

RESEARCH REPORT

ANDREW JOHNSON HOMESTEAD GROUNDS

ANDREW JOHNSON NATIONAL MONUMENT

by

Benjamin H. Davis
Superintendent

May 11, 1956

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BENJAMIN H. DAVIS
SUPERINTENDENT

ANDREW JOHNSON NATIONAL MONUMENT
GREENEVILLE, TENNESSEE

See memo 5-16-56
Reg. Historian, Reg 1
to Dir.

RESEARCH REPORT

ANDREW JOHNSON HOMESTEAD

GROUNDS

ORIGIN

The Homestead grounds, nearly two acres in area as we know them today, are not as Andrew Johnson knew them in the period 1869-1875. At the most he owned an acre and one half of the two acres in the present Homestead tract.

In 1851 when he purchased the house now known as the Andrew Johnson Home from James Brannon he acquired between one half and three quarters of an acre of land in the same purchase.^{1/} This purchase also included the spring and a "spring house."

Five years later, on June 13, 1856, Andrew Johnson purchased from Hartsell Good another lot north of his original purchase and separated from it by the so-called "Lamons" lot.^{2/} This lot was rather narrow and extended back from Main Street 267 feet.

The third lot Andrew Johnson purchased was the lot in the rear of his 1851 purchase and which extended back to the street now known as College Street. He purchased this lot from his son-in-law D. T. Patterson in 1870.^{3/}

- ^{1/} Deed Book 24, page 639, Register's Office, Greene County, Tennessee.
- ^{2/} Deed Book 28, page 67, Register's Office, Greene County, Tennessee.
- ^{3/} Deed Book 37, page 141, Register's Office, Greene County, Tennessee.

These three tracts comprised the total acreage of the Home grounds that were owned by Andrew Johnson at the time of his death in 1875. Later, in 1905, Andrew Johnson Patterson purchased the lot on the south side of the Home which now adjoins the Bernard No. 2 tobacco warehouse.^{4/} In 1906 Mr. Patterson purchased two lots on the north side of the original 1851 Johnson purchase extending from College Street to Main Street.^{5/} The above lots combined comprise the Homestead grounds of today.^{6/}

FENCES

Andrew Johnson had a wooden picket fence in front of his lot along Main Street. The photograph made of the front elevation of the Home on August 3, 1875 shows the picket fence very plainly. The photograph reproduced in Laura Holloway's Ladies of the White House, 1886, shows the same fence and in more detail. The pickets were alternating long and short, differing in length approximately six inches, the longer pickets being approximately three feet in length.^{7/} There appears to have been a base under the fence, possibly brick.

Contemporary accounts do not indicate the types of fences

^{4/} Deed Book 75, page 565, Register's Office, Greene County, Tennessee.

^{5/} Deed Book 79, page 572, Register's Office, Greene County, Tennessee.

^{6/} See Appendix A.

^{7/} See Appendix B.

Andrew Johnson had on his property, but the reporter for Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper dated September 23, 1865 did refer to the fact that the fences of the lot showed evident signs of dilapidation.

Two accounts describing the fences are available, both dating around 1900, at least twenty or twenty five years after Johnson's death. These two persons describe a picket fence along the sidewalk on Main Street that is different from the one shown in the 1875 photograph of the Home, thus indicating that the other fences they describe could be later also.

The older account of the fences is given by Mrs. Martha Willingham who lived with her grandmother, Mrs. Martha Johnson Patterson, in the Home from 1891-1901. Mrs. Willingham was born in 1887. She remember that the fences with the exception of the aforementioned picket fence along Main Street, were all wire fences topped with two-by-four wooden pieces.

About 1900 Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Johnson Patterson came to live with the former's mother, Mrs. Martha Johnson Patterson , in the Home. In 1942 Mrs. A. J. Patterson recorded her recollections of the Home grounds about 1900, including the fences. She described the picket fence along the Main Street front which we know is not the same picket fence Andrew Johnson left in 1875. She went into great detail describing the other fences on the grounds, her account in general corroborating that of Mrs. Willingham.

WALKS AND ROADS

Again, no contemporary accounts have been found indicating the paths or walks, and roads Andrew Johnson may have had on his property around 1875. Mrs. Willingham's and Mrs. A. J. Patterson's accounts correspond very closely regarding the walks or paths as they remember them around 1900. They both remember that a walk extended from the rear of the Home into the garden plot; that one extended from the rear of the Home, paralleling the garden to the spring; and that one extended from the gate of the sidewalk at Main Street around the north end and side of the Home and connected with the walks to the garden and to the spring. They both agree that these walks were tan bark walks.

