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(Ocmulgee Associates, Inc.)
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(Sara B. Chase)
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 - "Jason Russell and His House in Menotomy"
by Robert Harrington Nylander
Old-Time New England, Volume LV, Number 2 October-December,
1964, Boston, Massachusetts

Summary of Conditions Observed on Walk-through

(Note: See the Structural Evaluation and the Preliminary Architectural Preservation Assessment for greater detail and recommendations for improvement)

Basement

The basement is a combination of a small room in the NE corner with minimally adequate head height, and areas elsewhere which are simply crawl spaces affording access with great difficulty. This level features a hodge-podge of original and changed structural framing and supports, and a maze of plumbing, heating, electrical, fire alarm and fire protection elements.

First Floor

Entry Hall

- Heavily worn floor boards
- Staining of window muntins and sash from condensation in winter (no storm windows)
- Damaged risers from foot traffic
- Worn stair treads and handrail
- Front door is difficult to operate, cracked bottom rail (Opening has filler piece, added to accommodate standard size door?)
- Old push-button light switches, typical; hanging light

Kitchen

- Heavily worn floor boards
- Loose floor boards at SW corner
- Old light fixture with wire mold

Old smoke detector with exposed wire drilled through beam and joists.

Parlor

Painted floor is worn in areas

Noticeable drop in floor level at NW area about six feet from N wall

Old smoke detector; no lighting

Assembly Room/Shed

Ceiling and upper wall are pulled apart, with a $\frac{1}{4}$ " gap.

Noticeable high point in flooring at original wall location; drop in floor level into gallery.

Crack in ceiling front to back where old plaster meets new (former stair/pantry area).

Peeling paint at ceiling

Kitchen in ell

Poor quality cabinets, counter, appliances

Some paint stripped at windows Vinyl flooring

Beaded wainscot, chair rail and trim

Exposed sprinkler pipe

Bath

Ceiling plaster coming off Wall tiles cracked in places

Laundry

Exposed pipes at ceiling and wall

Vinyl floor

Weather stripping in bad shape

Noticeable drop in floor level from door into room

North Entry into Ell

Stair wall noticeably dropping to right (west)

Second Floor

Stair Hall

Windows deteriorating, typically; two broken panes

Heavily worn floor; one loose board

Old brass push-button light switches, recessed flush light socket at ceiling, smoke detector on junction box

Open gaps into attic at ceiling

Bedrooms

Windows deteriorating, typically; one pane broken

Old light and smoke detectors

Numerous stains on white painted ceiling and joists (from old leaks)

Worn floor boards; at least one is loose

Insect damage along E wall at one board

Lean-to Loft

Small fixed end window needs work Strip

fluorescent lights on ceiling Cracked plaster at E wall

North and South Rooms of Ell Peeling

wall paper

Storms are 2 over 2, but sash are 6 over 6 Sash

CORDS MISSING

North Room Closet

Window sill paint deterioration from condensation and/or rain Plaster

cracked at S wall because of stair wall movement

Introduction

This brief report on the Jason Russell House at 7 Jason Street in Arlington was initiated in order to assess the existing structural condition of the house. In addition, given the complex history of the house, it was deemed appropriate to provide a preliminary review the building's architectural fabric and finishes, in conjunction with a brief assessment of historical archives, that might pave the way for a more thorough analysis of the building.

The Arlington Historical Society benefits from having an excellent scholarly article on the Jason Russell House, written in 1964 by Robert Harrington Nylander for *Old-Time New England*, the *Bulletin of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities* (now *Historic New England*). Forty years later, however, it seemed appropriate for a new review of the building and its historical documentation. Analytical techniques have developed over time, and preservation philosophy has also evolved. Knowing that the building was possibly moved from its original site and that much was altered in the 1920's restoration after the Historical Society acquired the building, the project team believed that at least a brief re-assessment was called for. Having a better sense of what dates to the restoration, and what is earlier, might provide the foundation for a more thorough future analysis, one that might affect how the Historical Society interprets the building in the 21st century. It also might affect the Society's long-term goals for the property's treatment.

The project team included Wayne King of Ocmulgee Associates for the investigation of structural conditions; Sara Chase for the preliminary investigation of building fabric and the overview of available documentation on the building; and Gary Wolf of Gary Wolf Architects[^] Inc. Greg Antonioli of Out of the Woods Construction and Cabinetry, Inc., provided useful carpentry services during the investigation. Bob Fredieu took the lead for the Historical Society, after the project's initiation by Howard Winkler, President.

The process included an on-site investigation by the project team. In addition, Sara Chase reviewed historical materials at Historic New England and other historical documentation provided by the Historical Society;

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Finally, it was suggested to the project team that the Society may want to consider the larger question of the basement: not just the structural inadequacies found there, but also the problems presented by the lack of a full height basement under most of the house and the difficult access that results. It is clear from this report that the house is not in its original location, and that the existing basement should not be regarded as historic. It may be appropriate therefore, for the Society to explore its long-term options with respect to the basement before it embarks on the full range of repairs here.

It would not be unreasonable to consider the possibility of excavating below the building in order to provide a full basement throughout. This would give the house new, water-tight foundations and interior supports structurally designed to support the building above. It would enable the Society to undertake more readily all possible structural repairs and improvements to assure the long-term stability of the existing house. It would also allow the Society to more easily introduce up-to-date building systems for the ell, as well as such limited building systems as are appropriate for the historic house, and to design and locate these in a manner that permits use of portions of the basement for other purposes. Such improvements would contribute significantly to the preservation of this building for future generations.

Conditions Summary

As will be seen in the letter reports included herein, the Jason Russell House at 7 Jason Street in Arlington is, overall, in good condition, with some specific areas for improvement. When it is compared with other houses of its age that are in private hands or that are owned by not-for-profit organizations, the Jason Russell House appears to have benefited from good maintenance over the years: it does not appear to have suffered from long-term neglect, from vandalism, from a lack of security, or from ill-considered "improvements" over recent decades.

Until this year the rear wing was occupied by a tenant, but it is currently vacant. This means that the time is appropriate for the Historical Society to consider larger questions regarding the long-term use, repair and presentation of the Jason Russell House, including whether to continue renting out the ell for residential use.

The primary area of concern for the Historical Society in commissioning this preliminary investigation was the structural condition, especially the first-floor framing. What was found in the on-site review was an ad-hoc structural situation where the existing first-floor framing and foundations have been changed over time, where structural elements sometimes were replaced, sometimes were deteriorated, and sometimes were missing. Knowing something about the building's history in relation to its setting (its relocation from its original site closer to the street), it is perhaps not surprising that some of these structural conditions exist. A list of the problem areas is included at the end of the structural report.

Other areas of concern show up in the Assessment of Preservation issues,

where it is clear that both historic building fabric and more recent replacement materials are deteriorating, and need to be addressed. Suggestions for preservation here will depend on further research and on the Society's developing a coherent approach to the interpretation and treatment of the historic house.

