

C. Synthesis

The Trenton House property enjoyed a rich and varied history extending over more than two centuries. The basic outline and key events of this history are discernible in the documentary record (see above, Chapter 5A). The architecture of the buildings still standing on the property in 1987 and the buried remains investigated in the former hotel yard give this history an uncommonly real substance, highlighting the intensity of land use on the property and helping to unravel its complex development as a residential and commercial entity.

In many respects, the history, architecture and archaeology of the Trenton House property present a microcosm of growth and change in the downtown core of the capital city. The property was established as a separate town lot within one of the original city blocks by at least the mid-1740s. Until the very end of the colonial period the property remained undeveloped and in the hands of the Morrisises, one of Trenton's wealthiest and most influential early families. A fine brick town house and attached kitchen wing were erected in the mid-1770s and, from the outset, these premises also included a commercial element in the form of a store on the first floor. During the final quarter of the 18th century the property was owned by a number of prominent local figures, including John Reynolds, a paper manufacturer, Barnt DeKlyn, a merchant, and William Churchill Houston, a politician and lawyer.

The property continued to support a combination store and dwelling until 1824 when this structure was converted into a tavern or small hotel and became known as the Trenton House. In the late 1830s the commercial potential of the property increased with the arrival of rail and canal transport corridors in Trenton and the eventual establishment of a railroad terminus in the northeast corner of the Dunhams Block. Robert F. Stockton and Philemon Dickinson (both prominent in the development of rail and canal transportation within the state) and then the Camden and Amboy Railroad and Transportation Company held the Trenton House property during this period and the hotel premises were apparently expanded at some point during their ownership terms.

The hotel enjoyed its peak of popularity, however, during the second half of the 19th century when it was owned and managed by Peter Katzenbach. Three major expansions of the premises took place in the third quarter of the century, leaving only a small yard in the center of the lot as open space. During this period the hotel ranked among the very best in the city and hosted numerous important political figures and celebrities. By the turn-of-the-century the hotel had passed its peak and by the 1920s it was much reduced in size as a result of much of the first floor space

being converted to serve in other commercial uses. By the mid-1960s the hotel was closed and the property entered the final stages of decline, culminating in the demolition of the buildings in late 1987.

In the following pages, through a synthesis of archival sources, historic architecture and archaeology, the history of the property is reconsidered in terms of its physical development and changing use of space.

1. Townhouse, Store and Tavern, c.1775-1830:

Prior to the mid-1770s, while owned by William Morris, the Trenton House property appears to have existed as an open yard or garden lot or perhaps even as a small field. The well-mixed soils and possible plow scars at the base of the archaeological stratigraphic sequence indicate that the property was tilled during this period. The plow marks run north-south, suggesting that cultivation may have taken place before 1746, when the narrow Trenton House lot was part of a large parcel, and perhaps even before 1736, when Morris Alley (the forerunner of East Hanover Street) was formally laid out.

Sometime between 1774 and 1778 a two-story, Georgian-style, brick town house and a one-and-a-half-story frame kitchen wing were built, probably by Israel Morris, the son of William Morris. These two structures filled the lot's entire North Warren Street frontage, with the brick house occupying the corner of today's North Warren and East Hanover Streets (Figure 5.15). No visible traces of the kitchen wing remained in 1987 and this structure appears to have been removed in its entirety during the mid-1850s hotel expansion program (see below). The brick house, however, survived in much-altered form within the four-story structure that was created as part of the same mid-1850s expansion.

The most obvious exterior indications of the survival of this late 18th-century residence were in the north facade of the building, where the roof line and gable-end chimney of the original two-story structure could be seen, and in the second floor of the front (west) facade, where the original fenestration pattern was still visible. Inside the building, there were very few traces of the original structure at basement and first-floor level, although the massing of the southeast corner of the house still appeared to survive (Figures 5.1 and 5.2). The clearest interior traces of the late 18th-century structure survived at the second-floor level, where much of the back (east) wall of the house, with two of its window openings, had been incorporated within the larger 19th-century hotel building. As indicated by both the architectural evidence and the documentary record, this house contained four rooms to a floor and followed a standard Georgian center-hall plan.

