



Colchester Archaeological Group

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THE COCK AND PIE

by Richard Shackle

The newcomer to Colchester would be puzzled if he were asked where the Cock and Pie is, as there is no public house of that name. However, older residents know number 56 North Hill as the Cock and Pie even though it has not been a public house since 1939.

In May 1990, when the building was renovated, I had the chance to examine the building. On the upper floor, stacked in a corner, was a pile of boards with fragments of printed paper attached to them. When I examined these pieces of paper closely, they turned out to be eighteenth century playbills and other printed matter. This article is in two parts: 1) the building, and 2) the playbills.

1) THE BUILDING

The building is in four parts:

- a) the Georgian front range
- b) a seventeenth century wing
- c) a late medieval wing
- d) a nineteenth century brick extension behind the seventeenth century wing which I did not record.

a) The Georgian Front Range

This is a timber framed building with a brick front. Figure 1 shows the upper floor of the whole building as it was in May 1990, and you can see how the front range relates to the older wings. The ground floor had an open passage going through it to the yard and garden behind. This passage is clearly shown on the Ordnance Survey 1:1500 scale map of 1876 and on the deed plan of 1873 (Fig 2). The wooden part of the Georgian range contains many reused timbers.

b) The Seventeenth Century Wing

This timber framed wing is built into an earth bank on the south side, the earth being restrained by a brick wall. On the north side, the building is jettied. There may have been large moulded brackets below the jetty, at the bay divisions, there are no signs of brackets now. This wing has four bays, three wide bays and narrow one at the end. I think this narrow bay may have held a brick chimney stack. In figure 3, I have tried to reconstruct the original layout of this wing. In truss E-F, there may have been a fully framed wall with a door in it, but the surviving remains suggest just a short partition on south side as shown. The windows on the upper floor are in two parts: the main windows are original, the smaller side windows were put in later. This can be seen because the peg holes and mortices for the sawn off studs can still be seen in the top plate above the windows. Figure 4 shows jettied wall, A-I. The studwork on the ground floor in this wall has been replaced by a brick wall. Figure 5 shows three sections through the buildings; section G-H probably only had studs in the space not filled by the brick chimney stack. Figure 6 shows a reconstruction of the outside of the wing, as it might have looked about 1650 AD. The walls would have been plastered except for the windows. There may have been some simple pargetting. The small window with leaded lights now removed was probably a later addition to illuminate a low table or chair.

c) Late Medieval Wing

This small timber framed building was originally jettied on both sides, but it is now under-built on the south side (Fig 7). It was originally divided into two rooms on both floors by truss, O-P. If the building was always this size, this would give two very small rooms on each floor, as the building was probably longer originally. The building may have been a new extension to a medieval building; whether that was on this site or somewhere else is not clear. It appears to have been rebuilt at sometime as it incorporates several newer timbers, particularly later joists in the floor.

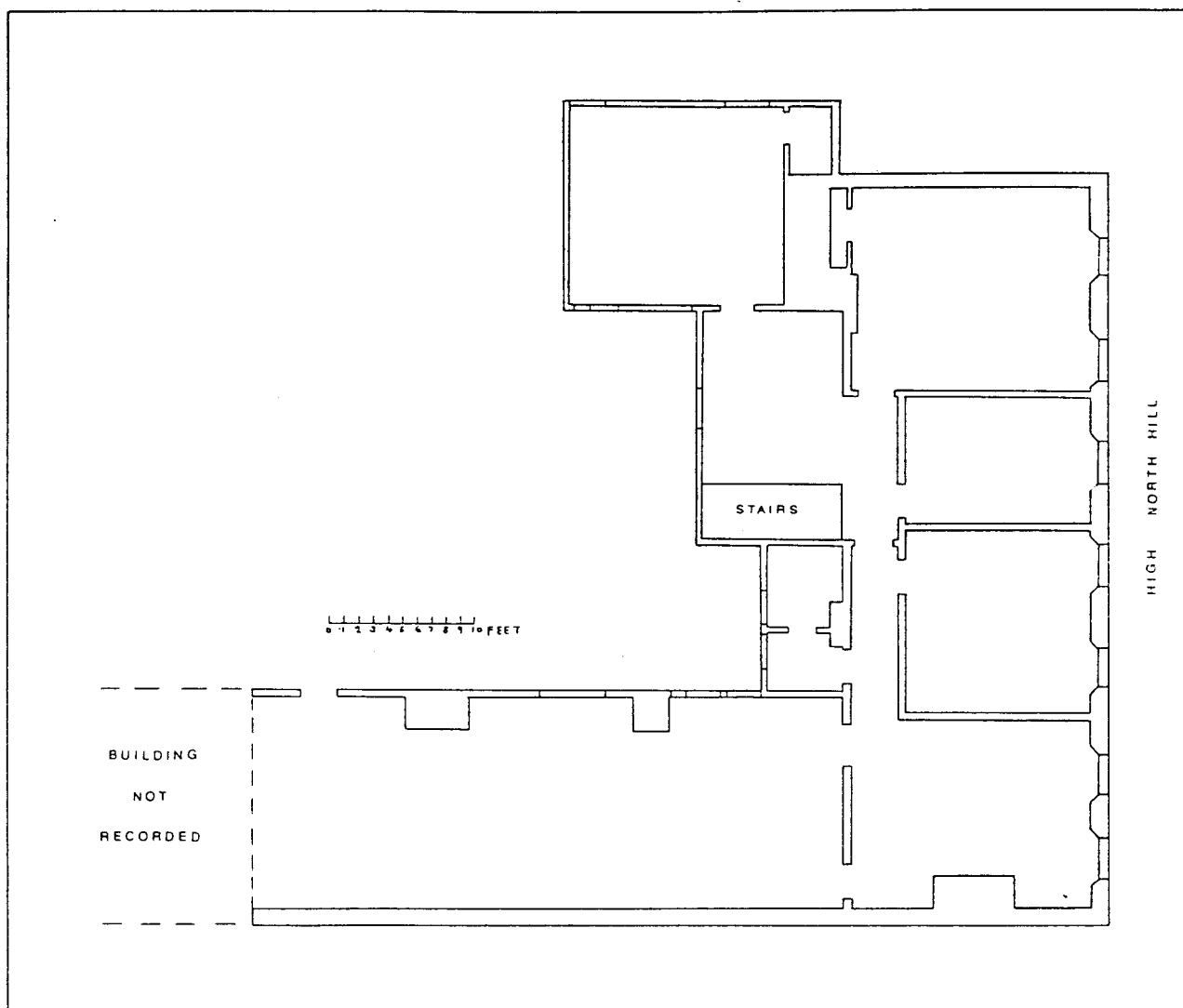


Fig 1. Cock & Pie, North Hill, Colchester.

History of the Cock and Pie

At the Colchester Branch of the Essex Record Office, the earliest documentary reference I have been able to find is in the Colchester Borough Alehouse Recognizances Book 1764-1819. In the Michaelmas session of 1764, it was held by Henry Mason with sureties by Robert Jones and Thomas Gonner. It continued to be held by Henry Mason until 1781 when it was held by Robert Wright with sureties by Thomas Holden (Victualler) and John Nunn (Innholder). Robert Wright held it until 1814 when James Mason and Thomas Collin were the persons licensed. They continued to be the licencees until the end of the book in 1819. The later Ale Recognizance Books are missing so we have to turn to other sources.

In Pigot's Directory of 1823 we find: Mason and Collins, Cock and Pie, North Hill. In the nineteenth century notebooks for St. Peter's Parish, the Cock and Pie is not mentioned; it must have been noted as a house and not named as the Cock and Pie.

In the Essex Record Office at Chelmsford are some deeds relating to the building. There is a lease dated 3rd July 1852 for a Spirit Shop and premises on North Hill, Colchester, from Mr James W Mason to Charrington Nicol Esq. (Merchant).

"...All that SPIRIT SHOP situated on the West side of North Hill in the Parish of St. Peter in Colchester, aforesaid with two WAREHOUSES standing immediately behind the same and another warehouse on the opposite side of the yard together with an outhouse near the same now used as a TUB and WOODHOUSE and also all that room situated and being over the first named warehouse and also all that small room situated on the north side of the passage leading to the aforesaid premises which has lately been taken from the residence of the said JAMES WILLIAM MASON and an entrance made there from the aforesaid passage together with the use of the said passage... "

There is an indenture (CTE/710) dated 7th April 1865 part of which states "...between Elizabeth Chaplin of Dartford, Kent and John Chaplin of London, Hotel Keeper on the one part and Henry Tayler of Colchester, Wine and Spirit merchant on the other part 21st November 1859 between Henry Tayler and said Elizabeth Chaplin, John Chaplin and George Cornwall Philcox.... All that freehold messuage or tenement etc. ... known by the name 'Cock and Magpie' or otherwise formerly in the occupation of Henry Mason afterwards Robert Wright, since James William Mason and the said Henry Tayler and Miss Allen.... And also all that parcel of ground whereon a messuage (divided into 5 tenements) formerly stood, which tenements were sometime since in the occupation of the said Henry Mason, Robert Wright and Samuel Love.....Together with several tenements, warehouses and buildings."

Among the deeds is a plan (Fig 2) dated June 1873. It is a plan of property on North Hill, Colchester of Mrs Tayler and Messrs Page and Lee. The plan was prepared by G. Gard-Pye, Architect. It gives a very good idea of the layout of the grounds of the Cock and Pie before the Essex County Council Educational Buildings of 1907.

From the above records, it would appear that the Cock and Pie ceased being an ordinary public house about 1823 and became mainly a spirit shop and warehouse. It continued to be a public house even after it was bought by Essex County Council in 1907, and finally closed in 1939. There is a photograph in the *Essex County Standard* (February 27th 1987) showing the publican, Mr Walter Bird, and friends standing in the back yard of the pub in 1919. Since 1939, the County Council has put it to various uses. During the Second World War, it became a centre for the Colchester Air Training Corps and there was a three bladed propeller hung on the outside of the building. Later it became the sixth form common room for the Gilbert School. At this stage it was said to have had a mural by the artist Richard Stone, but this was later painted over.

When the Sixth Form College was created, the Cock and Pie block on North Hill was sold off and has been redeveloped as offices with a new building in the yard at the rear.

