

Slave Housing Data Base

Building Name: Four Square Slave Quarter

Evidence Type: Extant

Historical Site Name: Four Square

County: Isle of Wight

State: Virginia

Investigators: Doug Sanford; Andrew Stempel; Dennis Pogue

Institutions: University of Mary Washington – Center for Historic Preservation; Mount Vernon Ladies' Association

Project:

Start: 8/15/2007

End: 12/7/07

Additional Investigators: Dan Miles, Michael Worthington

Institutions: Oxford Dendrochronological Laboratory

Project:

Start: 12/7/07

End: 12/7/07

Summary Description:

The Four Square duplex quarter is a frame, one story building with a garret, covered by a side-gable roof and horizontal wooden siding (both modern replacements), supported by brick piers, with a central brick chimney that is largely collapsed. The two first floor rooms are accessed via single doorways centered in their bays on the west facade, with single windows in each bay in the opposite wall, and in each end wall. An enclosed stair is located in the southwest corner of the south room, providing the only access to the garret. The garret appears to have been divided into two rooms at the chimney stack. No stair currently exists to provide access to the garret above the north room, but evidence in the framing suggests that a second stair was located in the northeast corner of the space. In addition to the collapsed chimney/fireplace, a structural post in the east wall has failed, causing the adjoining wall section to deflect, and in turn resulting in considerable additional deterioration to the siding and to structural members. The structure is located 168 feet from the SW corner of the building to the NE corner of the shed addition of the main house at 220°.

Abundant structural evidence exists to suggest that the duplex was created during two phases of construction, with the second phase likely the result of moving and appending an existing structure (now the north bay) to the original cabin (south bay). The results of dendrochronological testing confirm this hypothesis, as the findings indicate that the south bay was erected circa 1789 and that the north bay was built circa 1830.

Notes:

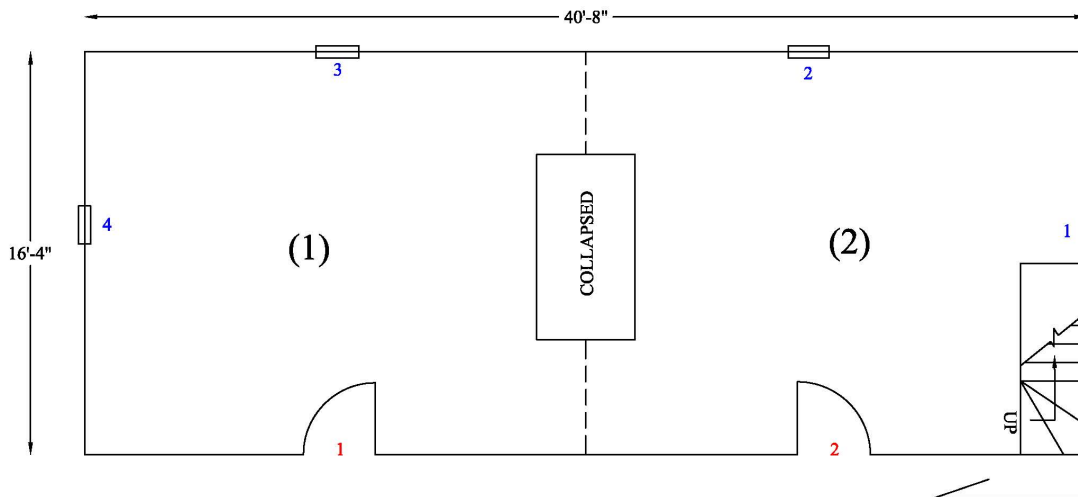
Upton (1982) hypothesized an original construction date of circa 1810 for the quarter,

primarily based on the ascribed date of 1807 for the nearby main house. He recognized that the existing structure was the result of two building phases, further hypothesizing that the addition dated to the second quarter of the 19th century. The dendrochronological results therefore support Upton's assessment of the general timing of the construction of the second bay, but also indicate that the Period I portion of the building was erected considerably earlier than had been suggested. That the single-cell quarter may have been constructed almost 20 years earlier than the main house raises the question whether the building originally served as an outlying quarter, or whether it was related to an earlier farmstead. At least one of the corner posts in the Period I portion appears to have been repositioned, which at least raises the possibility that the structure was built of reused material. As with the repositioned post (it has been inverted), other framing elements located along the north wall of the Period I cabin appear to have been altered, possibly to accommodate joining the two existing structures; no other timbers exhibit any evidence of having been reused. It may have been necessary to adjust the roof pitch of the original structure to match the addition, as well, as short pieces of wood were found attached to the feet of each of the rafters there, which may have served to raise the roof slightly.

