

ABSTRACT

Title of Final Project: JOHN TYLER'S WOOD BURN:
A PRESERVATION PLAN

William Valentine White IV, Master of Historic
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Final Project Directed By: Dr. Donald Linebaugh, Director
Historic Preservation Program

Woodburn is an early nineteenth-century property located in Charles City County, Virginia. Built between 1813 - 1815 for John Tyler (the tenth U.S. president), the property is now owned by a descendant of Tyler who is interested in its preservation and possible uses for the site. This paper provides an overview of the property, its history, its current condition, and makes recommendations for additional investigations and potential uses.

JOHN TYLER'S WOODBURN: A PRESERVATION PLAN

by

William Valentine White IV

Masters Final Project submitted to the Faculty of the Historic Preservation Program of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Historic
Preservation
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Advisory Committee:
Professor Dr. Donald Linebaugh, Chair
Dr. John H. Sprinkle

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Dedication

To Kim

Acknowledgements

This paper could not have been written without the cooperation of the Tyler family who allowed me access to the Woodburn property. A thank you must be given to the staff at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, the Library of Virginia, and the Charles City County Court House, all of who helped me with locating additional resources and providing copies of documents, records, and letters from owners of the Woodburn property.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This project develops a preservation plan for Woodburn to assess its current condition and address its future needs. In 1813, John Tyler, a Virginia politician and later the tenth president of the United States, built Woodburn (also spelled Woodbourne) in Charles City County, Virginia. The property is located on the Virginia Peninsula which is bounded by the York River to the north, the James River to the south, and the Chesapeake Bay to its east, where the rivers meet the bay. Divided into subregions the peninsula has four independent cities and two counties, Charles City and James City (Figure 1.0).¹

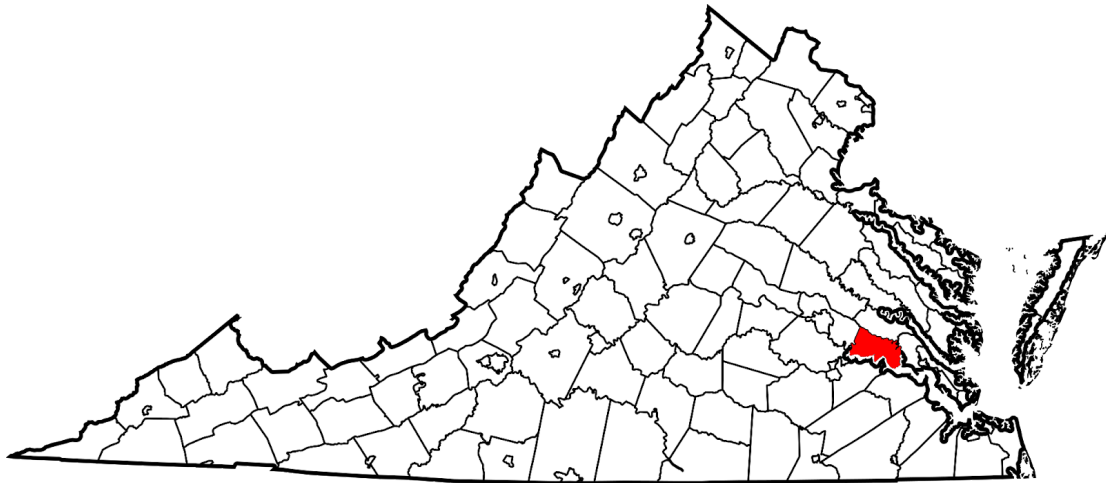


Figure 1.0. Map of Virginia with Charles City County marked
(Source: Wikipedia)

Located on 60 acres of land, the two-story, 3- part Palladian-style house is currently owned by a descendant of John Tyler and has remained under the ownership of the Tyler-Christian family throughout most of its history. The property consists of eight structures including the main house (ca. 1813) (Figure 1.1) office, kitchen, barn,

¹ Virginia Places. "Chesapeake Bay." Accessed January 20, 2023.
<http://www.virginiaplaces.org/chesbay/index.html>.

and several supporting outbuildings. Given the connection to Tyler, a slaveholder and supporter of the Confederacy, the property has a complex and contested history. The preservation plan will examine the historical context of the property from its connection to John Tyler to its place in the larger Virginia narrative, and present an examination and assessment of the structures and landscape. The end goal is to develop recommendations for preserving and interpreting the property as new uses are developed.



Figure 1.1. Front view of Woodburn,
(Photo by author, 2022).

In the 1980s, a member of the Tyler family restored various aspects of the Woodburn dwelling house and rebuilt several outbuildings on the property. In the 2010s, the restoration of the house stopped, leaving the current owner with various sections of the property unfinished. The central problem currently facing the property is developing a modern, sustainable use for the house and its outbuildings. The current owner proposes to replace the siding and other deteriorating elements of the

main house, and plans to build additions to the main house with modern amenities as part of a plan to turn the property into a bed and breakfast. Due to its use as a plantation, its connection to the enslavement and forced labor of African Americans, and its previous use by the Chickahominy people, Woodburn reflects a complex and contentious history. Even more challenging is its connection to John Tyler, a U.S. president who not only owned enslaved persons but also sided with the Confederacy during the American Civil War. The ultimate goal of this project is to consider how properties like Woodburn can balance these challenging topics while developing new sustainable uses that do not promote false historical narratives.

Research Questions

Being a historic property connected to a U.S. president, the American Civil War, and slavery, Woodburn provides a place and space where a wide range of topics can be explored. This paper primarily focuses on developing a preservation plan that engages several basic research questions. In considering the preservation of the outbuildings and main house, what is the current state of the property and its structures? What structures are in need of repair and to what degree do these repairs need to be addressed? How can a preservation plan help the current owner of the property? What archaeological resources might exist and what further research should be suggested?

Other research questions include: What are the challenges and opportunities for a property connected to slavery, located on former Chickahominy Indian lands, and owned by the only U.S. president to side with the Confederacy during the Civil

War. What questions need to be addressed when it comes to the property's complex history, and how can this complex history be interpreted for future users and visitors?

Methodology

To develop a preservation plan for Woodburn, a full description of the property was undertaken. This work included the local context of Woodburn; an architectural description of the main house and its remaining outbuildings, and landscape; a review of the 1970s restoration (1970s - 1990s), and an overview of the property's current condition. A recommendations chapter presents preservation and interpretation priorities.

Due to the property being owned by a descendant of John Tyler and the property remaining in the Christian-Tyler family for most of its history, early research relied on the owner recounting his knowledge of the property and their family history. Following the collection of oral history relating to the Tyler-Christian family, historical research primarily focused on documents acquired from the Department of Historic Resources in Virginia, the Library of Virginia, and the Charles City County Deeds Office. The previous owner of Woodburn registered the property in the 1970s and carried out a restoration of the main house and outbuildings between the 1970s and 1990s, thus the Department of Historic Resources in Virginia holds a collection of papers, government documents, and oral histories which were saved and recorded during this work. These documents aided in understanding the family's goals in restoring the property and provided some of the history of the property between the 1920s and 1970s.

In order to examine the physical structures and landscape, several field trips were made over the last eight months. Measurements of the outbuildings were collected, and photographs were taken of the property during three separate visits throughout the process. As the current owner of the property is working to restore and develop ways to use the property, they had architects create a map of the property and floor plans for the main house. These digital files, along with a sketch map by a former owner of the property in the 1970s were used for marking locations of possible archeological sites which will be discussed in a later section regarding future plans of action.

In developing a preservation plan for the property, this research investigated several other historic properties in the vicinity. While Westover, Berkeley, and Shirley Plantation are all earlier historic houses within the same county as Woodburn, additional research largely focused on properties whose architectural design more closely resembled Woodburn's palladian style, for example, The Semple, The Rowe, and Tazewell Hall, or properties whose history related to Tyler's such as Greenway Plantation and Sherwood Forest. The current owner has no interest in turning the property into a house museum, thus the preservation plan will explore other possible uses compatible with its historic nature.

Chapter 2 presents the prehistoric and historical context of Woodburn and Charles City County. The chapter examines the history of Chesapeake indigenous communities pre-contact, English colonization of Virginia, and the eighteenth through twentieth centuries. The chapter concludes with the history of Woodburn which includes a history of John Tyler and the subsequent owners of the property. Chapter 3

includes a section on the architectural context of Woodburn in relation to the area and a full architectural and landscape description of the property. Chapter 4 discusses the early restoration work done on the property in the 1970s to 1990s, and ends with an overview of the current condition of the property. Chapter 5 concludes the research with an overview of what actions the owner could take to preserve Woodburn and possible approaches for interpreting its complex history.

Chapter 2: Prehistory and Historical Context

Introduction

Before the arrival of English settlers at Jamestown in 1607, the area around Woodburn was home to several communities of Algonquian-speaking people. After Jamestown became established, settlements and plantations expanded farther inland creating Charles City County (see Figure 1.0). As settlers started to grow tobacco along the James River, their plantations proved profitable and by the early eighteenth century, large plantation houses were being constructed. Several plantation houses dating back to the colonial period, including Shirley Plantation (ca. 1723), Westover (ca. 1750s), and Berkeley (ca. 1726) survive and are open to the public. Today, Charles City County remains primarily a rural county with farmland used for growing crops such as winter wheat, soybeans, and corn.

Prehistory of the Virginia Peninsula

Archaeological evidence in the Chesapeake region indicates that the first humans to move into the area occurred during the Paleoindian Period between 11,000 to 10,000 years ago. During this period, Paleoindians were hunter-foragers who lived in communities composed of “nuclear and extended families.” The communities having strong kinship ties were likely egalitarian in their political beliefs.² Following the Paleoindian Period, the Archaic Period (ca. 10,000 to 3000 years ago) witnessed the creation of small settlements within the Chesapeake area. These settlements were likely based on a seasonal system; during the summer and warm seasons settlements

² Robert J. Dent, Jr., *Chesapeake Prehistory: Old Traditions, New Directions*, (New York: Plenum Press, 1995), 130.

may have been organized around riverine and coastal camps but divided into smaller inland camps during the fall and winter seasons.³

The Woodland Period followed the Archaic Period, beginning roughly 3,000 years ago and ran until European contact.⁴ During the Woodland Period, new technologies, settlement practices, and forms of material culture were developed. By the Late Archaic ceramics, techniques were developed and by the Early Woodland period, various types of ceramics were being produced. While seasonal settlements were developed in the Archaic Period, by the Woodland Period larger and more permanent settlements were created. These settlements included houses with an oval floor plan made from bent sapling poles and covered with woven-reed mats or barks. Among the Powhatan people, these houses are known as *yi-hakan* in Algonquian. During this period agricultural practices developed and became part of the lifestyle of these permanent communities. Within the Chesapeake region, native people cultivated various types of maize, squash, beans, and tobacco.

During the later Woodland, the Chesapeake region witnessed a movement of native peoples from outside of the region into the bay area. By about 800 years prior to the arrival of Europeans in the Americas, Algonquian-speaking peoples had migrated into the area from the north moving into lands occupied by other indigenous inhabitants who had been living on the rivers connecting to the Chesapeake Bay. Before the arrival of English settlers in 1607, Powhatan, an Algonquian chief inherited leadership of six tribes known as the Powhatan Chiefdom. By the time English settlers arrived in 1607, Powhatan had expanded his influence to over thirty

³ Ibid., 163.

⁴ Ibid., 217.

tribes that made up the Powhatan Confederacy. The confederacy spanned from as far north as the Potomac River to as far south as the James River and east to the Eastern Shore.⁵ When English settlers arrived on the Virginia Peninsula the area that became Charles City County was under the Powhatan Confederacy and inhabited by the Chickahominy, Paspashegh, and Weyanock peoples.⁶ Today the Chickahominy Tribe is the second largest Virginia Indian tribe and remains present in both New Kent County and Charles City County.⁷

History of Charles City County

In 1607, the first permanent English settlement was established on Jamestown Island. Despite a difficult start for the colony, by 1619 the Virginia Company was planning an expansion further inland and called for the creation of four incorporations (or boroughs) to be established. These four divisions, referred to as “cities,” were James City, Elizabeth City, Henrico City, and Charles City.⁸ Charles City was named after King James I's son, Prince Charles, who became Charles I of England. By the early 1620s, the Virginia Company was struggling to survive leading to an investigation led by the Privy Council. In 1624, the Virginia Company charter was revoked and the king assumed control of the colony. In 1634, the Virginia colony was divided into shires or counties creating Charles City County.⁹

⁵ Sarah J. Stebbins, “Chronology of Powhatan Indian Activity,” National Park Service, updated June 2012.

<https://www.nps.gov/jame/learn/historyculture/chronology-of-powhatan-indian-activity.htm>

⁶ Charles City County, “History of Charles City County, Virginia,” accessed January 20, 2023. <https://charlescity.org/learn/history/>

⁷ Charles City County, “Chickahominy Tribe,” accessed April 19, 2023, <https://charlescity.org/learn/chickahominy-tribe/>

⁸ National Park Service, “JAMESTOWN National Historic Site,” Last modified December 12, 2002. https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/hh/2/hh2b5.htm

⁹ James City County, “History,” accessed January 20, 2023. <https://jamescitycountyva.gov/905/History>

During the settlement of the county, plantations developed along the James River and its tributaries. In large part thanks to John Rolfe, Virginia plantations began growing tobacco which quickly became the principal cash crop for the colony. However, it was through human bondage that Virginia was able to fully profit from the crop. In 1619, the first ship carrying enslaved Africans arrived in Virginia and forever changed the landscape, economy, and society of Virginia. By the early-to-mid-eighteenth century, plantations such as Westover, Berkeley, and Shirley had produced enough income from enslaved workers and tobacco that families were able to construct large manor houses to display their wealth.

During the American Revolution, Charles City County's wealthy residents sided with the American cause with Benjamin Harrison V of Berkeley Plantation signing the Declaration of Independence along with other Virginia planters such as John Tyler Sr., the father of President John Tyler.¹⁰ Toward the end of the eighteenth century, Charles City County was the birthplace of two American Presidents, William Henry Harrison the ninth president (born at Berkeley in 1773), and John Tyler, the tenth president of the United States (born at Greenway in 1790).

By the early nineteenth century, the farming and agricultural landscape of Virginia changed thanks to new scientific farming methods and new crops. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Virginia's agricultural product was tobacco which laid the foundation for the colony to become one of the wealthiest of the English colonies in North America. However, while the cash crop built Virginia to be one of the most powerful colonies and later states, by the late eighteenth century the

¹⁰ Christopher J. Leahy, *President Without a Party: The Life of John Tyler* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2020), 13.

harmful effects of tobacco on Virginia's soils became known. The process of continuously planting tobacco in the fields every season was depleting the nutrients in the soil. During the early nineteenth century, southern planters such as Edmund Ruffin began experimenting with how to restore fields by neutralizing the soil's acidity by applying base chemicals. Following the use of agricultural chemistry and the decline in planting tobacco along with the later practice of crop rotation, countries like Charle's City began to plant and harvest crops such as corn and wheat in the early nineteenth century.¹¹

By the mid-nineteenth century, slavery had developed into a topic dividing Americans. While slavery was seen as morally wrong for many it was not until after the American Revolution that Americans began to fully question the practice. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, many Northern states banned the practice of slavery but those in the Southern states would not. To some politicians both in the North and South, it was believed that if slavery was limited to the South it would eventually dissolve naturally. However, as Americans began to move farther west and developed new states the question of slavery moving west became a subject of intense debate with figures like Henry Clay and John Tyler, (whose opinions will be discussed later in this paper) getting involved. Clay was able to ease tensions through the Missouri Compromise, which divided the western territories into free and slave states. By the 1850s, Americans had become bitterly divided leading to the American Civil War.

¹¹ John McClure, "Edmund Ruffin (1794–1865)" *Encyclopedia Virginia*. Virginia Humanities, Published December 22, 2021). <https://encyclopediaivirginia.org/entries/ruffin-edmund-1794-1865/>

With Richmond named the capital of the Confederacy and Charles City County being east of the city and sharing the James River, which connected the capital to the Chesapeake Bay and the Atlantic Ocean, the county was heavily impacted by the war. While no large battles occurred in the county itself, many, Union troops passed through the area. In March 1862, Union troops under Gen. George B. McClellan made their base in the county as part of the Peninsular Campaign. While local properties were damaged during the campaign the Union troops did not reach Richmond. Two years later, in May 1864, Union troops passed through the county again, while en route to Petersburg, with Gen. Ulysses S. Grant's army crossing the Chickahominy and James River.¹²

Following the Civil War, Charles City County experienced Reconstruction, and formerly enslaved persons were free from bondage. The county never recovered economically and remained rural, agricultural, and poor. During the early 1920s, John Rockefeller Jr. began to investigate restoring Virginia's eighteenth-century colonial capital at Williamsburg. What became Colonial Williamsburg kick-started a historic tourism industry in the area, impacting what is known as the Virginia historical triangle which includes Jamestown, Williamsburg, and Yorktown. With Charles City County being adjacent to James City County and Williamsburg and Jamestown, the plantations of the colonial elite, such as Berkeley, Westover, and Shirley that look out over the James River became additional locations for tourists.

¹² Paul M. Nasca, Dennis B. Blanton, Charles M. Downing, and Veronica L. Deitrick, *Archaeology at Fort Pocahontas: Results From the 1997 Field season*, William and Mary Center for Archaeological Research, February 9, 1998, pg 20.

History of the Woodburn Property

As discussed above, before the development of Charles City by English settlers, the land that eventually became Woodburn belonged to the Chickahominy people. During the colonial period, Charles City County became home to the Tyler family. By the eighteenth century, their role in the community included being involved in politics and later supporting the patriot cause during the American War for Independence. However, the Tyler name became known nationwide after John Tyler became the tenth president of the United States (Figure 2.0). Born in Charles City County, John Tyler's name is linked to several historic properties within the county including Greenway, Woodburn, and Sherwood Forest, with the Tyler family still in possession of the latter two.



Figure 2.0. John Tyler by William Hart, 1841
(Credited to the Library of Virginia).

John Tyler was born in 1790 at Greenway Plantation, destined to follow the Tyler name into politics. Tyler's father, John Tyler Sr., was a supporter of the patriots during the revolution serving in the Virginia House of Delegates before later serving as a Speaker of the House.¹³ Growing up in an area of Virginia heavily impacted by the American Revolution, John Tyler inherited his family's distaste for the British. Tyler's education began at Greenway where he developed a strong interest in American politics before he attended the College of William and Mary to study law at the age of fourteen. In 1807, Tyler graduated and read law with his father who was then serving as Virginia's governor; Tyler was admitted to the bar in 1809.¹⁴

In 1813, John Tyler married Letitia Christian, daughter of Robert Christian of nearby New Kent County. Following their marriage, John and Letitia moved to Mons Sacer (now called Gunns) which John Tyler inherited from his father in 1811. Wanting to build a house for his wife, Tyler purchased 119 acres of land known as the "Royster Tract" in 1813 and began construction on Woodburn. Two years later in 1815, John Tyler and Letitia Christian Tyler sold Mons Sacer (and his childhood home of Greenway) and moved to Woodburn. The original farm is reported to have included the main house, kitchen, smokehouse, dairy, and some type of barn.¹⁵

Despite Tyler now having his own home, he spent most of his time away from the property focusing on his career in Washington D.C. Before his marriage to Letitia, Tyler had begun his public career first serving Charles City County as a

¹³ Leahy, *President Without a Party*, 14.

¹⁴ John Deal and Dictionary of Virginia Biography. "John Tyler (1790-1862)." *Encyclopedia Virginia*. Published December 22, 2021.
<https://encyclopediaofvirginia.org/entries/tyler-john-1790-1862/#heading1>

¹⁵ Virginia Department of Historic Resources. "Woodburn_1977_Research." MVP 3/1/77
VHLC Research, Woodburn, Charles City County.

representative in the House of Delegates, and later was elected to the U.S. Council of State by the General Assembly. By 1816, Tyler was elected to fill a vacant seat in the U.S. House of Representatives and won full terms in 1817 and 1819.¹⁶

By 1817, Tyler purchased additional acreage surrounding Woodburn, expanding the property to a total of 294 acres.¹⁷ While growing his political career and expanding Woodburn, Tyler was seldom at the property, spending half the year in Washington D.C. His wife, Letitia Christian Tyler lived on the property with their three children while Tyler was away. Unfortunately little is known about Letitia's time on the property. Letitia clearly did not run the plantation on her own as the 1820 census lists that twenty-four enslaved individuals lived at Woodburn.

In 1821, at the age of thirty-one, Tyler decided to retire from public life. In a letter, Tyler explained that he had a duty to his family to help with the education of his children. Returning to Woodburn, he continued his law practice while also focusing more on his properties. In the same year, Tyler repurchased and moved to Greenway, his nearby birthplace. While no longer residing at Woodburn, Tyler continued to add acreage to the farm. In 1828, the name Woodburn first appeared in the Charles City County land books and it is recorded as containing 310 acres.¹⁸

Following his retirement from politics, the country was debating the issue of slavery in the west which mainly centered around the Missouri Crisis. A letter from Tyler during this time mentions his rejection of calls for disunion, and how, despite not agreeing with the later Missouri Compromise, he did not believe in secession at this time. It is an interesting commentary, as thirty years later he would be

¹⁶ Deal and Dictionary of Virginia Biography. "John Tyler (1790-1862)."

¹⁷ VDHR, "Woodburn_1977_Research."

¹⁸ VDHR "Woodburn_1977_Research."

encouraging the division of the United States on the issue of slavery and siding with the Confederacy. Thus, during Tyler's residence at Woodburn, he was against the idea of disunion, whereas his subsequent home, Sherwood Forest, reflects the future of his succession politics and his unequivocal support of the Confederacy.¹⁹

From the 1830s to 1842, Woodburn changed ownership multiple times primarily between members of the Tyler and Christian family. In 1831, John Tyler sold Woodburn to his brother Wat H. Tyler, and later that same year, Wat Tyler sold the property to Oliver Ladd.²⁰ In 1832, Ladd sold Woodburn to Robert Walker Christian (John Tyler's father-in-law). Secondary sources from the 1970s state that in the 1830s, the office was built on the property to the west of the main house. While John Tyler was still in possession of Woodburn he likely did not build the office during this time as he was living at Greenway. While Wat H. Tyler or Oliver Ladd could have constructed the office during their ownership it was likely that Robert Christian had the office built during his residency.

In 1836, Robert Christian sold Woodburn to Henry L. Jones and Mary Tyler (daughter of John Tyler); Henry L. Jones sold Woodburn back to John Tyler in 1842. That same year, the Charles City County deed books record John Tyler granting Woodburn to his son John Tyler, Jr. as “Trustee for Mary T. Jones.” Mary was Tyler’s daughter and she was still living on the property. The Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission research files on Woodburn from 1977 provide two possible theories as to why Mary Tyler Jones' brother was named trustee when her husband was still alive. The first suggests that Henry L. Jones “may have had some financial difficulties,”

¹⁹ Leahy, *President Without a Party*, pp 57-62.

²⁰ VDHR, “Woodburn_1977_Research.”

while the second suggests that there may have been some type of “marital rift” between the couple. Whatever the cause, in 1842, John Tyler Jr. as trustee for Mary Tyler Jones, sold Woodburn to Lycurgus A. Lamb.²¹

Grantor	Grantee	Date	Deed Ref
Charles Wilson, Elizabeth, and Ann Royster	John Tyler	1813	Deed Book 5, p. 497
Dunbar and Rebecca Gordon	John Tyler	April 29, 1815	DB 5, p. 549
Richard Waddel	John Tyler	1815	DB 5, p. 601
John and Letitia Tyler	Robert Graves	April 20, 1826	DB 7, p. 125
John and Letitia Tyler	Wat H. Tyler	1831	DB 7, p. 537
Wat H. Tyler	Oliver Ladd	March 21, 1832	DB 8, p. 26
Oliver Ladd	Robert W. Christian	1832	DB 8, p. 169
Robert Walker Christian	Henry L. Jones	August 18, 1836	DB 8, p. 371
Henry L. Jones	John Tyler	1841	DB 9, p. 184
John and Letitia Tyler	John Tyler Jr. / Mary Jones	April 2, 1841	DB 9, p. 187
Mary Jones	Lycurgus A. Lamb	December 31, 1841	DB 9, p. 252
Lycurgus A. Lamb	James H. Christian	1846	DB 10, p. 54
GAP IN DEEDS			
James Christian and Mary	Samuel Munford	June 30, 1905	DB 18, p. 387
James Allen Christian and Munford	Louis C. Christian	April 19, 1907	DB 19, p. 251
GAP IN DEEDS			

Table 1.0. Chain of Title.

