

Virginia Slave Housing Project

Building Name: Sandy Hill Frame Duplex
Evidence Type: Extant
Site ID: 032-0379
Historical Site Name: Sandy Hill Farm
City: Vicinity of West Bottom & Fork Union
County: Fluvanna
State: Virginia

Investigators: Dennis J. Pogue, Douglas W. Sanford
Institutions: Virginia Slave Housing Project
Project Start: 2/24/22, 6/1/22

Summary Description:

The three-bay, one-story, frame outbuilding at Sandy Hill farm measures about 30 ft. 5 inches long (east-west) by 18 ft. 3 inches wide, and has a side-gable roof covered with slate shingles. The walls are clad with horizontal, tapered weatherboards and rest on a dry laid, field stone foundation. The structure was designed as a double quarter to house two enslaved households, and originally featured brick exterior end chimneys, one of which survives on the east end wall.

The plan consists of two unequally-sized first-floor rooms, each of which has a doorway and a 6/6 sash window in its front wall and a single 6/6 window centered on the rear wall. The placement of the doorways is unusual, as the west room is entered from the north and the east room from the south. The enclosed stairway leading to the garret was positioned along the partition in the slightly larger west room. The wall frame and the ceiling joists in both rooms were originally exposed and whitewashed. The walls now are covered with whitewashed tongue-and-grooved horizontal boards, and the ceiling in the west room was enclosed as well at one time.

The unheated garret was divided into two spaces, but only the west room was accessible from below and it was whitewashed. Two windows are located in each gable, flanking the chimney in the east and in roughly the same position on the west. The west gable wall has been largely replaced, and the windows were altered, which likely occurred when the fireplace and chimney were removed in the 20th century. Only nail holes and other remnants indicate the existence of the former partition that divided the garret into two spaces. Therefore, it is uncertain whether the east end of the garret was accessible from the west room, but the presence of the windows suggests that it was used for storage at least

Builders elected to use a hybrid form of construction, mixing traditional timber framing techniques with a near complete reliance on circular-sawn, dimensional lumber. The frame consists of oversized sills and plates, with equally substantial posts at the corners, which are braced, and similar-sized posts framing each of the openings for the doorways,

windows, and fireplaces. Smaller dimensional studs complete the wall frame. Ceiling joists lap over the substantial plate, and support a flat false plate upon which rest the feet of the rafter pairs. The rafters are simply butted at the peak, but the posts, braces, and studs are attached to the sills and the plates with traditional mortise and tenon joints. Crippled studs are fastened using mature cut nails. The presence of circular sawn boards provides a *Terminus Post Quem* (date after which) of 1840 when the duplex was erected. The combination of traditional joinery methods with innovative materials reflects the growing influence of industrialization that was felt in Virginia in the years leading up to the Civil War. The date of construction ascribed to the Sandy Hill house based on documentary evidence is ca. 1853, which accords well with the construction characteristics of the quarter.

In the post-Civil War period the building was altered from a duplex to a single household. The western chimney was removed, with this space infilled with clapboards attached with wire nails. Both fireplace hearths were removed and the downstairs floorboards were removed and replaced. Occupants used a woodstove attached to the eastern chimney. Builders in the modern era covered the wooden exterior siding with asphalt shingles and the flooring for the garret was removed, replaced with a variety of loose lumber and plywood.

