

## THOMPSON'S HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE

Like pioneer settlers throughout North America, Thompson's earliest European settlers built whatever shelter they could with readily available materials. Caves, dugouts, and crude log shelters based on Native American designs were all typical of the earliest days of settlement. As soon as improving conditions allowed them to build a more permanent shelter, European settlers in New England turned to the housing traditions of rural England to produce the "central-chimney house," the dwelling type most often associated with the region's colonial past.

Central-chimney houses are instantly recognizable to those who travel the back roads of New England. As the name implies, their most conspicuous feature is a large central chimney, generally topped by brick above the roofline but resting on a massive stone base. Their facades are almost always symmetrical, with five window bays and a central entry. They are supported by huge hand-hewn timbers, fitted together with hand-cut mortise-and-tenon joints and pinned tight with wooden pegs known as "treenails" (pronounced TRUH-nulls). Contrary to popular belief and common sense, these massive timber frames are not unusually strong, since the joints themselves are relatively delicate and flexible. In fact, one of the surest field tests for determining whether a house has a timber frame is to sight down an exterior wall: since the wall itself is secured only loosely to the flexible frame, it will almost inevitably be out-of-square and out-of-plumb.

Now thought of as the epitome of "traditional" architecture, the central-chimney house was actually an extreme and not entirely