Aside from John Tyler Jr. being listed as Trustee for Woodburn during his sister’s time there, the same file offers another theory regarding the property changing ownership so frequently during these years. Based on the county deeds books a historian reviewing the transactions suggested that with the property largely staying

²¹ Ibid.

in the Tyler family and changing hands between family members “[i]t seems obvious that Woodburn was used as security to borrow money,” and it likely was used to help maintain Greenway.²² In 1846, Lycrugus A. Lamb sold Woodburn to James H. Christian who owned it until 1905. From James Christian onward, the property is listed as being owned by the Christian family until 1913.

During the American Civil War, several maps of Charles City County were sketched by the Union army. These maps included various properties in the area along with marking the location of landmarks, houses, and businesses. In July of 1862, while McClelland’s army was at Harrison’s Landing in Charles City County, a sketch map was made of the county. The roads marked on the map still remain today and following them Woodburn can be located with some ease. While the name of the property is not mentioned, a single black dot indicates the manor house with the name “Christians” above it and James H. Christian was the owner at the time (Figure 2.1).²³

A map produced by the Union Army of the Potomac in 1864 shows the Christian family still residing at Woodburn. Marked as “Christian,” the property is depicted with two buildings on the property next to one another (Figure 2.2). One being the manor house and the other an unknown structure. In an oral history done in 1971 by a member of the Christian family, it is stated that the kitchen was originally located on the right of the main house. Thus, this second structure marked next to the main house might be the kitchen in its original location.²⁴

²² Ibid.

²³ W. W. Blackford, *Sketch of McClelland's position, July 7th. 1862.* Map.
<https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3883c.cwh00099/?r=0.525,0.101,0.225,0.161,0>

²⁴ United States Army, Corps Of Topographical Engineers, J. F. Gedney, J. Schedler, and United States Army Of The Potomac, Engineer Dept. *Central Virginia*. [Washington, DC: Lith. by J.F. Gedney, 1864] Map.
<https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3880m.glva001/?sp=17&r=0.634,0.488,0.119,0.085,0>



Figure 2.1. Sketch of McClelland's [sic] position, July 7th, 1862;
Woodburn marked as "Christians" in the upper right corner
(Credit to Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division).

A third map of the area produced during the Civil War indicates the property, again marked as "Christian." This map shows three structures on the property (Figure 2.3). The one farthest south indicates the main house with one structure to its north and a third located to its west. These two structures marked north of the main house were clearly outbuildings and may have been barns.²⁵

In 1971, an Architectural Survey Form was completed and lists the then-current owner as John Christian but notes that Woodburn was sold to Dr. Joseph Netick and Dr. Ann Tyler Netick that same year. The survey provides the most

²⁵ Map of the James River Valley from the vicinity of Richmond to Chesapeake Bay: including parts of Henrico, Chesterfield, Charles City, and James City counties, Va. [186, 1862] Map. <https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3882j.cwh00100/?r=0.448,0.446,0.055,0.039,0>

detailed information about the property's condition and appearance before its restoration in the 1980s under the Neticks.²⁶

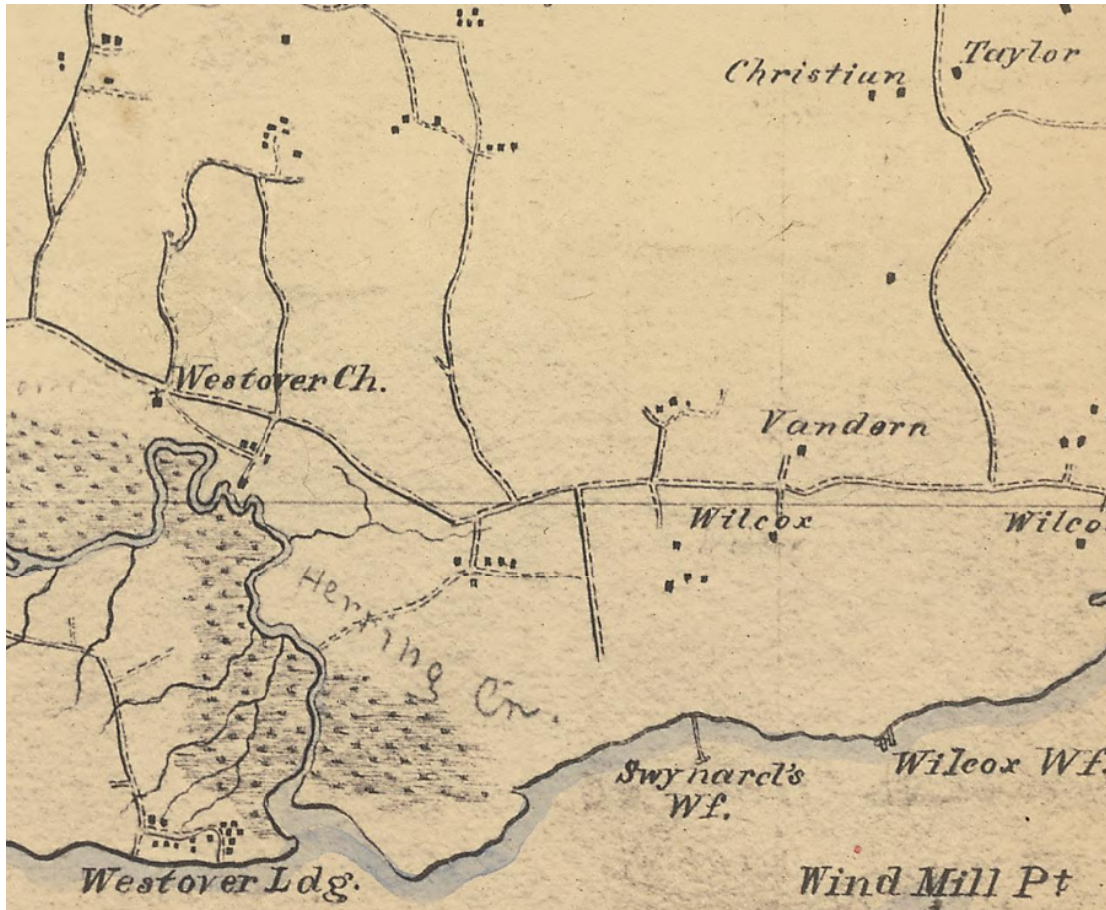


Figure 2.2. U.S. Army Corp of Topo/Army of Potomac - 1864 Central Virginia- Sheet 21, map 2, c. 1
Woodburn marked as “Christian” in the upper right corner with two structured marked on the property
(Credit to Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division).

The historical significance section of the survey form indicates that John Christian provided a short history of the property based on oral histories from the Christian family. According to the survey, following the death of Letitia Christian Tyler in 1842, “‘Woodburn’ came into the possession of present Mr. Christian’s (John

²⁶ Virginia Department of Historic Resources. “Woodburn_1971_Survey” Architectural Survey Form.

Christian) grandfather.”²⁷ This lines up with James H. Christian who purchased the property in 1846 from Lycurgus A. Lamb.

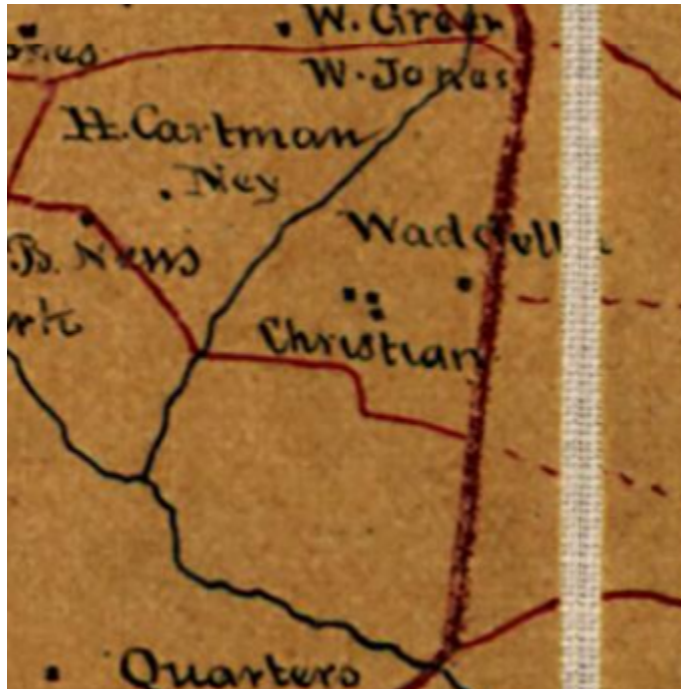


Figure 2.3. Map of the James River Valley from the vicinity of Richmond to the Chesapeake Bay : including parts of Henrico, Chesterfield, Charles City, and James City counties, Va. (Credit to Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division).

Reporting on the landscape of Woodburn, Mr. Christian stated that Letitia Tyler was not buried on the property as rumored and he believed she was buried at the family cemetery at Auburne. No additional information was given of other family members, either Tylers or Christians being buried at Woodburn. However, John reported that “he remember[ed] a slave cemetery to the right of ‘woodbourne’ as seen from the front porch. This is now a cornfield.” This area is currently (in 2023) used as a pasture for horses (Figure 2.4).

²⁷ Ibid.



Figure 2.4. Bird's eye view of Woodburn with possible cemetery location marked (Source: Google Maps).

The interior description of the main house provides a brief summary of its condition in 1971, along with sketches of the layout prior to its restoration. The first floor's "Ballroom" is described as "still a beautiful and well porportioned [sic] room if modern bathroom removed."²⁸ The stairs in the entry hall are reported as "very steep." The second-floor landing is a large open hall with "3 rooms off it." Plain paneling covered the first-floor entry hall and stairway. The wings on the first floor both had cupboards built into the side of fireplaces. The report suggests that the downstairs mantels may be later than when the house was built, "perhaps 1850." From the back door off of the "ballroom" was a glass breezeway joining the kitchen. The kitchen attached to the house is stated as being original to Woodburn and was

²⁸ Ibid.,

first located in the backyard “in a slightly different position,” in the yard on the east side of the main house.²⁹ In 1912, the kitchen was moved to the back of the main house for convenience (Figure 2.5).³⁰ No date is given for when the breezeway was added connecting the kitchen to the house, but the 1971 survey said it had been there before 1930. The only interior description for the kitchen states that it has a “bedroom above kitchen always for servants.”³¹

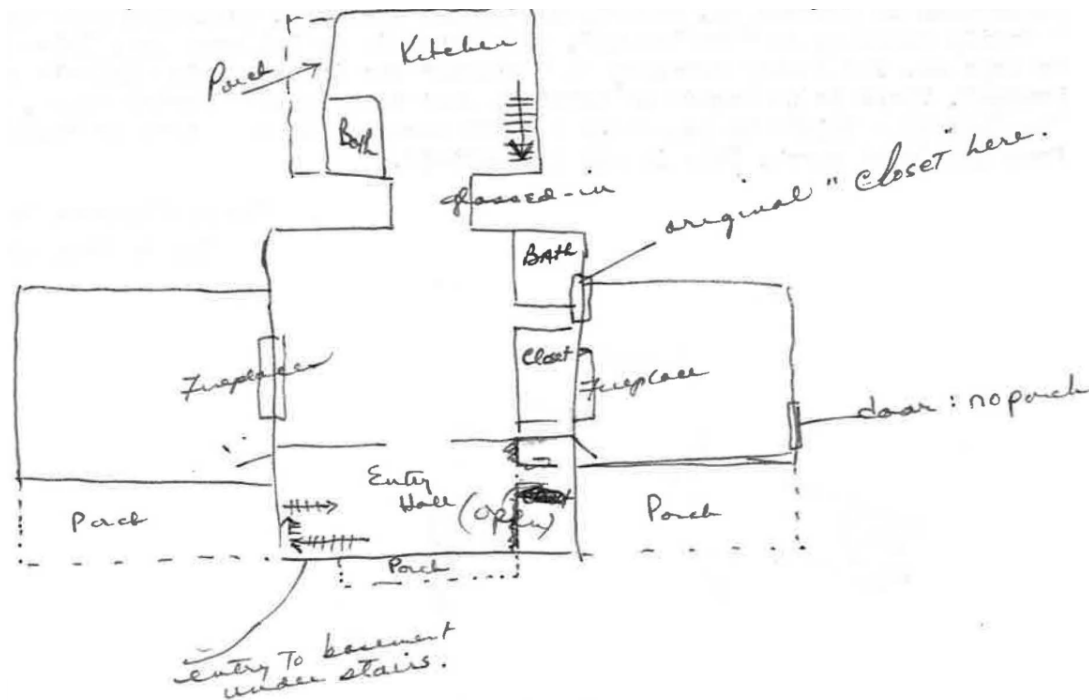


Figure 2.5. 1971 Architectural Survey Form - Sketch of the first floor
(Source: Virginia Department of Historic Resources).

Only one outbuilding is mentioned in the survey, the “schoolhouse” also called the “office.” The survey states that it was built by John Tyler and used as an office and after he left the property was used as a school. Despite the office being the only outbuilding mentioned, the other outbuildings are depicted in sketches of the

²⁹ Ibid.,

³⁰ Virginia Department of Historic Resources. “Woodburn_1972-1997_Correspondence.”

³¹ VDHR. “Woodburn_1971_Survey” Architectural Survey Form.

grounds that accompany the survey form. Other outbuildings include a dairy, smokehouse, "modern shed," and a barn, along with a storage house used as a "Harness House" (Figure 2.6).³²

Also included in the sketch are two "depression sites." The first "large depression," is located to the right of the main house and is listed as the site for the original kitchen. This depression can still be seen and may indicate the area of the English basement. The second depression is listed as "original Ice House," which the survey does not provide any additional information about.³³

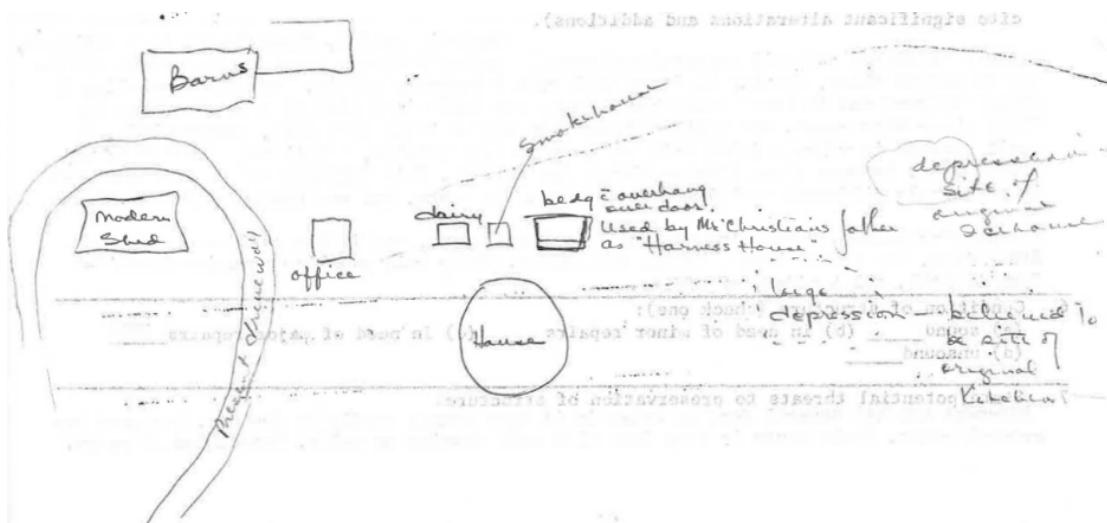


Figure 2.6. Sketch of property layout from 1971 Architectural Survey Form
(Source: Virginia Department of Historic Resources).

Lastly, the 1971 Architectural Survey Form included a statement on potential threats to Woodburn's preservation. It noted that the basement had several feet of water in it, adding that the basement had several rooms. Another issue was a continuation of the first as the whole house was described as "very damp with mold

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

showing on the walls.”³⁴ The final threat was that no one had lived in the house for the last ten years, leaving it to fall apart and rot from the inside. Despite the damage, that same year John Christian sold Woodburn to a recently married couple with ties to the property.

In 1970, Dr. Joseph Netick, a dermatologist, and Dr. Anne Tyler Netick, a professor in the Modern Languages department at the College of William and Mary, were married in Wren Chapel in Williamsburg, Virginia.³⁵ The following year the couple purchased Woodburn from John Christian. Anne Tyler Netick was the great-granddaughter of John Tyler and grew up in Charles City County at John Tyler’s last residence, Sherwood Forest. The Tyler and Christian families have continued to have a strong connection to the county with several family members still living in their family’s historic houses. When growing up as a child at Sherwood Forest, Anne remembered that maintaining an old house meant keeping up with small repairs. “The plaster would crack, the floors creaked and, in winter, water pipes were often frozen ... [b]ut the house was fun and had real personality.”³⁶ This philosophy carried over into her restoration of Woodburn.

A year after purchasing the property, the Neticks began to research the property with the goal of having it “recognized as a Virginia ‘landmark’ area.”³⁷ During the 1970s, Anne researched the property and contacted the Virginia Historic

³⁴ Lena Basha, “Penchant for Preservation,” *Daughters of the American Revolution*. Vol. 141, No. 4, July/ August 2007, Page 5.

<https://www.dar.org/national-society/american-spirit-magazine/penchant-preservation>

³⁵ Peggy Agouris, “Notice Regarding Anne Tyler Netick,” *William and Mary*, published October 27, 2021.

<https://www.wm.edu/news/announcements/2021/notice-regarding-anne-tyler-netick.php>

³⁶ Basha, “Penchant for Preservation.”

³⁷ Virginia Department of Historic Resources. “Woodburn_1972-1997_Correspondence,” pg 1.

Landmarks Commission for aid in getting the property registered and asking for help with its preservation. The Virginia Department of Historic Resources retains copies of the correspondence between Anne Netick, the VHLC, the National Register of Historic Places, and several architectural historians who aided Anne in researching Woodburn.

On April 20, 1977, the Neticks were notified that the Historic Landmarks Commission had placed Woodburn on the Virginia Landmarks Register and that it had been nominated to the National Register of Historic Places.³⁸ Seeking help with the restoration Anne applied to the Commission requesting \$41,000 for restoration with Woodburn. The following year the couple was informed that their grant application was unsuccessful but encouraged to re-apply in 1979 to which Anne Netick informed the Commission that she would. However, despite VDHR having the correspondence between the Neticks and several other departments between 1972 to 1997, there was no additional information regarding the 1979 application. In April 1979, the Neticks were informed that Woodburn had been entered into the National Register of Historic Places.³⁹

The National Register of Historic Places lists the property as being of architectural and political significance. Its statement of significance reads “[a]rchitecturally the house is notable as a provincial version of the so-called tripartite ‘Palladian’ dwelling, a house form popular in the South during the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth centuries. A striking feature of Woodburn is its austere handsome interior woodwork.” As for its connection with John Tyler, the form

³⁸ Ibid., 12.

³⁹ Ibid., 20.

provides a brief history of Tyler purchasing the land and having the structures built, and ends with a short chain of ownership that stops with the Christians in 1913.⁴⁰

Following its listing on the National Register, the Neticks continued to restore Woodburn for the next two and a half decades. By 1995, the Neticks had completed the major restoration work. While repairing Woodburn the Neticks did not live in the house and never moved into it once the restoration was complete. Instead, the Neticks lived next to the property in a house within walking distance.⁴¹

After its completion in the 1990s, the Neticks continued to make repairs around the property. In 2013, Historic Virginia Land Conservancy (HVLC) announced that Woodburn was the first property the Williamsburg Land Conservancy had protected in Charles City County. The HVLC added that the Neticks had placed an easement on the 107-acre property which includes Woodburn's building complex, pasture land, crop, and timberland.⁴²

Anne Tyler Netick was primarily the face of the restoration project appearing in interviews and researching her family's connection to the property. In 2015, Joe Netick passed away and five years later on December 2020, Dr. Anne Tyler Netick followed. She left several Arabian horses that lived on Woodburn and two cats, both of which still roam the property. Anne left the property to her nephew who is also a descendant of John Tyler.

⁴⁰ "Woodburn," National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Nomination from, 18-52. https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/VLR_to_transfer/PDFNoms/018-0052_Woodburn_1978_Final_Nomination.pdf

⁴¹ Basha, "Penchant for Preservation."

⁴² Historic Virginia Land Conservancy. "Protected Land Increased to 6,000 Acres." Accessed January 20, 2023. <https://historicvirginialandconservancy.org/williamsburg-land-conservancy-increases-protected-land-6000-acres/>

Chapter 3: Architectural Context and Description

Architectural Context of Region

Despite the survival of large brick mansions such as Westover, Shirley, and Berkeley Plantation in Charles City County as reminders of the area's colonial past, these structures represent only a small portion of houses that once stood across the Chesapeake region. These structures continue to survive largely due to materials used in their construction, and their connection to wealthy families who resided in them. In reality, these mansions represent only a small portion of settlers living in the area and only reflect the architecture and lifestyle of the upper class. Over the centuries, hundreds of post-in-ground, log, and frame structures connected to small farmers, lower-class families, and enslaved communities have disappeared.

When English settlers first arrived and began developing settlements in the Chesapeake region in the early seventeenth their structures were typically made using methods practiced in England. Built from local materials, early English settlers' houses in the region were post-in-ground frame structures made from local lumber. Basing their building techniques from those in England, these early structures' walls were made from wattle and daub, a method in which walls of a structure are made by weaving together thin wooden stakes called wattle and plastering over the wattle with a material called daub, made from a mixture of wet soil, clay, sand, and animal dung, along with straw and animal hair. While functional in England's colder climate, in Virginia the method slowly faded out of style as settlers developed architecture to better fit the warmer and humid climate of the Chesapeake. While wattle-and-daub methods were still practiced, by the latter half of the seventeenth-century wooden

siding was used to clad the exterior of structures. These houses remained a typical style of architecture into the eighteenth century.

During the latter half of the seventeenth century, tobacco production led to large plantations creating a wealthy class of settlers in the Maryland and Virginia colonies. Exporting their goods through the rivers connecting to the Chesapeake Bay, these wealthy families chose to distinguish themselves from their predecessors and other settlers through their buildings and possessions. While the previous generations had resided in wooden structures similar to working-class families, the elite families in Charles City County began to use their wealth to construct massive brick mansions.

As Virginia plantations developed along the James River, wealthy families began building their own permanent brick mansions along the river. While wooden structures had developed to fit with the economic and social conditions and climate of Virginia these brick houses were commissioned to follow the architectural styles found in Europe at the time. Bacon's Castle (ca. 1665) in Surry County is an early example of the Jacobean style popular in the late seventeenth century. By the early eighteenth century, the Georgian style reached the colonies inspiring families in Charles City County to build in the style creating Berkeley Plantation (ca. 1726) and Shirley Plantation (ca. 1723).

By the late eighteenth century, the Georgian style of architecture was fading and was replaced with more Classical inspired designs such as the Greek Revival and the Federal style. However, a style of architecture known as the Palladian, popularized by Thomas Jefferson in the second half of the eighteenth century developed a following in Virginia. Based on the works of Italian Renaissance

architect, Andrea Palladio, the Palladian style balances both classical elements of the Greek Revival style and the symmetrical design of the Georgian style, creating a unique style of houses built in Virginia into the early nineteenth century, including Woodburn.