Additionally, while the scope of this brief study did not include an assessment of other building systems, it is clear from the complicated, outdated nature of these systems and their presence throughout the basement that they will have to be addressed, at least in part, when structural work is undertaken. The basement features a maze of pipes, conduits and wires serving heating, electrical, plumbing, fire alarm and fire protection. All are largely out-moded at this point. The extent of these elements is pervasive enough to make the recommended structural repairs more difficult, if not impossible in places. Furthermore, if the Society hopes to improve the rear ell for reuse, whether for a tenant or for museum/archive/administrative purposes, these systems need to be addressed.

The lack of ventilation is one condition observed in this study. As will be seen in the Preservation Assessment, inadequate ventilation is the likely cause of some problems in the building, and any proposal for new or renovated systems in the Jason Russell House should include attention to its ventilation.

In general, the exterior of the building was found to be in good shape, with some specific areas needing paint repair, wood repair and brick repointing.

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Attic

The attic displays the changes to the roof framing and sheathing over time, with both old and more recent framing members (some missing pegs, as noted in the structural report), and both old and more recent roof sheathing. As with other areas, it features out-dated electrical and fire-detection elements.

Exterior

Some areas of peeling paint, wood decay, and repointing of the brick at the chimney need attention as part of an on-going maintenance program.

**Jason Russell
House
Arlington, MA
Preservation/
Conditions**

The Jason Russell House: A Preliminary Architectural Preservation Assessment

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to examine the current state of preservation of the

important historical portions of the Jason Russell House. The prime consultant is Gary Wolf Architects.

The report contains the following sections:

-this introductory statement

-a general summary of the history and existing conditions of the House,

-a room-by-room schedule of architectural elements showing the material, date, coating, condition in an abbreviated schematic way

-a list of architectural drawings in the AHS archives -

photographs of selected areas and conditions taken by

Chase -some facts from primary documentary

research -a list of extant original architectural

features

Attention was paid both to the history of the extant architectural materials and features, and to their present conditions. The report suggests some consideration for future work on the building. If/ when some preservation or rehabilitation is to be done, more detailed analysis could be useful, For example, a paint study of selected interior finishes, and of the few areas of cl 814 or earlier exterior trim details might yield colors or stains different from those presently on the building. Some areas where deterioration is occurring may need remedial treatment, such as worn historic flooring and the 1926 sash.

Documentary historical research for this report was done in the Arlington Historical Society Archives in the exhibit/archive facility adjacent to the House and in the Historic New England (SPNEA) Archives. Careful scrutiny of the architectural fabric of the House took place during two site visits (April 26 and June 29, 2005). In addition, the "Structural Conditions Report" by Wayne King (May 7,2005) and the "Archaeological Investigations..." report by Mark Boulding (April 1986) were taken into account. Robert Nylander's fine and detailed history of the house, "Jason Russell and His House in Menotomy," published in Old-Time New England in 1964, was an excellent basic starting point for all research. A paper in the HNE Archives prepared by a graduate student for a course taught by Abbott Lowell Cummings, "The Jason Russell House" by Claudia Bushman was also helpful.

General Summary

History

The Jason Russell House is comprised of original and later historical architectural elements, dating from 1740 through 1923. Robert Nylander chose 1923 as a terminus a quo for his history of the House; in 1924 the Arlington Historical Society purchased it. Furthermore, all additions now existing were present by that time (barn on west demolished but rebuilt for archival storage, exhibitions, and meetings in 1978). Interior restoration of the House in 1924-26 involved removal of architectural features which dated from after the late 18th century or very early 19th century. Where original c!740-1775 interior woodwork and masonry (fireplaces) did not exist or were unusable, the necessary pieces were brought in from similar historic houses being demolished in Arlington. That was done on the advice of William Sumner Appleton, founder of SPNEA (cf. correspondence from Appleton to Judge Parmenter, appended) with concurrence by the AHS membership.

Thus, in addition to examining the conditions of the existing wood, plaster, brick, and metalwork in the house, this researcher undertook to identify

-material which was originally there and became exposed, stripped and refinished during the 1924 - 26 restoration,

*-historic material brought to the house from other contemporary houses in 1926, -
newer reproduction material and modern material.*

Conditions

The four rooms plus stair hall and assembly room which are the primary house museum exhibit areas are generally in good condition. Three general problems exist however.

Most of the wood which has no opaque coating (paint, whitewash) is showing signs of deterioration. Nearly all windows on the south and west sides of the unpainted rooms have no opaque finish. Continual exposure to UV light has damaged the wood of the sash. None of the windows had provisions for limiting UV exposure of contents of the rooms.

The flooring in the Kitchen and in the Children's Chamber above it are dark along the outer edges but quite worn elsewhere. The flooring in the front stair hall, and some of the stair treads, have evidence of having been varnished (dark margins) and are not as worn. By contrast, the painted flooring in the Parlor and the Best Chamber is in good condition. Painted trim in the Parlor, Best Chamber, and Assembly Room is sound and reasonably clean. Ceilings in the Assembly Room's small wing to the west and in the Children's Chamber show some signs of deterioration.

The rooms of the caretaker's apartment also seem to be in moderately good repair. They seemed to have high humidity during the site visits made for this report. The general wear and tear of a resident has not been attended to at this time. It is recommended that all wall-to-wall carpeting be removed and the floors given proper treatment for clear

finishing to help curtail the persistent dampness.

In the area opening from the Kitchen into a space suggesting a former cellar stair, there is a curious condition on an object which looks like a large hollowed-out smooth-surfaced log. The base of the log has a white growth, suggesting a significant moisture problem there. In fact, no provision for positive air circulation in the older portion of the house existed. From cellar to attic, no ventilation was found.

On the exterior the House seemed in good condition. Paint was peeling badly, however, on the west side (cf. photograph). Some paint deterioration was noted on the small one story shed at the west end of the House on the south (front) side as well. The chimney needs minor repointing. At the corners where the end grain of corner boards is within 4' of the ground some wood decay can be seen.

*INTERIOR—Room by Room**Assembly Room/Shed*

Floor: pine 3 1/4" straight grain oil stain 1926 wear pattern of foot traffic,
white paint drops

Baseboard: pine 6 1/2" flat + quarterround molding 1926 light green paint

Baseboard in 1 story shed: pine 12" + c!840 surbase (Greek Revival) light green paint

Chair rail: pine molding profile c!820-40 (Greek Revival) light green paint

Walls: plaster c 1926 or later matte white paint

Ceiling: plaster c 1926 (Shed c 1870 or earlier) matte white paint

Sash: 6/6 (3 on W, 1 on E) c!926 painted

Doors: Shed—S, hollowcore, 1978 to passage to new building

S. c!740? To closet 2 planks, pine, 13 1/2" wide, wrought nails &
thumb latch, hinge cuts in door frame on W painted

to Kitchen: 4 panel raised field panel 1926 or later oil stain/paint

to Apartment: 4 panel Victorian c!840 2-barrel hinges paint

Fireplace: mantelpiece pine? 1926 or later

two small closet doors pine hand-planed c!740? wrought iron butterfly
hinges

Hearth: 2 slabs of black slate 26 1/2" x 18" 1926? later older bricks on firebox floor

Preservation issues:

- A. interpretation and/or uses of historic corner closet and plank door in Shed area
- B. interpretation of 1926 decisions regarding this room—a later kitchen (not in 1775)—relating to history of dividing house between two primary residents?
- C. paint colors to reflect c 1814? 1840? Colonial Revival?