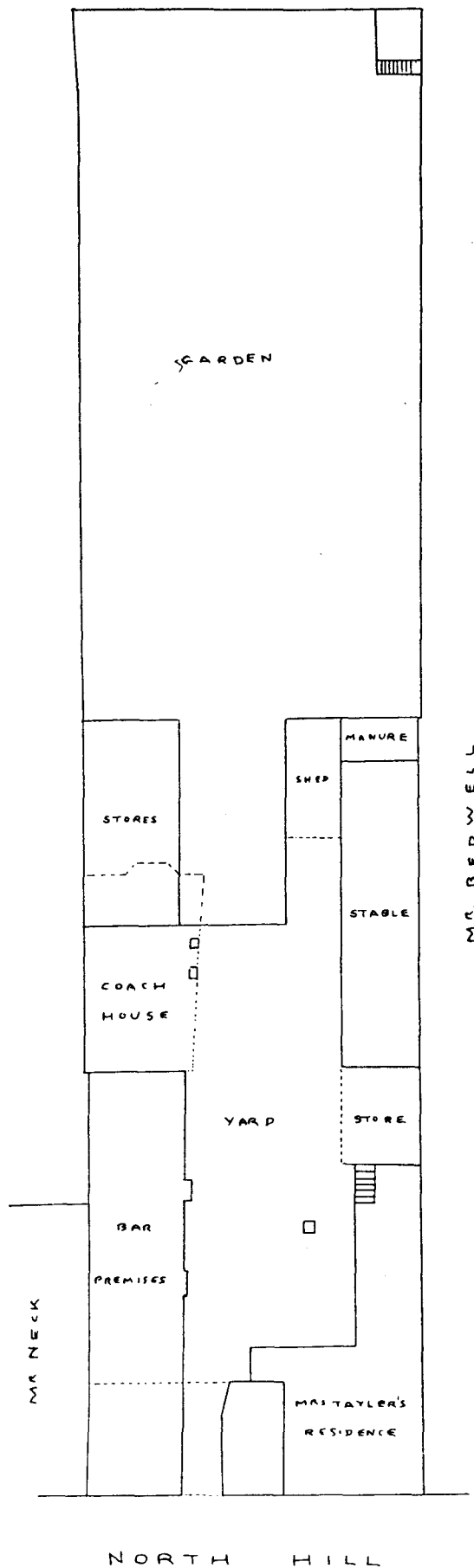


Fig 2. Cock & Pie, North Hill, Colchester

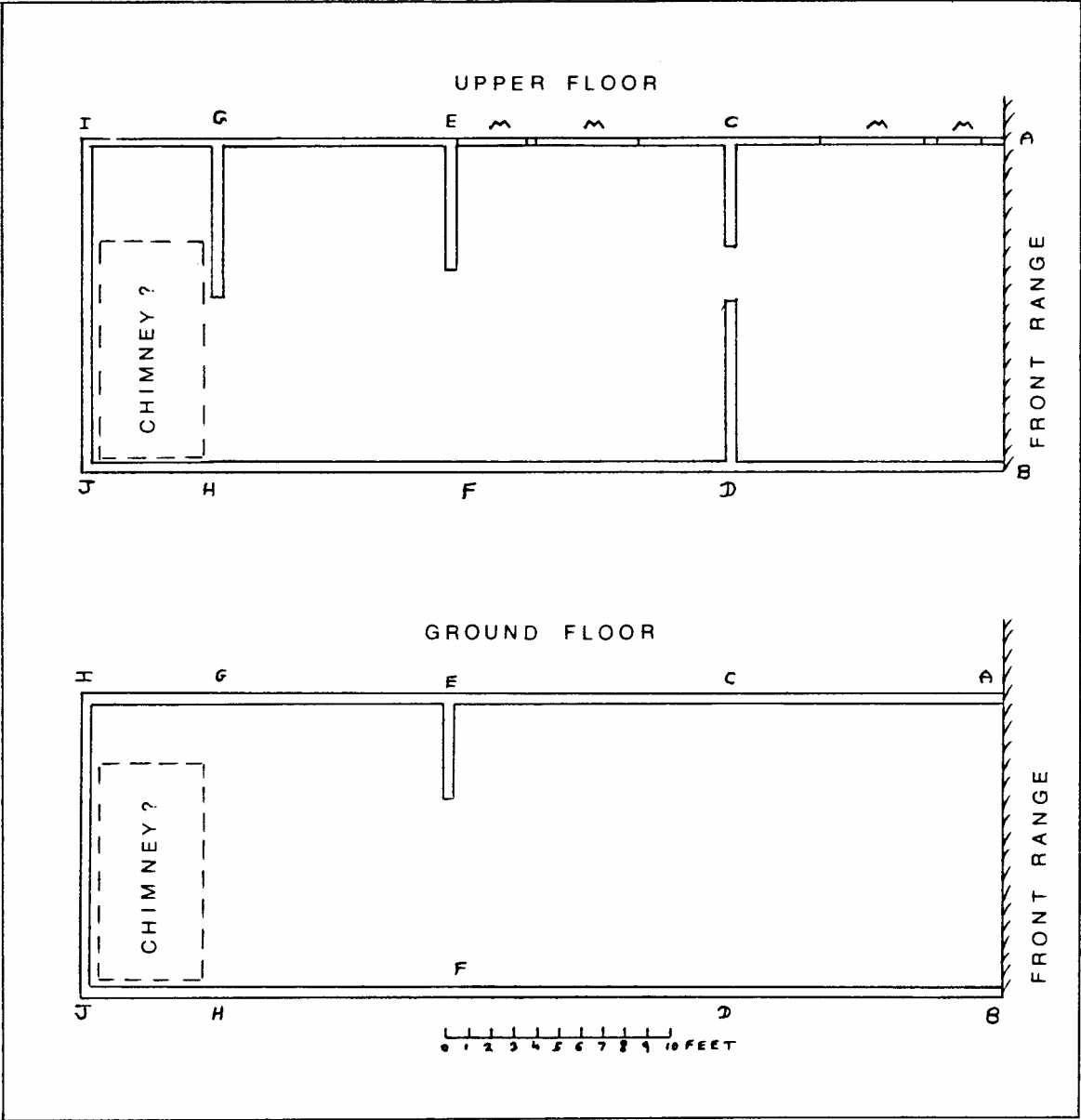


Fig 3. Cock & Pie, North Hill, Colchester

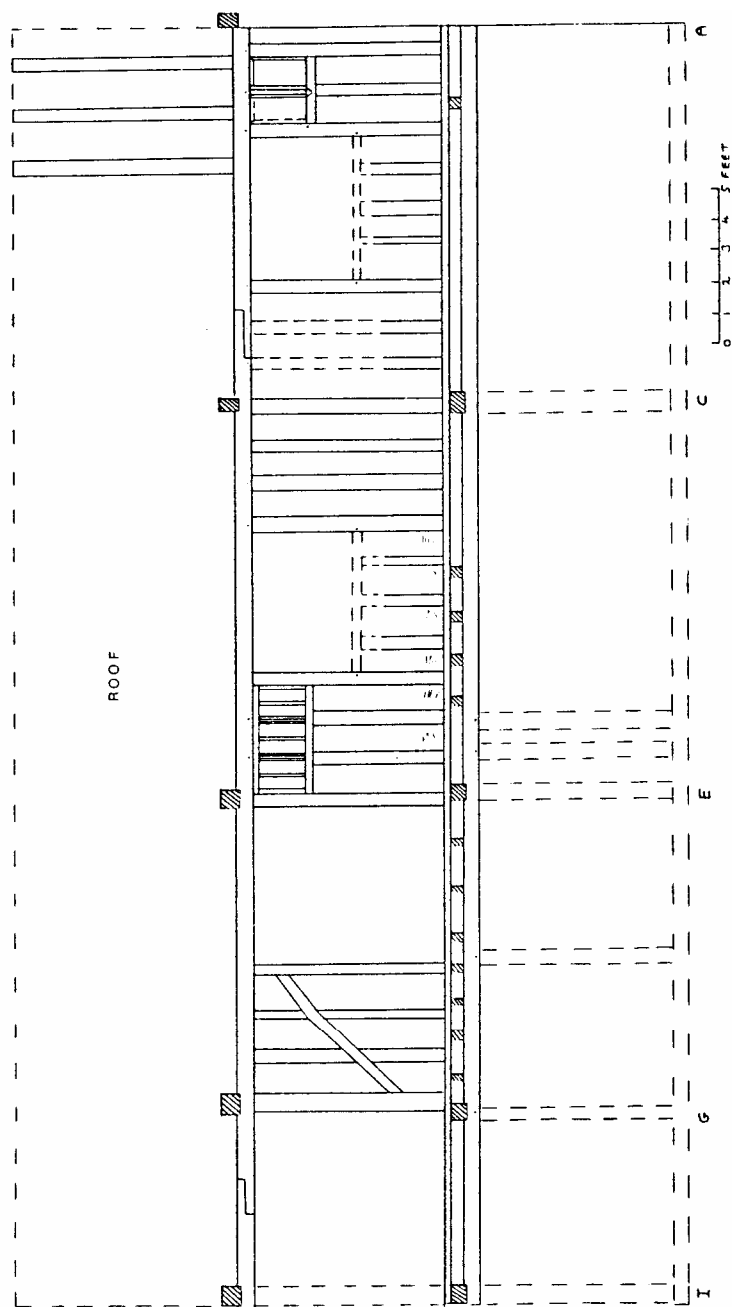


Fig 4. Cock & Pie, North Hill, Colchester

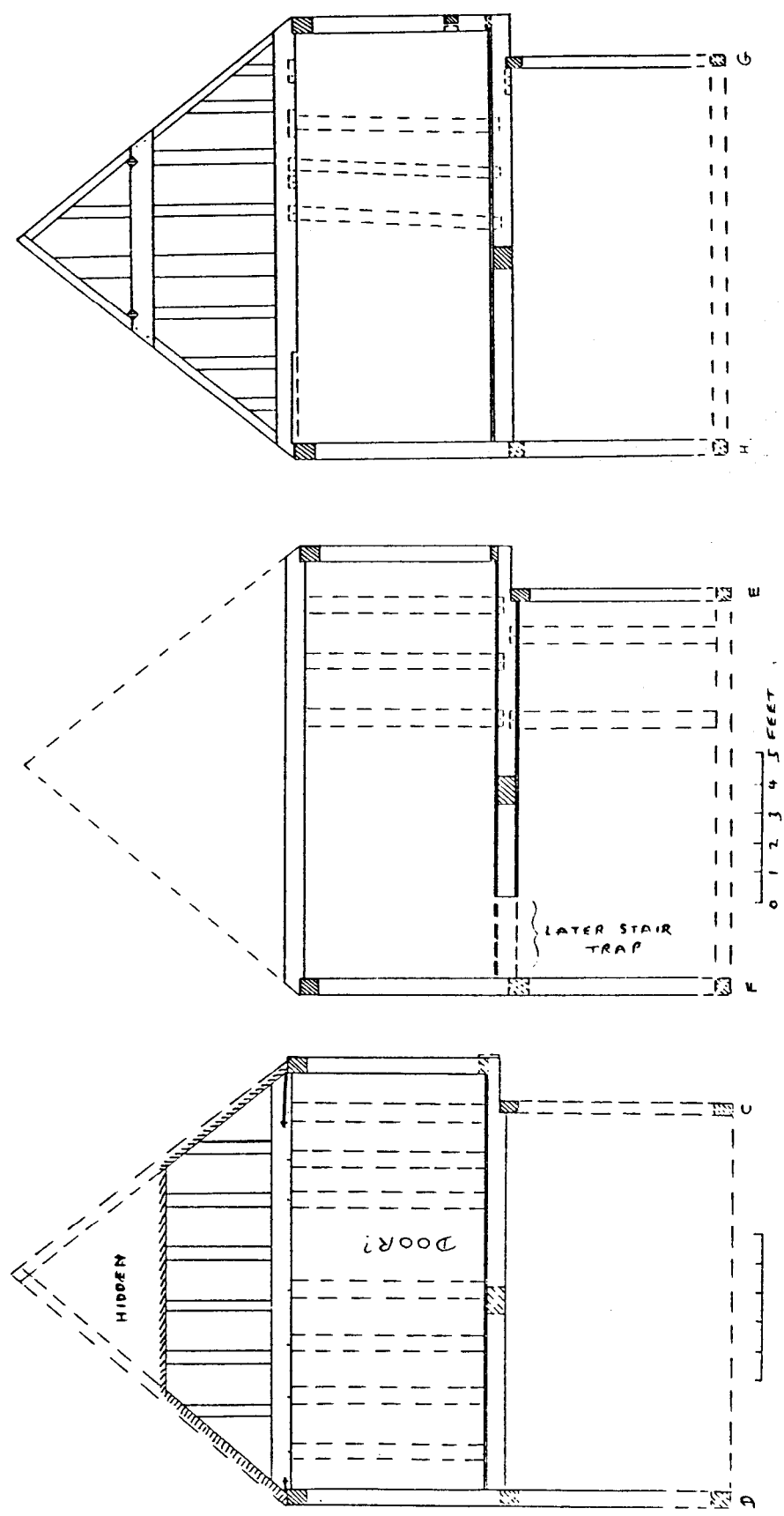


Fig 5. Cock & Pie, North Hill, Colchester

