

**ROSS MANSION QUARTER
SEAFORD, SUSSEX COUNTY, DELAWARE
HISTORIC STRUCTURE REPORT**

For
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University of Delaware

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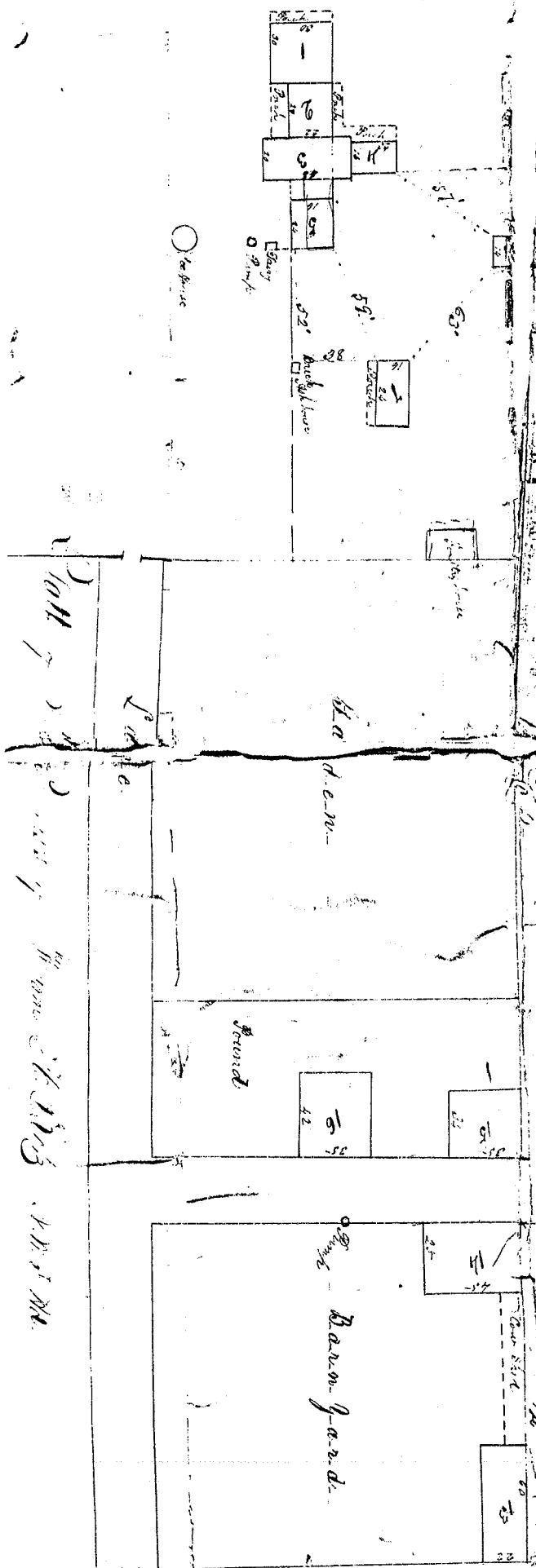
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Introduction

The Ross Mansion Quarter Committee was appointed by President David Roselle of the University of Delaware to review the architecture and historical documentation of the Ross Mansion Quarter and to formulate an historic structures report consisting of recommendations that will assist the Seaford Historical Society in their proposed restoration and interpretation of the structure. Situated on agricultural property held in trust for the University of Delaware, the Ross Mansion Quarter was identified by Claudia Melson of the Seaford Historical Society. At their request, the Ross Mansion Quarter was donated by the University of Delaware to the Seaford Historical Society. Fieldwork on the Ross Mansion Quarter was supported by a state Historic Preservation fund subgrant awarded to the Center for Historic Architecture and Engineering. University of Delaware graduate students Gabrielle Lanier, Wanda S. Czerwinski, Nancy Van Dolsen, and Robert Koelle assisted with the field documentation of the structure. Reproduction and other aspects of report production were funded by the Seaford Historical Society.

The appointed committee consisted of David L. Ames, Robert Bethke, James Curtis, J. Ritchie Garrison, Bernard L. Herman, James Newton, Rebecca J. Siders, and William H. Williams. Their individual and combined perspectives on African-American culture, folklore and folklife, social and economic history, historic architecture, cultural resource management, and museum studies are reflected in the ensuing pages. Individual committee members' observations and recommendations compose the bulk of the historic structures report following the introductory recommendations. The committee's findings and recommendations stem from several observations we share about the historical and architectural significance of the Ross Quarter. We believe that the significance of the building extends beyond its historic past and into its future use as an interpretive element at the Seaford Historical Society's Governor Ross Mansion site. The Ross Mansion Quarter is a remarkable and rare artifact documenting a complex, often painful, period of rural life in Delaware; it is the only documented slave dwelling standing in Delaware.

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THE COMPANY ON _____ Dollars, repewing _____ policies

INTERSECTION OF DEPOSIT NOTE HEADS BY
- NO. 1 -

THE KENTUCKY MUTUAL INSURANCE COMPANY.

1910
DUE JANUARY 1, 1902 IN FURNITURE
OFF REAPER, DELAWARE.

Interest ----- \$

Less 7 per cent. interest on balance to credit, December 31, 1900

Amount due \$

AGENT.

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Recommendations for the Future of the Ross Mansion Quarter

Our recommendations for future use and development of the Ross Mansion Quarter include three overall ones as well as a series of specific ones focused on the physical aspects of the building, research and historic context development that will increase our understanding of the quarter, and suggestions for possible directions of interpretation and education activities.

1. The Ross Mansion Quarter represents an important and unique opportunity to expand the interpretation of African-American history in Delaware and on the Delmarva Peninsula. Thus, the Ross Mansion Quarter should be documented and interpreted with an eye to its place in a regional as well as the local context.

2. The Ross Mansion Quarter with its later history as an “improved” tenant dwelling presents a rare, possibly unique, chance to interpret and exhibit the historic transition from slavery through emancipation to freedom for African-Americans in Delaware. As one committee member states, the site calls for a “documented accounting directed toward public awareness of 19th-century Sussex County ‘plantation’ economy in contexts of both continuities and changes.” Thus, we recommend that the Seaford Historical Society consider placing equal emphasis on the quarter’s history as a slave quarter and as a tenant house. “Life for free blacks in Sussex was not a lot more promising than slavery.”

3. The Ross Mansion Quarter reflects several periods of dramatic architectural change. These include the re-siting of the building, refinished interiors, addition of a second story and gable shed, and removal of the original porch. The committee recognizes and stresses that the material remains of Delaware slave life are scanty, and that we must remain faithful to what the physical evidence of the Ross Mansion Quarter can tell us. We caution against overreaching what can be known about the history and use of the building and against embracing the interpretation of the structure as a “token” of Delaware’s slaveholding past. As one committee member writes, we need to be “honest about what we do not know and tell a larger story than the furnishings or architecture of the quarter would convey in and of themselves.”

4. Develop a plan. The Seaford Historical Society needs to develop a comprehensive plan for the Ross Mansion Quarter that will address not only the conservation of the building but future research, interpretive, and development needs that will make the structure an integral

part of the Ross Mansion story. Specific to the physical preservation of the building, the plan should identify well-defined goals with particular attention to tasks, time table, and an order of work. The plan should be developed with some sense of how the quarter fits into the larger Ross Mansion context and how it will be used to interpret the site. Although the building likely will be moved before the Seaford Historical Society can develop a plan, the committee feels that the dwelling should not be re-sited until a plan is fully in place.

The Building

1. After reviewing the attached architectural description and preliminary analysis of the Ross Mansion Quarter, the Seaford Historical Society should consider what is necessary for an ongoing detailed program of **architectural analysis** that will meet their general goals and site needs. Preliminary investigations already indicate just how complex and subtle the building's physical history appears to be. Future architectural investigations need to consider the building archaeologically, though as an above-ground site. Thus, future investigations should proceed with caution and care. Additionally, the Seaford Historical Society should take the following steps throughout the conservation process:

- a. photographically (black and white, not color) and graphically record all steps;
- b. keep a building journal or log that records all research and work on the structure;
- c. study and record everything (seemingly inconsequential details often have the habit of gaining unexpected importance);
- d. keep and carefully label samples of removed materials such as plaster, mortar, nails, and scantling.

2. Carefully evaluate the following four key phases involved in the Ross Mansion Quarter project: The four tasks identified by the committee are:

- a. first, **relocate** the building. This can be done even before the final siting of the quarter has been determined. Relocation may take place in two stages beginning with moving the structure to the farmyard where initial work can begin, and concluding with setting the quarter on the site where the conservation of the building will be completed and interpretive programs begun. Relocation will require the demolition of the existing second story and gable end shed.
- b. second, **stabilize** the structure and assess the most immediate needs to insure the preservation of historic fabric. Stabilization will likely necessitate roofing the house and protecting it from any further damage by the elements. Once the Ross Mansion Quarter is stabilized, the Seaford Historical Society can take a slower, more measured approach to the building's future.
- c. third, **secure** the quarter before renovation. Open and unfinished buildings are perennial targets for vandalism and accidents. To protect both the building and the Seaford Historical Society, the structure must be secured as soon as possible.
- d. fourth, **restore** the Ross Mansion Quarter. Restoration can mean many things, all of which depend on the interpretive future of the structure. Committee members feel that the most logical solution is to restore the building to its second period appearance as a freed family's tenement. Restoration should remain within the parameters of what is actually known about the structure. The watch words for the restoration should be conservation and preservation.

3. **Develop volunteer and member activities** specific to the Ross Quarter restoration and interpretation. The Ross Mansion Quarter will provide innumerable possibilities to engage Seaford Historical Society and local community members in the work of planning and restoration. Special events centered on the restoration process can be used for both hands-on interpretation and fund raising. A house moving or roof raising, for example, are just two elements in the overall restoration process that can be used to build community interest, publicity, and support for the Ross Mansion Quarter.

Historic Context and Research

1. Emphasis on research or **context building** should remain as high a priority as the physical preservation of the Ross Mansion Quarter. One committee member observed, "It is important to develop a context for the slave quarter, not only architecturally, but in terms of the agricultural economy in which it existed, and in terms of the people who occupied the building." All the committee members emphasized the importance of doing research thoroughly. Among the research priorities identified as necessary to the interpretation of the structure are the determination of historic patterns of use. The basic question was "how did people occupy and shape this space?" The committee also stated the need to understand the architecture, owners, and occupants in the context of Ross family, Seaford area, Sussex County, and Eastern Shore. The peculiarities of the Ross context, however, also should be born in mind: "The Ross farm's number of unfree blacks was many times larger than the average nineteenth century slave unit." The importance of establishing the historic context of the Ross Mansion Quarter is reflected as follows:

- a. the need to situate the quarter, mansion, and overall site both in their "historic past" and "lived present;"
- b. development of a sensitivity to the fact that the realities of slavery varied over time, by place, and according to individual situations;
- c. exploration of the role that the Ross family played in the lives of their bondsmen and bondswomen, and conversely the impact that slaves and later freedmen and women exerted on life in the Ross household. "In short," one committee member stated "black/white relationships are crucial to the story;"
- d. tracing the genealogies and family fortunes of the Ross quarter occupants as well as the Ross family itself;
- e. exploration of the role of African-American history and culture (for example, naming patterns or religious activities) in Delaware.