Kitchen (SE Corner Room)

N.B. rfp = raised field panels

Floor: random width pine + wrought & cut nails, 4" - 8" clSth 0, moved worn oil stain

Baseboard: none

Walls: horizontal planks, pine, 13 1/2" -15 1/2" wide clSth 0, moved oil stain + wax

Ceiling: exposed joists/floor above, oak (chestnut?), original, summerbeam with unusual champfer (molded but no stops) charred in NE whitewash/black dots

Sash: 6/9 2 on E, 1 on S, 1926 oil stain darkened and worn by UV

*Doors: on W to Assembly Room 4 rfp 1926 or later paint/oil stain
on N to Entry Hall 4 rfp 1926 or later oil stain (pegged mortise+tenon
but NOT hand planed and pegs are dowels, not whittled)*

to cellar stairway 4 rfp 1926 or later

Corner posts: oak c!740 (or earlier?) NE&NW look original-pegged joinery to plate

SE & SW joinery to plate seems unusual

*Fireplace: large lintel over opening—1926
two small closet doors—brought in? Note wall finish traces on Rt door
small cast iron doors—c!814
hearth 8" clay tile—some 1926, some brought in?*

Preservation issues:

- A. UV damage to windows*
- B. Wear-and-tear on floor*
- C. Moisture in cellarway*

Entrv Hall f East. Center)

Floor: 13 1/2" pine, wrought + cut nails c 1740/1926? Worn, dark varnished edges

Baseboard: on E, N, S 7" pine with surbase c 1770s oil stain

*Wainscot: on E, N, S pine 30" high (1 plank 13 1/4") Federal molding on chair rail
1814*

Wall: on E, N, S plaster no cornice 1926 or later white paint

On W feather edge/bevel vertical planks, 16 1/2" wide c!740 oil stain + wax

Ceiling: plaster 1926 or later white paint

Windows: 4/4 on N and S, 1926 casings c!780 style but 1926 oil stain sun damage

*Doors: E 6-panel rfp new oil stain
S 4 panel rfp new cf. Kitchen oil stain N 4
panel rfp original cf. Parlor oil stain/paint*

Stairs (treads & risers): pine original? but patched bullet holes? oil stain/varnish

Railing: pine original (all joinery is mortise and tenon, pegged) oil stain/waxed

Preservation issues:

- A. window deterioration due to UV*
- B. wear on floor*
- C. loose tread on third stair*
- D. handicapped access?*
- E. security?*

Parlor (NE Corner)

Floor: pine, random 10" - 16" original (wrought floor nails & no other) red ochre paint

Baseboard: pine, 6 1/4" original light Prussian blue paint

Walls: plaster 1926 or later wallpapered (1926,1950)

Ceiling: plaster 1926 or later white paint

Windows: 6/9 1 on N, 2 on E. 1926 light Prussian blue paint

*Doors: 1 on W 4 panel rfp 1926 or later light Prussian blue paint
1 on S 4 panel rfp original (joinery, dimensions) paint—one side,
oil stain—other side*

*Fireplace Wall (S): all rfp paneling—six to L of fireplace, closet to R, one over fireplace, bolection molding around opening light Prussian blue paint All paneling appears to be original. However, no investigation of construction
Hearth: black slate Why a crane?*

Preservation issues:

A. UV protection at windows to preserve wallpaper, fabrics, other clear finished wood

SECOND STORY

Stair Hall Landing

Floor: pine random 8" - 13 1/2" original wrought flooring nails only, worn

Baseboard: none

*Walls: horizontal pine planks on E 10" - 15 1/2" installed 1926 oil/stain
vertical planks on N and S random up to 20" original (signs of lath & plaster) oil*

Ceiling: exposed joists & flooring original N.B. scribe marks in plate for joists

Windows: 6/9 on E only 1926 unpainted wood N.B. Victorian lock (Photo)

*Doors: to Attic original(?)—all construction & hardware cl680-cl740 pine oil/stain
to N (Best Room) 4 panel rfp original oil stain/paint
to S (Children's Room) 4 panel rfp 1926 oil/stain*

Cornerpost: oak, shouldered, boxed on N but not on W original

Preservation issues

- A. UV damage to window*
- B. Wear on floor*
- C. Victorian window latch?*

Children's Chamber (SE)

Floor: 14"- 15" random pine, original, worn, signs of darkening near walls—
varnish?

Baseboard: none

Walls: pine planks random 8" - 21" horizontal on E, S, and W original stained,
waxed vertical planks on N (fireplace wall) 18" - 21" original(?) stripped
stained

Ceiling: joists & attic flooring, original (width, saw kerfs),
whitewashed

Windows: 6/9, 2 on E, 1 on S 1926 oiled

Doors: on N 4 panel rfp to Landing 1926 oiled on N to closet 4
panel rfp original oiled on W to Lean-to loft 4 panel rfp
reproduction—recent? Oiled

Fireplace: hearth and fireplace floor are old waterstruck large brick 3 3/4" x 7
1/2 " (original to House?)

N.B. Closet on N wall appears to be original have original flooring, structure

Corner posts: shouldered oak or chestnut at all four corners apparently joined as
originally to hand hewn beams (girts, summer); traces of later lath/plaster but most of
the wood in this room has been very well-stripped and even scraped with a draw
blade.

Preservation issues:

- A. Check interior of closet to left of fireplace for water or rodent damage.
Consider
how this small space which may have remained unchanged for over 200 years
might be included in tours.
- B. Screening of opening between outer and inner east ceiling plates (where rafters
insert) should be done.
- C. UV damage to windows and wear on floor need attention.

Best Chamber (NK)

Floor: random width wide pine, original, like Parlor floor red ochre
paint

Baseboard: pine, 6" flat with 1 1/2" flat board as surbase 1926 (?) paint

Walls: plaster on W, N, E. 1926 or later white paint

S wall pine panels original around fireplace, closet to Rt. rfp
original painted

Ceiling: plaster 1926? but may be earlier, painted white summer beam E/W
painted red

Windows: 6/9 2 on E, 1 on N painted set in longer openings

Doors: on S to Landing rfp 4 panel original, also hardware painted off-
white

On W to Lean-to loft rfp 4 panel 1926 or later

Fireplace: on S wall almost identical to Parlor paneling original closet to W
painted Hearth smaller bricks

Shouldered corner posts and beams on all four sides & corners: boxed, may be
original, Painted

Preservation issues:

- A. UV damage to windows
- B. Paint colors (trim, floor)
- C. UV filtering for collection

Attic

Floor: random oak, pine much is original unfinished

Baseboard: no

Walls: no

Ceiling: no

Windows: 2, on N and S 1926 UV damage no finish

Door: 1, on E at stairs, which divide in front of chimney original

Preservation issues:

- A. Ventilate this area, especially in the summer*
- B. Prevent UV damage to windows.*
- C. Carefully vacuum flooring and cover with canvas so dust & dirt do not sift down to rooms below*
- D. Re-activate the trapdoor in the opening above the stairs.*
- E. Install fire extinguisher*
- F. Investigate the chimney to see if any part of existing chimney is original or early.*

Caretaker's Apartment

When this area has been emptied and cleaned, each room should be inventoried for any datable historic architectural elements.