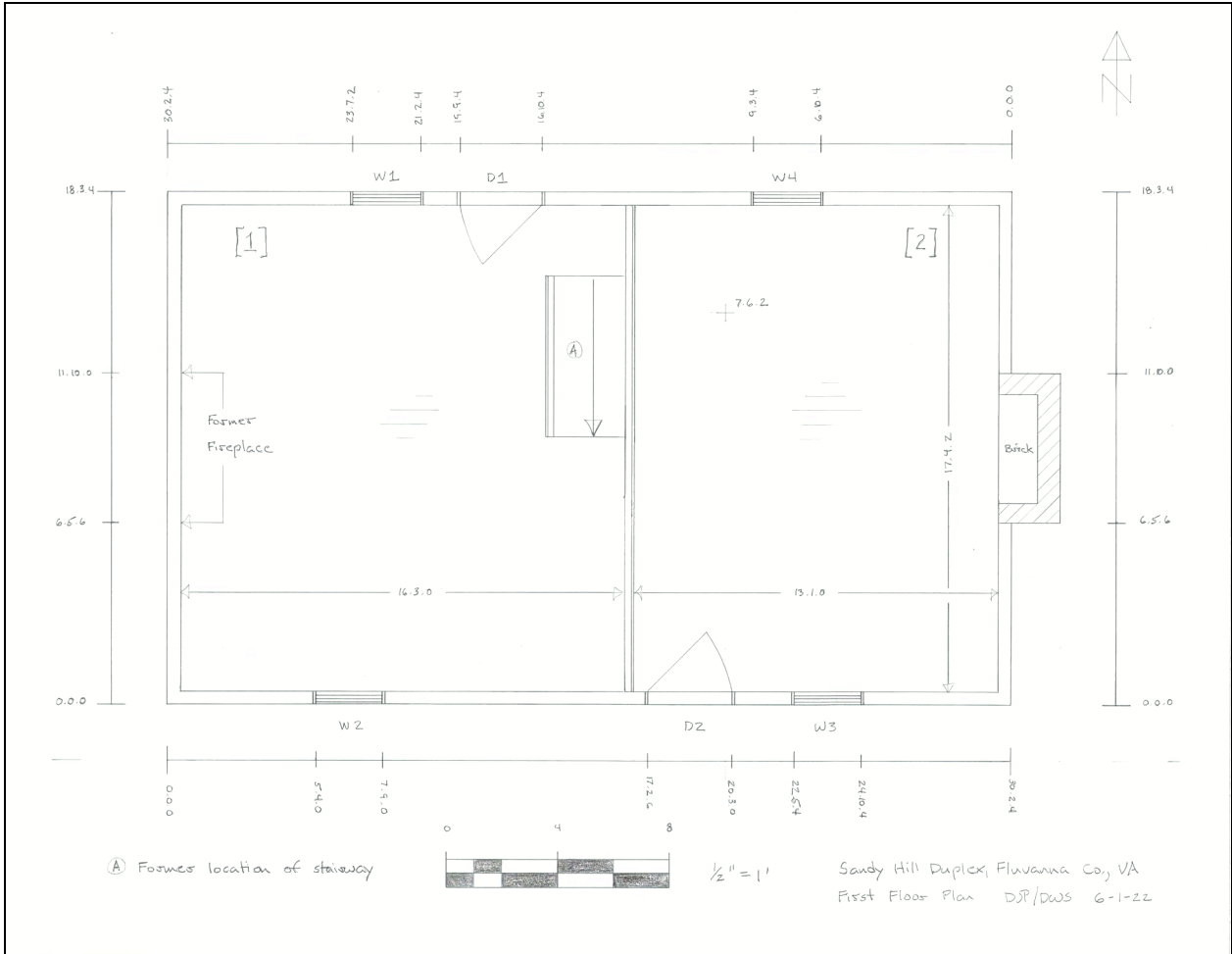
Other Documentation:

The U.S. Census of 1860 lists John H. Burgess, who acquired Sandy Hill in 1852, as owning three enslaved people and hiring 16 other enslaved workers. Burgess is also credited with three slave houses. Burgess may have been a principal in the company of Burgess & Anderson, who operated a nearby steam sawmill. The production of Burgess's 588-acre property appears to have been focused on subsistence agriculture, with no tobacco crop listed. Therefore, many if not most of the 16 hired persons in 1860 may have been employed at the Burgess & Anderson sawmill. As the advent of steam power was a major factor stimulating the erection of mills producing lumber with circular saws, this enterprise may be directly related to the use of circular sawn materials in constructing the buildings at Sandy Hill. The saw mill was a major operation, as it is credited in 1860 with producing 700,000 board feet of lumber.

Principal Construction Type: Frame

One Story – With Garret

Footprint:



Number of Rooms: 4 total – 2 down, 2 up

Dimensions: (1) West, downstairs: 16.3.0 (E-W) x 17.4.2 (N-S), 7.6.2 (H, bottom of ceiling joists)

(2) East, downstairs: 13.1.0 (E-W) x 17.6.2 (N-S), 7.6.2 (H, bottom of ceiling joists)

(3) West, garret: 16.3.0 (E-W) x 17.4.2 (N-S), 9.10.0 (H, from floor to roof peak)

(4) East, garret: 13.1.0 (E-W) x 17.6.2 (N-S), 9.10.0 (H, from floor to roof peak)