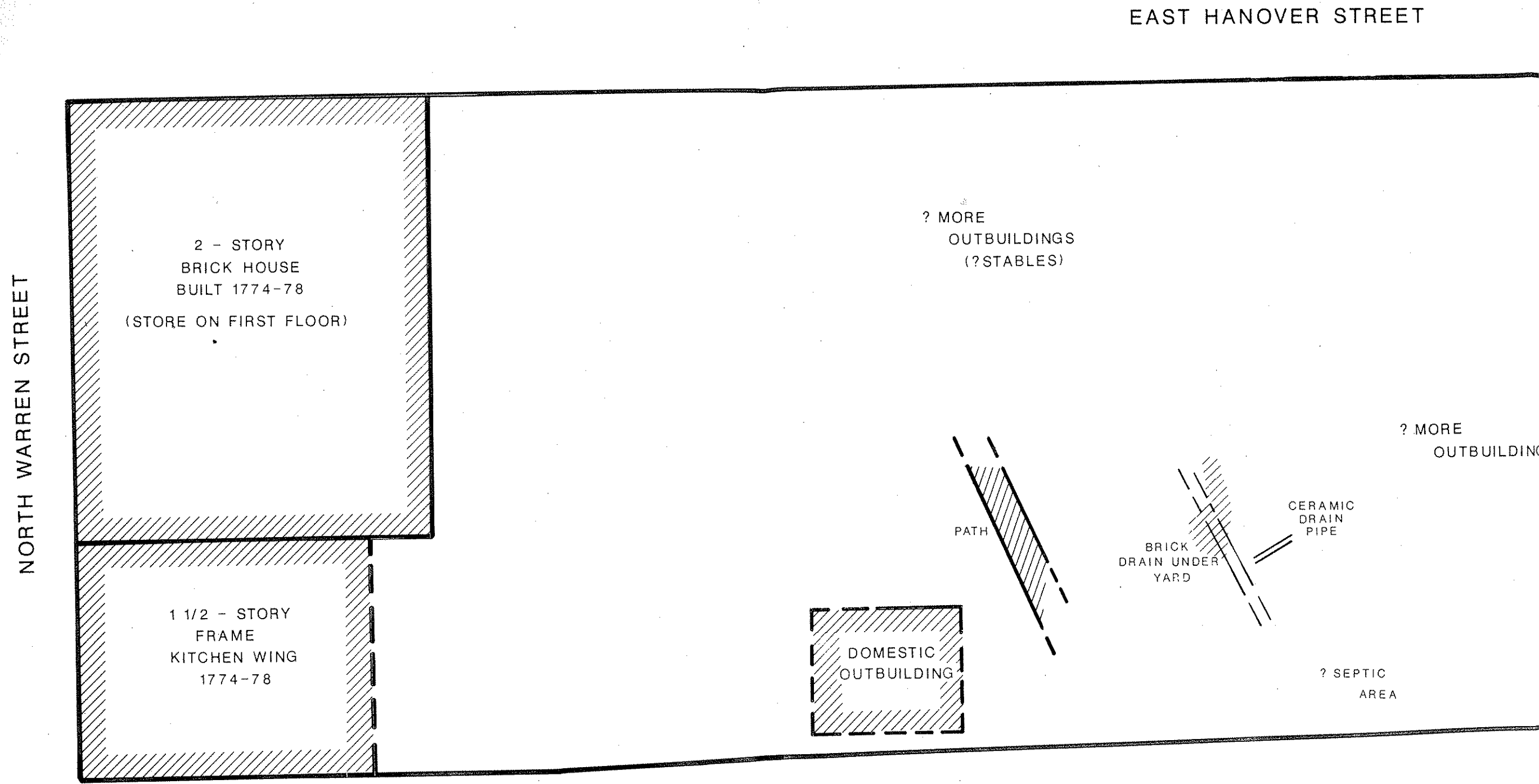
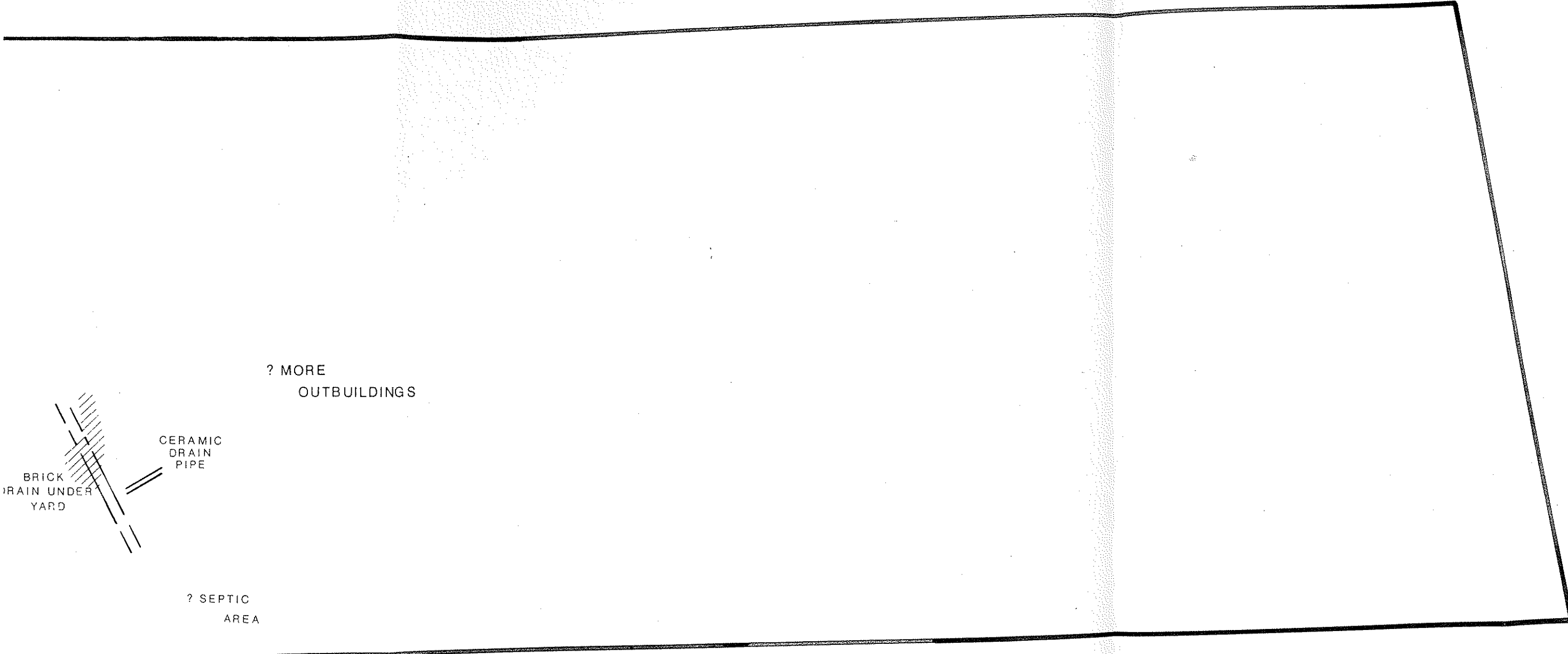
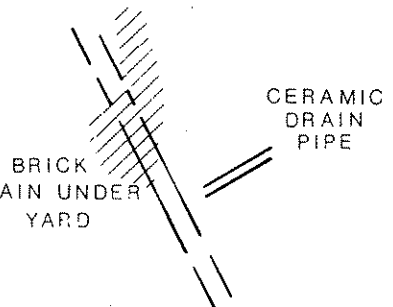


