

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE OLD THOMAS JAMES  
STORE TO THE BOARD OF THE MATHEWS COUNTY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

March 18, 2009

Having gathered several reports and secured a number of estimates for future work, the Committee on the Old Thomas James Store has come to the point where it must ask the Board of MCHS to decide whether:

*The store should be moved to a site next to Tompkins Cottage as previously planned, or...*

*Left on the site where it has stood for almost 200 years.*

In order to move the building, according to Frank Lansinger's written list of March 2008, physical changes would have to be made - the **wings discarded** and the **roof removed and replaced later**.

And because of space restrictions at the Cottage site, the store would have to be placed **gable-end to the street, rather than fronting** on it.

The **cost of moving the store**, over and above the expense of stabilizing it - which will be about \$10,000, and is needed either on the new site or where it stands now - is estimated by Frank and the contractors he's worked with to be **in excess of \$55,000**.

\* \* \*

The old store does appear to have been moved once from its original footings, but we believe it has stood on the James/Sibley property for **almost 200 years**. Absent the need to **move-it-or-see-it-demolished**, to **move it now** would be a **violation of its historical continuity and integrity**.

There is no way the **roof** (which is **almost wholly original**) could be removed and later replaced without loss of original material, and the loss of some of the building's very rare, visible aging process.

The **wings** undoubtedly saved the old structure from rotting away. They may be as much as **150 years old**. They are an **integral part** of the aging process of the store.

**Removing the roof**, even if it is replaced later, and **discarding the wings** would constitute a **violation** (and to some extent **destruction**) of its **architectural/antique integrity**.

\* \* \*

Over the last three years at least five individuals, who are considered authorities in architectural history and historic preservation, have examined the store. Since the decision facing MCHS is **no longer to move or lose** this building, our expert advisors are adamant in their collective recommendation that we do **not** move it for the reasons given above. They have warned that our listing on the State and National Registers would probably be at risk should MCHS proceed with the move.

Given that one of these authorities is the Regional Director for the Virginia Department of Historic Resources - a key figure for us - it must be recognized that we will have real difficulty in obtaining grant monies without his enthusiastic support - which we now enjoy.

Graham Hood and Dee Lawson