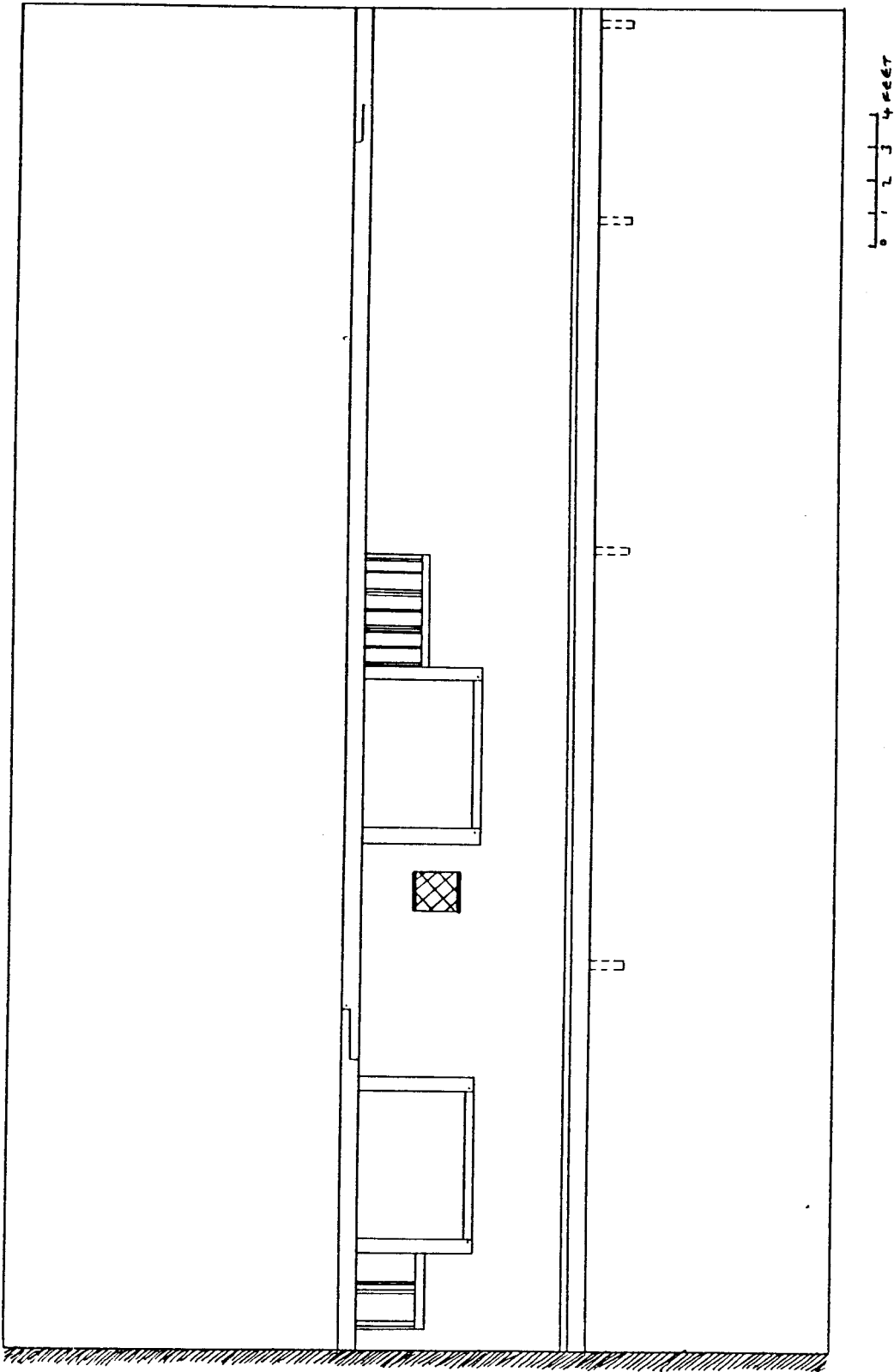


Fig. 6 Cock & Pie, North Hill, Colchester

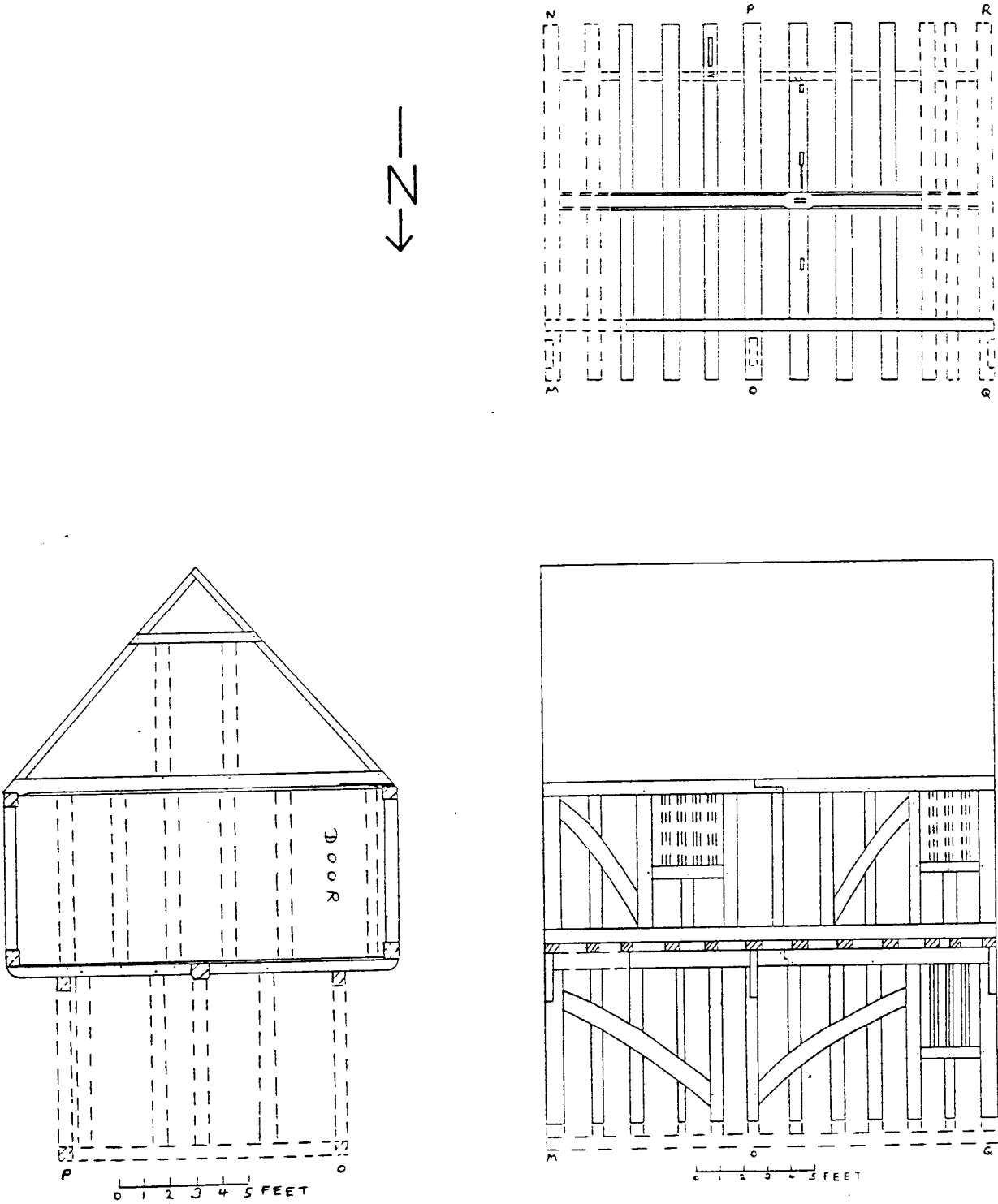


Fig 7. Cock & Pie, North Hill, Colchester

2) THE PLAYBILLS

At the time of the playbills etc. in the 1790's, the Cock and Pie was held by Robert Wright who presumably displayed the playbills in his public house, then reused them in the staircase.

