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THE EASTMAN HOUSE IN FARMINGTON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Text by Murle A. Corson
Photography by Gladys G. Redlon

1958

Nehemiah Eastman bought of John Mead three-quarters of an acre of land in 1810. On January 23, 1813, he bought from Dr. Benjamin Libby for \$700, one acre and twenty-one rods with buildings, as lot 105, drawn to the rights of William Ellis. This was the so called Jonas C. March property. Dr. Libby acquired the same property from a David Reynolds in February, 1804. Records show that Mr. Eastman added to his property again in 1815 by buying land from Dr. Libby.

The Eastman house was built probably in 1813. The following description was found in a Dover paper four years after the death of Nehemiah Eastman: "Up for sale, 2 story house, 20 by 40 ft., an L 20 by 40 ft. adjoining, a T 20 by 40 ft., one story, in which is a well of excellent water. A stable 30 by 40 ft. connected to the house by a shed or work room, painted and blinded."

The house today has ten large rooms and bath, two long halls, a pantry, six fireplaces with evidence of another fireplace in the kitchen, and several large closets.

The front section of the house has a central hall. On entering the front door, one is impressed by the graceful staircase leading to the second floor and by the carvings around the doorways, along the staircases and on the moldings.

At the left side of the hall, one enters the parlor, a room formerly set apart for gracious entertaining, weddings and funerals. If this room could talk, it might tell us of the gatherings there of the leaders of the town, community and state.

This room is more elaborately carved than the hall or living room. The eye is drawn to the beautiful fireplace with the small pillars at the side, so delicately and gracefully carved. One wonders if this

work was done by skilled labor in the town or by labor imported from the coast, or perhaps the panelling itself was brought here. The Indian shutters are another interesting feature of this room. One set of the shutters can still be closed.

The living room, at the right of the hall, has a more modest tiled fireplace with carvings on the wood work, simpler, but very lovely.

The kitchen is unique with recessed windows made by the very thick outer walls which were probably planned for added warmth.

A portico was built over the front door sometime during the first fifty years of occupancy. In 1879, George N. Eastman, son of Nehemiah, built a new fence in front of his residence. Much later, a double piazza was put on the south side of the house.

A house without some knowledge of the people who lived in it, is cold and lifeless. Let us note some of the interesting facts about the property and its early owners.

On the land where the Eastman house now stands, was built, as early as 1770, a log house occupied by one Berry, probably the first house in town. It was under this house that legend tells us of the burying of the Indian Paugus by a man named Chamberlain.

After the battle of Lovewell's Pond in which Chamberlain shot the celebrated Indian Paugus, his son, Paugus, Jr., wished to revenge himself upon Chamberlain who kept a mill in Rochester, New Hampshire. One night some of his friends came and told him that Paugus had appeared in the village and they thought that he meant some harm. Chamberlain did not feel afraid, but, as night approached, he took the rifle which he had taken from Paugus, Sr., after he shot him and went down under the mill after he had hung up his hat and coat in an open department in the mill.

At length he saw Paugus approaching. Paugus, seeing the hat and coat in the dusk, and supposing it to be Chamberlain, fired. At the same time, Chamberlain fired and killed Paugus. At that period of our history, if a white man killed an Indian, it created war, so Chamberlain wished to remove and bury the body without being observed. With the aid of a few of the mill hands, Chamberlain took the body to the part of the town later called Farmington and buried it under the house then standing on the present site of the Eastman house. (This was taken from an account on Farmington written in 1887 and pasted in the scrapbook made by Henry A. Tibbetts and given to his mother, Mrs. George F. Tibbetts, It was dated April 7, 1887.) (Also given in the History of Rochester, N.H.)

The second frame house in town was built by Jonas C. March sometime before 1792. Mr. March built a store near his house which afterward burned.

After Mr. Eastman acquired the Jonas C. March property, he sold the house to Josiah Edgerly. As Mr. Edgerly proposed to move the house whole, Mr. Eastman found that it must be moved through his garden (the thought of which he couldn't endure) or the front poplar trees which he prized must be cut down, or his shed must be torn away. He tried to buy back the house, but in vain. Of these three evils, he chose that which seemed the least, and decided to tear down the shed.

When the new house was framed, Ned Chamberlain, the poet of the neighborhood, was called upon for the christening ceremony, but unfortunately Ned was drunk. He was brought up, however, and being allowed to support himself over a brace, began as follows:

"As for Nehemiah, he is both lawyer and a squire
 But the moving of the house he did dread,
 And, without any discretion, he fell into a passion
 And swore he would tear down his shed."