Preservation issues:

Such an investigation might shed more light on the history of changes to the House, as well as uncover any situations where repair is needed.

This area was not checked for preservation conditions or issues as it was examined thoroughly by Wayne King of Ocmulgee Associates in May 2005. He observed and reported on structural conditions. He was able to check nearly all of the first floor framing from the cellar.

Preservation issues:

Wayne King outlines several issues in his report. Cf. Page 7 of his report where he describes ten items of structural concern.

Jason Russell House
Arlington, MA
Preservation/ConditionsLean-to Loft

Floor: carpeted (should be removed)

Baseboard: 6 1/2" plain flat board, pine, original to c 1820-40 painted white

Walls: plaster, 1926 or later, painted white

Ceiling: plaster, 1926 or later, painted white

Windows: single 4-light sash on N and S, two 6/6 on W. W sash are original to c!820-40; lamb's tongue muntin profile painted

*Doors: to S 4 panel rfp 1926 or later paint/oil stain
To Apartment 4 panel Victorian, c!870 (?) ceramic knob set, 2 barrel hinges painted white*

Preservation issues:

- A. Remove carpeting to determine historical value of flooring*
- B. Conserve all five historic sash.*
- C. Investigate for historic datable finishes.*

Sara B. Chase

Sara B. Chase

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6/30/05

Jason Russell House Arlington, MA Preservation/Conditions

EXTERIOR

South Elevation, Main House

Chimney: rebuilt in 1924, red brick some mortar is missing or loose

Clapboards: all recent—check AHS Minutes for date no decay noted

*Windows: 4; all have original early 18th century boxed frames
mortised and tenoned into the window sills or stools except that the 2nd story has one new
sill.
Sash are 1926 or newer. Condition appears OK*

East Elevation, Shed

Roof: black asphalt shingles

Clapboards: recent painted some blisters and cracking of paint

Windows: 1926 or later appear sound

*Door: planks from c!740. old thumb latch, strap hinges (match
attic door hardware)*

East Elevation, Main House

Chimney: minor repointing; check cap

Roof: black asphalt shingles all appear sound

Clapboards: all recent; newly painted

*Windows: 9; all have original boxed frames & sills (stools)
Sash are 1926 or newer*

*Door: six panel, rfp new painted milk chocolate brown, no
gloss*

Door trim: original to 1814, some possibly earlier (moved)

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6/30/05
Jason Russell House Arlington, MA
Preservation/Conditions

North Elevation, Main House

Chimney: minor repointing; check cap

Clapboards: minor cracking and peeling near ME first story corner

*Windows: 3; all have original early 18t century boxed frames mortised
and tenoned into the window sills Sash are 1926 or newer*

North Elevation, Ell Addition—

Clapboards: 1926 or later; good condition

*Windows: 1926 (?) or later; Greek Revival profile on window lintel
molding, 6/6 These windows have 2/2 late Victorian exterior storm windows.*

Door: 1926 or later; caretaker's main entrance

Roof: 1950? Later? No discernible problems

Chimney: 1950? Later? No discernible problems

West Elevation: Ell & Lean-to & Shed

*Roof: recently shingled; note on new "barn" that galvanized vent hood is
rusting out
Note also that gutter on "barn" shows overflow drips—needs cleaning*

Clapboards: paint failure on Lean-to, Shed OK

Windows: note flat window trim on Lean-to c!840 or earlier (sash are Greek Revival)

Drawings in the AHS Archives*Measured Drawings/Jason Russell [sic] House/Arlington, Mass 2003.24.13 G. Bertram Washburn,**Reg. Architect 686 n.d. [1924?]**4 Sheets**No. 2090 A First Floor Plan, Parlor Fireplace, & Elevation thru "A" Section 1/4" scale**No. 2090 B Second Floor Plan, Bedroom "A" & Fireplace Wall 1/4" scale**No. 2090 C Front Elevation, Front Entrance, Left Elevation 1/4" scale**No. 2090 D Rear Elevation, Right Elevation, Kitchen Fireplace 1/4" scale**Bruce Taylor, Architect 2 sheets, no date**page 1: Dimensioned floor plans of Attic, First Floor, Second Floor 1/4" scale**page 2: Dimensioned section, Section A [thru middle of Kitchen] 1/2" scale**Smith Museum Building, Arlington MA, Arlington Historical Society James H. Ballou and**Robert D. Farley, Salem, MA 1978 18 sheets**A-1 Site Plan 1/16"**A-2 Basement 1/4"**A-3 First Floor 1/4"**A-4 Mezzanine 1/4"**A-5 East & West Elevations 1/8"**A-6 Rafters & Mezzanine Framing 1/8"**A-7 Foundation Sections 3/4"**A-8 Wall & Roof Sections, Details various scales**A-9 more of same**A-10 more of same**A-11 Interior kitchen varied scale**P-1 Mezzanine Plan no scale P-2 First Floor Plan
no scale**H-1 Heating - Basement Plan 1/4"**H-2 Heating - First Floor Plan 1/4"**H-3 Mechanical Room 1/2"**E-1 Electrical**E-2 Electrical*

*Photographs**Taken by Sara B. Chase, July 2005*

Figure 1. View of the NE corner frame joinery of the Kitchen. This joint looks original, in contrast with the joint (not photographed) in the SE corner of the room

Figure 2. View of the small closet door, over the fireplace, to the Rt. Note the dark finish (oil stain, wax) which has slopped over onto the door's frame from the adjacent wall.

Figure 3. View of the hollow log in the former cellar stairway/closet. Note white growth.

Figure 4. View of the former cellar stairway/closet showing the back side of the original door from the Entry Hall.

Figure 5. View looking down the few stairs, probably original, of that early stairway.

Figure 6. View of the Parlor showing fireplace paneling. Color is excellent version of Prussian blue of the 18th century, unfaded. When was a fire built in this fireplace?

Figure 7. View of the window on the second story Landing, showing Victorian window lock.

Figure 8. View of the ceiling of the Landing, showing the joists framed into a beam, with original carpenter's scribe marks.

Figure 9. View of the door to the attic. Note stripy quality of paint stripping on hand planed wood. Without hard use of a wide bladed draw knife, the natural indented areas left by hand planes still have some original & early finish. Note also the "butterfly" hinges.

Identical hinges exist on the present main entry door, in the Shed.

Figure 10. View of the NE corner framing joinery in the Children's Room—over the joint in the Kitchen shown in Figure 1. All corner joints in this room appear to be original.