These fragments of printed ephemera were found glued to boards which surrounded the staircase. It would seem that they were glued to the fairly rough pine boards to give a smooth surface for wallpaper to go over. I am grateful to Mr. John Bensusan Butt for notes on the plays and performances. The plays were put on by a touring company based at Norwich. There are fifteen items as follows:

Playbill 1) THE PAD(LOCK)
Days of playing Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays

By desire of LADY POMFRET on Saturday
The School for Scandal
THE PRIZE

The Padlock was by Bickerstaff, music by Dubin, 1768 and School for Scandal by Sheridan, 1779. Lady Pomfret may be from the Irish Peerage and may have been the wife of an officer at the garrison.

Playbill 2) TIPPY BOB and FAL, RAL, TIT by Mr. J?
To which will be added a musical farce called
THE FARMER

For the benefit of Mr. and Mrs. Powell
To-morrow
The Way to get Married and the High(land Reel)
Being the last night of performance

The Farmer is a comic opera by O'Keefe, first produced in 1787

Playbill 3) REGIMENT
(MID)NIGHT HOUR
ORCHESTRA
..... LEY MR (H)
TH(IS) WEEK (ARLESS) (WITH A)
..... and CHARLES S()

Playbill 4) (COM)IC SONG BY MR JACK(SON)
(TO) WHICH WILL BE ADDED A FARCE CALLED
A MISS IN HER TEENS
(PLAY)NG MONDAYS TUESDAYS WEDNESDAYS
THURSDAYS AND SATURDAYS (THE) THEATRE,
COLCHESTER
MAI SERVANTS, FROM THE THEATRE-P

Miss in Her Teens was first produced by Garrick in 1746/7.

Playbill 5) to which will be added
DEAD AND ALIVE
WEDNESDAY, A BOLD STROKE FOR A HUSBAND
WITH THE TWO MISERS
..... FOR THE BENEFIT (OF)

.Playbill 6) The last night of performance
On Monday, Macbeth with The Devil to Pay.

