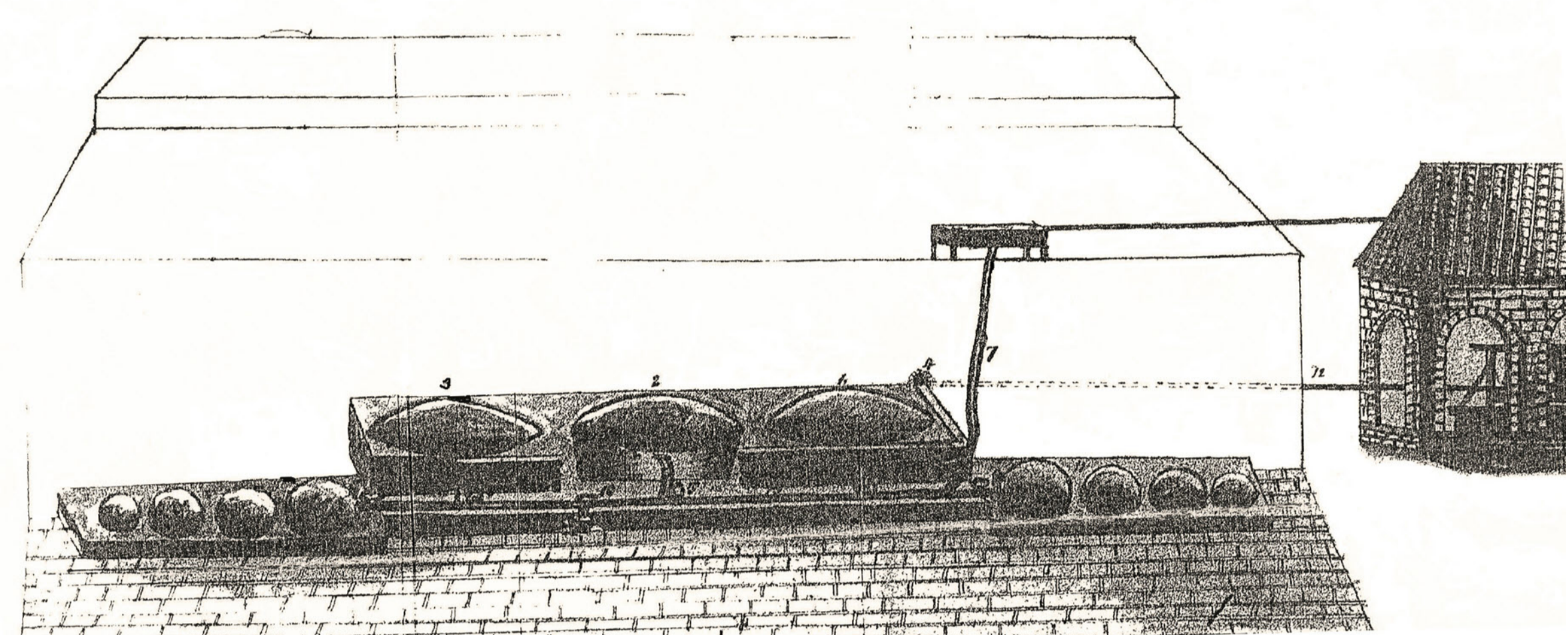


# BITTERSWEET

## A STORY OF FOUR SUGAR PLANTATIONS

### PROCESSING THE SUGAR CANE

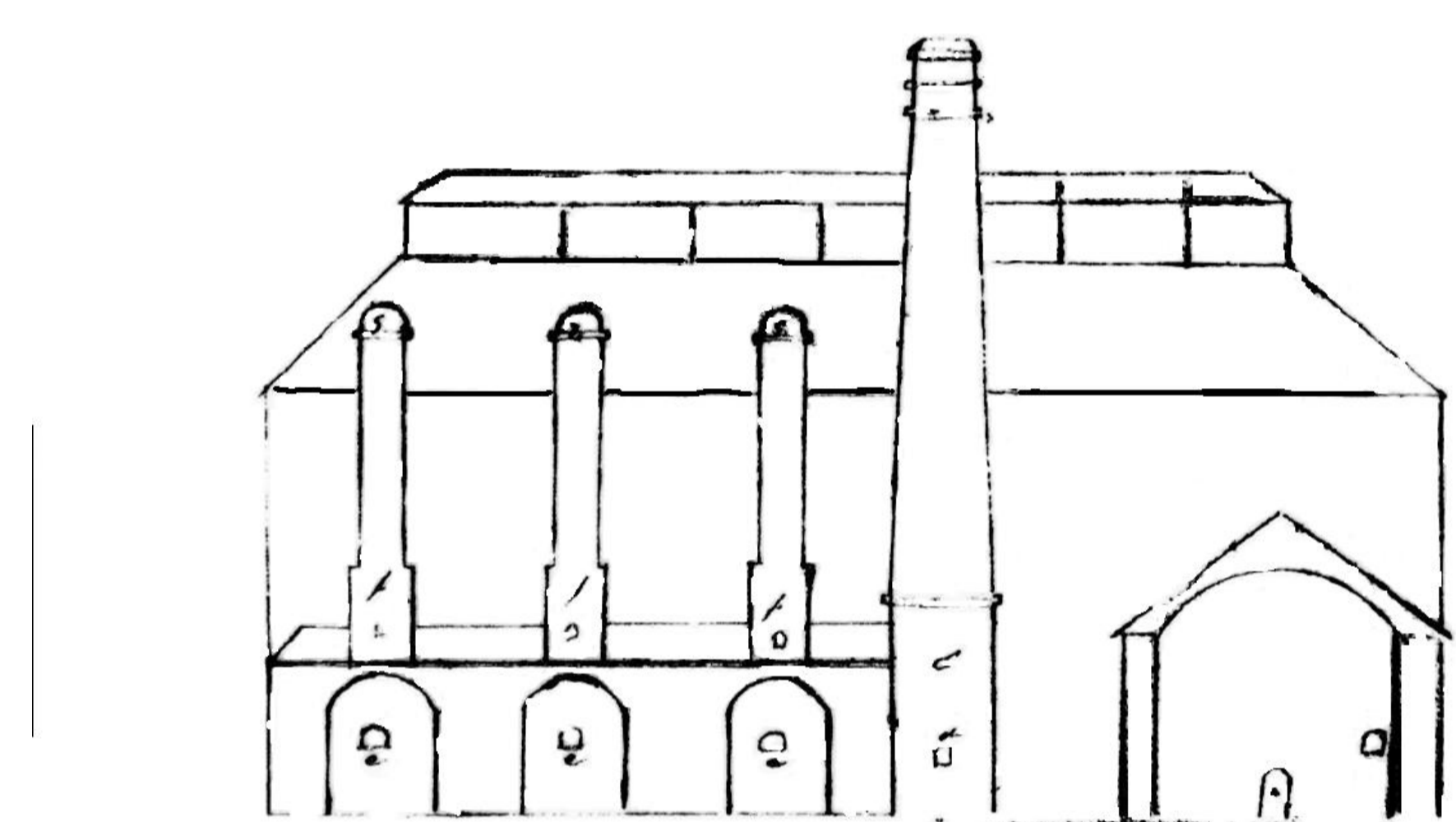
Converting the canes into sugar involved several different processes that were undertaken in the various buildings at the sugar works. Several proposals for repairs to and development of the sugar works on the four plantations have survived.



#### The Mill

Once cut the cane had to be crushed within a few hours before its sugar content deteriorated. The canes were carted to the mill either on mule-back or in wains drawn by cattle.

The canes were fed by hand between the rollers and the dark brown juice flowed into a trough. It was then piped into a cistern in the boiling house.



#### The Boiling House

The cane juice had to be boiled within a few hours or it would ferment. A battery of four or five great copper kettles was hung over a furnace. These were carefully scaled in size – 180, 120, 80 and 30 gallons. The smallest copper had the thickest bottom and was over the hottest fire.

The boiler ladled cane juice from the cistern into the first copper, skimmed off the impurities from the surface and ladled it into the second copper. The process was repeated in the third and fourth coppers. The sugar began to turn ropey and dark brown in colour. Gradually a gallon of juice contracted into one pound of sugar.

A good head boiler was the most important slave – valued at up to £20 more than the others.

In 1806 Charles, the head boiler at Blue Mountain, died 'owing to his falling into the middle pan and being scalded to death'.