Figure 11. View of another corner joint in the Children's Room, showing possible wood damage.

Figure 12. View of the room side of the door to the Best Chamber. Note the very early wrought iron hinges which still have (original or replaced) small leather gaskets beneath each nail. Note also paint which may be original. Should be analyzed.

Figure 13. View of the unusual hatchway of the attic stairs. Is it still functional?

Figure 14. View of a typical original boxed window frame, showing mortise and tenon joinery. Tenon is framed through the window sill or stool.

Figure 15. View of the present door to the Shed—note use of original (?) vertical feather edge planks and wrought iron butterfly hinges like those on the Attic stair door.

Figure 16. View of typical window lintel molding profile of the wing at the NW of the House. Note Greek Revival echinus profile.

Figure 17. View of paint peeling along west side of Lean-to.

Figure 18. View of rusted galvanized vent hood on "barn"

Figure 19. View showing bottom of corner board at SW corner of "barn" showing end grain beginning to split.

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Jason Russell House
Arlington, Massachusetts
Structural Conditions Report
OA File 24100
May 7, 2005

General Description of the Jason Russell House

The Jason Russell House is an eighteenth century, two story farmhouse with at least two nineteenth century additions. As the site of a bloody skirmish with retreating British soldiers on April 19, 1775, the eighteenth century house is a classic design with a large bay at each end and a smaller central entrance and chimney bay. There is some evidence that this 37 foot long by 16 foot wide house was built in two stages. Oral history suggests that the house was moved in the late 1800's, but the foundation construction does not demonstrate this conclusively. There is also an attached shed to the south of the antique house and lean-to and a modern museum building south of the shed that mimics the massing of a demolished barn.

Typical of eighteenth century houses, the oldest areas are framed with small joists supported by large wall "plates" and summer beams. The back lean-to is also framed with the small joists characteristic of the 1850's, when the lean-to was said to have been built. The custodian's ell addition is framed with 2x10 rough sawn joists contemporary with the latter half of the 1800's. With most of the second floor and roof framing concealed in the nineteenth century additions, the focus of the investigation was on the first floor framing, which was visible throughout the crawl space and basement.

The building straddles an unusual crawl space and basement. The site itself slopes slightly from west to east so that the west wall of the ell is closer to the ground than the east wall of the antique house. A mound of bedrock runs generally west to east under the ell and the chimney bay of the antique house. There is a full basement under the north bay of the antique house and part of the ell and there is a crawl space under the south bay of the antique house and the lean-to. The crawl space is stony under the antique house, varies in height and includes a pit-like depression that was the site of an archeological investigation in the 1985. The crawl space is earthen under the southeast corner of the antique house and under the lean-to. A drainage trench is excavated next to the west wall of the lean-to.

The following report was based on site observations made by Wayne C. King, P.E. of Ocmulgee Associates on Tuesday, April 26. The prime consultant for this project is Gary Wolf Architects.

Description and Condition of First Floor Structural Systems

Foundations.

The foundations consist of field stone walls around the perimeter of the entire building. At the basement under the ell and antique house and for most of the crawl space under the antique house, the stones are generally well fitted and die joints are mortared. But for most of the south wall of the antique house and die

west wall of the lean-to, there is no mortar. Furthermore, much of the south foundation wall of the antique house is only a pile of stones laid up without much skill, as shown in the photograph below. There are no remaining remnants of the original foundation along the west wall of the antique house, although the stones could have been salvaged and used for the lean-to foundation. There is also no apparent seam in the lay-up of the stonework where the north and south foundation walls cross from the antique house into the additions.

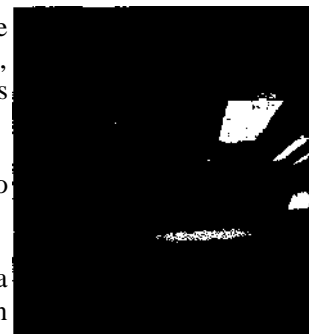
The foundation for the central chimney is the bedrock mound. If the present site is not the original site, mere certainly could not have been a more convenient location to support the chimney foundation. However, this same mound blocks access into the basement from what would have been the normal central location of the basement stairs under the stairs going up to the second floor.

While a fieldstone foundation is always moving slightly and mortar joints are always cracking and loosening, no egregious bulges or displacements were observed. Except for periodic inspections and routine maintenance, no remedial work needs to be done.



At the interface between the antique house and its additions, the foundation consists of brick piers located under the original sill of the antique house. Similarly, a brick pier supports the midspan of the south or kitchen summer beam. The 1985 archeological explorations near the kitchen summer beam pier found that it simply sat on loose stone debris and had no footing. As shown in the photograph on the left, this pier is presently tilted and there appears to be a gap between it and the beam. It is not expected that any of the piers have footings and the brickwork probably does not extend much below the present ground surface.

There are no foundations supporting the beams at the east wall of the lean-to. As shown in the photograph on the right, the 4x6 beams in the background are propped up with short, wood posts bearing directly on the ground.



At the interface between the lean-to and ell, a sill-like beam between the two additions is supported on a short brick pier built on the bedrock hump.

The one story "bump out" for the bathroom in the addition appears to be a minor addition to the ell, judging from the two parallel foundation walls seen at that corner of the ell.

Antique House Framing.

Joists. The antique house is supported by 3 inch wide joists spaced about 22 inches apart. They are supported in pockets in the faces of the exterior sills and beams that cross the 16 foot width of the house. Although the north and south bays appear to be similar, there are slight differences that suggest construction was done in two stages. The joists in the north bay are 3x5's and in the south bay are 3x4's. The north joists are coated with whitewash and their bottom surfaces have the crazed cracking characteristic of dormant dry

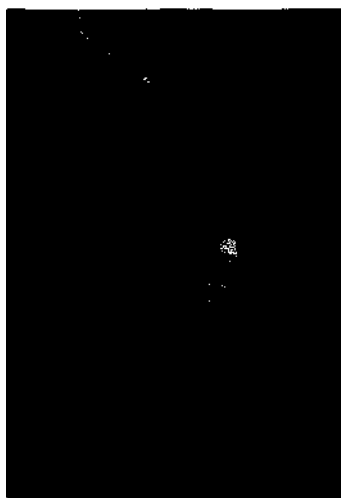
or brown rot while the south joists are untreated

hardwood,
probably
chestnut, in
excellent
condition.

Because of their smooth, almost planed surfaces having only a hint of fine vertical saw strokes, a skeptic would question whether they might be modern, replicated joists.

An engineering analysis found that the joists have a live loads capacity ranging from 75 to 130 psf, depending on the span. The lower load would be at the central, front entrance bay where the span is the longest.

The original joists for the entrance bay of the half-house were probably replaced when the entrance bay was enlarged during the second stage of construction. Except for the joint in the sill, discussed below, there is no remaining evidence in the floor construction of the two construction stages.