2.) The bulk of the committee's comments that did not address the physical preservation of the Ross Mansion Quarter focused on developing a systematic **research program**. At the outset, though, the committee feels that the considerable existing research materials collected by the Seaford Historical Society should be carefully catalogued and examined so that future research efforts do not duplicate earlier work and that all such materials be fully and consistently annotated. Following the assessment and annotation of existing materials, we recommend the Seaford Historical Society consider pursuing some of the following possibilities. Again, much of the research recommended would be ideal for volunteer efforts, ongoing interpretation, and publicity.

a. **Documentary research** that is both site specific and general in its focus will help us understand both the particulars and the larger context of the Ross Mansion Quarter. Some of the historic public records that are particularly promising include manuscript population censuses (to reconstruct demographic patterns related to the black and white rural population around Seaford and how they related to the Ross Plantation), manuscript agricultural censuses (to place the Ross plantation, its labor force, and agricultural products in the larger context of Sussex County), tax assessments (to determine the economic and property-owning status of black and white Seaford area taxables), and orphans court and probate records (to develop through the orphans court annual valuations and inventories a larger understanding of the architectural context for the Ross Quarter). Private records located in the Delaware State Archives and other repositories including farmers accounts, tenant leases, period newspapers, and insurance policies should also be developed for contextual purposes. Some of the themes identified by the committee include the activities of the Patty Cannon gang, the peculiarities of slavery in Delaware under 1787 law, and the tension between custom and modernity described in regional literature such as Townsend's The Entailed Hat.

b. **Oral history** and other categories of folklore and folklife about life in the Seaford community will enrich interpretations of the Ross environment. On-site oral histories taken in the Ross Mansion Quarter, for example, will evoke the intangible evidence of memory through the tangible material environment of the quarter. The search for family photographs can be tied to an oral history program.

c. **Archaeological investigation** is essential. The Seaford Historical Society should pursue funding for archaeological research on both the historic and present sites of the Ross Mansion Quarter. Archaeology may provide additional insights into the architectural history of the structure and into the lifestyles of those who occupied the building over time.

d. **Architectural analysis** that will continue to probe and interpret the structure has been identified above. Additional architectural research in terms of local construction practices and house types, however, should be a research priority. Through comparable structures, we will be able to infer more about the use and significance of the Ross Mansion Quarter.

e. **Landscape study** will provide an innovative avenue to understanding the physical and cultural environments the Ross Mansion Quarter occupied. Particular attention should be paid to the present house site in the woods over the next two to three years in an effort to identify and salvage cultivated domestic plant stock. Ornamental flowers, shrubs, and some herbs may survive around the site after having “gone native.” The historic plantings are as much a part of the site and its significance as the building and written records. Volunteers can be trained to seek other vanished house sites and identify other landscape features which will tell us about the “yards” of the Ross Mansion Quarter. The search for historic ornamental plantings and heirloom flowers and vegetables can be used to enrich the experience of the Ross Mansion Quarter as reflecting what one committee member termed a “collective ‘sense of place’ and ‘personality.’”

Interpretation and Education

1. Review the choices for **interpretation** and design **education programs**. The committee held that an emphasis should be placed on everyday life and comparative perspectives that place the Ross Mansion Quarter in the larger context of the transition from slavery to freedom in southern Delaware. Both the quarter and the tenancy periods are significant. As a committee member wrote, “There are two possible directions to pursue in terms of interpretation of the Ross Quarter: first is the building as it was used prior to 1865--as a slave quarter; second is its function as a tenant house, possibly for free blacks, after the end of the Civil War. Both avenues will require additional research in order to provide an informed interpretation of African-American life in Delaware.” The core choices for interpretation are as follows:

- a.) **period house**--an approach which singles out a particular period of historical significance for focused interpretation. The period house alternative often leads to “frozen” furnishing plans and a loss of perspective on historic changes over time. Because the Ross Mansion Quarter possesses limited architectural integrity related to its earliest use as a slave dwelling and because the building reflects multiple periods of historical significance, the committee does not feel that this is the best approach.
- b. **living history site**--an approach which requires interactive presentation and interpretation of historic folklife related to the dwelling. A living history alternative is not limited to a particular historic period, and may be used to enact “scenes” or “situations” relevant to the history of the structure and the larger Ross Mansion site. Living history programs can also include occasional programs which celebrate both “ordinary” domestic folklife activities and “non-ordinary” or special folklife activities.
- c. **adaptive reuse**--the use of an historic structure for both site-specific historic interpretations as well as other programmatic functions. One committee member suggested consideration of using the Ross Mansion Quarter as a gallery and demonstration space dedicated to the presentation and interpretation of African-American heritage in

southern Delaware. The committee generally found that an approach combining adaptive reuse with lesser elements of living history and period interpretation offers the best alternative for the conservation and presentation of the Ross Mansion Quarter.

2. **Develop volunteer and member activities** specific to the Ross Quarter restoration and interpretation (see the preceding sections on the building and research).

3. Use research and restoration as an **educational** and interpretive component; solicit and encourage the participation of both undergraduate and graduate students as well as faculty (high school as well as college).

Development

Development activities can range in scope from fund raising to coordinating volunteer activities. Many of these possibilities have been addressed above, but two recommendations remain:

1. Identify potential **consultants** who will bring their expertise to the conservation and interpretation of the Ross Mansion Quarter. At the same time use “in-house” expertise and services to work in conjunction with outside consultants. State and federal agencies can provide some measure of technical support. Committee members individually suggested checking into and drawing on the resources of such agencies and institutions as the American Folklife Center, Delaware Agricultural Museum, and the staff from the Delaware State Archives, State Historic Preservation Office, Delaware State Museums, and Delaware Parks and Recreation. Again, a plan will help the Seaford Historical Society identify where they require consultation.

2. Develop a **fund-raising** strategy for the Ross Mansion Quarter. The Seaford Historical Society may find the tasks of fund-raising and grant-writing time consuming, but many of their goals regarding the future of the Ross Mansion Quarter as well as the recommendations above can be accomplished through external funding. As a small non-profit organization, Seaford Historical Society is hampered in its fund-raising efforts by lack of staff and resources. Still, the Ross Mansion Quarter represents the kind of historic property and interpretive project that will be attractive to a number of granting agencies as well as private donors.

History of the Ross Mansion Quarter

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The Ross Mansion Quarter is first mentioned in the documentary record in December 1860 when it was mapped and described in a Kent County Mutual Insurance policy for the Ross Farm.¹ Described as “a Framed Quarter 16 x 24 1 1/2 stories high with porch” and insured for \$150, the building was located to the east of and behind the mansion (Figure 1). It was situated between the mansion and the garden, beyond which were the agricultural buildings (a carriage house, cart house, corn crib, 2 barns, a stable, and a combination stable and corn crib). The insurance policy was taken out upon the completion of Ross’s new brick Italianate mansion, which had been under construction since 1856. William Ross had inherited the 1400-acre property from his father, Caleb Ross, in 1841, and took up residence there ca. 1845. The farm was described as “worn out” but Ross applied “an intelligent system of farming” and was able to turn the farm into “one of the most productive farms in the state.”²

Tax assessment records for Northwest Fork Hundred show that William Ross was a slave owner at least as early as 1846, when he possessed 3 adults and 2 children. Over the next fourteen years his labor force grew to 14 adults, including two who were “afflicted”. It is possible that the slave quarter was built during the period from 1845 to 1860 to house the Ross slaves as they became more numerous. Research on several communities in the nearby Eastern Shore of Maryland for the period around 1798 indicates that while small numbers of slaves (under 9) might be housed in a variety of structures such as kitchens and work shops, larger numbers (over 10) usually necessitated the construction of a building whose specific function was to house slaves and was described as either a quarter or a dwelling.³ Regardless of when the Ross Slave Quarter was actually constructed, in 1860 it was home to ten men (Denas,

¹ Kent County Mutual Insurance Policy #1035, 1 January 1861. Survey map, 25 December 1860.

² Obituary for William H. Ross, Conrad-Tatnall Collection, Delaware State Archives. Biographical sketch of William H. Ross in McCarter and Jackson, Encyclopedia of Delaware, 1882.

³ Sharon Clarke, student paper, “Property First: Somerset County in 1798,” 1992.

64; Zachariah, 55; David, 40; Tona, 30; Solomon, 26; Aaron, 23; Ben, 20; Jim, 17; Abe, 16; and Henry, 12) and four women (Harriet, 42; Sarah, 40; Eunice, 20; and Amey, 16). The Tenant family, who owned the farm prior to its sale to Caleb Ross in 1836, also owned slaves, some sixteen of them in 1824.⁴ Presumably, these slaves were housed somewhere on the property; they may have been spread out over various structures located in different sections of the 1260-acre farm.

Soon after William Ross insured his farm, the Civil War broke out. Ross's sympathies were clearly with the Confederates and he became involved in smuggling arms to the Confederate Army. In 1861, he found that his political attitudes and, more particularly, his willingness to take action, were making life in Seaford somewhat uncomfortable. Taking his family with him, Ross fled to Europe. With the exception of one trip back, he remained in Europe until the Civil War ended. During his absence he left the farm in the hands of an overseer, with either his eldest son, James, or an old friend, Henry Adams, to keep an eye on the overseer. Ross returned to Seaford to take up residence on the farm in 1865.⁵ He remained on the farm until the early 1880s when he turned the property over to his son James.

None of the itemized insurance policies after 1865 list the "negro quarter" or any other building that resembles its physical description. It is our hypothesis that following the war, Ross had the building moved to the edge of one of the outfields, presumably to house either tenants or hired laborers, who may have been either black or white. For whatever reason, neither William Ross nor his son James felt that it was necessary to continue coverage on the structure after it was moved.

Ross continued to operate the farm after the Civil War, but the nature of his crops changed drastically. Always one to be aware of the most up-to-date agricultural practices, Ross began to diversify and focus on the production of fruit (peaches, pears, apples, quinces,

⁴ Sussex County Deed Books, AX46-32 and AX46-41, 1836. Transfer of land from James Tenant and Sarah Tenant, heirs of John Tenant, to Caleb Ross, a merchant of Philadelphia. Sussex County Tax Assessment for Northwest Fork Hundred, 1824; John Tenant was assessed for 16 slaves valued at a total of \$1,035.

⁵ Existing sources vary in their claims about Ross's presence in Seaford during the war, as well as the identity of the person who was in charge of the farm. It is clear, however, that Ross was absent from the farm for much of the period from 1861 to 1865.

raspberries, strawberries, and blackberries). He planted thousands of fruit trees in the fields surrounding the mansion and regularly shipped the produce out by railroad.

William Ross died in 1887, leaving the farm in Seaford to his son James. The property remained in the Ross family until the early 1900s when Brooks Ross went bankrupt and the farm was sold to Edward Davis. Davis' will left the farm in trust to the University of Delaware.

Status of Existing Research

While various members of the Seaford Historical Society have done an admirable job collecting data on Governor William Ross and his farm, much of the research focuses specifically on the man as governor, his relationship with his family, and his Italianate mansion. The research to date has included an examination of many of the standard secondary sources for Delaware, some of the pertinent deeds, orphans court records, and tax assessments, the Ross papers at Eleutherian Mills Library, the insurance records for the various owners of the farm, and a great deal of genealogical work on the Ross family.

Little has been found that describes Ross's relationships with either his slaves or his tenants and hired laborers. The only specific mention of the slave quarter itself is the 1860/61 insurance policy and map. It is important that the existing research materials be carefully catalogued and examined so that future research efforts do not duplicate earlier work.

Recommendations for Research

There are two possible directions to pursue in terms of interpretation of the Ross Mansion Quarter: first is the building as it was used prior to 1865--as a slave quarter; second is its function as a tenant house, possibly for free blacks, after the end of the Civil War. Both avenues will require additional research in order to provide an informed interpretation of African-American life in Delaware. It is important to develop a context for the slave quarter, not only architecturally, but in terms of the agricultural economy in which it existed, and in terms of the people who occupied the building. Even if extensive information on the Ross farm building and its inhabitants cannot be uncovered, the contextual research will still provide a means for interpreting the quarter.

The population census for Delaware indicates that slave labor persisted much longer in

Sussex County than it did elsewhere in the state. What effect did this have on the African-American population near Seaford? Did the few free blacks operate in the same sorts of communities that they established in Kent County? Did they act as independent tenants on farm land or were they restricted to the role of hired labor?

Population census data has yet to be explored either for Ross himself or for any of his tenants. There is the possibility of discovering who the actual inhabitants of the slave quarter/tenant house were at the time of the census in 1860 and 1870, and whether there was a separate household for slaves in 1850. Again, this type of data should be examined not only for Ross and his tenants but for the surrounding community of Northwest Fork Hundred to see how Ross and his tenants fit in.