Tea

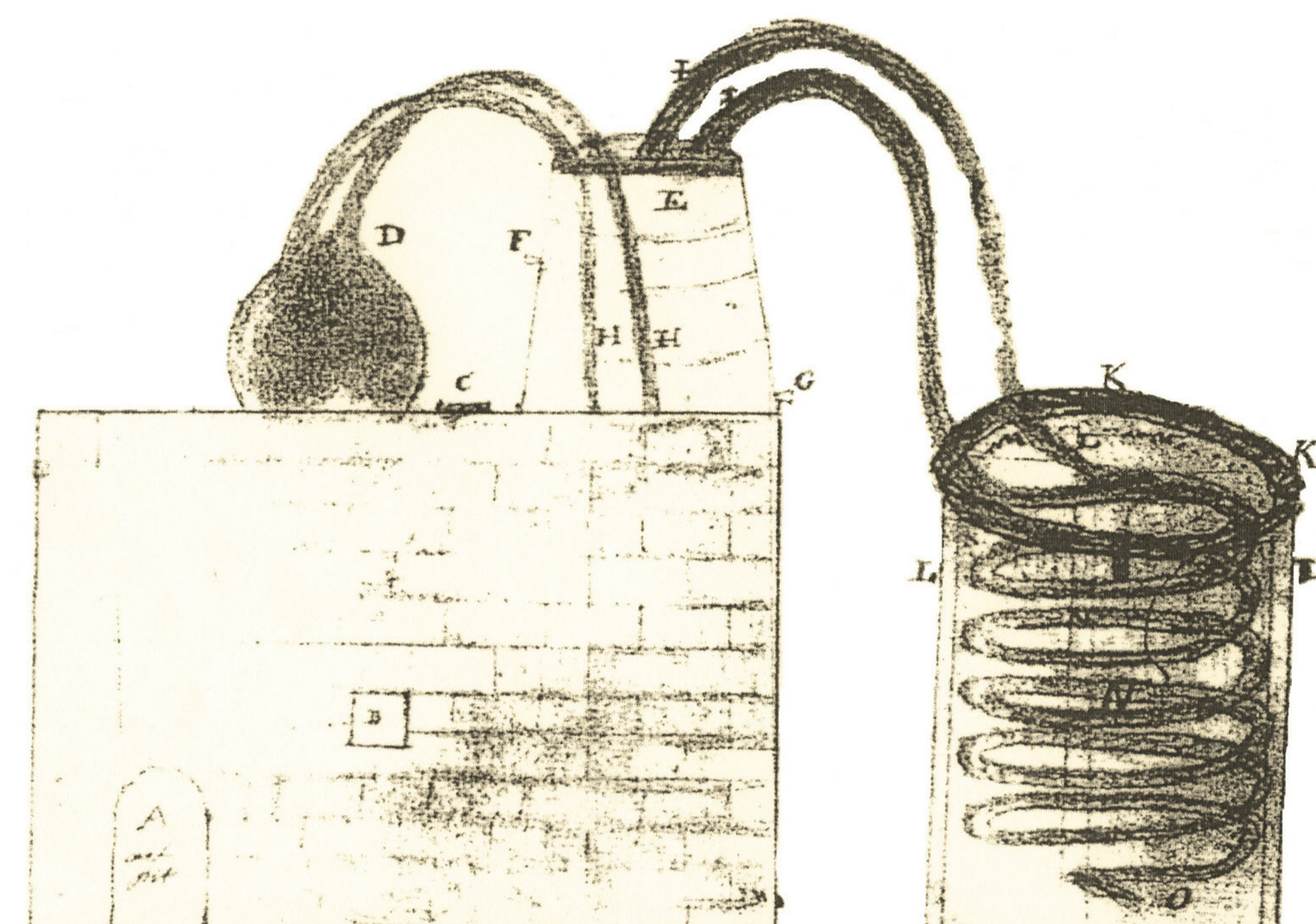
#### The Curing House

When the sugar had cooled for about twelve hours after the final boiling, it was transferred to the curing house, which was kept as hot and close as possible to help the drying process.

