abner's death in 1851, the property passed to Isaac Pierce's nephew, Pierce Shoemaker [*4].

By the mid-1860's the old distillery building had already been converted into a barn. FIGURE # 6. Mr. Shoemaker held the entire property until the U.S. Government bought the part containing the mill and spring house in 1892 to include it in the newly-created Rock Creek Park. The land upon which the Still House and Pierce Shoemaker House now stand remained in the Shoemaker family & their descendants

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet****Still House
Washington, D.C.****Section number** 8 **Page** 3

until 1924 when the the land containing the Still House was sold to Dr. and Mrs. Hyland Kerr. Dr. Kerr proceeded to convert the old structure from its current state as a stable, into a dwelling. He consciously retained as much of the original structure as possible. The hand-hewn floor planking of the loft was used on the first floor and all of the existing beams and structural members were left in place. The successful care in conserving the building's appearance can be seen by comparing the photo of the building dating to 1916 FIGURE # 3 and the photo taken after the 1924 conversion. FIGURE # 4. One can see that Dr. Kerr retained the main body of the structure with one-story additions to the west and south, and with a few additional openings added to the original distillery that were compatible with the original character. In addition, the Kerrs incorporated a number of items into their new home which, though not directly connected to the Pierce property, add to the historical character of the building. For example, the mantelpiece boards are said to be part of the original capitol building burnt by the British in 1814, and the hearth stones are fossil samples showing footprints of historic creatures.

The Still House has been owned or leased by various prominent persons throughout its history. In 1954, it was leased by Mr. and Mrs. Sherman Adams. Mr. Adams was a former Governor of New Hampshire and Assistant to the President in the Eisenhower Administration. During the Adams' residence many guests of international stature, such as Sir Winston Churchill, visited the house. The Still House later became the residence of U.S. Representative William Miller. Mrs Kerr sold the house to Mr. Bruce G. Sundlum in 1963, who left it empty. In 1965 he sold it to Mr. James R. Clark who carried out further renovations. During the past 22 years since 1967 the Still House has been owned by Dr. Bernard J. Sussman who recently enclosed the south side screened porch.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