An examination of Sussex County Orphans Court records to see how quarters are described would help to develop an architectural context for the Ross Mansion Quarter. Were quarters the accepted method for housing slaves in Sussex County or were other patterns visible? What was the quality of housing in Sussex County for slaves and free blacks as compared to the rest of the population? A study of agricultural tenancy in Kent County has shown that all sorts of farms and dwellings were occupied by tenants, both black and white, and there was little difference in quality of housing at the bottom of the ladder. On occasion, free blacks could also inhabit some of the better housing available to tenants--is this true for Sussex County African-Americans?

Another way to determine the type of housing available to slaves would be to link slave owners identified in the population census for 1850 and 1860 to building complexes described in tax assessments, orphans court records, and insurance policies. Is the pattern for slave housing similar to that observed on the eastern shore of Maryland? Are the same types of structures used to provide shelter?

An examination of existing records should be made to search for information on Ross's relations with his slaves and tenants. In addition, and particularly if nothing surfaces connected to the Ross farm itself, the same type of information should be sought for other slave owners and large landowners in the surrounding area of Sussex County. This will establish a social and legal context for the treatment and use of slaves on similar farms in the region. Sources for this research might include farmers' account books, tenant leases, tax assessments, population

census, and period newspapers.

Efforts should be made to track the slaves freed from Ross's farm after the Civil War. Did they leave the area or remain as tenants and/or hired labor on Ross land? other folks' land? Where do they appear on the tax assessments in terms of holding real or personal property? Are they able to make an impact on the community economically or do they develop separate communities of their own? If descendants of the families are still in the area every attempt should be made to conduct oral history interviews with them.

Specific tenants in the area , especially Ross's own, should be identified. Examination of probate inventories for such tenants could be helpful in determining the possible contents of houses such as the Ross Mansion Quarter. Linking probate inventories to properties known to contain quarters might also give some idea of the contents of the building while it served that function. Research on these tenants in terms of their economic situation, the racial distribution in their population, and their housing may provide greater understanding of their way of life.

The Ross Farm should be placed within the agricultural context of Sussex County based on the agricultural census for 1850,1860, 1870, and 1880. These sources will provide information on the types of crops Ross's slaves and tenants tended and produced--were they working in the orchards and gardens or producing corn and wheat elsewhere?

Governor Ross Mansion Quarter: Architectural Analysis

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The Governor Ross Mansion Quarter stands today as a two-story, log and frame dwelling with the ruins of a gable end leanto addition. Located in a small copse of trees, the gable roof dwelling faces roughly south across a cultivated field and looks toward the farm complex behind the Ross Mansion. The three-bay 24 foot by 16 foot 4 inch core of the house is currently divided into a two-room plan with evidence of a gable end chimney stack in the principal room. Access into the body of the house is gained through opposed entries flanked by sash windows. Entry into the gable shed was provided from the main block by means of a door cut through the log wall to the right of the now demolished chimney pile. To best understand the history and integrity of the Ross Mansion Quarter the following comments are organized by recognizable periods of construction activity represented in the fabric of the house. Our ability to understand the history of the Ross Mansion Quarter is aided by the deteriorated condition of the building on its present site. Decay and various architectural investigations have left much of the historic fabric exposed to view. To gain the following observations, however, some additional selective demolition was undertaken. This work was designed to derive additional information about the original appearance of the building and its relationship to the building described as a "Negro Quarter" located near the mansion house on an 1860 insurance survey. While architectural investigations have resolved many of the questions about the history and appearance of the dwelling, they have left others unresolved and raised still more. The conclusions and recommendations at the conclusion of the architectural analysis list these problem areas as well as suggest research and preservation strategies for the existing structure.

Period I. The Ross Quarter, as first built, stood as a one-story log house containing a single room and provided with a porch along the present north wall. The house consisted of a 24 by 16 foot block with a gable roof containing an unheated loft. The walls were laid eleven rounds high and joined at the corners with full dovetail notching joints. The cornering for the chimney end of the building tended to be lighter and included some half dovetail corner joints.

Additionally the walls were stiffened by pounding each log round into vertical wooden pins. Despite the *circa* 1855 construction date for the quarter, the fabrication techniques are consistent with eighteenth and nineteenth-century log construction throughout the Delaware Valley. The logs represent a mixture of oak and pine with the inner and outer wall surfaces hewed flat while the upper and lower surfaces generally had their bark removed but were left in the round. The interstices between the logs were chinked with riven scrap and fragments of sawn scantlings. On the exterior the interstices were chinked further with a sand and lime-based mortar covered with a thin, weather resistant finish coat. When sections of the present siding were removed, the surface of the logs on the south and west elevations showed clear evidence of weathering although the degree of weathering suggests that the exterior was exposed for less than a decade. The logs in the north elevation exhibited almost no weathering, a condition consistent with the possible presence of a porch formerly located along this wall. Pit-sawn poplar joists were identified as reused materials in the east gable shed and were likely recycled from the original porch when the house was remodeled in Period II or III.

Details of the Period I foundations and chimney pile are impossible to ascertain without archaeology at both the present site of the dwelling and the location of the quarter indicated on the 1860 insurance map. Existing architectural evidence in the cut sill of the east gable and the cut nailed board located against the Period I north jamb indicate the dwelling was heated with an exterior gable chimney not unlike the one indicated by the brick base in the existing building.

The interior of the original house appears to have been a single open room with the logs and rough wood chinking left exposed. Because the evidence for this possibility is ambiguous on a visual inspection, we will identify the need for microanalysis in the summary recommendations. The evidence of an exposed log interior is based on two observations. First, where lath and plaster surfaces have been removed on the interior, there is an apparent patina on the surface of the logs. This sort of patina is consistent with the build up of day-to-day living, although the heavier deposits associated with cooking fires are absent. The lack of a heavy patina relates well to the scenario of the Ross Mansion Quarter standing on its original site near the mansion house kitchen. Like the exterior log surfaces, the interior walls were exposed for a brief period of time spanning no more than a decade. Second, the existing lath and plaster finishes on the first floor of the log core are the first such finishes installed. Several

details in these surfaces support the possibility of their Period II origin. The straight-sawn lath are attached to straight-sawn vertical nailers placed on two-foot centers. The nailers are placed into irregular depressions roughly adzed out of the interior surface of the logs. The lack of patina in the depressions and their character as an afterthought or retrofitting further support the contention of an originally exposed log interior. Finally, the partition wall (which on the basis of construction details can be interpreted as the first and only partition in the dwelling) is integral to the plaster surfaces on the log walls.

Exposed straight sawn ceiling joists matched the exposed log walls of the Period I house. Unplaned and unornamented with either beads or chamfers, the joists were placed on roughly even 2 foot centers. The single exception is the ceiling joist closest to the chimney end of the house. This single joist is set 2 foot 4 1/2 inches from the gable and approximately 1 foot from the next joist. The irregular placement may relate to the construction of the existing corner winder stair which on the basis of construction and finish dates no earlier than Period II. The complete lack of evidence for a Period I stair raises the possibility of a simple ladder to the unheated loft. The use of stepladders for loft access is well documented in orphans court valuations from the late eighteenth century through the mid 1800s. Also of note regarding the ceiling joists is the likelihood that they originally extended six to eight inches beyond the exterior faces of the house and carried a board raising plate which would have provided the structural base for the roof frame. No evidence for the design and pitch of the Period I roof is visible, although robbed mortices in the log girt of the east gable indicate the former presence of stud-built and weatherboarded gables. Similarly, the evidence for Period I windows is uncertain. The roughly fitted board jambs for glazed sash and the pieced repairs over at least one window raise the questions of whether the Period I quarter possessed the present configuration of two windows in the north and south walls and if those windows were of comparable size and finish. The rough surfaces and general lack of finish and architectural amenities in the Period I building would suggest that the present first floor fenestration is a Period II or III improvement.

In sum, the details and features described above support the image of the Period I Ross Mansion Quarter as a roughly finished, dovetailed log, story-and-a-loft dwelling with a porch along one gable and an exterior chimney stack.

Period II. The Period II appearance of the Ross Mansion Quarter represents its period of greatest architectural and historical integrity. In evaluating the changes associated with Period II, the reader should be aware that the second major architectural episode reflected in the fabric of the structure may, in fact, be composed of two or more less easily distinguished bouts of building improvement. The principal problem centers on the precise chronology of when the building was moved (if indeed this is the same structure indicated on the 1860 insurance plat) and if it received its first major renovation before or after the move. The answers to these questions may never be known, but a carefully planned and executed archaeological program could go a long way toward resolving the issue of if and when the structure was moved and sited in its present situation. For the sake of clarity and in conformity with the strong documentary descriptive link between the quarter in the woods and the one formerly standing behind the mansion house, this report assumes that the two structures are one and the same. Thus, the following observations reflect the building's status in its Period II history as a moved structure.

In Period II the building was likely re-sited, weatherboarded on the exterior, partitioned into a two-room plan, and finish on the interior with lath and plaster walls, a box winder stair, improved door and window openings, and rebuilt chimney pile. The resulting structure retained the mass and scale of the first period structure but represented a significantly improved standard of living.

The Period II Ross Mansion Quarter was a one story and a loft, two-room plan dwelling. The log walls were sheathed with weatherboard and the corner joints cased with vertical boards. On the interior the old one-room plan was subdivided into a two-room arrangement through the insertion of a stud framed partition. The partition was built of two by three and three-quarter inch studs set flat to the ceiling joist and nailed in place. The new unheated room was seven and a half feet deep, while the heated common room comprised a rough fifteen foot square. Both rooms were fully lathed and plastered with the exception of the ceiling joists which were left exposed and painted. The straight-sawn lath for the plaster was nailed to one by two and a half inch straight-sawn nailers trenched into the inner surface of the Period I log walls. The Period II phase also likely included the demolition of the original porch and construction of a gable end shed using the old poplar porch ceiling joists.

The weatherboard on the exterior was mechanically sawn with mill-driven vertical and circular saw blades. Five and a half inches in face, the weatherboard was nailed directly to the logs. The lath, nailing strips, stair materials, and window and door casing were similarly reduced. All wooden members were attached with fully developed cut nails. In Period II the house was supported by brick piers and provided with a now demolished brick chimney situated outside the east gable of the log core but within the newly built frame shed. The piers consist of L shaped corner units two feet two inches on a side and roughly nine inches deep. The intermediate piers are two feet ten inches in length and also roughly nine inches in depth. Smoke and fire damage indicate that the fireplace faced into the principle room of the house and that the shed was either unheated or provided with an iron stove with a stove pipe entering the back of the stack. The extensive remodeling of the house included possible enlargement of all the existing windows. Only a more detailed analysis of the actual window cuts will determine the extent to which windows were widened and heightened or even added.

The key aspect in evaluating the Period II building is the degree to which the character of the Period I quarter was altered. The installation of the new lath and plaster interiors required the builders to hew away the surface of the logs to a depth of roughly one to two inches every two feet. As a consequence, the ability to reconstruct the Period I interior is limited. The enlargement of windows renders it difficult to recover, much less reconstruct original window sizes. The Period I footings and chimney configuration will remain similarly elusive pending archaeology. Even then, our ability to reconstruct the Period I stack will be limited to size and shape. The same is true for the original ladder stair. The present corner winding stair with its beaded board trim and box appears to have obliterated all evidence of the original.

Period III. The changes to the structure associated with Period III left the Ross Mansion Quarter little changed except for the removal of the original roof and construction of a stud framed second floor. The second floor plan followed the Period II arrangement below and included lath and plaster interior finishes. The construction of a second floor required the builders to saw off the ends of the Period I ceiling joists where they would have extended beyond the planes of the front and rear walls to form the seating for raising plates. The current gable roof on the two story structure, which likely reflects the pitch of the original, makes no use of reused materials from the Period I roof. Still, the original mortices for the Period I gable studs

are visible in the top surface of the log girts in each gable end. Finally, Period III changes included replacing the corner boards and some of the weatherboard. All stock for these changes was circular sawn and attached with cut nails.