At this stage of the proceedings, Eastman made his appearance with a green hide in his hands and quickly putting to rout the drunken poet, ended the ceremony. It is said that this was the first house built in this part of the country without being named.

A few facts concerning the Eastman family were recorded by Nehemiah's great-grandson, J. S. Hackney of Point Marion, Pennsylvania.

Nehemiah Eastman was born in Gilmanton on June 16, 1782. He married Anstress Woodbury, daughter of Peter Woodbury and sister of the Honorable Levi Woodbury, former Secretary of the Navy and Treasury, also Governor of our State.

To this union were born these children:

- 1-Charles, born-----died in Peoria, Illinois. He had a large family.
- 2-Martha Ann, born-----, married Rev. Mr. Curtice who taught in the Gilmanton Theological Seminary and later became pastor of a church in Tilton. At this time the couple lived in Sanbornton. They had one child, Mary Esther, born 1853, died 1868.
- 3-George, born January 20, 1820, died April 28, 1892. Married Ellen Gilman of Laconia. They had no children.
- 4-Henry Patrick, born March 16, 1826, died July 13, 1894. He married Mary Porter. He practiced medicine in Merrittstown, Pennsylvania. They had seven children.

A few highlights of the first family to live in the Eastman house as gathered from the "Farmington News" are as follows:

"Mrs. Eastman, an excellent lady, had a Sabbath school in the dining room in 1829 and gathered a few of the neighbors' children to teach with her own.

"The old school courtliness and suavity, the bright ebullition of

wit, the play of humor, the friendly debate, the cheerful 'golden gossip' were features of the gracious hospitalities of the Eastmans."

The Honorable Nehemiah Eastman represented his district as a member of Congress and held other important offices.

Nehemiah Eastman was a very active man. He owned several outlying farms and kept a large number of sheep. He had two or three barns on his home lot at one time, but they have since been removed.

At the upper end of his land, stood his law office, long since burned. Here were held nearly all the justice trials of the day, before John Wingate, Esquire. It was a long, low, one-story building with a country store occupying the north end of it. The doors to the office and store were side by side. Just above the store stood a horse shed.

From the papers of the late "Squire Eastman" which were preserved by his son, is selected a yellow sheet dated August 12, 1826, which says: "We agree that we will contribute toward the support of a school to be taught by Miss Moody of Sanbornton, in the schoolhouse near Jeremiah Dame in said Farmington and commenced as soon as may be, for a length of time not exceeding twelve weeks, our equal proportion according to the number set against our several names, only it is to be understood that the expense of said school shall not exceed nine pence for each school."

Squire Eastman's carriage was taxed two dollars in 1814 (Certificate of a carriage chargeable with the yearly tax of 2 dollars, No. 72). "This is to certify that Nehemiah Eastman of Farmington in the County of Strafford, the second collection district of N. H. has paid the duty of two dollars, for the year ending the 31st day of December next, for and upon a two wheel carriage for the conveyance of persons, hanging on Wooden Springs called a chaise owned by said Eastman.

"This certificate is to be of no avail any longer than the aforesaid carriage shall be owned by the said Eastman unless said certificate shall be produced to the Collector by whom it was granted, and an entry be made thereon specifying the name of the then owner of said carriage, and the time when he or she became possessed thereof.

Given in conformity with an act of the Congress of the U. S. passed on the 24th day of July 1813.

Hatevil Knight

Collector of Revenue for the Second Collection District of New Hampshire Rochester third day of March 1814."

The following deals with the settlement of the estate of Nehemiah Eastman.

"To settle a claim of \$18,505.46 to 88 creditors the house and personal property had to be sold.

"At auction on Jan. 7, 1862, George Eastman bought the Eastman house for \$2,330, the goods and chattels as invoiced for \$1972.84."

The personal property is listed as follows:

"Entire Law Library and Books about 400 volumes. The family Library of about 260 volumes. Book cases and office Furniture, 2 cook stoves, a Hay Fork, Manure Fork, Ax, Barn Shovel, Hoes, Wood Saw and Horse, Rakes, Wheel Barrow and Sled, Wash Tubs, Wash and soap tubs, Fail and Keelers, Meat Barrels, Cider and Vinegar Barrels, large tub for Orange Plant, lots of Stone and Earthern Ware, several dozen of Juice Bottles and other glass bottles and vials, lots of old Iron and Iron hoops, large Iron Kettle, cheese Safe and Hoops, Snow Shoes, Window Blinds, Saddle and Bridle, Oil Cloth carpet, 2 pews in the village meeting house, 1 pew in the Baptist Meeting House, a lot of old boards and lumber, together with many other articles not mentioned."

