or 4 years, when the country became adapted to agriculture, they built themselves handsome houses, spending on them several thousands.” (De Wolf 1992, 5–6)

Early homes of the colonial settlers were built in much the same way as they were in England, though the climates were quite different, and first attempts did not stand up well to the harsh New England weather. Half-timbered homes common to the West Country in England, from where many colonists emigrated, proved to be an ineffective barrier. The wattle-and-daub method of construction (wood frame with woven twigs and mud and a thatched roof) was not impermeable, and cracks developed in the walls and at the joins. Colonists soon began to replace the half-timbered exterior with a covering of clapboard walls and a split shingle roof, which was an effective wind barrier.

Home Layouts

The layout of the early colonial home in the Northeast was either based on a single-cell or two-room interior (both one room deep) with a half story above. Often the smallest of homes would have a central door, two window openings on either side, and a large masonry fireplace on one end. The half story, which would be a floor laid underneath the eaves, might only reach halfway across the length of the dwelling and be reached by a ladder. Half stories of other homes might cover the floor space entirely and be accessed by a tightly turned corner staircase. The one-and-a-half-story home of William Oakford was built in

A hearth and staircase in the William Oakford House of Salem County, New Jersey, shown in great disrepair, probably in the 1930s. The house was built in 1736. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.