

RESEARCH BULLETIN

No. 112

September 1979

Fort Beausejour Ground Interpretation Project, Parker Paintings

In June, 1977, approval was given to commence work on an Interpretation Project which involved the commissioning of seven paintings depicting specific features and events in the history of Fort Beauséjour/Cumberland. Fort Beauséjour National Historic Park is located on the west side of the Missaguash River which forms part of the border between the province of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. It was occupied by the French from 1751 to 1755 before it was captured by the English and renamed Fort Cumberland. The English manned the fort intermittently (I 1755-1768; II 1776-1793; III 1809-1833) during the next seventy-eight years. The paintings designed to capture some of the history of these years were the work of Lewis Parker, an artist with a national reputation as an historical illustrator. Prior to his work at the Museum of Man, he was among other things, a recognized specialist depicting the Huron Indians, and he has also done artwork for the Fort Amherst Audio/Visual programme. When finished, these paintings were photographed for appropriate mounting at selected points on the site. (fig. 1) The purpose of this paper is to give an account of the research methods and approach used to achieve the above project whose conclusion for those closely involved meant the end of a successful and satisfying exercise.

Team Effort

Once the programme received official sanction, representatives from various sections were assembled to form a team. The nucleus of this involved an historic interpreter, Terry Shaw who acted as team co-ordinator; an historian, Barbara Schmeisser, who was responsible for research input; and the artist, Lewis Parker who transferred the data supplied him into representations of historic views and events. In addition to this core group a considerable number of resource people were consulted whose special knowledge helped improve the historical accuracy of the paintings. Those involved in these exchanges included Pierre Nadon, Marcel Moussette, Jervis Swannack, DiAnn Herst, Gerard Gusset, David Flemming,



Gerard Finn, Eric Krause, Carol Whitfield, Ross Wilson, Barry Rich, Rene Chartrand, Raymond Troke and Stephen Ridlington. In addition to in-house expertise, the New Brunswick Historical Resources Administration was approached and staff curators, Clarence LeBreton and Jeanne Arsenault from the Village Acadien, Caraquet, and Susan Burke of Kings Landing near Fredericton provided valuable assistance.

Much of the information amassed to meet research requirements was gathered by means of letters, round-trip memos, telephone conversations and interviews. A more traditional method of research such as reading books, archaeological reports and primary documentation pertaining to the history of Fort Beauséjour/Cumberland was also adopted. Individual information packages were assembled to outline the subject matter of each painting. Not all the detail needed to complete the project was available in these packages because new questions constantly arose with the evolution of the paintings. The amount of detailed information required was not originally realized until the project was well underway. When there were no answers the research had to be done to prove that specific references did not exist and then it was necessary to search for comparative information which came from Archives or communications with resource people. The research process was concluded when the last brush stroke was applied to the seven studies.

This led to constant interaction between team members and their advisors. From the first meeting at Fort Beauséjour to identify the subjects for the paintings everyone was involved. During the length of the project which was a year, many meetings occurred in the region between researcher, interpreter and their advisors as well as two other meetings which took place at the artist's home in Ontario. Apart from these exchanges with the artist, we relied heavily on the telephone and the mails. Communication by the telephone always had the potential to confuse and the intermittent functioning of the mails, during the winter of 1977-78, hindered the exchange of sketches which was a vital part of the whole operation. Despite these frustrations, the team approach and these methods of communication created seven scenes from the Fort's colourful past.

Paintings

On June 9, 1977, the team met at Fort Beauséjour to discuss possible views and scenarios for the paintings. The fort itself can be considered a "stabilized ruin" which had

undergone extensive archaeological excavations in the late 1960s and early 1970s. At that time the contours of the bastioned pentagonal fort were restored and a few structural features dating from different historic occupations were reconstructed or stabilized. In an afternoon, this setting inspired seven locations (fig. 1) and as many stories each with different time frames emphasizing specific events. Included in the following section will be an assessment of each painting reviewing its content, the reference material and the artists response to our specifications.

Painting Number One (Fig. 2)

Location: new British entrance from the exterior

Action: work party of soldiers returning from a wood gathering expedition

Time: Spring 1756.

Site orientation programme and natural visitor flow pattern made this location our simplest and most logical choice. The route taken by the work party in the painting is the identical path visitors follow (fig. 3) to reach the main entrance to the fort. Physical remains can still be seen of the English passageway built in 1755-56 and this was felt to be an asset because it, like the ramparts themselves, would provide recognizable and spontaneous links with the past as depicted in the painting. Another deciding factor was the availability of archaeological information on the entrance and immediate area. The activity, depicting a work party returning after foraging for firewood is well documented. This particular rendition (fig. 2, final photograph) affords a more intimate acquaintance with the soldiers of the 40th regiment of foot present at the fort, who would have performed this task under protection of an armed guard because of the Indian/French threat. The time frame of the painting was set for the spring 1756 because at that time the new English entrance would have been finished but the buildings which were to be constructed just outside the entrance would not yet exist. Hence, the artist would have more freedom to develop the action of the scene and the historian did not have to deal with the problem of non-existent structural information for these buildings. The year 1756 was auspicious also because the military complement of the fort was known, making it possible to outfit the soldiers for the period and occasion.

The importance of good reference material can be illustrated best by a change which occurred in the initial planning stage of painting number one. Originally, the angle

and emphasis was concentrated on the entrance itself and the interior view of the fort (figs. 4 and 5). Historical and archaeological summaries of the site made the task of identifying or locating the relative position of the structures included in the view easier, however, the objective of creating a reasonable facsimile of the external appearance of the original buildings was not possible either using these or primary source material because details of the external structural appearance could not be located. It was decided not to focus on these features exclusively but concentrate on what was known and it soon became obvious that substantial information did exist for the fortifications themselves. Consequently the interior view of the fort was replaced by the exterior of the fort entrance revealing some classical characteristics of bastioned earthenworks. The new perspective acquired by the revision to the painting also helped to de-emphasize an unknown that was a topic of many a conversation. There was no evidence to suggest how the top of the fort's entrance was finished. Did the ramparts continue over the doors supported by wooden beams? Did the cut stone continue to the top of the parapet? It was difficult to choose with any confidence between the possible styles of entrances, hence we decided to leave the gateway open on the top. The details of military dress and accoutrements were supplied by military curators whose dedication to detail is reflected in the artist's rendition of the officers and men.

The constant exchange of ideas as well as concrete facts resolved a number of stumbling blocks. The treatment of perspective of the picture and the unity achieved in the composition evolved as the artist grappled with his own appreciation of the historical problems. To aid the artist, the interpreter provided black and white photographs for all the paintings. These were an indispensable step in achieving an accurate representation of the spatial relationship scale and perspective of structural elements. Linear sketches (figs. 6 and 7) were exchanged providing a means to communicate and gauge our progress. In retrospect, the sketches recall the infinite patience exhibited by the artist when someone would comment "no, not that way, something like...". Yes, men could be repairing the walls, but that's not how they sodded it." Without these sketches, the incidence of error in historical accuracy would have been far greater than exists and the final product would never have achieved its present refinement.

Painting Number Two (Figure 8)

Location: Interior of fort, before men's barracks (2E16)

Activity: Two soldiers returning from guard duty

Time: Summer, 1778.

This particular Barracks was chosen because its foundations were clearly visible and uncluttered by the remains of other buildings that once stood on the same site (fig. 8). Moreover, the archaeologist, W. Dendy who studied this structure provided excellent information to assist in creating its likeness. The time, 1778 was chosen because the building would have been newly built and its military occupants were known at that time. By 1778, Goreham's Royal Fencibles were well entrenched to defend the fort from the rebel American forces and better prepared than when Jonathan Eddy first attacked in 1776. The scenario in the painting reveals the routine of a soldiers' lot regardless of the hour or weather.

The research requirements for this painting remained as they were first conceived, and most of our efforts were concentrated on the structural detail of the building which would dominate the picture. Those details which archaeologists could not supply were located by means of comparative research among secondary sources such as related plans, views and photos in the Picture Collection of the Public Archives of Canada and from references given by those with special knowledge in the 18th century domestic architecture. The artist prepared a linear sketch (fig. 10) according to this material concentrating on the dominant structure. These line drawings usually made it apparent that however much detail was supplied, there was always more needed (fig. 11). The military curators again accepted the challenge of dressing the soldiers and maintained a watchful eye for errors up to and including the day the paintings were delivered to the Atlantic Regional Office. At the unveiling and exchange ceremony, Mr. Parker had thoughtfully brought along his paints, which turned out to be fortuitous as the sentry on the ramparts had been shouldering his musket barrel up, oblivious to the rain pouring into it.

However, there were other occasions when corrections were more complex and both historians and interpreters were stymied by the contradictions that existed in various maps and plans. This was the case when certain features of the ramparts were to form the background in painting number two, and it was difficult for this period to provide accurate details. The interpreter resolved the dilemma by introducing the idea of the silhouette technique and adding the darkening skies and driving rain. The added element of realism of inclement weather also provided another tangible link with the past, as forceful as the foundations of the building itself. The decision to depict the widest sampling

of weather and season in the paintings was made by the artist and interpreter at an early stage.

Painting Number Three (Figure 12)

Location: Interior of reconstructed French casemate
 Activity: French soldiers removing barrels in the presence of Thomas Pichon
 Time: 1754

The French occupied the fort for a short period of five years, during which time they had constructed substantial earthenworks and contributed an interesting chapter to the history of the Chignecto area. Consequently, the reconstructed French casemate was an obvious setting for our illustration, and the size and purpose of the structure suggested the activity depicted. The time was set in 1754, a year before the siege in order that the infamous Thomas Pichon, spy of Beauséjour and part-time commissariat of the fort could be included in the scenario.

The painting was a relatively simple exercise from the researcher's point of view. It was necessary to check Pichon's letters to confirm his presence and to locate a portrait which furnished his likeness. The resources available at Fortress Louisbourg provided the particulars concerning soldiers, costume, barrels and lighting; and archaeological data along with photographs of the interior (fig. 13) gave the artist the foundation to create his painting. The artist's approach to his subject is revealed very clearly in the sketches submitted for this painting. He concentrated on perfecting the background and setting of the picture before adding the action. (fig. 14, 15) This itself evolved, as changes occurring to improve the accuracy of the perspective, inspired new positions for the soldiers (fig. 16). The final sketch submitted by the artist was scrutinized with care to correct false impressions or erroneous details. (fig. 17) The cold sunlight illuminating the entrance and the play of shadow and lamplight combining to make a harmonious whole are the result of artist and interpreter collaborating very closely on every aspect.

Painting Number Four (Figure 18)

Location: View from the Prince Henry Bastion looking towards Loudon's Battery atop a stone casemate, built by the British in 1755-56.

Activity: soldiers of the 28th and 43rd regiment of foot are mounting artillery pieces while New England militiamen are assembling to go out on patrol.

Time: Autumn, 1757

One of the few reconstructions on site includes the stone casemate which supported Loudon's Battery. (fig. 19). It was realized a view from the Prince Henry Bastion would have the advantage of a more panoramic effect and the artist would be less restricted in developing the recommended activities. Therefore, the first sketch (fig. 20) depicted the observer's viewpoint looking west toward the parade square and battery. The year 1757 was a good year to show Fort Cumberland as a busy military center full of soldiers who were preparing for more clashes with the French, hence the artillery exercises and patrols to search for pockets of fugitive Acadians. The artist and interpreter collaborated to comment on the passing of the seasons and the large waterfowl population which inhabited the Tantramar marshlands surrounding the fort.

The sources used involved a contemporary description of the battery which was helpful but had to be used with some care as it was made in 1766. The archaeological reports on the casemate and barracks, along with contemporary cartographic evidence provided more relevant structural information. Despite these aids the details of certain features often eluded us and various picture files and secondary sources again proved useful. This information assimilated by the artist again took concrete form as linear sketches (fig. 21, 22) which were always a revelation as step by step the artist would make the past a more tangible item. The historic events of the period provided the inspiration for what could be happening on the battery and parade square and the artist continued to fill in the details (fig. 23) resulting in illustrating another chapter in Fort Cumberland's history.

Painting Number Five (Figure 24)

Location: Point of view is taken before the Bastion, later named by the English after Prince Edward. A two-storied French officers quarters, a single story soldiers barracks and a storehouse form the background.

Activity: There are three main scenes of activity; one focusing on an English prisoner being escorted to Fort Lawrence to be exchanged for a French deserter; another showing Abbé LeLoutre accompanied by two Micmacs in conversation with a French officer; and finally, some Acadians are bartering for food while others unload a wagon.

Time: Spring, 1754

The final product comprising the fifth painting was not the final choice of the group meeting at Fort Beausejour. The original idea was to have a panoramic view of the parade square from the Prince Edward Bastion depicting the fort as it appeared in 1768. This theme posed problems because there were so many unknowns which would have required more primary research than time would allow. Moreover, not a lot happened in 1768, apart from the abandonment of the fort. However, the idea of a panoramic view for the French occupation had more merit since it was a colourful period in the fort's occupation and could reveal activities that the only other painting depicting the French occupation could not. All of the activities could be documented and structural information was available for the buildings of this time-frame. The viewpoint was revised after a photograph (fig. 25) was provided by us which indicated the precise angle and range of the painting (fig. 26). The source material for the French occupation had been analysed and much of it published which made it less difficult to research than other occupations. Hence, the three scenarios as described in the picture were based on historical documentation and portray the interaction between the fort and its English, Indian and Acadian neighbours.

The artist's linears (figs. 27, 28) were again essential to make us aware of problems the artist would have in understanding the requirements necessary to depict the structures and people. One of the major changes in the structures involved redrawing the storehouse from a neat frame building to a simpler picket construction. Only the dimensions, location and material (i.e. wood) for this building were known, therefore how it might have been constructed was found in secondary comparative sources. A plan (fig. 29) existed for the two-story officers quarters in the centre and a view (fig. 30) gave some indication of roof construction of the soldier's barracks in the left background. The linear (fig. 27) which concentrates on the

characters in the scenarios, provided an opportunity to correct their costumes and add any additional features appropriate to the buildings and other objects in the picture. The myriad of details in the paintings have provided a valuable and continuing learning experience as Mr. Parker's last minute touch-up to correct an Indian's powder horn which had hung upside down indicates. It will continue to do this as others view the scenes and give thought to how the fort would have looked and what sorts of activities would involve the fort's inhabitants and neighbours.

Painting Number Six (Figure 37)

Location: Interior view of the fort, with Loudon's Battery and a barracks building in background

Activity: The fort is being reoccupied by Goreham's Royal Fencible Americans and a few Yorkshire settlers have come to welcome the newcomers.