FIGURE 5.15. TRENTON HOUSE, CONNECTICUT

EAST HANOVER STREET



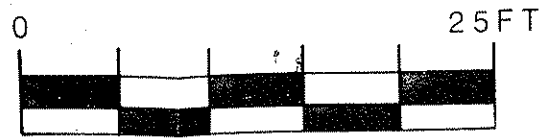
? MORE
OUTBUILDINGS



BRICK
DRAIN UNDER
YARD

CERAMIC
DRAIN
PIPE

? SEPTIC
AREA



TRENTON HOUSE, CONJECTURED SITE PLAN, c 1775 - 1830

No other above-ground evidence was found for structures dating to the period circa 1775-1830. For this initial period of the property's occupation, however, archaeology was able to supplement the architectural information to good effect. Not only were the original mid-1770s construction levels (with associated artifacts) identified in the stratigraphic sequence within the hotel yard, but various additional features of the property were discovered. The site of a small domestic outbuilding that probably dated from this period was encountered roughly 40 feet to the rear of the house. The principal evidence for this structure took the form of a rubble-filled trench which reflected the robbing of the building's foundation sometime in the mid-19th century. The function of this outbuilding is uncertain, although it may have been a smokehouse, wash house or outkitchen.

Less than ten feet northeast of the outbuilding a section of a brick walk was uncovered that ran diagonally across the property from northwest to southeast. Some 20 feet further east a brick drain was exposed which ran parallel to the brick walk. The pitch of the drain was from northwest to southeast, while a smaller ceramic drain pipe apparently fed into this main drain from the northeast. These features suggest the presence of other outbuildings in this general vicinity, and it is hypothesized that a stable block (known to have existed during this period from the documentary record) may have been located along East Hanover Street to the northwest of the path and drain. Another outbuilding may well have been located to the northeast of the smaller ceramic drain pipe. The pattern and pitch of the drains also implies that cisterns or a septic area of some sort existed at the southeastern end of the larger brick drain on the site of the later ice house.

In terms of the volume of archaeological deposits, the principal stratum related to the circa 1775-1830 period consisted of a deep layer of garden or yard soil. Well-mixed and clearly cultivated, this layer produced a diverse assemblage of domestic artifacts (including domestic and imported ceramics and glassware), which reflect the material culture and life ways of this middle- to upper-middle-class residential and commercial property.

Structures and features other than those alluded to above undoubtedly existed on the Trenton House property in the circa 1775-1830 period, but later building had removed all above-ground evidence of these. Other relevant data may have survived below ground, but total archaeological excavation of the yard was not possible and, again, later land use, even within the yard, severely limited the potential information yield. It is hypothesized, however, that the most likely area for additional structures would have been along the East Hanover Street frontage, an area that was thoroughly redeveloped in the 19th century.

It is not known whether the establishment of the Trenton House as a hotel in 1824 involved any major new construction on the lot. While it is possible that a small wing may have been appended to the rear of the building to provide additional space for accommodation, no documentary or field evidence has been indicate that this ever occurred. Indeed, the documentary record and subsequent development of the property suggest that the tavern or hotel of the mid-1820s was probably confined within the original house. Joseph Bispham, the first proprietor of this tavern, died in 1832, heavily in debt to John Savage, the owner of the property. It seems unlikely that this unsuccessful owner-proprietor team would have expended money and effort building on any major additions. As discussed below, it is far more likely that the first major expansion of the hotel took place in the 1830s.