The Eastman house remained in the Eastman family until the death of Mrs. George Eastman on October 29, 1896. Her brother and heirs held the property for four years until they sold on September 7, 1900 to Cora Thomas. Mr. and Mrs. Thomas lived in the house for two years. On December 19, 1902 Cora Thomas sold to Wilbert Starrett who in turn sold to William A. McWirk.

William A. McWirk sold to Edward Willson January 9, 1903.

Edward Willson sold to Hazel R. Crossley October 9, 1922.

Hazel Crossley sold to Bessie and Grover Hayes July 1, 1927.

Bessie and Grover Hayes sold to the present owners (1958) Eva and Carl Blanchard May 14, 1929.

COPY OF LETTER TO Miss Murle A Corson from J. S. Hackney, dated 11/6/1957

November 6, 1957
Fort Marion, Pa.

Miss Murle A. Corson
16 Spring St.
Farmington, N. H.

Dear Miss Corson:

The history of the Eastman House I cannot give to you. I talked with my Aunt (Mrs. Fowle of Uniontown) the other day and she did not have any information in regard to the house. I looked through some of my mother's old papers and there was nothing in them. As you probably know the original Eastman was "Roger" born in Wales, England in 1611 and died in Salisbury, Mass., Dec. 16, 1694. He was married to Sarah Smith born in 1621 and died in Salisbury, Mass., March 11, 1697. Roger Eastman and his wife had 11 children. Our ancestor comes from the tenth child whose name was Samuel, born Sept. 20, 1657 and died Feb. 27, 1725. He was married twice - 1st, Elizabeth Scriven, and 2nd, to Sarah Fifield. He had twelve children of which Samuel Junior was the sixth child, born, Jan. 5, 1695 and died in Kingston, N. H., Dec. 20, 1753. He was married to Sarah (Brown Clough widow of Ezekiel Clough). He had seven children of whom Ebenezer was the sixth.

Ebenezer Eastman, born April 24, 1746, and died in Gilmanton, Oct. 27, 1794. He married Mary Butler, born 1756 and died Oct. 10, 1836. He was a lieutenant in Stark's Brigade at the Battle of Bunker Hill. From here originates the poem "Mary Butler's Ride". Ebenezer and his wife, Mary, had eleven children as follows:

ABAGAIL born in 1775 and about 1 yr. old when she died
(Some say it was the child she took on her ride)
EBENEZER born Jan. 12, 1777
STEPHEN born Nov. 21, 1778
SAMUEL born Mar. 12, 1780
NEHEMIAH, born June 16, 1782, married Anstress Barker Woodbury
died Jan. 11, 1856. Anstress Woodbury was a daughter
of Peter Woodbury and sister of the Honorable Levi
Woodbury former Secretary of the Navy and Treasury
SALLY, born June 21, 1784
IRA ALLEN, born Sept. 25, 1780 ?
POLLY, born Jan. 10, 1789
SHUAH, born June 10, 1791
DOLLY, born Aug. 5, 1793
WILLIAM, born April 29, 1796

The children of Nehemiah Eastman (also an attorney) are as follows:

- 1-Charles, born-----died in Peoria, Illinois - he had a large family.
- 2-Martha Ann, born-----married Rev. Mr. Curtice, resided in Tilton, N.H.
- 3-George, born Jan. 20, 1820, married and lived in the old house -
no children born to this marriage.
- 4-Henry Patrick, born in Farmington, N. H., March 16, 1826. Read
medicine and graduated at Jefferson Medical College with
the class of 1847. Came to Fayette County, Pa., and located
at Merrittstown, Pa. He married Mary Ported and they made
their home in Merrittstown, Pa. Dr. Eastman died July 13,
1894. His widow died June 14, 1929. Dr. Eastman and his
wife had the following children:

- 1-Anstress Woodbury, married Asbery R. Struble of Masentown, Pa. They had one child, May Smith Struble - single & still living.
- 2-Thomas Nehemiah Eastman, a physician, married Jane Hogatt Bathdul? & still living in Uniontown, Pa. They had two boys: Thomas Eastman Husted and Walter Bugh, Jr.
- 3-Anna May married Dr. Jacob S. Hackney. Both dead. Four children. Virginia, married to Wm. W. Tanney of Detroit, Mich., still living. One adopted son. Henry Eastman Hackney, an attorney, married Elizabeth Pendleton of Connellsville, Pa. Both living. They had 3 sons, namely, Henry Eastman, Jr., Reed and William. Mary Hackney, married to W. J. Davidson - now resides in Connellsville, Pa. They had two daughters, Virginia and Margaret Jacob Sidwell Hackney, Jr. married Margaret J. Liggett of Washington, Pa. They have two daughters, namely Mary Elizabeth Hackney and Martha Suzanne.
- 4-Martha Jane Eastman, daughter of Dr. Henry died 1878
- 5-Dr. Henry Eastman, Jr., was physician, specializing in diseases of the eye. He married Evelyn Gates of New York. No children. Dead.
- 6-Ellen Maria Eastman married George M. Rathmell of Brownsville, Pa. Both dead. They had two children namely, George, Jr., and Elizabeth Rathmell - both dead.
- 7-Nora Blanche Eastman, married Ennest Fowler of Uniontown. They were married a short time when Mr. Fowler died. No children. Mrs. Fowler is still residing in Uniontown.

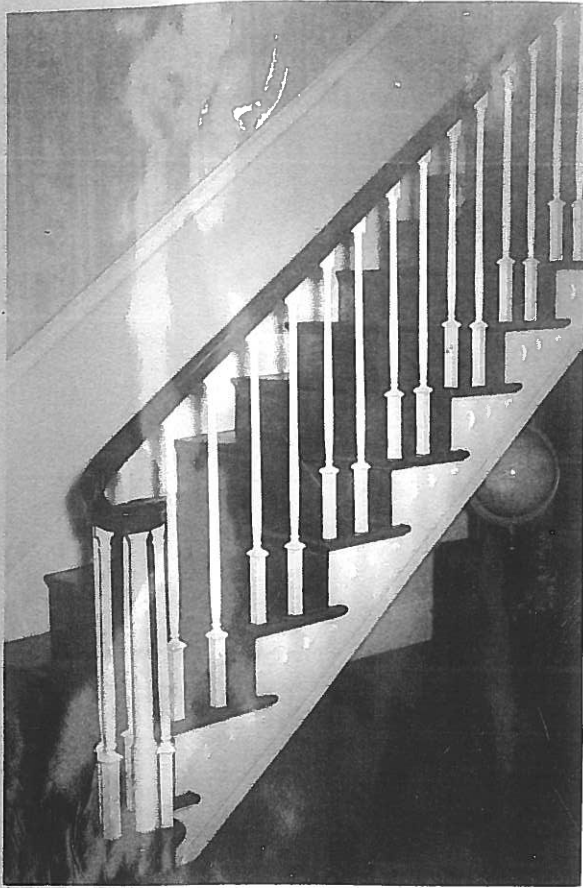
I hope that the information may be of some use to you. I am sorry that I am unable to give you more information about the old Eastman Home. I could give you some information as to the children - grandchildren and great grandchildren of Dr. Henry Patrick Eastman.

I myself am trying to compile a genealogy of our own family the Hackneys and have traced it back to London prior to the 1600's. I also have a fair history of the Woodbury family who came to America in 1629. John Woodbury the first settler was one of the first proposers of the Bay Colony. I also have quite a number of letters written by Nehemiah Eastman to his son, Henry, when he was in medical school. I have never gone through all them as I just got a hold of them about one year ago.

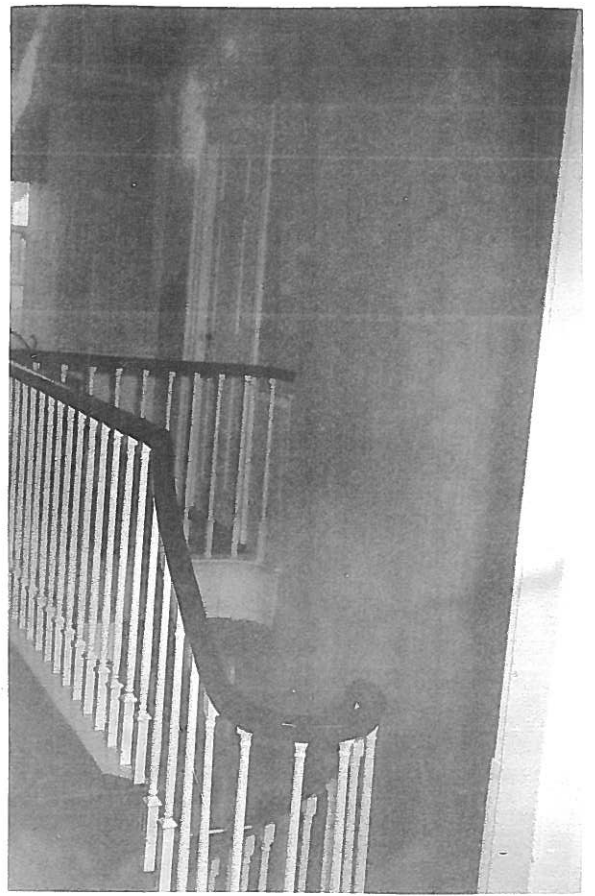
This last summer I enjoyed my trip through the New England States, this being my first trip up there. I have heard my Mother and Father speak of the old Eastman home for years and I have always wanted to see it. I believe my sister, Mrs. Tanney was up at one time.