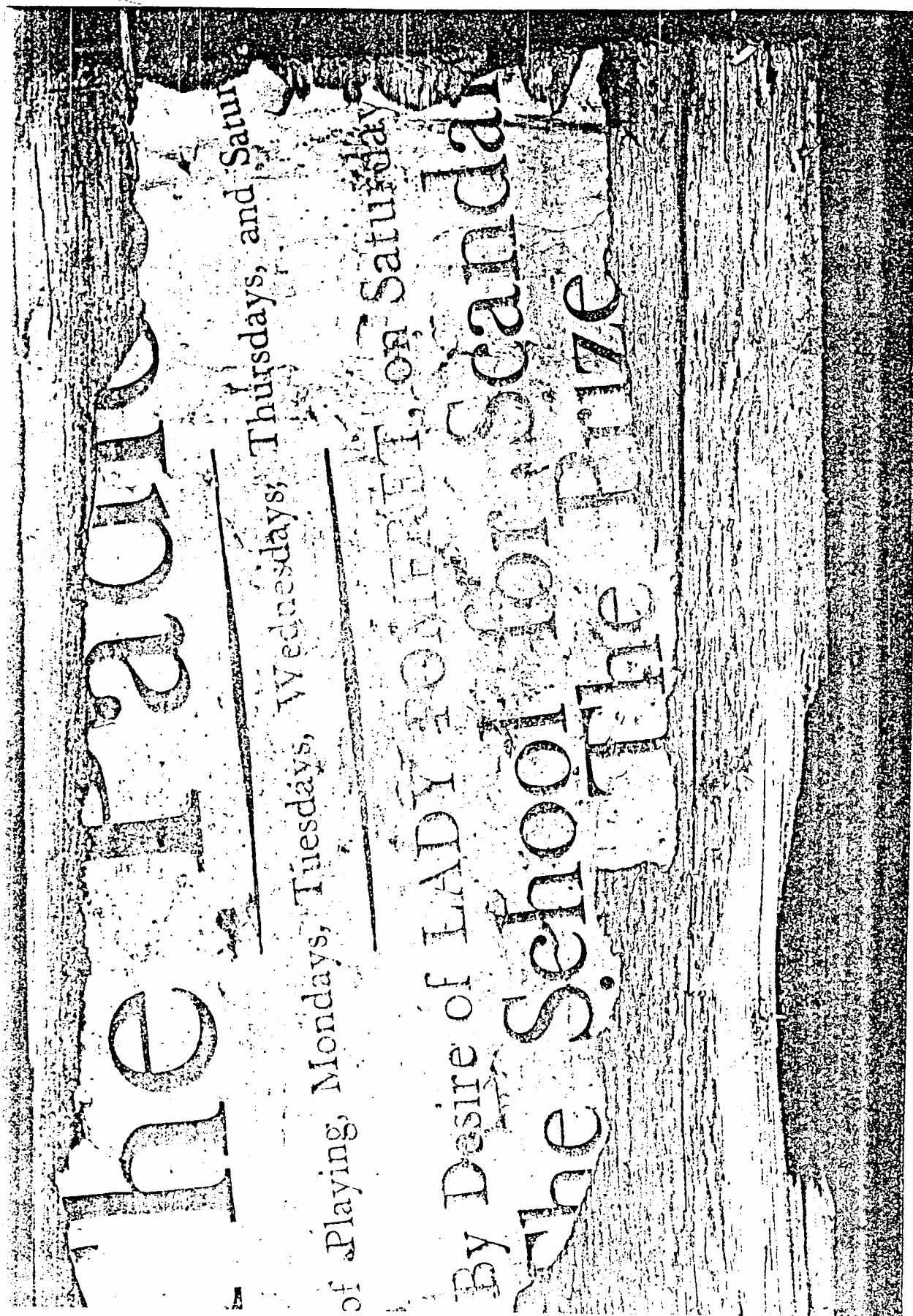


Fig. 8 Playbill 1

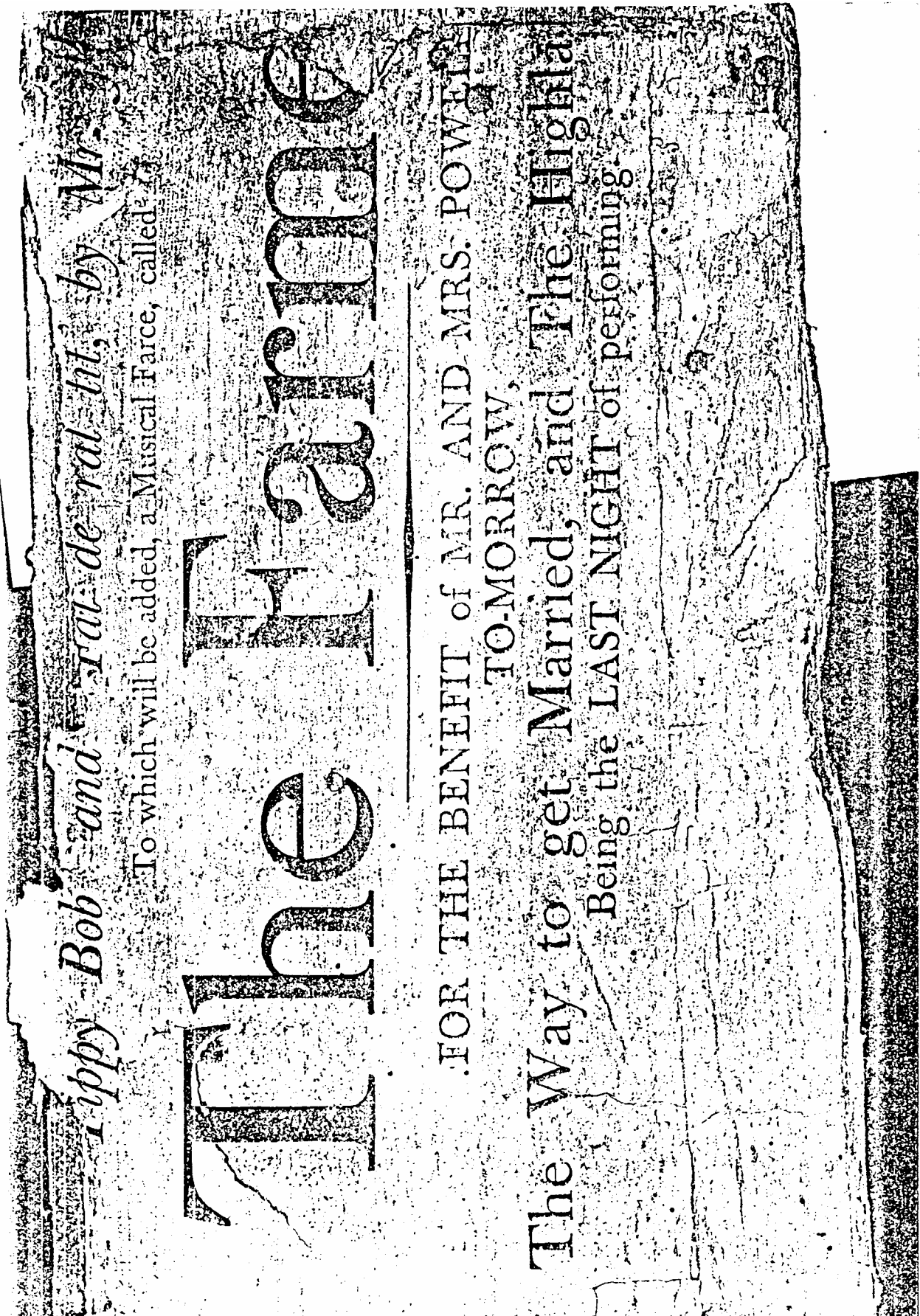


Fig. 9 Playbill 2

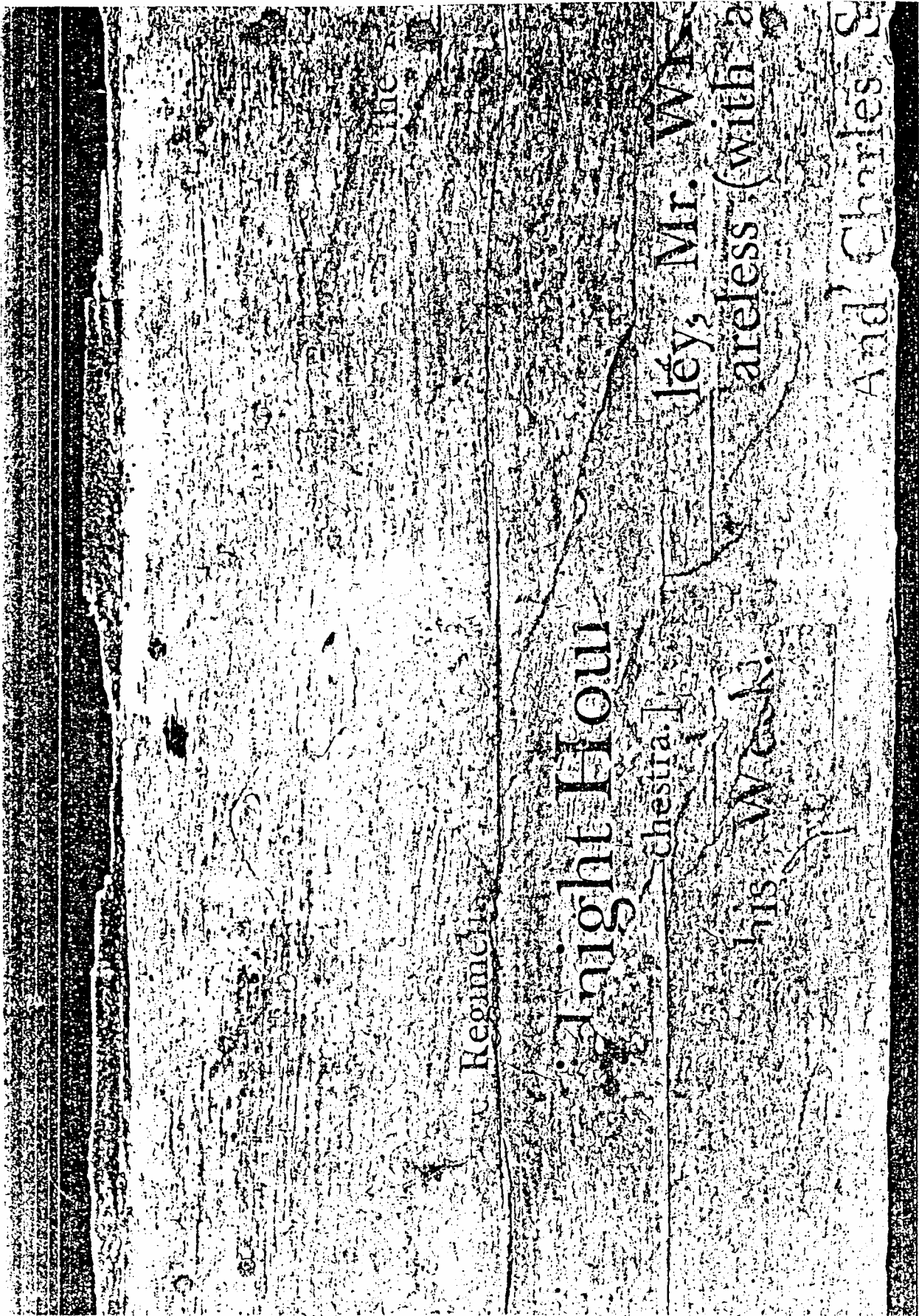


Fig. 10 Playbill 3

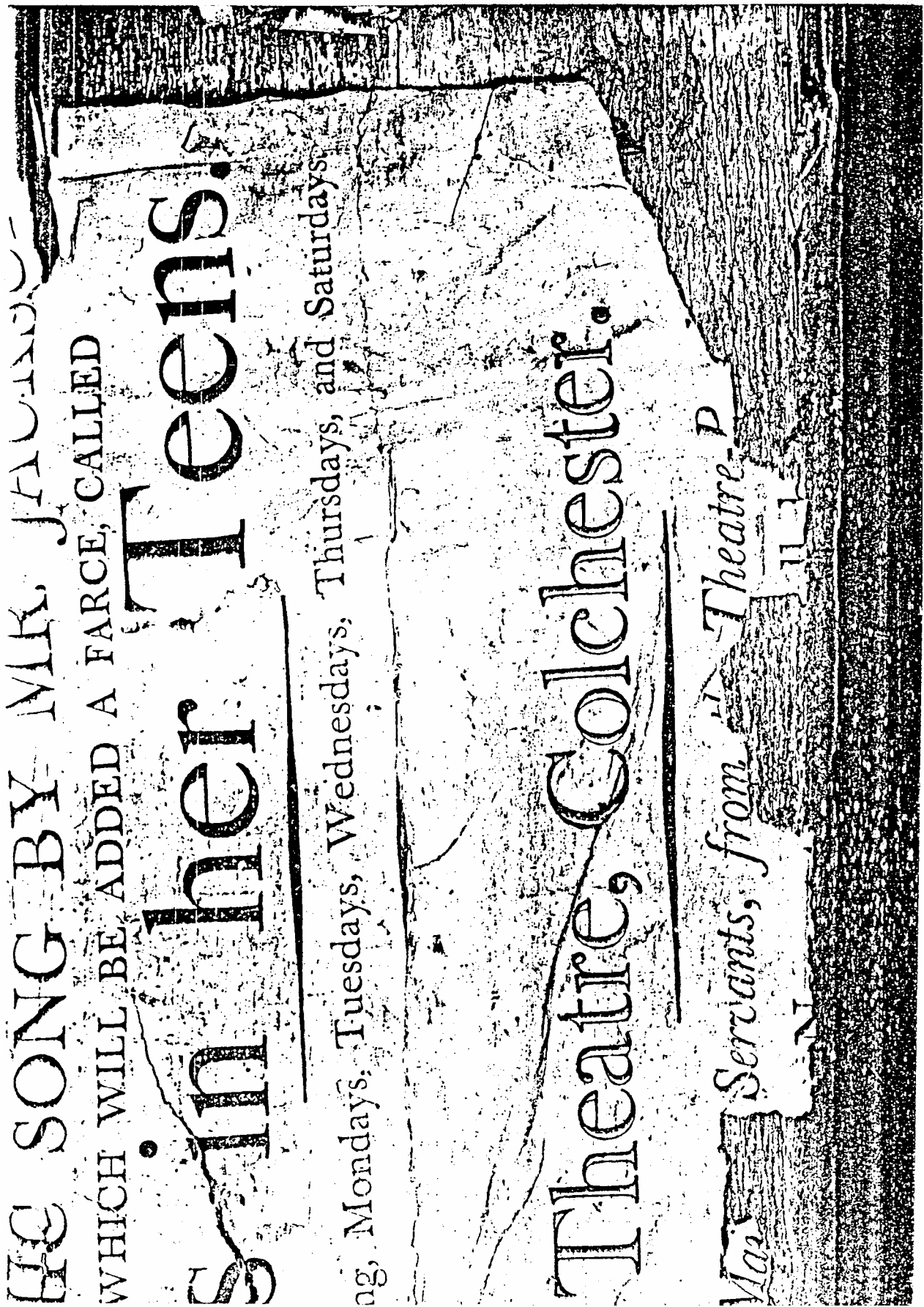


Fig. 11 Playbill 4

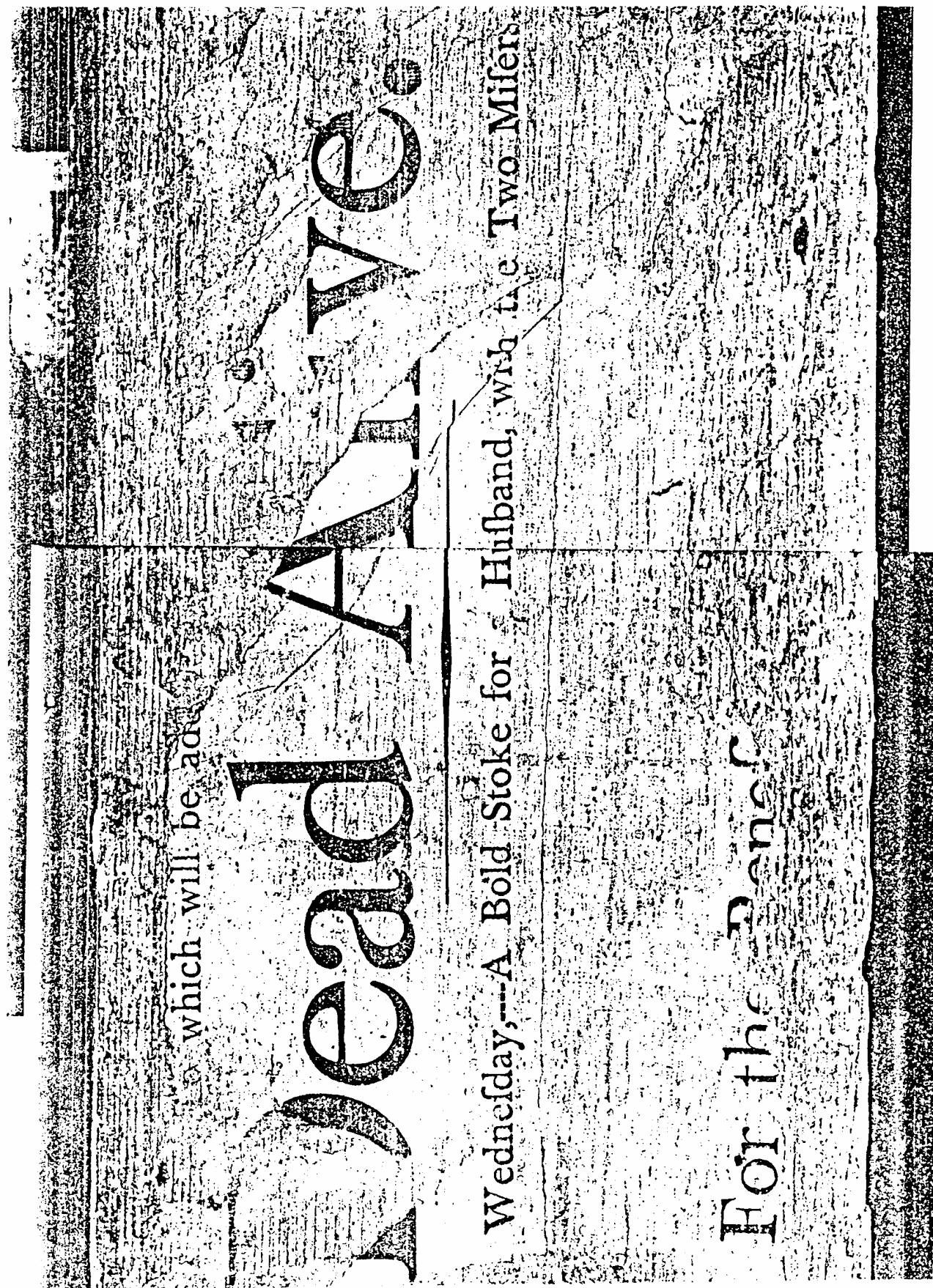


Fig. 12 Playbill 5

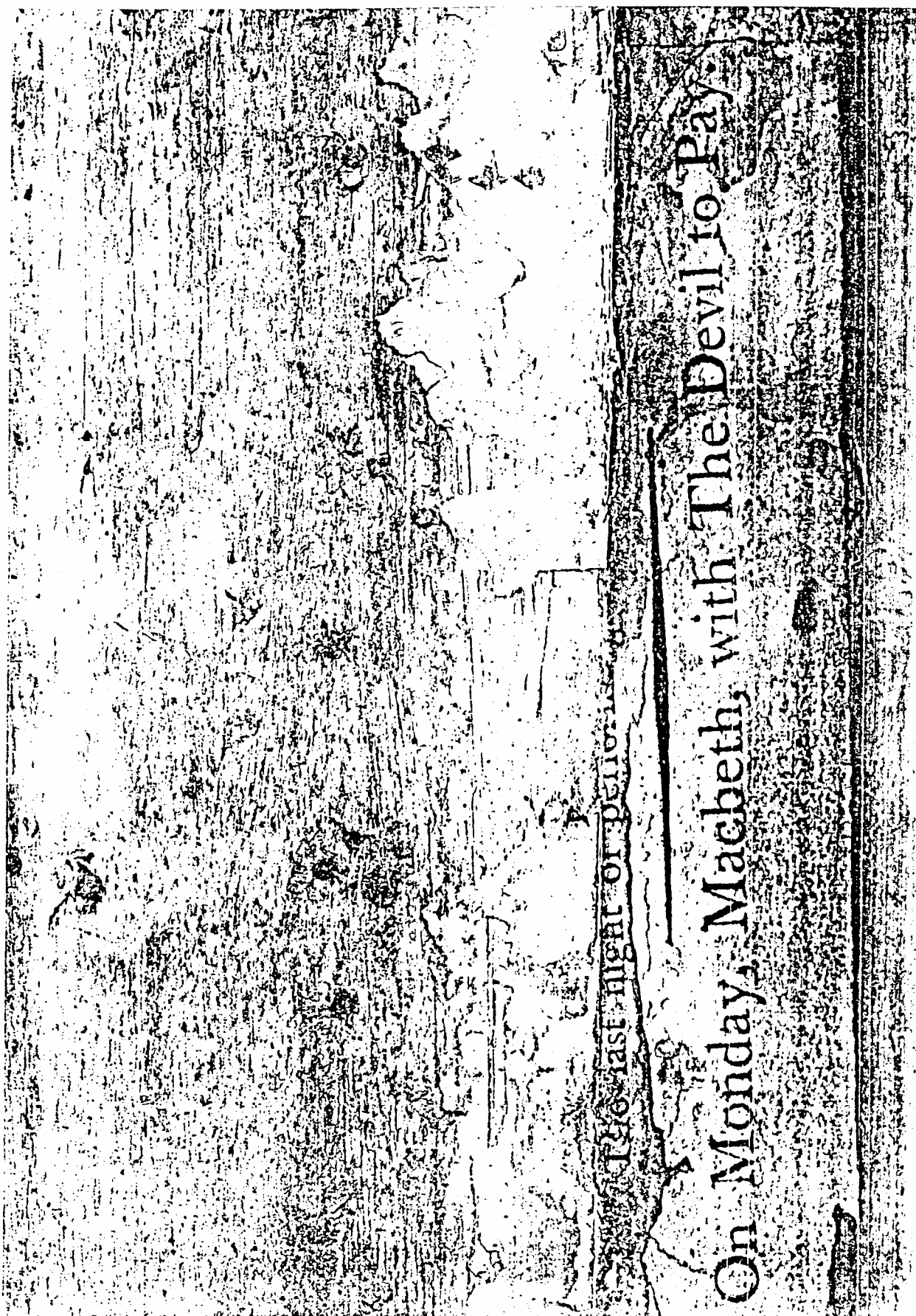


Fig. 13 Playbill 6

Playbill 7) Dancing by Mrs. Chesnut, and a comic song by M....
THE HIGHLAND REEL

The Highland Reel was written by O'Keefe in 1788.

Playbill 8) TENNIS MARKERS, &. BY OTH(ER)....
And MR GOLDFINCH, by Mr. BI.....
The Widow Warren, by M...
Jenny, Mrs Powell, Mrs. Ledger....
And Sophia by Miss BR
End of play, "How merrily we live" by Mr
.....and Mrs. J. Brunton
and "How s ans?" by Mr. Word.....
.....Concerts

Playbill 9)J BENNET(T)
ROBERT, MR MORETON
