PREVIOUS ARCHEOLOGICAL AND ARCHIVAL WORK

Prior to the Phase III excavations recently conducted at the tavern site, Phase I and II testing had been carried out by Mid-Atlantic Archaeological Research (MAAR), Inc. (Thomas et al. 1980). These studies were completed in connection with the improvements to Concord Pike and included work at seven historic sites along the Pike, but with archeological testing only being carried out at the Blue Ball Tavern. Phase I testing at the Blue Ball Tavern site included surface collection in exposed areas and a 20-foot interval grid of test excavations made with a manual posthole digger. Concentrations of artifacts and architectural remains were recorded along the north side of the former tavern/house location and in the adjacent plowed field just to its north, beyond the high chain link fence separating these areas. The location of the remains of an outbuilding is shown on plan maps prepared for the report. Figure 5 shows the locations of the outbuilding and areas of artifact concentrations identified in the Phase I/II investigation.

Based on the results of these tests, several larger test excavations were made (Figure 6). Test 1 exposed what was assumed to be the southeast corner of the tavern/house foundation. In Test 2, it was hoped that the northeast corner of the foundation would be located, but a stone-lined well capped with concrete was discovered there. Tests 3 and 4 were excavated in order to locate the southwest corner of the foundation, thought to have been discovered in Test 4. However, the report stated that the foundation in Test 4 was a single course of stone deep with no builder's trench evident, and it was reported that subsoil was reached on either side of the stones (ibid.:27).

Four trenches were also excavated, three (Trenches 1, 3 and 4) in an area where the northeastern part of the foundation was expected to be and a cross-shaped trench (Trench 2) where an outbuilding was thought to be located based on a surface irregularity. Trench 1 revealed a shallow stone wall, interpreted as being part of the west wall, which was a single course deep and resting on subsoil. A second possible stone wall was reported about six feet east of this, although the drawings show a rather narrow row of stones. A third wall was reported running diagonally about three feet east of the second. A posthole was discovered in the east end of the trench. Trench 3 revealed a section of stone wall interpreted as being six and a half feet wide, although later excavations showed that an east-west section of wall in the rear wing had most likely been discovered. Trench 4 revealed a wall interpreted as being the north foundation wall. Both of these trenches were said to have revealed subsoil within and outside of the foundation. Trench 2 revealed a stone and brick structure filled with loose rubble. Modern bottles were discovered within the feature.

MAAR, in connection with the Phase I and II testing, completed some research into the historic records available for the Blue Ball Tavern site. Further research was conducted during a study for the widening of the Route 141 corridor. This work was done in 1989 by Thunderbird Archeological Associates, Inc. (Taylor et al. 1989) and included the history of ownership of the property and some research into wills, census records, tax