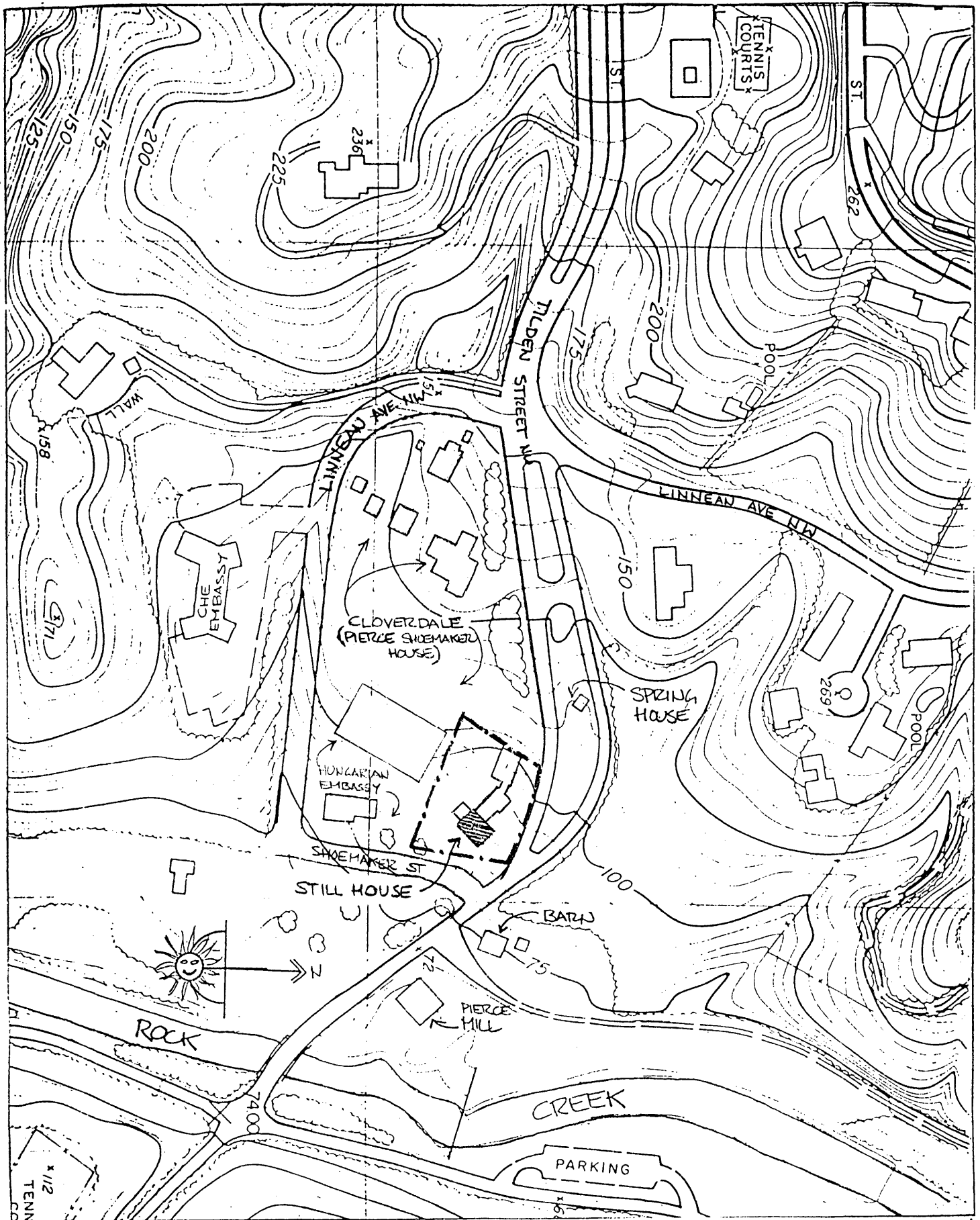
Section number 8 Page 4

Still House
Washington, D.C.

C. Conclusion.

The property is architecturally significant and retains a high degree of integrity in its location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association with nearby structures.

Due to the site's historical association with the earliest recorded owners of this property and the early industrial development of Rock Creek, it is likely to contain significant domestic archaeological resources from the early 19th century. To our knowledge, no investigation of this sort has been carried out.