AND FREDERICK, by MR POWELL
()ABINA ROSNY, by MRS BRUNTON
MR WRANGLE, MRS POWELL
...s, AECEY, WAITING WOMAN, MRS LINDOE
...(a)nd LADY RUBY, by MISS EDMEAD
(E)nd of play, Dancing by Mrs Chesnut

Playbill 10) (a)nd MRS DARNLEY, by MI(SS)
END OF THE.....
....ING BY M...
To which will be added a farc(e)
...not acted here these four)
R
or The Tars of

Playbill 11) Sir OLIVER SURFACE, Mr
Joseph Surface, Mr. SEYMOUR
Crabtree, Mr. LINDOE
Sir Benjaminn Backbite, Mr. WEBBER
Moses, Mr. BLANCHARD

This is from the cast list of School for Scandal?

Playbill 12) ...ZAR (WITH A SONG) MR WO
ANTONIO, MR WHITMORE
DON JOHN, MR BLANCHARD
MR J BENNETT,... SEXTON, MR CHESNU(T)
LEONATO, BY MR LINDOE
(H)ERO, BY MRS J BRUNTON BLANCHARD, URSULA, MRS CHESN(UT)
BEATRICE, BY MISS EDMEAD

END OF PLAY
(CO)MIC SONG BY MR JACKSON
...TE ENTERTAINMENT OF THE.....