Contrary to former beliefs, apparently the so-called carriage drive did not exist. Neither of the two ladies remember one. There was a gate off Main Street and a gate at the end of the bridge across the creek for bringing horses into the lot, but there was no road as such connecting these two gates according to their stories. ^{8/}

^{8/} See Appendix C.

GARDEN

The reporter for Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper in 1865 briefly described the grounds of the Home in the following manner: "... by looking into the lot [from Main Street] you see several young apple trees, and in the spaces between them are potatoes growing ... and down there in the lower end of the lot is a grapevine, trained upon a trellis Scattered over the lot are a number of rose, currant and gooseberry bushes." ^{9/} Of course, this reporter is not describing Andrew Johnson's garden because Andrew Johnson had not been home in Greeneville for more than five years. The mention of the grape arbor and the apple trees is significant in that these two features are mentioned in accounts thirty years later.

Andrew Johnson had a vegetable garden in 1870. A visitor that year on one occasion found him working in it.- as he stated he found the ex-President "hoeing his corn and potatoes."^{10/} The writer further describes Andrew Johnson's garden thusly: "a big vegetable garden."

On August 3, 1875, the day of Andrew Johnson's funeral, a reporter in his account of the day's events, referred to the Home as a brick dwelling "with a deep garden." ^{11/}

^{9/} Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, September 23, 1865. page 12.

^{10/} E. V. Smalley, "Recollections of Andrew Johnson." The Independent, Vol. 52, page 2152.

^{11/} "Daily Press and Herald," Knoxville, Tennessee. August 3, 1875.

There is no description of the garden that we know of during the period 1875-1900, about which latter time Mrs. Willingham would have been of sufficient age to have remembered very much about the grounds and the garden in particular. She is remembering the garden of her grandmother, Martha J. Patterson, who, as we know, "renovated" the Home and the grounds after 1880. ^{12/}

The precise location of the garden plot is not indicated in the earlier accounts, but rather, the accounts refer to it generally as being at the rear of the kitchen. How far back from the kitchen no one indicates.

Mrs. Willingham's and Mrs. A. J. Patterson's accounts of the garden agree on the location of the plot that Mrs. Martha J. Patterson used for her garden. ^{13/} Mrs. A. J. Patterson states that perhaps the garden area in 1900 was the same as had been used by Andrew Johnson until 1875. There is reason to believe that her statement in general is correct because the remainder of the original (1851 purchase) is rather swampy and not suited to such use. Further, indications on the ground point to this plot as having been used for many years as a cultivated area.

^{12/} Holloway, Laura, Ladies of the White House. New York. 1886. Vol. II, page 338.

^{13/} See Appendix D.

TREES AND PLANTINGS

Here again the earliest account is that left by Frank Leslie's reporter who referred to the plantings in his article dated September 23, 1865. He mentioned that there were several young apple trees on the lot, that an aspen tree stood near the rear of the kitchen, that three or four small shade trees stood in front of the building and that two large weeping willows stood near the spring just outside the lot. Other plantings described by him include a grape vine trained upon a trellis at the lower end of the lot, and rose, currant and gooseberry bushes scattered over the lot. The ambrotype reproduced in that paper shows only one tree in front of the Home and two trees in the side yard.

The 1875 photograph of the Home shows the shade trees in front but no more. The photograph in Holloway's Ladies of the White House, 1886, shows three trees in front of the Home and two trees in the side yard, one of which is evidently the box elder standing in the side yard today.

To come back again to Mrs. Willingham's and Mrs. A. J. Patterson's accounts of the trees on the grounds about 1900. They both agree on the black walnut tree in the side yard. Mrs. Patterson mentioned the two trees in the side yard that are prominent in the 1886 Holloway photograph. They both refer to several sweet apple trees on the lot, which trees could well be the same ones

referred to in Leslie's 1865 account.

No two accounts agree exactly on the number and location of the weeping willow trees on the grounds. Leslie's reporter mentions two such trees standing near the spring, Mrs. Holloway mentions one willow near the spring, Mrs. A. J. Patterson mentions one and Mrs. Willingham refers to a total of seven willows in the vicinity of the spring.

