

DAVID PETTIT BARN
1566 Burrsville (Squankum) Road
Brick Vicinity
Ocean County
New Jersey

HABS No. NJ-1060

HABS
NJ
15-BRICK,
2-

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

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

DAVID PETTIT BARN

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LOCATION: 1566 Burrsville Road, Brick Vicinity , Ocean County, New Jersey.

USGS Lakewood, New Jersey Quadrangle
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates:
18.573480.4436759

SIGNIFICANCE: The Pettit Barn retains the requisite integrity of design and materials, and the frame, its most important feature as a utilitarian agricultural structure, is largely intact. The barn clearly is a representative example of its type and of traditional braced-frame construction and, in a local context as Brick Township rapidly loses the vestiges of its rural past to rapid suburban development, has significance as a rare surviving example. In the larger context of coastal New Jersey, the barn is an important example of the use of ship-building materials in non-marine construction. Authorities on the region's vernacular architecture and water craft have indicated that there appears to have been a tradition of such practices, but that examples are quite rare. A hotel (no longer extant) and a house in what is now Island Beach State Park are said to have been constructed from ship timbers. An examination of pertinent historic site surveys and cultural resource assessments suggests that the Pettit Barn is the only known New Jersey example of this practice in the construction of agricultural buildings. On another level the Pettit Barn sheds light on the widespread tradition of the construction of houses by shipwrights; it provides clear evidence not of shipwrights building houses, but of the use of ship-building materials in a non-marine context.

DESCRIPTION: Located on the east side of Burrsville (Squankum) Road in Brick Township, the Pettit Farmstead consists of a small house and barn, both modest frame structures of 19th-century date. The barn's frame, little impacted by recent alterations made to the structure, is a rare example of the incorporation of ship-

building timbers into traditional braced frame construction.

The Pettit House faces the road with a short set back. Its main block is a two-story, gable roofed structure with an irregular four-bay fenestration, single-pile two-room plan, and north gable-end chimney; at the south end on the rear is a small modern one-story appendage. The main block evidently dates to the middle of the 19th century and was built in two parts. It bears a close resemblance to several Brick Township houses whose construction the 1980 Ocean County Historic Sites Survey attributes to that period. Modern machine cut nails, a type of nail first widely available in the 1830s, are found throughout the house. That the northern half of the main block was built first is apparent from the construction of the foundation and the roof. Only the northern portion has a full brick cellar, and the framing of the original south gable, which now divides the attic, retains many of the modern machine-cut nails employed to attach clapboards to its south side. The cellarless south extension is quite similar in construction and detailing to the original unit and probably was added not long after the latter was built. The house has been remodeled on more than one occasion, and the alterations of more recent years, including the rear addition, have resulted in the loss or the obscuring of much early fabric, thus seriously compromising its original integrity of design and materials.

While the main block's basic form and fenestration pattern survive, nearly all visible exterior fabric is modern. Although the brick foundation and possibly the chimney stack of the northern half of the house are original, the foundation of the southern half has been rebuilt in cinder block and the south gable-end chimney removed. Asbestos shingles cover the original clapboard siding, and the roof whose overhanging eaves appear to have been rebuilt is clad with asphalt shingles. The three-bay front porch is of

modern construction, and the windows and doors have been extensively reworked. On the first-story front both end-bay windows and the original unit's central entry have been blocked-up. The south entry's door is a replacement, as are the frames and sashes of all of the main block's windows except for the four-light attic window in each gable. Double windows have been inserted on the south gable end and rear elevation.

The interior of the main block also exhibits extensive reworking, most of which probably occurred in conjunction with the addition of the rear appendage which houses a kitchen and bathroom. The cellar under the north end of the house, accessed by an entry hatch at the rear, has brick walls laid in the common bond with a lime and sand mortar. Two small brick piers support the north gable-end chimney. The floor of the room above is framed with hand-hewn, clear-spanning joists which appear to be joined to the hand-hewn sill with mortice and tenon joints. On the first story, the north room has modern tongue-and-groove flooring, sheet rock walls and ceilings, modern door and window trim, and a rebuilt fireplace; the south room has similar finishes except that in the recent remodeling the ceiling joists and some of the wall studs were exposed to create a rustic effect. A portion of the rear wall was removed to open the room to the new kitchen, and perhaps in an attempt to reinforce the floor above, new timbers (dressed to appear hand hewn) were bolted to two of the original clear-spanning saw-cut joists. Nail holes in the joists indicate that the ceiling was plastered. That the exposed second-story flooring has been patched at the south end of the room suggests that a chimney and perhaps an enclosed staircase were located in that area. The open staircase at the north end of the room is modern.