2. City Hotel in the Early Railroad Era, c.1835-54:

Robert F. Stockton and Philemon Dickinson apparently acquired the Trenton House property in 1833 as a speculative venture in anticipation of the arrival of the railroad and the canal in Trenton. Both Stockton and Dickinson were prominent backers of the Camden and Amboy Railroad and Transportation Company, the former being President of the Delaware and Raritan Canal Company (which was bound to the Camden and Amboy through their combined status as the Joint Companies), the latter being President of the Trenton Banking Company, a major investor in the railroad. The Camden and Amboy Railroad and Transportation Company subsequently bought the Trenton House property from Stockton and Dickinson in 1838 following the establishment of the railroad terminus in the northeast corner of the Dunhams Block. Over this five year period, between 1833 and 1838, the value of the property more than trebled. It is therefore postulated that a major expansion of the hotel facility took place, either during the Stockton-Dickinson tenure or immediately after the Camden and Amboy's acquisition of the property.

Precisely what form this hypothesized expansion might have taken is difficult to determine (Figure 5.16). Sidney's map of the city in 1849 shows the hotel as a large L-shaped structure at the corner of North Warren and East Hanover Streets (Figure 4.11). While a wing had clearly been added to the hotel along East Hanover Street by this time, the Sidney map is small-scale and one cannot be

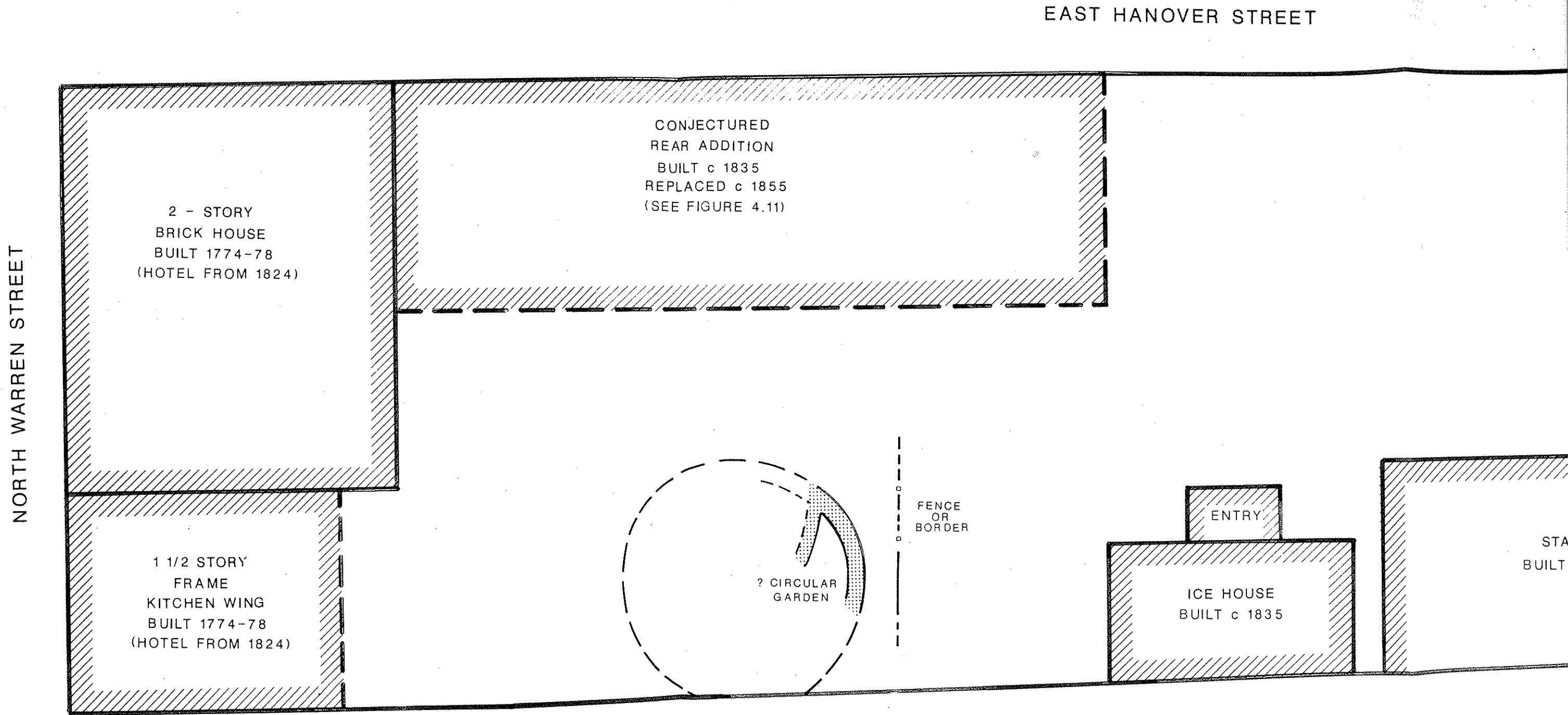
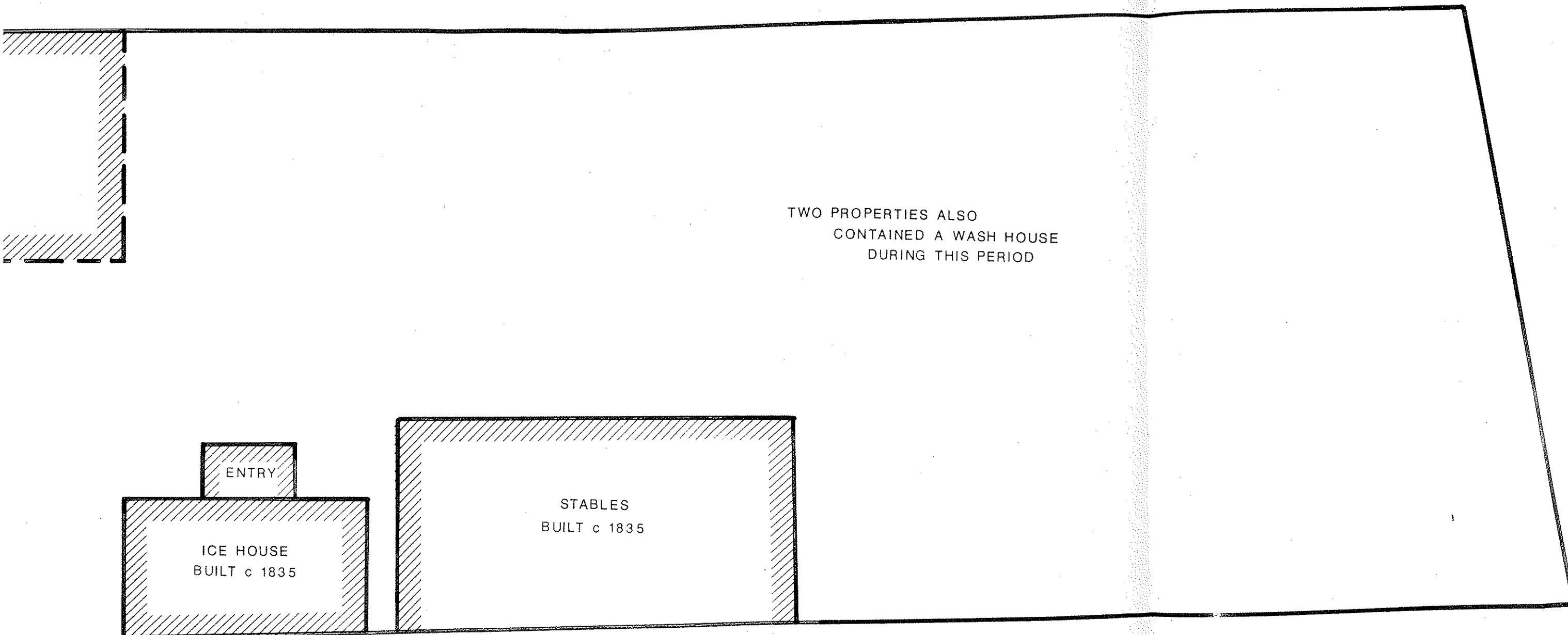