Time: Summer, 1776 when Nova Scotia is preparing its defences against American revolutionaries

The second English occupation of the Fort occurred because it was feared attempts would be made to invade Nova Scotia. The Isthmus of Chignecto was particularly vulnerable because of its accessibility to New England and the number of potential sympathizers living in the area. Painting number six (fig. 31) would depict a scene from this era when Fort Cumberland once more would figure prominently in local events. The Fort had not been occupied for eight years and this inspired the scene of activity whereby Goreham's Rangers were putting the Fort in order while Yorkshire settlers who remained loyal to the British Crown came to make contact with the Fort's defenders. The inclusion of these settlers provides an interesting contrast for painting number five, which showed the interaction between the Acadians and the occupants of the Fort in 1754. A load of hay in the picture was particularly appropriate as it was an important crop of the nearby marshes and used often in military service for fodder, mattress stuffing, etc. The lack of uniforms in the painting was due to the shortage of issue for soldiers. Officers were responsible for their own and therefore would be more likely to be outfitted at an earlier date than soldiers. These details may not appear significant to a casual observer, however, they are

representative of attempts to create a reasonable picture of this period based on the information available.

The artist followed the same steps to compose this subject as in the other paintings. He began with the rough sketch (fig. 32) which was the first response to the ideas discussed on site (fig. 33). Using the photograph of the site for angle and range, he followed up with a structural linear (fig. 34) incorporating the historical data available on the buildings and fortifications. The second linear (fig. 35) concentrated on the activity in the foreground and provided the interpreters and historians with numerous details to check. The artist used data from the information package for the painting, to outline his characters. The addition of colour and its careful application also created interesting challenges for artist and researchers. Decisions had to be made; if or what the buildings were painted; what dyes were available for clothing, and the local seasonal colours for flora and fauna. Specific information about the flora and fauna of the area was obtained from biologists at local universities. Unfortunately, the dimension provided by colour cannot be appreciated in the reproductions for this bulletin.

Painting Number Seven (Figure 36)

Location: South-west view of the spur atop the Duke
of Cumberland Bastion

Activity: Goreham's Rangers are making preparations
to defend the fort's spur from the attacking
rebel party led by Jonathan Eddy.

Time: November, 1776

This was another of the paintings which underwent considerable change during its creative phases. (fig. 37) The original ideas as evinced in the rough sketch still emphasized the interior of the fort and it soon became apparent that requirements for structural details were very scarce and the emphasis on buildings and fortifications produced a sterile scene. Therefore, a return trip to the fort by T. Shaw provided a new set of photographs from which we determined the most feasible choice from an historic and aesthetic point of view. (fig. 38) The time and action were chosen because of the availability of primary material describing the condition of the fort and the activities of the soldiers during the Eddy rebellion.

The spur contained the magazine, Officers Quarters, Carpenters shop and many large old buildings [were] erected and occupied by part of Lord Loudon's army from Halifax, in the year, 1758 ... our greatest apprehension and danger was in the facility of setting fire to those old building(s) ... Having received information of their making preparation for such methods of attacking, ... the powder was removed from the magazine, to one of the old casemates in the fort the decayed and most dangerous buildings pulled down and some fence rails ... placed as a Freeze ... which not only made the access in or out very dangerous but prevented their throwing combustibles over them, ... (Goreham's Journal, published in Report on Canadian Archives, 1894, D. Brymner, Ottawa, Queen's Printer, p. 361).

Goreham also mentioned that the rebels had burned a barn and some other buildings near the fort which inspired the wisps of smoke apparent in the background. The mood of the defenders was faithfully and vividly captured by Lewis Parker when he translated Colonel Goreham's words into images.

... One must expect great murmurings and desertions ... Yet ... there were not so many as in such a situation ... might be expected ... no Troops could be more ready and alert at their posts ... one half of the Garrison by tour was constantly in the Ramparts and further to support this hard labour & duty (with) the Cold Season advancing ... the Soldiers (were) permitted to wear Barrack Rugs and Blanketts otherwise they must suffer greatly if not entirely perish. (Brymner, Public Archives Report, 1894 p. 361).

These descriptions were invaluable to the development of the scenario which would then require a suitably arranged stage. The creation of the painting's setting became a challenge for everybody and was not without the frustrations often associated with inter-disciplinary productions.

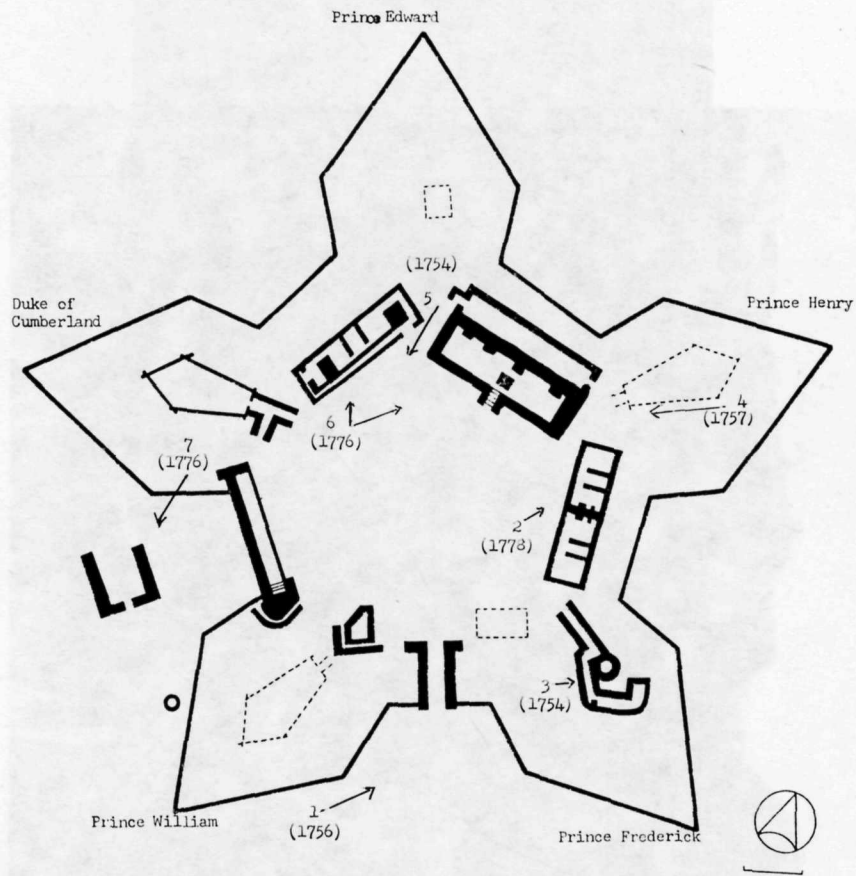
The preparation of a structural linear sketch was the most difficult stage of the painting. Usually the artist did this to give the team something on which to comment, and this method had worked well in the other paintings when we could supply more information initially. This time there were only a few plans (fig. 39) which identified the spur buildings and one or two scattered references to them; there were no archaeological reports as little digging had been done in this area. Therefore, it was necessary for us to prepare a rough conceptual sketch for the artist from the little we did have. In return, Mr. Parker sent a linear

(fig. 40) which bolstered our spirits and kept the team busy in its appointed roles of critic and compromiser. Our comments resulted in a second linear (fig. 41) incorporating the changes suggested; whereby the fort's general condition and some features were altered and the attempts to squeeze a wheelbarrow and large crates through the small sallyport were also abandoned. In this manner the final product evolved to present a carefully constructed rendition of Fort Cumberland in November, 1776.

Conclusion

The choice of artwork as an interpretive media was an innovative approach which will be a valuable resource to the Atlantic Region for many years to come. The most common interpretive techniques practised at historic sites include restoration and animation programmes; however, Fort Beausejour was not to be restored and its ruins created a composite site of different time periods discouraging animation. The use of historical illustrations would effectively restore a physical setting, animate activities of the Fort's occupants and permit movement from one historic time zone to another. Therefore, at a very reasonable cost, Fort Beausejour gained a ground interpretation programme that would convey impressions of life in specific historical periods and the Regional Office gained a valuable asset for audio-visual projects, exhibits and publications. The Parker paintings themselves provide a unique collection of historical and regional illustrations which will contribute to our heritage in much the same way as does the work of C.W. Jeffreys.

Barbara Schmeisser
Historical Research Section
Atlantic Regional Office
Parks Canada



1 Diagram of fort with locations for 7 scenes.



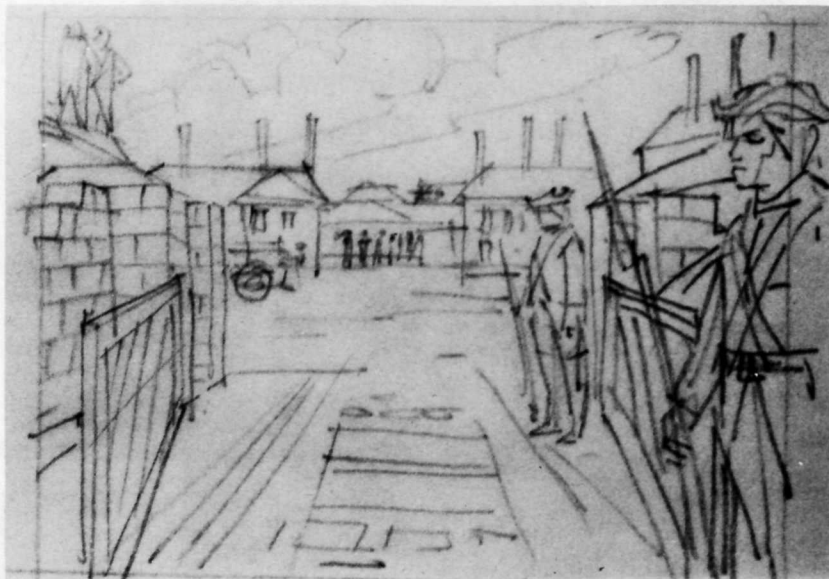
2 Finished painting no. 1.



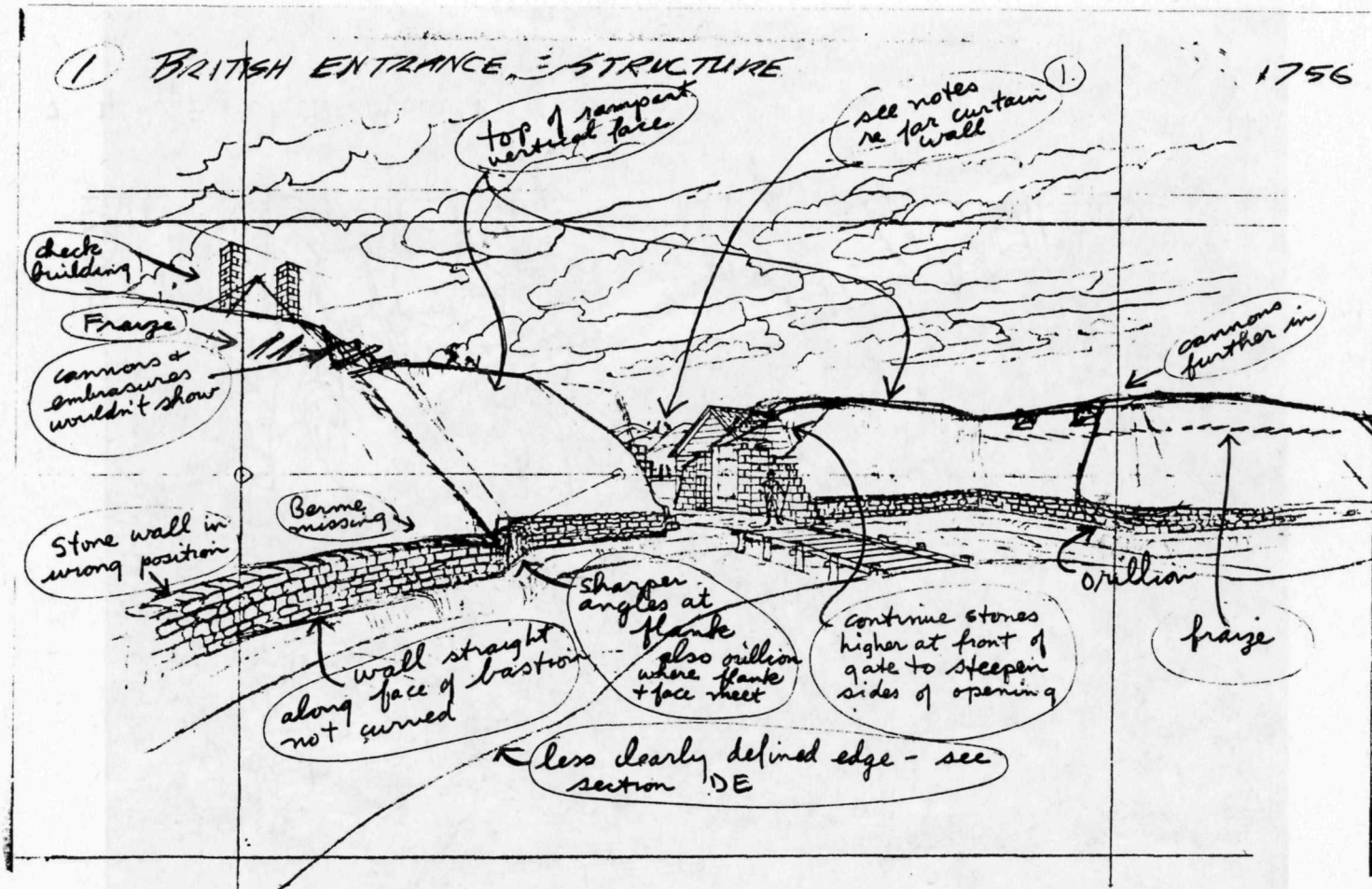
3 Modern photograph 8" x 10" of final choice.



