

**Meeting of Dr. Carl Lounsbury, senior architectural historian, and Matthew Webster, conservator of architecture, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, and members of Mathews Historical Society at the Thomas James Old Store, Monday January 19<sup>th</sup> 2009.**

Present from Mathews were Stuart Allen, Dee Lawson, Jack Caldwell, Earl Soles, Henry Schlenk, and Graham Hood.

The purpose of this meeting was to inspect the structure of the building and propose stabilization treatments.

Despite the very cold weather, this group spent two hours in the building. The notes below were compiled at the subsequent meeting of the two visitors and Messrs. Lawson, Soles, and Hood at Richardson's.

Recommendations in order of importance, were as follows:

**Drainage:** absolutely the top priority for the building is to improve the drainage of rainwater from the site. Water being wicked up into the wooden frame of the building through the brick piers has caused some rot and poses risk of much more.

Blacktop on three sides of the building has, in effect, created a hollow in which the structure stands. Rainwater accumulation is increased by the roof gutters on the east and west that simply channel rainwater down at the four corners of the building.

**Structural:** the north side original sill was pieced when the chimney was removed. It has separated from some of the vertical joists, which need to be stabilized. There is damp rot on parts of this sill extending to the corners. The replacement floor needs to be taken up entirely to inspect the floor joists, some of which, in the northeast corner particularly, have separated from the east sill and have been pieced out. At least one of the brick piers has settled and needs to be inspected further.

**Salt infestation:** the ceiling boards, particularly at the south end have been thoroughly soaked in brine solutions. They need to be carefully vacuumed, both on top and underneath, at the same time the interior of the building is vacuumed to remove dust and flaking whitewash.

**Ironwork:** the number of original hinges and staples in the building is significant. All original iron needs to be treated - each of the original

double doors on the east side should probably be removed from its remaining unbroken hinge.

**Insect infestation:** it cannot at present easily be determined if any of this infestation is active. Selective Borate injection of affected areas is recommended.

**Exterior siding:** decayed weatherboards need to be selectively pieced and/or replaced on all sides and carefully painted. The recommendation is to carefully touch up the present paint surface, not apply new paint overall.

**General observations:** the two advisers noted that this site is striking and unusual in showing its evolution over almost two hundred years without the need to replace of walls and other fabric wholesale. This is a real advantage.

They suggested that the Society might approach the project as one of preservation/education, rather than as one of simple display of an historic artifact. They strongly concurred with the notions of virtual interpretation of the building in the future. This could be so much more ample, more specific, and more dramatic than the more traditional spoken methods.

**Next phase:** a Historic Structures Report is recommended. This will include a minute examination of every feature and result in scale drawings, electronic surveys, and dendrochronological findings. They suggested that such a project be accompanied by as complete an historical examination and report on the documentary records for this site as can be obtained.

Graham Hood and Dee Lawson, 1.21.09