The Period III changes altered the massing of the old Ross Mansion Quarter and its Period II changes, but, other than the creation of two second floor sleeping chambers, left the older spaces of the house intact.

Later Changes. The Ross Mansion Quarter remained essentially unaltered for the rest of its history. The major modifications included the introduction of asbestos tile exterior siding shingles, wall board for the first floor ceilings, and wiring for electricity. Evidence for indoor plumbing is totally absent. The greatest late changes are the result of abandonment and neglect. These include deterioration ceiling joists, loss of the gable shed roof, and collapse of the southeast corner log wall (which should be raised off the ground and moved into a dry storage area to prevent its loss). Indications of ruinous outbuildings are also evident.

Recommendations for the architectural conservation of the Ross Mansion Quarter have been made in the Introduction.

Interpreting and Restoring the Ross Mansion Quarter

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Introduction

The potential for recovering and restoring the former slave quarters of the Gov. Ross Mansion in Seaford, Delaware, represents an important opportunity to expand the interpretation of the state's African-American history. By accepting stewardship of the only documented slave quarters presently known in the state, the Seaford Historical Society will have to carefully consider the implications for educating the public about an important yet painful part of the state's history. The restoration of the building to its original site will set off a chain reaction of other questions about the restoration of the micro-landscape around the mansion and its attendant outbuildings. More importantly, the building will force visitors to confront how the lives of black and white people intersected and coexisted during the ante bellum and reconstruction eras. If these anticipated developments represent rich opportunities for learning, they will also introduce new problems that the society will have to resolve. These problems include the need to determine *what* ought to be interpreted when the evidence proves inconclusive or politically threatening to different local constituencies. None of these potential problems should deter the historical society from proceeding with the project, but it should plan deliberately.

Interpretive Issues

Despite growing interest in Delaware's African-American history among both the white and black communities, there are very few pre Civil War buildings specifically associated with African-American culture. Officials at the State Historic Preservation Office and academic advisors at the University of Delaware and Delaware State College have all indicated that the identification and preservation of buildings associated with Delaware's black history is a high priority. The Ross Mansion Quarter presents a rare, possibly unique, chance to study and exhibit the history of slavery, emancipation, and race relations in the state. This last point is critical because we still have much to learn about slavery in Delaware. As scholarly study of

colonial and ante bellum slavery has progressed, historians have learned that the peculiar institution and slave life was complex and variegated. Delaware's slave owners followed patterns associated with both the mid-Atlantic region's tenant and family-owned farms and the plantation economy of some areas of the Chesapeake region where gangs of slaves worked fields of staple crops. We know too that slavery declined in the state throughout the ante bellum period and that Delaware possessed a large population of freed blacks who followed trades, served as laborers, and ran family farms. Governor Ross was among a distinct, but small and powerful, group of slave holders in the region when the Civil War began, and was decidedly pro-Southern in his political sympathies, at least as they pertained to race relations. In selecting an interpretive strategy for the Ross Mansion Quarter, then, the historical society needs to convey to visitors a sense of the complexity of black/white relations at the Ross Mansion and beyond. By choosing to own slaves in the 1850s and early 60s, Governor Ross took a decidedly minority point of view, continuing a labor practice and set of social relationships that was declining slowly statewide; the vast majority of Delaware's African-Americans were not slaves but free—able to choose their own lives within the confines of a majority white society deeply ambivalent about race relations and usually prejudiced against the idea of equality.

Although public attention has centered on the Ross Mansion Quarter as a slave dwelling, it was not a quarter for very long. During most of its existence, then, the building was apparently a tenant house with a second story and a lean-to shed. In restoring the building as a quarter, the historical society will destroy most of the evidence of what the building was like during most of its history. In architectural terms, the period as tenant house looms large, but in political terms, the short period it served as a quarter is what makes it significantly different than any other tenant house and, therefore, worthy of preservation. However brief it may have been, this period as a quarter makes the building emotionally charged, evoking in tangible form a painful period in the state's and nation's history. Yet the post-emancipation years were also painful as African-Americans sought to make lives in a world where the old rules were turned upside down and replaced by a rigidly segregated society that in some cases denied them traditional rights they had once enjoyed. Governor Ross's decision to physically remove the quarter from his back yard represented a tangible expression of the separation between blacks and whites, a change from a time when (in spite of the inequalities inherent in

slavery) he and other slave owners had considered individual slaves part of the “family,” to a time when he and his peers would see all blacks as a kind of inferior caste to be kept apart from whites as much as possible. Both of these periods in Delaware’s history deserve interpretation that will help people confront the past in terms of its complexities, successes, conflicts, contradictions, and tragedies.

Unfortunately, the physical evidence for slave life in Delaware is still scanty. Restoring the Ross Mansion Quarter is going to require more than simple disassembly of a log and frame building and re-erection on a new site. The historical society needs to think of the building as an archaeologist would think of an excavation at a new site. Almost all archaeology is a destructive process in which the evidence is systematically ruined to learn about the past. Like an archaeologist who reads below ground stratigraphy for the chronology of past changes, the historical society should begin by stripping away layers of the past, one at a time, carefully recording each as it is revealed. Take off the most recent layers first and work back to the oldest layers. *Study everything*, keep samples for later reference. There is no second chance; if you miss something and send the evidence to the dump, it is lost. Paint samples, hardware, building materials, construction techniques, the chemistry of mortar, and even the spacing of tree rings are part of the evidence base.

Details are important. For example; the Governor Ross Mansion is one of Delaware’s most elegant Italianate style mansion houses. To what degree did the Ross Mansion Quarter reflect the mansion’s elegance? Why was the quarter built of logs, a construction technique generally reserved in the 1850s for agricultural outbuildings? Was it plastered originally? Plastered interiors would not only indicate Ross’s willingness to spend money on the quarters, but, presumably, would suggest some concern for the comfort and well being of his slaves’ housing, no matter how he may have regarded them personally. Similarly the presence or absence of soot on the ceiling joists should allow us to estimate how well the house was warmed, whether the cooking was done indoors (it may have occurred outdoors or in the kitchen of the mansion), and what standards of cleanliness were like. Even patterns of nail holes can reveal where people hung things, put up shelves, or used decorative items. The only way to recover this level of detail is to slowly and deliberately remove later accretions, preferably by or with someone who can recognize and interpret the evidence as it is uncovered.

Issues for Restoration

Based on preliminary field investigation, the quarter seems to have been exposed log inside and out during its earliest history. The logs are weathered slightly and the chinking on the exterior is carefully finished, clearly an unnecessary and wasteful construction detail if the logs were to receive cladding immediately. At present we cannot tell how long this period may have lasted, perhaps a few months, possibly a decade. The owner, whether Ross or someone else, then sided the building with clapboards after this earliest period. The interior plaster and partition wall are still puzzling. The interior logs are darkened with soot and oxidation as if they were exposed to soot from a fireplace before lath and plaster was added. They may date after the building was no longer a quarter, but careful "excavation" of these layers should tell more about the building sequence.

To do the job right, the historical society is going to find the process of stripping away layers of evidence slow and, at times, frustrating. It is not the sort of work most contractors can or are willing to do because it requires that the job stop when new evidence is revealed to permit study, recording, and interpretation. If the society has members who have the time and strength, the work can be done "in house" with outside consultants who can serve as advisors. This approach will give the society time to raise money and study the building and the sites it has occupied. Do not move the building until you have to or are ready, but do not delay endlessly. If at all possible, shore up the structure, cover the windows and openings with strand board, and put a temporary roof on to prevent further water infiltration and provide a measure of security. Get the section of the wall that has fallen out of the building off the ground and under shelter, preferably in one piece. Covering it with a tarpaulin shows good intentions, but water will still get in via the ground and the tarpaulin will prevent ventilation. In effect, the fallen wall section under the tarpaulin has its own tropical micro-climate encouraging rot. Get it into one of the drier barns and put it up on wooden stickers to get air circulating around it.

While stabilizing and studying the building, the society will need to conduct documentary research on Governor Ross, his slaves, other slave holders in Sussex county, and, more generally, slave life in the area near Seaford. To interpret and/or restore the building, you

need to understand its architecture, occupants, and owners in context. Otherwise the building is merely an interesting curiosity without relationship to the larger issue of slavery, plantation labor, race relationships, and domestic life on the Eastern Shore. This documentary research is also essential because the building itself will not “speak” about the lives of slaves. The society will have to rely on all the evidence it can find to formulate a detailed interpretation of what probably happened at the Ross Mansion. The research should canvas the following sources: documentary records in state and local archives, oral histories among the descendants of Governor Ross and his former slaves, archaeological materials below ground at the original site and the present location of the building, and the internal evidence in the structure. The presumption implicit in these categories is that the entire history of the building and its occupants is potentially significant, not just a few years when the building was a slave quarters. Only after most of the research is assembled, can the historical society really make an informed judgement about how to interpret the quarter to the public.

This process will take some time, probably several years. Let the research dictate the pace of work on the building. Some of the most sloppy restorations undertaken by American museums were and are caused by staff or donors who are anxious to see results and do not care particularly how those results are obtained. Restoration is usually expensive, particularly when it is done properly. It will take time to raise money to fund the research, removal, and restoration of the quarter. Unless a well-endowed donor comes along to pay for the project, the society will probably have to practice a pay-as-you-go approach, combining grants, fund raising activities, and gifts to finish the work. Such an approach will work and sometimes has a hidden advantage. It forces the project directors to halt the process periodically, think about it, and clarify goals and priorities before proceeding with the next round of fund raising.

It is also possible to use this research process as an interpretive strategy, involving the public in how restoration is practiced. For a number of years institutions such as Historic Annapolis and Colonial Williamsburg have invited the public to tour archaeological excavations while the work is going on and listen to interpreters talk about how archaeology is done and what kinds of things we can learn from digging up the past. Similarly, Historic Deerfield, Inc. has allowed visitors to tour the E. H. Williams House, a dwelling it has been restoring since 1983. All three institutions have found that many visitors are fascinated with seeing how museums

conduct restoration and research and are interested in being permitted to see work in progress. The approach also generates publicity about the institution and its mission, publicity that might be used for fund raising.

While the research goes forward, the historical society should begin to consider its options for exhibiting and interpreting the structure. It should develop educational programs for a variety of ages in consultation with educators and concerned groups. For school aged children, begin by contacting interested local teachers to jointly plan how school curriculum might make use of the quarters. Work with interested members of the local African-American community on oral history and solicit their opinion on how the building should be interpreted; it is essential that this community be involved in a meaningful way with this project. In seeking cooperation from these groups, narrow the range of options to a realistic number to keep the discussion focused.

There are a number of choices for exhibiting the building, some clearly better than others. The society may elect to not show the building interior at all but simply restore the exterior to convey a sense of the early landscape in the Ross mansion's back door yard. If the public is allowed to enter the building, the society needs to consider several possible alternatives:

- 1) Restore the building and furnish it like a period house. This option is problematic since we know very little in general about how slave quarters were actually furnished. Ascertaining specifically what the Ross Mansion Quarter once looked like will probably prove impossible; as a result the society will have to furnish the building using a "composite," assembled from a variety of sources, most of which were not associated with the Ross Mansion.
- 2) Interpret the building as a living history site. In addition to the problems listed in option one, living history sites are inherently expensive to staff, and visitation at the Ross Mansion would not justify the expense.
- 3) Adapt the building for alternative uses. The building might house a static exhibit on slavery at the Ross Mansion and the post-emancipation period or it might function as a changing exhibit gallery. This solution would permit the society to interpret the entire

history of the structure and its occupants using photographs, text, objects, archaeological material, copies of documents, and other exhibit items. Of course, the building also could serve as an office or storage area for the historical society.