Doors: 2

	Rm. 1, N (1)	Rm. 2, S (2)
Type:	Board and batten, 7 vertical boards, 3 battens	Board and batten, 7 vertical boards, 3 battens
Dimensions:	2.11.0 (W) x 6.2.0 (H)	3.1.0 (W) x 6.4.2 (H)
Hardware:	Wire nails, 3-knuckle butterfly hinges	Wire nails, 3-knuckle butterfly hinges with screws
Swing:	In (hinged on east side)	In (hinged on west side)
Replacement:	Yes	Yes (note 2 generations of earlier hinges on east side)

Windows: 8

	Rm. 1, N (1)	Rm. 1, S (2)	Rm. 2, S (3)
Type:	Single-hung sash, 2/2	Single-hung sash, unknown/removed	Single-hung sash, 2/2
Dimensions:	2.5.0 (W) x 3.10.2 (H)	2.5.0 (W) x 3.11.2 (H)	2.5.0 (W) x 4.0.0 (H)
Hardware:	None	None	None
Shuttered/ Slide/ Swing:	Probable replacement sash	NA	Probable replacement sash

Windows: *continued.*

	Rm. 2, N (4)	Rm. 3, W (5)	Rm. 3, W (6)
Type:	Single-hung sash, 6/6	Unknown, removed	Unknown, removed
Dimensions:	2.5.0 (W) x 3.11.2 (H)	1.9.0 (W) x 2.4.2 (H)	2.4.0 (W) x 2.4.2 (H)
Hardware:	None	Unknown, wire nails for framing	Unknown, wire nails for framing
Shuttered/ Slide/ Swing:		On north side of gable end wall; likely later replacement	On south side of gable end wall; likely later replacement

	Rm. 4, E (7)	Rm. 4, E (8)
Type:	Unknown, removed	Unknown, removed
Dimensions:	1.8.0 (W) x 2.5.0 (H)	2.0.0 (W) x 2.5.2 (H)
Hardware:	Wire nails in trim	Wire nails in trim
Shuttered/ Slide/ Swing:	On south side of gable end wall; likely later replacement	On north side of gable end wall; likely later replacement

EXTERIOR

Foundation:

Continuous Masonry: Stone cobbles (largely quartz)

Thickness: 0.9.0 – 1.0.0

Height: 0.7.2 at NW corner; 1.0.0 at SW corner

Bond: Random

Mortar Type: None, dry laid

Repaired: Replaced in several areas with unmortared bricks, and with a brick pier at the SW corner.

Shed/Porch: No

Roof:

Roof Form: Gable

Roof Covering: Slate shingles

Roof Framing:

Exposed: Yes

Form: Common rafters

Rafter Number: 15 pairs (including those at the gable ends)

Rafter Dimensions: 0.3.0 x 0.4.0

Collar Ties: No

Height from Floor to Roof Peak 9.10.0

Building Height: @ SW corner

Ground to bottom of Soffit: 9.1.2

Ground to Top of Crown: 9.11.0

Ground to Top of Eave: 10.1.0

Ground to Apex: 19.1.2 (@ west gable end)

Walls:

Frame:

Material: Wood

Cladding: Horizontal lapped and tapered weatherboards

Beaded: No

Chimney(s): 2 total (west gable end chimney removed)

Chimney (1): West -- removed

Material: Brick

Location: Exterior – End

Height: NA

Chimney (2): East

Material: Brick

Location: Exterior – End

Height: not obtained

INTERIOR

Wall Framing: Exposed (earlier, with whitewash)

Wall Finish: Later finish – horizontal tongue-and-groove boards, with whitewash

Fireplace (1): Room 1, removed

Fireplace Material: Brick

Fireplace Overall Dimensions: ~ 5.3.0 (N-S, removed)

Fireplace Opening Dimensions: Unknown, removed

Hearth Material: Unknown, removed

Hearth Dimensions: Unknown, removed – later flooring covers hearth area

Fireplace (2): Room 2, east wall

Fireplace Material: Brick

Fireplace Overall Dimensions: 5.3.0, flush with east gable end wall

Fireplace Opening Dimensions: 3.9.2 (W) x 3.0.0 (H) x 1.5.0 (D)

Hearth Material: Unknown, removed

Hearth Dimensions: Unknown, removed – latter flooring covers hearth area

Stairs: Yes – removed

Type: Unknown, removed (suspected as ladder)

Stairwell Dimensions: Approx. 8.3.0 x 2.7.0

Number of Treads: Unknown, removed

Stair Tread Dimensions: Unknown, removed

Subfloor Pit: No

Floor: Wood – downstairs floorboards are later replacement; garret floorboards largely removed

Dating:

Dendrochronology Date: NA

Other Date: ca. 1840-1860, but likely ca. 1853 to align with construction of main house

Dating Evidence:

Saw Marks: Circular sawn boards used throughout

Nails: Machine headed cut

Notes

Exterior

A compass reading taken at the SW corner, looking toward the NW corner, produced a bearing of 10^0 . Essentially, the building is oriented north-south (width) and east-west (length).