In spite of such conflicting accounts regarding the trees and other plantings it is believed that these plantings could be duplicated with a large degree of accuracy. ^{14/}

^{14/} See Appendix E.

ANDREW JOHNSON HOME GROUNDS

OUTBUILDINGS

A. SPRINGHOUSE

In 1851 when Andrew Johnson acquired the original Homestead tract, he acquired ownership of the spring and a "spring house." ^{15/} This is the earliest known reference to any outbuilding on the property.

No contemporary account has been found which describes the structure. Leslie's reporter mentioned the spring but made no reference to the spring house. ^{16/} Mrs. Holloway, in her description of the Home grounds about 1886 did not mention the spring house but did refer to the spring. ^{17/}

Several years after their marriage, Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Johnson Patterson came to live with the mother of the former, Mrs. Martha Johnson Patterson, the the Andrew Johnson Home. This was about 1900. In 1942 Mrs. A. J. Patterson recorded her recollections of the premises as they were about that time - 1890-1900. She remembered that the spring house was there at the spring (below it; not over it) in 1889, the year she and A. J. Patterson were married probably. She remembered it as having been a wooden structure, of ordinary size, and had no tile in the spring itself.

^{15/} Deed Book 24, page 639, Register's Office, Greene County, Tennessee.

^{16/} Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, September 23, 1865, page 12.

^{17/} Holloway, Laura, Ladies of the White House. New York. 1886. Vol. II, page 338.

In 1891, at the age of 4 years, Martha Belle Landstreet, Now Mrs. Martha Willingham, came to live with her grandmother, Mrs. Martha Johnson Patterson, in the Andrew Johnson Home. Mrs. Willingham lived there until 1901. Recently she has furnished the writer with a sketch and other material regarding her recollections of the grounds from 1891-1900. In 1901 she would have been fourteen years of age. According to her recollections the spring house stood over the spring, that it was approximately twelve feet square, that the spring was enclosed in a heavy wooden box with a hinged lid and that the spring house had a stone foundation. She further described the structure as frame with a small shed or porch on one end and with three stone steps down to the spring.

The two foregoing accounts comprise the sum total of our information regarding the spring house and these two accounts are at variance with each other.

B. STABLE

The property on which the subject stable stood was purchased by Andrew Johnson from his son-in-law, David T. Patterson in 1870.^{18/} Accordingly, the earlier chroniclers would not have mentioned the stable.

Again, Mrs. A. J. Patterson and Mrs. Martha Willingham, daughter-in-law and granddaughter respectively, of Mrs. Martha J.

^{18/} Deed Book 37, page 141, Register's Office, Greene County, Tennessee.

Patterson, have recorded their recollections of this feature, which accounts in general coincide rather well. Mrs. A. J. Patterson's statement is given as follows:

"The stable was also a frame building, and stood in the south east corner of the Johnson Lot facing Water Street or College Street. As one would face the stable from Water Street, a shed ran the length of the barn parallel with the street. To the right of this shed but not so large was another shed which ran the other way of the barn. The barn was approximately thirty feet by forty feet, the long way of the barn running parallel with the street. As one would face the barn from the street, the peak of the roof ran parallel with the street. It seems that the front of the barn did not face the street, and off of this gangway were three stalls on the right and three on the left. All of these, however, were not used for horses, perhaps some for machinery, and some for feed. The peak of the barn was directly over the gangway on the first floor. The hay mow was in this loft with a window or door in the left end of it, (as one faced it from Water Street), [sic] through which the hay was thrown."

C. PRIVY

The only accounts found thus far of the privy are those by Mrs. A. J. Patterson and Mrs. Martha Willingham. These accounts differ in all respects such as locations, number of holes, etc. Mrs. Patterson stated that that portion extant is original; Mrs. Willingham said that it is not. Mrs. Willingham remembered that the privy sat on the property line running back from the north end of the Home. Mrs. Patterson stated that it stood by the walk which ran straight from the kitchen door at the rear of the Home.

D. SMOKEHOUSE

There is only one account of the smokehouse, the one left by Mrs. A. J. Patterson in 1942 in which she recorded her recollections of the Homestead premises as they were between 1890-1900. She stated that the structure now standing on the Home grounds is the original structure on its original location.