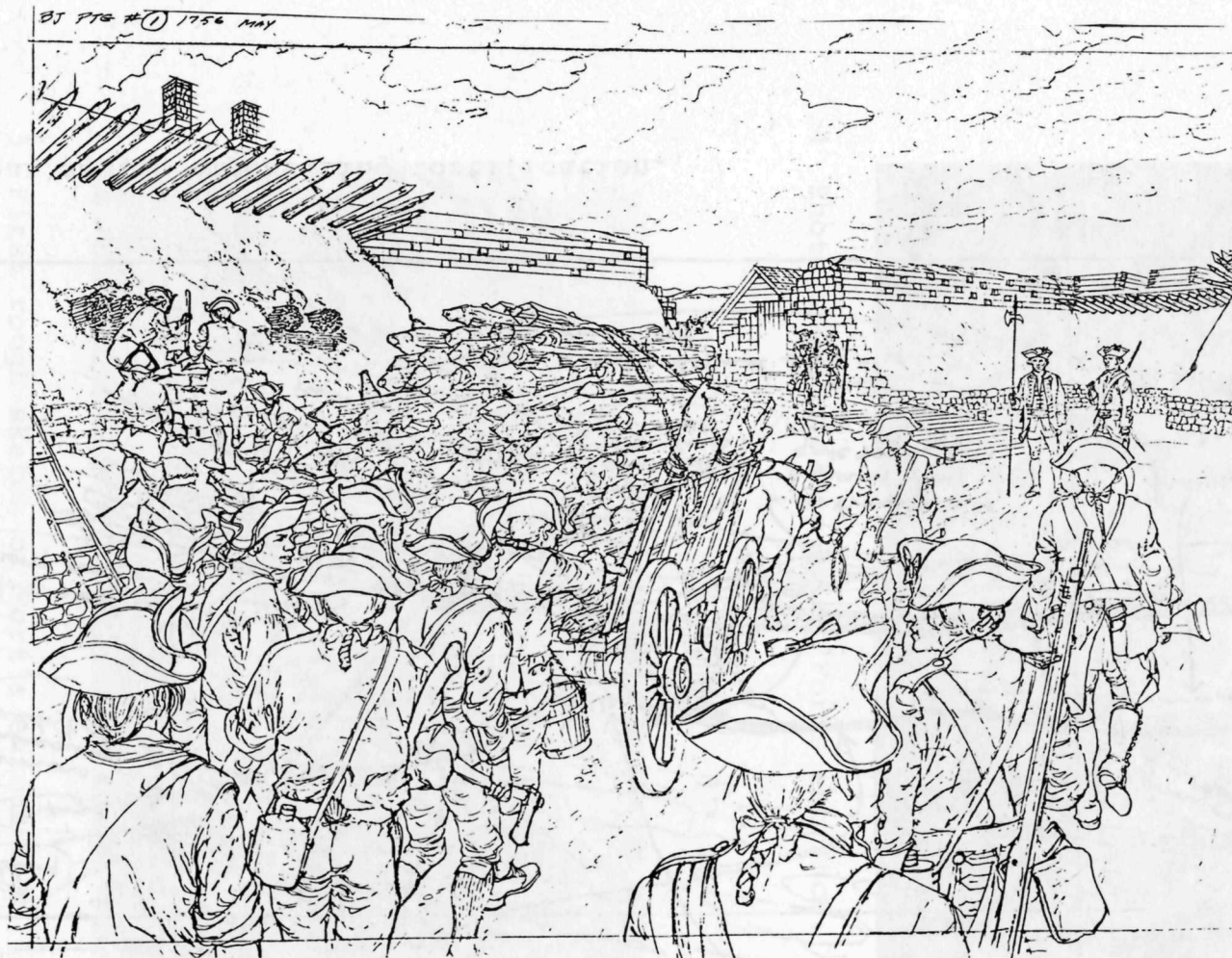
4 Photo showing close-up of Fort's entrance.



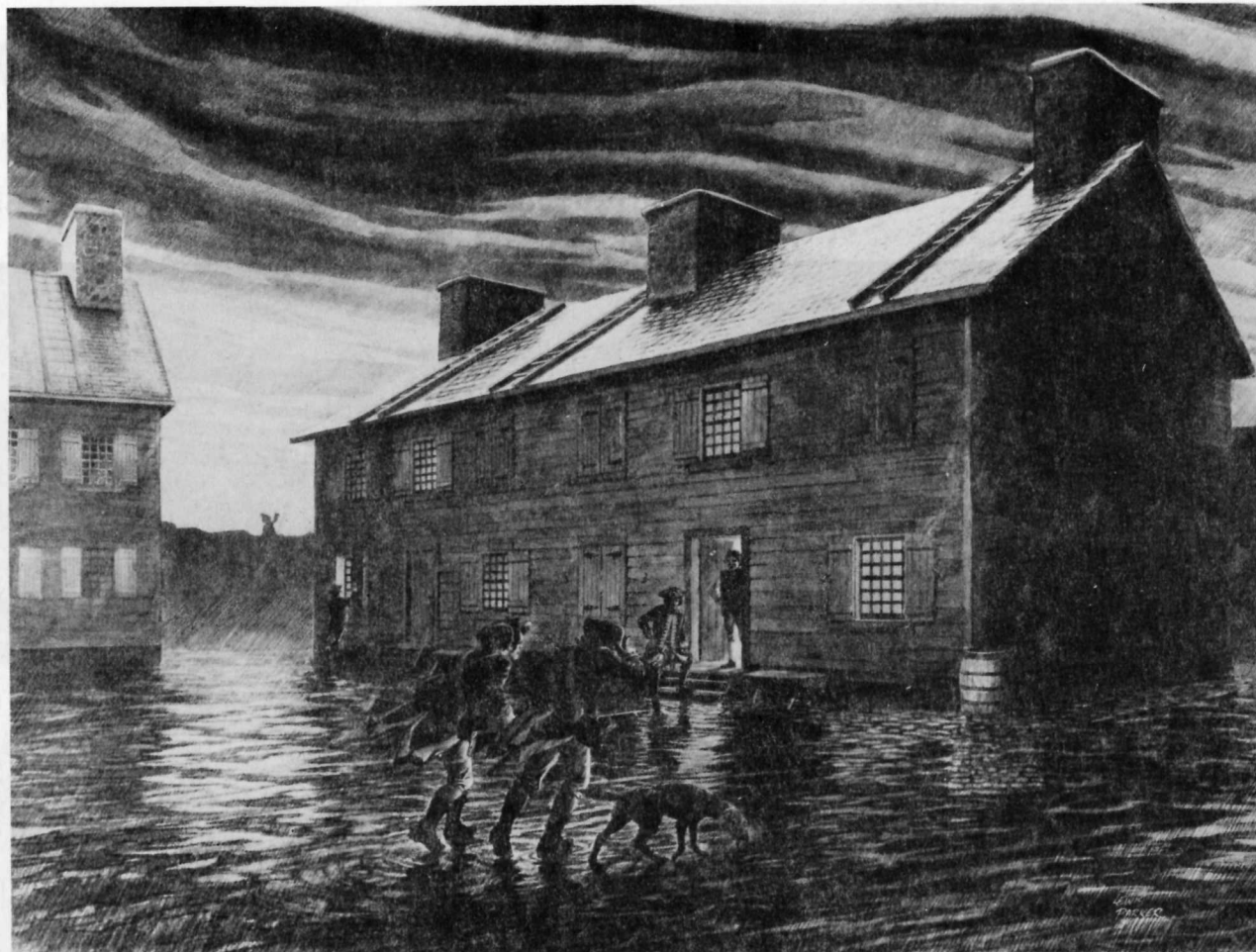
5 First rough sketch of Fort's entrance.



6 Linear sketch emphasizing fortification.



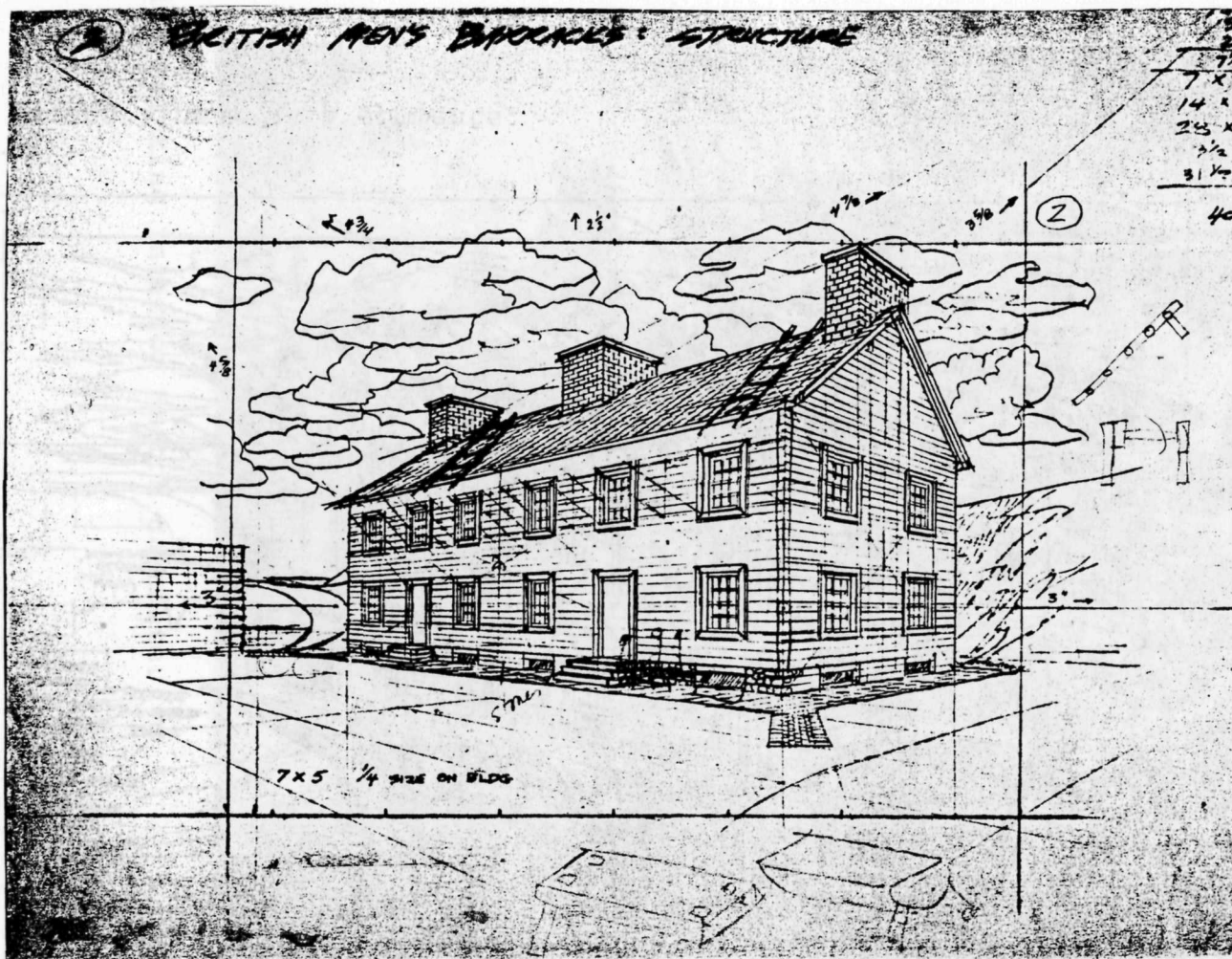
7 Linear sketch emphasizing action.



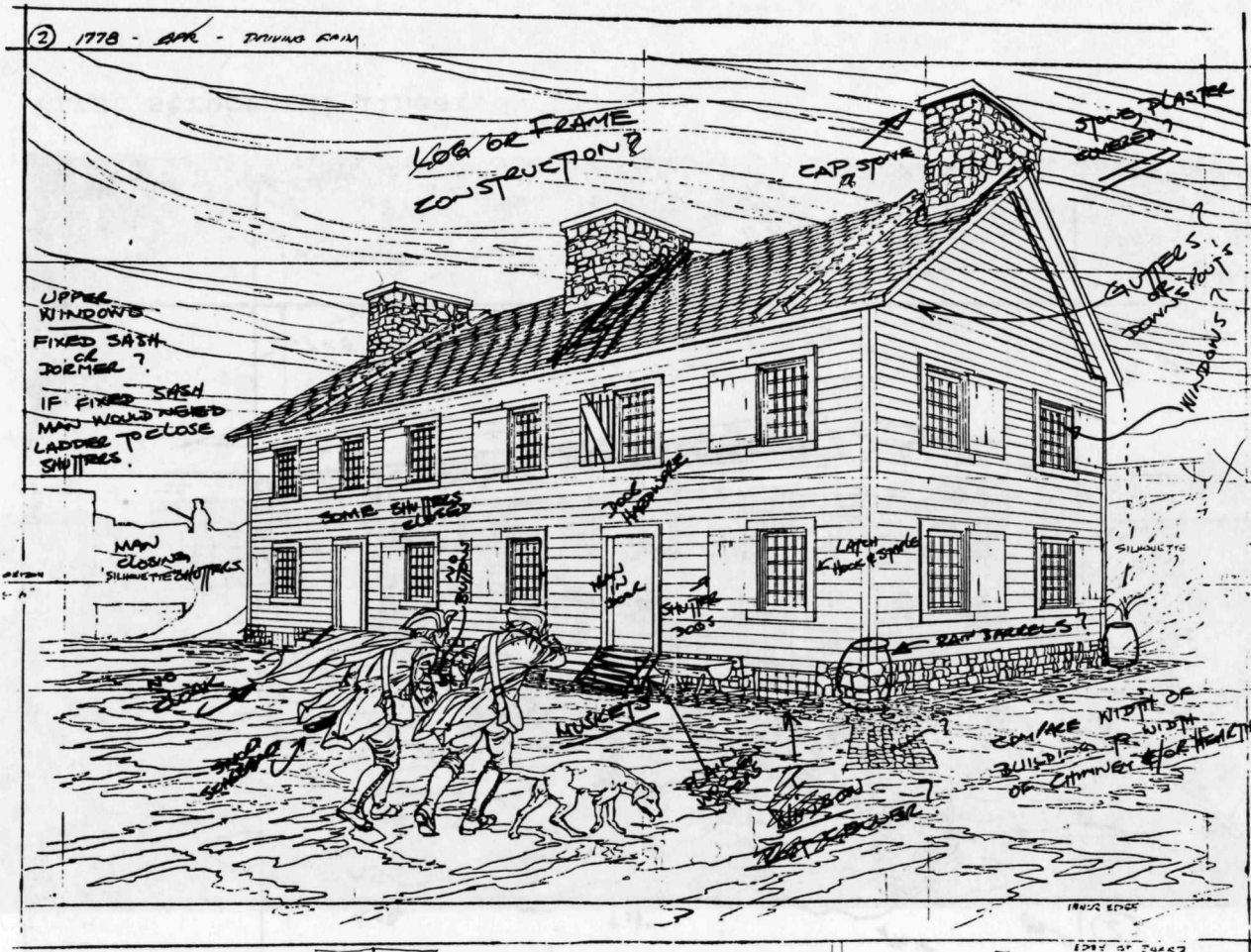
8 Painting no. 2.