All of the finishes of the second story south room are modern, as those of the north room except for the floor and ceiling. The north room retains random-width, tongue-and-groove flooring, and in the ceiling the small,

widely spaced, saw-cut joists of the attic floor are exposed, probably the original treatment as there are no nail holes in the joists. At the north end of the room, the attic floor boards between the joists have been covered with sheet rock; at the south end, a hatch provides access to the attic. The small saw-cut rafters framing the roof are connected at the peak with nailed miter joints. The northern half of the attic is whitewashed.

The frame barn is located a short distance north of the house and set perpendicularly to the road. A three-bay English barn of braced-frame construction on a brick foundation, it probably dates to the mid-19th century and most likely was erected by David Pettit, to judge by the initials "D.P." carved on several of its beams. The renovations made in the 1970s include a poured-cement floor slab, a top course of cement block on the foundation, and new asphalt-shingle roofing and clapboard siding (earlier siding or sheathing remains on the north and west walls beneath the modern clapboards). The central entry on the north side was closed and the one on the south side sized down; the latter and its two flanking entries were fitted with cross batten-doors. The frame, however, remains essentially intact except that the sills appear to have been replaced in part, diagonal braces were removed from the lower portion of both main trusses for the insertion of a floor at loft level and the lower half of the south post of the west truss has been replaced with a member assembled from small-dimensional lumber. Iron tie rods also have been installed, connecting like rafter plates from rafter plate to rafter plate in alignment with both trusses.

The barn's braced frame is constructed of both hewn and vertically sawn timber, and incorporates a number of spars. Most of the larger members are hewn and the top-hewn poles were employed for the rafters; the studs and diagonal braces are saw cut. Each of the main trusses has two horizontal

members joined to the post at both ends with a diagonally braced, mortice and tenon joint. Spars were used for both upper members. Apparently yards from a small coastal schooner, the spars measure about twenty feet in length, tapering from the middle where they are octagonal in section to round ends. Both bear the marks of having been fitted with iron collars. Another spar, possibly a mast, appears to have been used for the central portion of the north rafter plate; the member is octagonal in section at its west end where it is connected by a long lap joint with the timber forming the west end of the plate. A shorter spar, also octagonal in section, was employed in the west gable end for the central post between the top and middle girts.

The initials "D.P." carved on several of the barn's framing timbers, including the spar of the west truss and the north post of the east truss, presumably are those of David Pettit who established his homestead farm in 1836. That the initials on the post are perpendicular to the ground and on the spar upside down strongly suggests that they were carved before the frame was erected. Client's initials may well have been used by the carpenter preparing the frame as a mark to distinguish it from other orders.

HISTORY:

The David Pettit farm is situated in north-central Brick Township on Burrsville (Squankum) Road, northeast of the Metedeconk River. A thorough analysis of primary documents illustrates that David Pettit purchased three tracts totaling 55 acres between 1833 and 1836 in what was then Howell Township, Monmouth County. The farmhouse was probably built by Pettit around 1836 on a five acre parcel that was purchased along with a 20 acre tract from Jeremiah Brand in 1836.

The growth of Burrsville (Laurelton) on the Metedeconk river about one mile south of the Pettit farm, and the development of the regional economy in this period may have influenced Pettit's site selection.

Burrsville was established in the early 19th century as a mill and forge settlement. The Burrsville-Squankum Road (now known as Burrsville Road) was laid out early in this period as an overland connection between Burrsville and the mill settlement of Squankum.

David Pettit's farm was a small-scale operation. Although he enlarged the farm in the second half of the 19th century, no more than 38 acres were described as 'improved' on the various agricultural censuses. Pettit practiced a mixed form of agriculture, combining livestock raising with crop production. At its height, the Pettit farm had land on both sides of the Burrsville-Squankum Road, and a parcel of salt meadow on the Metedeconk River.

Census data and miscellaneous records indicate that David and Maria Pettit had at least seven children. The last child was born in 1849. The growth of the Pettit family can possibly shed light on when and why the southern section of the Pettit farmhouse was built. Since census data indicate that the number of people in the household did not increase after 1849, it is suggested that the southern section of the Pettit farmhouse was constructed between 1836 and 1849.