Recommendations

Based on a consideration of the issues I have outlined above, I recommend the following approaches for the restoration and interpretation of the Ross Mansion Quarter:

- 1) Stabilize and secure the building immediately to reduce the speed of the building's decay and to prevent vandals or curiosity seekers from inflicting damage. Remove the fallen front wall to safe storage and frame in a temporary wall to replace the gap it has left.
- 2) Record the building and site with measured drawings (*including the current second floor and shed areas*) and with photographs.
- 3) Map and conduct an archaeological study of the first site of the building to attempt to locate precisely where it stood, and to recover information about the building's use and landscape. Interpret the process to the public and invite the media.
- 4) Carefully remove the later additions to the quarter. Start with the most recent additions and work backwards, layer by layer. Record each step of this process with photographs and written notes, and, where necessary, with additional measured drawings. Call in consultants to interpret confusing evidence. Interpret the process to the public and invite the media.
- 5) Conduct documentary research on the Ross Mansion landscape, its former slaves, and the role of slaves in the Ross family. Do not assume these patterns are either the same or different than for other slave holding families in the area. Expand the research to ask questions about slaves and slave holding in the Sussex County area and, more generally, the Eastern Shore. Attempt to track down the histories of former Ross slave families and what happened to them after emancipation. It is essential to involve the African-American community. Determine why the quarter was removed from the rear dooryard to a remote site.
- 6) Draw up plans for the removal, restoration, and use of the quarter once it is

returned to its original site. Design education programs for the building in cooperation with local teachers.

7) Relocate the building and restore it. After the structure is moved, conduct an archaeological study of the second site to learn about the building and its landscape after it was moved and enlarged. This information may prove important to the building if it becomes an exhibit gallery. Interpret the process to the public and invite the media.

8) Implement an exhibit strategy and educational programming.

There is one final issue that needs further discussion. Although it seems obvious that the issue of slavery and its aftermath is emotionally charged, the historical society will have to come to terms with the political implications of a decision to return a slave quarter to the Ross Mansion door yard. Evidence is growing that the American public is prepared to deal with controversial exhibits on issues such as racism and slavery, provided that they perceive these exhibits as balanced and well researched. For that reason, I have put considerable emphasis on the issue of research and the importance of doing it thoroughly. Moreover, there seems to be growing impatience with curatorial decisions that avoid mentioning subjects that are unpleasant even though most people know they existed. To ignore the Ross Mansion Quarter because the subject is discomforting, shirks our intellectual and cultural responsibilities. Yet we should not make the quarter a symbolic token of a guilty conscience. Instead, we must find out about and explain who the people of the Ross Mansion Quarter were, and what their lives and those of their master and mistress were like before freedom came and in the years that followed. My own preference for the future of the structure is to see it reused as a gallery so that we can be honest about what we do not know and tell a larger story than the furnishings or architecture of the quarter would convey in and of themselves. I do think the structure should be saved, not to remind us that slave quarters once existed in Delaware, but to teach us that slavery was eliminated, and that we still struggle with its bitter fruits regardless of whether we have black or white skin.

Ross Mansion Quarter: Folklife and Folklore

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Introduction

The "Ross Mansion Quarter" refers to recent identification of what may be the only remaining slave dwelling in the State of Delaware: a built log structure, 20 by 18 feet, located in southwestern Sussex County, Delaware, in the environs of Seaford. Preliminary estimates date the structure to the mid-1850s. It was built on land owned by Gov. William H. Ross, known both to have owned slaves and to have provided African American dwelling "quarters" on his property. Whether the dwelling actually housed slaves, or instead "Free Negroes," or both, is at this writing yet to be conclusively determined. The historic and extant architectural evidence suggest that the "quarters," a vernacular structure detached from the Ross Mansion, was moved from its original site to its present location. The structure is abandoned and in deteriorating condition, and existing architectural modifications to it largely conceal its visible importance.

The Ross Mansion Quarter, which currently stands on a tract of land held in trust for the University of Delaware, is being given by the University to the Seaford Historical Society. The Seaford Historical Society intends to restore and interpret the structure in the context of the Governor Ross Mansion.

The Ross Mansion Quarter calls for assistance in efforts directed not only to urgently needed preservation, and arguably restoration, of the dwelling per se; the dwelling, together with its historic happenstance, call for documented accounting directed toward public awareness of nineteenth century Sussex County "plantation economy" in contexts of both continuities and changes.

The Ross Mansion Quarter may warrant nomination for the National Register of Historic Places. Argument to that end is beyond the scope and intent of the present section of the Ross Mansion Quarter Historic Structure Report. Nevertheless, the substance of information herein as well as issues raised, questions posed, and recommendations conform in many ways with current requisites for researching a historic property for National Register nomination; the guidelines for the latter (see O'Donnell 1991) certainly should be consulted as both informing,

and extensively supplementing, the "Folklife and Folklore Section" of the Report.

Considerations informing the Ross Mansion Quarter arguably might begin with its historic and sociocultural contexts of "being." The "Folklife and Folklore section" of the Report proceeds with this research design as an organizing premise, in two Parts. "Major Recommendations" follow each of the two Parts.

Part I emphasizes situating the site in the **historic past**. Confirmation of points made, as well as research suggested, call for tasks and sources that are familiar to historians. "Historians" are here considered to include a range of individuals not limited to professionally trained historians, but include among many others local librarians, members of historical organizations, and collectors of Delawariana. **Part I** also introduces terminology and perspectives intended to guide "folklife and folklore" inquiries in tandem with current nation-wide calls for "cultural conservation."

Part II emphasizes situating the site in the **lived present**. Confirmation and pursuit of points made, as well as research indicated or suggested, call for tasks and sources that may or may not generally be familiar to the range of "historians" suggested above, but in keeping with the types of inquiries currently pursued by many graduate-degree holding folklorists professionally trained in America since the 1970s and also members of the American Folklore Society. Though the latter individuals sometimes self-identify as academicians, a majority of them by recent survey indicate that "some of their work was in the public sector" (Harzoff 1992). **Part II** especially encourages the Seaford Historical Society to seek out and utilize such specialists located in the Delmarva region, virtually all of whom share close and often working-affinities with "historians" and are familiar with repositories--whether archival or living persons--of history, folklife, and folklore with bearing upon the Ross Mansion Quarter.

PART I: Situating the Site

During the period 1780-1865, Sussex County was slow to adopt "many of the progressive farming techniques which were then causing northern Delaware to blossom into a widely diversified agricultural economy. Although Sussex Countians did begin applying the new principles during the last half of the 19th century, many vestiges of the 18th century plantation economy with its strong dependence on slave labor continued until the Civil War"

(Carter 1976:23).

"Slavery was a dying economic institution in Delaware in the first half of the nineteenth century. Delaware's farmers grew grains and a variety of other crops that did not require large numbers of workers like tobacco and cotton did. Also, Delaware's laws and constitution forbade the import and export of slaves. This ended the [legal] slave trade in the state and helped make slavery less profitable" (Historical Society of Delaware 1989:2).

Historic situating of the Ross Mansion Quarter in mid 19th century southern Delaware must acknowledge the statistical prominence of Sussex County generally as the state's slave-holding region. One accounting for 1810 cites 4,177 slaves in Delaware, of whom 2,402 were owned by Sussex County white residents, 728 by Kent Countians, and 1,047 by New Castle Countians (Carter 1976:25). Though Sussex County along with other portions of the Upper Delmarva Peninsula had a large and escalating population of free blacks during the 1800s, the same source cites for 1862 some 1,800 slaves in the State of Delaware, of whom 1,350 were owned by Sussex Countians. Benjamin Burton, prominent white Sussex County resident and relative of then-Governor William Burton, in 1862 owned 28 slaves and was the state's largest slave-holder (Carter 1976:25-27 *passim*). But "by 1865, the old plantation economy of lower Delaware was already largely dead" (Carter 1976:28).

What do these statistical patterns mean for documentation and planning for preservation of the Ross Mansion Quarter? What role should circumstances of lingering "plantation economy," together with "increasingly subsistence farming" in Sussex Co. during the 19th century (Carter 1976:23), play in interpretation of the site? Indeed, were the specifics of Ross Mansion Quarter circumstances indicative, and broadly representative, of slave-holding and slave tenancy in Sussex County during the 19th century? Were the structure and presumed day-to-day activities on the Governor Ross property typical, or instead increasingly anachronistic, against the backdrop of changing 19th century Sussex County agrarian economy, and both the politics and practice of race relations?

"Sussex County and other parts of the lower peninsula had a large population of free Negroes...Most [male] free blacks were craftsmen and small farmers" (Carter 1976:25). Nonetheless, "relations between blacks and whites became strained in the 1840's and 1850's as a result of many of the conditions characterizing the later slave era when the strong feelings

against slavery were being vented in state houses and in congress...Except in the most blatant cases like that of the Cannon gang, illicit slave trading was often overlooked" (Carter 1976:26). Indeed, in what if any ways might Governor Ross, together with the precedents of family-inherited white ownership and African-American occupancy of the Ross Mansion Quarter site, figure into an objective historical accounting of the so-called and infamous "Patty Cannon gang" once operant in the Seaford vicinity? (see Appendix).

Such questions are suggestive of issues that frame pursuit of more particularized Ross Mansion Quarter research inquiries, the latter including "folklife and folklore."

"Folklife" and "Folklore"

"Folklife" is here defined as conventional and group-shared forms of informally acquired, hand-me-down patterns of activities that in word, material culture evidence, or otherwise performed practice reflect display of collectively held beliefs, values, aesthetics, and customary behavioral expression. Folklife is thus tradition and heritage indicative of shared consensus for a self-identified "community." The latter may constitute groups that range from family to regional, ethnic, occupational, recreational, religious, or any number of other affiliations in which observance of vernacular "traditions" holds sway. In substance, "folklife" is akin to what is more familiarly known as "customary folkways."

"Folklore" is embraced in "folklife," though often more narrowly circumscribed as genres and examples of it: family and community oral histories; customary observances of foodways; legends keyed to local place and persons; music, song, and other household or public display of identity.

"A common misconception about tradition [of a folklife and folklore sort] is that it is part of the past. Although traditions did exist in the past, we must not lose sight of the fact that they are also part of the fiber of our present-day lives" (Lockwood et al. 1985).

Historic Preservation, Folklife, and Folklore

"The historic preservation movement began primarily as an attempt to preserve unique structures of national historic significance--a Mount Vernon or a Monticello, a plantation house or a Vanderbilt mansion. Today, many preservationists are becoming convinced of the

importance of preserving a more complete historical picture--the slave quarters that stood behind the plantation manor....Folklorists enter preservation networks not only arguing for the preservation of the ordinary and overlooked but convinced that the human legacies, ongoing and historical, that gird the foundations of built structures must be preserved" (Feintuch 1988:11).

Concern for folklife and folklore in historic preservation and interpretation is currently finding new and expanding advocacy, a trend prompted in large measure by National Historic Preservation Act Amendments of 1980, Title III, Section 502 (P.L. 96-515, 94 Stat. 2987, 16 USC 470). Briefly, that legislation directed attention to the preservation of "cultural intangibles." The latter frequently constitutes "folklife" and "folklore," as described above. Recent guidelines issued by the Department of Interior, National Park Service, for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places reflect what in historic preservation circles is coming to be more widely acknowledged under the cover-term "*Cultural Conservation*."

Calls for "cultural intangibles" and "cultural conservation" informing historic preservation and interpretation of the likes of the Ross Mansion Quarter are legion in number and referenced in other sources (e.g., Feintuch 1988; Vlach 1991). By example, two passages from one example are especially deserving of pertinent notice:

"Today folklorists are encountering historic preservationists with whom they share research and preservation goals. As the two fields become aware of their common goals and examine more closely their respective methods and points of view, there may be opportunities in the future for serious and fruitful collaboration....[The] historic preservation movement has gradually broadened from a preoccupation with tangible artifacts to attention to the whole range of cultural expression, tangible and intangible" (Jabbour and Marshall 1980:43).

"[The] historic preservation movement has gradually broadened from a preoccupation with tangible artifacts to attention to the whole range of cultural expression, tangible and intangible. The same way of life that created buildings also created songs, dances, recipes, religions, philosophies, medical practices, and a host of other forms of expression which, though lacking in artifacts, are clearly not lacking in significance. These aspects of culture are not only useful in providing a fuller understanding of buildings, but also deserve attention for their own sake" (Jabbour and Marshall 1980:44).

