

Virginia Slave Housing Project

Building Name: Oak Hill Double-Duplex Slave Quarter

Evidence Type: Extant

Site ID: 071-0026 [De-listed]

Historical Site Name: Oak Hill Plantation

City or Vicinity: Vicinity of Danville

County: Pittsylvania

State: Virginia

Investigators: Douglas Sanford, Marissa Kulis, Elyse Adams, Mary Fesak

Institution: Center for Historic Preservation, University of Mary Washington

Investigators: Douglas Sanford, Dennis Pogue

Institution: Virginia Slave Housing, Inc.

Project Start: 2/13/16

Project End: 10/12/21

Summary Description:

The substantial brick outbuilding that served as quarters for multiple enslaved households is located due east of the ruined Oak Hill plantation house. The one-story building is arranged in four main bays and is unusually long for its width, measuring approximately 18' wide (north-south) by 72'5" long (east-west). The quarter is arranged as two duplex units, placed end to end within a single building, with two sets of two rooms each sharing a center chimney. None of the first-floor spaces are directly accessible from one another; the four garret rooms each were accessed from the room below via internal stairways. The moderately-pitched side-gabled roof was originally covered with wood shingles which have been replaced with standing seam sheet metal pans. For ease of description, each of the joined two-room units are designated as a separate duplex; the west unit is Duplex A and the east is Duplex B. Each of the duplexes measures 18' wide by about 36'2½" long.

The structure has severely deteriorated, with much of the south façade wall having collapsed. With the lack of structural integrity, the two garret rooms above Duplex B were largely inaccessible. While the fallen wall means that the fenestration cannot be determined precisely, it is likely that each of the rooms mirrored the conditions in Rooms 1 and 2, each with a doorway and window; windows are centered on each room on the north wall. Interior central chimneys in each duplex unit served fireplaces for the rooms to either side. The unheated garret rooms are divided by wooden partitions.

The brick walls are largely laid up using a 4:1 common bond, although portions of the north wall are less regular, with 2-3 stretchers alternating with 1-2 headers. The color of the north brick wall changes slightly at the transition point between the east and west duplexes, but there is no interruption in the courses to suggest two periods of building construction. Much of the quarter rests on a brick foundation, but with field stones visible along the east wall, where the grade drops moderately. The presence of mature

machine-cut nails, sash sawn timbers, and common bond construction suggest a date either contemporaneous or somewhat later than the ca. 1823-25 date for the main house.

A number of changes were made to the quarter in the post-slavery and modern eras, especially within Duplex B. These included replacing the floors, altering the window frames and sashes, repairing the stairs, and replacing the original wood shingles with sheet metal. In Duplex B, a doorway on the north side of the chimney was inserted, allowing access between the two downstairs rooms. In more recent decades, a concrete floor was installed in this duplex, a concrete tub or trough was added in the northeast corner of the eastern room, and the fireplace was largely rebuilt.

In 2017 archaeological excavations were conducted within Rooms 1 and 2 in Duplex A. The archaeologists revealed and excavated one brick-lined feature in each room, roughly 3' x 4' in dimension, which were identified as sub-floor storage cellars. Excavators recovered a range of domestic and food-related artifacts interpreted as related to the lives of the enslaved occupants. The few diagnostic objects recovered date to the middle decades of the 19th century.

Other Documentation:

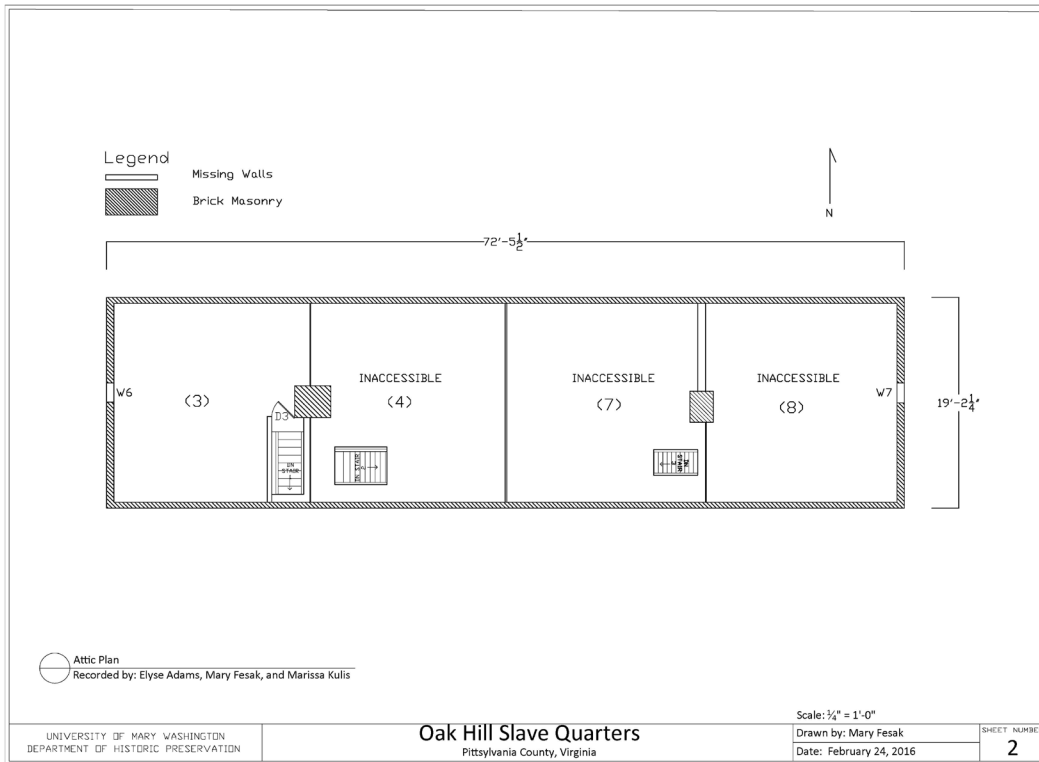
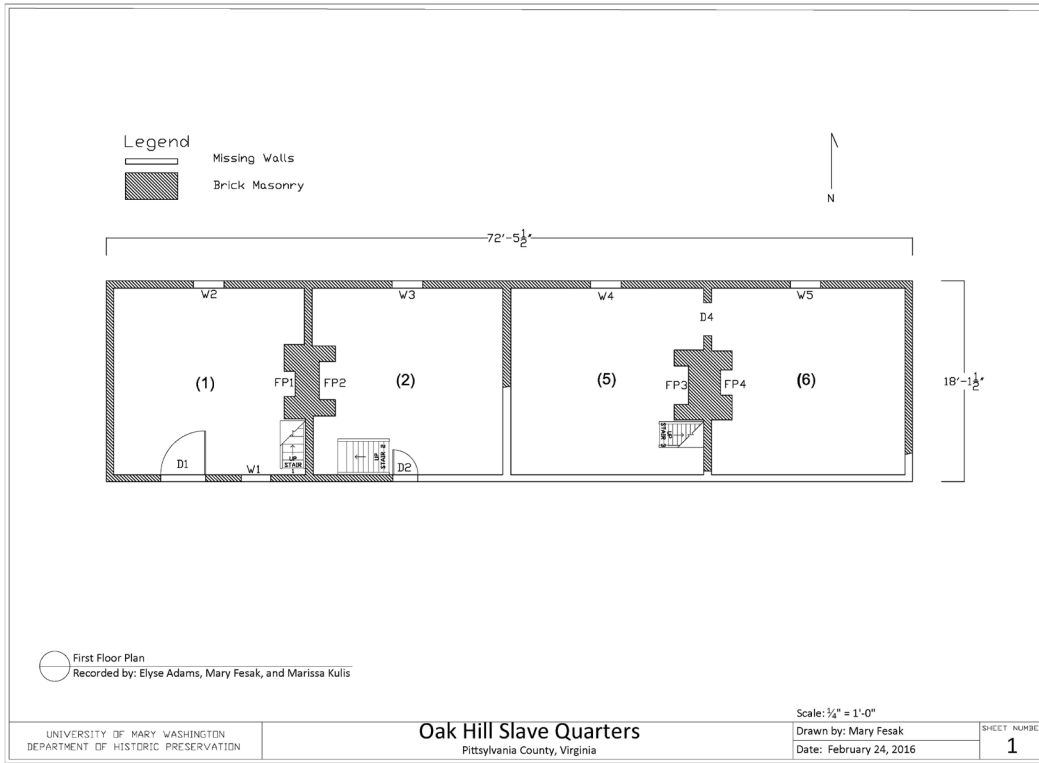
Oak Hill, National Register of Historic Places Nomination (1979) (Delisted, 2001)