David Pettit worked his farm until at least 1880, when he was 68. Pettit died between 1895 and 1901. The farm was either left to his heirs or became their possession after his death. Two of the original three land purchases, which totaled 25 acres, remained in the Pettit family until 1912.

In 1912 the David Pettit farm was sold to Laurelton Farms, Inc., as part of their consolidations for a poultry farming enterprise. The Pettit farm was one of five parcels bought by them in the establishment of an approximately 90 acre farm. Laurelton Farms was one of the first poultry farming businesses to be established in Brick

Township. In 1930 the same five parcels were sold to another poultry farm.

In 1936 the five acre Pettit homestead lot was sold to Herbert Bing of Jersey City. The lot is currently 3.60 acres.

SOURCES:

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Ocean County Cultural and Heritage Commission, New Jersey Historic Sites Inventory: Ocean County, Toms River: Ocean County Cultural and Heritage Commission, 1981.

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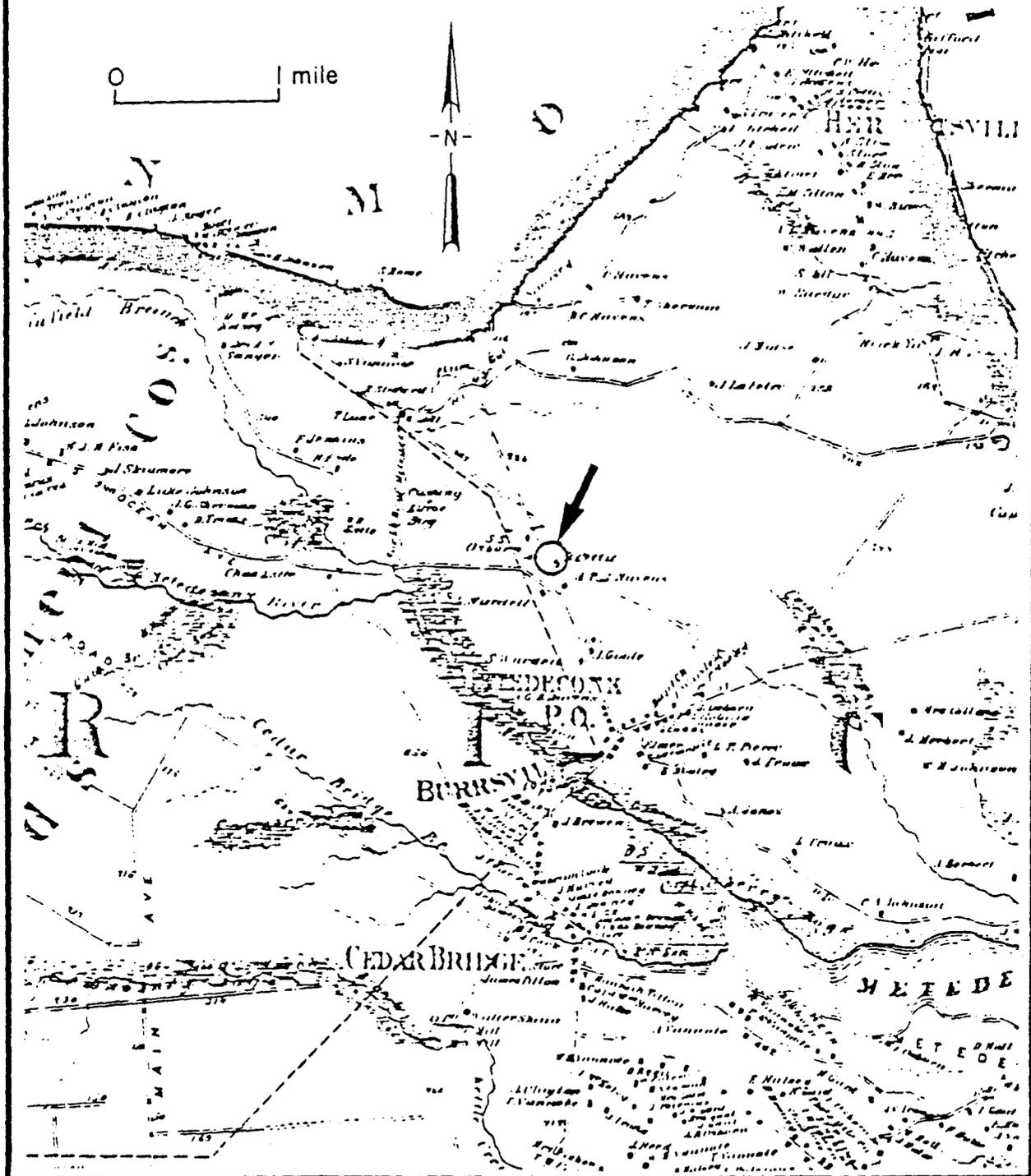
United States Census, 1840 Monmouth County, Howell Township; 1850-1880 Ocean County, Brick Township.