Major Recommendations

1. Documentation and subsequent public interpretation of the Ross Mansion Quarter site in Seaford, Delaware, should provide a sense of the day-to-day "ordinary" folklife activities of both resident whites and African Americans. Such activities should be documented by compilation of extant historic resources, to the extent possible, that seem indicative of collectively normative folklife at the site during each of several historic time-frames to be determined. Instances should include both domestic and non-domestic "spheres of ordinary" activities for both resident whites and African Americans. Domestic examples might include (but are not limited to) customary foodways, from food-types of choice to patterns of recipes and consumption; dwelling-situated handicraft, as related to clothing and other functional/displayed adornment, such as quilting and chairmaking; adult and childhood types of informal, traditional entertainment. Non-domestic examples might include (but are not limited to) customary religious observances; hunting, fishing, and trapping practices; gathering natural environment substances for use in herbal folk medicine.

The "ordinary" domestic and non-domestic folklife activities of resident whites and African Americans should be considered *separately*, as well as to the extent *interdependent, evolving, and mutable* within each of the historic time-frame contexts. *Comparative* perspectives surely should be encouraged. Just as certainly, any resultant interpretations insistently should be sensitive to avoiding stated or implied hegemonic implications that encourage stereotyping and special-positioning of either resident white or African American culture in evidence at the Ross Mansion Quarter Site.

In developing *comparative* treatment, comprehensive interpretation of the site and its dwellers in day-to-day terms of "ordinary folklife" should also strive to acknowledge and situate historically evolving circumstances of *race, class, gender, and sociopolitical* atmosphere in Sussex County, in the State of Delaware, and in the nation at large during the aforementioned selected time-frames.

2. Documentation and subsequent interpretation of the site should provide a sense of the day-to-day "non-ordinary" domestic and non-domestic folklife activities of both resident whites and African Americans. Such activities should be documented by extant historic resources, to the

extent possible, and include spontaneous, life cycle, seasonal, and calendric-dictated events. Interpretive presentation should ultimately be indicative of collectively normative circumstances at the site during each of several historic time-frames to be determined. Examples might be (but are not limited to) ways of conventional response to immediate property or adjacent community exigencies, like fire-fighting, and particularly the aftermath customs; customary religious-viewed observances of births, marriages, and deaths; harvest fests; and other formally observed or otherwise deemed special "holiday" occasions observed in traditional practice. Additional recommendations for "non-ordinary" folklife activities are consistent with those for historic and "ordinary" Ross Mansion Quarter folklife accountings above.

3. The recommendations above require identification and culling of written historical resources for folklife and folklore particulars informing the Ross Mansion site. This is a challenging task. "In the investigation of the human and material conditions of slavery, the historian confronts serious shortages of documentary evidence which require him to adopt new approaches in the exploration of the past. Already, despite the lingering objections from some historiographers on the reliability and value of oral testimony, the ex-slave narratives collected in the 1920's and 30's are being utilized with increasing skill and success. The type of data found in oral histories provides an invaluable foil to the observations contained in white plantation account books, diaries, agricultural papers, and travel journals" (Herman 1984:253).

Quest for such resources should begin, but not end, with the considerable published and manuscript information on Delaware history and culture to be found at the likes of the Delaware State Archives, in Dover; the Historical Society of Delaware, in Wilmington; and in library general-circulation and Special Collections holdings of the University of Delaware, in Newark, and at Delaware State College, in Dover. Other pertinent holders of resources of possible relevance include Delawariana book and miscellanea collectors.

4. Given the close geographic, historic and cultural affinities between southwestern Sussex County and the Upper Chesapeake region of neighboring Maryland, it would seem quite reasonable to cull the types of historic sources suggested that are available for northeastern Maryland. As an example, ex-slave narratives may prove to exist in greater number than for Delaware (see Monroe 1984:282), and may contain information that with cautious but

arguably tenable validity could be taken as "likely the case" for folklife and folklore at the Ross Mansion site. Minimally, Maryland sources should prove to supplement whatever information is available for Sussex County and the immediate environs of Seaford.

5. It is thus recommended in general that in terms of folklife and folklore **in the past**, the Ross Mansion Quarter site should be documented and interpreted with an eye to its folk culture in regional as well as site-specific patterning. Put alternately, while research may yield folklife activities and forms cited as indeed once extant at the site, there is considerable likelihood that those activities and forms also were regionally extant elsewhere--in a Mid-Atlantic region of white and African-American folk cultures that existed sometimes separately, sometimes together, and often in fused cultural blend that anthropologists and folklorists term *syncretism* (see Vlach 1991:4-5).

Part II: Situating "Sense of Place" and Folk Tradition

"Sense of place" is difficult to define in its dimensions, but the concept is commonplace enough to suggest its importance. The notion surely includes held perceptions of natural and social environments, and at that often environments shaped to greater or lesser extent by human activity--including what has been described as traditions of folklife and folklore. "A place cannot have a personality except as that personality emerges in the expressions of its people--their homes, songs, stories, and customs...Folklife expressions [perform] an important function in recycling the knowledge and values of past generations. They tie past, present, and future together" (Hufford 1986:11,59).

Is there a collective "sense of place" and "personality" that has long informed grassroots lived experience in the surroundings of Seaford, Delaware, and proximate to the Ross Mansion Quarter site? Are there folklife and folklore expressions identifiable in the area that today, in some sort of continuity with the past, indeed "function in recycling the knowledge and values of past generations"? Are oral recountings of the notorious Patty Canon gang known, and supposed haunted sites part of the "folk knowledge" of local youths as well as elderly adults?

The questions are transparently rhetorical, as attested by even passing familiarity with Sussex County "slippery dumplings," ham and oyster "feeds," scrapple-making, quilting, fire-fighters and church benefits, coon hunts, bluegrass music, or legendary place-lore. Folklife and

folklore traditions with considerable precedence continue to figure into both white and African American vernacular lifestyle. They deserve notice in documentation and interpretation of the Ross Mansion Quarter site as part of its larger local fabric of "living history" and folk culture in the present.

Major Recommendations

1. The Seaford Historical Society should consult with the American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, along with Gregory Jenkins, folklife/folklore and cultural conservation specialist newly employed by the state's Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, toward securing grant funding for person or persons to conduct a selectively focused survey of Seaford-vicinity folk heritage pertinent to documenting and interpreting the Ross Mansion Quarter site. No such survey presently exists. Funding for such an endeavor is competitively available under appropriate categories from the National Endowment for the Humanities; the National Endowment for the Arts-Folk Arts; and possibly State of Delaware agencies, including the Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs, Office of Historic Preservation; and DNREC. This survey demands professionally trained individual(s) holding a graduate degree in folklife/folklore and experienced in conducting equivalent survey contract-work elsewhere in the United States; there are many qualified persons who meet these requirements. The survey will require multiple ethnographic and report-producing skills.
2. Researchers affiliated with the Seaford Historical Society and the Ross Mansion Quarter site should, even in the absence of the above survey, consult for relevant materials in holdings at the University of Delaware: the University of Delaware Folklore Archive, managed by Professor Robert Bethke, professional folklorist, Department of English; Professor James Newton, Black American Studies Program; Professor Bernard Herman, Center for Historic Architecture and Engineering; and Special Collections, Morris Library. Leads to possible holdings at Delaware State College are suggested through contact with Professor John (Jack) Gardner, Department of History.
3. The Seaford Historical Society might consider soliciting the involvement of both undergraduate and graduate students in the Ross Mansion Quarter site effort. In addition to professors listed above, inquiries along these lines should include the Department of History,

University of Delaware; Professor James Curtis, History and Winterthur Graduate Program, University of Delaware; Professor Ritchie Garrison, Museum Studies Program; and the undergraduate Honors Program, University of Delaware. Request for current status of a campus American Studies Program, participant faculty, and students should be pursued through the Office of Dean, College of Arts and Science, University of Delaware.

Appendix: The "Patty Cannon Gang"

[The exploits of Patty Cannon and her "gang"--in fact and popular lore of Sussex County, Delaware, and nearby Maryland--have been subject to various tellings (Munroe 1984:282-283). Dick Carter (1976:25) has provided a useful summary of what he believes is close to historical accuracy. The following, much abbreviated in details, is a synopsis of that summary; it does not purport to substitute for research still needed for fully comprehensive and accurate accounting, especially insofar as implications of variant tellings in oral folklore and popular culture print.]

Patty Cannon lived in the town known in the 1820s as "Johnson's Crossroads," located several miles to the west of Seaford on the Delaware-Maryland border, and today designated "Reliance." She came to southwestern Sussex County as the wife a small farmer Jesse Cannon, the latter a descendant of a prominent white family in the area. There is evidence that Jesse Cannon prior to 1821 was involved in slave trading, legal and illegal. Jesse Cannon died in the early 1820s. Patty and son-in-law Joseph Johnson subsequently became notorious for operating "Joe Johnson's tavern" some twenty yards inside the Maryland state line. The place catered to slave traders who ventured up the northern reaches of the Chesapeake Bay. The attic of the tavern is said to have held both slaves and Free Blacks captured or otherwise enticed to the facility, where sales and re-sales (prohibited by law in Delaware at the time) were transacted. White slave traders were also victimized.

Patty Cannon was arrested in 1829 upon accidental discovery of a trunk buried on farm property leased by her across the state line in Sussex County. The trunk contained the remains of a Southern slave trader who had disappeared a decade earlier; the bones of other persons, including a child, were also discovered. Cyrus James, a black servant of Patty Cannon, testified as witness to numerous criminal acts over a period of years. Patty Cannon was extradited to Sussex County jail at Georgetown, where she committed suicide prior to trial.

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**Ross Mansion Slave Quarter Report:
An Overview of Slavery in Southern Delaware**

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Slavery was introduced to Delaware by the Swedes when they brought Black Anthony from the West Indies to Fort Christina in 1639. The Swedes may have added one or two other unfree Africans, but the Swedish inability to develop a foothold in the African slave trade seriously limited the number of Africans brought to New Sweden on the Delaware. In 1655, the Dutch seized New Sweden and then proceeded to import at least 100 slaves over the next nine years. Indeed, by September of 1664, probably 20 to 25 percent of the population of the Dutch colony along the Delaware were enslaved blacks. That is a far higher percentage than in the Chesapeake, where slaves made up 6 percent of the population in 1664. In fact Delaware, in 1664, was the leading slave colony along the Atlantic seaboard north of Florida.

In late 1664, the English conquered the Dutch holdings on the west bank of the Delaware. This development led to a decline in the institution of slavery on the west bank because the English conquerors seized a large number of Dutch slaves and sold them to Chesapeake planters. In addition, during the late sixteenth century the English were not well positioned to get deeply involved with the African slave trade and, therefore, couldn't supply any of their mainland colonies with many fresh slaves. The Dutch, who were well positioned in the African slave trade, were barred from sending Africans to Delaware and to the other English colonies by England's Navigation Acts. As a result, by 1700, slaves had declined to perhaps 5 percent of Delaware's total population.

During the late seventeenth century, the international tobacco market went into a serious decline and this put considerable pressure on Maryland's Eastern Shore tobacco planters. The gentry were able to ride out the economic storm, but for the "middling and lesser sort," the slump in tobacco prices spelled disaster. Understanding that lower tobacco prices demanded higher productivity per acre, many of these middle and lower class whites looked to the virgin soils and forests of central and southern Delaware for salvation. Taking advantage of liberal land policies practiced by Delaware's colonial government, hundreds of Marylanders moved into lower New Castle, Kent, and Sussex. However, because these whites were generally

not slave holders, few unfree blacks accompanied them.