John Tyler had a strong interest in following the philosophy of Thomas Jefferson, sharing similar politics, views on the state of Virginia, and slavery. Tyler's 'retirement' from politics in the 1820s mirrors Jefferson's own retirement from D.C. before returning to run for president. This same interest in copying the lifestyle of Jefferson can be seen in the architectural design of Woodburn's main house. The two-story Palladian style house with a front gable main block flanked by one-story wings directly reflects Jefferson's own taste in architecture with his encouragement of the Palladian style in American architecture (Figure 3.0).

One of the earliest examples of this style in Virginia is the Semple House (ca. 1770s) in Williamsburg (Figure 3.1). According to Calder Loth, an architectural historian from the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission who corresponded with Anne Netick during the restoration, Woodburn shared a similar 3 - part Palladian type of architecture to the Semple House. However, Loth refers to Semple House as a Palladian "prototype," and adds "[t]he form (Palladian) was advocated by Thomas Jefferson."⁴³ Authorship of Semple House design is debatable but its design is often ascribed to Thomas Jefferson who was a resident of Williamsburg at the time the house was built. The National Register for Historic Places Inventory - Nomination

⁴³ Virginia Department of Historic Resources. "Woodburn_1972-1997_Correspondence," pg 2.

Form for The Semple House notes that Jefferson's 1768 drawings for Monticello share parallels to the house.⁴⁴

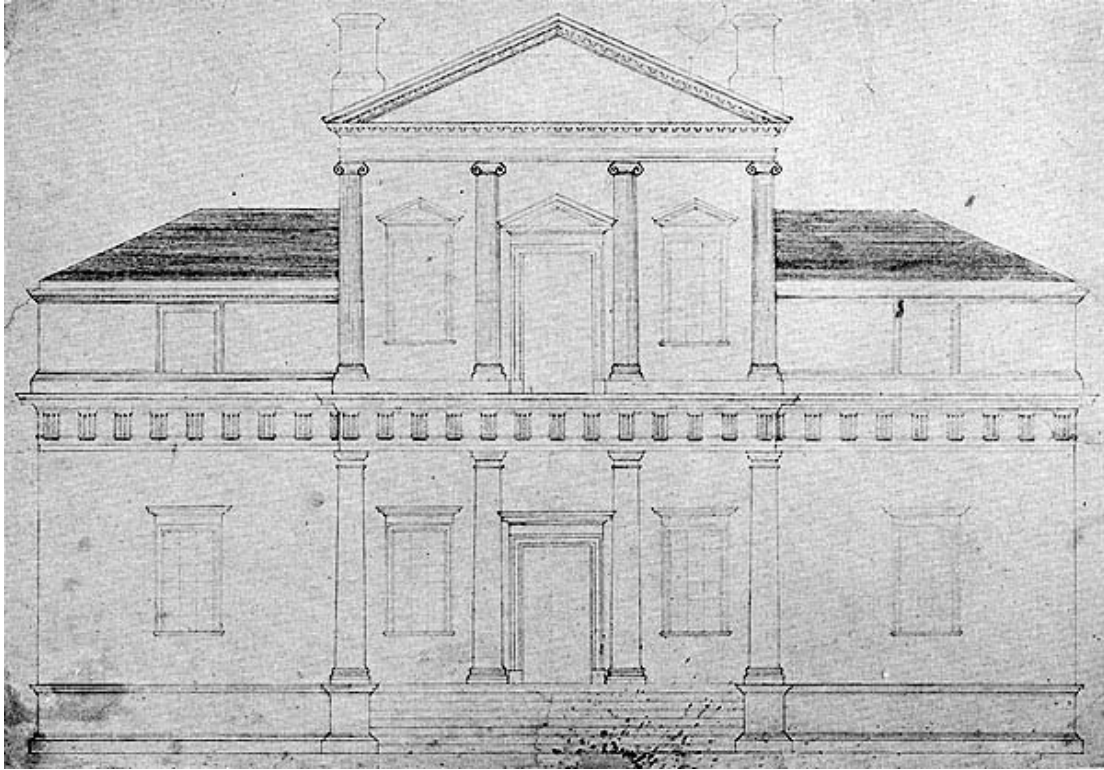


Figure 3.0. Thomas Jefferson's Monticello original drawing, 1771
(Source: Wikipedia).

By the 1810s, Palladian-style homes could be found across central Virginia, such as Tazwell Hall in Newport News (ca. 1760s), Battersea in Petersburg (ca. 1765), Brandon Plantation in Prince George County (ca. 1765) (Figure 3.2) or The Rowe (ca. 1770- 1780) (Figure 3.3) that was also in Charles City County before falling into disrepair. While all the examples of Palladian houses mentioned share the same general appearance, Woodburn and Semple more closely resemble one another. During Tyler's time at the College of William and Mary, he lived at The Semple

⁴⁴ "James Semple House," National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Nomination from, 37-33.
https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/137-0033_JamesSempleHouse_1974_Nomination_NHL.pdf

House between 1802 to 1807, as he was related to the Semple family.⁴⁵ Thus, he possibly based Woodburn's design off of The Semple House and with its possible connection to Jefferson as the designer Tyler was likely further trying to imitate his taste.



Figure 3.1. Semple House (ca. 1770s)
(Photo courtesy of DHR).

⁴⁵ “Semple, James, House,” National Historic Landmarks Program. Web. Archives.org
Accessed April 1, 2023.
<https://web.archive.org/web/20110606155036/http://tps.cr.nps.gov/nhl/detail.cfm?ResourceId=1038&ResourceType=Building>



Figure 3.2. Brandon Plantation
(Photo courtesy of DHR).



Figure 3.3. The Rowe
(Photo courtesy of DHR).

Main House (c. 1813)

Built between 1813 to 1815, Woodburn is a two-story, frame three-part palladian style house with a front gable roof and two exterior chimneys located between the main block and wings (Figure 3.4). Its main block is two stories and three bays while the wings are one story and one bay. Its exterior is clad in beaded weatherboard. The front gable roof of the main block and side gable roof of its wings are covered in asphalt shingles.



Figure 3.4. Front of Woodburn
(Photo by author, 2022).

The facade of the main block has a single six-over-six, double-hung sash window in the gable with a pair of louvered shutters. The second floor has three symmetrically placed six-over-six, double-hung sash windows. Each has simple wood framing and wood lintel and sill. Each window has matching louvered shutters in various conditions. The first-floor has a centered six-panel wooden door. The door is

framed with plain wood trim with simple fluted molding surrounding it with elements running up to the ceiling of the porch. Flanking the front door are two nine-over-nine, double-hung sash windows. Due to the porch pilasters, each window only has a single louvered shutter.

The front porch was added to the house sometime following the 1920s. The porch has a front gable roof and beaded weatherboard filling its pediment. Two pilasters connect the front porch to the house, and it is supported on two posts with chamfers; vertical railing connects the pilasters and posts. The porch has tongue-and-groove wooden flooring and is supported on brick piers. The porch is reached by four brick steps with vertical railing. The space between the brick piers and the English basement is filled with an open brick lattice. The structure has a full English basement laid in Flemish bond. Two small windows flank the porch in the English basement. The first-floor windows line up with these basement windows.

Flanking the main block are one-story wings that mirror each other. A single nine-over-nine, double-hung sash window is centered on each wing. A small covered porch that accesses the main block is tucked into the connection of the wings and main block; on each side; they have shed roofs, tongue-and-groove wooden flooring, and are supported on a brick pier. Brick lattice fills the space from the pier to the main block. A wooden rail and brick steps reach the porch running in front of the wings' window. The foundation of the wings is Flemish bond brick.

The east wing has one additional entrance on its eastern side with a small porch. A gabled porch roof with matching asphalt shingles is supported on two wooden columns with chamfers; the porch floor is wooden tongue-and-groove.

Similar to the small porches on the front of the house coming off the main block, the porch is supported on brick piers with brick lattice filling the space. Wooden stair rails and brick steps reach the house.

Basement

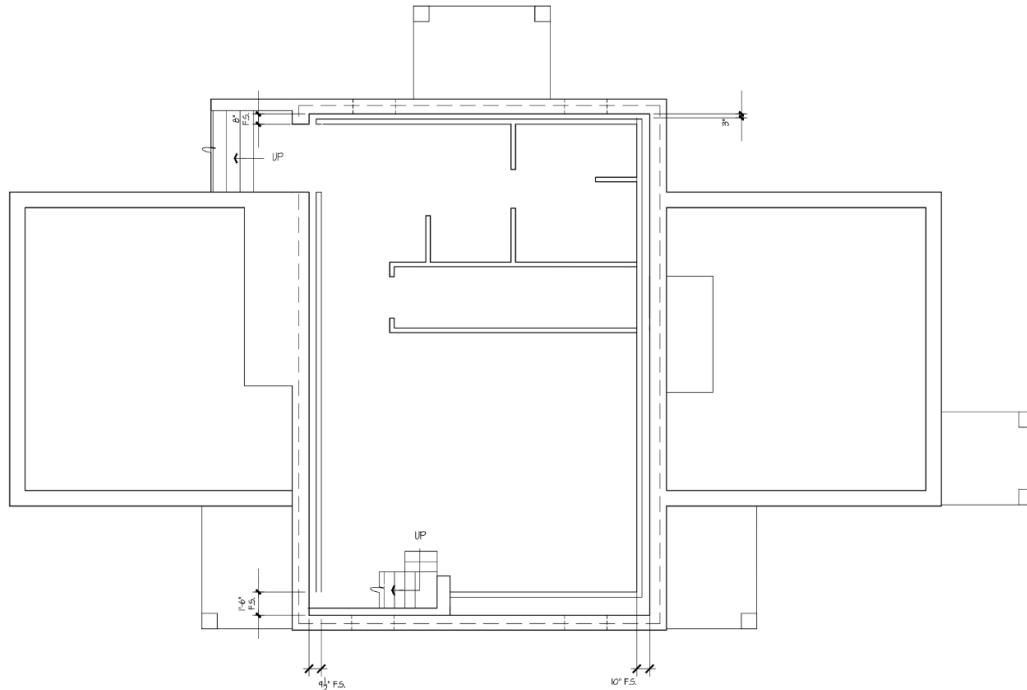


Figure 3.5. Floor plan of Woodburn basement
(Source: Tyler Family Collection).

Located only under the main block of the house, the English basement does not extend under the wings (Figure 3.5). Two windows pierce the south and north walls. The space has two entrances, one from the exterior of the house and the second from the interior. The exterior entrance is located on the back of the house where the west wing and main block meet (Figure 3.6). This entrance originally was an open set of steps running down the side of the West wing to a doorway that provided entrance into the basement. This open staircase and landing were likely not originally covered.

Today, a small structure covers the stairs and landing. A modified door on the West side of the covering allows access to the stairs.

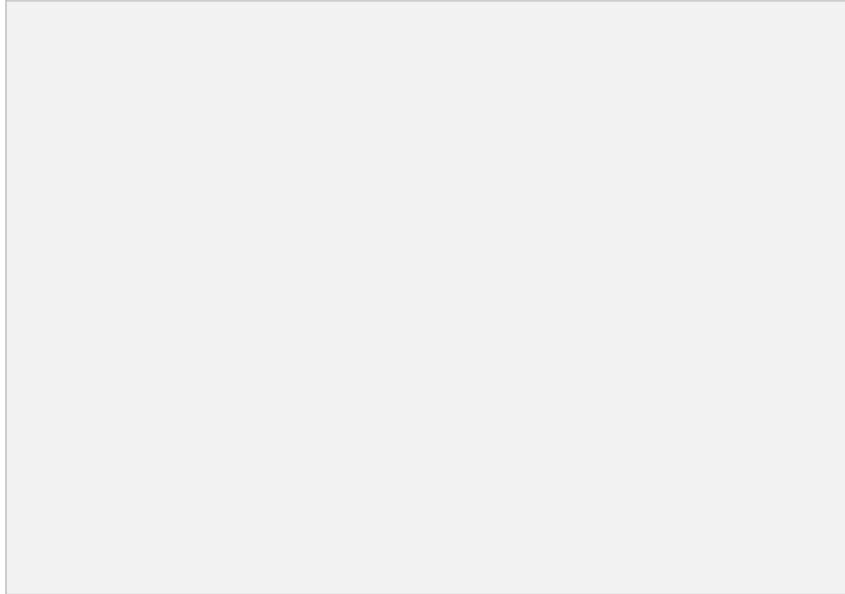


Figure 3.6. Exterior entrance to English basement
(Photo by author, 2022).

The interior entrance to the basement is located under the staircase on the first floor. The first-floor staircase crosses the west window allowing natural light into the basement staircase. The stairs winds down into the basement and crosses a small basement window (Figure 3.7). The walls of this stairwell are covered in unfinished drywall and unfinished trim around the window sills. These unfinished details provide a glimpse of the renovation work started in the basement.

The ceiling of the basement is unfinished and provides a view into the system supporting the first floor. Elements from the 1970s restoration can be seen as steel I-beams running across the ceiling supporting the wooden floor joists (Figure 3.8). The tongue and groove flooring for the first floor can be seen in between the joists

and has been gauged and undercut (Figure 3.9). Several hand-hewn beams still support areas of the ceiling and are likely original to the construction of the house in 1813 (Figure 3.10).



Figure 3.7. (left) Interior entrance to basement. The apron of the first floor window is visible along the top. The small basement window can be seen along the stairs leading into the basement. (right) Interior entrance to basement, view from basement (Photo by author, 2022).

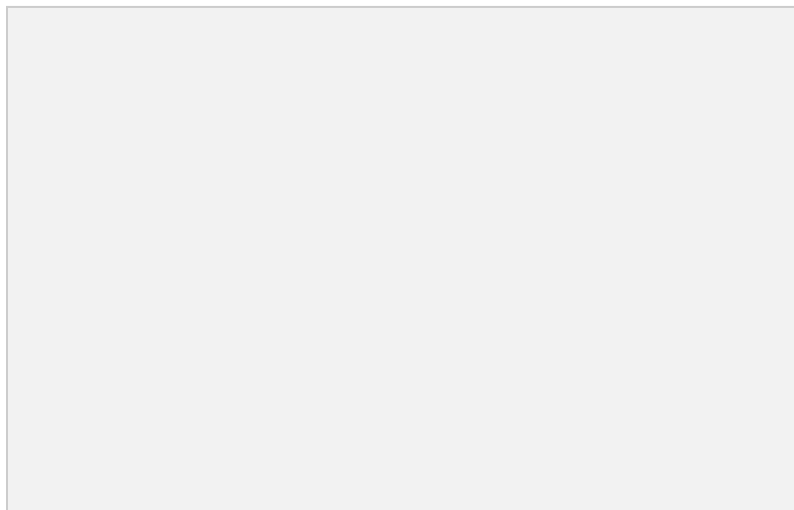


Figure 3.8. Image of one of the I-beams added in the 1970s (Photo by author, 2022).



Figure 3.9. Tongue and groove flooring visible between joists
(Photo by author, 2022).

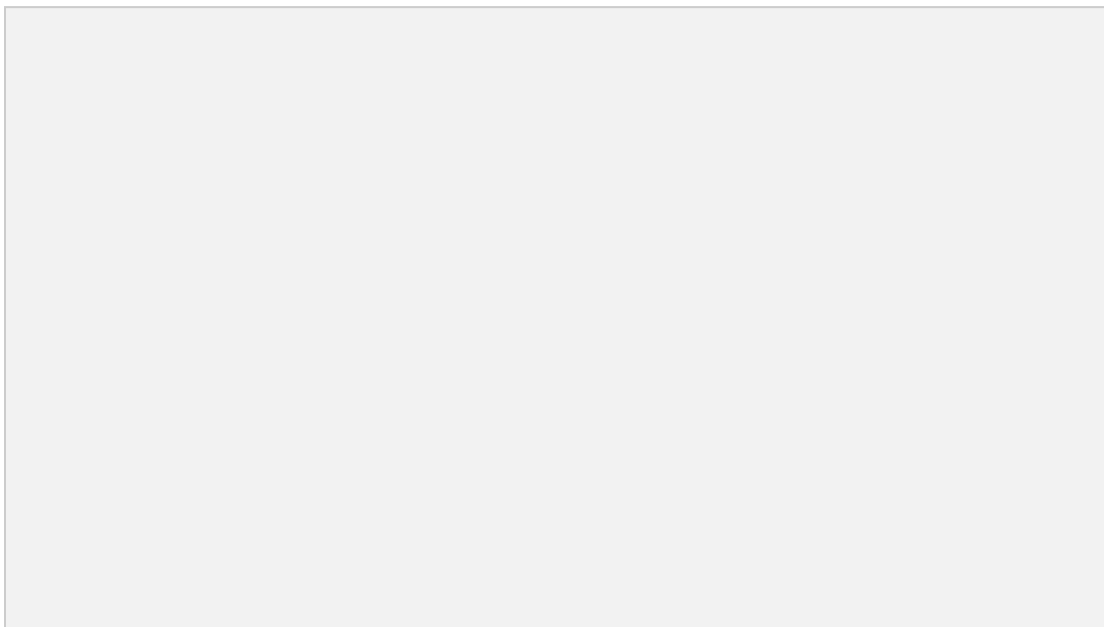


Figure 3.10. Hand-hewn beam on back basement wall
(Photo by author, 2022).

First Floor

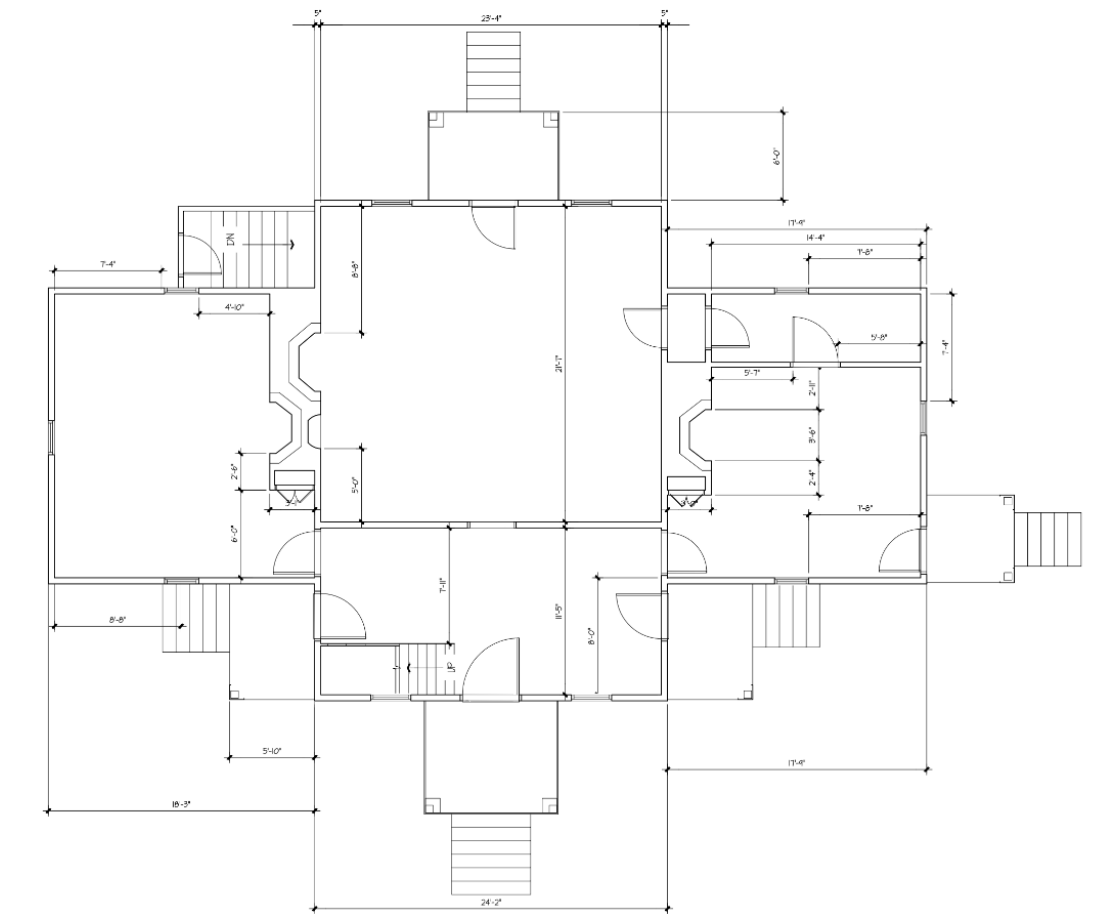


Figure 3.11. Floor plan of First Floor
(Source: Tyler Family Collection).

The first floor of the main block of Woodburn has two rooms, the entry hall and the ballroom (Figure 3.11). The entry hall measures 23'-4" by 11'-5" and includes the staircase leading to the second floor and the entrance to the staircase that leads to the basement. The main entrance is located on the South wall with the staircase to its left. A single door directly opposite the main entrance on the north side of the entry hall leads into the ballroom. There are two doors on both the East and West walls of the entry hall. The two northmost doors open to the wings, while the south doors open to the small side porches on the front of the wings. These small

porches at one point ran across the full width of the wings. The porch doors also allowed east to west ventilation. Virginia houses were often designed so that the front door and back door were symmetrically placed to allow for a cross breeze during warmer seasons.

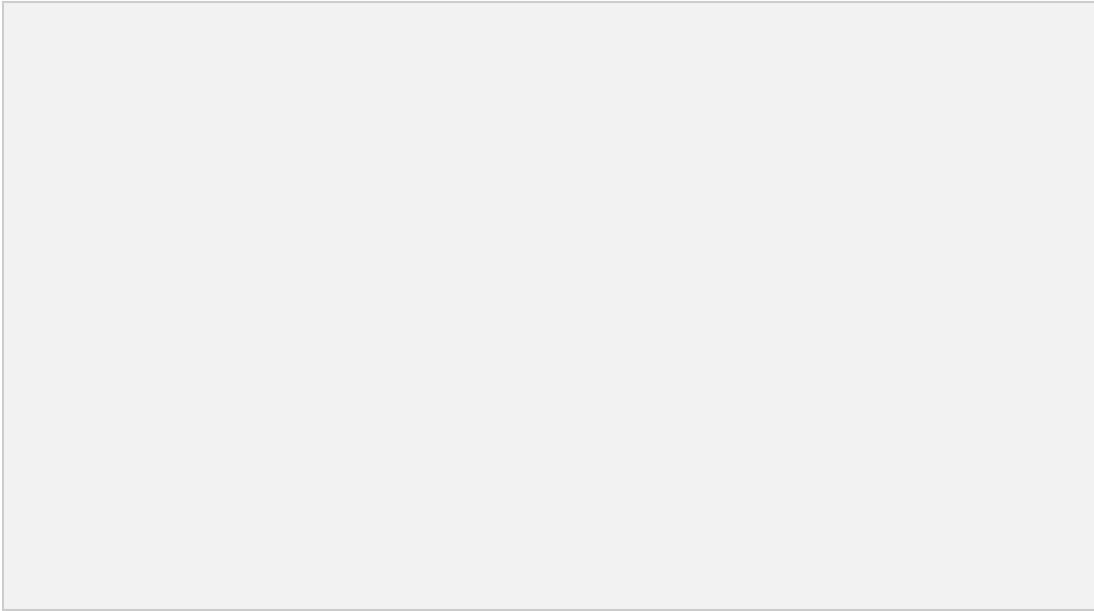


Figure 3.12. Woodburn with porches running across its wings, ca. 1980s
(Source: Tyler Family Collection).

Two windows flank the front door with the west partially covered by the staircase. Several eighteenth- and early nineteenth-centuries houses had staircases that crossed in front of windows, a Charles City County example being Shirley Plantation (ca. 1723). The purpose of this design was to allow natural light down into stairs located under the first-floor staircase and provide visibility for those walking down into the English basement. Also with the floorplan, it would be difficult to put the stairs elsewhere in the entry hall. A door accesses the basement stairs (Figure 3.13).



Figure 3.13. Image of the entry hall, facing southwest. On the left is the main door. The open door on the far right leads into the west wing (study), and the closed door on its left leads to the small porch that remains (Photo by the author, 2022).