Mrs. Martha Willingham, who is recalling the same period during which she lived in the Home with her grandmother, has stated that there was no smokehouse on the property during those years, that her grandmother kept her cured meats such as hams and bacon hanging under the latticed rear porch.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Holloway, Laura, Ladies of the White House. New York. 1886. Vol. II.

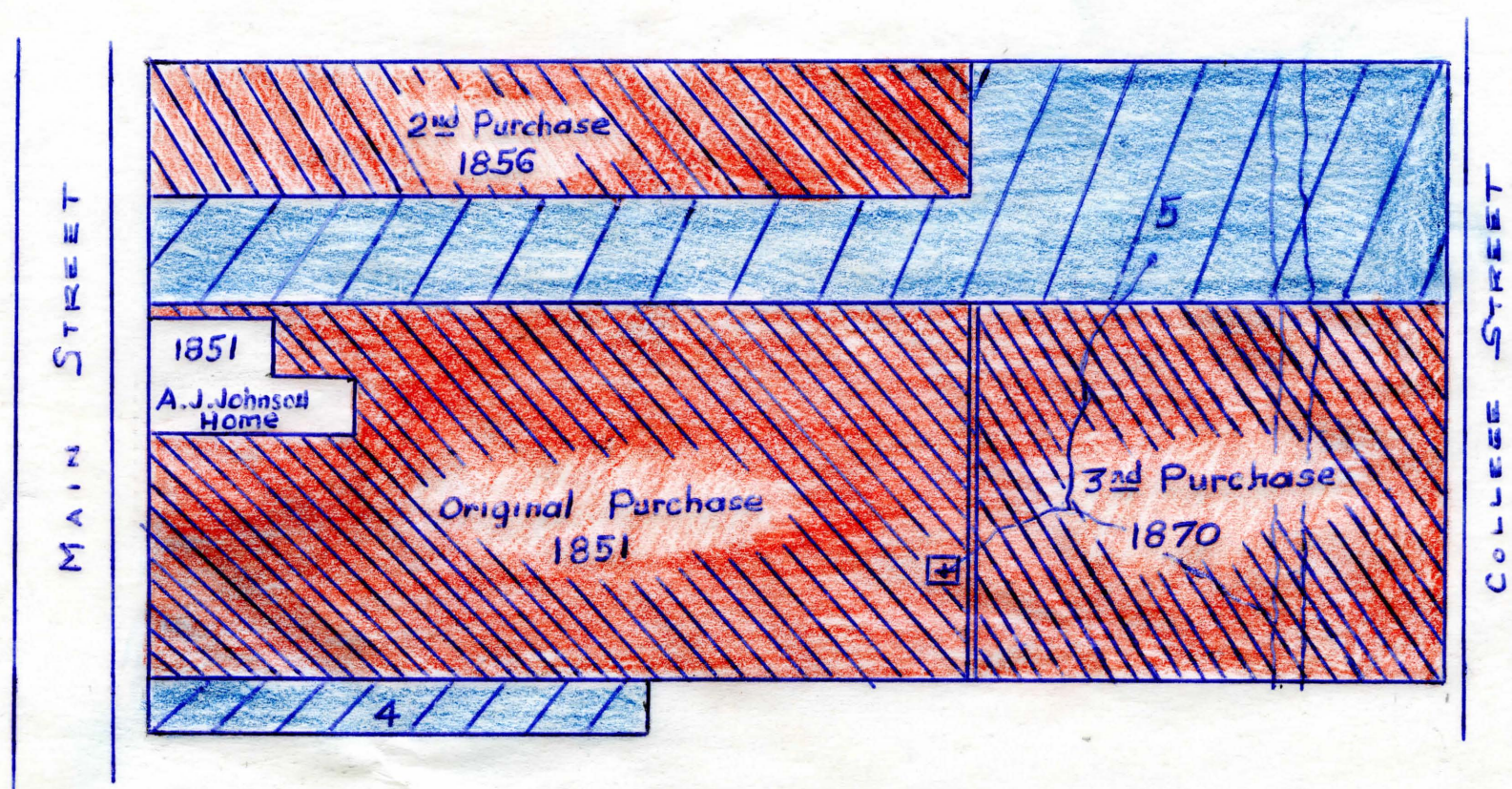
Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, September 23, 1865.

Records, Greene County, Tennessee.

The Independent, New York.

"Daily Press and Herald", Knoxville, Tennessee. August 3, 1875.