SITE LOCATION MAP 1989

Derived from National Capital Planning Comm. Map # 5774

by Alster & Assoc. Washington DC 1973

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

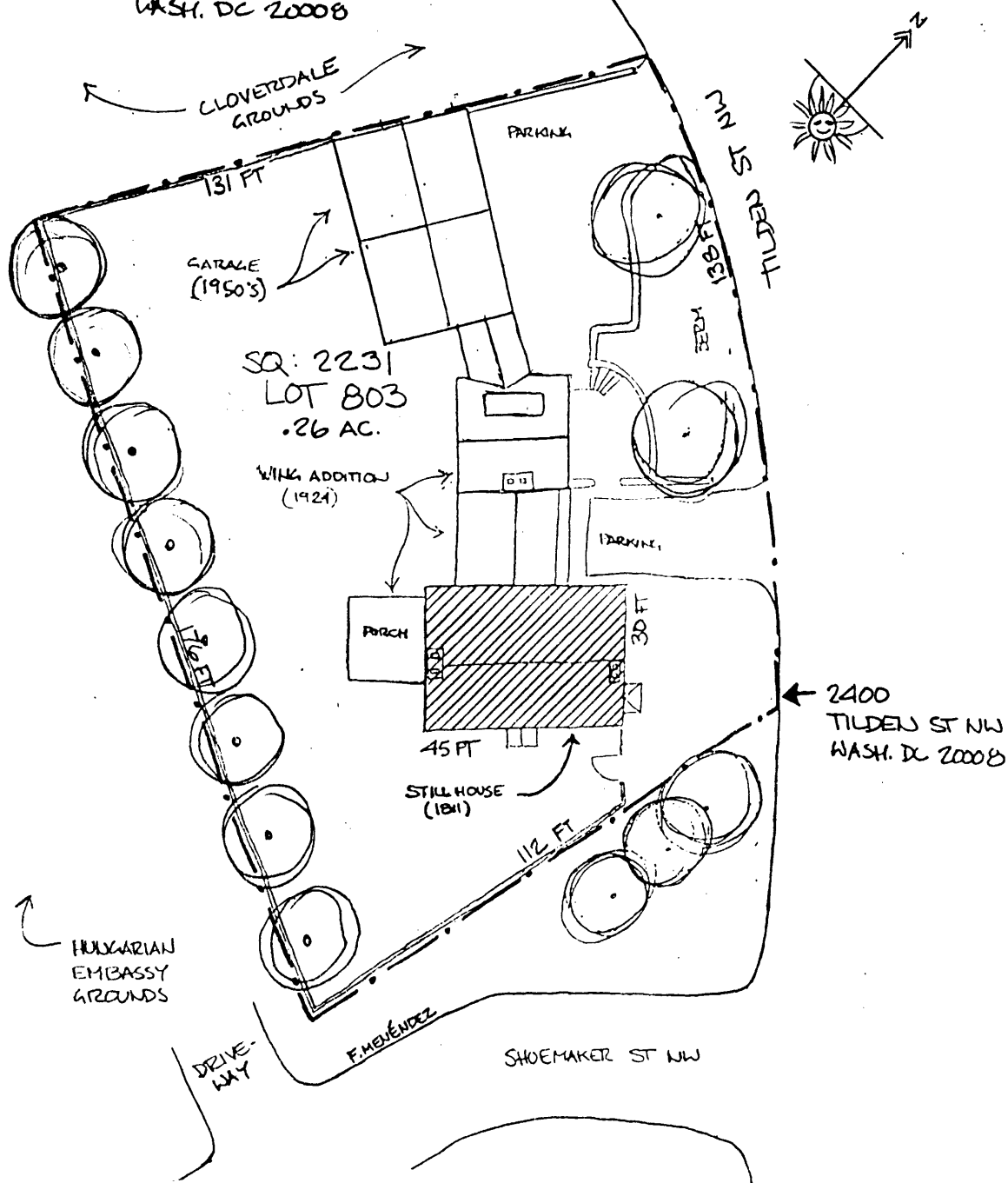
FIGURE # 2

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8. Page 6