Beams. The summer beams under the parlor and the kitchen are 10-1/2 inches wide by 9 inches deep and 8 inches wide by 10 inches wide respectively. The chimney beams are 7 by 7 inches square. Like the joists, the beams are whitewashed in the north and central bay and untreated in the south bay. The beams are in generally good condition although there is powder post beetle damage in a "wane" of the south summer beam and considerable insect and rot damage in the south chimney beam where it meets the chimney foundation, as shown in the two photographs on the

n the
photograp
h to the
left, a
wane is
where the
right
angled
corner of
the beam
was hewn
close to
the
surface of
the tree
such that
the corner
of the
beam is
actually
round and
may have
had bark
still on it
when it
was
installed.
The first
few
inches of
a freshly
cut tree
contain
sugars and
starches
attractive
to beetles.
Beetles
generally
leave a
timber or
die out
after the
nutrients
are
oxidized
or
consumed
. The
untreated
beams are
white oak,
a rot
resistant
species
that was
customarily
used
over damp
crawl

ent powder post beetle infestation when temperature and moisture conditions are favorable.

As a result, the surfaces of the beams are also perforated with random beetle holes.

There are several types of beetles that infest building timbers, including the "house" (Hylorupes bajulus) beetle, "powder post" (Lyctus brunneus) beetle, "furniture" (Anobium punctatum) and the Ambrosia beetle.

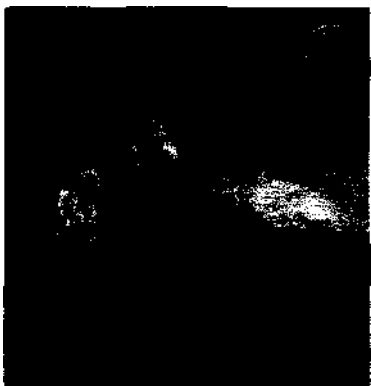
joist support.

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Where beetle damage is discovered, it should be observed for at least a year to determine if it active or not. A common way to make observations is to lay brown paper under the damage and observe it periodically to see if any frass is deposited on the paper; where the damage consists of discrete holes, they can be circled, dated and counted periodically to see if new holes appear.

At the south summer beam where the inch deep wane has been consumed (and fallen off in one long strip), the joist pocket appears to have been undercut. A strip of wood has been nailed to the faced of the beam to supplement the pocket as a

All of the beams have special seats and joints into the exterior sills. The two summer beams are notched to fit over the sills. That is, the top half of the 7x7 sills are notched to receive an overlapping extension of the beam. The beams are actually supported by the foundation wall and the notched detail simply ties the beams and sills together. The two chimney beams, however, are engaged to the sill with a one inch thick mortise and tenon detail.



Where there is no foundation wall on the west side of the antique house, the 10 inch deep beams cling to the original sills from a 3 inch deep extension. The beam at the north bay is also supported by a brick pier but the beam at the south side is supported only by the sill, as shown in the photograph on the right, where a brick pier is about two feet beyond the beam in both directions.

An engineering analysis found that all of the beams can support a live load of at least 50 psf. However, the notched connection detail at the west end of the south summer beam and the mortise and tenon connection at the chimney beams are extremely overstressed.

Sills. The sills around the perimeter of the antique house are 7 inches square. A short section has been replaced at the southeast corner. Both the east and north sill are completely rotted and crushed down at the northeast corner. Peering into the northeast corner from the inside of the basement, one can see the back side of the exterior trim board through the cavity left by the rot. A 1/8 inch diameter drill bit was used to probe the north sill about two feet from the corner and soft wood or a void was found 3 inches in from the surface. It appears from this probing that the exterior and bottom faces of the sill are so rotted that the sill has rotated outward. This condition may be fairly old insofar as the floor boards have been shimmed off the rotted sill to keep them level and feeling solid.



As shown in the photograph on the left, the sill at the center of the north wall is spliced with an in-line mortise and tenon instead of the more common scarf lap. One can see at the one remaining intact corner of the original sills that they were mortised and tenoned together. The in-line detail suggests that the second phase of construction utilized the original corner tenon for the extension of the sill. In fact, one could speculate that the north half of the east sill is the original north sill of the original half-house.

Unfortunately, framing references neither confirm nor deny this idea since neither Abbot Lowell Cummings nor Cecil Alec Hewett devoted any attention to foundation and sill construction details in their definitive works on antique framing and joinery practices ([The Framed Houses of Massachusetts Bay, 1625-1725](#) and [The Development of Carpentry, 1200-1700](#) respectively). However, Cummings' general discussion of the half-house suggests that the chimney would have been half the depth of the subsequent chimney depth and the door would have been hard against the original corner post (if it hadn't been shifted when the house was expanded).

The west or original exterior face of the west sill is superficially damaged from exposure to moisture, proving

that it had indeed been at an exterior wall at one time. Wall studs and a diagonal wall brace can be seen meeting the top of the west sill near its south end. With some difficulty, one can peer up into the wall cavity here.

Lean-To Framing.

Joists. The lean-to is framed with 3 inch wide by 6 inch deep joists that span the full distance from the exterior west wall to the west face of the antique house, or about 10'-6". Spaced 22 inches apart, these joists are somewhat anachronistic for the mid-nineteenth century but were still used for vernacular structures. They are in good condition although at least one of them falls short of the interior support and is extended with a sister.

An engineering analysis found that the joists can support a live load of about 65 psf.

Sills and Beams. The joists frame into pockets cut into the face of the 7x7 sill at the west wall and they sit on 4x6 beams placed adjacent to the west sill of the antique house. The beams and sill appear to be in good condition. However, the beam construction appears to be a substandard afterthought and not compatible with the normal skill and construction techniques of the 1850's. The 4x6's are short overlapping lengths of wood that are supported on similar short posts placed directly on the ground. It is difficult to speculate why this work wasn't done more solidly unless it replaces something else and had to be done in a space with limited access. It is conceivable that the joists were intended to be supported on the west sill of the antique house but the idea was abandoned at the last minute.

There is a slope and hump in the lean-to room where it crosses from the original lean-to into the shed. That is, the lean-to room is actually larger than the original lean-to area and it overlaps into part of the shed. This slope and hump is due to differential settlement between the relatively flexible floor framing and the rigid lean-to foundation wall underneath the floor at the overlap location. It is also possible that the lack of proper foundations under the east end of the joists has caused additional differential settlement.

Ell Framing.

The ell is framed with 2x10 joists that are spaced at a modern 16 inches apart and that span in the north to south direction. Although modern style balloon framing had been familiar in the mid-west and west for about 20 years, the joist sizes and spacing seem a bit too modern for a minor building built in New England during the early days of the Civil War. While the joists are generally in good condition there are two locations where damage has occurred.

The worst damage is at a single joist that supports the wall going up to the second floor and attic. While it is likely that the second floor joists also span north to south and therefore the wall is not a bearing wall, the weight of the wall has caused the joist to rotate and twist. To the extent that the wall may be supporting headers and landings at the stair openings, the floors have settled in these areas.