9 Modern photograph of background for painting no. 2.



10 First structural linear.



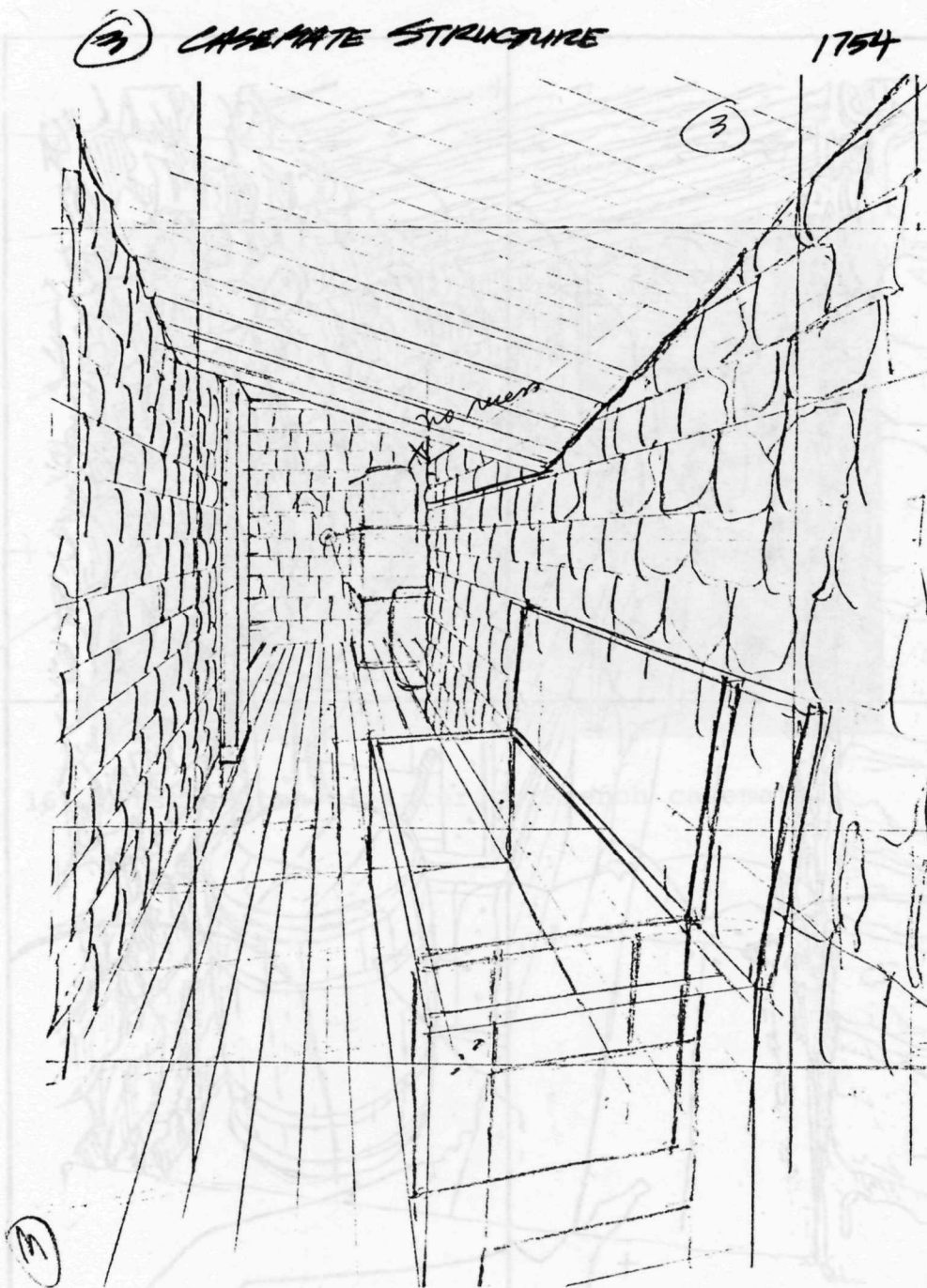
11 Second linear with comments.



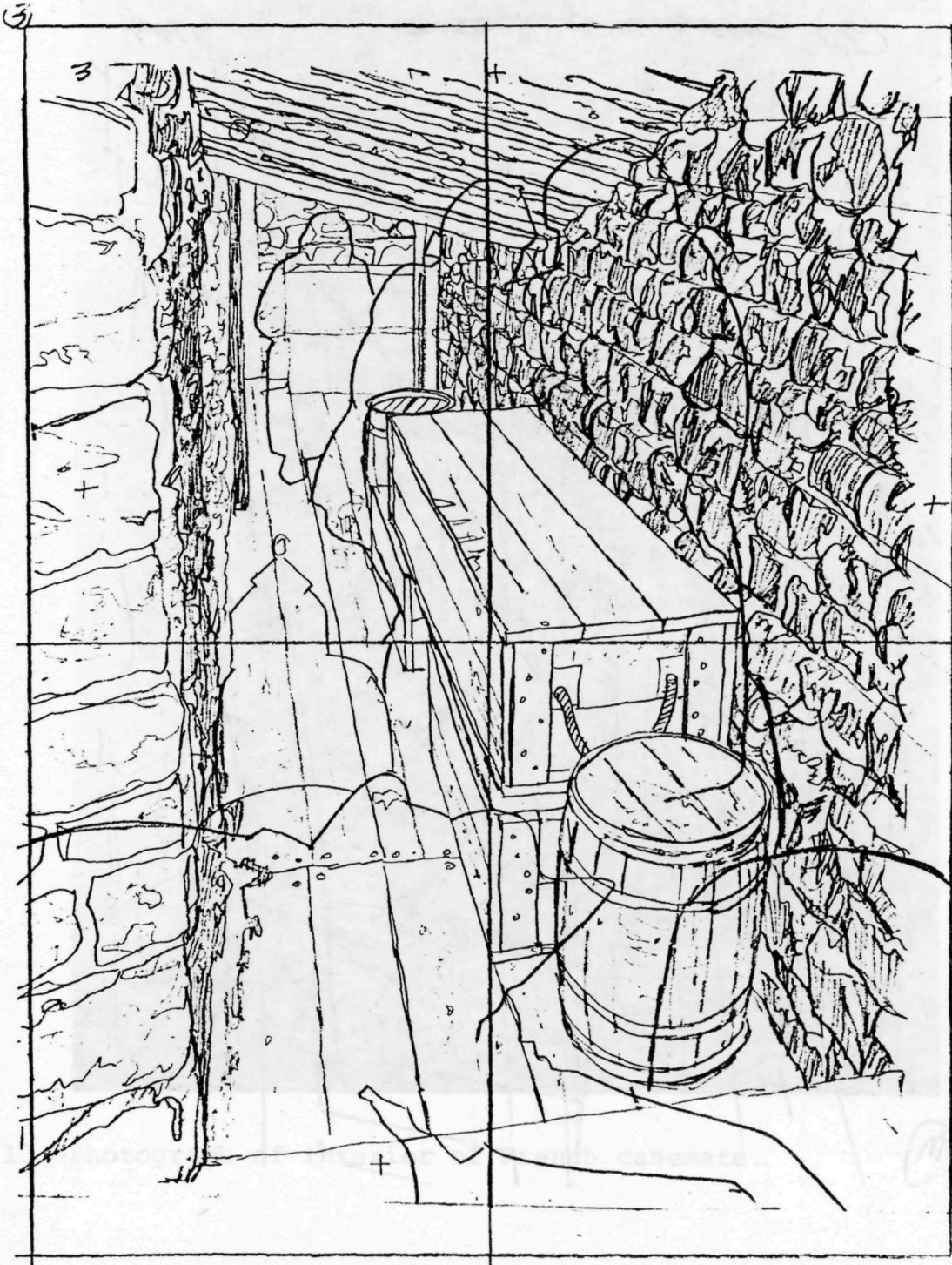
12 Painting interior French casemate.



13 Photograph of interior of French casemate.



14 Linear sketch outlining interior.



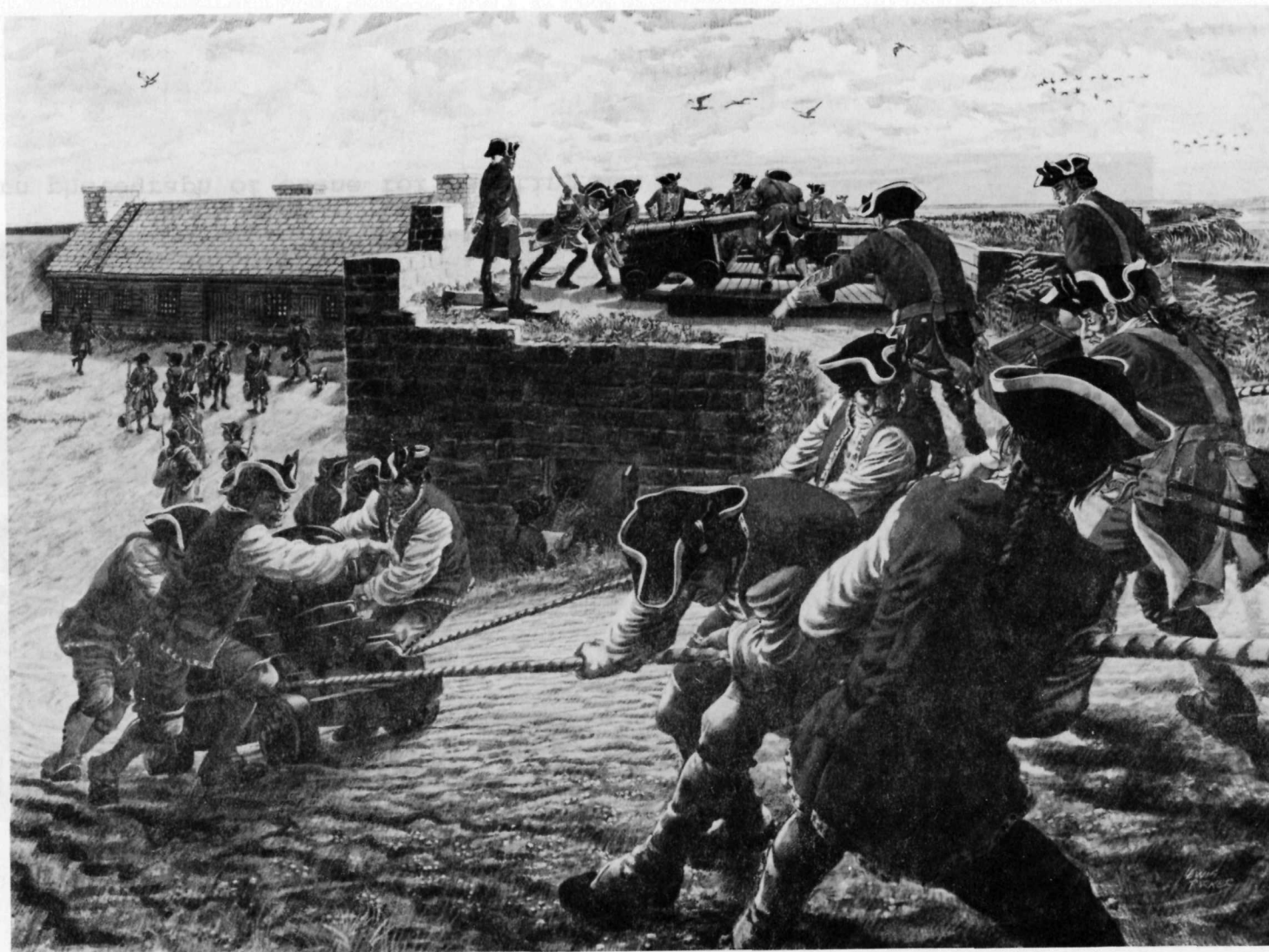
15 Sketch casemate interior locating people.



16 First sketch of interior French casemate.



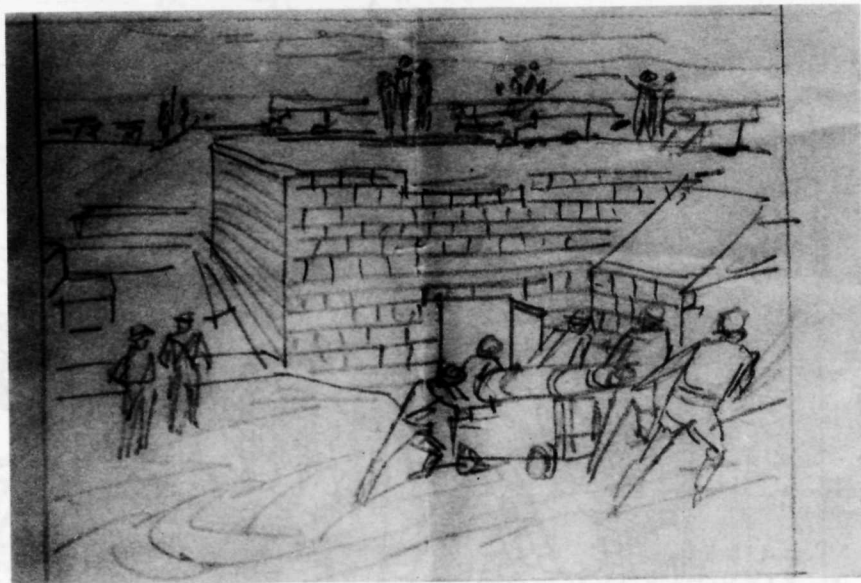
17 Final sketch of French casemate.



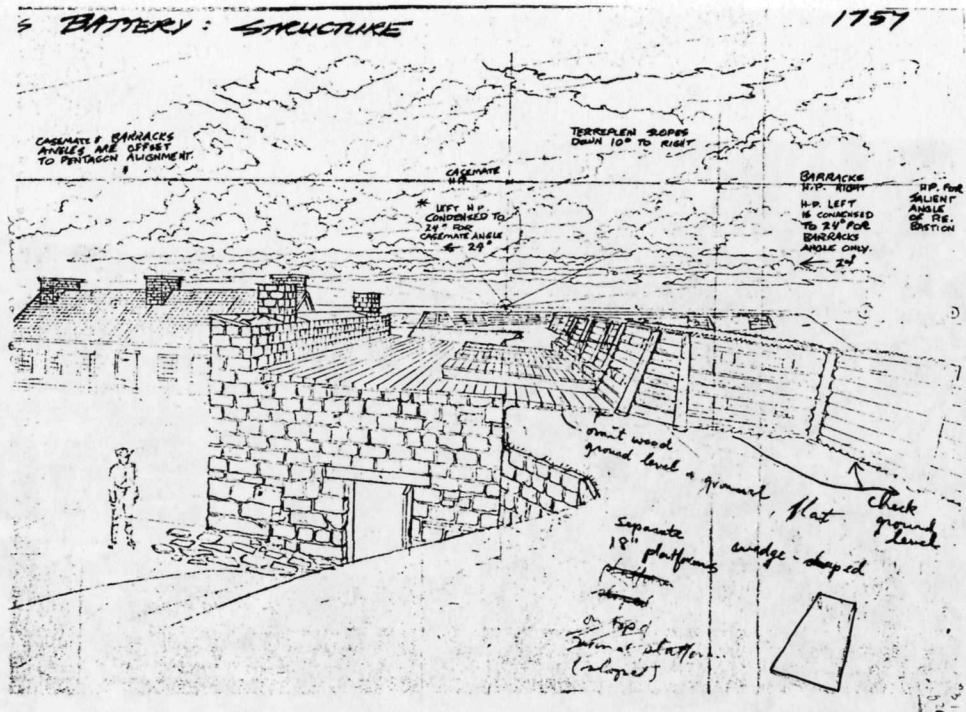
18 Finished painting no. 4.