Still House
Washington, D.C.

OWNER OF LOT # 803 (2400 TILDEN ST NW)
DR BERNARD J. SUSSMAN
2400 TILDEN ST NW
WASH. DC 20008



SITE PLAN 1989
(no scale)

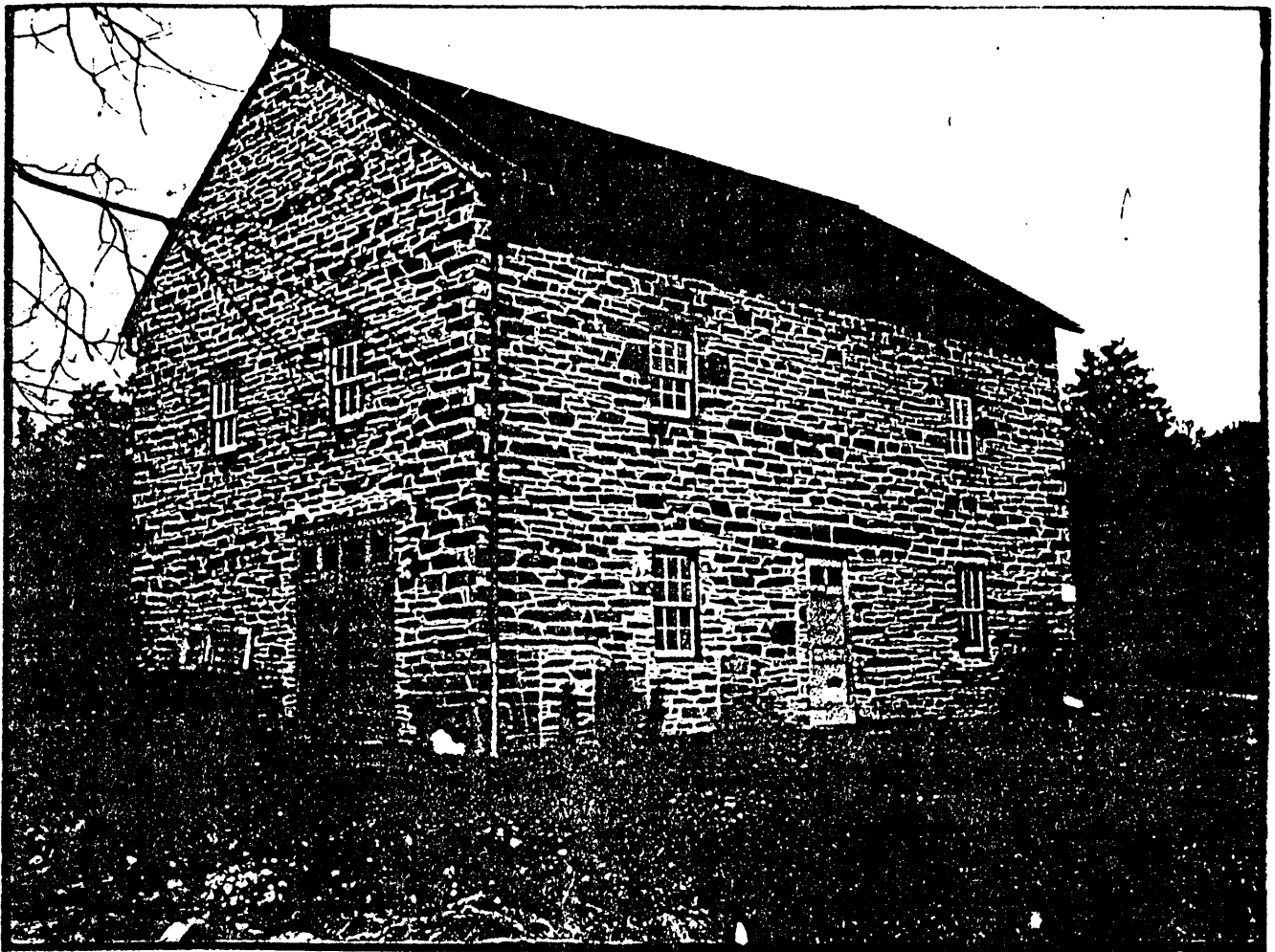
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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7