Fig. 14 Playbill 7

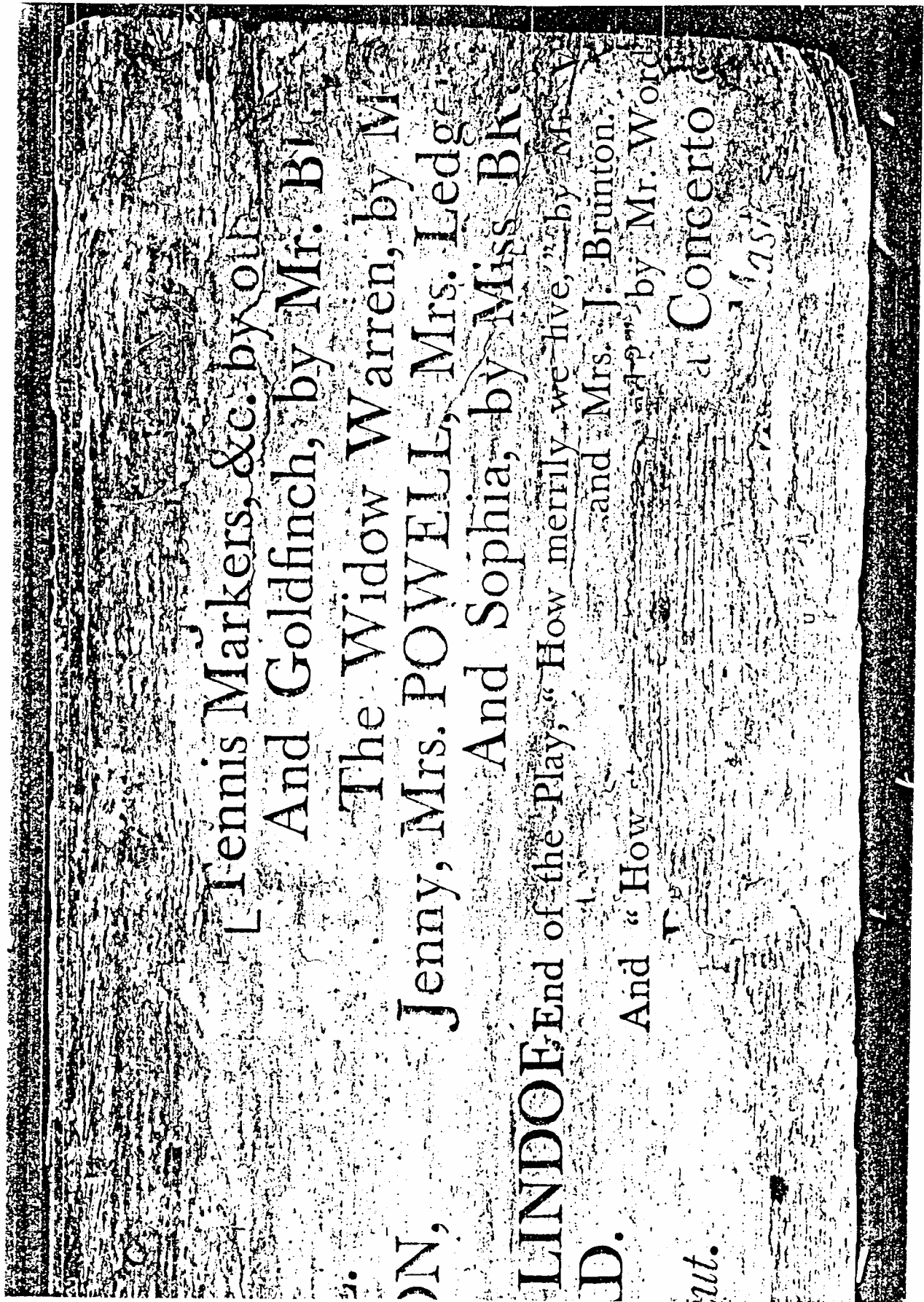


Fig. 15 Playbill 8

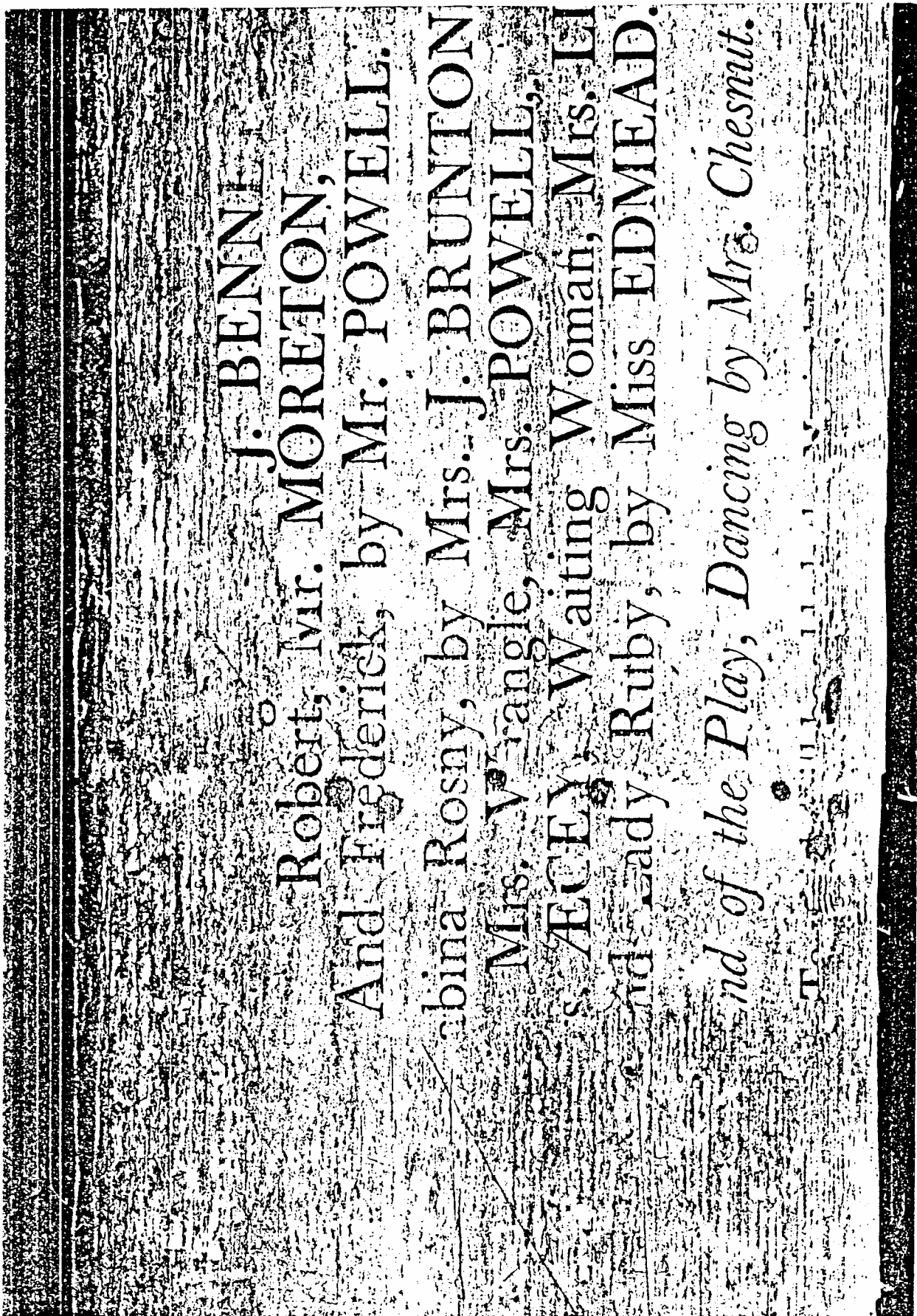


Fig. 16 Playbill 9

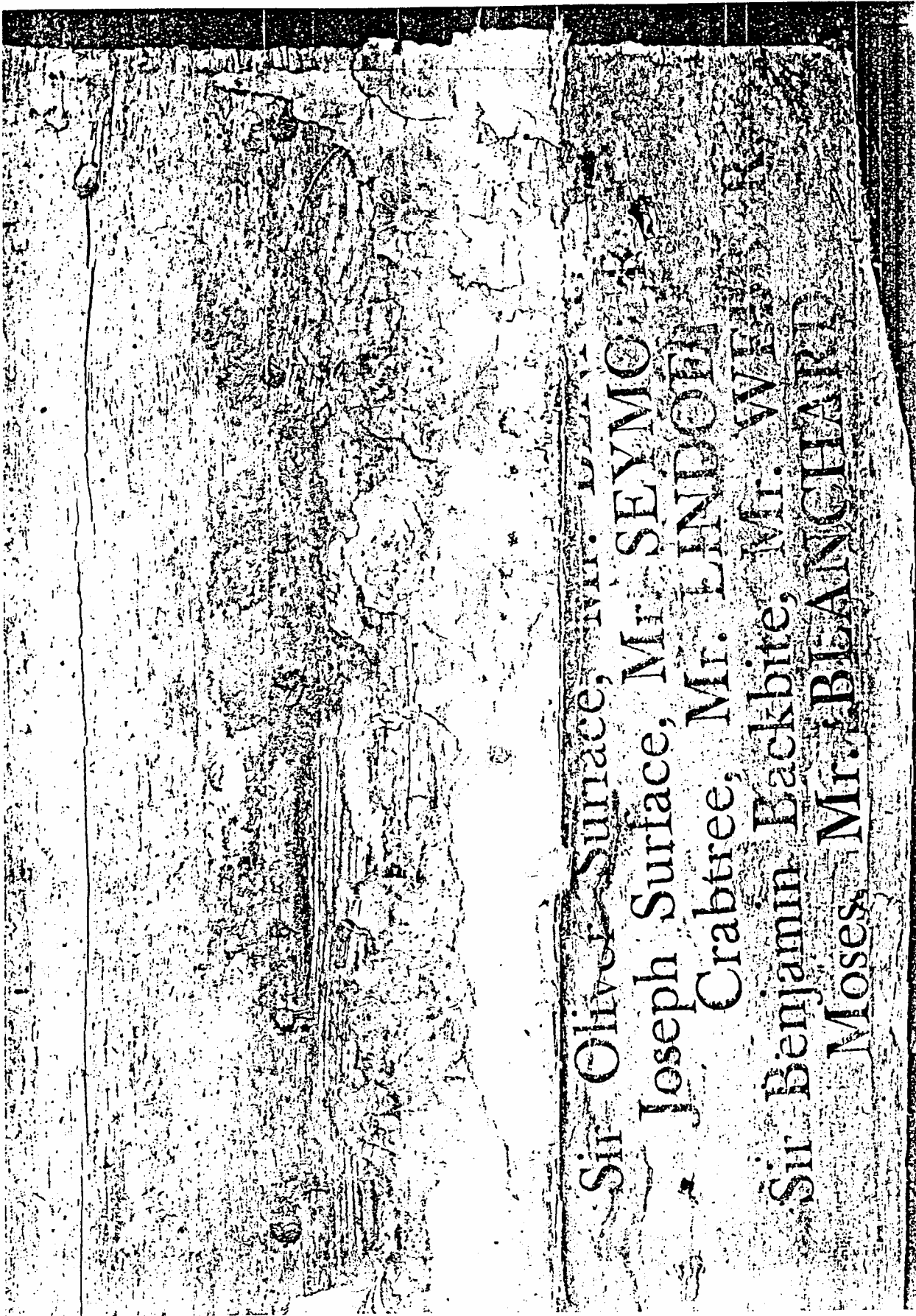


Fig. 18 Playbill 11

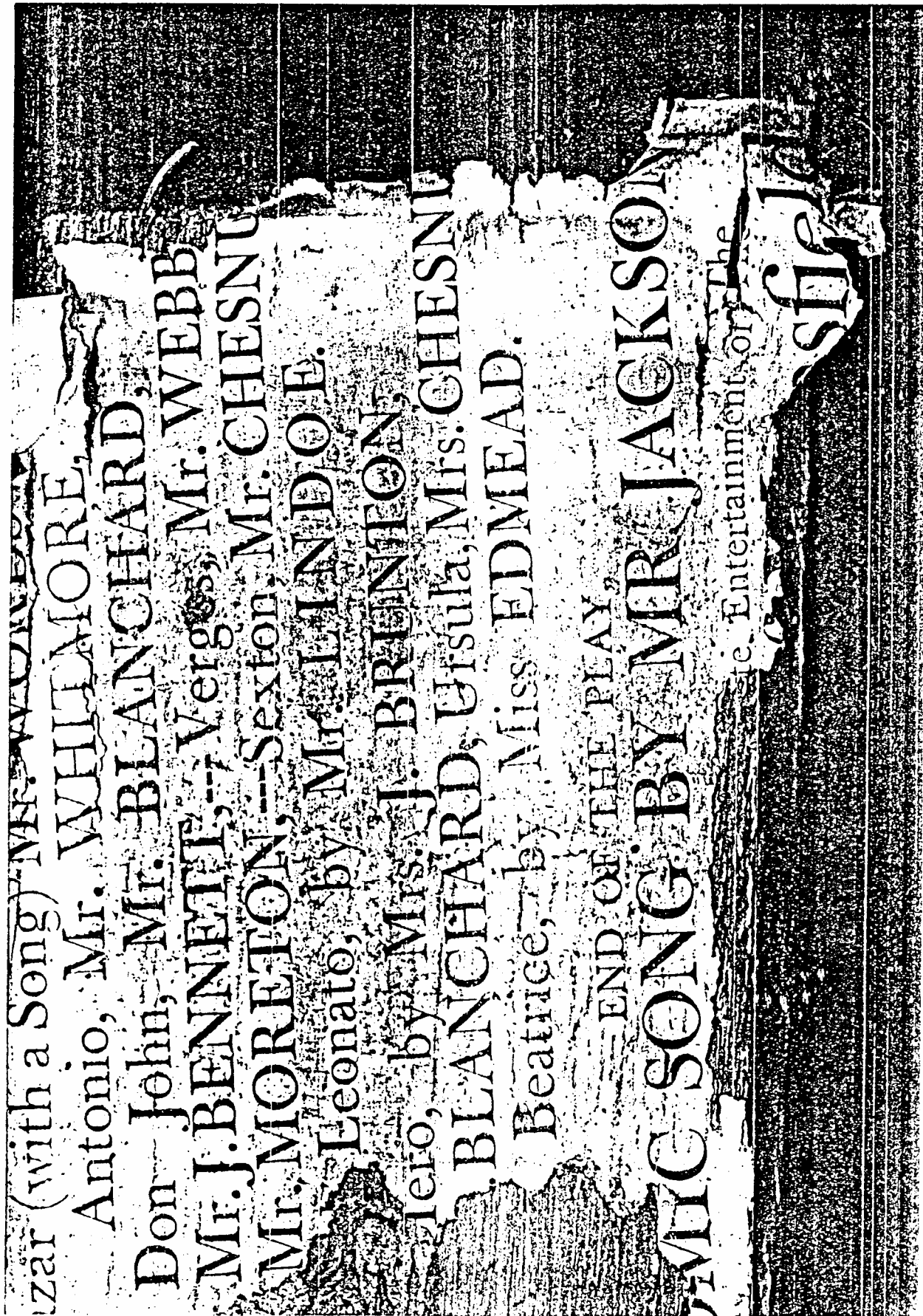


Fig. 19 Playbill 12

Playbill 13) ...WHE ...
Diamond Fox of Fir
A Battery of R ...
Scr Wheel
... un ... Horiz(ontal)
A Globe
A Doub(le) ...
Two
6 Fo(ur)

This obviously a fragment of an auction list of personal and household goods. The words Diamond and Globe suggest high quality goods.

Playbill 14) ...genes of the
...Colchester
The double S...
is late(r)
(Ea)rnestly request(ed) fo(r)
FRICHOT
GLEE
"HARK THE LARK"
GRAND CONCERTO, on the double serpent, by Mons. FRICHOT
ACT II
Concerto Violin, Mr. Richards
SONG, Mr. Bennett, "Love f(i)nds the ..."
GLEE, "Sigh no more, Ladie(s)"
(SE)PTUOR OBLIGATO, for T(w)o violins
SONG, Mr. TOWNSEND, acc(ompanied)

Tickets, T....
A..

This notice was for a grand concert for the benefit of Mr. Richards, with Mons. Frichot on the double serpent (lately arrived from Paris), which was held on 17th November 1792.



Fig. 20 Playbill 13

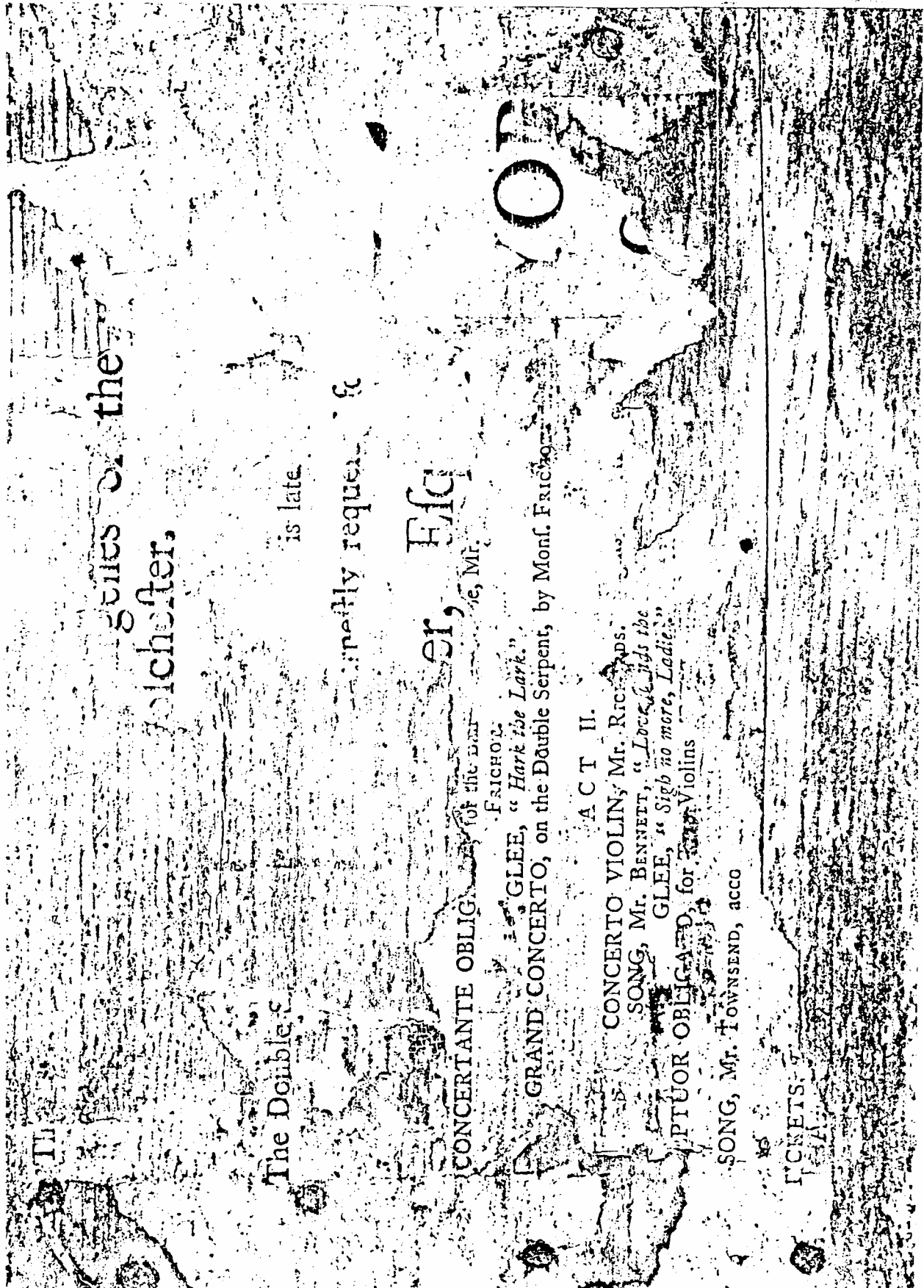


Fig. 21 Playbill 14

Playbill 15) (SAT)URDAY
... WILL BE PERFO(RMED)

(These words at the top of the fragment may not be related to the rest of the printing, which is a subscription list, arranged by Parish).

St Mary Magdalene				N Corseilus Esq	1	1	0	St Runwalds			
	£	s	d	Mrs W Kestermann	1	1	0	Rev James Round	5	5	0
Rev John Smythies	1	1	0	Mrs Patmore	1	1	0	Mr C Key...	2	2	0
St Nicholas				Mr (l)illey	0	10	6	Mr W Key...	1	1	0
J Collins Tabor Esq	10	0	0	Mr Cole	0	10	6	Mr W...jnr	1	1	0
Mr John Kendall	5	5	0	Mr A....in	0	10	6	Mr Jam(es)	(1)	(1)	0
Rev John Smithies	4	4	0	Mr Gos(n)all	0	10	6				
Mr James Lovell	4	4	0	Mr P... N	0	10	6	(Unknown Parish)			
Mr Charles Great	3	3	0	0	10	6		£	s	d
David Lloyd Esq	3	3	0	...M...	?	?	6	Mr ...D	?	?	?