Yours

J. S. Hackney



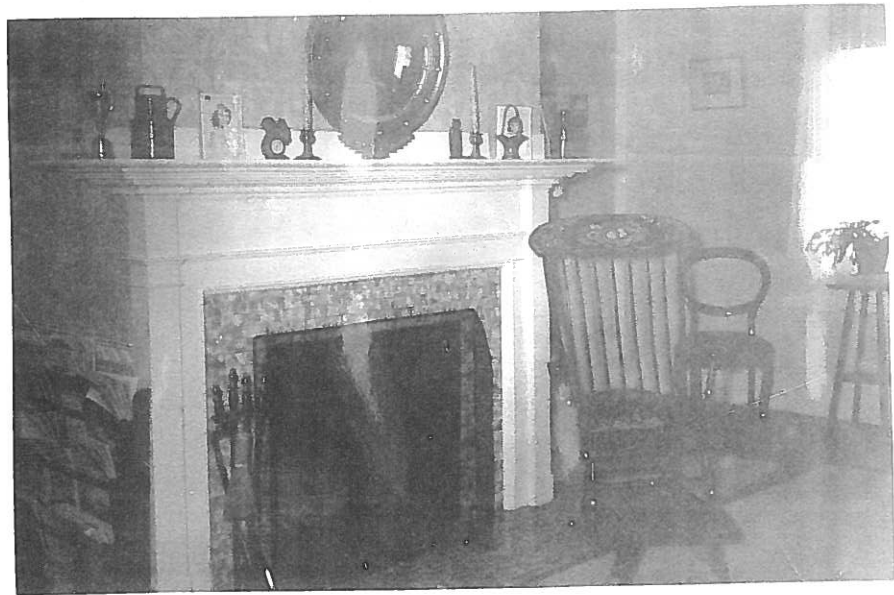
Staircase from
lower hall



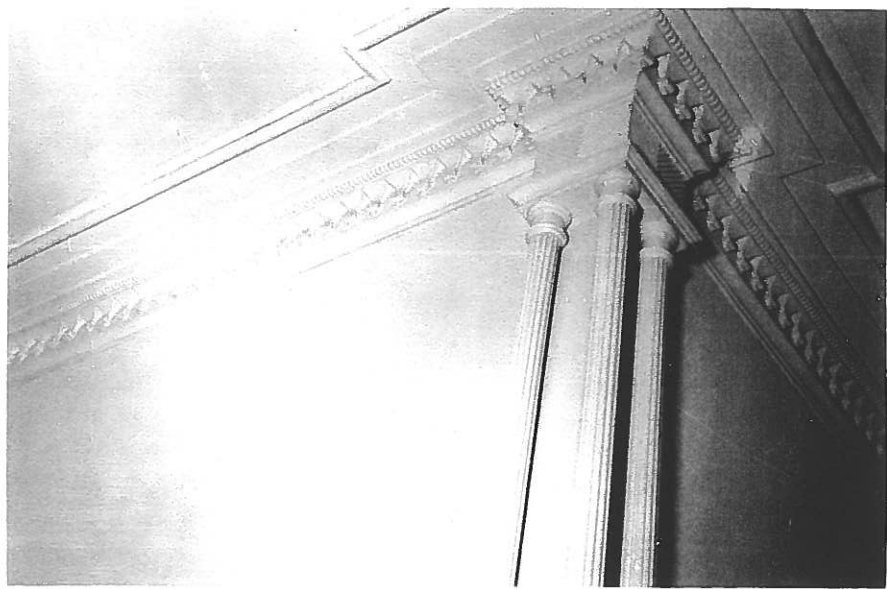
Staircase from upper hall



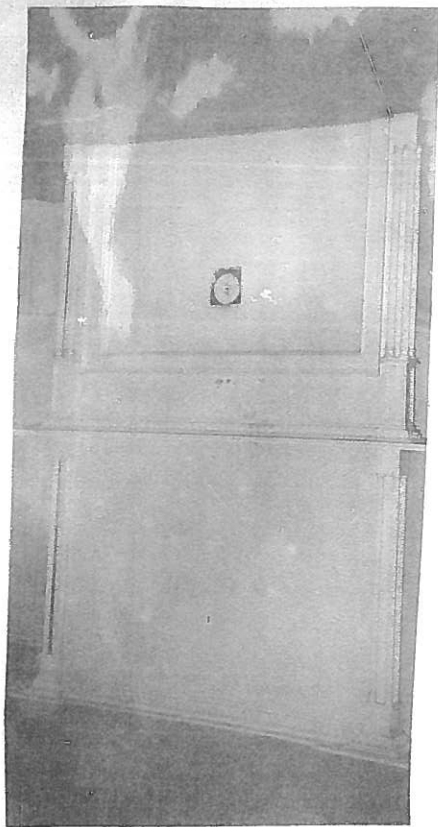
Parlor Door