The casing around the windows runs into the chair railing, and the crown molding abuts the similar window header. Under the chair railing is a simple one board wainscoting with no panel designs, under which is wide baseboard molding. Crown molding, chair railing, and baseboard molding design are continuous on the first floor (Figure 3.14). The flooring throughout the house is made of pine (possibly Virginia Pine), tongue and groove with cut nails, likely all original to the construction.

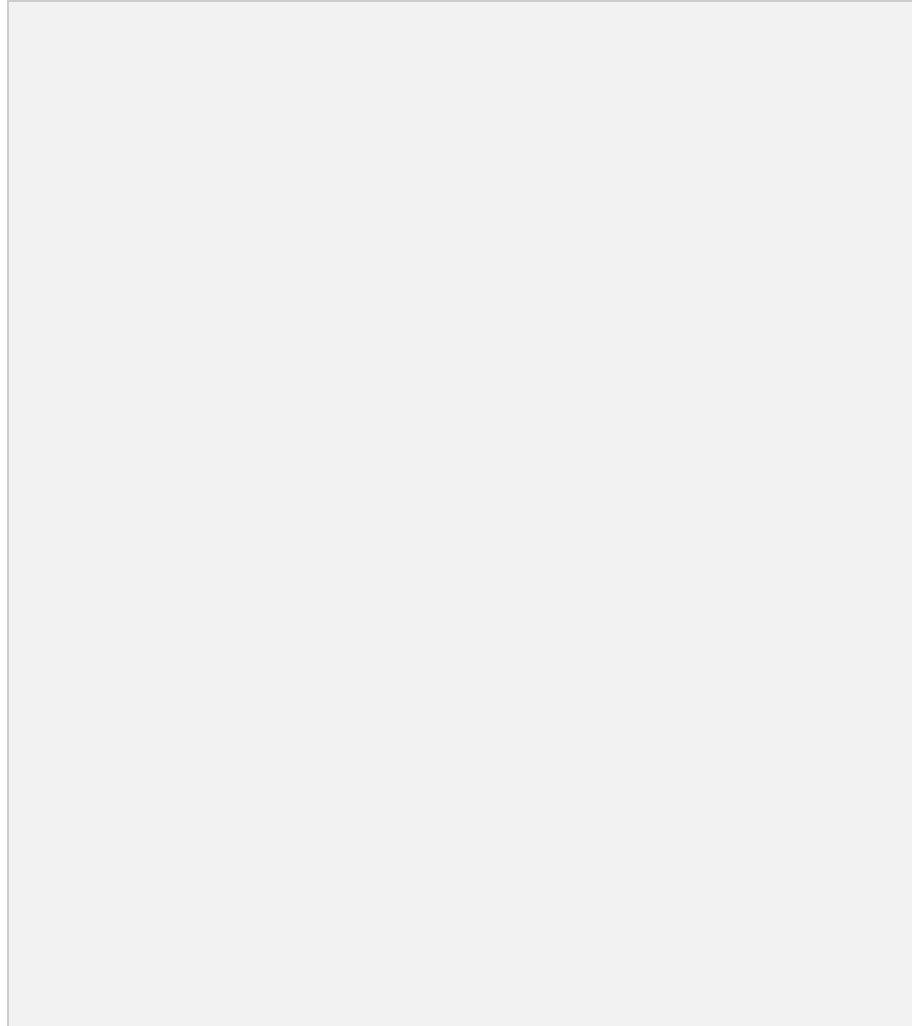


Figure 3.14. Woodburn entry hall.
(Photo by author, 2022).

The ballroom (sometimes listed as the living room) is the largest room in the house measuring 23'-4" by 21'-7". Out of all the rooms it has undergone the most changes over the centuries with the space being divided up to create smaller rooms and closets. During the Netick's renovation of the house it was returned to its original design, these previous changes will be discussed later. The room has three doorways, one on the south wall connecting to the entry hall, one on the east wall connecting to a closet space linking to the east wing, and a back door on the north wall. The back door is flanked by nine-over-nine, double-hung sash windows with the crown

molding overlapping the window's header. Baseboard molding and chair rail wrap around the room with simple wooden wainscoting (Figure 3.15).

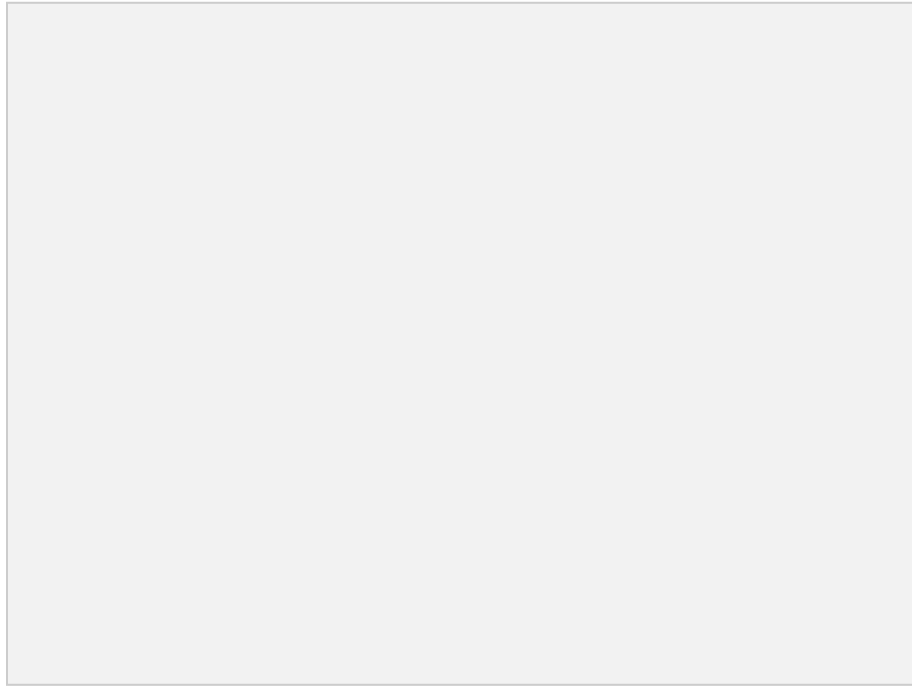


Figure 3.15. Ballroom/living room
(Photo by author, 2022).

The west wall has an original fireplace in its center with Federal period molding details. Two wooden Tuscan columns flank the fireplace opening supporting a simple entablature. Wooden reeding above the frieze survives in several sections. A wooden carved design with four rings is centered in the frieze (Figure 3.16). Built-in shelves are located in the wall to the left of the fireplace. On the right side of the fireplace mantel is a wooden panel that covers the space used for accessing pipes.



Figure 3.16. Ballroom fireplace mantel
(Photo by author, 2022).

Second Floor

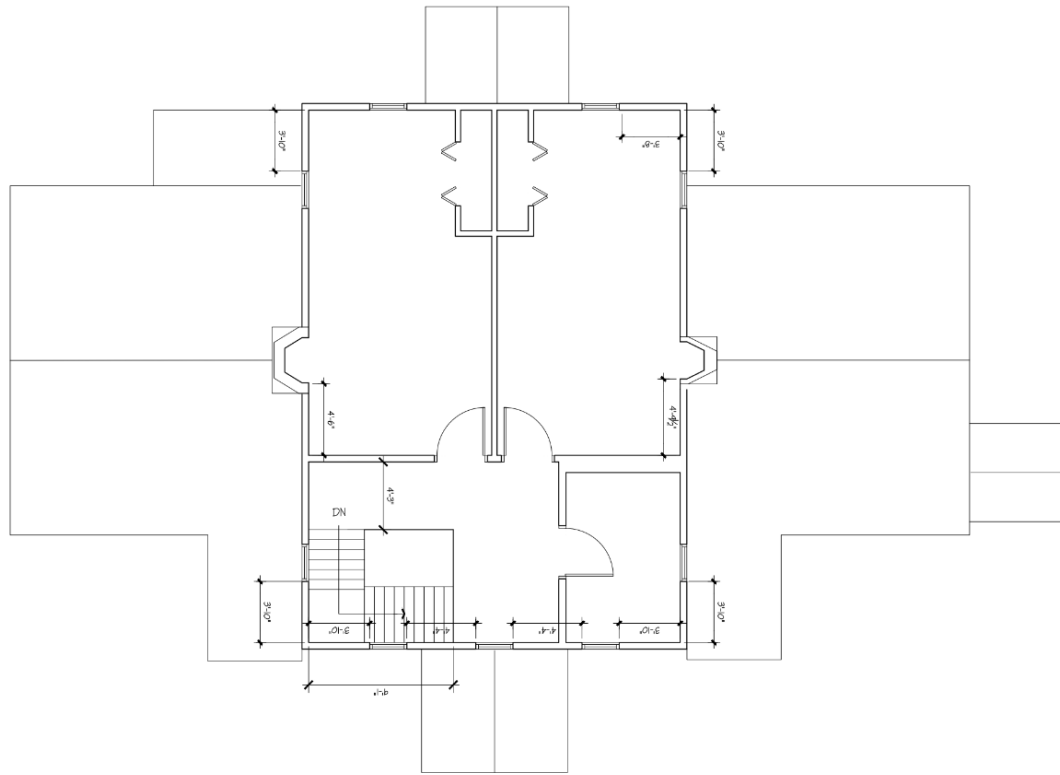


Figure 3.17. Floor plan of second floor
(Source: Tyler Family Collection).

Three rooms make up the second floor of the main block: two bedrooms and a single full bath. The staircase leads to a landing, the northern wall has two doors located side-by-side that open into the bedrooms, and the east wall has a single door to the bathroom (Figure 3.17). Two windows on the south wall illuminate the landing. A third window is located on the western wall above the steps. The window molding connects to the chair railing wrapping around the space (Figure 3.18).

The bedrooms mirror each other with both having a fireplace on the exterior wall, a window on the same wall, a single window at the back of the room on the north wall, and a closet jutting out of the wall. The west bedroom has a small hatch in

the ceiling that opens to a set of folding stairs that connect to the attic. Like in the second-floor wall, the window casing connects with the chair railing (Figure 3.19).

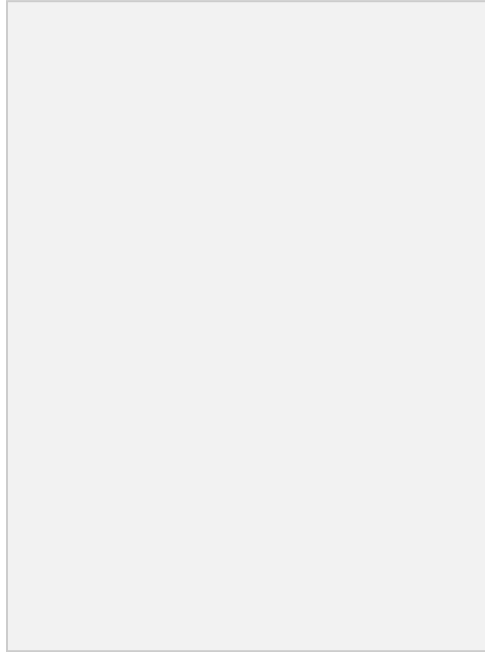


Figure 3.18. Second-floor landing
(Photo by author, 2022).



Figure 3.19. Left: West bedroom (Photo by author, 2022).

A full bathroom is located on the east end of the second-floor landing. This room was originally a small bedroom that was turned into a bathroom. The room has two windows, one on the east wall and one on the south wall. The room is lined with chair rail molding under which is beadboard wainscoting. In the southeast corner is a sink (Figure 3.20), with a walk-in shower placed in the northeast corner with a toilet to its left.

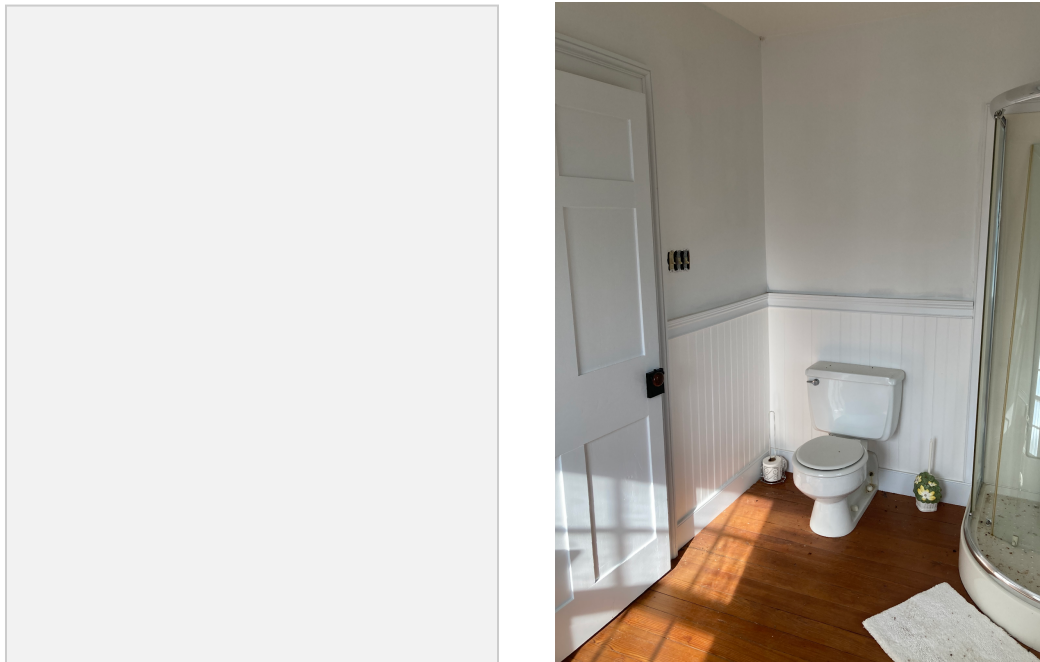


Figure 3.20. Bathroom
(Photo by author, 2022).

Wings

Two wings flank the main block of the house, the east wing containing the dining room and the west wing the parlor. These wings mirror one another in size but have over the centuries been modified in some ways. The parlor in the east wing is also referred to as the office or study. Like the other rooms on the first floor, the parlor has crown molding, chair rail, baseboard molding, and simple flat wainscoting with the window casing ending at the chair railing. Two windows pierce the west wall

with one window on the north and south walls and the fireplace on the interior wall on its east. This fireplace mantel has a simpler Federal style design compared to the one in the ballroom. Like the ballroom mantel, a pair of Tuscan columns flank the fireplace and support the plain entablature and frieze (Figure 3.21).



Figure 3.21. Parlor fireplace mantel
(Photo by author, 2022).

On the right side of the fireplace are two built-in cabinets (Figure 3.22). These cabinets are located next to the entrance to the entry hall and are mirrored in the east wing. The cabinets in both wings have modern brass hinges with Phillip head screws. The locks are not original to the house and appear to be from the late nineteenth to early twentieth century. Various colors of paint can be found inside the cabinets and on their doors, this will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5 relating possible methods of identifying the room's original color.



Figure 3.22. (left) Parlor cabinet doors closed; (right) Parlor cabinet doors open. White and blue paint can be seen along the edge (Photo by author, 2022).

The east wing contains the dining room and has likely always been used in this fashion. In line with to the door leading into the entry hall, the dining room has a door on its east wall that leads to a covered porch and steps. When the house and outbuildings were originally built in 1813 this door led to the kitchen which was located to the east of the house. According to the owner, the east wing has always been used as the dining room indicating that this side door was the ‘servant’ entrance from the kitchen (Figures 3.23 and 3.24).



Figure 3.23. Dining room with servant door (Photo by author, 2022).



Figure 3.24. Exterior of the servant door outside the dining room (Photo by the author, 2022).

The west and east wings are mirrored in design with two windows on the east wall, a single window on the north and south wall, and the interior fireplace on the west wall. Like all the rooms on the first floor, the dining room has crown molding, chair railing, and baseboard molding, however, unlike the parlor, it does not have wooden wainscoting. The room is divided by a wall that creates a small pantry-like space (Figure 3.25). This wall was built in the 1970s and will be discussed in Chapter 4 with the Netick renovation.

Unlike the mantels in the ballroom and parlor, the dining room fireplace mantel has no columns and instead has a pair of pilasters supporting a simple entablature. The frieze has an oval plaque in its center (Figure 3.26). The two built-in stacked cabinets in the dining room are located on the left of the fireplace by the door leading into the entry hall.

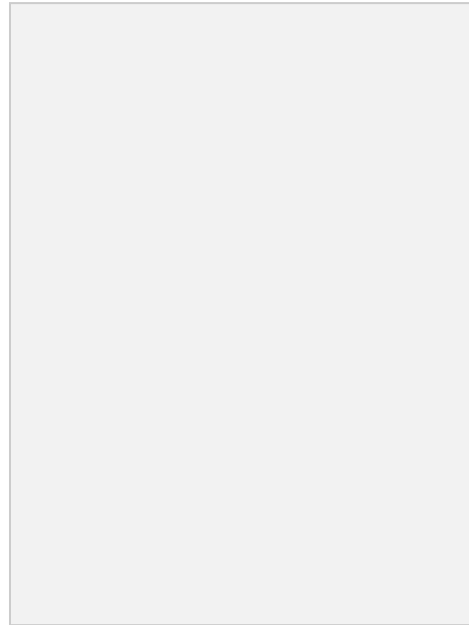


Figure 3.25. (left) View of the dining room from the hall doorway; (right) view from the other side of the dividing wall, and see the chair railing and crown molding stop at the wall (Photo by the author, 2022).

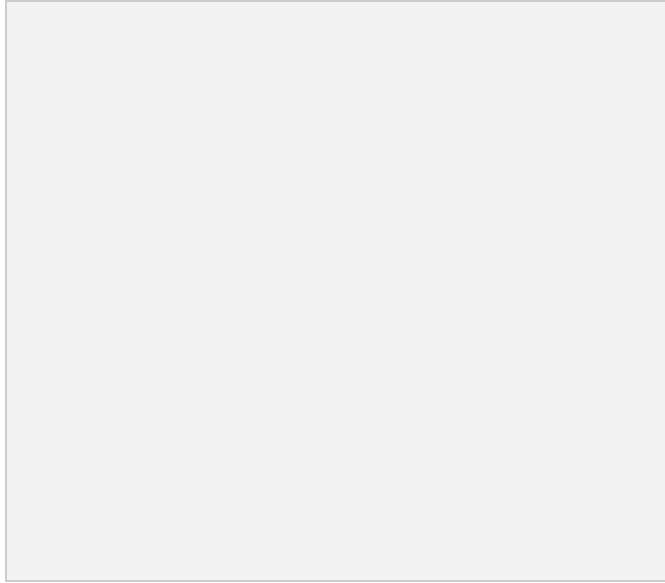


Figure 3.26. Dining room fireplace mantel
(Photo by author, 2022).

Attic

The west upstairs bedroom has pulldown stairs in the ceiling that accesses the attic space. Like the basement, the attic provides a detailed glimpse into the changes to the house over the centuries. In 1977, sketches were made of the gabled roof during renovations when the attic floor was covered with wooden boards (Figure 3.27).

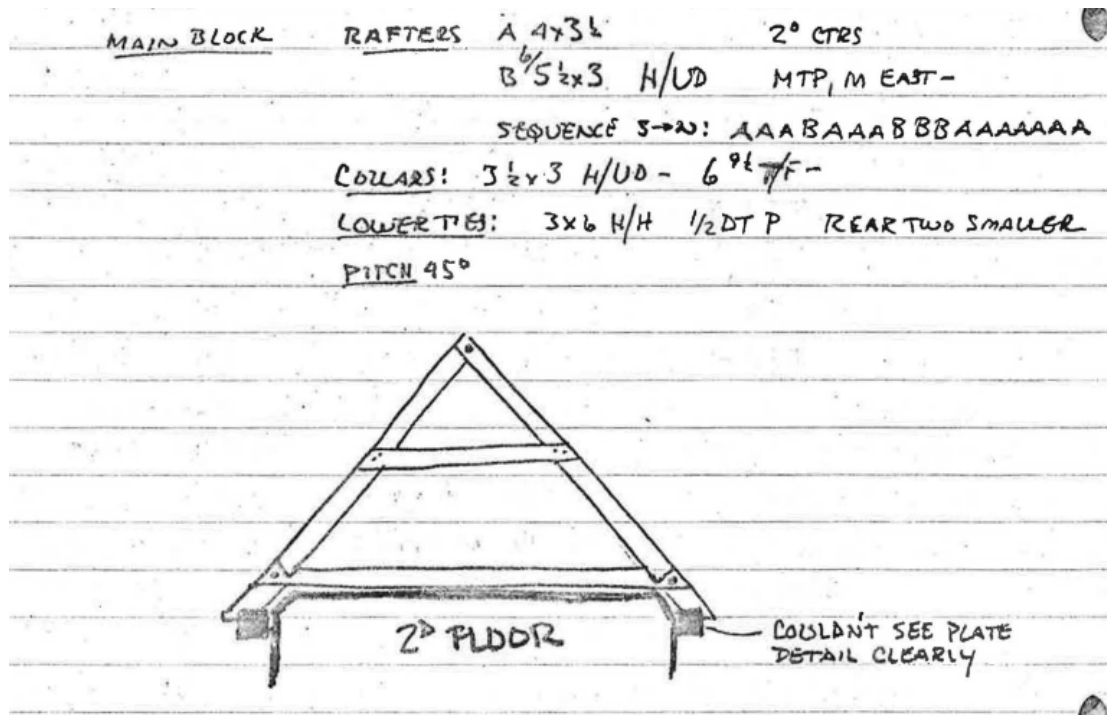


Figure 3.27. Sketch of Attic from 1977 survey
(Source: Virginia Department of Historic Resources).

From the attic, the back of the beaded weatherboard can be identified as having pit sawn marks (Figure 3.28). The attic has hand-hewn, pit sawn, and circular saw marked elements, but pit and sash saw marks are the most common, followed by circular saw marks on elements replaced during the renovation and fewer hand-hewn marks (Figure 3.29).

The rafters and collar beams are mainly pit sawn with a few circular saw marks on the south wall likely part of 1970s restoration (Figure 3.30). The roofing decking is wide sash sawn lumber with visible cut nails. On top of the decking are sheets of plywood with wire nails for the asphalt roofing currently on the house (Figure 3.31).

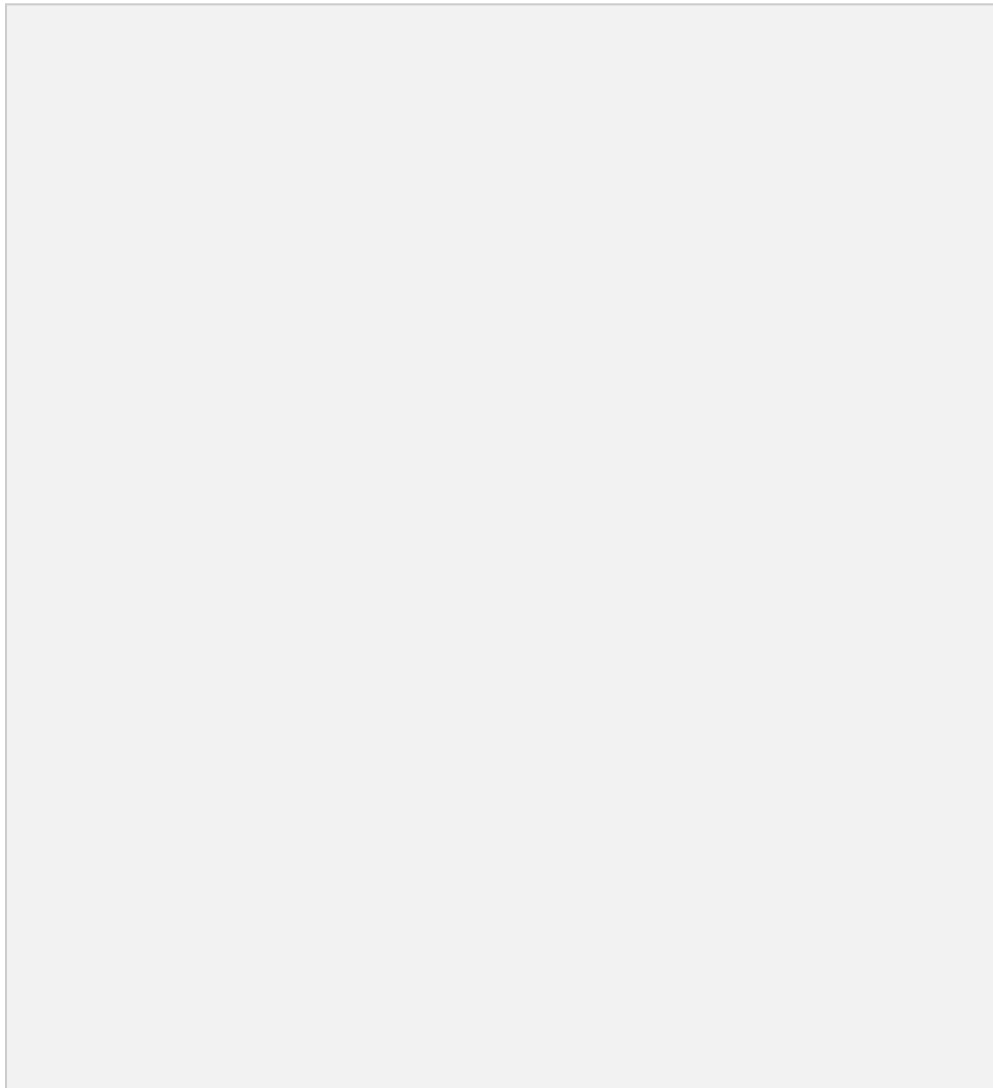


Figure 3.28. Attic Wall
(Photo by author, 2022).