Lichtenberger, Randy, and Elizabeth A. Moore, *Final Report on Excavation at the Oak Hill Plantation Slave Quarter (44PY0440-0005), Pittsylvania County, Virginia* (2017).

Principal Construction Type: Brick

One Story – with Garret

Footprint:



Number of Rooms: 8; 4 down, 4 up

- Dimensions:** (1) 16.8.0 (N-S) x 17.1.0 (E-W); 7.0.3 (H) to bottom of ceiling joist; 7.6.3 (H) to bottom of garret floor
 (2) 16.7.3 (N-S) x 17.1.0 (E-W); 7.9.2 (H) to bottom of ceiling joist; 8.5.0 (H) to bottom of garret floor
 (3) 16.6.1 (N-S) x 17.9.1 (E-W); 5.8.1 (H) to bottom of collar
 (4) Floor unstable and partial collapse of roof, unable to access (assume similar to Room 3)
 (5) Not accessible (N-S), due to collapsed wall x 17.4.0 (E-W); 8.6.1 (H) from ceiling to dirt floor; 7.10.2 (H) from bottom of joist to dirt floor
 (6) Not accessible (N-S), due to collapsed wall x 17.5.2 (E-W); 7.9.3 (H) from bottom of joist to concrete floor; 8.5.1 (H) from ceiling to concrete floor
 (7) Not accessible due to partial collapse and instability
 (8) Not accessible due to partial collapse and instability

Doors: 4

Total of 3 for Duplex A

	Rm. 1 (1)	Rm. 2 (2)	Rm. 3 (3)
Type:	Board & batten	Board & batten	Board & batten
Dimensions:	5.7.2 (H) x 3.7.2 (W)* *door widened in post-slavery era	5.11.3 (H) x 2.3.0 (W)	6.0.3 (H) x 1.11.0 (W)
Hardware:	3 knuckle butt hinge, w/machine-made screws	Modern, 3 knuckle strap hinge w/wire nails	Modern, 3 knuckle strap hinge w/machine-made screws
Swing:	In	In	In
Replacement:	Yes, both door & frame; circular sawn boards w/wire nails; porcelain knob	Yes, both door & frame; circular sawn boards, original lintel survives	Yes, both door & frame. Door at top of stairs, adjacent to chimney stack

The only doorway surviving in Duplex B is that between Rooms 5 and 6 on the ground floor, on the north side of the central chimney.

(4)

Type:	No door surviving, only the doorway
Dimensions:	6.6.3 (H) x 2.11.1 (W)
Hardware:	NA
Swing:	NA
Replacement:	Post-slavery doorway, inserted through medial wall

Windows: 7

Total of 5 for Duplex A

	Rm. 1 (1)	Rm. 2 (2)	Rm. 2 (3)
Type:	Casement (single, 6-pane sash)	<i>No longer survives due to partial wall collapse</i>	No sash surviving; likely similar to W1
Dimensions:	2.0.2 (W) x 3.4.3 (H)	NA	2.1.1 (W) x 3.5.2 (H) – frame opening
Hardware:	3 knuckle butt hinges w/machine-made screws; note surviving original pintle on exterior frame	NA	NA
Shuttered/Slide/Swing:	Replacement sash; original jambs w/machine-cut nails	NA	Original sill and lintel survive; note exterior board & batten shutter

Windows continued:

	Rm. 1 (4)	Rm. 3 (5)
Type:	Casement (single sash, 6 panes)	Wood frame w/vertical wooden bars (no glass)
Dimensions:	2.0.2 (W) x 3.4.3 (H)	1.3.2 (W, frame opening) x 1.9.0 (H, of bars); 1.11.0 (H, frame opening)
Hardware:	3 knuckle butt hinge w/machine-made screws	Top pintles still exist, as does hasp for interior shutter; note modern exterior hinges
Shuttered/Slide/Swing:	Replacement frame; note exterior board & batten shutter	Original frame, wooden bars missing; interior wooden shutter no longer exists