Still House
Washington, D.C.



Pierce Distillery/Barn 1916
view from Southeast

Rambler Collection,
Columbia Historical
Society

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

FIGURE # 4

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8

Still House
Washington, D.C.



STILL HOUSE 1966
view from Southeast

Columbia Historical
Society

VIEW FROM SOUTHEAST 1966



LOCATION MAP 1856-59

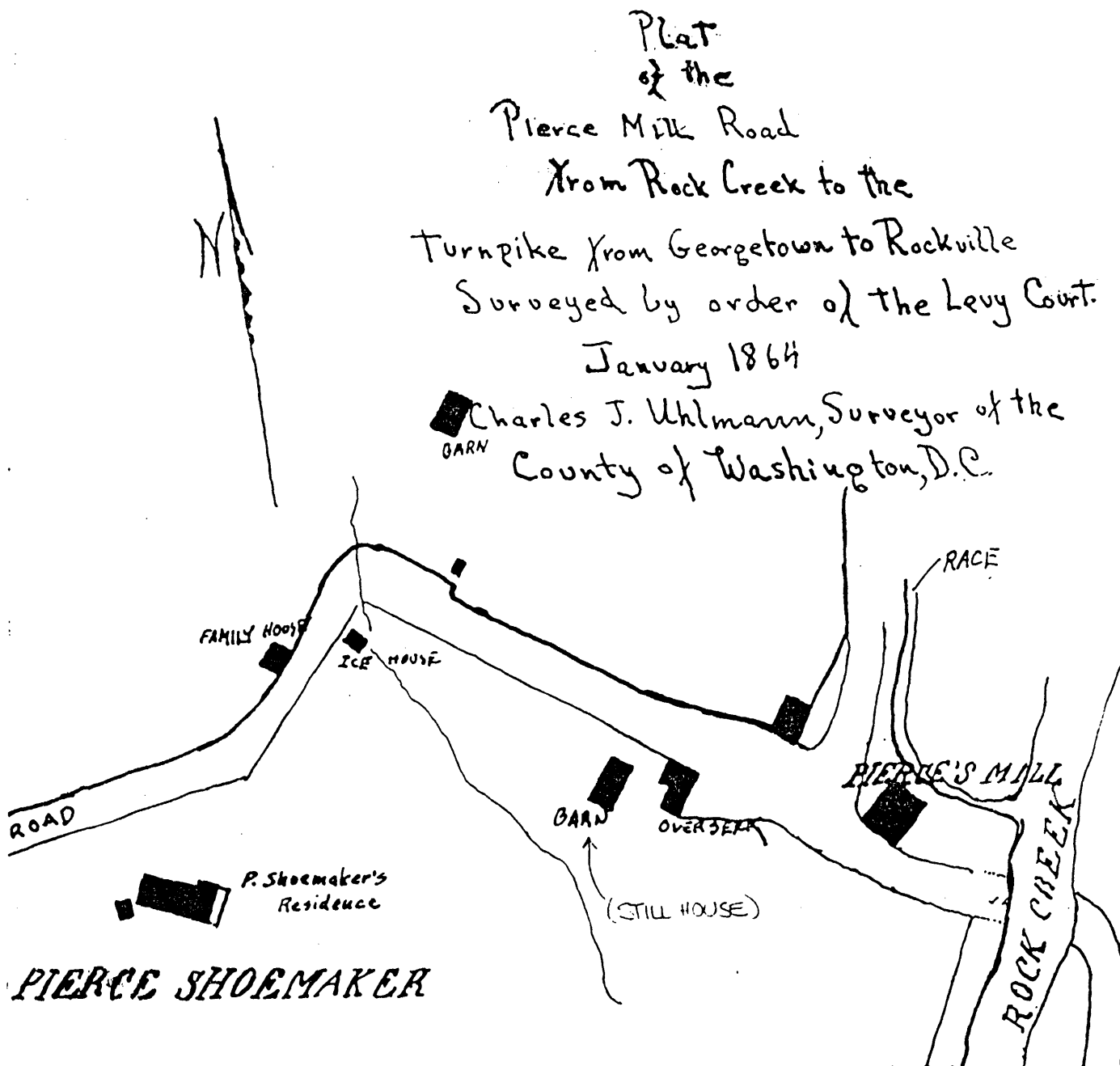
Excerpt from the Map of the District of Columbia, 1856; by A. Boschke
in the collection of The Library of Congress, Geography & Map Div.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 10

Still House
Washington, D.C.



LOCATION MAP 1864

Derived from Plat of Pierce Mill Road by Charles J. Uhlmann, Surveyor, 1864
in the collection of the Pierce Mill file, Nat. Park Serv. Wash. DC