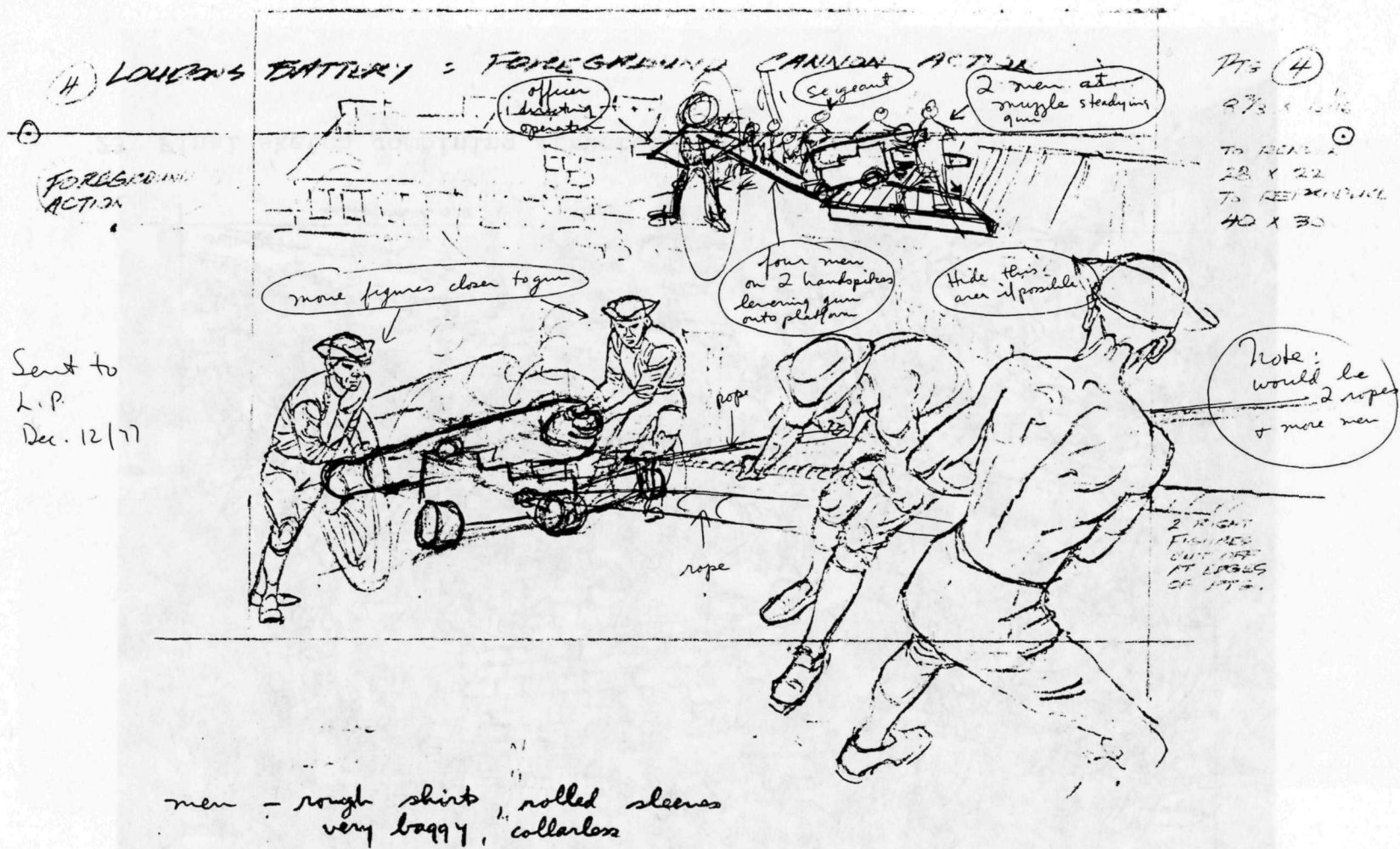
19 Modern photograph of scene for painting no. 4.



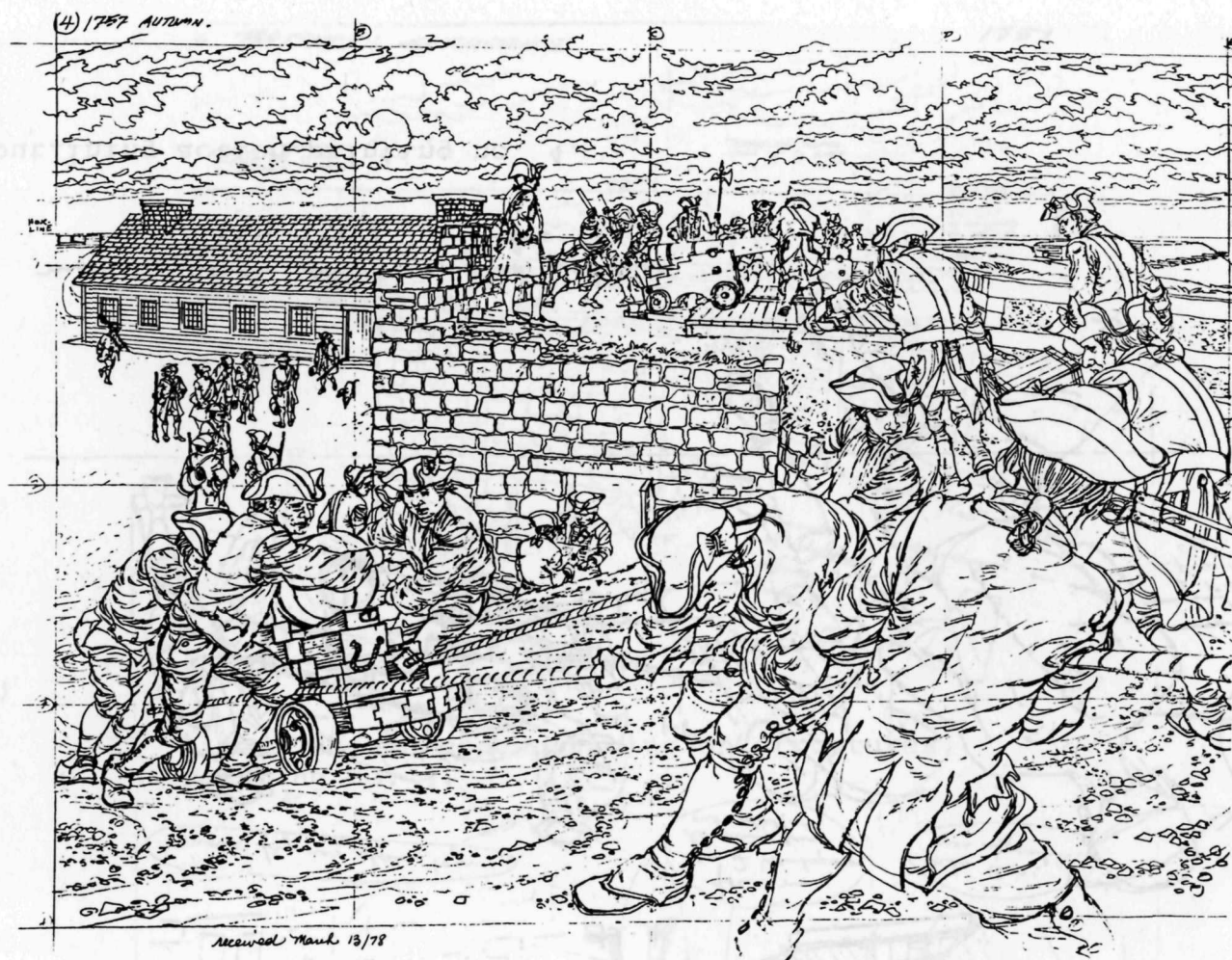
20 First rough sketch for painting no. 4.



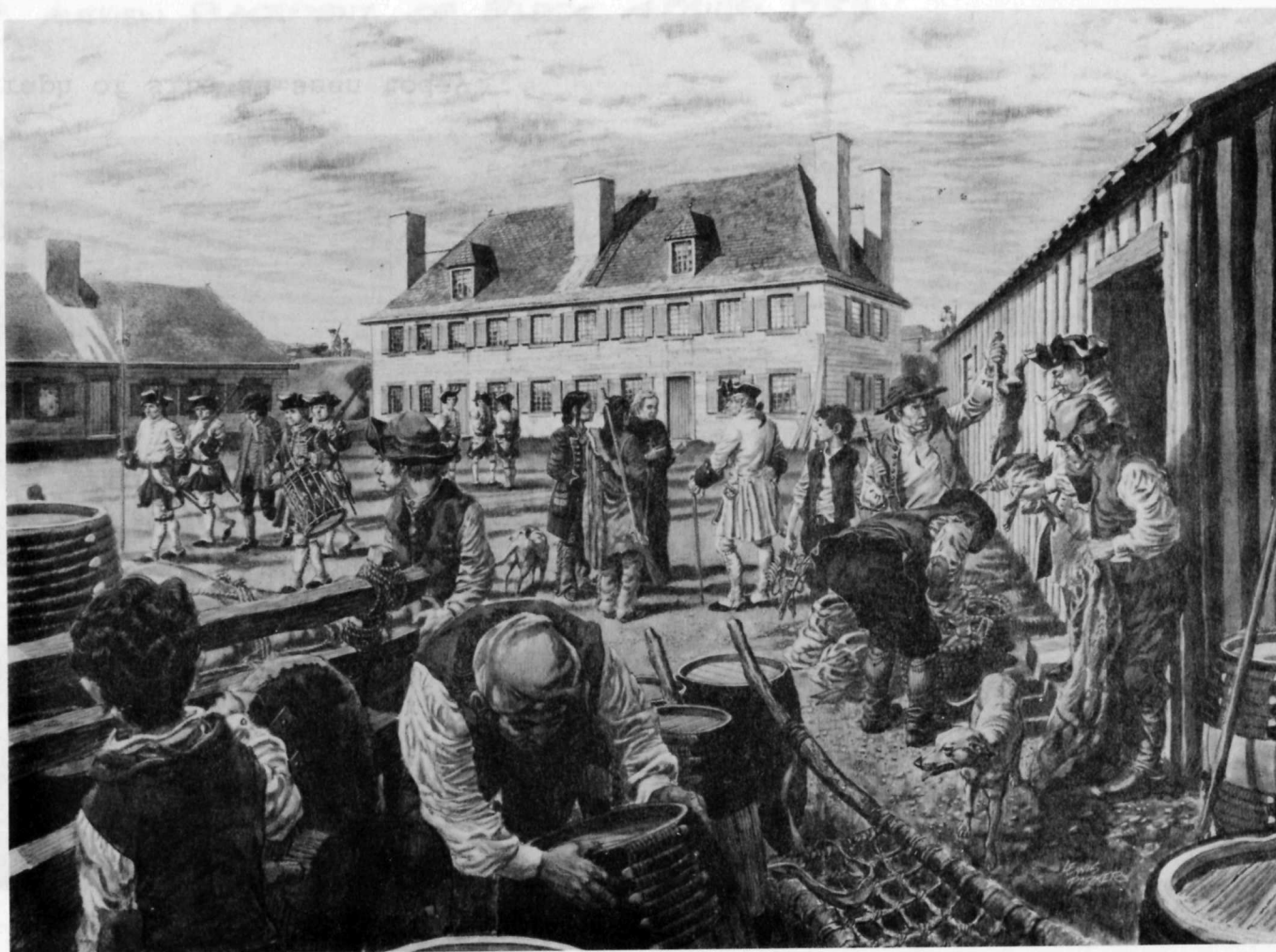
21 Linear sketch concentrating on structures, painting no. 4.



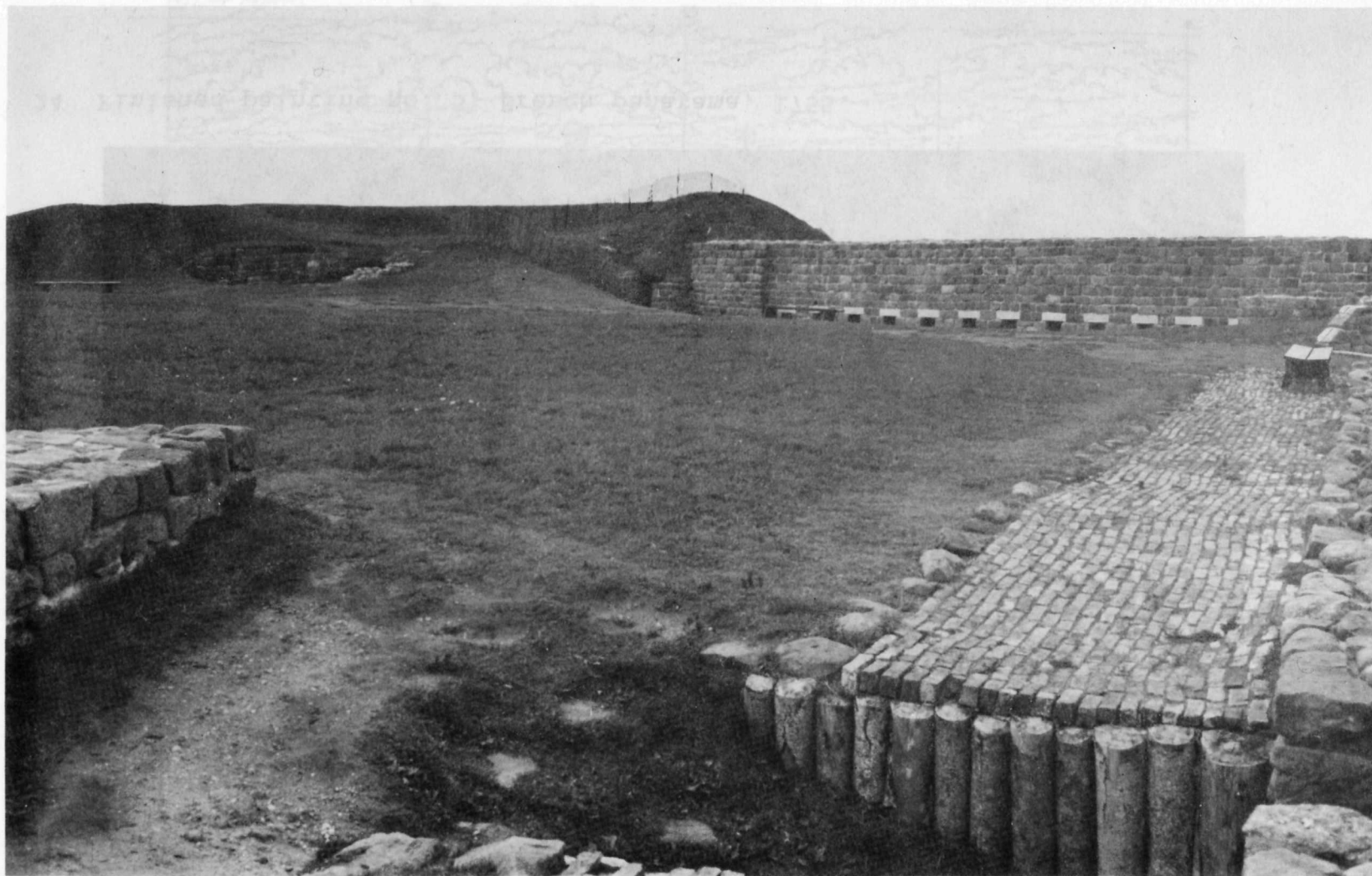
22 Sketch outlining action painting no. 4.