Bibliography:

Dell Upton, *Slave Housing in 18th-Century Virginia* (1982) and *The Early Architecture of Tidewater Virginia* (2002); Miles and Worthington *The Tree-Ring Dating of Eight Virginia Slave Houses* (2009).

**One Story with Garret
Footprint:**



Number of Rooms: 4 (2 up, 2 down)

- Dimensions:**
- (1) 15'-9 1/2" (E-W) x 19'-11" (N-S); 7'-8" (H)
 - (2) 15'-7" (E-W) x 19'-3" (N-S); 7'-7" (H)
 - (3) 17'-8" (E-W) x 19'-1" (N-S); 9'-2" (H)
 - (4) 17'-5 1/2" (E-W) x 20'-0" (N-S); 9'-5" (H)

Principal Construction Type: Frame

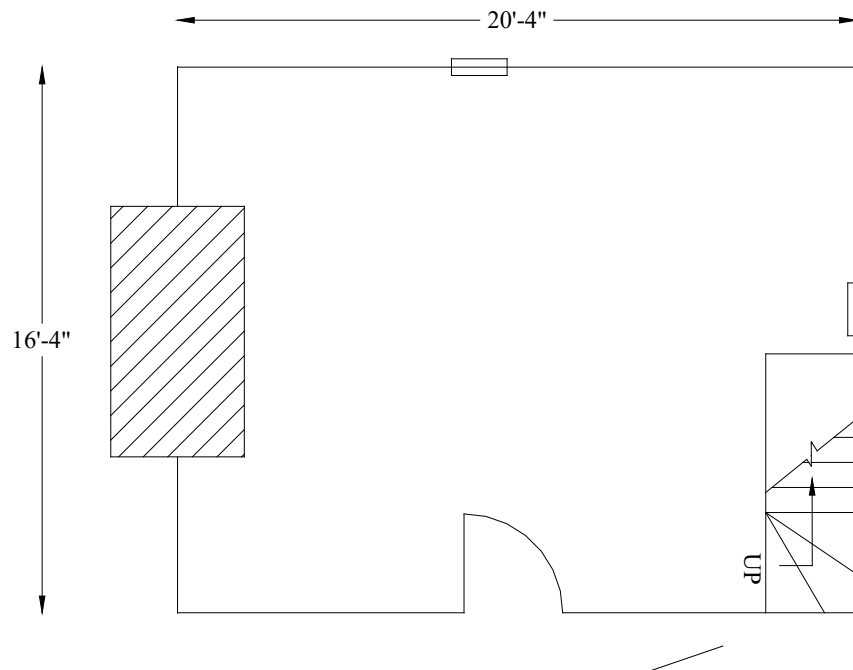
Period: I

Period I relates to the south room (2) of the building. The northwest corner of the south room exhibits intact down braces on the north wall, indicating the original end wall. There is evidence of an earlier window in the south room on the west wall between the stair and doorway.

Dendro Date: 1789

Other Date: (previously circa 1810)

Footprint:



Number of Rooms: 1

Dimensions: (1) 15'-7" (E-W) x 19'-3" (N-S); 7'-7" (H)

Doors: 2, but there is evidence of a door for the stairs

(1)

(2)

Type:	Board & Batten	Board & Batten
Dimensions (W/H):	2'10 ¾" by 6'1 ½"	2'11" by 6'1"
Hardware:	T-strap hinges (modern)	T-strap hinges (modern)
Swing:	In	In

Windows: 6; window 5 on the gable end is boarded over

(1)

(2)

(3)

Type:	4/4 double hung sash	4/4 double hung sash	4/4 double hung sash
Dimensions (H/W):	3'10 ½" by 1'8"	3'11 ½" by 1'7 ½"	3'10" by 1'7"
Hardware:	None	None	None

(4)

(5)

(6)

Type:	NA	NA	NA
Dimensions (H/W):	3'9" by 1'6 ½"	2'1" by 1'8 ¾"	2'2" by 1'8"
Hardware:	None	None	None

There was originally a window in the west wall of the south building measuring 3'-10" (H) x ~1'-8" (W).

Foundation:

Masonry Piers

Material: Machine made brick with modern mortar

Number: 7

Height: 1'-5" (S) to 2'-5" (N)

Shed/Porch: No

Roof:

Roof Form: gable

Roof Covering: standing seam metal

Framing Exposed: yes

Form: common rafters with mortise and tenon, pegged; 1'-10" – 2'-2" on center

Rafter No: 20 pairs

Rafter dimensions: 3 1/4" x 4"; 2 1/2" x 3 1/2"; 4" x 5"

All the collars have been removed but they were half lapped and spiked and there is whitewash in former joints. The rafters rest on a flat false plate. There is whitewash on the rafters and partition in the south room.

