

Slave Housing Data Base

Building Name: Cessford Laundry/Slave Quarter

Evidence Type: Extant

Historical Site Name: Cessford

City: Eastville

County: Northampton

State: Virginia

Investigators: Douglas W. Sanford, Dennis J. Pogue

Institutions: Virginia Slave Housing Project

Project Start: 4/13/18; 2/1/19 **Project End:** 2/2/19

Summary Description:

The Cessford outbuilding is located to the northwest of the two-story, brick, main house, which is dated to ca. 1802, and is in the Federal style. In addition to the house, an extant smokehouse and chicken house, and the sites of a barn and another structure traditionally identified as a kitchen/slave quarter, are located nearby. Cessford was the property of Dr. George Kerr, who was listed in the 1860 federal census as owning 14 slaves and four slave houses.

The Cessford outbuilding is a one-story, timber-framed structure, with a side-gable main roof and shed-roofed rear addition, supported on a mixture of brick piers (south wall) and a brick foundation. A substantial exterior brick chimney, with weathered shoulders transitioning from the base to the stack on the north and south sides, is roughly centered on the original west wall. The entire building is covered with narrow overlapping weatherboards, attached with late cut nails, and roofed with asphalt shingles. The dimensions of the original construction were 18'4" by 16'4" – the rear addition enlarged the footprint by roughly 10'6". Based on an assessment of construction methods and materials (sashsawn framing and mature cut nails), the original portion of the quarter likely dates to circa the 1820s-1840s, with the rear rooms added before the Civil War.

The south-facing façade of the two-bay main block is asymmetrically arranged, with one six-over-six double-hung sash window to the west of the centrally located doorway. Matching sash windows are centered on the east wall on the first floor and in the garret; one small single-sash window is set on either side of the chimney in the garret. The sash windows in the main block match those in the east and west walls of the addition (dimensional lumber, wire nails), indicating that the original windows were replaced -- and the windows in the garret likely were installed -- when a series of renovations were carried out in the 20C. Two windows are roughly centered and butted together on the north wall of the addition, with one opening for each room.

The first floor of the main block consists of a single room, which is dominated by the remnants of a 6'-9"-wide fireplace. The height of the original fireplace opening is

unknown, as the lintel does not survive and the masonry mass has failed to a point just above the level of the ceiling. The size of the surviving brick hearth is also notable, with a dimension of roughly 9' x 4'. The ceiling joists are hewn and pitsawn, and do not exhibit any evidence that a plaster ceiling ever had been attached to them. The interior north wall of the original structure has been covered with horizontal planks attached with cut nails, which are similar to those visible in the addition forming the partition separating the rooms. The other walls have been covered with 20C-wall board. Two doorways are centered in the original north exterior wall to provide access to two equally-sized rooms comprising the addition.

Access to the garret is provided by a gap in the ceiling boards spanning between the plate and the first joist at the southeast corner in the main room. Currently there is no means of reaching the garret. The character of the header for the opening suggests that it may be an addition. The garret ceiling is enclosed with plaster on split lath, which are attached with mature cut nails. There is no source of heat in the garret or in the rear rooms.

A section of the eave of the main block is exposed within the east rear room, which reveals that it had an open cornice and that the exterior walls had been whitewashed before the addition was constructed. The joists project 7" beyond the wall, and pegs attaching rafters to the false plate are visible protruding from the bottom surfaces of the joists. Paint ghosts and cut nails protruding from the ends of the joists indicate that a fascia board (but no soffit) was an original feature. A surviving siding board is visible just below the eave, suggesting that the building originally was covered with wide, flush weatherboards.

The base of the chimney is in poor condition, with numerous substantial vertical cracks. Probably the most serious of the cracks likely is due to pressures stemming from the deterioration and expansion of the iron trammel bar. The bar ran in a north-south direction, spanning the length of the fireplace, and was inserted into the brickwork on each side. Only remnants of the bar survive in the south side of the brick mass; when the bar rusted and expanded in dimension, it applied force to the surrounding bricks, and thus was likely the initial cause of the failure of the brickwork.

Given the large size of the fireplace and the chimney in the outbuilding, the function of the structure was directly related to the commodious fire box. Until the 1970s a structure that has been traditionally identified as a combined kitchen and slave quarter was located within 100' to the south of the outbuilding and just to the northwest of the extant smokehouse. In addition to a kitchen, a laundry would require a substantial heat source. A trammel bar was an essential element of both kitchen and laundry fireplaces, as it allowed liquid-filled kettles to be suspended over the hot coals spread onto the hearth.