It wasn't until the end of Queen Anne's War in 1713, that the first large wave of slaves moved into Delaware from the Eastern Shore. With the end of hostilities, tobacco prices pushed higher. At approximately the same time, Eastern Shore gentry were buying large numbers of slaves to work their plantations from the Susquehanna to the Pocomoke. But as tobacco became profitable once again, the problems of soil exhaustion and long-term family security reared their heads. Generally, it was believed that tobacco was so soil depleting that after several years of production, tobacco land needed to lie fallow for twenty years before it would regain fertility. In addition, members of the Eastern Shore's slave-holding gentry had to concern themselves with, not only the economic future of their own children, but of grandchildren and great grandchildren to come. Because they produced such large numbers of offspring, the gentry needed to acquire additional land holdings to insure their family's long term stake in the future. Many were attracted to Delaware because it offered large expanses of inexpensive fertile land that had yet to feel the bite of ax or plow. From 1713 to about 1765, large numbers of Eastern Shore gentry, accompanied by their slaves, moved into Delaware.

The impact of this immigration was felt in all three counties. By 1765, almost one out of four Delawareans was a black slave. While a majority of slaves were brought into Delaware from the Eastern Shore, still others were purchased directly from Africa via Annapolis and Philadelphia. Sometimes, Delaware planters travelled to slave markets in those cities to buy Africans, but on other occasions, the Africans were brought by the boatload to all three counties for sale. Almost all of Delaware's unfree blacks were directly or indirectly from West Africa, probably from the regions where forest met savanna. They brought to Delaware their individual languages and cultures, but they also carried with them the knowledge and skills of a people who for generations had worked the land and herded livestock.

In Delaware, unlike the other southern slave states, slavery reached its peak in the late colonial period. Looking back on slavery from 1860, when the few slaves left in Delaware were overwhelmingly concentrated in Sussex, most Delawareans would have been tempted to view slavery in the First State as a primarily Sussex County phenomenon. In 1775, however, slavery was well entrenched in all three counties. Kent led the way with approximately 38 percent of Delaware's slaves, followed by Sussex with 37 percent and New Castle County with

25 percent.

Up until about 1740, a majority of unfree Delawareans knew well the arduous stoop labor of the tobacco fields. By 1786, however, one observer reported that tobacco was no longer grown in Delaware as a cash crop. Indeed, by mid-century, most Delaware planters were finding wheat and corn preferable to growing tobacco. This meant that at least part of the slave work-year underwent a dramatic change. Just one example was that tobacco fields had been prepared by hoeing rather than by plowing. Wheat, however, demanded that fields be plowed before sowing. Wheat also demanded considerably less field work than tobacco and, to a lesser degree, than corn. Thus hoeing, often the work of female slaves, was no longer necessary when bread grains were grown. While male slaves could be used for such other heavy work as clearing and ditching, female slaves lacked enough field work to keep them busy much of the year. Masters in southern Delaware, ever aware that idle slaves were financially draining, met the problem by turning to home textile production to profitably employ their female slaves. Timbering and stock raising became important ways of employing male slaves that might otherwise be idle in southern Delaware.

Enslaved Delawareans, lived and worked on small units that generally contained five to eleven slaves during the late colonial period, and three to six unfree blacks in the nineteenth century. Generally, those slaves were in constant contact with their master and his family. Indeed, after working along side their owners all day in the fields, Delaware slaves came home to living quarters that were in the master's house, or in out-buildings and cabins that were very close to the master's house. This round-the-clock physical proximity was occasionally eased by a day or two off for visiting other black friends and relatives during holidays or during slack season. In addition, Delaware's unfree blacks generally had part of Saturday and all of Sunday off except for harvest time. Liquor and music seemed to be important facilitators in slave social gatherings. Indeed, because home-made brandy was so accessible, slaves were often accused of being drunk in their leisure moments. Discipline was enforced by the master through various types of rewards and the liberal use of the whip. A few Sussex slaves died from brutal application of the lash while others routinely felt its sting.

Because slave units were so small in Delaware, young adult slaves were forced to go beyond their own plantation or farm to seek out suitable marriage partners. As a result, the

nuclear slave family in which the father, mother and children lived together was very rare. This was just one of many impediments to family life produced by Delaware slavery. A second was the sexual exploitation of female slaves by the master or other white males. A significant mulatto population indicates how widespread sexual exploitation was in Delaware. However, many of the mulattos were products of unions between male slaves and white indentured female servants. Under these and other pressures, it isn't surprising that many African-American children didn't really know their fathers. George Alfred Townsend's novel The Entailed Hat, set in pre-Civil War Delaware and Maryland's Eastern Shore, speaks convincingly to this issue when one slave laments to another that because " We is black," we don't have fathers.

In general, African-American mothers lived with their children in attics, basements, and out-buildings. Delaware had few slave cabins and when they did exist, they tended to be approximately 16' by 20' log structures that looked a good deal like the homes of Delaware's poor rural whites. The food and clothing of the slaves seemed adequate in most cases. Physical size indicates that Delaware bondsmen and bondswomen were well nourished by comparison with peasants and urban workers in Europe, Asia, and Africa. Helping to vary diets was the practice of the master assigning garden plots and chicken coups so that slaves could grow produce and raise poultry for themselves and for sale to others.

Most African-Americans had a genetic resistance to malaria and those born and raised in Africa generally had developed a conditioned resistance to yellow fever. This fact made African slaves an attractive work force in Delaware because, except in the northern part of New Castle County which is covered with rolling hills, malaria wrecked havoc with white farm laborers and, after 1790, yellow fever was a health threat. On the other hand, blacks seemed to be more highly susceptible than whites to bronchial and pulmonary infections. Perhaps one fourth died from these types of infections in the first year in Delaware after leaving Africa. To most other diseases, blacks and whites seemed about equally susceptible. Small pox was a significant health threat to slaves and many of their masters had them inoculated during the eighteenth century. The fact that African-Americans often developed diarrhea caused them to consume very little milk. Combined with a diet that seemed to be primarily made up of pork and corn, the lack of milk made slaves particularly susceptible to pellagra.

Culturally, Delaware slaves soon lost most of their African customs and traditions. The

small size of the slave units, the constant contact with whites, and the fact that few if any blacks directly from Africa entered the state after 1763, made it all but inevitable that the heritage of Africa would fade away to be replaced by a slave culture that was modeled, in some ways, after white values and attitudes. When the African-born generation pretty much died out during the late eighteenth century, so too did the memories of African customs and mores. Slave naming practices in Sussex and Kent are just one example of the increasing dominance of white culture. Although most slave parents or parent probably had the right to name their offspring, only about ten percent of slave names in Sussex and Kent, during the eighteenth century, were African in origin. The rest were either Anglo-Saxon, classical or biblical.

Another specific example of the loss of African culture was in religion. During and after the American Revolution, a spiritual vacuum created in part by the loss of African religious rites and rituals, was filled by Anglo-Saxon Methodism. By 1810, probably one out of four Delaware slaves were Methodists and many others attended Methodist services. Although African-Americans seemed more celebrative than whites at Methodist worship services in the Early National Period, the differences between blacks and whites seemed more a matter of degree than kind. The differences that distinguish black and white church services today in Delaware were produced by developments of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

During the American Revolution and the Early National Period, the percentage of Delaware African-Americans who were slaves decreased from perhaps ninety-five percent in 1775 to about forty percent in 1810. All of this reflected a strong anti-slavery movement in Delaware led by Quakers, Methodists and those imbued with some of the radical implications of the revolutionary ideology that led the thirteen colonies to declare independence from Great Britain in 1776. Whether or not economic factors, such as the movement towards wheat and away from tobacco, had considerable influence is hard to say. It is clear, however, that the Delaware law of 1787, which began the prohibition against the sale of slaves out-of-state, took away from Delaware slave holders the possibility of legally selling their unfree blacks for a considerable profits to the growing slave markets in the lower Mississippi Valley.

By the mid-nineteenth century, slavery was not very important in Delaware except as an emotional symbol. Even in Sussex, the vast majority of blacks were now free. Clearly, in its day, the Ross Mansion Quarter was an anachronism. The Ross farm's number of unfree blacks

was many times larger than the average nineteenth century Delaware slave unit. The implications of this larger number of blacks in terms of family life and independence from the master were considerable. The work done in the fields was also quite different from that of earlier Delaware slaves. About the second or third decade of the nineteenth century, Delaware farmers turned from the production of wheat and corn to a variety of truck crops because the worn out soil of the state just couldn't compete with the rich virgin lands of the upper Mississippi and Ohio valleys and because the wheat crop seemed increasingly subject to disease. At the Ross farm, sweet potatoes rather than wheat and corn was the primary cash crop. All of this meant that field work would have a slightly different rhythm than it had when slavery was at its peak in Sussex County at the end of the colonial period.

Recommendations for Research

It seems to me that a study of the similarities and the differences in the slave experience on the Ross farm compared to a more typical Delaware slave unit of its day is a good starting point. It should be made clear that the Ross farm was not a typical slave-holding unit of its era in southern Delaware. Because an overwhelming majority of southern Delaware blacks were free by the mid-nineteenth century, their experiences should be added to this comparative study.

The second suggestion is to develop a sensitivity to the fact that slavery in Delaware's history, as in most other areas of the American South, varied with time as well as place. There was a significant difference, for example, between an eighteenth century Nanticoke River Valley slave unit and the Ross farm. There was also a significant difference between slave life on the Ross farm, where the cultural ties were with the slave South, and a slave unit in New Castle County where the Pennsylvania influence was strong.

I find it hard to make suggestions for specific research because I am not familiar with what has been compiled to date. But it does seem to me that a comparative approach is essential so that visitors to the Ross Mansion Quarter can compare the life of unfree African-Americans there with slave life in other sections of Sussex, in other sections of the State, in the Chesapeake region, and in the rest of the American South. Perhaps a brief comparison with slavery in the

West Indies and Latin America of the early and mid-nineteenth centuries would also be helpful.

Some historians in recent years, intent on showing that slaves were able to exercise considerable control over their own lives despite the oppressive nature of slavery, and convinced that slave culture was primarily shaped by African heritage rather than the New World experience, have had a tendency to ignore the vital role of slave owners and other whites in shaping the world of the slave. This has been, I think, a serious error. Clearly, in states where slave units were small, the impact of the dominant white society and the slave owner in particular on the life of the slave is hard to exaggerate. This would translate, on the Ross farm, into exploring the role that the owner and his family played in the lives of his bondsmen and bondswomen, and conversely the impact that the slaves had on the Ross household. In short, black/white relationships are crucial to the story.

Finally, I think that it is important to trace the fortunes of the occupants of the Ross Mansion Quarter, or at least slaves like them, after they were freed. My own sense is that life for free blacks in Sussex was not a lot more promising than slavery.

The Ross Quarter and the State Historic Preservation Plan

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Historic preservation activities undertaken by the Delaware State Historic Preservation Office are guided by priorities set out in the Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan, the purpose of which is to plan for the future protection and continued use of historic and cultural resource within Delaware. As defined by the plan, using the definitions of the National Register of Historic Places, such resources are districts, sites, buildings. In 1990, the Delaware State Review Board for Historic Preservation, which sets historic preservation priorities for the State, placed a high priority on identifying and evaluating those resources associated with the minority experience in Delaware.

As the first step in implementing this priority, the Board requested the Center for Historic Architecture and Engineering at the University of Delaware to establish an advisory committee to convene a statewide conference from which it would recommend long range priorities for the identification and evaluation of minority historic resources. The Board asked specifically that the committee identify those issues and projects that should have highest priority for immediate action and funding by the State Historic Preservation Office. The Center and the advisory committee filed their recommendations with the Board in March 1991.

In light of the finding of the Advisory Committee that no structures associated with African-American slavery in Delaware survived, the discovery of the Ross Mansion Quarter is very significant. Its significance lies not just in its survival but more fundamentally in its very existence. Slaveowners in Delaware, being relatively small landowners, generally did not build special quarters for their slaves but let them fend for themselves to find living space in corners of outbuildings or by cobbling their own shelters in woodlots. In general, the committee found, that the physical historic resources associated with African-Americans in Delaware were few because their number was small, (there were 21,627 African-American residents in the state in 1860 of which 5,711 lived in Sussex County) and they were the poorest of the state's residents.