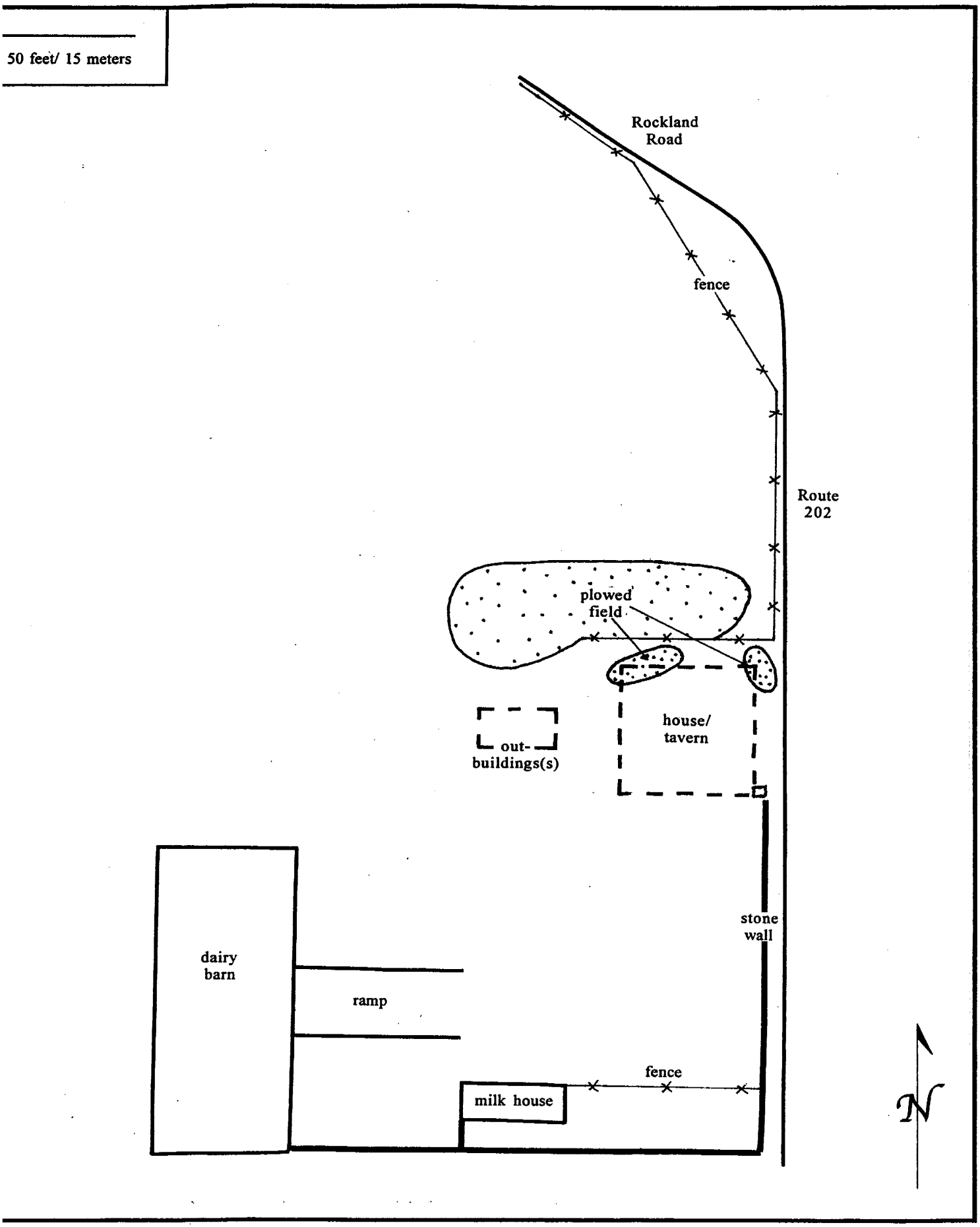


FIGURE 5
Plan View Showing Outbuildings and Artifact Concentrations Identified in thePhase I/II Archeological Studies (Thomas et al. 1980)