The current exterior siding consists of tan-colored asphalt shingles, attached with wire nails. Beneath is the suspected original siding of lapped and tapered weatherboards, attached with machine-cut nails.

The exterior walls measure 0.5.2 thick.

At a later, post-Civil War date, the western chimney was removed. This space was filled in with siding attached with wire nails. The upper portion of the west gable end wall was repaired and re-sided as well. The replacement siding may have occurred in different phases and one phase utilized dropped German siding.

Interior

While using traditional timber framing techniques, the building's construction relied on circular-sawn lumber. For example, the wall's corner posts and the posts that frame door and window openings and the chimneys are more substantial than the wall studs. There are heavy down braces at the corners. Corner posts and studs are attached with mortar-and-tenon joints to the plates and sills. Wall studs measure 0.3.0 x 0.4.0, while corner and opening posts measure 0.4.0 x 0.6.0. Down braces measure 0.4.0 x 0.6.1. Ceiling joists measure 0.2.2 wide and 0.8.0 high and are spaced on 2.2.0 centers. The sills measure 0.7.0 x 0.9.0 and have mortise-and-tenon joints at the corners.

In an unusual arrangement, the building's exterior doors were placed off-center from the building's north-south axis. In Room 1, the exterior doorway opened near the stairs, enclosed within a framed partition against the central partition wall, allowing access to the garret above. In Room 2, the exterior doorway opened near the central partition wall (nailed to the east face of joist #8 from the west gable end wall). This room's occupants did not have access to the garret.

Stairs: The stairs were enclosed within a partial partition nailed to the west face of joist #7 from the west gable end wall. A door for the stairwall existed near the room's north wall, while the stairs rose from north to south. The stringers stairs are indicated by parallel concentrations of five nails on the inside faces of joists 7 and 8 (from the west gable end wall), along with ghost marks for the stringers. The ghosts measure between 9.1.0 and 9.6.0 from the south wall plate. Based on nail marks for the presumed partition's door opening towards the north wall, the stringers' base began about 2.6.0 from the north wall. The ceiling joists within stair enclosure were not whitewashed on the undersides, while the portions farther south were whitewashed.

Room 2: This room contains the only surviving fireplace. It's surface earlier had a wash of red pigment, while later, it was whitewashed. After the room received its second finish treatment, that of whitewashed tongue-and-groove boards, a hole was cut through these boards above the fireplace to allow placement of a stovepipe into the chimney. The conversion to heating by woodstove likely took place after the western chimney had been removed in the post-Civil War era.

Room 3: The western garret room has whitewash on the exposed rafters and roofing boards, in contrast to the unfinished condition of Room 4 to the east. The whitewash extends to the 8th rafter pair from the west gable end.

There is some evidence for a partition wall in the garret, separating Rooms 3 and 4, at the 8th rafter pair. A single horizontal board exists at the roof's peak at this location and nail holes suggest other horizontal boards extended down to a typical collar height (no collars are present on the rafters). Other nail holes on this rafter pair's west face suggest that studs existed below this height to form the partition wall and it's likely that horizontal boards were nailed to these studs to finish forming the partition wall.

Some evidence suggests that the building's western chimney may have had an interior rather than an exterior end location. The first floor joist out from the west gable end occurs at 1.5.0 from the wall, rather than at the usual 2-foot spacing. Also, the center of the end girt has been patched and/or replaced, probably after the chimney's removal. Finally, the gable end wall rafters have been altered and repaired.

Roof framing

The rafters are circular sawn and butted at the roof peak. They are spaced on 2-foot centers and the rafter feet rest on a false plate. There is a wider gap, measuring 2.7.0 (east-west) between the 8th and 9th rafter pairs, which parallels the distance between the corresponding joists below, where the stair construction is located.

The roofing boards are circular sawn. Protruding through the boards are the tips of the machine-cut nails used to attach the slate roofing shingles. There appears to be only one generation of roofing nails. The boards are 0.1.0 thick and mostly measure from 0.11.0 to 1.0.0 wide, although there are narrower boards (around 0.9.0) towards the roof peak. In the main portion of the roof, there are gaps of 0.2.0 to 0.3.0 between the boards.