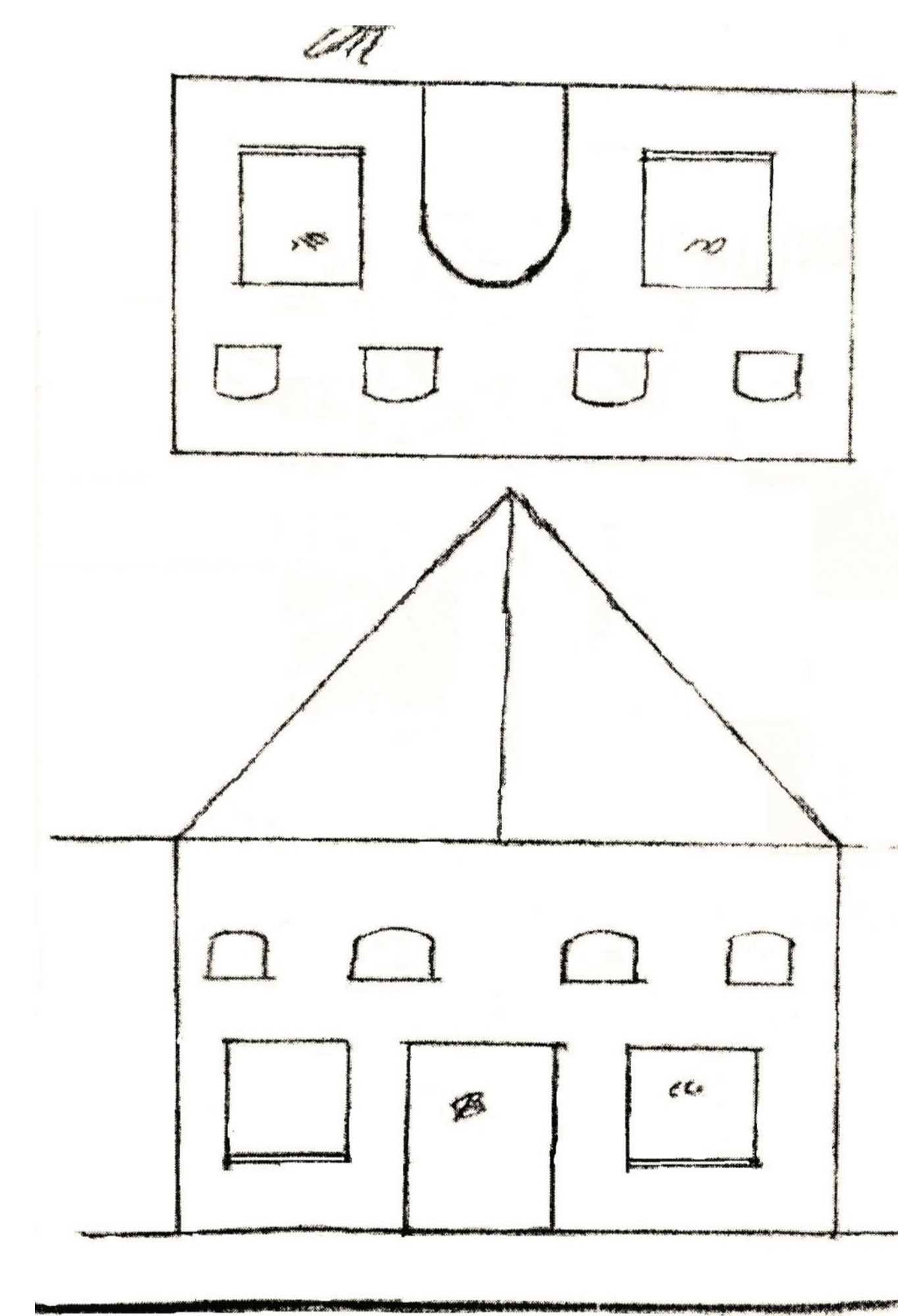
The sugar was put into large earthenware pots with a hole in the bottom. This hole was plugged for 48 hours, then unplugged so that the molasses could pour out. This process was repeated for about a month.

When the sugar was finally knocked out of the pot, it had hardened into a cone-shaped loaf. The frothy top-end and molasses saturated bottom end were cut off and re-boiled.

The central two-thirds of the loaf was spread out in the sun to dry, packed into hogsheads and stored in the warehouse ready for shipment to England.



The molasses that were drained from the sugar in the curing house were taken to the still house, where they were distilled into rum.



The bottom of this diagram shows the east front of the boiling house at the Blue Mountain Plantation. It is intended to indicate that a new arch has been placed on the west front to prevent the roof from collapsing.



Sugar