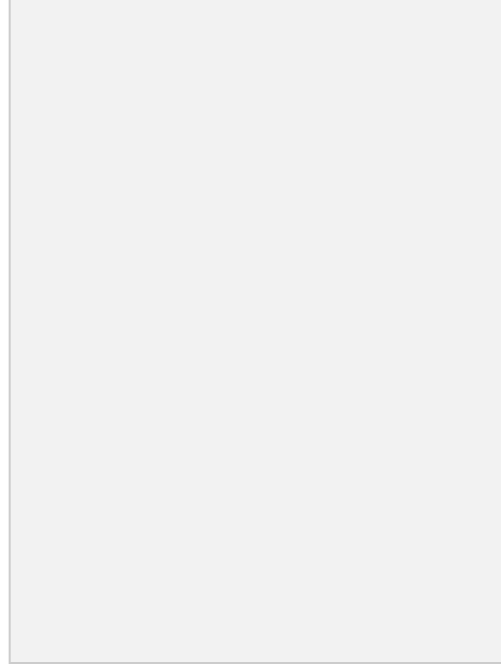


Figure 3.29. (left) Hand-hewn rafter in attic, (right) Pit or sash sawn rafter
(Photos by author, 2022).

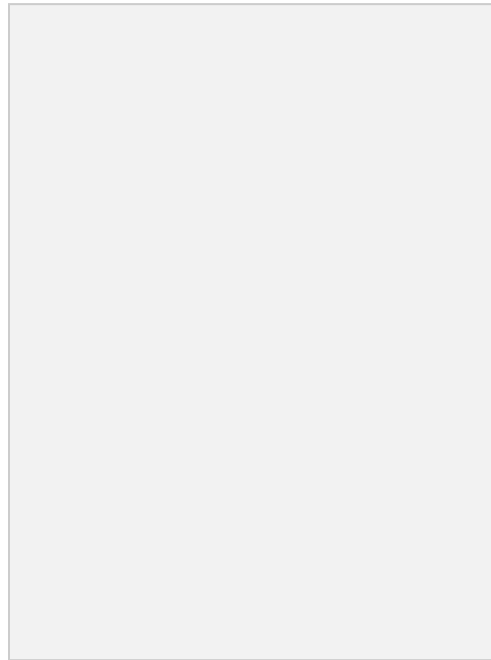


Figure 3.30. Circular sawn lumber from the 1970s restoration
(Photo by author, 2022).



Figure 3.31. Cut and wire nails in attic decking
(Photo by author, 2022).

The south wall of the attic has a single six-over-six, double-hung sash window looking out over the front of the property; the northern wall has no openings (Figure 3.32). There is no insulation on the attic walls, only the beaded weatherboard on the outside. Originally the attic could have been used by the enslaved persons who worked inside the house. The original entrance to the attic was likely closed off and replaced with the pulldown stairs in the west bedroom during the 1970s restoration.

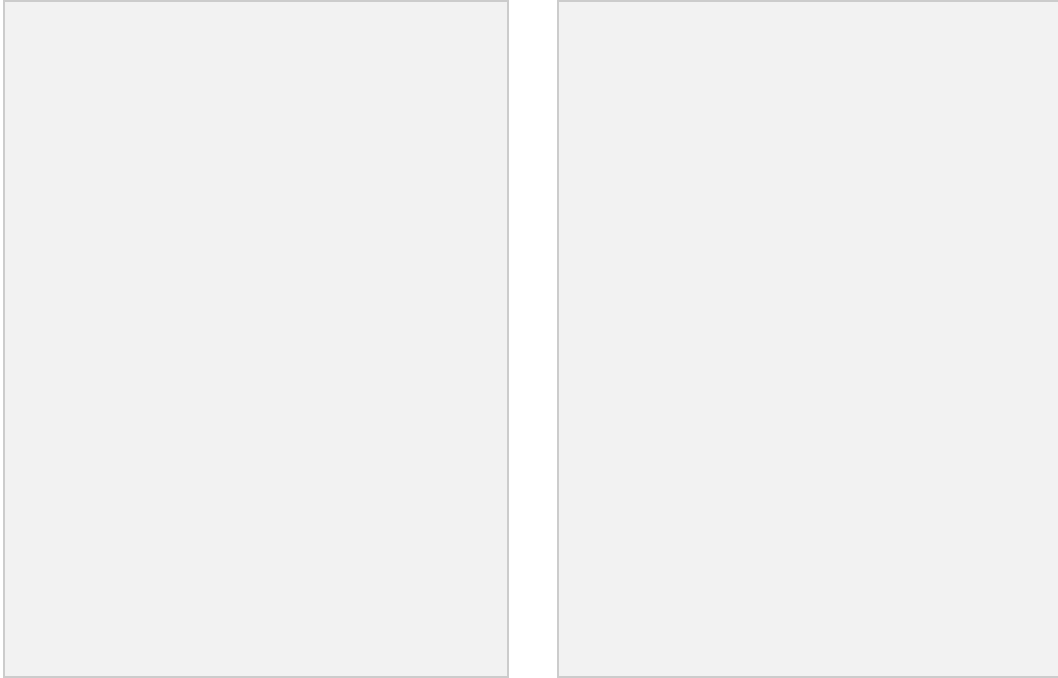


Figure 3.32. (left) South wall, window looking out to the front, (right) North wall
(Photos by author, 2022).

Outbuildings

The property has six outbuildings including an office, dairy, smokehouse, storehouse, barn, and kitchen (along with a modern well house) (Figure 3.33). According to the National Register of Historic Places Inventory form from 1977, there were only “two early outbuildings” that were surviving, the office which they suggest was possibly built ca. 1830, and an original smokehouse.⁴⁶ The dairy is also mentioned as being original to the property but was listed as being collapsed. Several notes from 1977, when the Netick family was starting the restoration list the main house, dairy, and smokehouse as being original to 1813 -1815. This same document provides a sketch of the center of Woodburn and illustrates the mid-nineteenth century storehouse and barns (at the time two separate structures that were

⁴⁶ “Woodburn,” National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Nomination form, 18-52.

subsequently combined into one); the west date to the twentieth century, and the east “pole barn” to the nineteenth century. While the date of the office construction is not written on the map, the document also states it was possibly built ca. 1830.

Unfortunately, the kitchen (labeled as OLD ELL) does not have a date listed (Figure 3.34). Several structures from the 1977 map were removed during the restoration, including a twentieth-century “TRACTOR SHED” and a twentieth-century dairy.⁴⁷

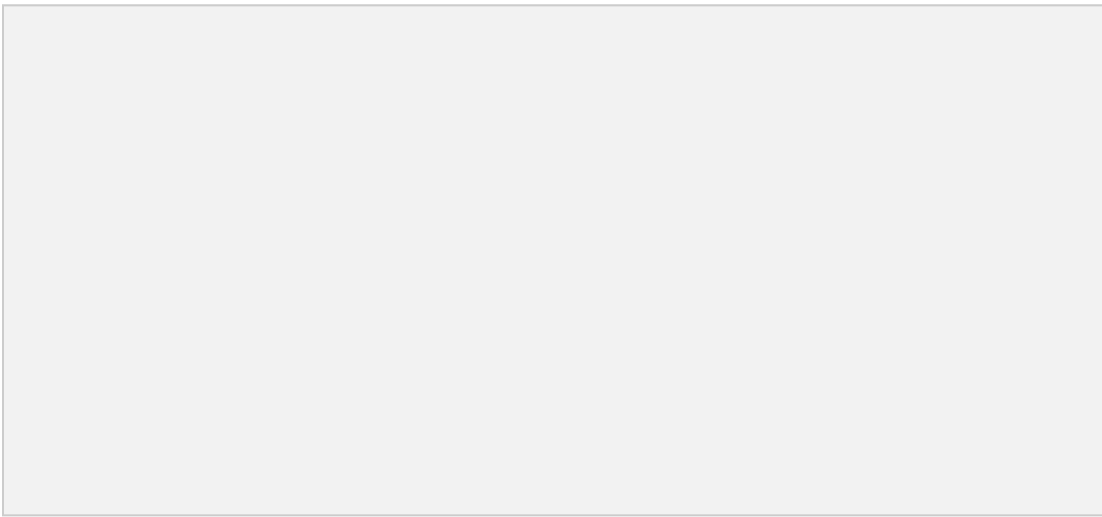


Figure 3.33. Back of Woodburn looking southwest, visible are the Smokehouse closest on the right, and behind the tree is the Dairy. Just to the left of the Smokehouse is the Store House. In between the Smokehouse and Store House in the back is the Office. The small tin roof structure is the water pump.
Photo by author, 2023.

⁴⁷ Virginia Department of Historic Resources, “Woodburn_1977_Survey,” Woodburn/Woodbourne (18-52), RT. 618, Charles City Co.

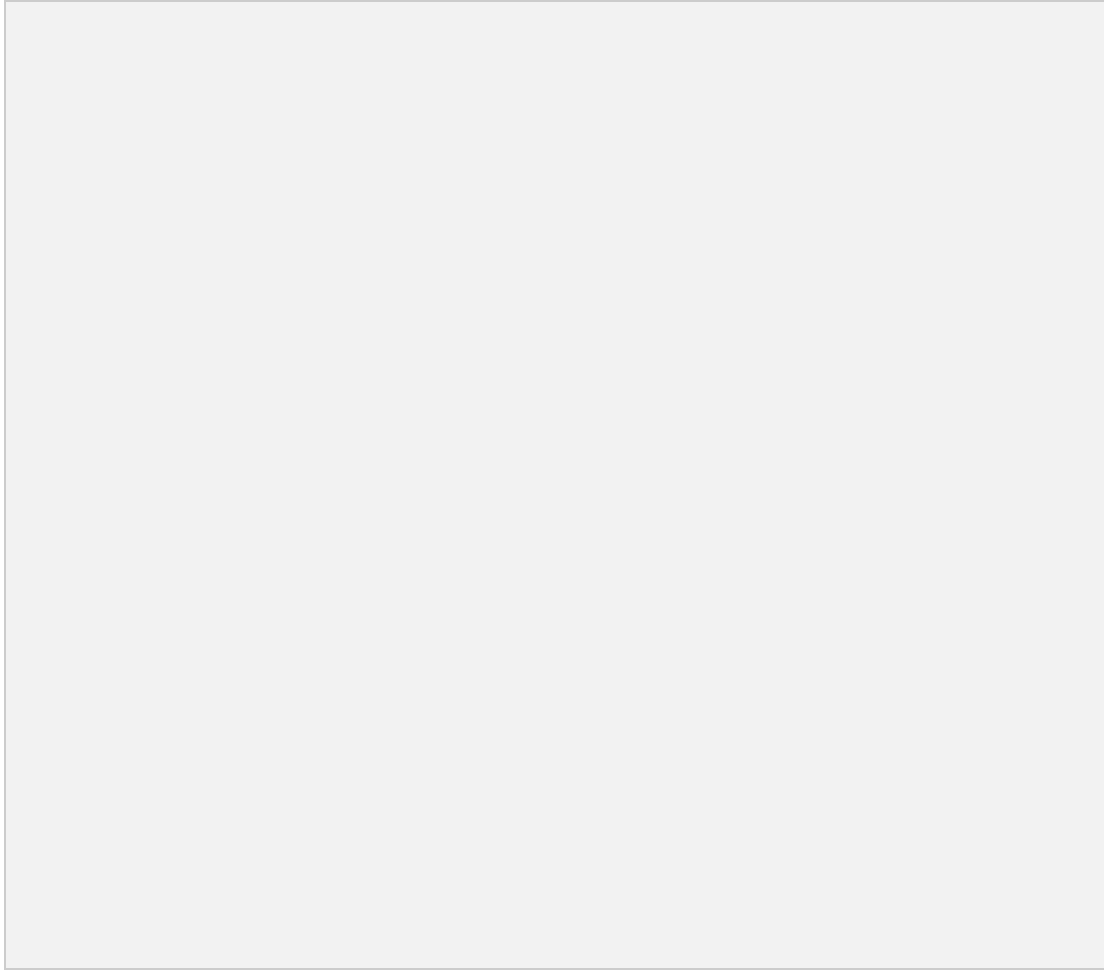


Figure 3.34. Layout of Buildings, 1977
(Source: Virginia Department of Historic Resources).

Dairy

According to the 1977 survey, the dairy was originally built between 1813-1815 during the construction of the main house.⁴⁸ Unfortunately, by the time the Neticks purchased the property, the dairy was in very poor condition (largely collapsed) and had to be rebuilt (Figure 3.35). Currently, the dairy looks much like it would have originally appeared in 1813 when Tyler lived on the property. Measuring 12' 9" by 12' 9" it is clad in beaded weatherboard, had a pyramidal roof, and cyma

⁴⁸ Ibid.,

reversa vent grilles on the front (Figure 3.36). A brick foundation in a Flemish bond, supports the structure likely original to its construction.



Figure 3.35. Dairy in the 1970s
(Source: Tyler Family Collection).

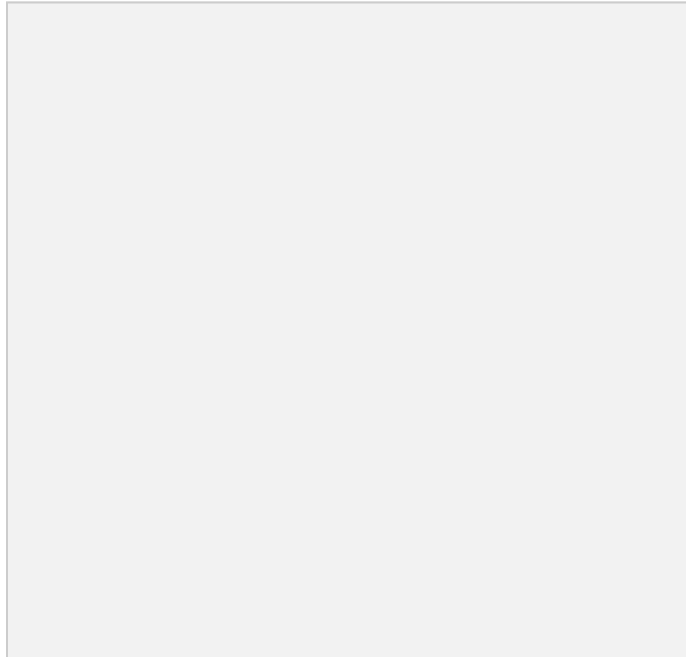


Figure 3.36. Dairy in 2023
(Photo by the author, 2023).

While looking similar to how the dairy would have looked in 1815, the structure has modern elements that indicate it is a reconstruction. All of the framing members have circular saw marks (Figure 3.37). The asphalt shingles on the roof are the same as on the main house with wire nails and were likely also added around the mid- to late 2000s. The cyma reversa vent grilles on the front are made from plywood. The door to the dairy is also made from circular sawn wood with modern hinges and screws (Figure 3.38).

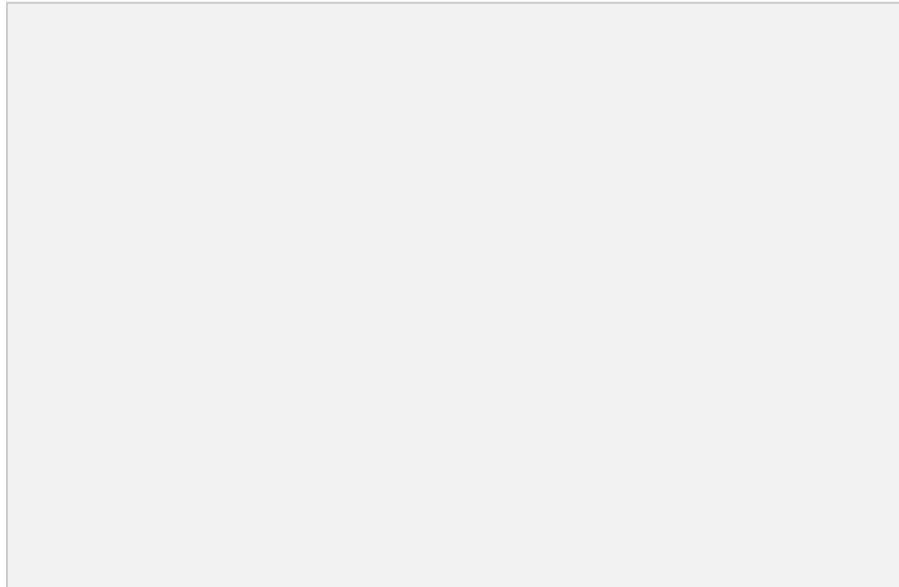


Figure 3.37. Interior of Dairy
(Photo by author, 2022)



Figure 3.38. Dairy Door
(Photo by author, 2022).

Smokehouse

Similar to the dairy, the smokehouse is also reportedly originally constructed in 1813 and is believed to look much like it would when John Tyler lived on the property (Figure 3.39).⁴⁹ While the surveys do not list it as being in a collapsed condition like the dairy, it appears that in the 1970s the Neticks also did repairs to the structure. Measuring 12' 1" by 12' it is clad in beaded weatherboard with modern asphalt shingles on its pyramid roof.

Inside the smokehouse, a majority of framing members are circular sawn, however, it seems that all the braces are hand-hewn. It is difficult to know if the

⁴⁹ Virginia Department of Historic Resources, "Woodburn_1977_Survey."

braces are original to the structure or if they were recycled from another source (Figure 3.40). The weatherboarding also has visible circular saw marks, indicating that the siding is not original to the early nineteenth century (Figure 3.41).



Figure 3.39. Smokehouse
(Photo by the author, 2022).

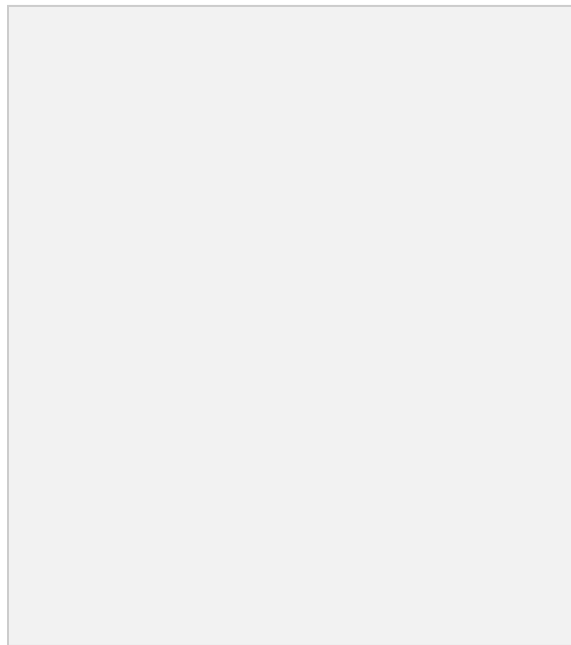


Figure 3.40. Smokehouse interior. Handhewn braces with circular sawn studs.
(Photo by author, 2022).

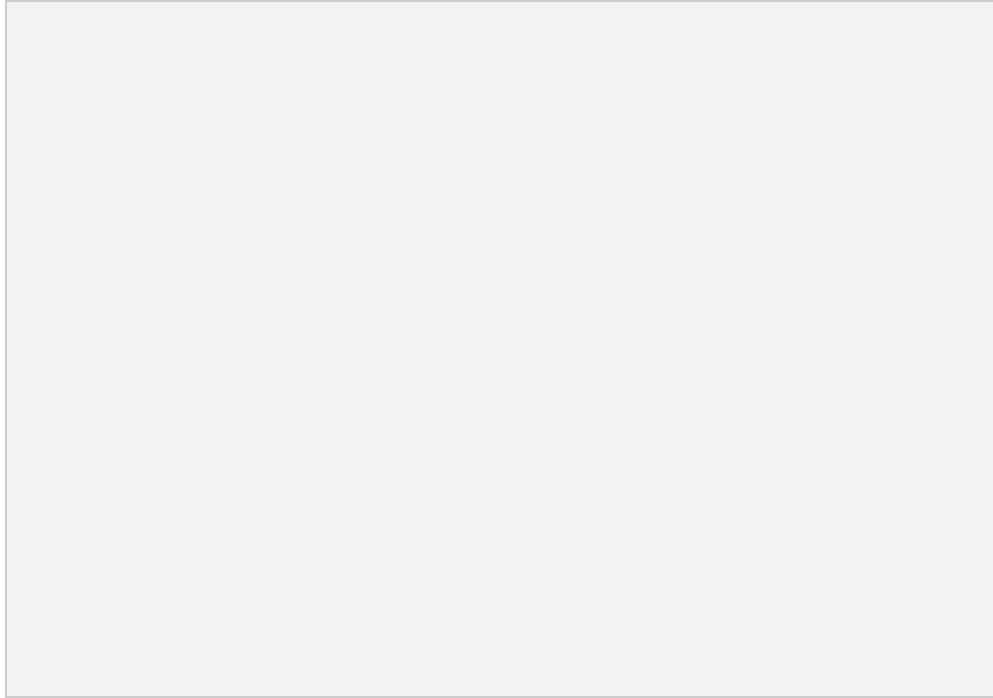


Figure 3.41. Back of Smokehouse
(Photo by author, 2022).

When examining the brick foundation of the smokehouse it appears it was fully rebuilt using Portland cement mortar (Figure 3.42). The dairy, despite being labeled as collapsed in the 1970s, appears to have its original brick foundation (Figure 3.43). The smokehouse has concrete blocks (CMU) as a foundation with Flemish bond brick above. These same bricks match similar ones found in the main house that were likely used during the restoration. This suggests that both the smokehouse and dairy are fully reconstructed, with the dairy still having its original foundation.