Only 2 windows survive in Duplex B

	Rm. 5 (6)	Rm. 6 (7)
Type:	No sash surviving	Single fixed sash, 9 pane
Dimensions:	2.1.1 (W) x 3.5.2 (H)	2.10.2 (W) x 3.3.1 (H)
Hardware:	None surviving	Wire nails within sash and frame
Shuttered/Slide/Swing:	Wooden exterior shutter; entire window frame appears to be a replacement	Window frame is a replacement; note exterior wooden shutter

EXTERIOR

Foundation:

Continuous Masonry: Brick, except for field stone at east end (of Duplex B)

Thickness: approx. 9 inches

Height: NA, blends into main wall

Bond: 4:1 Common

Mortar Type: Sand – limestone fragments
Joint: Flush
Repaired: Yes – with modern Portland cement-type mortar

Shed/Porch: No

Roof:

Roof Form: Gable
Roof Covering: Standing seam sheet metal
Roof Framing: Based on Room 3 only
Exposed: Yes
Form: Common Rafters
Rafter Number: 8 pair (west gable end pair even with exterior wall; eastern most pair is 0.6.0 shy of the chimney stack)
Rafter Dimensions: 0.4.0 (H) x 0.3.0 (W)

Collar Ties: Yes
Collar Dimensions: 0.4.2 (H) x 0.1.0 thick
Method of Joining: Let into mortised slots & spiked w/3 machine-cut nails
Height from Roof Peak: 2.4.3 to top of collar; 2.9.1 to bottom of collar
(In Room 4: 2.6.0 from roof peak to top of collar; 2.10.1 to bottom of collar; 5.5.2 from bottom of collar to the floor)
Height to Floor: from collar bottom, 5.8.1

Building Height: at west gable end, center
Ground to Soffit: 7.10.1 (at SW corner)
Ground to Apex: 16.7.2
Ground to Top of Eave: 15.11.1

Walls:

Masonry: Brick
Bond: Common (4 course) in most areas; note portion of north wall with Flemish-like pattern using 2-3 stretchers alternating with 1-2 headers.
Mortar Type: Sand – Clay – Limestone fragments
Joint: Flush
Repaired: Yes, with modern cement-type mortar

Chimney(s):

Chimney (1):
Material: Brick
Location: Center
Height: Not accessible

Chimney (2):
Material: Brick

Location: Interior – Center

Height: Not accessible

Both chimney stacks have been rebuilt at and above the roof line.

INTERIOR

Wall Finish: Plaster on brick (Rooms 1 and 2); Plaster on brick in Room 5; Whitewash on brick in Room 6.

Fireplace (1): Center (at east end of Room 1)

Fireplace Material: Brick

Fireplace Overall Dimensions: 6.6.0 (N-S) x 1.11.2 (E-W)

Fireplace Opening Dimensions: Collapsed and with infill, cannot measure height; 2.3.1 (W); 0.10.0 (D)

Hearth Material: Stone

Hearth Dimensions: 6.7.0 (N-S) x 1.11.0 (E-W)

Fireplace (2): Center (at west end of Room 2)

Fireplace Material: Brick

Fireplace Overall Dimensions: 6.4.1 (N-S) x 2.0.0 (E-W); possibly rebuilt & likely infilled; note 2 lintel bars (each 0.1.2 wide)

Fireplace Opening Dimensions: 2.11.0 (partial H); 3.5.1 (W); 1.4.0 (D)

Hearth Material: Stone

Hearth Dimensions: Not enough survives to provide dimensions

Fireplace (3) – Room 5: Center (at east end of Room 5)

Fireplace Material: Brick

Fireplace Overall Dimensions: 6.3.2 (N-S) x 2.7.3 (E-W)

Fireplace Opening Dimensions: 3.3.2 (H) x 3.5.3 (W); 1.3.2 (D)

Hearth Material: Cannot be observed; likely rebuilt

Hearth Dimensions:

Fireplace (4) – Room 6: Center (at west end of Room 6)

Fireplace Material: Brick

Fireplace Overall Dimensions: 6.2.2 (N-S) x 1.10.0 (E-W)

Fireplace Opening Dimensions: 2.5.0 (H) x 2.3.2 (W); 1.0.2 (D)

Stairs: Yes, Room 1

Type: Ladder

Stairwell Dimensions: 4.8.2 (L) x 2.4.2 (W)

Number of Treads: 7

Stair Tread Dimensions: 1.10.3 (L) x 0.8.2 (W) x 0.10.2 (H)

Stairs: Yes, Room 2

Type: Ladder

Stairwell Dimensions: 4.8.2 (L) x 3.2.2 (W)

Number of Treads: 8

Stair Tread Dimensions: 2.9.3 (L) x 0.9.2 (W) x 0.6.0 (H; some 0.5.2)

Stairs: Yes, Room 5

Type: Ladder

Stairwell Dimensions: inaccessible

Number of Treads: 10

Stair Tread Dimensions: 1.11.0 (L) x 0.9.2 (W) x 0.8.0 (H)

Stairs: No, Room 6 (former stairs in Room 6 do not survive)

Subfloor Pit: Yes

Number: 2 total – 1 in Room 1, 1 in Room 2

Location(s): Both in front of the fireplace hearths

Dimensions: approximately 3 x 4 feet

Depth: NA

Lined: Yes

Material: Brick

Floor: Wood – replacement flooring with tongue-and-groove boards; partially surviving floor joists are circular sawn (replacements)

Floorboards Dimension: 0.3.3

Dating:

Dating Evidence:

Saw Marks: Sash sawn

Nails: Machine-headed cut

Comments: Sash sawn timbers and machine headed cut nails, along with common bond brickwork suggests from early 19th century (1820s+) to early antebellum period (see National Register nomination for main house, ca. 1823-25).

Notes for Duplex A (Rooms 1-4)

Room 1: The interior walls have received a plaster coating, composed of a lower brown, rough coat and an upper whitewash coat (this same treatment occurs in Room 2).

The stairs for this room are located in the SE corner and rise up towards the chimneystack and along the duplex's brick medial wall. The stair's stringers and treads show a mixture of machine-cut and wire nails, with the latter for circular sawn replacement treads. The stringer measures 0.2.3 by 0.7.3. Near the base of the stairs are two, surviving, partial floor joists.

The framing for Window 1 appears to be original, with wooden pegs at the corners for the header and the sill. Two pintles are visible on the frame exterior, serving as supports for a former wooden shutter (see those on the rear wall windows, Windows 3 and 4).

There are a total of 8 ceiling joists, with the 8th joist situated at the chimneystack, and it has been cut off to accommodate the ladder stairs. The joists are sawn, measuring 0.3.0 to 0.3.1 wide and 0.5.5 to 0.6.0 high. Note that ledger boards have been installed on the walls at the ends of the joists at the north and south, with the boards cut out to fit around the joist ends (attached with wire nails).

Room 2: The stairs for this room are located near the SW corner, along the south wall, and rise up to a stair landing in the SW corner of the garret room (Room 4) above, with the landing between the chimney stack and the duplex's medial (north-south) wall. The top portion of the stairs has been rebuilt, using circular sawn boards (with wire nails) sistered to the stringers and attached to the ceiling joists. This repair includes the top two treads. The 8 original treads were let into grooves within the original stringers. The stringers measure 0.2.2 by 0.6.0.

There is no surviving evidence for the original wood floor in this room.

Room 3: The framing of the roof is exposed in this room. The rafters and collars here are whitewashed, as are the roofing boards. The collars have been let into mortised slots and then spiked at each end with 3 machine-cut nails. Rafter pairs are ship-lapped at the peak and then spiked with machine-cut nails. The roofing boards measure 10 to 14 inches wide and have bevel cuts. Many, small cut nail ends are observed exiting the roofing boards, serving as evidence for the building's earlier wood shingle roof. Many of the shingles survive beneath the current sheet metal roof (which has wire nails). The rafter feet rest on a flat, false plate supported by the extended ceiling joists for Room 1 below.