23 Final sketch combining structures and action.

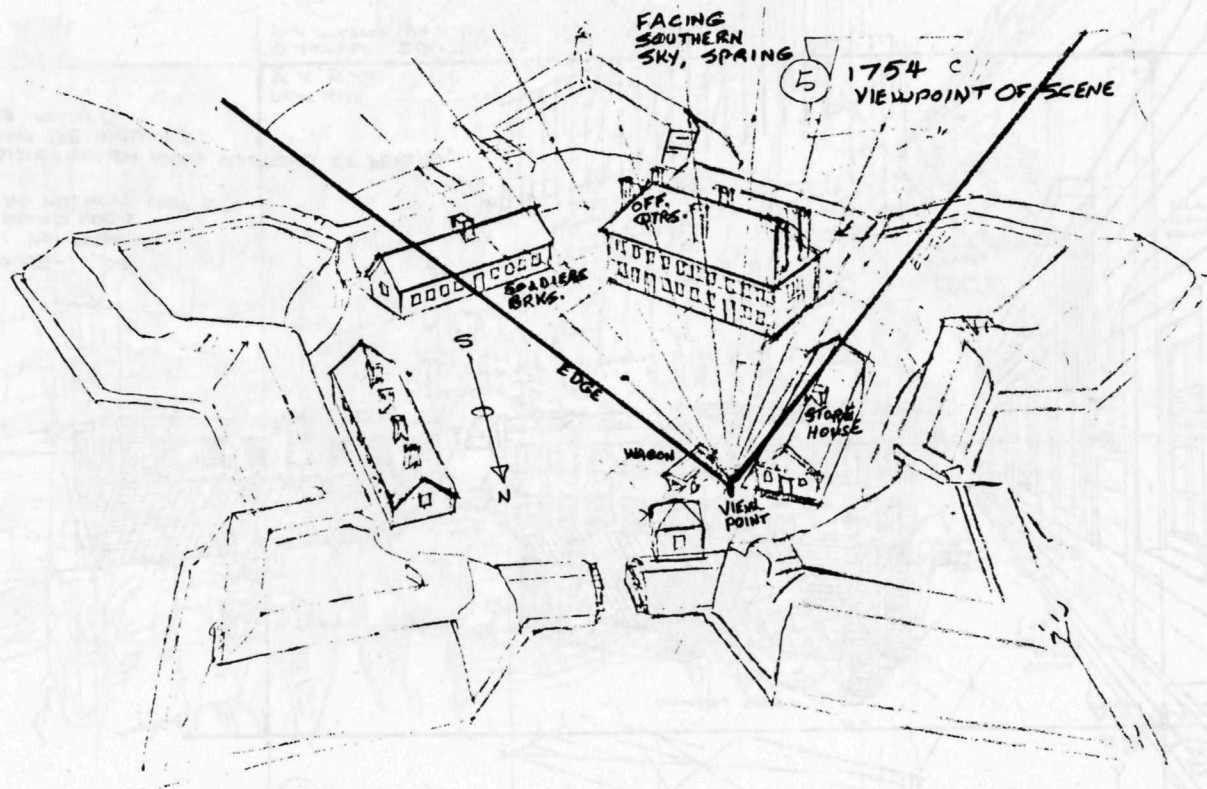


24 Finished painting no. 5, French panarama, 1755.



25 Photograph of site as seen today.

⑤ AIRVIEW PLACEMENT OF BLDGS SPRING 1754

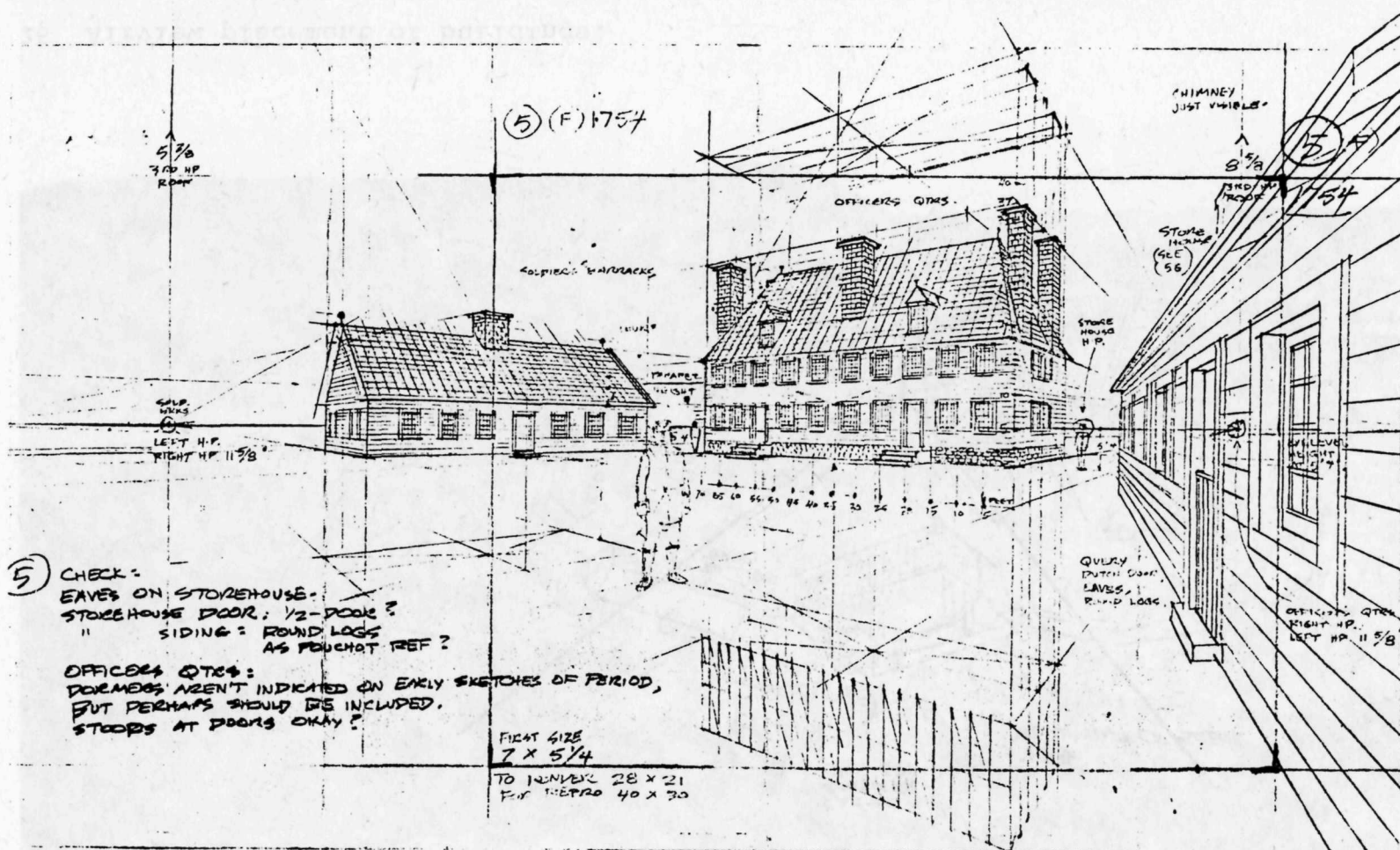


26 Airview placement of buildings.

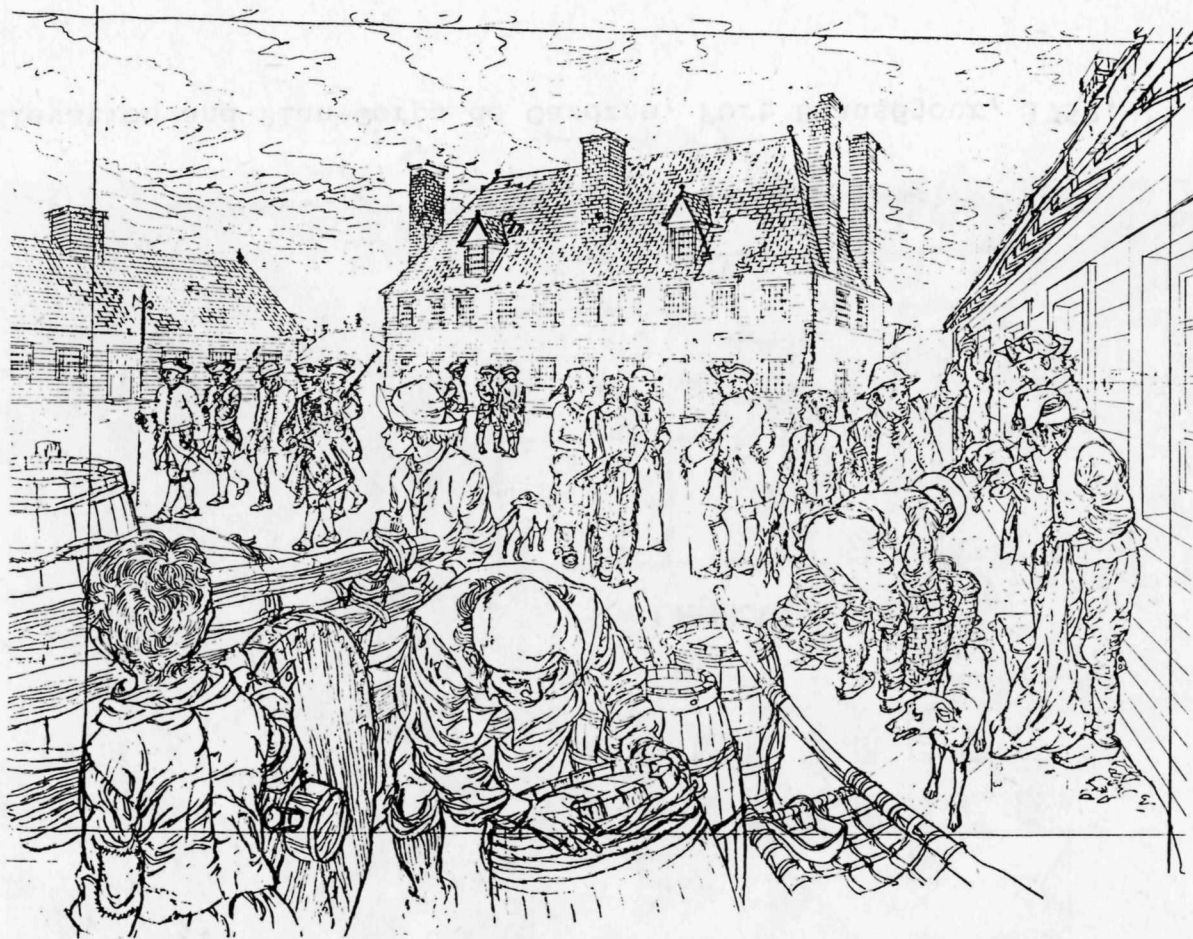
PREP LINEAR 1/4 SIZE

3

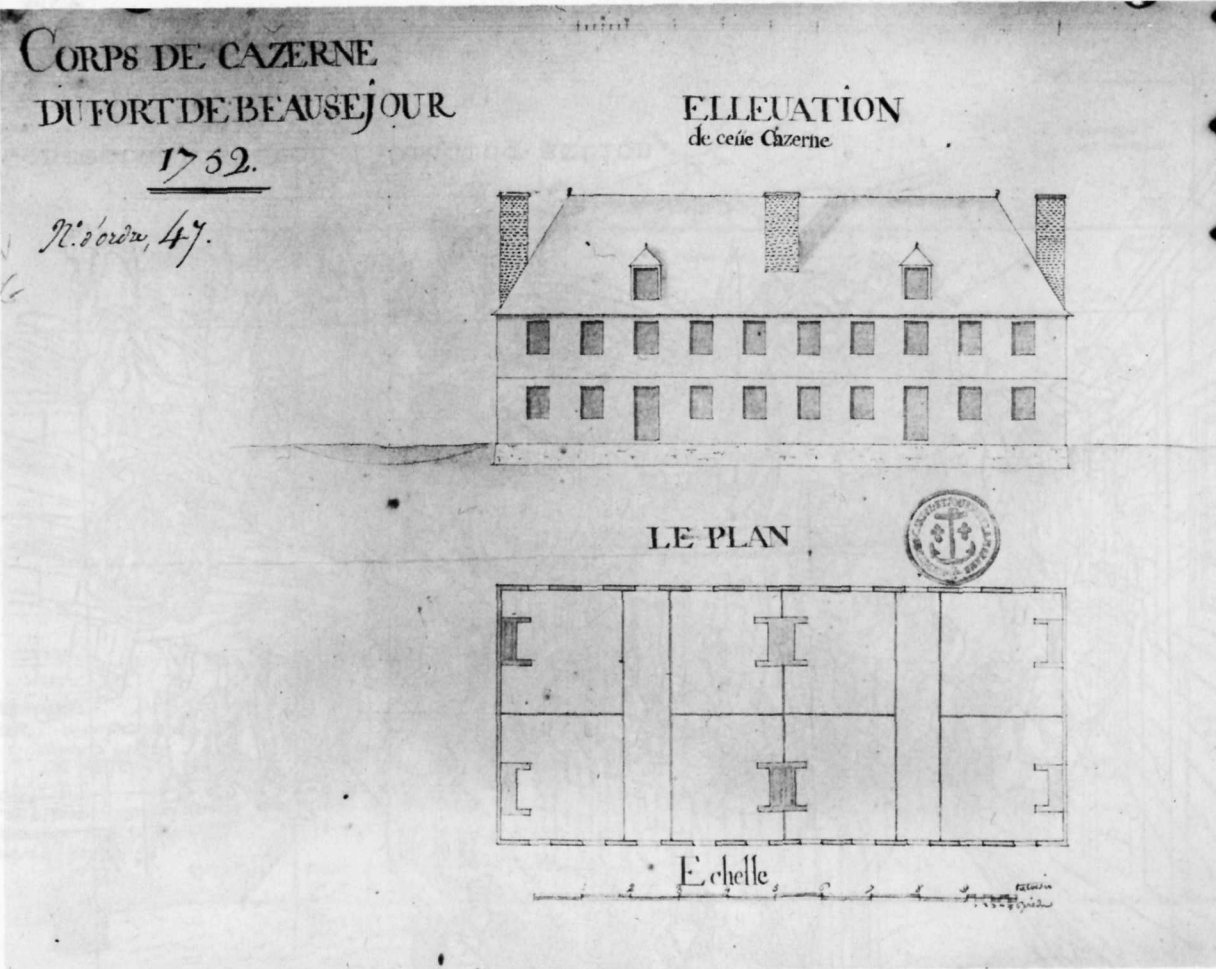
38



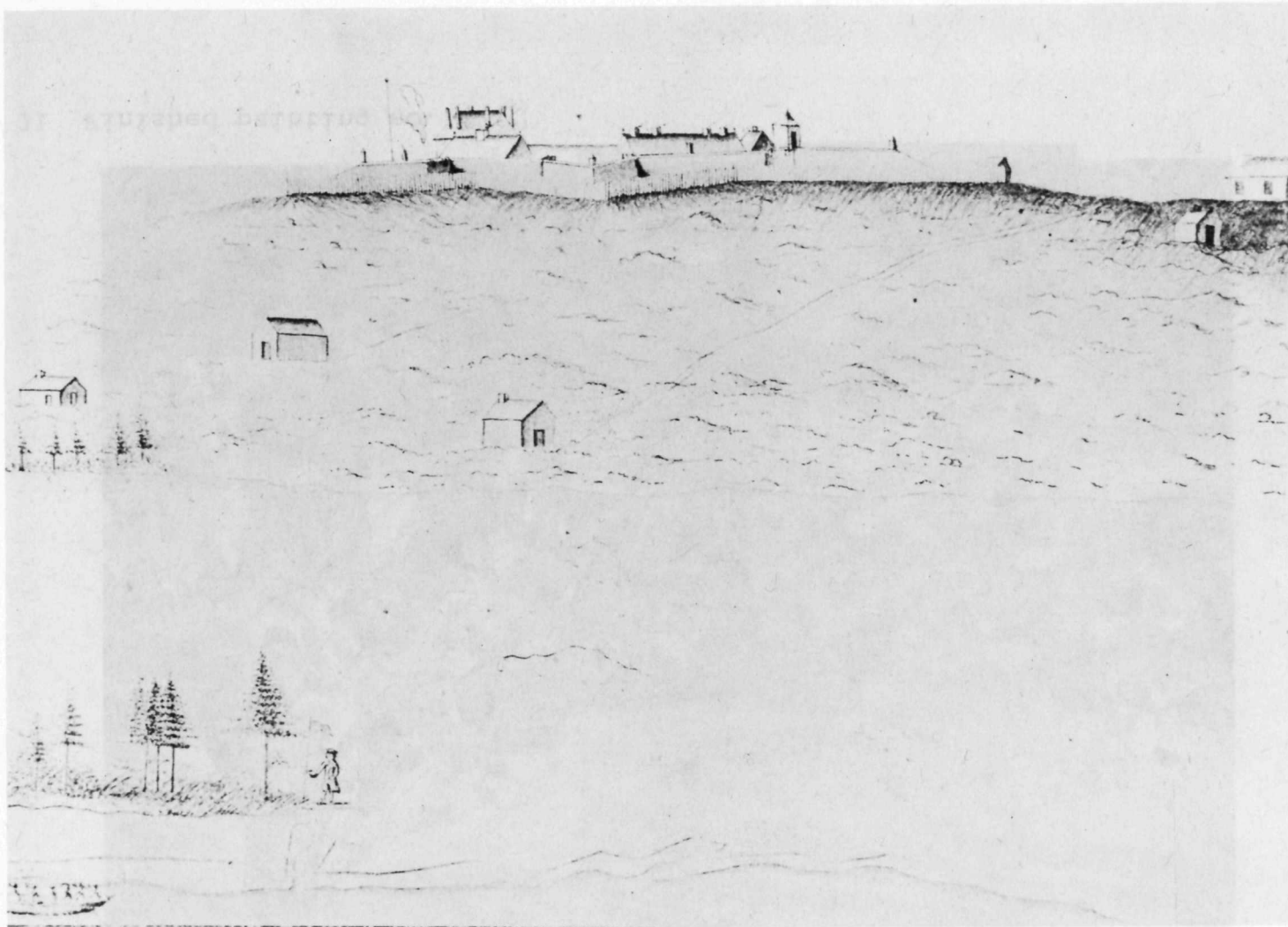
27 Linear sketch of structures.