APPENDIX "A"



LEGEND



HOMESTEAD PORTIONS
OWNED by A. JOHNSON

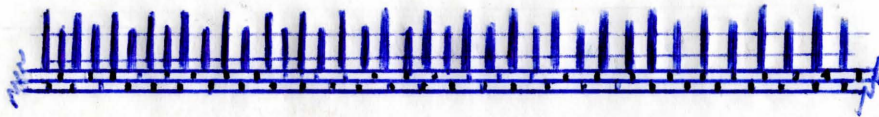


HOMESTEAD PURCHASES
AFTER 1875

SCALE 1"=60'

ANDREW JOHNSON NM
HOMESTEAD PLAT

APPENDIX "B"

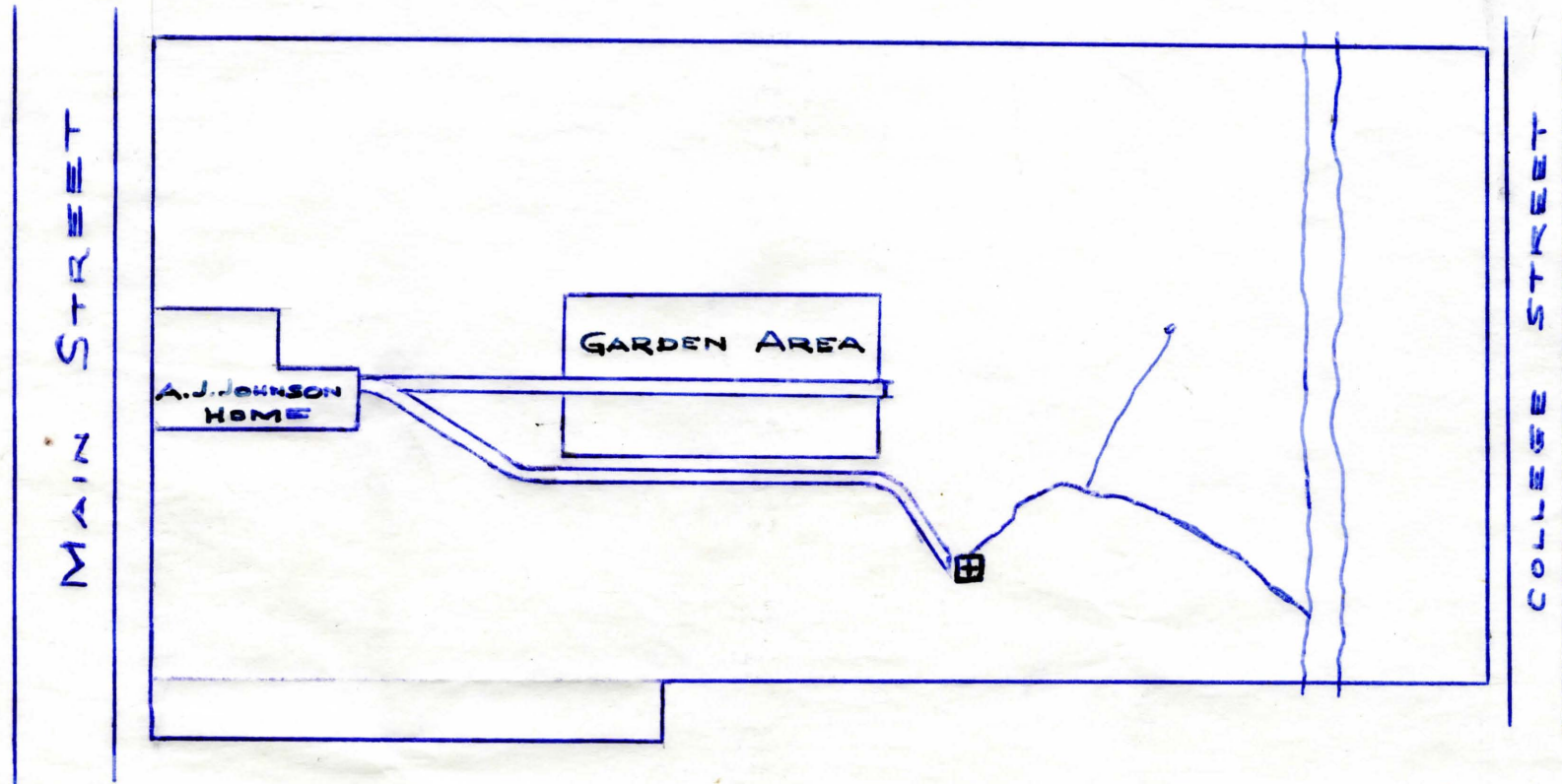


Detail of Picket Fence

ANDREW JOHNSON
HOMESTEAD

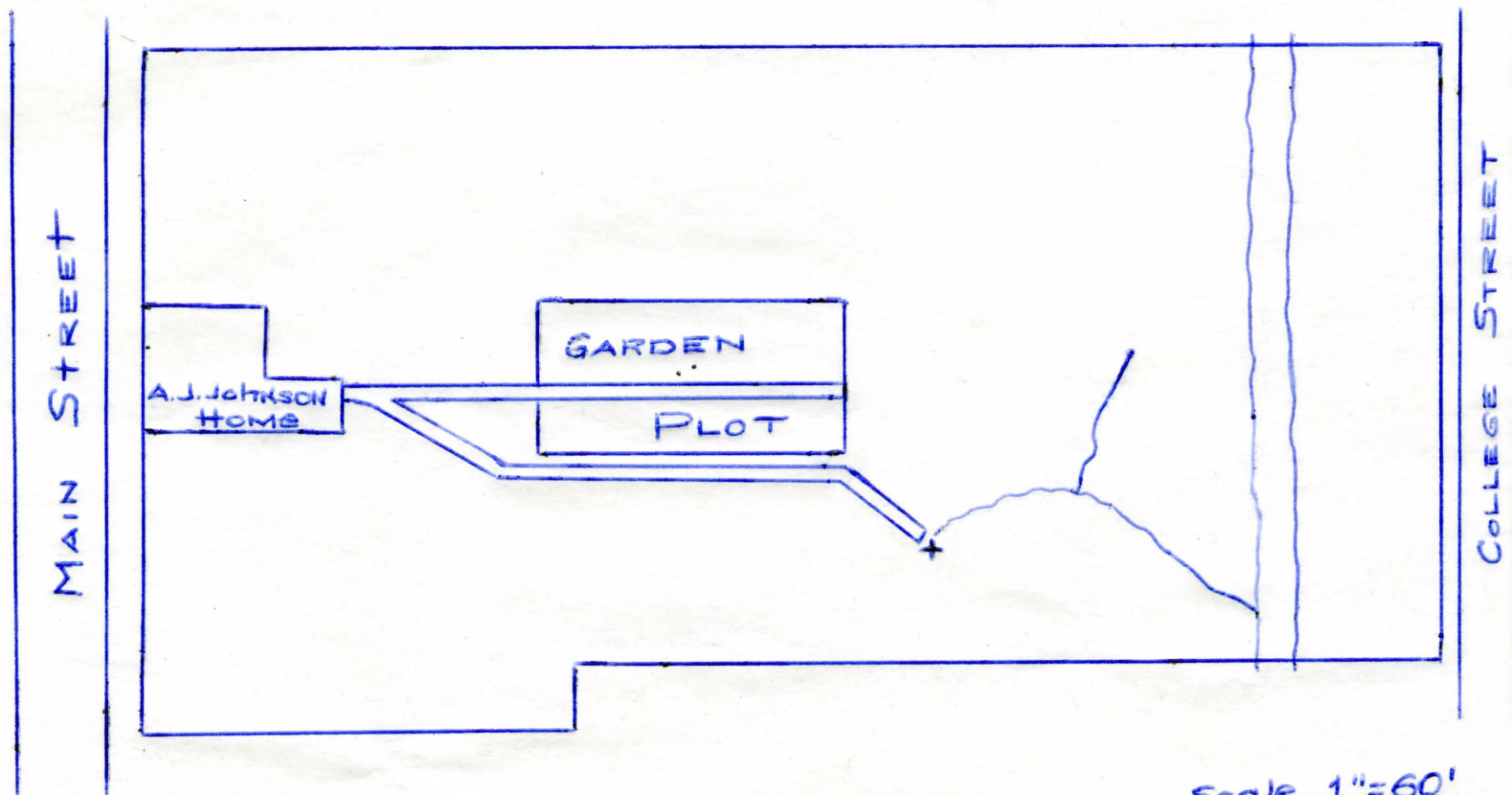
Scale 1"=10'

APPENDIX "C"