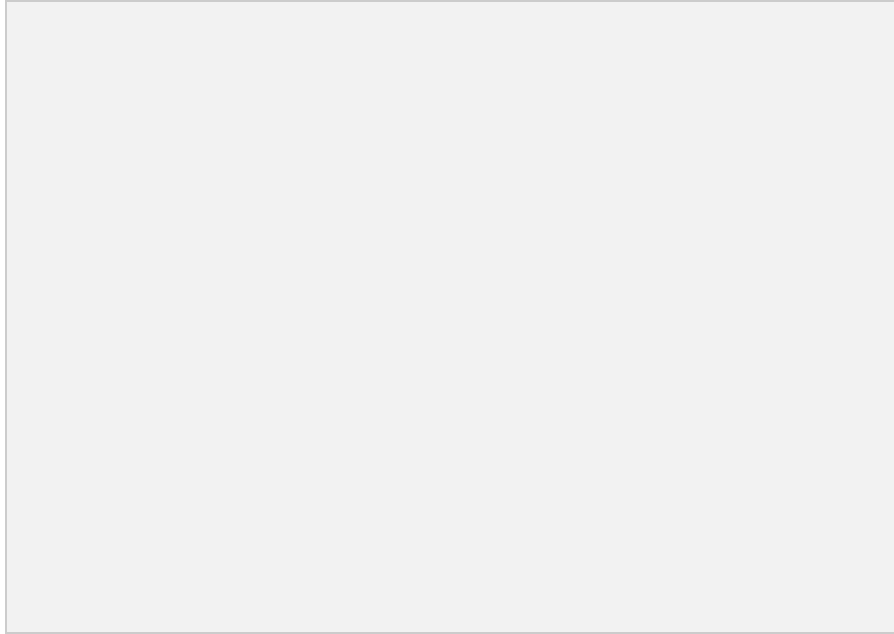


Figure 3.42. Foundation of Smokehouse
(Photo by author, 2023).



Figure 3.43. Dairy foundation
(Photo by author, 2022).

Storehouse

Located directly behind the main house, the storehouse measures 12' 3" by 12' 4" and is clad in weatherboard on a brick foundation with a molded brick cap and a gable roof with asphalt shingles (Figure 3.44). A single wooden door with modern hinges provides access to the structure; the storehouse has two six-over-six double-hung sash windows, one on its west side and one on its east side. According to the 1977 survey, the structure is listed as being from the mid-nineteenth century and is likely timber framed.⁵⁰ The interior walls are finished with plaster (Figure 3.45). Circular saw marks are visible on the exterior including several of the weatherboard with wire-cut nail heads. On the rear of the structure, a single concrete slab abuts the brick foundation. It appears that the slab was put there to buttress the wall (Figure 3.46).



Figure 3.44. Storehouse
(Photo by the author, 2022).

⁵⁰ Virginia Department of Historic Resources, "Woodburn_1977_Survey."

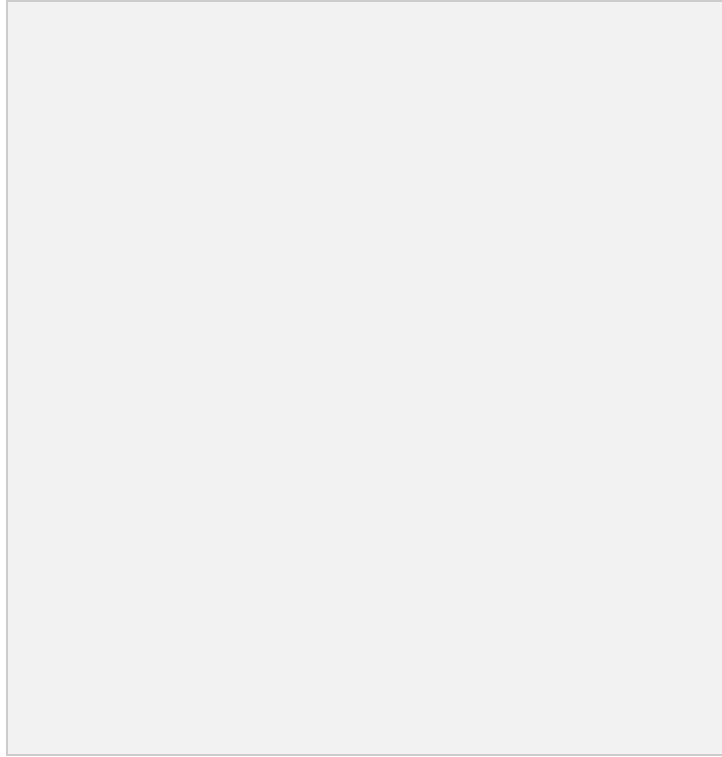


Figure 3.45. Storehouse interior
(Photo by author, 2022).



Figure 3.46. Back of storehouse with a concrete slab in the brick foundation
(Photo by author, 2022).

Office

Called the office by the family, the survey and National Register form suggest that the structure was built in the 1830s.⁵¹ The office was likely built during Wat H. Tyler's time as owner in 1831 to 1832 or during Robert W. Christian's time from 1832 to 1842. The structure measures 16' 4" by 16' 4" and has asphalt shingles covering the side gable roof while the outside of the building is clad with beaded weatherboard and sits on a brick foundation with a molded brick cap. The front of the office (facing south) has a single four-paneled door with a pair of six-over-six, double-hung sash windows flanking it (Figure 3.47).

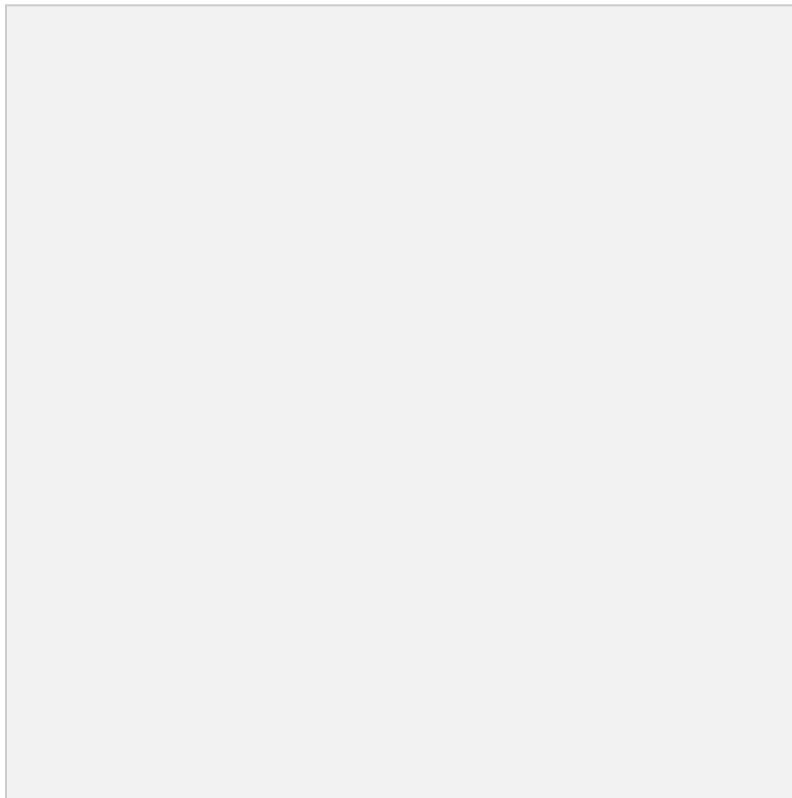


Figure 3.47. Front of Office
(Picture by author, 2022).

⁵¹ Virginia Department of Historic Resources. "Woodburn_1977_Survey"

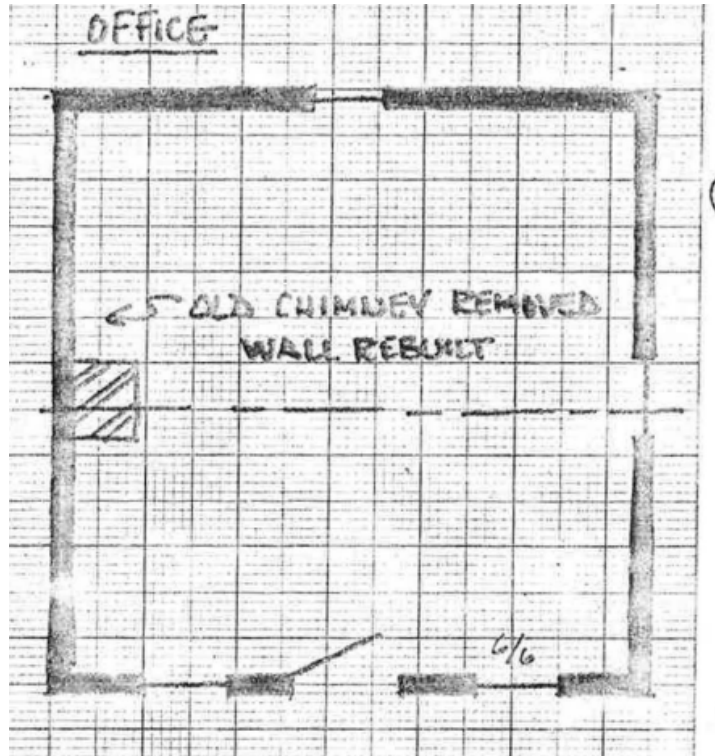


Figure 3.48. Sketch of Office from 1977 Survey
(Source: Virginia Department of Historic Resources).

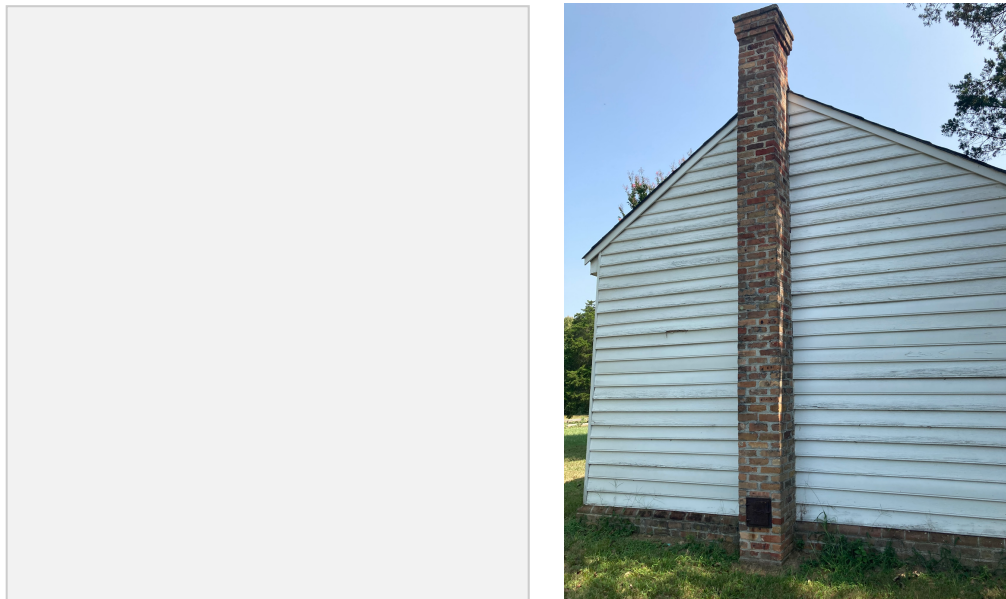


Figure 3.49 (left) East side of Office, (right) West side of Office
(Photos by author, 2022).

Like the storehouse, the interior has plaster with no visible view of the framework, but likely based on its suggested date of construction is a timber-framed structure. The office is a single open room with a stove pipe opening on the west wall. The room is lined with a flat baseboard and crown molding. The floor is made up of tongue-and-groove, however, it appears to be on top of the original flooring. When looking at the door sill, the floor can be seen over lapping the threshold (Figure 3.50).



Figure 3.50. Tongue and groove flooring visible on door sill
Photo by author.

Kitchen

According to the Tyler family and the architectural survey, the kitchen, currently under renovation, has reportedly been moved two times since it was built (Figure 3.51). It is suggested that the kitchen was originally located to the east of the main house, the 1971 survey map outlines a “large depression - believed to be site of

[the] original kitchen” (see Figure 2.6).⁵² The survey also included a map showing the kitchen connected to the back of the main house with a breezeway (see Figure 2.5). By 1977, the kitchen had been moved west of the house as illustrated in Figure 3.34.⁵³ It can be concluded that sometime between 1971 and 1977 the kitchen was relocated. Photographs from the Netick’s restoration in 1977 show the back of the main house without the kitchen attached.

Unfortunately, despite records about the kitchen moving in the twentieth century, there is little information about the kitchen in general. No survey or documents suggest when it was first built or when it was moved from its original location to behind the house. According to a letter from Anne Netick, the breezeway connecting to the kitchen to the house was added in 1912.⁵⁴ Measuring 15’ 6” by 18’ 4”, the kitchen is a one-and-a-half-story frame structure with an English basement. The kitchen has a side gable roof with asphalt shingles and an exterior end chimney on its south elevation. Clad in beaded weatherboard, the timber-framed structure has a single nine-light window above the front porch. A front gable roof covers the porch supported by posts on brick piers; it is reached by a set of brick steps. The first floor has a six panel-door with a four-over-over, double-hung sash window to its right. A side entrance also with a porch is located on the north elevation. The English basement is laid in Flemish bond. Flanking the porch are two small windows for the basement with a molded brick watertable. The English basement is accessed through a set of stairs on the south elevation.

⁵² Virginia Department of Historic Resources, “Woodburn_1971_Survey,” Architectural Survey Form.

⁵³ Virginia Department of Historic Resources, “Woodburn_1977_Survey,”

⁵⁴ 018-0052_Woodburn_1972-1997_Correspondence.

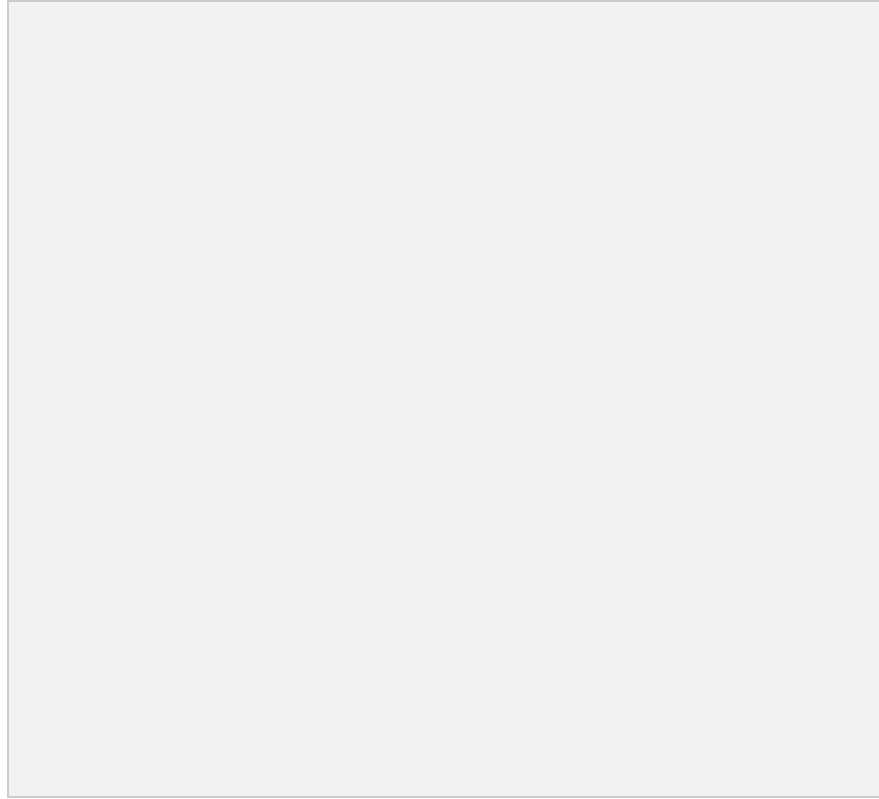


Figure 3.51. Kitchen
(Photo by author, 2022).

The attic space has been modified into a bedroom with a section in the northwest corner walled off for a bathroom. This upstairs was likely originally used as the living area for enslaved persons who worked in the kitchen (Figure 3.52). Due to remodeling, the first floor and basement flooring and walls could not be properly studied. These ongoing modifications will be discussed in the following chapter.



Figure 3.52. Attic in kitchen with repairs of circular sawn lumber.
(Photo by author, 2022).

Barn

In the northwest corner of the property is the barn which was originally two separate structures (Figure 3.53). In the 1977 survey, two barns are shown, the westmost is labeled as “barn” with the construction date in the twentieth century, and the second barn to its left labeled as “pole barn” with the construction date estimated as being in the nineteenth century (Figure 3.54). It appears that between the late 1970s to early 1990s when the restoration of Woodburn was completed the barns were linked together (Figure 3.55). Currently, the overall structure measures 67’ 4” by 45’; the west barn from the twentieth century measures 40’ by 45’, while the pole barn measures 24’ 4” by 45’.

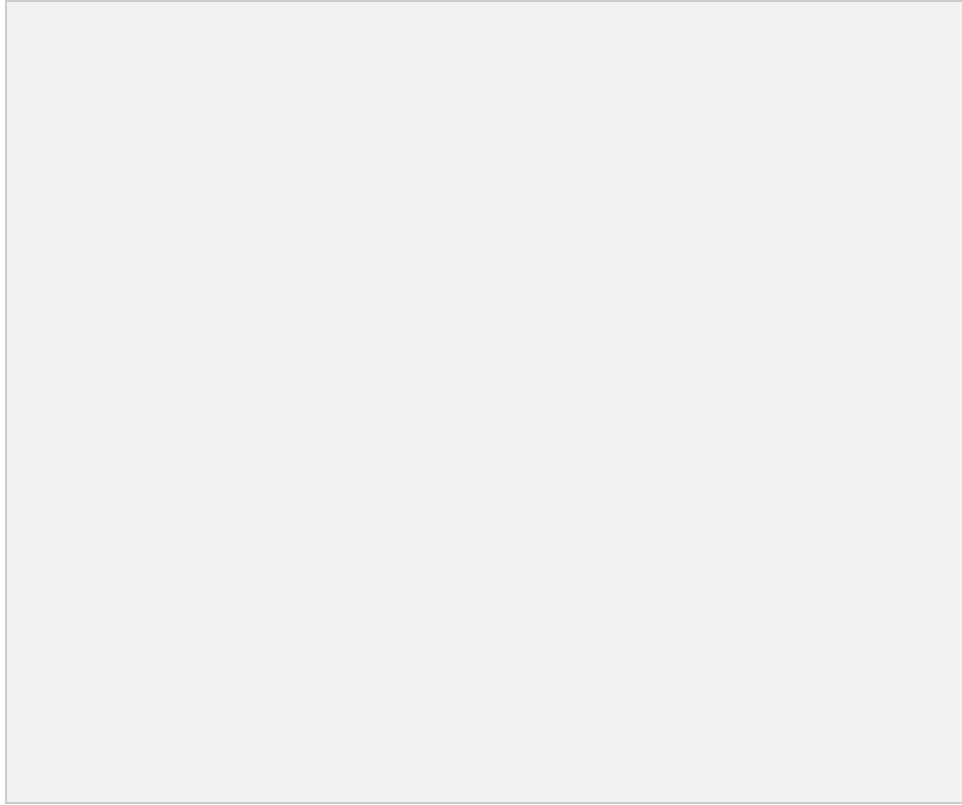


Figure 3.53. Barn. Right structure from the 19th century, left structure from the 20th century (Photo by the author, 2022).

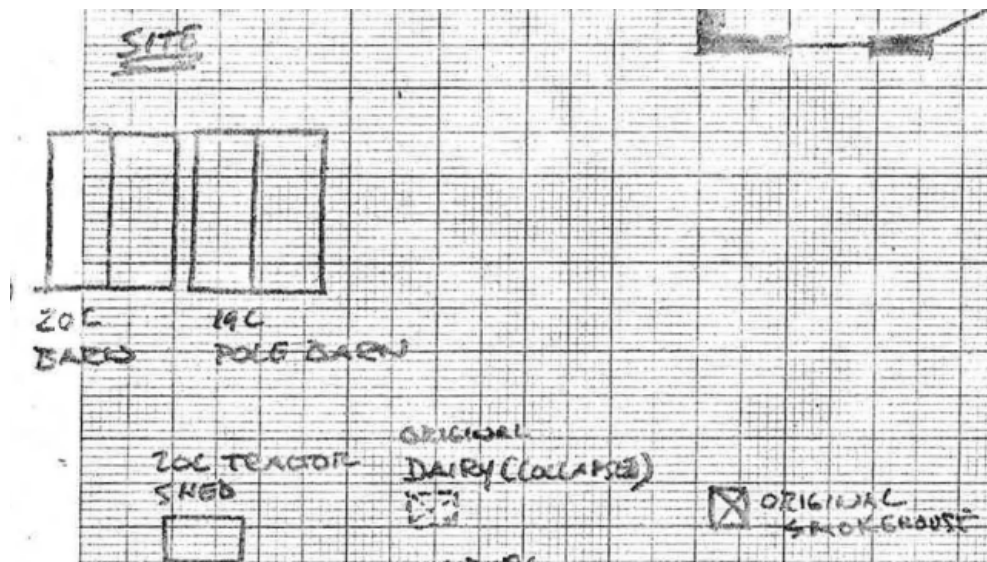


Figure 3.54. Survey with two barns marked on the map, 1977 (Source: Virginia Department of Historic Resources).

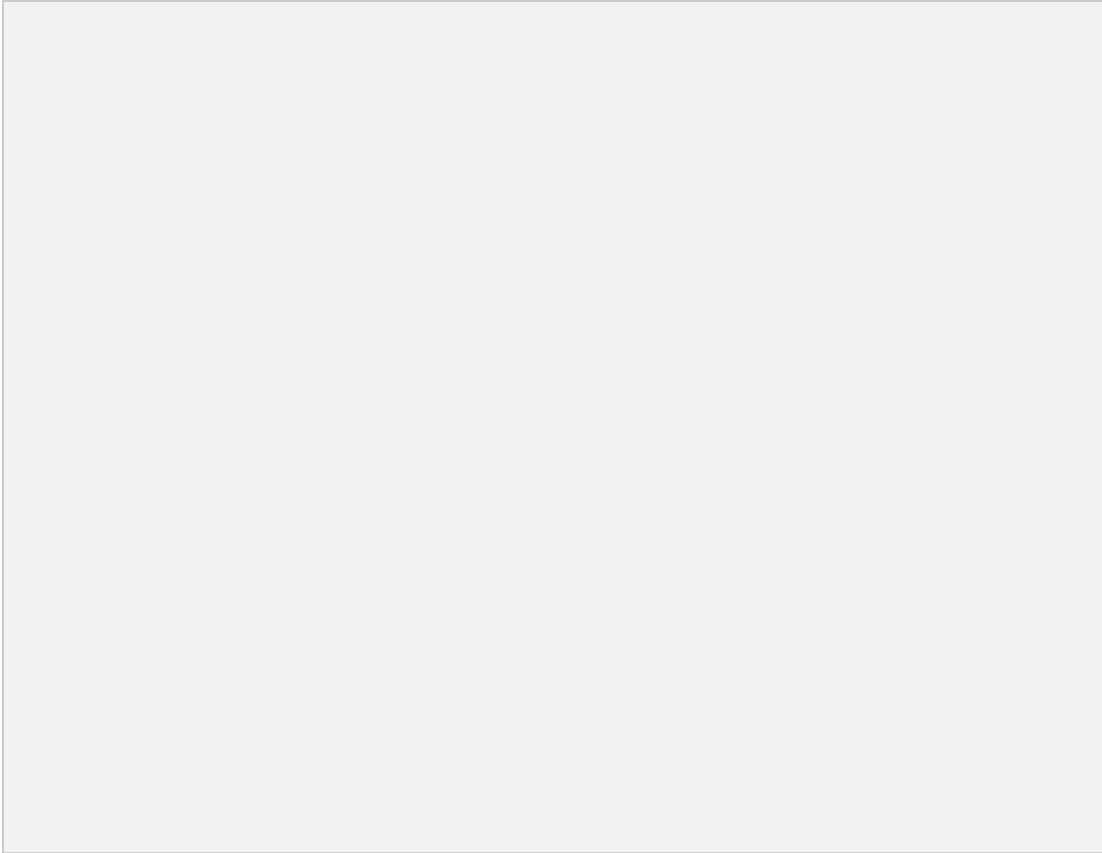


Figure 3.55. Pole barn on right and twentieth-century barn on left. A 3 ft addition connects the barns and which includes a door (Photo by author, 2023).