Combined with the presence of the nearby structure that likely was a kitchen, the large fireplace, expansive hearth, and robust trammel bar supports the interpretation that the original function of the outbuilding was as a laundry. Finishing the garret and adding the two rooms along the rear were later modifications, either to add or substantially improve accommodations for occupants. As those changes were carried out in the decades

preceding the Civil War, presumably the occupants were members of the enslaved work force.

Condition Assessment and Recommendations:

The structure is in poor but salvageable condition. In addition to the severely cracked and partially collapsed fireplace and chimney base, a number of bricks in the foundation and the piers have been dislodged. The wall sills in both the main block and the addition are deteriorated, and in some areas are completely disintegrated. In addition to the failed sill along the south wall, the ends of several floor joists in that location have rotted and no longer attach to the sill. Several floor boards located inside the exterior doorway have buckled and detached from the joists. The post at the southwest corner of the main block has failed, and the corner is several inches out of plumb. The roof covering for the addition has failed, and many of the framing members are severely deteriorated as a result of water penetration. Floorboards throughout the addition have collapsed, and the joists below are in poor condition.

In order to preserve the structure, it is imperative to carry out several interventions in the near future. Most crucial is to secure the envelope of the building by undertaking the following:

- Repair the roof frame on the addition and install new asphalt shingles.
- Repair and repoint the foundation and piers.
- Replace deteriorated sills in numerous locations and replace or sister joists and reattach.
- Support or replace deteriorated wall framing members – with the highest priority assigned to the post in the southwest corner of the main block.
- Shore up the chimney base on the exterior and support the remaining brickwork around the failed fireplace opening on the interior.

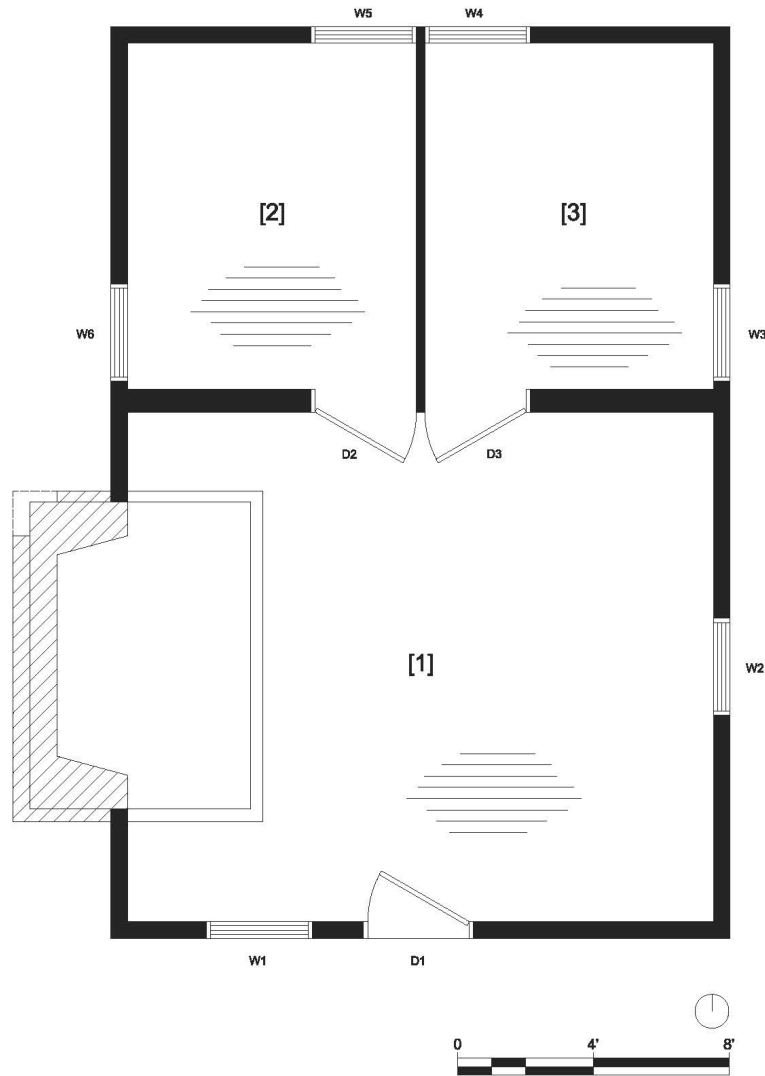
Bibliography:

Bernard Herman, *Continuity and Changes in Traditional Architecture: Folk Housing on Virginia's Eastern Shore*, PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania (1977).