FIGURE 5.16. TRENTON HOUSE, CONJECTURED SITE

EAST HANOVER STREET



TWO PROPERTIES ALSO
CONTAINED A WASH HOUSE
DURING THIS PERIOD

ENTRY

ICE HOUSE
BUILT c 1835

STABLES
BUILT c 1835

16. TRENTON HOUSE, CONJECTURED SITE PLAN, c 1835 - 54



certain of the dimensions of this structure. Other clues to the physical character of the hotel in the 1830s and 1840s can be obtained from a detailed inventory taken in 1851 of the estate of Maria Snowden, who was the proprietor of the Trenton Hotel at the time of her death.

At mid-century the hotel facilities included ten bedrooms, a bar room, dining room, sitting room and lobby. In addition, there were the living quarters occupied by the proprietor's family, consisting of a living room, a bedroom and a kitchen with bedroom above (the latter probably being contained within the one-and-a-half story frame wing on North Warren Street). While there would appear to have been more rooms within the hotel at this time than could have been contained within the original two-story brick house and its one-and-a-half story adjoining wing, the earliest extant wing surviving along East Hanover Street in 1987 (a four-story structure with some 40 to 50 rooms) was far larger than would have been required. It is therefore hypothesized that an earlier, smaller hotel wing once existed along the East Hanover Street frontage, and that this was subsequently removed in its entirety in the mid-1850s (see below) by the wing that was still standing in 1987 (Figure 5.16).

Also referred to in the 1851 inventory were a stable and carriage house, an ice house and a wash house, all located within the hotel yard. The first of these outbuildings is shown on the Sidney map of 1849 in the rear of the property adjacent to the southern line of the property. The identification of this structure rests on the later 19th-century expansion of the hotel (see below). No above- or below-ground traces of the stable and carriage house were observed in 1987.

While the location of the wash house remains uncertain, archaeological investigations resulted in the discovery of the ice house, a sizable 15 by 24-foot by 15-foot-deep structure situated immediately west of the stable and carriage house. The sheer size of this structure implies that it was built during the Stockton-Dickinson or Camden and Amboy tenure as an ice house as large as this would not have been necessary to service the original house and store or the early tavern. The ice house is recognizable as an unidentified structure on later historic maps. The map evidence and artifacts contained within its fill date its abandonment to around 1890, when the development of refrigeration would have rendered such a facility unnecessary. In its final use around the turn-of-the-century the ice house structure was apparently put to use as a septic, echoing the late 18th- and early 19th-century use of this part of the site.