The westernmost barn from the twentieth century has a gable roof covered in tin. Clad in weatherboard, this section of the barn has three entrances all of which have wooden steps leading to doors board and batten with circular saw marks and screws (Figure 3.56). The westernmost door leads to a room used for storing grain and hay, the two other doors lead into a large opening used for storage. Stairs on the east side connect to the second floor, which is also an open area used for storage. Stairs on the east side of the second floor connects to a loft. The back of the barn has an open stable area currently used by the horses.

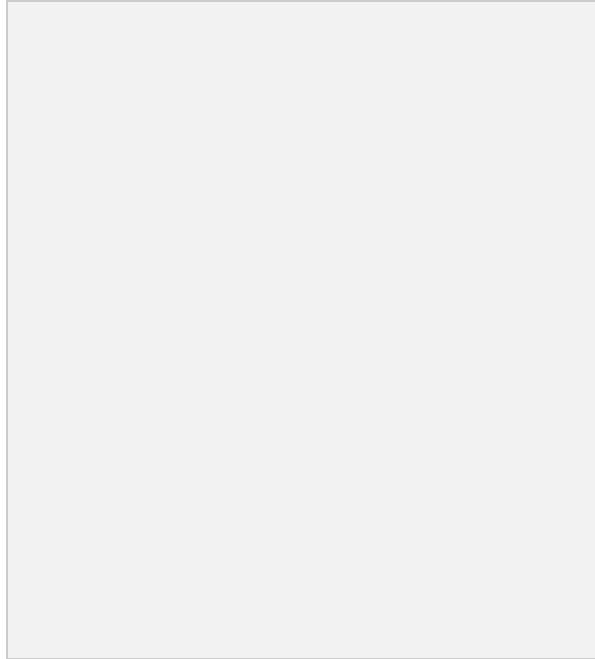


Figure 3.56. Backside of barn door with visible circular saw marks
(Photo by author, 2022).

This structure was labeled as being constructed in the twentieth century according to the 1977 survey, and this is largely confirmed was the various framing members with circular saw marks with wire nails, however, the structure has several hand-hewn beams. On the first floor, a hand-hewn brace is visible, connecting to circular sawn boards and studs (Figure 3.57). Figure 3.58 shows that debarked logs were also used within the barn. Likely, the other hand-hewn timbers within the barn are reclaimed lumber from a previous structure, possibly an earlier barn. Additional pieces can be found throughout the structure that further indicate reuse (Figure 3.59). In the attic space, cut nails are visible in the rafters.

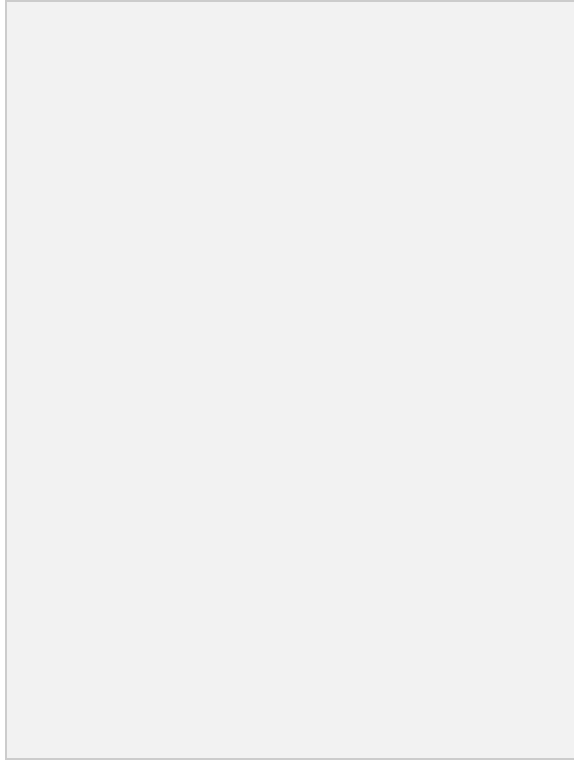


Figure 3.57. Hand hewn brace in twentieth-century barn
(Photo by author, 2022).

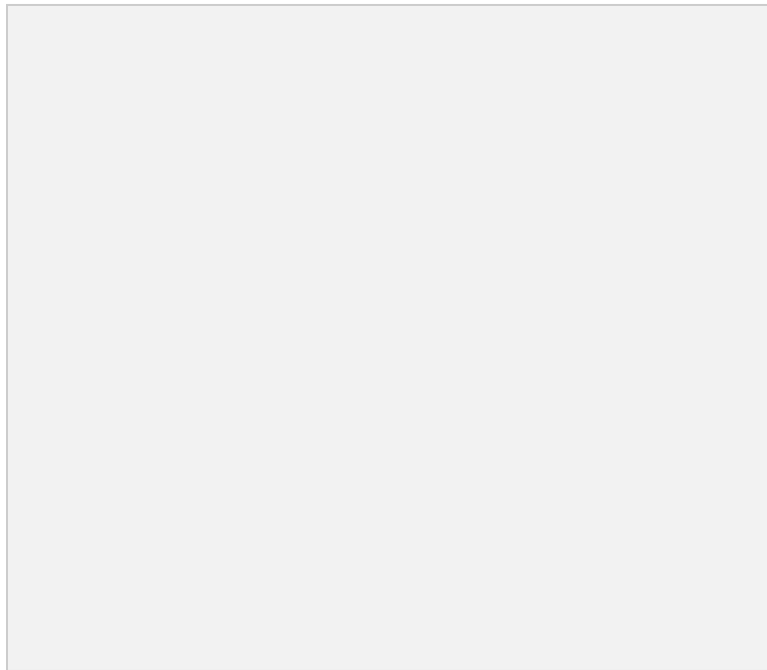


Figure 3.58. Debarked log in twentieth-century barn
(Photo by author, 2022).

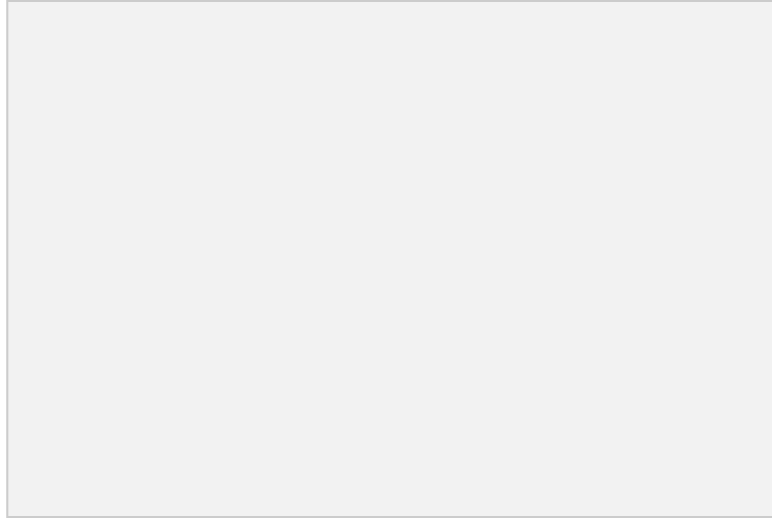


Figure 3.59. Barn beam, likely reused timber.
(Photo by author, 2022).

The pole barn has a tin-covered gable roof with an addition connecting to the side of the twentieth-century barn. It is clad in vertical siding with circular saw marks and has two wooden Dutch doors. The doors lead to separate stalls; the back of the structure is used by the owner for storing farming vehicles (Figure 3.60).

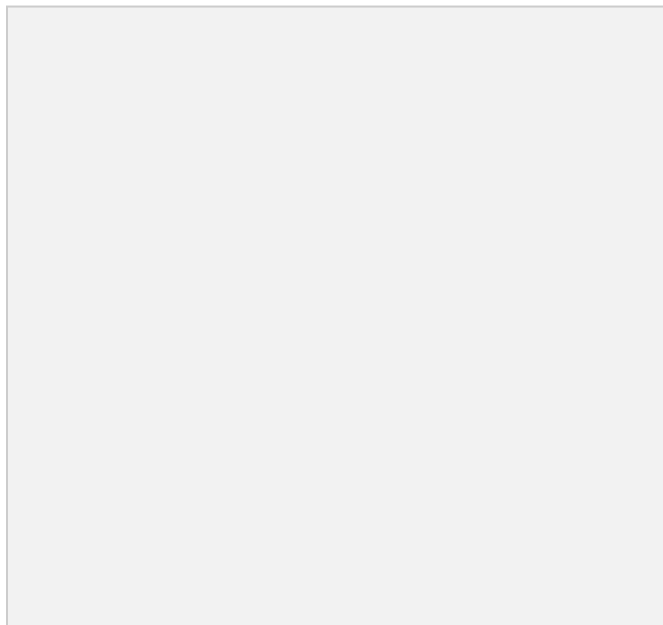


Figure 3.60. Polo Barn
(Photo by author, 2022).

The pole barn has debarked logs for its posts and beams, which are likely original to its construction. It appears that the barn was modified as a stable. Circular sawn boards clad the exterior of the barn, and similar circular saw marks are visible in the pole barn's interior as studs and boards are used to divide up the stable area, supporting the possibility of later modifications (Figure 3.61). The survey from 1977, showed the barns as separate, but between 1977 and the 1990s, they were connected.

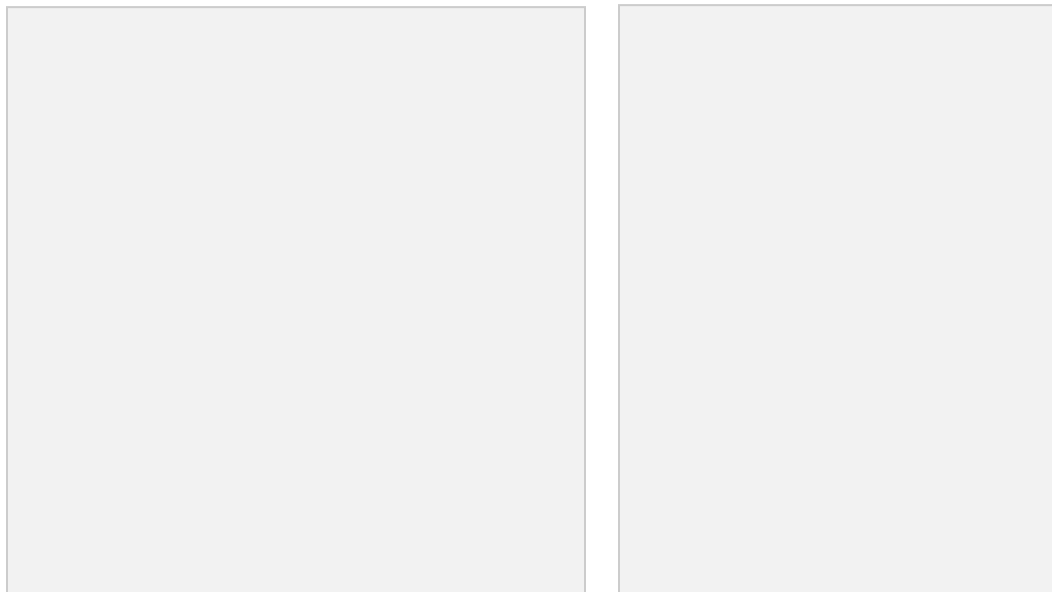


Figure 3.61. (Left) Pole Barn, debarked logs as posts and beams with circular sawn boards and beams dividing the space; (Right) Narrow hall between the twentieth-century barn and nineteenth-century pole barn (Photos by author, 2022).

Landscape

In front of the house is the faded remains of a teardrop-shaped circular drive. Originally the front of the property likely would have had no trees or tall vegetation to block the view of the house. Currently, several trees and plants cover various parts of the property. A type of holly has grown by the front porch blocking part of the

stairs, and a tree reaching as high as the second floor blocks the view of the east wing and path along the front. A large tree covered in various vines rests in the circular drive and six crape myrtles line the faded path that connects to the road (Figure 3.62). Ten other trees are scattered along the front of the property. On the east side of the house is a large tree located near the original site of the kitchen.

Behind the main house are the outbuildings which are placed in a symmetrical pattern. The storehouse is located several yards behind the back porch of the main house, with the dairy and smokehouse flanking but set back from the storehouse. The office is located to the northwest of the house and the kitchen is currently located just west of the house (Figure 3.63). Wood fencing divides the pastures from the main area, with the fencing connecting to the barn in the northeast corner. As mentioned, pastures surround the center of the property and are divided into seven fields of different sizes.

According to oral histories from one of the Christians, to the east of the smokehouse was originally where an ice house was located (Figure 2.6). The same person also commented that the enslaved person's cemetery was located to the west of the house at the end of the cornfield by the treeline, this area is also currently used as pastoral land for horses.⁵⁵ At the north side of the northeastmost field is the treeline leading to the main road.

⁵⁵ VDHR, Architectural Survey Form, 1971.

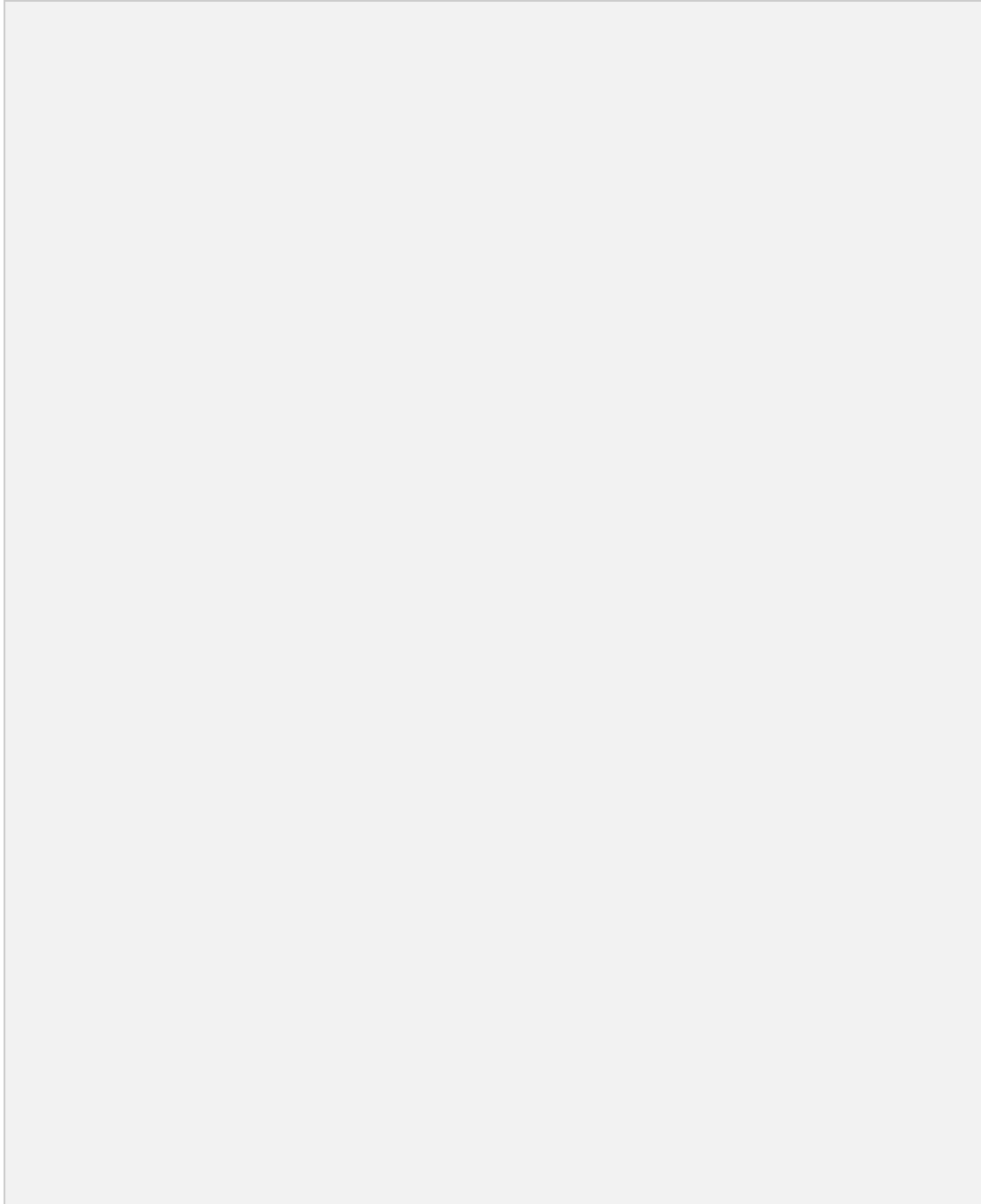


Figure 3.62. Map with circular Drive in front of Woodburn
(Source: Tyler Family Collection).

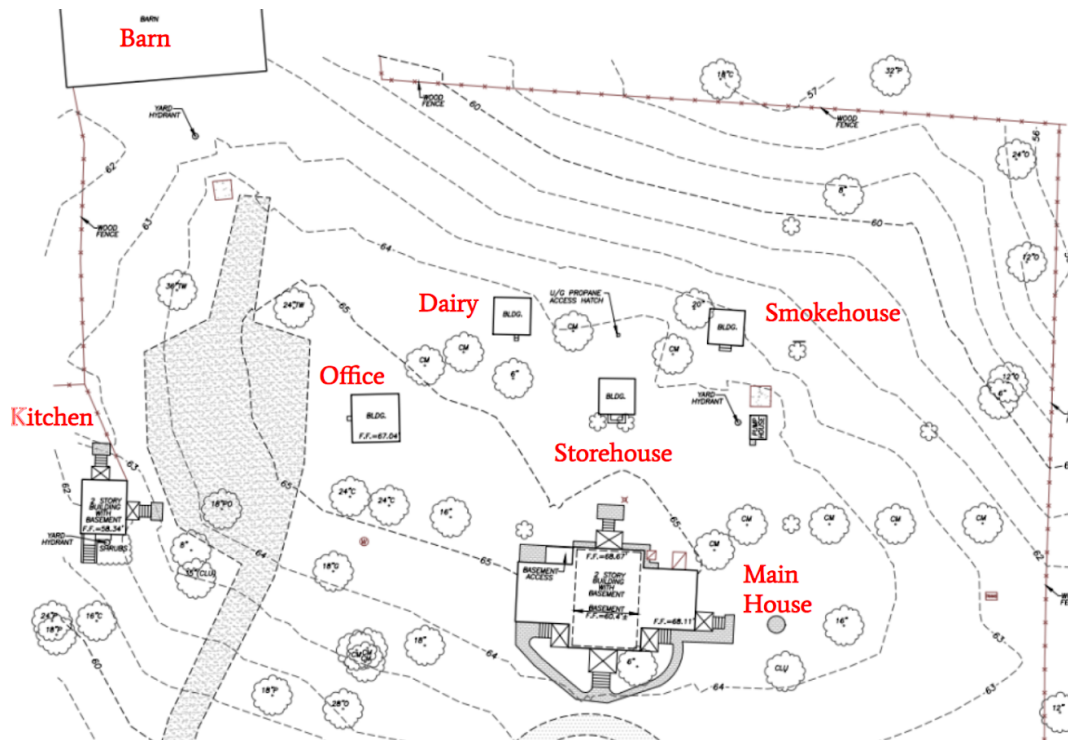


Figure 3.63. Map of Woodburn's outbuildings
(Source: Tyler Family Collection).



Figure 3.64. View of woodline, looking towards the existing road
(Photo by author, 2022).

Chapter 4: Condition Assessment

Netick's Restoration

When the Neticks purchased Woodburn in 1971 it was in need of massive restoration work. This work included repairing foundation as the basement was repeatedly flooded with several feet of water damaging the original foundation. Despite several photographs from the 1970s both before and during the restoration, few images help to fully illustrate the level of repair that was needed. In 1971, an Architectural Survey Form was done by the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, which included a sketch of the landscape and structures on the property along with a rough drawing of the floor plan of the house. In 1977, the Society of Architectural Historians Architecture Resources Archive (SAHARA) collected several images of the main house before its renovation. While helpful the archive only had images of the front of the house, the smokehouse, and three rooms on the first floor of the main house. These rooms were the entry hall, dining room, and ballroom. Despite the SAHARA images and the Architectural Survey report no photographs or sketches of the basement, second floor, or attic space. Due to a lack of documentation, aspects of their condition during the 1970s will be inferred based on analyzing the condition of the property based on the known photographs, the various sketches, and notes about the property collected by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and what the owner remembered being told about the property by the Neticks (Figure 4.0 and 4.1).



Figure 4.0. The rear of Woodburn, 1970s
(Source: Tyler Family Collection).

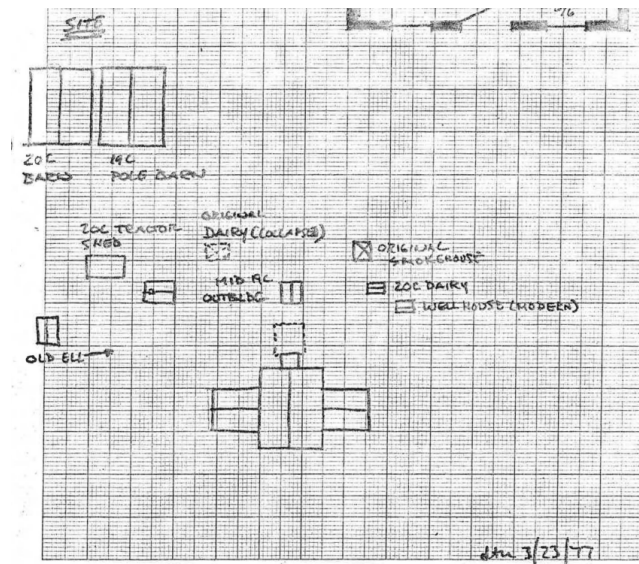


Figure 4.1. Sketched map of Woodburn, 1977. (From Left to Right and top to bottom) of 20th-century Barn and 19th-century Pole Barn in the upper left corner, 20th-century tractor shed [Removed], original Dairy labeled as collapsed, small outbuilding, an original smokehouse, “Zoe Diary” a 20th century dairy [removed], and a modern well house. “Old Ell” is the original kitchen which had been moved. The arrow is pointing to the outlined square connecting to the main house. Before being connected to the house in the 19th century it was originally located on the east side of the house (Source: Virginia Department of Historic Resources).

The Neticks first project was repairing the foundation and replacing brick. Following the elevation of the house, a series of I-beams were placed under the house for support. A letter from Anne from 1972 stated that the couple was preparing to start on the basement and chimneys, indicating that both were being repaired or stabilized first. Images from 1977 show the I-beams which are still visible in the unfinished basement and were left for support (Figure 4.2).

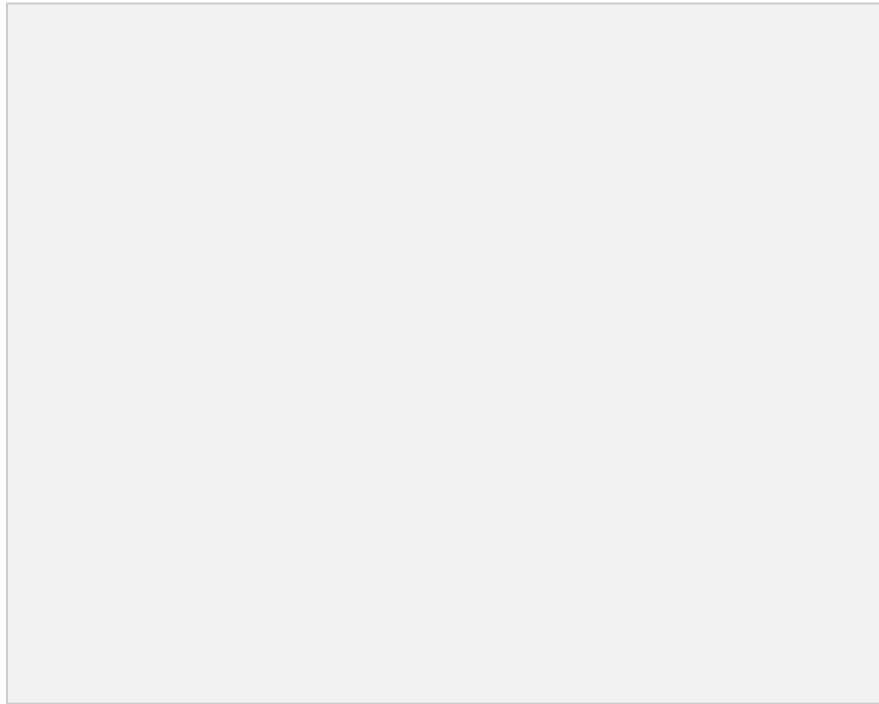


Figure 4.2. Front of Woodburn during foundation repair in the late-1970s. An I- beam can be seen running along the front of the house (Source: Tyler Family Collection).