HISTORIANS:

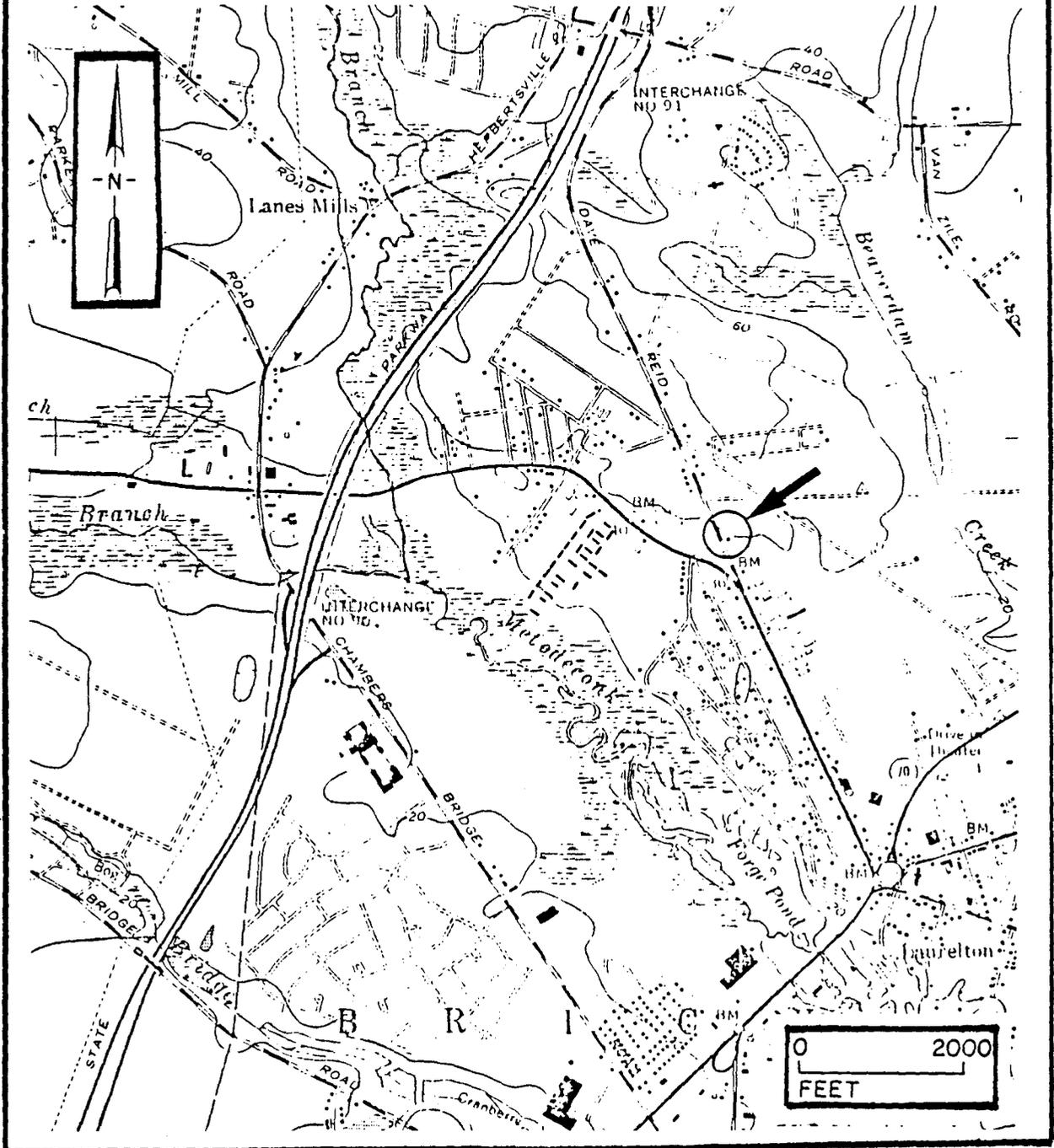
Dennis N. Bertland, Bertland Associates, Port Murray, New Jersey.