Messrs Brockway And Son	3	3	0	Mr Bu(d)d	?	?	?	Mr ... On	?	?	?
Mr Thomas Catchpool	(2)	2	0	Mr Peter Smith	0	5	0	Mr (Ma)ple	?	?	?
Mrs Fisher	2	2	0	Mr Smith, Sen	0	3	0	Mr Ward	?	?	?
Mr John Banks	2	2	0	Mr Walton	0	2	6	Mr Cruswell	?	?	?
Mr John Fenno	(1)	1	0	Mr Bragge	0	2	6	Mr Ladbroke	?	?	?
Mr John Rouse	1	1	0	Miss Fisin	0	1	0				
Mr Charles White	1	1	0					Mile End			
Mrs Alice Bumstead	1	1	0	Unknown Parish	36	9	0	Rev & Mrs Cambridge			
Mr Samuel G(i)bbs	1	1	0		£	s	d	Rev Mr Elliott			
Mr Samuel Nockold	1	1	0	?	0	5	0	Mr Posford			
Mr William Bunnell	1	1	0	?	0	5	0	Mr Blomfield			
Mr William ...ave	0	10	6	?	0	5	0	Mr Skinner			
Mr Samuel (ellis)	0	(10)	6	?	0	5	0	Mr Bugg			
Mr John Welham	0	10	6	?	0	5	0	Mr Wincoll			
Mr Rob(ert) D...	?	?	?	?	0	5	0	Messrs Hewes			
Mr T S Kendall	?	?	?	?	0	5	0	Mr Johnson			
M ...s Ath...	?	?	?	Miss Lancaster	0	5	0	Mr Thompson ,			
Mr Henry ...	?	?	?	Mr Giles Nunn	0	5	0	Mr J Nunn			
St Martin				Mr Thomas Augur	0	2	6	Mr Stradling			
John Round Esq	1(0)	0	0	Mr James Brooker	0	2	6	Mr Edward Stradling			
Rev Yorick Smythies	5	5	0	Mr Stanes	0	2	6	Mr Nunn			
Mr John E Wallis	5	5	0	Mr Potter	0	2	0	Mr Beckey			
Rev Joseph Brockwell	3	3	0	Mr Parker	0	2	0	Mr D...			
Mrs Dennis	3	3	0		0	1	0	Total Of Cont(ributions)			
Rev Rees Harris	2	2	0		96	5	6				

This subscription list must have been for a substantial project considering the amounts given. I thought it at first it was for the Handel Festival at St. James' Church, Colchester on Wednesday 22nd and Thursday 23rd September 1790, but the day of the week appears to be Saturday.

The list is an interesting record of the better off people in Colchester about 1790. Many of these people are in Mr J Butt's manuscript list of eighteenth century Colchester people.

I should like to thank the Essex Record Office for their help, in particular for allowing me to reproduce the 1873 plan of the Cock and Pie site.

REFERENCES

Butler, Nicholas, 1981

Theatre in Colchester