Archaeology produced evidence of additional features within the hotel yard, notably a continuing build-up of garden or yard soil and traces of the actual garden layout. Two sections of a curvilinear brick walk were noted in the south central portion of the yard. Although not definitely proven, it appears that these may have been part of a formal garden design, wheel-shaped in plan, that would have been centered almost exactly between the ice house and the rear of the original house. One can easily imagine Stockton and Dickinson, wealthy upper-class New Jerseyans, approving of a small formal garden within the hotel yard. A few feet to the east of the brick walk, traces of a garden border (postholes, a brick set on edge, a marked soil change) were observed. Indeed, this dominant north-south line may even have been the remains of a more substantial boundary, such as a fence or a trellis, which would have separated the garden from the more utilitarian ice house and stables. As with the garden soils beneath, these mid-19th century deposits within the hotel yard yielded a wide range of artifacts of the period.

3. The Katzenbach Era, c.1854-1905:

In 1854 Peter Katzenbach, manager of the Trenton House under the Snowdens from 1843 onwards, acquired the hotel property from the Snowden heirs' court-appointed commissioners. Katzenbach owned the Trenton House until his death in 1904 and presided over three major expansions of the premises in the third quarter of the 19th century (Figure 5.17). Fortunately, numerous maps were prepared for downtown Trenton during the second half of the 19th century and one is able to trace the broad outlines of the hotel's physical development with a reasonable degree of certainty.

Very soon after he purchased the hotel Katzenbach embarked upon a major program of alterations and expansions. During the mid-1850s he made three major changes to the property. He tore down the original one-and-a-half story kitchen wing and replaced this with a four-story brick structure. The second floor of this wing contained the well-known Room 100, scene of many unofficial political gatherings, negotiations, and decision-making. He added two more floors to the original brick house and expanded this structure to the rear. Finally he attached an entirely new, 50-room, four-story brick wing along the East Hanover Street frontage to the rear of the enlarged house. This latter addition extended for approximately 140 feet along East Hanover Street from the North Warren Street corner and replaced the rear wing erected on this site during the 1830s.