Richard C. Grubb, Richard Grubb & Associates, Inc., Cranbury, New Jersey.
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F.W. Beers, Topographical Map of Ocean County, New Jersey, 1872.

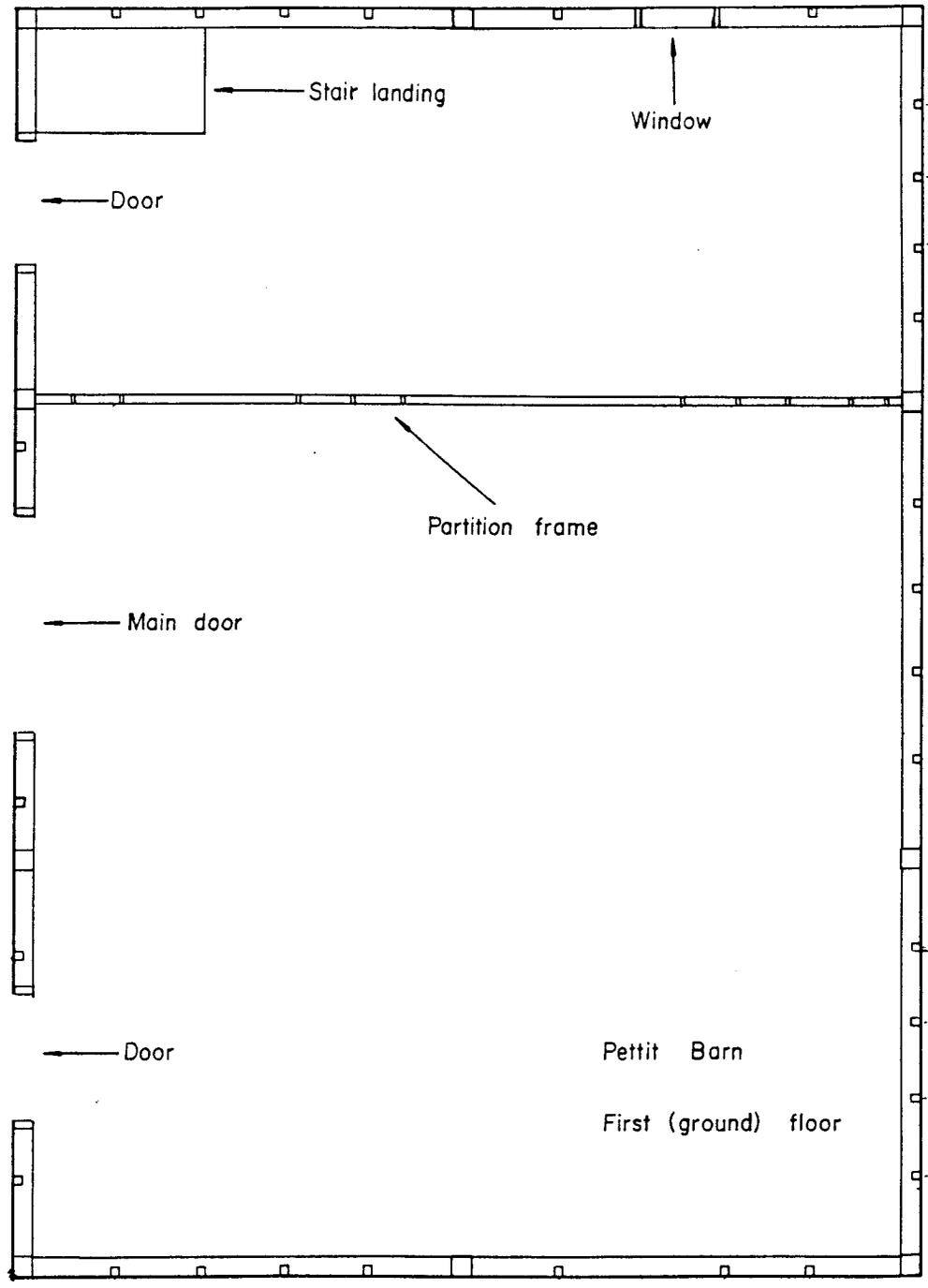


U.S.G.S. 7.5' Quadrangle: Lakewood, N.J. 1954 (photorevised 1971).





Plan of first floor





Plan of second floor