Roof Pitch: Rise over run, 12 1/2" over 12"

Building Height: 9'-6 1/2" from ground to eave; 19'-2" to roof peak at south gable end

Chimney Height: N/A

Walls:

Frame:

Material: wood

Cladding: horizontal lapped

Beaded: no

Chimney(s):

Chimney (1):

Material: brick (largely collapsed)

Location: central interior; originally located at the north end exterior of the first period building

Interior:

Wall Framing: exposed

Wall Finish: perhaps originally lathe and plastered and later south room was lapped with horizontal pit sawn boards and whitewash

Fireplace: brick

Fireplace Location(s):

Fireplace (1): center

Hearth material: brick

Hearth dimensions: collapsed

The chimney/fireplaces presumably were altered when the two cabins were joined together.

Stair: yes

Location: SW corner

Type: winder

Subfloor Pit: no

Floor: wood; 10" wide floor boards

Four Square Framing Schedule

Phase I

Member:	Dimensions:	Attachment:	Finish:	Nails:
Rafters	4" x 2 3/4-3"	M&T/P at peak	H&PS	
Collars	4" x 1 1/4" (empty mortise)	Half-lapped/pegged to rafters	----	
Studs	3 1/2-3 3/4 x 2 3/4-3"	Nailed to rafters; M&T to girts	H&PS	HH
False Plates	5 1/4" x 1"	Under cut to fit over joists	H&PS	
Ceiling Joists	6 1/2" x 3 1/2"	Notched over plate	H&PS	
End Girts	6 1/2" x 3 1/2"	M&T to rec. studs; notched over plate	H	
Plates	7" x 4"	Notched to rec. joists and girts; M&T/P to posts; mortised to rec. studs	H	
Corner Posts	7" x 3 1/2-4"	M&T/P to braces, plate, sill	H&PS	
Door Posts	7 1/2" x 3 1/2"	M&T/P to plate; nailed to sill (replacement, round nails)	H	
Door Header	@6" x 3 1/2"	Half-lapped to posts (ext.)	H&PS	
Studs	3 1/4"-3 3/4" x 2 1/2"-3"	M&T to plate; nailed to sill and braces	H&PS	HH
Braces	7 1/2" x 3 1/2"	M&T/P to posts, sill	H&PS	
Floor Joists	6 3/4" x 3"	Half lapped over sill	H&PS	
Sills	9" x 7" (end) 10" x 7 1/2" (side)	Half lapped	H	

Notes:

- Stair location appears to be original, but changed from ladder to winder: waisted outrigger in stair opening appears original, to bear false plate; but stud inserted to act as post for stair – no M&T, nailed at top with hand-headed nails, and notched to fit around corner brace. Original window closed to accommodate enlarged stair? Stair trim attached with machine-headed nails.
- All stud cripples nailed to braces using hand-headed nails.
- North end girt lapped over plate w/half-dovetail.
- Dist. from floor to bottom of collar mortise: 6' 9".
- Ev. of whitewash in garret.
- Much of sill on long side, front, replaced w/circular sawn; sill on rear deteriorated.
- Ev. of plaster lath (rectangular nail holes) on first floor side walls; remnants of circular sawn siding.
- NW corner brace (with empty mortises) nailed to corner post at M&T with round nails.

Phase II

Member:	Dimensions:	Attachment:	Finish:	Nails:
Rafters	4" x 3-3 1/2"	M&T/P at peak	H&PS	
Collars	2" x 1 1/2"	Half-lapped/pegged to rafters	Riven	
Studs	3 1/2-4" x 2 1/2"	Half-lapped to collar; M&T to girts	?	
False Plates	Replaced	--	--	
Ceiling Joists	6" x 4"	Notched over plate	H	
End Girts	6 1/2" x 4"	Notched over plate	H	
Plates	9" x 4"	Notched to rec. joists and girts; M&T/P for cor. posts; mortised to rec. studs	H	
Corner Posts	9" x 5"	M&T/P to plate (sill?)	H	
Door Posts	@4" x 3"	Nailed to sill and header	?	MH
Door Header	3 1/4" x 3"	Half-lapped to studs	H	
Studs	3 1/2-4" x 3"	M&T to plate; nailed to sill and braces	H&SS	MH&HH
Braces	9 1/2" x 4" (end) 7 1/2" x 4" (side)	M&T/P to corner posts	H&SS	
Floor Joists	8" x 5"	Half-lapped over sills	H&PS	
Sills	9" x 7 1/2" (end) 10" x 8" (side)	M&T	H	

Notes:

- Door appears to be inserted: header half-lapped on ext. face of studs; "posts" more like studs, added just inside wall studs.
- Both machine and hand-headed nails used to attach stud cripples to braces.
- No evidence of whitewash in garret.
- Distance from floor to bottom of collars: 6' 5".
- Sills jointed with mortise and tenon: end sills with tenons, sides with mortises.

DJP 4-25-09