Scale 1"=60'
ANDREW JOHNSON
HOMESTEAD
WALKS

APPENDIX "D"

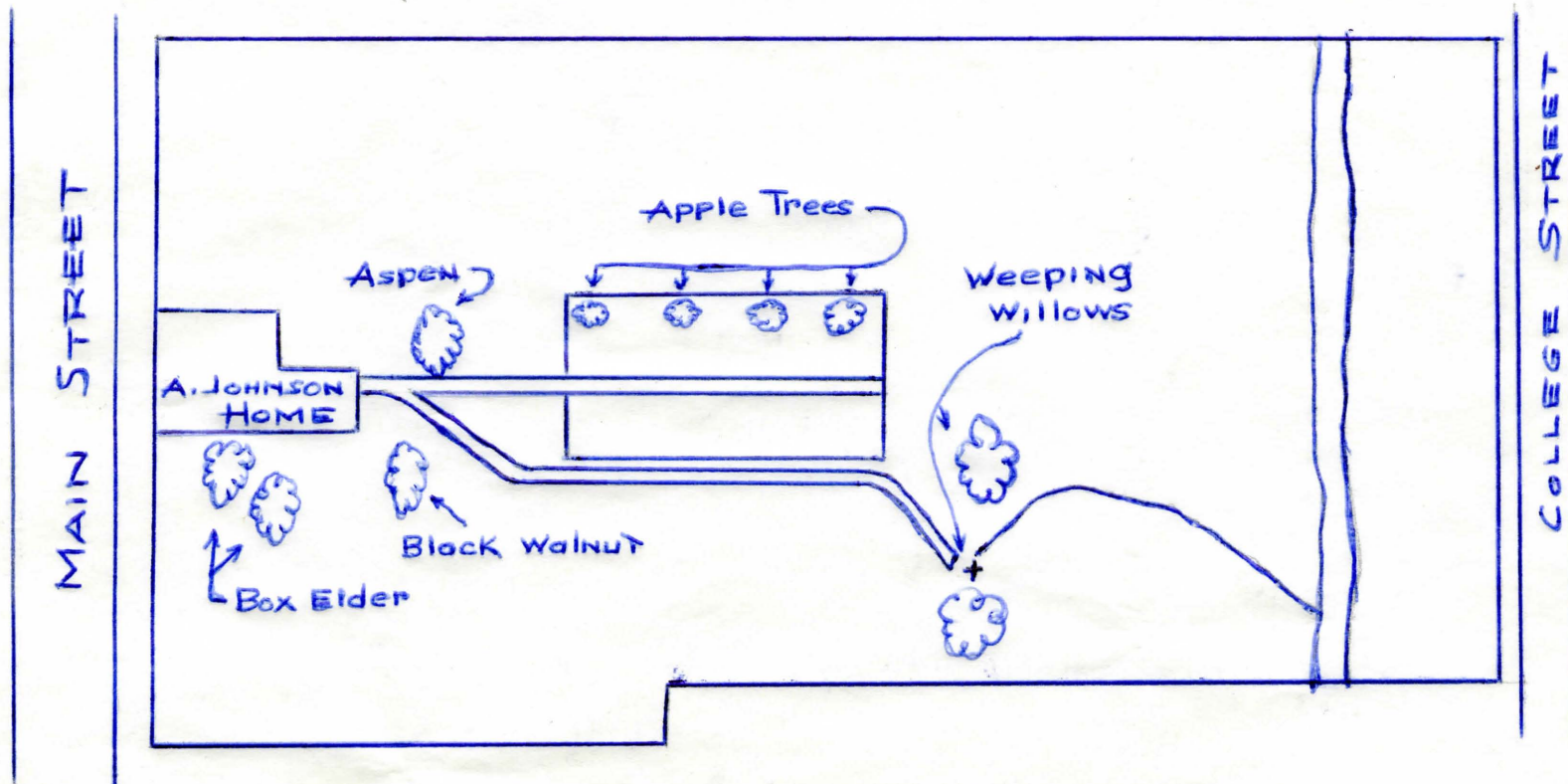


Scale 1"=60'

ANDREW JOHNSON
HOMESTEAD

GARDEN PLOT

APPENDIX "E"



Scale 1"=60'

Andrew JOHNSON
HOMESTEAD

TREES - HOME GROUNDS



Andrew Johnson Home

Rec'd of Judd memo 11/16/56