NORTH WARREN STREET

EAST HANOVER STREET

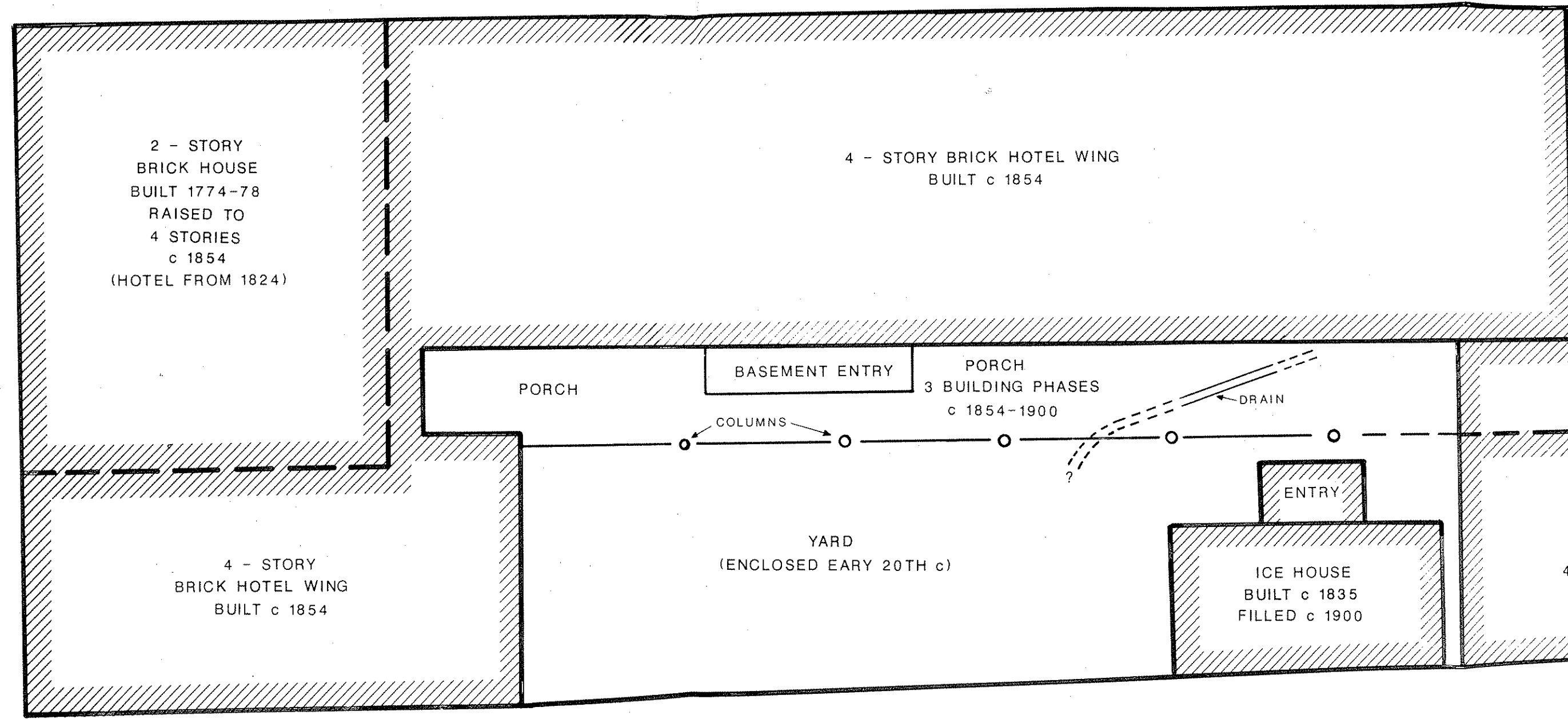
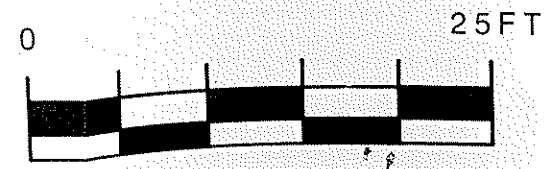
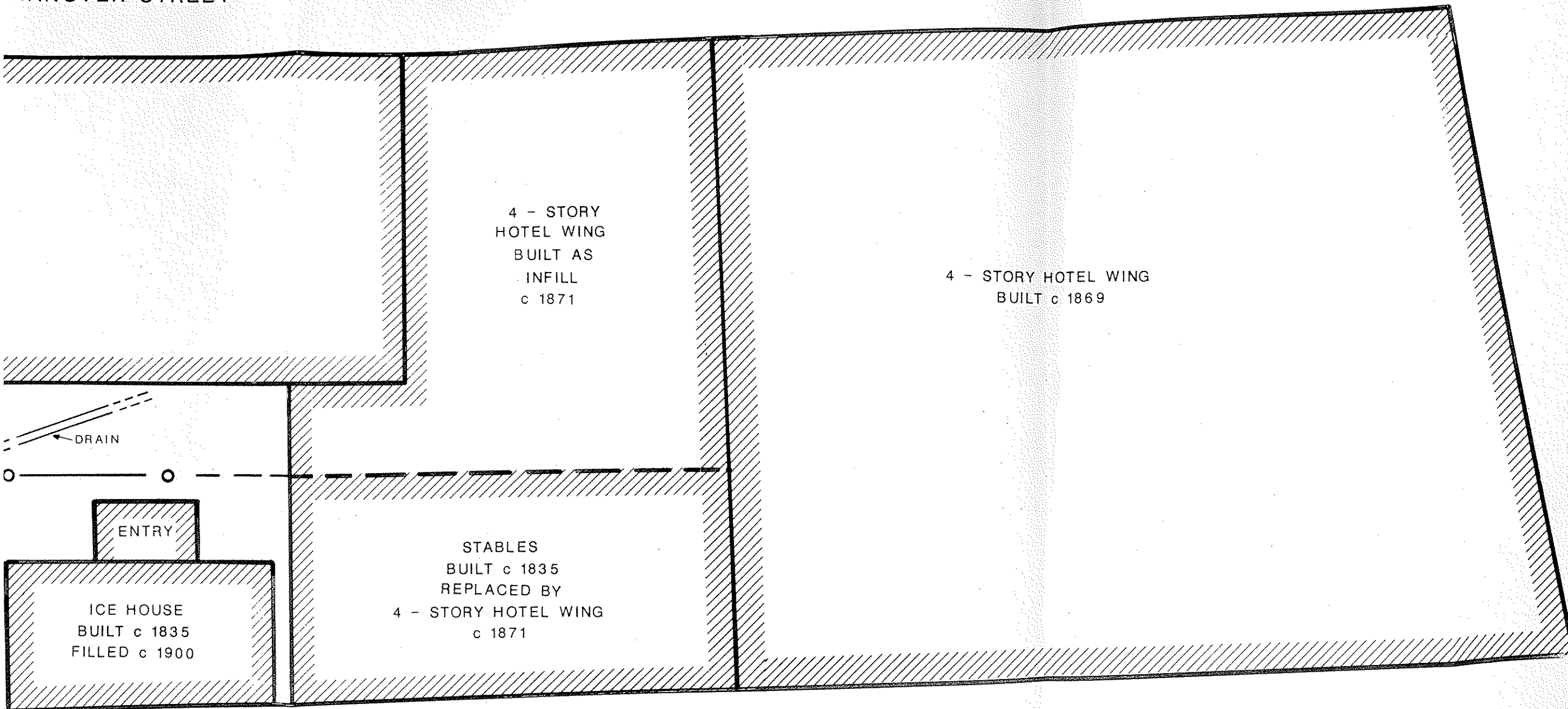


FIGURE 5.17. TRENTON HOUSE, CONJECTURE

HANOVER STREET



ITON HOUSE, CONJECTURED SITE PLAN, c 1854 - 1905

All three of these alterations/additions were clearly visible as components in the exterior appearance of the Trenton House in 1987 (Plates 1.1 and 5.1). The interior layout of the second, third and fourth floors of these structures in 1987 also reflected clearly this mid-19th century building episode. The first floor and basement, however, showed considerable evidence of later modification, mostly dating from the early 20th century. The outside wall at the eastern end of this wing was still clearly visible within the structure in the space where horses and carriages would have passed from East Hanover Street to the stable block (Figures 5.1 and 5.2).