The other location of damage occurs under the first floor wall between the kitchen and laundry room. Not only is there the extra weight of the wall but leaks from the kitchen sink and washing machine have damaged the joists. Coincidentally, the affected joists have also been damaged by water infiltrating at the north foundation wall. As a result, there are several generations of props under these joists, one of which has also worn out. One joist has been cut off and is unsupported at the bathtub drain line.

The joists frame into an 8x8 beam or sill at the interface between the ell and lean-to. Several large plumbing holes have been cut through this beam but the beam has been propped up with small posts adjacent to each holes.

For intact joists, an engineering analysis found that they can support a live load of about 50 psf. Shed Framing.



The shed floor is supported with 4 inch diameter logs that frame into a central 8x8 beam. While the beam appears to be in good condition, the logs are deeply rotted. They knarled appearance of the logs suggest that they are cedar cut from a local woods but they seem to have been exposed to an aggressively moist atmosphere. Perhaps they were installed with their bark on and this may have aggravated their decay.

For intact joists, an engineering analysis found that they can support a live load of only 27 psf.

Description and Condition of Second Floor and Roof Framing

Antique House.

The second floor framing of the antique house is similar to the first floor except that the summer beams run in the opposite direction, that is, from north to south instead of east to west. With similar member sizes, the load capacity is about the same as the first floor.

The roof framing is characterized by original widely spaced rafters interspersed with later rafters. Original purlins running between the original rafters were removed to let in the intermediate rafters. The original rafters meet at the ridge with half lapped joints pinned together. Some of the pins are missing, however.

Ell and Lean-To Additions.

The roof framing of both additions and the second floor of the ell are concealed by finishes.

Shed.

The shed roof framing is a modern, 2x replacement system.

Conclusions and Recommendations.

The Jason Russell House is in good structural condition overall but several structural deficiencies and maintenance items need to be implemented. Except for the shed floor, live load capacities are at least 50 psf, which is satisfactory for a house museum involving tours of small groups. Comparable uses requiring a 50 psf live load are commercial offices and classrooms.

Structural items include the following:

1. The sills are rotted for several feet in both directions from the northeast corner. Old photographs of siding work suggest the corner post may also be rotted. These structural members should be replaced or patched with dutchmen. For an utilitarian replacement material, pressure treated wood could be used. For historic replication, a durable material similar in appearance to the original wood would be teak.
2. The west end of the kitchen floor summer beam is poorly supported. A steel post or masonry pier should be installed directly under the end of the beam. A concrete or stone footing should be prepared before installing the post.
3. The beams under the east end of the lean-to joists are not supported by durable foundations. They should be supported with steel posts or masonry piers placed on concrete or stone footings.
4. A single 2x10 joist at the edge of the stairwell into the basement is inadequate to support the weight of the two story high plaster wall sitting on it. The joist should be reinforced with two modern 9-1/2" deep LVL (laminated veneer lumber or microlam) sisters. The existing wiring and piping will have to be temporarily removed to allow the sisters to be installed. It may not be possible to remove the twist in the existing joist or to re-level the landings.
5. The south chimney beam is deeply rotted and damaged by insects near the chimney. The damage should be cut or scraped out of the beam and the beam should be supported with a steel post or masonry pier adjacent to the north side of the damage. The post or pier can sit directly on the bedrock.
6. Both chimney beams are poorly supported by a one inch thick tenon at the exterior sills. Posts or piers should be added next to the foundation wall to provide more positive supports.
7. The floor joists in the shed are deeply rotted. They should be replaced with new pressure treated joists. The existing joists may remain in place as historic artifacts and evidence of past framing systems.

8. The pinned half-lapped details in the antique rafters secure the rafters against wind suction that can pull the roof apart. Empty pin holes should be filled with new oak pins.
9. Beetle damage in the first floor timbers is probably old and inactive. However, to be certain, a monitoring program should be implemented to see if the signs of infestation change over time.
10. Damage joists in the ell appear to be satisfactorily supported by various props. No remedial action is needed at this time. However, a prop should be placed under the joist that was cut off at the bathtub.

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Some Facts from Documentary Research

Minutes of meetings of the Arlington Historical Society from Volume 2 (1924-1939) through Volume 5 (1965 - 1971) contain information which helps to date the preservation, restoration, maintenance, and repair work done on the Jason Russell House. A time line showing the dates of installing a new furnace, for example, re-roofing, and other such work can show clearly the length of the useful life of such items.

It is recommended that all maintenance and repair work on the House continue to be documented, not only with the date of execution but also with the names of contractors, products, and other relevant information to understanding what problems were remedied by the work. Photographs are also helpful in showing pre-repair conditions.

More detailed examination of the information in the AHS minutes will follow. First, the HNE (formerly SPNEA) Archival information will be presented. William Sumner Appleton visited the Jason Russell House at the invitation of Judge Parmenter. Two photographs show Appleton's shiny black touring car in front of the House, to the right. Photocopies of all items in the HNE file are appended in a separate envelope.

Appleton's "Notes on the Jason Russell House, Arlington, Mass., inspected 3 November 1923 in company with Judge Parmenter & Mr. Pierce" states that the House was "moved a good many years ago" to cheaper back land so as to leave street frontage [Massachusetts Avenue]

available to "more expensive" sorts of buildings. (Two large Victorian houses were built on the land, facing Massachusetts Avenue.) Appleton notes that the House "originally faced pretty much into the angle of the two streets it is now near, but at the present moment faces more to the westerly in a general way facing about south." He also states that the moving, which sounds like more of a rotation, possibly, resulted in the "destruction of the old chimney and removal of many boards with bullet holes and even bullets..." It was Appleton who recommended that floor boards and doors from condemned houses be used to replace the ones in the Russell House with material of the mid-18th century, and moreover that all bevel edge sheathing (skived clapboards) be left unpainted. Judge Parmenter and Appleton agreed that about \$4000 should suffice for a new chimney, new furnace, and entire exterior painting.

In December 1924, local photographer H W Reynolds of Brookline wrote to Appleton to offer three interior views and one exterior view for 400 each. HNE Archives has those views.

The next major study of the House in the HNE Archives is dated November 4, 1939, and is written by Catharine W. Pierce. The information there is familiar as it formed the basis for much of the scrutiny done in the mid-20th century by Richard Nylander.

The study written by Claudia L. Bushman for History 909 in December 1969 is the next major report on file at the HNE Archives. The paper presents her research on the architectural history and construction of the House for a course taught by Abbott Lowell Cummings. Bushman provides the scribe marks of each of the early rafters, the pattern of the simple black dot/whitewash ground painting in the old kitchen, and measurements of every piece of roof

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framing along with a framing diagram. Some aspects of her report sound naive in relation to current building investigation but overall her work is useful.

With Ocmulgee Associates documentation of the framing beneath the House and Bushman's measurements and scribe mark identification of extant rafters, workmen can know what material is historic and what is modern with certainty.

A more recent letter in the HNE file is dated June 29, 1960. Lawrence L. Barber, President of the Arlington Historical Society wrote to Bert Little, Executive Director of SPNEA, that two Massachusetts Avenue properties were bought for \$55,000, and that the plan was to demolish those buildings. In particular, Barber sought advice and help regarding

construction of a fireproof building to house collections.