Based on the images from the 1970s, the foundation and chimneys were worked on first as the tin roofing on the wings and wooden shingles still remain on the center block still remain. A sketch of the roof rafters from the 1977 survey showed that the roof was examined but does not provide any information on the state of the roofing and attic space (see Figure 3.27). No photographs were taken before the restoration of the second floor and no records exist about the condition of that space.

Photographs of the restoration from the early 1980s show that the fireplaces upstairs were likely restored in the late 1970s to earlier 1980s after the foundation and chimney were repaired. Based on photographs from the late 1970s and early 1980s, it appears that most of the interior restoration began during this period(Figure 4.3). The ballroom was converted back to its earlier appearance, as the 1977 survey shows a wall on the east side of the room creating two small rooms labeled as a bath and closet.



Figure 4.3. East bedroom during restoration, 1980s
(Source: Tyler Family Collection).

Along with the main house, all of the outbuildings were restored. As mentioned previously in Chapter 3, the smokehouse and dairy are largely full reconstructions. Figure 4.5 shows the smokehouse during the 1970s restoration and Figure 4.6 shows the restored dairy. The kitchen, once connected to the back of the house with a breezeway, was relocated to the west side of the central area between 1971 and 1977. This is based on the kitchen appearing in the 1971 survey attached to

the back of the house and mentioned as being removed in 1977, suggesting that the building was moved between 1971-1977. Little information from the surveys from the 1970s discusses or mentions the landscape work done on the property. Based on the photographs several trees were removed and the circular drive was restored (Figure 4.7).

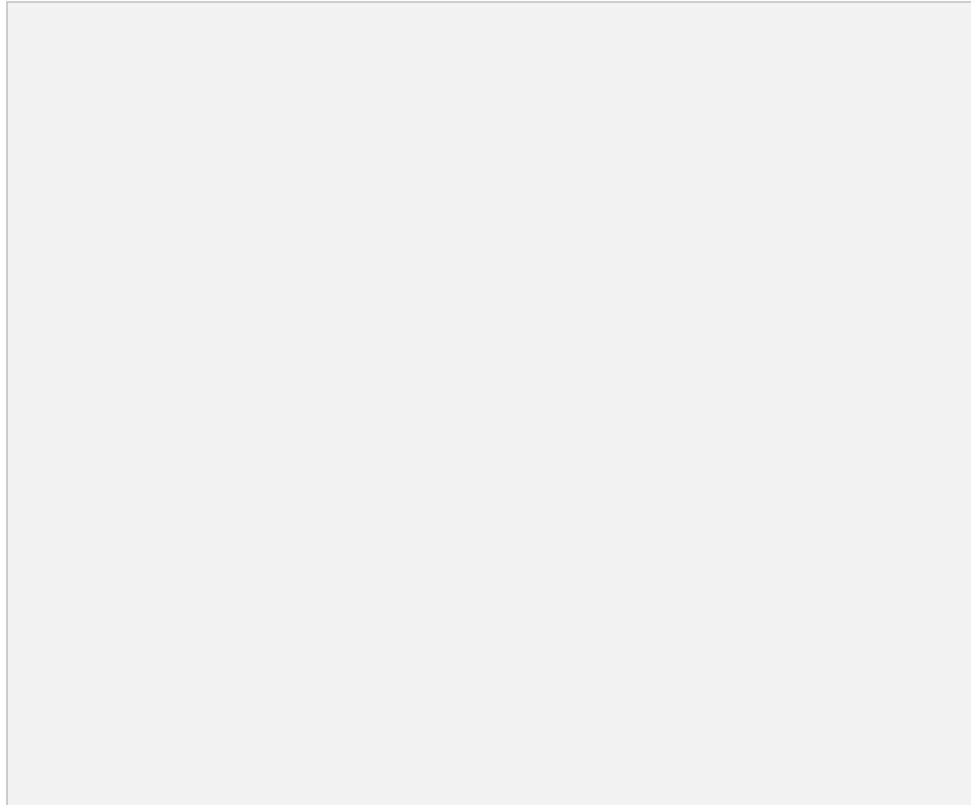


Figure 4.4. Floor plan of the main house, 1977
(Source: Virginia Department of Historic Resources).

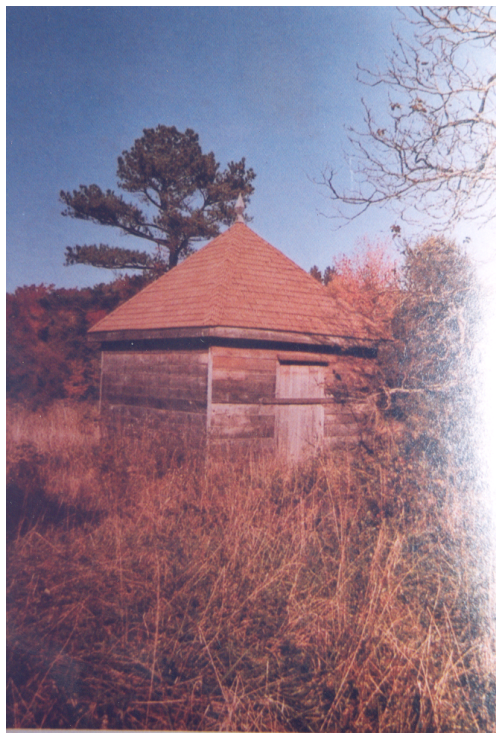


Figure 4.5. Smokehouse during the restoration
(Source: Tyler Family Collection).



Figure 4.6. Dairy Restored, ca. 1980s
(Source: Tyler Family Collection).



Figure 4.7. Side of Woodburn with circular drive restored, ca. 1980s
(Source: Tyler Family Collection).

Current Condition

Exterior

As for the current condition of Woodburn, the interior of the main house appears to be in good conduction. The exterior of the house shows the most signs of deterioration. There are no signs of damage on the roof and its asphalt shingles.

All of the sash windows are in good condition and protected by a sheet of plastic, however, several of the window shutters are falling apart or have completely fallen off (Figure 4.8). The brick foundation was repaired in the 1970s and appears to be in good condition with only a few areas in need of repointing. However, the brick lattice work on the porch (which was part of the restoration) shows visible signs of damage that need to be addressed (Figure 4.9).

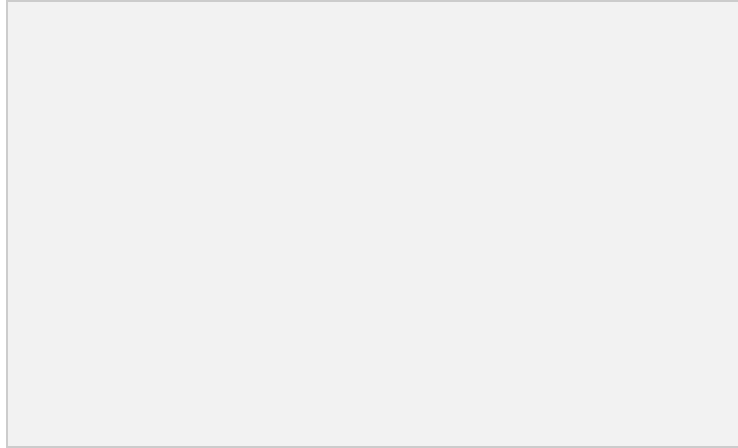


Figure 4.8. Damaged shutters
(Photo by author, 2022).



Figure 4.9. Damaged brick latticework on front porch
(Photos by author, 2022).

The weatherboard siding of the house shows visible signs of damage, several sections of water damage with large amounts of paint missing and rotting wood (Figure 4.10). Foam insulation spray was between the weatherboards in the attic and is likely causing some of the damage and paint peeling as the wood cannot breathe. Behind the house, the bulkhead entrance structure has water damage (Figure 3.6).



Figure 4.10 - Damage on weatherboarding
(Photo by author, 2022).

Interior

The attic shows no visible signs of water damage from the roofing nor the weatherboarding. The second floor bedrooms also seem secure, however, no records on from the 1970s restoration exist that discuss the rebricking of the upstairs fireplace, but were likely restored for looks and not to be used like the fireplaces on the first floor. The bathroom likely needs some small adjustments as the built-in shower appears to be in need of minor repairs. Similar to the second-floor the interior shows no signs of needing massive repairs. The fireplaces all have been modified for gas and would greatly benefit from a report checking to see if they are currently

working. As mentioned earlier reeded molding are missing from the ballroom fireplace mantel (Figure 4.11).

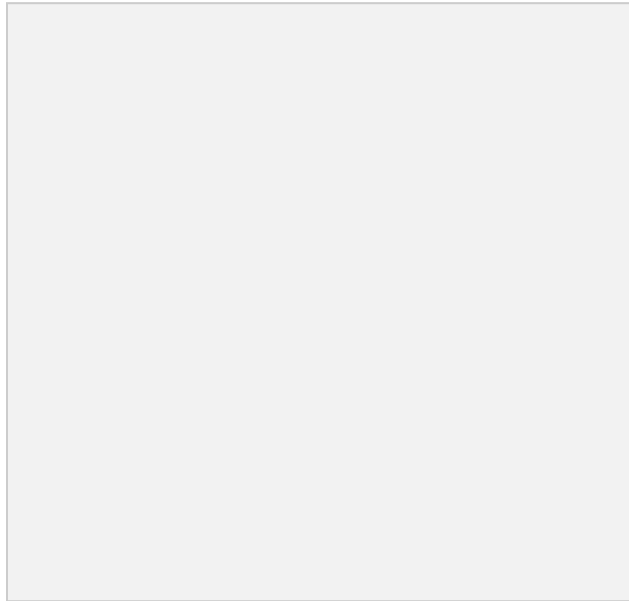


Figure 4.11. Ballroom mantel with missing molding elements
(Photo by author, 2022).

The basement is an open space that was being converted into a kitchen, however, the current owner has no plans of finishing the basement at this time. While the remodeling of the basement has ceased, the unfinished placement of stubs, piping, and outlets helps to illustrate what the finished kitchen area would have looked like. Modern tiles had already been laid covering the whole basement floor, coming down the interior stairs the basement is divided by an unfinished wall starting from the east side of the basement almost to the west wall (Figure 4.12). This front area was intended to be the kitchen space with the new wall being used as a counter space with a sink. Walking around the unfinished wall are several additional stubbed outlines of a few smaller sections. Behind the wall dividing the kitchen area was space attended to have a washer and dryer, and a second room was planned to be around a corner to

be used as a bathroom. Despite its unfinished condition, there are no visible issues of water damage that the basement previously dealt with while unoccupied.

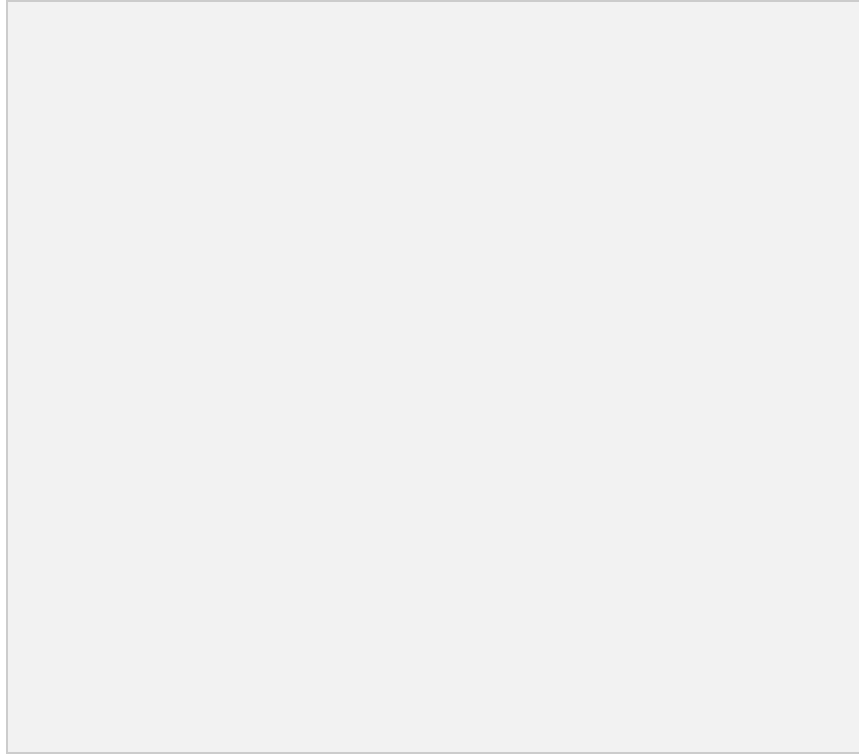


Figure 4.12. Unfinished basement
(Photo by author, 2022).

Outbuildings

All of the outbuildings share the same relative condition as the main house. The insides appear to have no visible water damage, the flooring seems to be secure, and like the main house, the weatherboard siding is showing signs of wear and tear. Between 2021 to 2023, the kitchen has been under construction and remodeling. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the attic space has been modified into a bedroom with a bath in the northeast corner. The first floor has been remodeled with new flooring placed over the previous flooring, a new mantel has been added to the

fireplace, and crown and baseboard molding with the ceiling clad with beadboard (Figure 4.13). The English basement is in the process of being modified into a kitchen area and bathroom. Modern tile flooring has been installed on the floor, along with drywall, beadboard ceiling, crown and baseboard molding along with vertical wainscoting. A section on the west side of the basement has been modified with plumbing for a toilet, sink, and shower.



Figure 4.13. Kitchen Remodeling
(Photo by author, 2022).



Figure 4.14 - Kitchen basement remodeling
(Photo by author,2022).

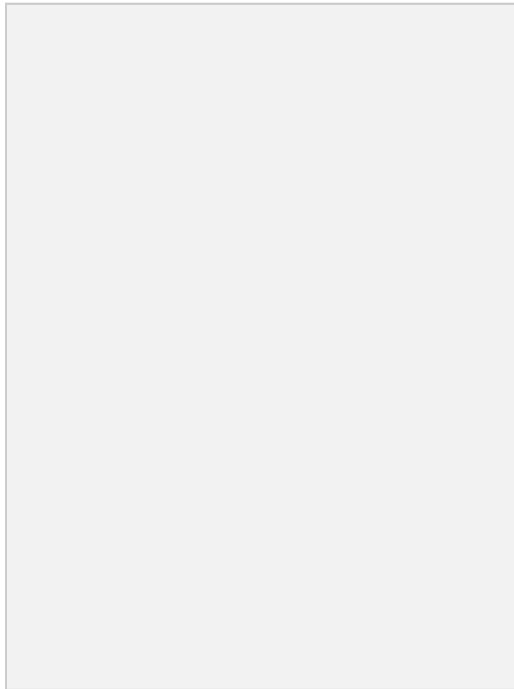


Figure 4.15. Kitchen basement remodeling bathroom
(Photo by author, 2022).

Chapter 5: Concluding Thoughts

As for the current condition of Woodburn, the house and outbuildings appear to be in generally stable condition but are in need of repairs. If action is not taken soon, interior damage could occur leading to a more costly and laborious repair.

Overall the attic visibly shows no signs of water damage, however, the roofing above the wings was not accessible during the research on the house. A proper examination of the roofing should be completed soon to ensure it is weather tight. The second floor appears to need little restoration work other than examining how the bedroom fireplaces were repaired and if they were intended to be used like those on the first floor. Repairs need to be done to the second floor bathroom shower and a general examination of the room's plumbing. The first floor appears to need minor repairs, the molding on the ballroom fireplace mantel would need its missing reeding elements replaced and the fireplaces should be properly examined to check if the gas modifications allow them to be used and if the chimney's restoration from the 1970s are appropriate and safe.

The basement is unfinished, while studs and some plumbing have been installed. There is no sign of any damage, but the space would benefit from being finished. The small structure covering the back entrance to the basement likely would benefit from being fully rebuilt with a higher brick foundation to protect against water that collects around the structure. Likewise, the outbuildings need to have a full architectural examination done on them. To better develop a full plan of action, the structures should have a full Historic Structure Report (HSR).

Another important preservation action would be to have an archaeological survey of the property which would help to locate extant archaeological resources. This archaeological survey could help confirm the original location of the kitchen and the identity of the depression marked as being an icehouse. Likely other outbuilding structures were also located in the central area and near the tree line, and could be identified through a survey. This survey could also help in identifying areas relating to enslaved person's lives, such as locations of slave cabins. The use of a ground penetrating radar survey would be needed to locate the enslaved persons' cemetery that was mentioned in the 1971 survey.

Interpretation

While later in his career Tyler would side with the South and join the Confederate States of America, Woodburn represents a time in Tyler's life when he eschewed disunion. John Tyler lived at Woodburn from 1815 to 1821, and during this time Tyler's writings suggest that he was strongly against the idea of disunion. According to historian Dr. Christopher J. Leahy's biography of John Tyler, during the Missouri Crisis when the country was divided over the topic of slavery continuing west, "Tyler wanted Missouri admitted with slavery if that was what the people who lived there wanted, but he would not stoop to threats against the Union." Leahy added that Tyler would have "found such a view as irresponsible." In a letter from Tyler to a Mr. Curtis, Tyler wrote "Men talk of a dissolution of the Union with perfect non-chalance and indifference . . . The storm I trust will burst on the heads of those

very wretches who have presumptuously raised it.”⁵⁶ Woodburn represents an interesting period of Tyler’s life, marking his early years in politics but also a time in his life when he was against the idea of disunion while remaining an owner of enslaved persons. Compared with Tyler’s later home of Sherwood Forest, the two properties reflect how twenty years of politics could change a man’s views.

Before Tyler moved from Woodburn in 1821, the 1820 census listed twenty-four enslaved persons on the property. The enslaved persons who resided, worked, and made their lives on Woodburn need to have their history and legacy remembered and acknowledged as part of the larger narrative not just of Woodburn but of Charles City County. As the owner does not want to turn the property into a house museum, there are some approaches that could be taken to help inform and acknowledge various stories connected to the site.

Three markers are already on the front of the house, however, none provide any information about the history of the property (Figure 5.0). Additional ones could be placed on the various buildings or with the growing amount of research and topics connected to the property, plaques with QR codes could be created. Unlike plaques with text, QR-codes are not limited by how much information they can provide. Being connected to a website, the QR-code page could have resources that would be limited by the physical space of a plaque, and being linked to a website the QR-code could be continuously updated as new information is gained. As historians continuously rework and reinterpret the past this would allow the owner and property

⁵⁶ Leah, *President Without a Party*, 59.

to stay on top of changing interpretations without having to remove and redesign markers as is a common problem for museums and historic sites.

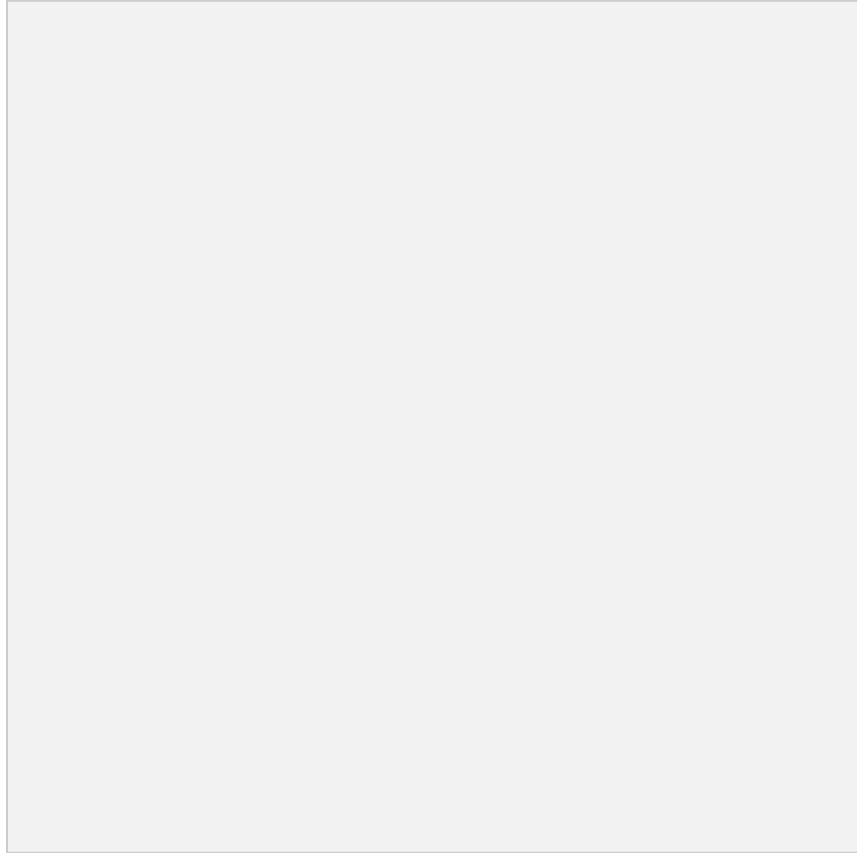


Figure 5.0. Plaques on the front of main house
(Photo by author, 2022).

Along with using digital resources, a website could be created to provide information about Woodburn, its history, and the story of those who once lived on the property. This could have images of the property over the centuries, information about the area, and how Woodburn connects to the history of Charles City County. A story map could also be created that would not only focus on Woodburn but make connections to other historic sites in the area. As stated earlier, Woodburn represents an interesting part of John Tyler's history and his political views, during his time

living there he maintained that the union should not be divided over the subject of slavery, this contrasts with his later beliefs with him siding with the South during the Civil War. In Charles City County, there are several properties linked to John Tyler, Greenway as his childhood home, Mons Sacer, and Sherwood Forest his final home. Similar to the other historic house museums open in the county, Sherwood Forest already has the reputation of being a president's house, Woodburn's interpretation could expand the story told at Sherwood Forest. Making the connection between Tyler's later political views while living at Sherwood Forest to his earlier views while residing at Woodburn in 1820 could be used as a way of discussing the changing attitudes of Southerners leading up to the Civil War.

Lastly, there needs to be a focus on interpreting the topic of slavery. One method for doing this would be to search for any descendant community linked to Woodburn and Sherwood Forest. A full archaeology survey should be done focused on the lives of those once enslaved there. It might be more impactful to allow some public archaeology to be incorporated. Charles City County's tourism and historical interest is primarily focused on the physical structures such as the house museums, if Woodburn held public digs it could help to further promote historical interest in archaeology in the region and help further encourage local interest. By exploring the history of those enslaved at Woodburn through searching for a descendant community to work with and focusing on public archaeology the property could be a starting point for larger conversations related to Virginia history.

Conclusion

While there are many paths the owner could take for interpreting Woodburn the best use for the property at the moment would be to finish the kitchen in the basement and use it as a residential house but allow the property to be semi-open to the public. This would be similar to the current use of Westover, a property that is lived in but allows the public to walk around the property and garden. With the pastures being used for the horses this is protecting the archaeological resources. At the moment, the owner is currently considering using the land and barn for horses with the goal to turn the kitchen into a house for a farm manager. If open to the public, the onsite manager could help with not only maintaining the site but perhaps help with running a limited visitor experience. With markers on the buildings, the public could learn about the property and complex history of Tyler and the enslaved persons who lived there. If the owner wanted, the office could be converted into a small museum space.

From John Tyler's early years in politics and his opinion on disunion to the decades of enslaved labor connected to the property, Woodburn stands as an important piece of Virginia history. The largest question for the owner is how to maintain the property, it would be beneficial to encourage the historical topics connected to the property in some way as suggested with some plaques. However, in the end, the preservation and use of the historical context linked to Woodburn fall to the owner to decide what to do with a property connected to so many different historical subjects.

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