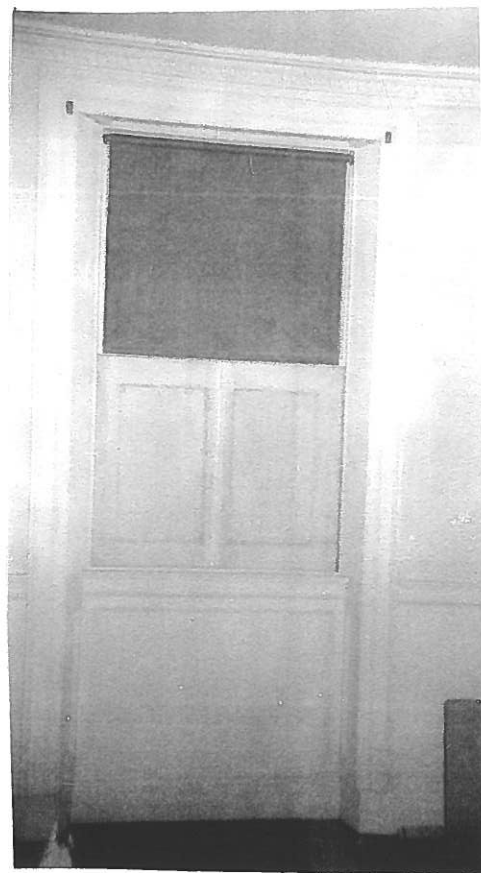
Living Room



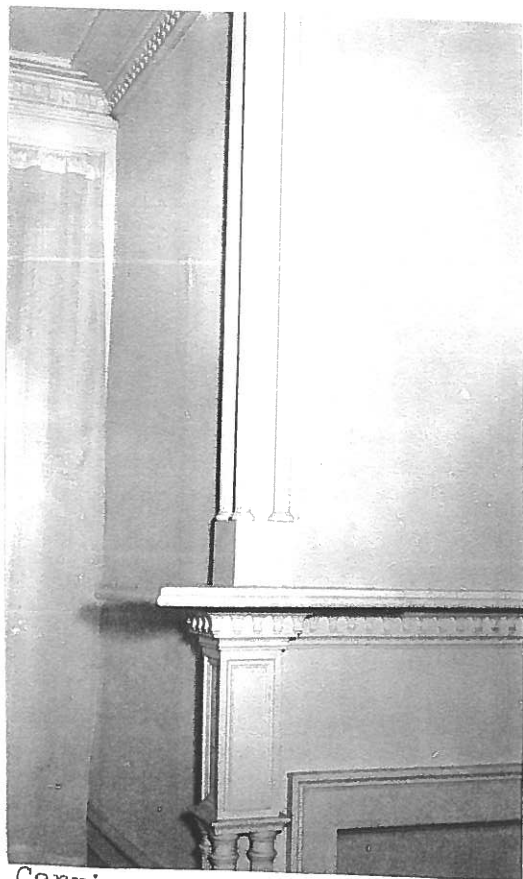
Carved Cornice



Fireplace in parlor



Indian Shutter in parlor



Carvings around parlor fireplace



Decorative window