

Preservation & Stabilization of The Hollow, Summer 2009

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Representing *Preservation Virginia* & Dr. & Mrs. David C. Collins

First, a brief look back to the work of Preservation Virginia's master carpenters Mike Adams and Karl Newago during season 2008



Last year, Karl, shown above finishing his beaded northwest-rear window frame, and Mike, at right after inserting his window frame to receive a four-light casement beside the west chimney on the 2nd-floor, prepared the walls for beaded poplar weatherboards. This required repair of existing window and door frames, such as the back-door frame with consolidation drying at lower right, or restoration of missing frames. Early tenants applied whitewash over *The Warrenton Virginian* newspaper to insulate cracks between boards on a board-and-batten door that Karl installed for the rear entrance. Newspaper also remains under whitewash on the partition between the hall and parlor inside the dwelling. A report on Thoroughbred Stock cattle on the door is pictured at center right. Meticulous removal of layers of lime wash to consolidate the door produced only one date, 1886, indicating that the application occurred or post-dated that year. Boards feature both watermill-sawn and circular-sawn marks of earlier creation and later repair. Unfortunately and similarly to archaeological evaluation, removal to date the interior lime wash and newspaper compromises integrity of these artifacts and future educational plans for the home. Therefore, scraping for dating information on the partition and other surfaces will not occur.

2009

The preservation and stabilization team of Louis Malon, Cheryl Shepherd, Mike Adams, Karl Newago, and Edward Ashby, outlined goals for this year that targeted finishing the work toward beginning the educational program. Ideally, completing the application and painting of the weatherboard on the rear elevation would occur when Ken Foster finds the last order of heart poplar. Lumber meeting the age and size standards of that used by Thomas Marshall in 1763-64 is not so easy to come by 246 years after settlement, logging, and sprawl in a former “frontier.”

Still, work could continue in July to put the dwelling back together since the removal of interior paneling and the lower stairway for stabilization that began in 2004. Visible in the lighter floor boards pictured above right, master carpenters Mike and Karl patched sections of ripped replacement boards with oak fence boards in the west hall, upstairs in the garret, and reinforced the 19th-century floor in the east parlor.

West Hall - Fence boards were inserted in place of unsafe 20th-century boards



Above, Karl begins to insert his just-built cellar door that will set flush within the existing floor opening. This replaced the oversized board of plywood that haphazardly covered the entrance for many years.



Pictured to the right, Karl and Mike carefully take up the 19th-century floor boards in the east parlor. The lower view shows the floor after they laid boards back into position on the front floor joists that received narrow wood strips on their sides to support reinforcement boards, as shown in the foreground. This strengthening method allowed them to save the old floor boards, even those with large holes. Although now two layers exist, the floor height remains the same, and the door swings easily open. Scholars can still read the tool marks and nail evidence in the preserved 19th-century floor in this room.

Next, these accomplished Preservation Virginia carpenters determined that the partition between the hall and parlor created a safety issue in its crude disconnection to the floor and ceiling. The team decided they should bracket it to the floor and hide the modern supports with a baseboard, as exhibited in the photograph at right. The ghost of the former baseboard is clearly evident. The simplicity and seemingly impermanent situation of this wall carrying the weight of a hinged board-and-batten door understandably astounded Mike and Karl. It appears that a lay carpenter, such as William Withers who acquired The Hollow in 1792, crudely relocated the wall to this side of the hall with the flip of the bottom steps into the east parlor and the move of the back door a few feet to the east. The reason for such arduous alterations in the late-18th - or early 19th-century still astonishes the team.



Furthering their work in August, Mike and Karl are shown figuring how the lower steps will fit in their return to their 2004 situation. The stabilization and righting of the heavily-shifted dwelling changed the height of the lower steps, requiring the addition of the fourth bottom step, shown below.



Karl proceeded to restore the beaded paneling in the west hall. Cheryl takes responsibility for the decision to slightly veer from the preservation and stabilization plan on the inside of the chimney because the period 1 fireplace opening had later been enclosed with rocks for conversion to stove heating, and wood panels across the chimney were missing or too severely compromised for reinsertion. Furthermore, since the team earlier determined not to re-form the stove flue, and to restore a brick arch over the rebuilt fireplace following brick remains in the dismantled chimney, the waiver of applying new paneling across the masonry seemed more appropriate. The condition of this feature is exhibited in the photograph at right, taken in March 2004.



Below, Karl drills holes for his fasteners in a recycled board needed for a baseboard in the northwest corner. Brought from their tool collection in the Jamestown workshop, the historic hand planer with the exactly-

matching beading blade to replicate the bead on the surrounding late-18th-century boards is also pictured.



At near right, Karl drops his freshly-built wooden ladder down into the cellar opening for safer access. Pressure-treated wood serves as the identifier of the modern addition.



At far right, Edward Ashby is amazed at the discovery of a tenant's hazardous flue vent in a board reinserted in the northeast wall of the parlor. Lime wash and plaster infill had hidden the hole until falling out while the numbered board was stored in the shed.





Karl and Mike shored up the floor in the garret before the end of August. They are now back on Jamestown Island making window sashes for The Hollow in between other necessary repairs to Preservation Virginia's numerous buildings.

In September, Edward had stonemasons Miguel and Alejandro tuck pointing lime putty mortar to the foundation. Plywood shades this material for slow curing.



Comparing the façade in March 2004 with August 2009





Comparing the rear elevation in March 2004 with August 2009



s/a Hollow Rept 10-2009