Principal Construction Type: Frame

One Story – With Garret

Footprint:



Number of Rooms: 4 (3 down, 1 up)

Dimensions: (1) 15.3.4' (N-S) x 17.4.4' (E-W); Height: 9.3.0 (to floorboards), 8.7.0' (to bottom of ceiling joists)
(2) 10.3.4' (N-S) x 8.7.6' (E-W); Height (@ south wall): 8.7.0'
(3) 10.3.0' (N-S) x 8.7.2' (E-W); Height (@ south wall): 8.7.0'
(4) 15.2.2' (N-S) x 17.3.2' (E-W); Height: 5.11.6' (beneath collars)

Doors: 3

	Rm. 1, S (1)	Rm. 2, S (2)	Rm. 3, S (3)
Type:	5-panel (horizontal)	Board & batten. Vertical planks, 3 chamfered battens	Board & batten. Vertical planks, 3 chamfered battens
Dimensions:	3.1.0' (W) x 6.2.0' (H), 1" thick	2.7.4' (W) x 5.9.6' (H), 1" thick	2.7.4' (W) x 5.10.0' (H), 1" thick
Hardware:	5-knuckle butt hinges, with 3 modern screws	Iron pintles w/strap hinges; handwrought hasp for chain; iron latch	Iron pintles w/strap hinges; formerly with box lock w/bolt; later lower iron handle & latch
Swing:	In	Out (into Room 1)	Out (into Room 1)
Replacement:	Yes (wire nails, modern screws in panels and rails)	No	No

Windows: 9

	Rm. 1, S (1)	Rm. 1, E (2)	Rm. 3, E (3)
Type:	6/6, double-hung sash	6/6, double-hung sash (upper sash removed)	6/6, single-hung sash (upper sash collapsed)
Dimensions:	2.4.4' (W) x 3.9.0' (H)	2.4.0' (W) x 3.8.4' (H)	2.4.0' (W) x 3.9.0' (H)
Hardware:	None	None	None
Shuttered/Slide/Swing:	NA. Note wood pegs in sash.	NA. Note wood pegs in sash.	NA

	Rm. 3, N (4)	Rm. 2, N (5)	Rm. 2, W (6)
Type:	3/2, single sash (partial, vertical slide)	3/2, single sash (partial, vertical slide)	6/6, single-hung sash
Dimensions:	2.3.4' (W) x 1.10.0' (H)	2.3.4' (W) x 1.10.0' (H)	2.3.4' (W) x 3.9.0' (H)
Hardware:	None	None	None
Shuttered/ Slide/ Swing:	Sash can slide a few inches up and down.	Sash can slide a few inches up and down.	NA. Reworked in modern era, like other windows.

	Rm. 4, W (7)	Rm. 4, W (8)	Rm. 4, E (9)
Type:	2/2, single fixed sash	2/2, single fixed sash	6/6 sash
Dimensions:	Inaccessible, covered with plywood.	Inaccessible, covered with plywood.	Inaccessible, covered with plywood.
Hardware:			
Shuttered/ Slide/ Swing:	On north side of chimneystack.	On south side of chimneystack.	Centered on east gable end.

EXTERIOR

Foundation: Mixture of continuous brick foundation and brick piers. Brick piers (4) survive on south wall of Phase I building.

Continuous Masonry: Brick (handmade)

Bond: Common

Mortar Type: Sand

Joint: Flush

Repaired: Yes

Masonry Piers: Brick (handmade)

Number: 4

Dimensions: Variable lengths, approx. 10" wide
Height: 8"
Mortar Type: Sand
Joint: Flush
Repaired: Yes

Shed: Yes, enclosed shed addition on rear (north) wall, 18.4.0' (E-W) x 10.10.4' (N-S).

Roof:

Roof Form: Gable roof for original, Phase I building. Shed roof for Phase II addition.

Roof Covering: Asphalt shingles over earlier, wood shingles.