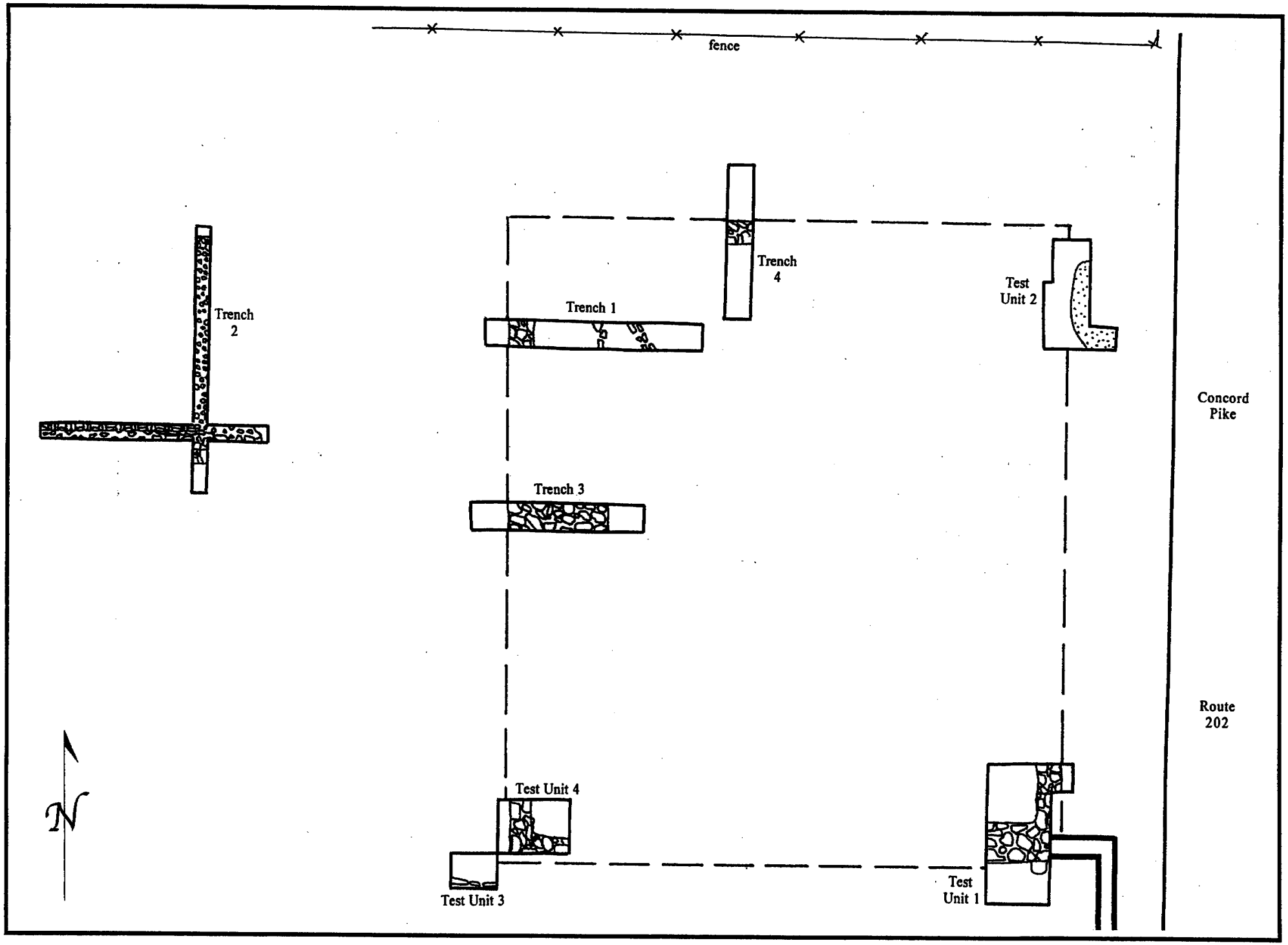


FIGURE 6
Plan Map Showing Phase II Test Excavations and Trenches

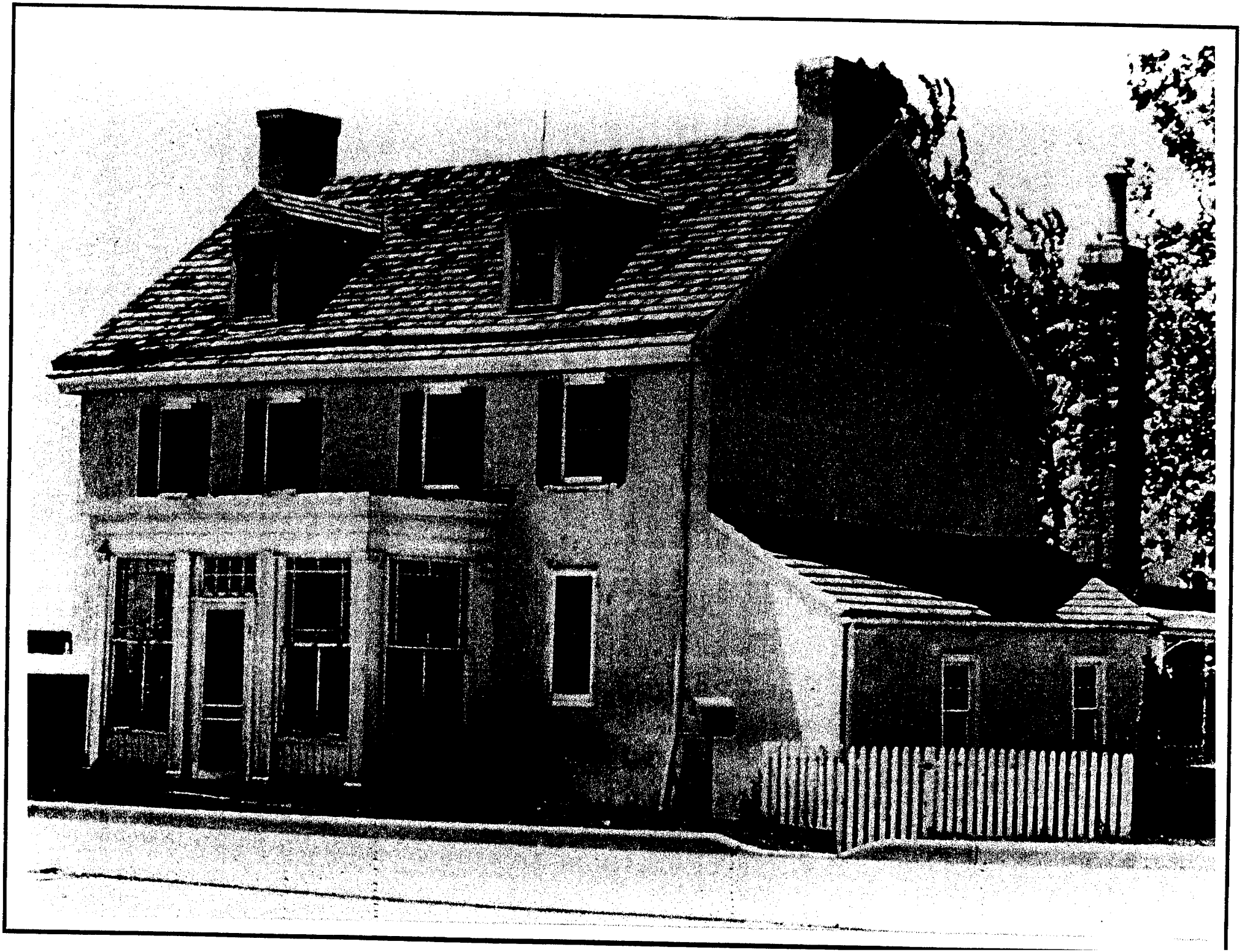
assessment records and historic maps. This report concluded that the tavern was in operation by 1808 at the latest and had been an inn or tavern until the 1840s, after which it became a tenant farm.

An Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) document for the Nemours estate was written in 1994 by the architectural firm of Kise Franks and Straw of Philadelphia (HABS No. DE-283). The Blue Ball Dairy and the Tavern site were part of Alfred I. du Pont's Nemours estate, and the standing dairy buildings were documented in this survey. According to this survey, the dairy serviced the Nemours estate from its construction in 1914 until about 1940, after which it was leased to Harvey and Ruthford Gooden, father and son, who ran the dairy and sold its produce on the market. Ruthford Gooden left the dairy in 1977; shortly after this the house and most of the outbuildings were torn down. The barn, milk house, and stone wall remain and, while they and the tavern/house site are part of the Nemours historic district, they are no longer included as part of the estate (HABS).

The architect of the Blue Ball Dairy buildings is unknown, in spite of research at several archives and institutions where other documents about the estate were examined. Even a search of the papers of Carrere and Hastings, architects of the Nemours mansion and still in the employ of du Pont in 1914, failed to reveal any drawings of the dairy buildings. One possibility is that his contractor, James M. Smyth & Son of Wilmington, helped du Pont design the structures and then build them. No documentation has been found to prove this hypothesis. It has also been speculated (Brizzolara 1989) that many of the structural elements are modeled after the specifications of Alfred Hopkins, a preeminent early twentieth-century architect; these specifications were published in his book *Modern Farm Buildings* in 1916. His work represents the most modern construction techniques of that time, and many of the features recommended in the Hopkins publication can be seen in the extant dairy barn. Correspondence dating to 1919 indicates that A. E. Whittington managed the farming and dairying for the estate. Ruthford Gooden, the last to run the dairy, was interviewed about changes to the farm that took place during his tenure there, but in this document his comments are limited to changes within the barn (HABS No. DE-283-A).

Aerial photographs that show the Nemours estate and the Blue Ball Dairy spanning the years 1932 to 1992 are included with the HABS form. Details of the tavern/house are not easily seen in these photographs. Perhaps the most informative photograph of the tavern/house was taken in 1955 and is available from Hagley Library (Figure 7). The photograph shows a two and a half story, four bay, side-gabled house with a partial length front porch that has been enclosed. There are two dormer windows on the front and interior chimneys at each end. There is a one-story shed-roof addition, and a one-story porch in the ell. The house is stuccoed, and the southeast corner meets the stuccoed stone wall that runs to the south along Concord Pike.

A two and a half story rear wing with a dormer on either side can be seen in a 1930s aerial photograph taken by Aero Service Corporation, available at the Delaware Historical Society. No additions or porches appear in the ell, and the northern one-story



addition is also absent. This picture also shows a front gabled structure with what may be a chimney located behind the house, as well as what appears to be a separate building on the north side of this structure. The large sycamore tree on the site makes this part of the picture hard to interpret. Behind these buildings is a very long, narrow structure or series of connected structures; also shown is the barn complex. A third photograph, also from the Delaware Historical Society collection, was taken from Foulk Road looking across Concord Pike. This 1930 view of an accident in the intersection also shows the house, the addition to the north end, the rear wing with one-story additions in the ell, and a chimney at the rear of the wing. The details of the outbuildings are not clear.