The collections housed in the Arlington Historical Society at present hold the greatest amount of information about the Jason Russell House. Other than incidental facts which might turn up peripherally in other collections, it seems that the primary documents are at HNE and AHS.

Photographic images at HNE are mostly in the file of unmounted photographs.

The photograph taken 14 August 1916, by The Halliday Historic Photograph Co (Boston) and donated to SPNEA by "The Misses Robbins" is labelled Jason Russell House, Arlington, on its new site. Obviously, the date is in error and 1926 is intended. The photograph, however, is quite interesting, as it shows the end of a barn to the right, the House with 2/2 sash, an enclosed entry portico with a four panel Victorian front door, and a small one story shed to the left. The yard is a field of unmown grass. The view of of the east and south sides.

A view of the east and north sides taken by H.W. Reynolds, 1923, shows "Jason Russell house, Arlington, house before restoration," according to a note on the back. In contrast to the Halliday photo, the chimney is quite small (not yet restored), the trim is quite light in contrast to somewhat darker clapboards, and a small portion of a porch with balustrade shows on the house next door, much closer to the street.

Two photographs taken by Appleton in October (9 and 22) 1922 show the Russell House from the front and north side, with Appleton's notable automobile parked to the right. A large gambrel roofed house stands near the street to the left—the Russell House appears small and tucked far back from the street.

One of H. W. Reynolds' photographs of the interior, showing the Kitchen fireplace wall with two rifles over the fireplace and that large log lintel with the very regular adze marks, has two hand written notes on the back: "Mantle & fire [sic] is from Russell house—lower fun was carried at Lexington by Capt. Benj. Locke of the Minute Men. / All new, brand new, almost all" It is dated 1924. One wonders if Appleton wrote the second note.

Selected items from the Arlington Historical Society Minutes shows work done on the building subsequent to its restoration.

AHS Minutes (a brief listing of items)

1926: steam heat modified so that Assembly Room and Relic Room over it could be shut off but housekeeping apartment heated (p.33)

stepping stone laid from

Jason Street (p. 99) 1930: roof

re-shingled in July \$287.71

1 ton of coal

plumbing repairs in

apartment 1931: glass door in

parlor chamber closet for exhibit

w

ired for

new

boiler

1932:

new

dry

wells

worry about structure's strength to hold "crowds"/answer: no

children under 14 1935: exterior painted; yard loamed and seeded;

water meter separated 1936: new pressure valve 1939: sprinkler

system; flagpole; housekeeping apartment painted; fence put up;

survey

1940: drywell at rear enlarged

parlor floor painted, also front screen door

new oil burner recommended; Electrol burner installed, plus new valves on all radiators

1942: storm windows (7) and doors (2) with copper screens

gutters repaired; platforms fitted on granite steps 1943: House painted (2 coats, gutters oiled, flagpole painted with red lead then white paint

"a man cleaned the paint in the parlor, assembly room, bests

bedroom, and hall"

Painted Assembly room,

electrical work done 1947:

photographs taken for post cards

"new fireproof building" proposed (for archives and collections, probably)

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&30105

apartment chimney fell down making a hole in the roof; repairs included plaster & calcimine paint on ceiling

new curtains made

for all windows 1950:

exterior painted

parlor and parlor chamber redecorated

(wallpaper a gift) 1951: hall walls painted

exterior (front only) 2 coats of paint 1952: oil

burner and leaking water pipe problems—replaced and

repaired

paint and paper apartment

new brochure by Dorcas

O'Neill 1954: repair of "chimney as

large as four chimneys"

front roof resingled due to hurricane 1955:

Old-Time New England (SPNEA) article by

Catherine Pierce

back of house and rear of shed resingled

sill, boarding, and clapboards repaired at SE corner

new gutter on ell

replaced cracked boiler

plan made to paint house

in Fall 1958: kept house heated

all winter (first time)

old cesspool backed up into cellar

old elm tree gone

1960-61: removal of two

houses on corner gas

heat throughout

house (?)

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cleaned attic

new 500 gallon oil tank; new bulkhead

new bulkhead

cellar stairs rebuilt

trees trimmed

entrance hall

calcimined and painted 1964-

65 (Annual Report—no page

numbers)

repaired large chimney, pointed and crowned

ne

w front

door

1965-66:

exterior

painted

sprinkler

repaired 1967:

caretaker's kitchen

repainted

floor in Parlor painted

1968: plan to rebuild ell of house at end of Assembly Room 1969:

house painted: all new clapboards and some framing (wood borers and old age)

Richard Nylander recommended staying with gray on

the clapboards 1971: cemented cellar floor, covered ledge

with cement

list of Extant Original Architectural Features: not fully researched

At many house museums restoration work done 50 to 80 years ago is being re-evaluated. Using newer research techniques and instruments (fiber optics, microscopes, e.g.) preservationists are discovering more than ever before. More extensive studies are now common at in the light of growing awareness that our current approach to historic preservation will interest future preservationists and historians. With due respect to those who instigated the preservation movement some 130 years ago, we now approach architectural history with other tools as well as with documents and oral history.

The list below is intended to show what could result from research and analysis more detailed than was done for this preliminary preservation conditions report. With close examination of all construction details, including judicious loosening of selected elements to see the saw kerfs, nailing, paint layers and composition, and more, the list could be made accurate and verifiable. All evidence would be recorded—photos, measured drawings, taped and typed narrative statements.

The next step would be similar analysis of the 1926 restoration features. They are now almost 80 years old, and, like much of the work done at Williamsburg at just that time, tell their own very interesting story of how architectural restoration was done at the time of our nation's 150* anniversary.

The written reports on file could have their valuable information integrated with the physical research on the House, and a fuller, more fascinating story of the Jason Russell House could be presented.

As a first small step in that direction, the following list is presented. The evidence for determination of original material is not presented here; the scrutiny made was based on clues readily evident to any experienced technical preservation consultant.

FIRST STORY

SECO

ND STORY

Assembly Room/Shed
landing

Stair

floor

Original features (or at least c!740):-

vertic

al planks (moved)

Fireplace opening

ceiling

Plank door at west end of shed area

doors:

- attic & bedchamber

Two small fireplace closet doors

cornerposts

Corner closet

Kitchen

Fireplace opening

Ceiling

Cooking over & ash takeout doors

Area beneath stairs, formerly cellar stairs

Vertical wall board between Hall and Cellar doorways

[corner posts and beams appear original, but joinery
has been altered somewhat]

Entry Hall

Floor

Wainscot

Door to Parlor

Stair risers, most treads

Balustrade

Parlor

Floor

Baseboard

Fireplace wall paneling

Fireplace opening

Door to Entry Hall

Children's Room

floor

vertical wall planks

ceiling

fireplace (mostly)

corner posts & beams

closet W//fireplace

Best Bedchamber floor

fireplace wall panels, closet door to Landing corner posts (casings?)

baseboard (?) beams (boxed casings?)

Attic

floor (mostly)

stairs (?)

Lean-to *Loft* windows on west side