In the late 1860s Katzenbach had a new 75-room, four-story brick structure built at the eastern end of the hotel lot. This building contained suites of rooms that were more spacious and relatively ornate in comparison with those in the earlier sections of the building (Acroterion 1988). Interestingly, this structure was not attached to any of the already existing portions of the hotel as access had to be maintained from East Hanover Street to the stable block on the southern edge of the property. This arrangement of the hotel premises is apparent on the Beers map of 1870 (Figure 4.13) and was borne out in the architectural evidence of the first-floor and basement in this part of the hotel (Figures 5.1 and 5.2).

This configuration of the hotel buildings did not last for long and it may always have been Katzenbach's intention to eventually connect this easternmost wing with the rest of the hotel. Apparently by 1871 the stable block had been demolished and an infilling structure had been erected uniting the mid-1850s and late 1860s wings of the hotel. The infilling structure was again brick-built and four stories in height, but its principal axis ran from north to south, perpendicular to the other buildings. The ground floor interior space on the East Hanover Street frontage, apparently built as the hotel's main kitchen, was articulated with massive iron I-beams which provided the chief structural connection between the hotel wings on either side. With the demolition of the stable block, the erection of the infilling structure and the demolition of the ice house (sometime around 1890), the hotel premises essentially took on the appearance they had in 1987, although it still remained for the yard to be enclosed in the early part of this century.

Inspection of the basement and first floor of the hotel premises generally confirmed the sequence of late 19th-century development outlined above. The North Warren Street basements included portions of re-used foundations, but had also been extensively modified during this century. The East Hanover Street basements contained far more original 19th-century fabric and the major distinctions between the mid-1850s, late 1860s and circa 1869-71 building episodes were recognizable. The hotel's first floor level displayed little 19th-century interior fabric because of extensive 20th-century alterations, although the original shell of the building was generally present except along the street frontages. Iron columns of late 19th-century date still survived in the interior of the original dining room and billiard room spaces in the East Hanover Street wings (Figures 5.1 and 5.2).

Archaeological investigations within the former hotel yard provided some supplementary information on the late 19th-century development of the Trenton House. A mid-1850s construction deposit (a rubble fill make-up level) was identified throughout most of the excavation units and this building phase evidently involved raising the level of the yard by at least a foot. Interestingly, later 19th century construction episodes were not discernible in the archaeological record (the buildings concerned were probably too far away from the excavation units) and there was no clear evidence of a cultivated garden soil within the yard during the second half of the 19th century. These deposits may have been removed as part of the 20th-century building activity within the yard, or the yard may simply have existed as an uncultivated, possibly paved, open space. No evidence of a paved surface was observed, however, meaning that any such surface would also have to have been removed in the 20th century.

The most valuable contribution of archaeology in unraveling the late 19th-century development of the Trenton House was the identification of a sequence of three successive porches that were built along the rear (south) side of the mid-1850s East Hanover Street hotel wing. An eight-foot-wide porch appears to have run the length of this wing of the hotel from the mid-1850s until the yard was enclosed in the early 20th century. The first version of this porch, presumably contemporary with the construction of this wing of the hotel, consisted of an open colonnade-like structure with columns set on sandstone pillars (possibly at intervals of around 12 feet). Only two of these pillars were observed at the eastern end of the yard, so the spacing of these columns remains uncertain. During this period, from the mid-1850s until around 1870, the porch provided easy covered access at ground level between the rear of the North Warren Street sections of the hotel and the ice house and stable block to the east. The porch also obviously gave access from the East Hanover Street wing into the hotel yard.

The porch was apparently rebuilt twice, each time at a slightly higher level, so that by the end of the century the final-phase porch level may have been as much as two feet above the early 19th-century ground surface. The reason for these rebuildings is unclear. It may have been because of deterioration or because of modifications to the interior of the hotel. Difficulties with drainage within the confined yard space may also have been a reason for raising the porch level. The brick foundations for the two later porches were both laid along the line of the original porch pillars and each successive stage of porch construction involved the incorporation of parts, if not all, of the pre-existing foundation. The locations of columns in the second porch phase is unknown as the final phase required their removal. Four cast iron columns from the final phase were still present in 1987, having been incorporated within the early 20th-century one-story structure enclosing the yard. After 1870 or so the porch gave direct, covered access between the North Warren Street sections of the hotel and the newly-constructed wings at the eastern end of the property (as well as the ice house, up until around 1890).

One final archaeological feature dating from this period that was found in the hotel yard was a section of brick drain that appeared to have been constructed at some point after the mid-1850s. This drain ran west southwest from the eastern end of the mid-1850s East Hanover Street wing to an unknown destination (presumably a septic or cistern) somewhere within the central section of the yard.

4. Twentieth-Century Decline:

By the time Peter Katzenbach died in 1904, the Trenton House was already in decline. During the first quarter of the 20th century most of the hotel's first-floor space was converted into retail store units and the yard was enclosed within a single-story frame structure. The hotel itself continued to function until 1962, using the upper floors for accommodation and a much-reduced space at ground level. These changes accounted for the appearance of most of the first-floor premises in 1987 and for the removal of much of the original fabric of the buildings. Archaeological investigation also encountered considerable evidence of these 20th-century changes in the upper levels of the stratigraphy in the hotel yard.