28 Conceptual sketch including action.



29 Elevation and Plan-Corps de Cazerne, Fort Beauséjour, 1752.



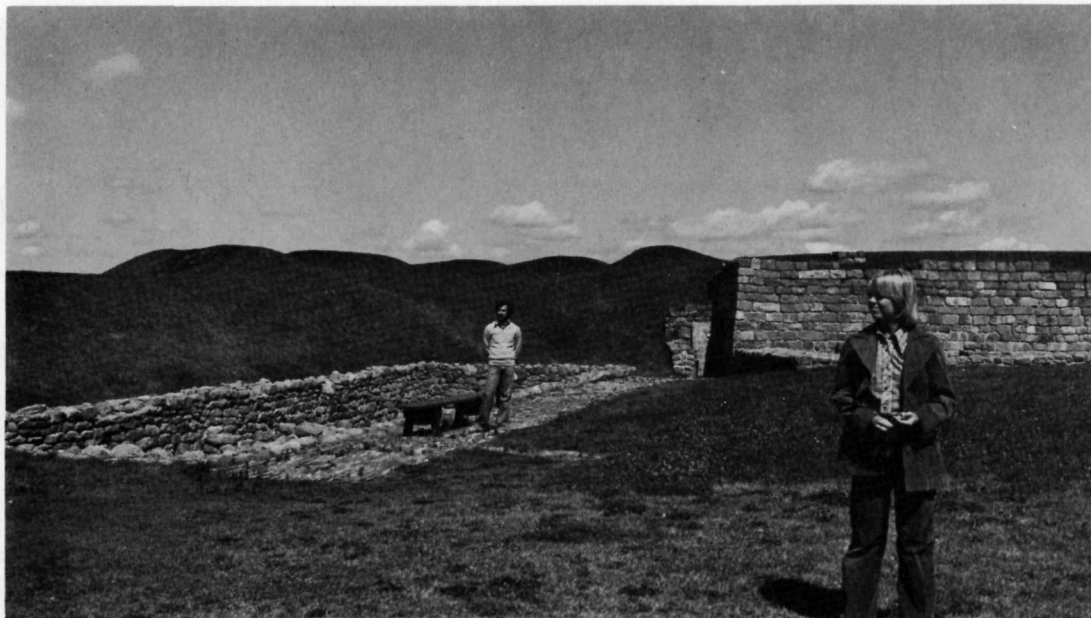
30 Fort Beauséjour, 1755 (insert only), plan 214-01-2-755-0015 PAC (c. 19954).



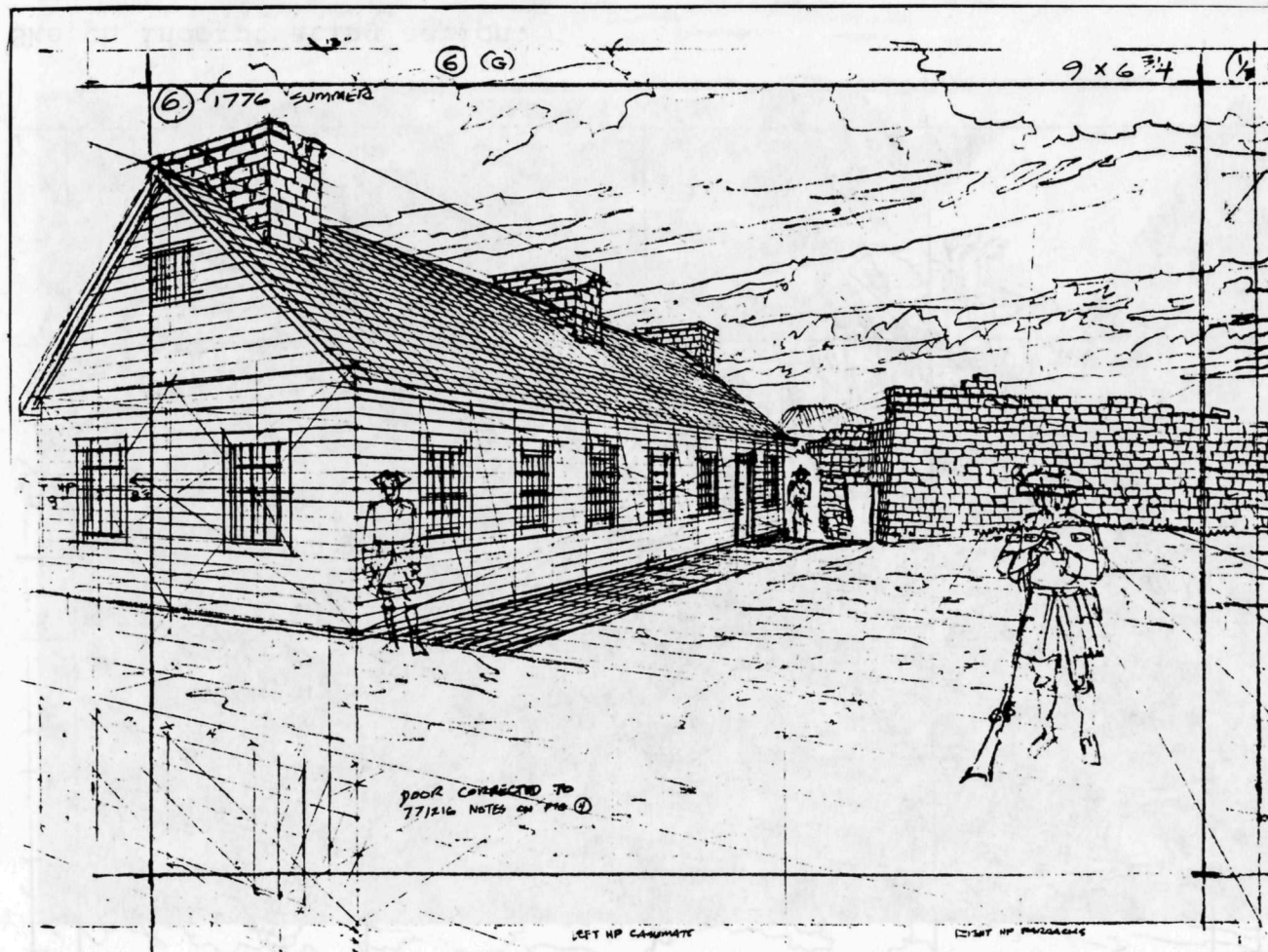
31 Finished painting no. 6.



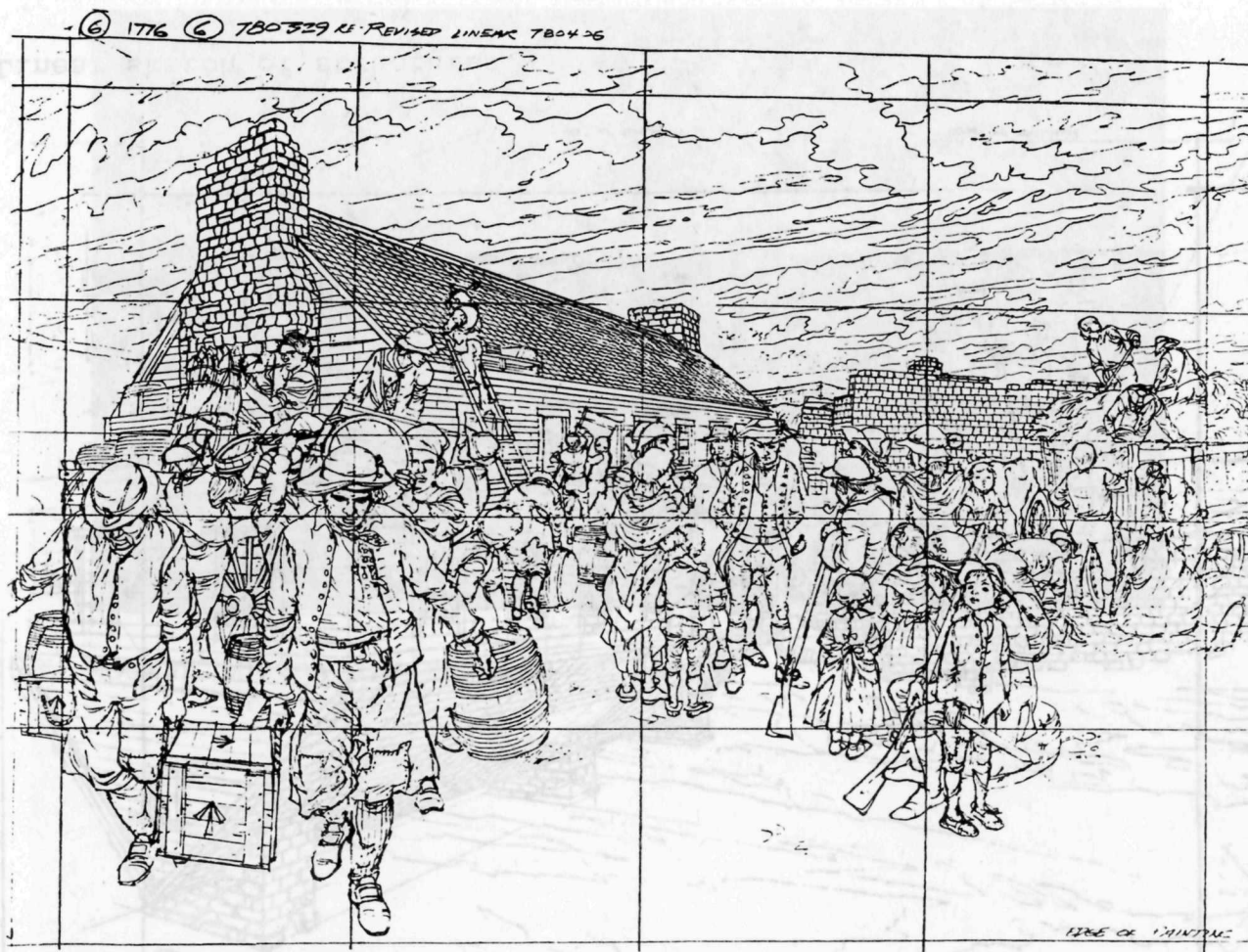
32 Rough sketch from 'on-site' ideas.



33 Modern photograph of site of scene.



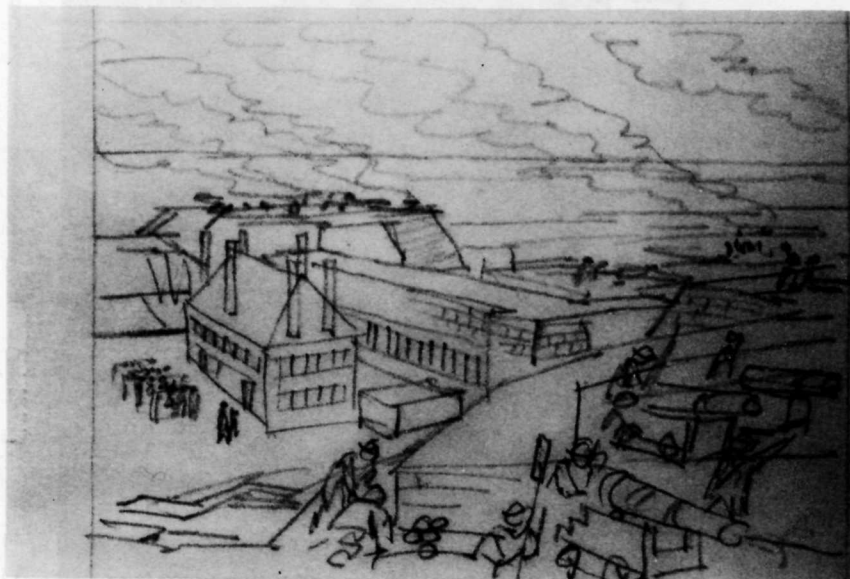
34 Linear sketch of structures.