LOCATION MAP 1884

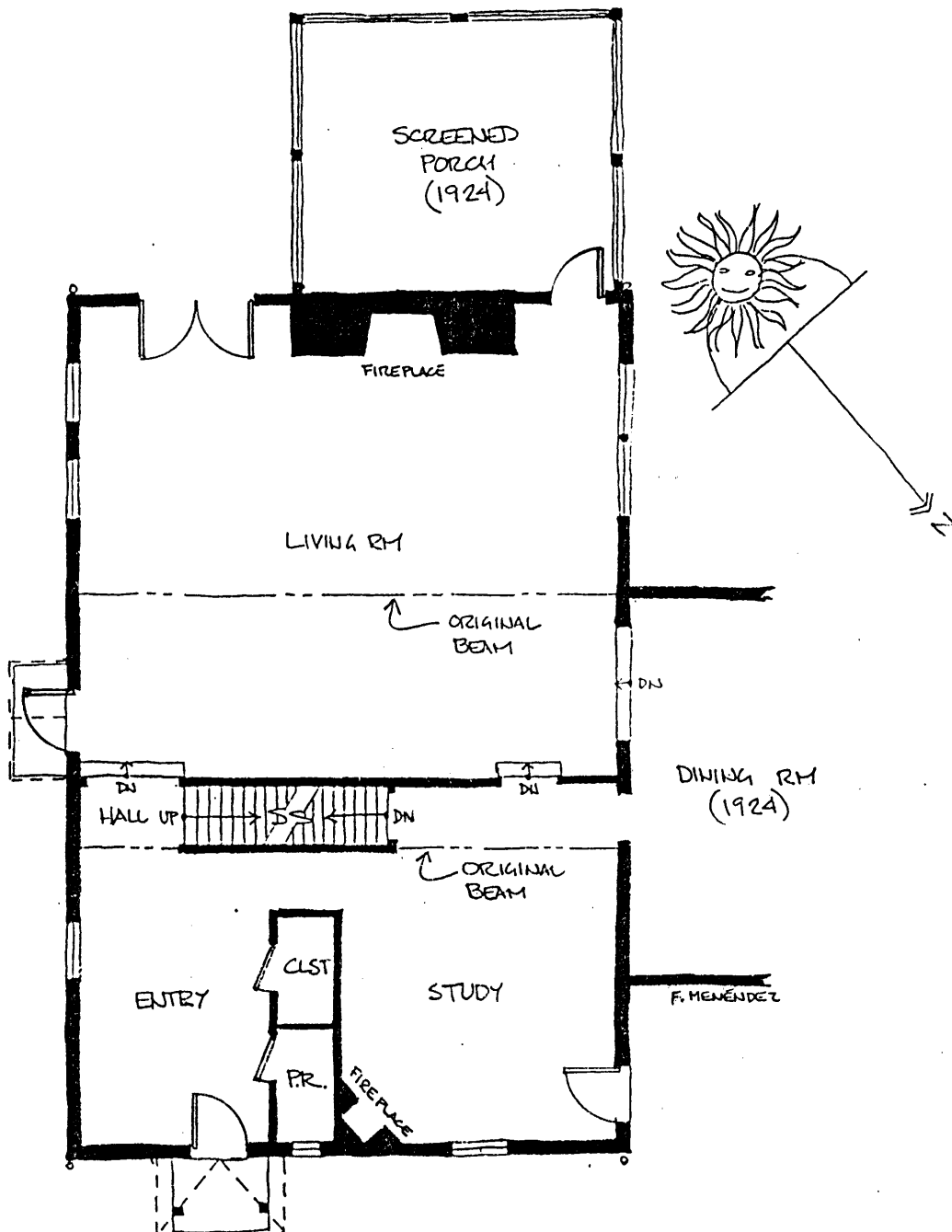
Excerpt from the Map of the District of Columbia, 1884; by Major Lydecker & Capt. Greene
in the collection of the National Archives, Cartography Div. Alexandria, Va.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 12

Still House
Washington, D.C.



FIRT FLOOR PLAN 1989
(no scale)

1/27/89

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 13

Still House
Washington, D.C.

REFERENCE NOTES
(Refers to both Sections 7 & 8.)

1. "Dinosaur prints on the Hearth"; Washington Star, July 10, 1966.
2. "Park is Locale of Sherman Adams Home"; Washington Star, Feb. 28, 1954.
3. "Pierce Plantation—Yesterday and Today," Term research paper by Lisa Koteen for Professor Pat Malone, Amer. Civ. Course, Brown University 1/16/73, Pg. 7
4. Ibid., page 10.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 9 Page 2

Still House
Washington, D.C.

Unpublished Material

1. Pierce Mill Nomination to National Register of Historic Places Inventory; by Nancy Taylor, Landmark Historian, Nat. Cap, Planning Comm., Wash. DC 2/27/69.
2. Historical American Building Survey Report No. DC-22; by Ruth E. Butler, Historical Assistant, 1936 (in the files of the DC Historic Preservation Department).
3. "Pierce Plantation-Yesterday & Today", Term research paper by Lisa Koteen for Prof. Pat Malone, American Civ. Course, Brown University, 1/16/73.

Published Material

4. "Dinosaur Prints on the Hearth"; The Washington Star, July 10, 1966.
5. Peter, Grace Dunlop & Southwick, Joyce D.; "Cleveland Park, An Early Residential Neighborhood of the Nation's Capital", Cleveland Park Community Library Committee, Publisher; Wash. DC 1954,
6. "Park is Locale of Sherman Adams House", The Washington Star, Feb. 28, 1954.
7. Shoemaker, Louis P.; "Historic Rock Creek", Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Vol. 2, Wash. DC 1909, Pgs 38-45.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 90001295

Date Listed: 9/6/90

Pierce Still House
Property Name

County

DC
State

Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Patrick Andrews
Signature of the Keeper11/8/90
Date of Action

=====

Amended Items in Nomination:

A technical correction has to be made to the nomination form. The property is nominated for Exploration/Settlement and Architecture, but only Criterion C is checked on the form. The form is now officially amended to add Criterion A.

DISTRIBUTION:

National Register property file
Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)