Roof Framing:

Exposed: No (with few exceptions); whitewashed

Form: Common Rafters

Rafter Number: Approx. 9 pairs

Rafter Dimensions: One original example, 3" x 4"

Collar Ties: Yes

Collar Dimensions: Unknown, not exposed

Height from Floor: 5.11.6'

Building Height: SE corner, Phase I

Ground to Soffit: 9.8.6'

Ground to Apex: 19.5.2' (east gable end)

Ground to Top of Eave: 10.8.4'

At estimated SE corner: 12.7.6' (where shed roof meets cut edge of gable roof)

Building Hight: NE corner, Phase II

Ground to Top of Eave: 7.5.0'

Walls:

Frame:

Material: Wood (walls approx.. 5" wide)

Cladding: Horizontal weatherboard/lapped (affixed with machine-cut nails).

Beaded: Yes, for earlier siding boards (machine cut nails), largely located on upper portions of the Phase I building.

Chimney(s):

Chimney (1): On west gable end wall

Material: Brick (5:1 common bond)

Location: Exterior – End

Height: 24.5.6' (top of stack); 9.1.2' (at lower edge of shoulder)

The chimney base has a spread footer, measuring 6" wide on the west side and 3¼" wide on the north and south sides. There are 13 steps in the brickwork between the shoulder

and the stack. The cap molding at the top only survives on the east side. A square-cornered, framed opening extends to either side of where the chimney's upper mass enters the west gable end wall.

The original chimney bricks measure: 8¼" x 2¾" x 4¼"; a portion of the rear wall has been repaired with small (thinner) bricks (8¼" x 2", no header available).

INTERIOR

Wall Framing: Corner posts, braces, studs, and door posts. Originally exposed, whitewashed.

Wall Finish: Covered on three walls with 20C wallboard with molded battens. Horizontal boards on north wall and on partition in addition (sashsawn, mature cut nails, measuring up to 12").

There are 7 exposed ceiling joists, set mostly on 26"-centers (one interval is 24½ inches); they measure 2¾" to 3¼" wide and about 6¾" high; they are hewn and pitsawn.

Fireplace (1): Exterior end (fireplace interior largely has collapsed)

Fireplace Material: Brick, 5:1 common bond

Fireplace Overall Dimensions: 9.0.0' (N-S) x 2.10.4 (E-W)

Fireplace Opening Dimensions: 6.9.2' (W) x unknown (H) x 2.6.0' (D); tapers to rear width: 6.2.0. There is a smoke shelf in the rear wall. The fireplace cheeks measure 13" wide (N-S).

Hearth Material: Unknown, removed

Hearth Dimensions: 4.0.0 (E-W) x ~ 9.0.0 (N-S); northern end covered with collapsed brick

Stairs: Opening for stair located near SE corner of Room 1, along the east gable end wall. The opening in the garret floor begins 2.0.4' from the south wall baseboard, 2.1.4' from the south wall plate.

Type: Unknown

Stairwell Dimensions: Ceiling opening: 1.10.0' (E-W) x 4.4.0' (N-S)

Number of Treads: NA

Stair Tread Dimensions: NA

Floor: Wood

Floorboards Dimension: Room 1, with tongue-and-groove boards, running east-west, measuring 5¼ to 7¾ inches wide (mostly 6½ to 7 inches wide); attached with machine cut nails.

Dating: ca. 1820s-1840s

Other Date: Main house, ca. 1802

Dating Evidence:

Saw Marks: Hewn and pitsawn joists; sashsawn frame

Nails: Machine cut in frame; wrought clinched nails in two interior doors

Comments: Wrought strap hinges for interior doors.

Notes:

Exterior:

Compass bearing, taken at the building's SE corner, looking north along the east wall: 16⁰. The building's exterior wall measures 5 inches thick. Currently, all of the building's windows have been covered with cut sheets of plywood.

Interior:

Room 1: The exterior door (Door 1) has been replaced, although iron pintles survive from the earlier door, set into the western door post on the interior side.

Room 2: The boards on the partition measure up to 16 inches wide, and have been whitewashed. Room 2's floorboards measure from 11½" to 13" wide. The door (Door 2) has wrought iron strap hinges, attached with clinched, wrought nails that have square washers. The strap hinges measure 1' 4" long.

Room 3: The door (Door 3) has sash-sawn, vertical boards, and the door had a hasp set into the frame/post of the west side, part of the partition wall between Room 2 and 3. The doorway has been reframed, using wire nails and circular-sawn lumber. There is no period wall treatment surviving.