A wooden partition survives on the east side of Room 3. There also is a partition along the west side of the stairwell opening. The boards for this latter partition are 1.1.2 wide and appear to be earlier, having bevel-cut edges and whitewash on the room interior side (not the side facing the stairwell). The two collar ties immediately west of the chimneystack have been removed, apparently to allow the insertion of this partition's

doorway, which suggests that the door is a later construction. Note two substantial posts forming the west side of the stair partition, with the taller member acting as part of the doorframe. This post is a reused timber, showing mortises measuring 4 by 4 inches. The roof boards and rafters over the stairs are not whitewashed, whereas those elsewhere in Room 3 are whitewashed.

The partition to either side of the chimneystack includes a number of replacement vertical boards with circular saw marks and wire nails, and which lack whitewash. The earlier boards that survive were attached with machine-cut nails and received whitewash. There are also some circular sawn boards that are attached with machine-cut nails and have whitewash, suggesting multiple stages of repair for this central partition.

Floorboards measure 0.9.0 to 1.1.0 wide.

Room 4: This room was not accessible due to dangerous conditions, such as the partial collapse of the south wall of Room 2.

There is no whitewash on the rafters and roofing boards in this room. The rafters show the same shiplap joints, with collars let into mortised slots and then spiked with machine-cut nails. The rafters measure about 3 by 4 inches, although some are 2.75 inches wide. The rafter pair at the middle of the chimneystack has a removed collar tie, likely due to the later rebuilding of the stack's upper portion. The roofing boards are wide, some measuring 16 to 18 inches wide.

At the east gable end, there are horizontal boards on the interior side, which appear to be replacements, while the exterior side (into Duplex B) has vertical boards. This difference could relate to post-slavery era alterations to Duplex B (see its survey form).

Notes for Duplex B (Rooms 5-8)

Room 5: The interior wall surface has been coated with plaster, consisting of a lower, brown rough coat and an upper, finish coat of whitewash.

The ceiling joists in Rooms 5 and 6 appear to be the same as those in Rooms 1 and 2, measuring 3 inches wide and 6 inches high. Both these joists and the bottoms of the floorboards of the garret rooms above have been whitewashed.

Fragments of 3 floor joists survive near the west wall, consisting of hewn logs running north-south and which measure 2.8.0 to 2.9.0 apart, center to center. There are remnants of brick paving in this area at a level below the floor joists, which could suggest a sub-floor pit.

A doorway (D4) was inserted through the brick medial wall on the north side of the central chimney, likely during the post-slavery period to allow access between Rooms 5 and 6. Much of the medial wall was removed during this installation, except for a portion joining the main north wall. A remnant of the medial wall's foundation survives

at the ground level. The framing of the doorway uses dimensional lumber that is circular sawn and joined with wire nails. A wooden partition was constructed to the doorway's sides, using similar materials and narrow horizontal boards.

Stairs were located towards the room's SE corner, running along the southern side of the chimney base and rising to the east. The stringers are less substantial than those observed in Rooms 1 and 2, measuring 0.1.2 thick and 0.7.2 wide. The treads are let into grooves cut into the stringers, but the noses of the treads do not lap over the stringers as seen in Room 1. As in the other rooms, the top part of these stairs has been repaired. The consistency of this alteration suggests the replacement of the original floors in all four, ground story rooms.

Note the surviving vertical boards of the upstairs partition, between the garret spaces (Rooms 7 and 8). This partition forms the west wall of Room 8 and stands on the east side of the chimneystack, opposite of the location for the partition on the north side of the chimney.

Room 6: As compared to the interior wall plaster seen in other rooms, this room only has whitewash on the brick walls.

The fireplace (No. 4) in this room has been rebuilt and the hearth has been removed and replaced by the modern concrete floor. A wooden mantle does survive.

The original stairs were located in the NW corner of this room, on the north side of the chimney base. The stairs were removed during the insertion of the doorway (Door 4) into the medial wall. Evidence for the former stairs consists of a sawn-off ceiling joist on the north wall and, a ceiling joist near the chimney shows the marks for two, former vertical timbers that were let and spiked into the joist with machine-cut nails.