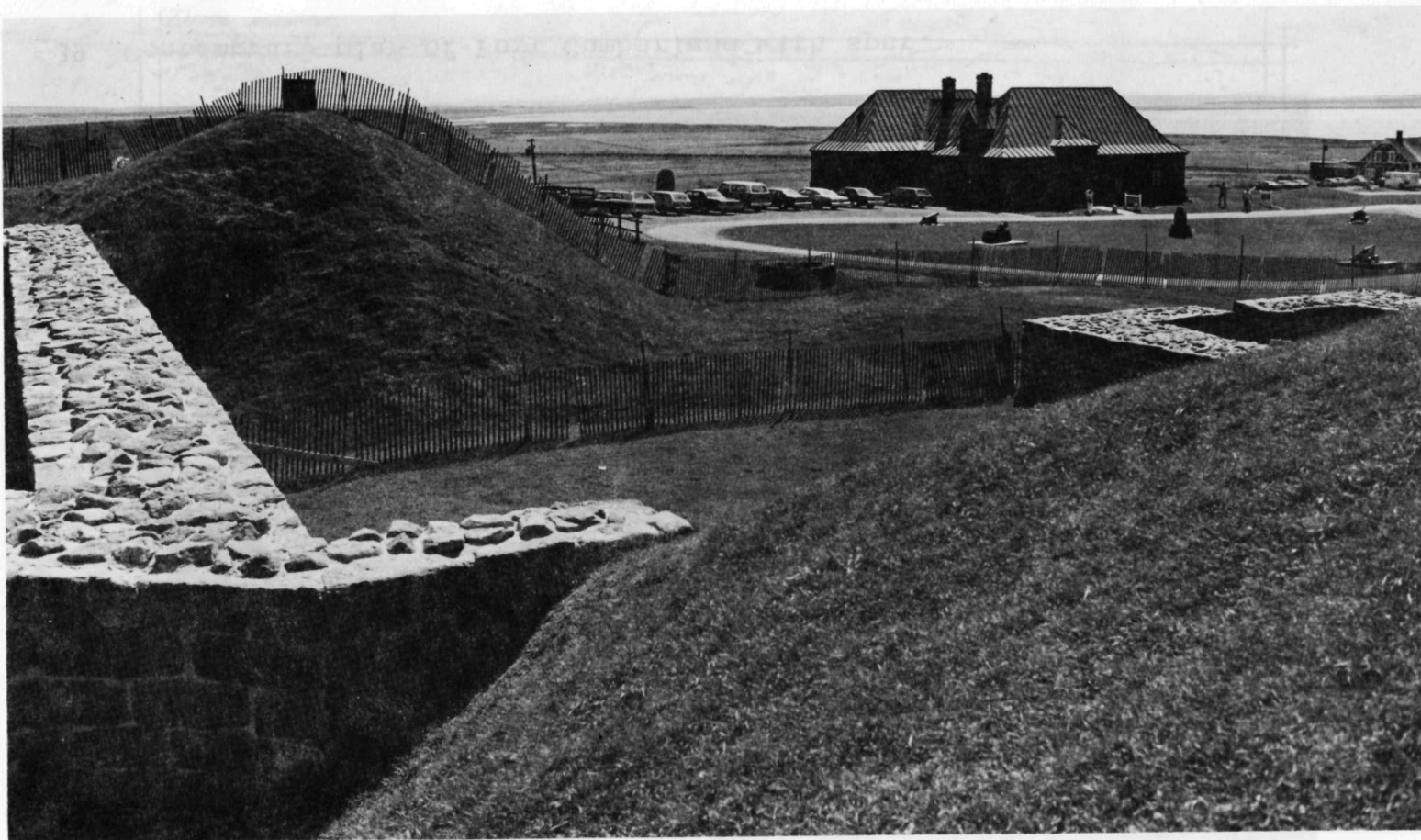
35 Sketch incorporating action.



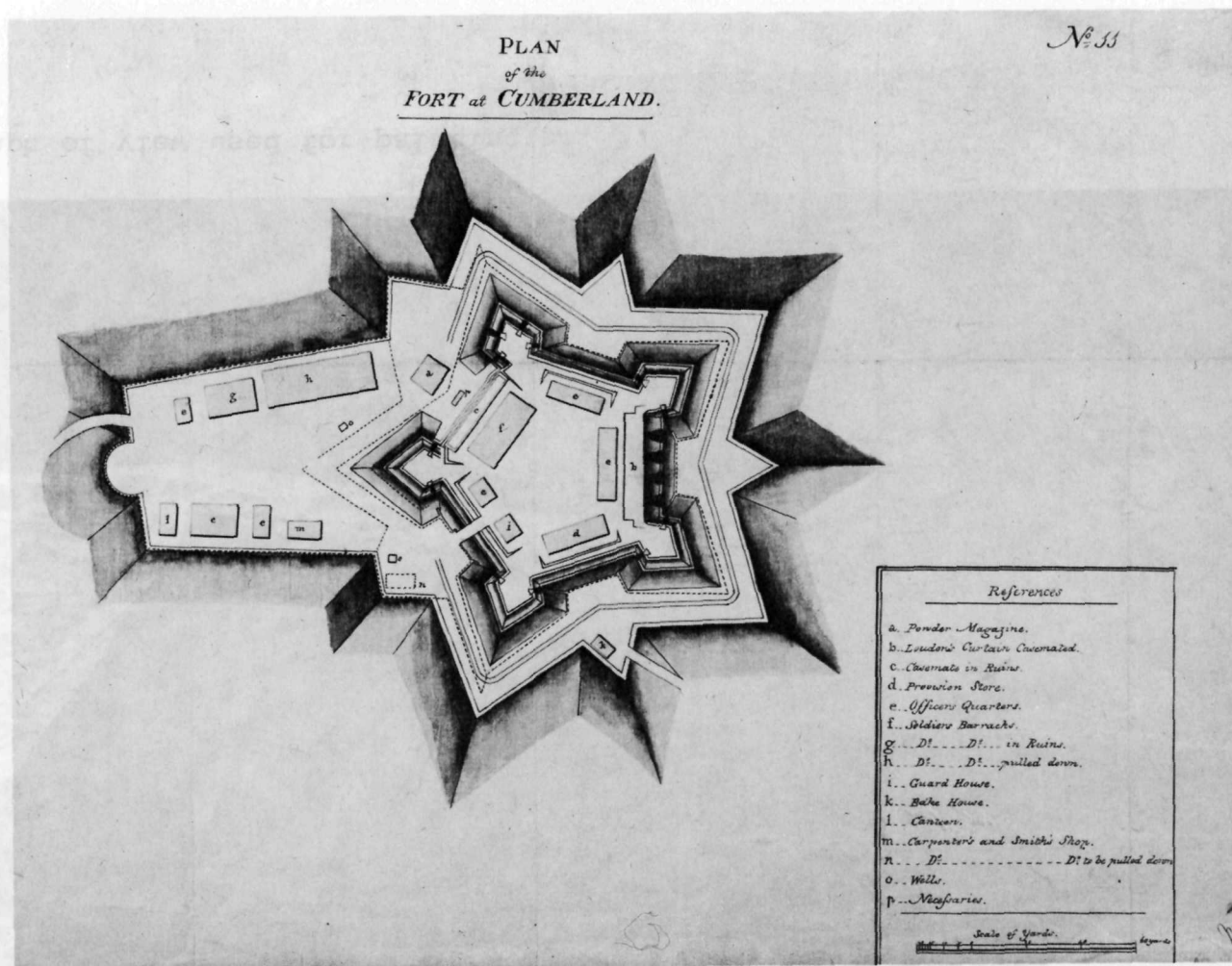
36 Finished painting no. 7.



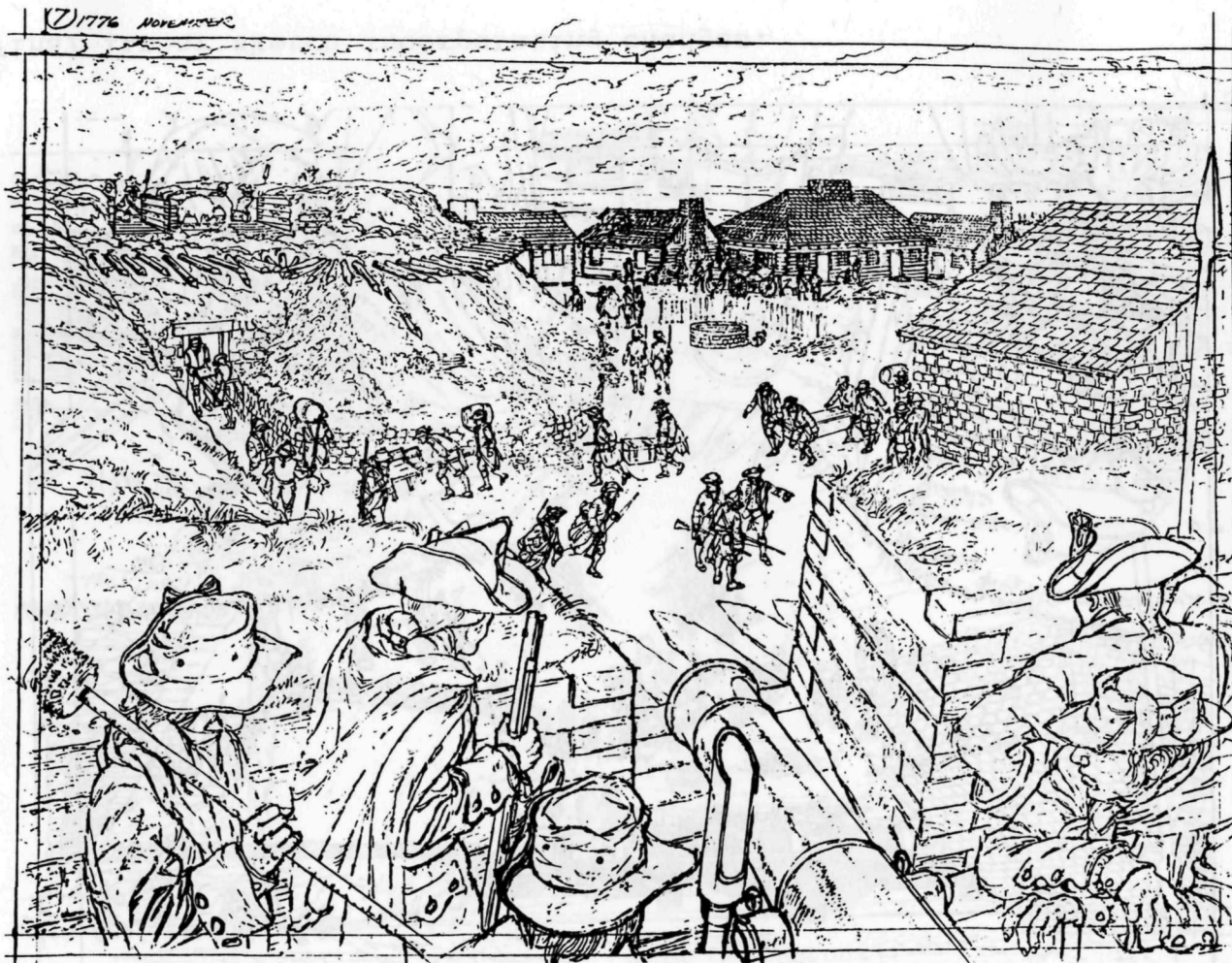
37 First rough sketch, painting no. 7.



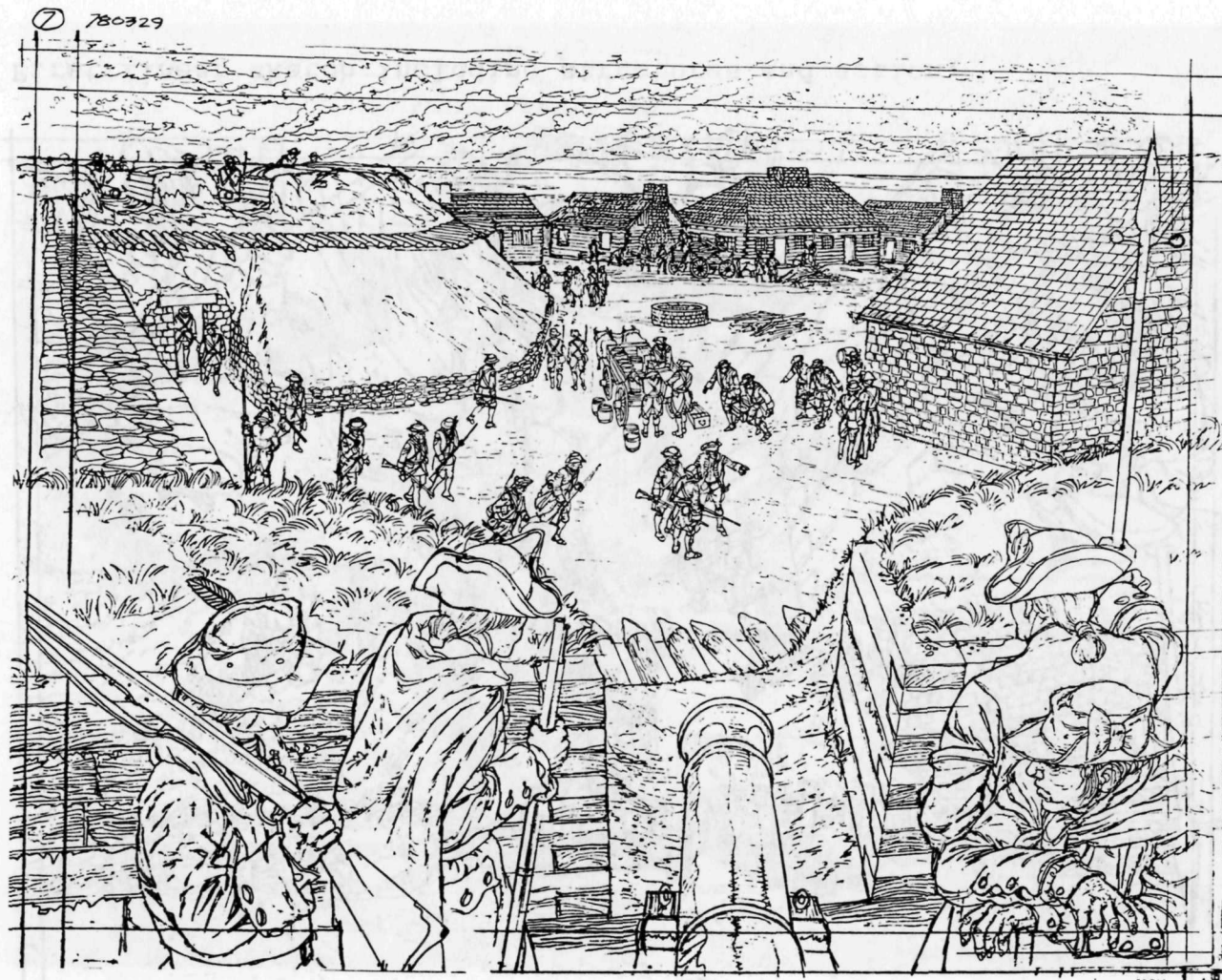
38 Photograph of view used for painting no. 7.



39 Contemporary plan of Fort Cumberland with spur.



40 First linear sketch including structures and action.



41 Final linear sketch incorporating changes.

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