Further, the committee found that those resources that do survive are severely

threatened. At the broadest level, since the settlement pattern of African-Americans in Delaware was largely the reflection of discrimination, historic black settlements are disappearing as discriminatory barriers are eroded. As settlement has shifted older resources are threatened by development and demolition and, mostly in rural areas, by neglect. The committee recommended dual action of research and preservation by placing its first research priority on developing a statewide history of African-American settlement patterns and demographic change to provide a context for discovering and interpreting African American historic resources while moving to preserve selected historic resources. Finally, the committee found the preponderance of extant African-American resources to be concentrated in northern Delaware.

The Ross Mansion Quarter is of great value in understanding African-American resources in Delaware and Sussex both physically and symbolically. Physically, as the only known resources associated with slavery, a funding package should be put together for the interpretation, restoration and maintenance of the Quarter. The State Review Board for Historic Preservation could place a priority on funding a portion of this as a Public Outreach program in its funding priorities for the next fiscal year. Without, at this point, making recommendations that would imply commitments, we would recommend that the Seaford Historic Society and the State Historic Preservation Officer should appoint a committee to develop a plan for the future preservation of the Ross Mansion Quarter and to develop a funding package of public and private sources, including endowment funds to support the maintenance of the Ross Mansion Quarter and associated research.

Historic American Building Survey Photographs

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
INDEX TO PHOTOGRAPHS

Ross Mansion Quarter
East of State Route 543,
North of Seaford
Seaford vicinity
Sussex County, Delaware

HABS No. DE-196-A

Photographer: David Ames

DE-196-A-1	ELEVATION OF SOUTH SIDE LOOKING NORTH
DE-196-A-2	PERSPECTIVE OF SOUTH AND EAST SIDES LOOKING NORTHWEST
DE-196-A-3	ENVIRONMENTAL VIEW OF NORTH AND EAST SIDES LOOKING SOUTHWEST
DE-196-A-4	DETAIL OF LOG SIDING AND CHINKING ON NORTH WALL LOOKING SOUTHWEST
DE-196-A-5	FIRST FLOOR: EAST PARTITION WALL OF WEST ROOM LOOKING EAST
DE-196-A-6	FIRST FLOOR: EAST LOG GABLE WALL BETWEEN LEANTO AND LOG SECTION LOOKING WEST
DE-196-A-7	FIRST FLOOR: WEST LOG GABLE WALL LOOKING WEST

DE-196-A-1

Elevation of south side looking north



DE-196-A-2

Perspective of south and east sides looking northwest



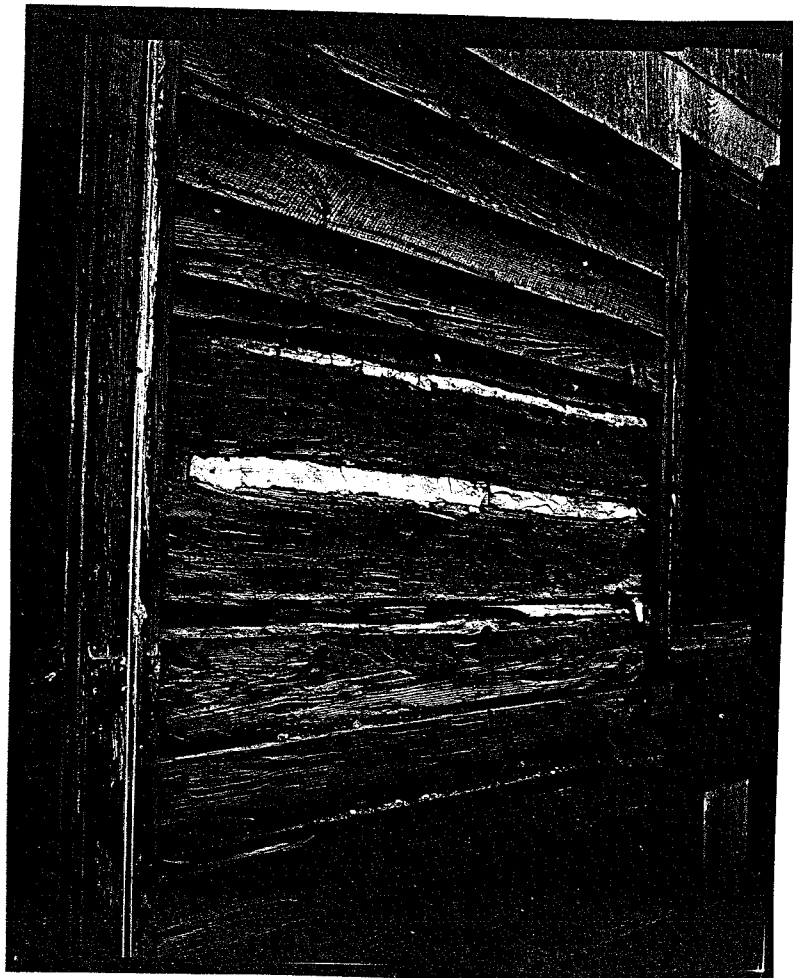
DE-196-A-3

Environmental view of north and east sides looking southwest



DE-196-A-4

Detail of log siding and chinking on north wall looking southwest



DE-196-A-5

First floor: east partition wall of west room looking east



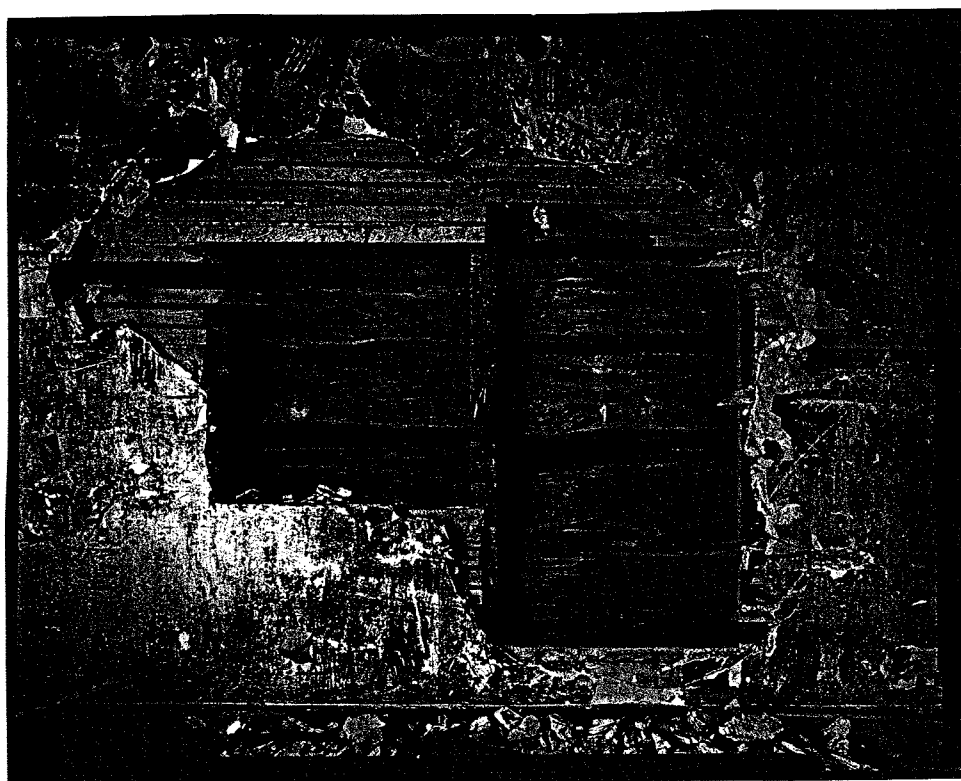
DE-196-A-6

First floor: east log gable wall between leanto and log section
looking west



DE-196-A-7

First floor: west log gable wall looking west

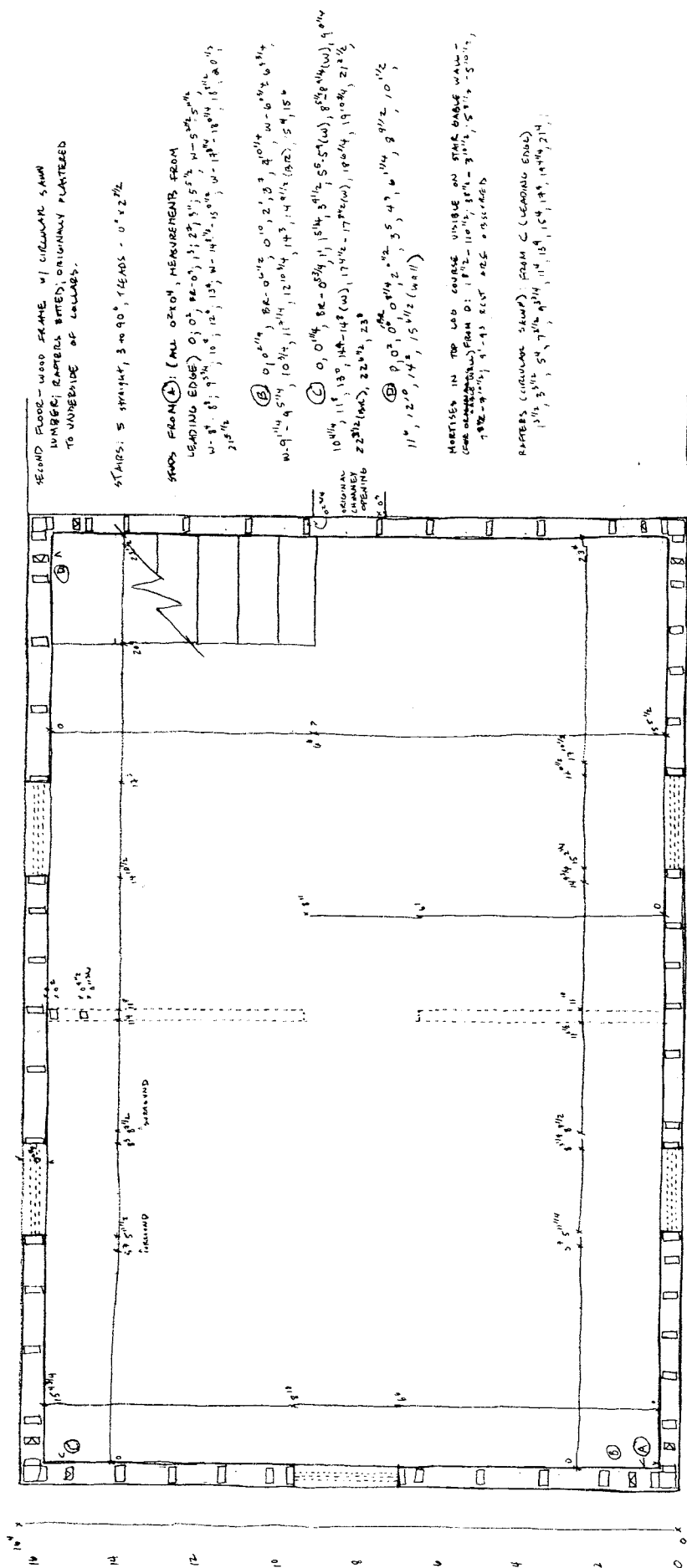


Architectural Fieldnotes

2nd Floor Joists, 1910-1911, 711 J.A. (2) [14-16] [32-34] [52-54] [74-76] [94-96]
 FROM NUMBER TABLE OF DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA [74-76] [94-96]
 [98-100] [118-120] [122-124] 125 to wall

STAIRS - 3 TO 90°, 5° STRAIGHT TO LANDINGS
 STRAIGHT TREAD SIZE 23" x 8"
 CLOSET UNDER STAIRS IS 25" DEEP FRONT TO REAR

JOISTS FROM A 0, [24-26], [34-36], [54-56], [74-76], [94-96]
 [114-116], [134-136], [154-156], [174-176], [194-196], [214-216], [234-236], [254-256], [274-276], [294-296], [314-316], [334-336], [354-356], [374-376], [394-396], [414-416], [434-436], [454-456], [474-476], [494-496], [514-516], [534-536], [554-556], [574-576], [594-596], [614-616], [634-636], [654-656], [674-676], [694-696], [714-716], [734-736], [754-756], [774-776], [794-796], [814-816], [834-836], [854-856], [874-876], [894-896], [914-916], [934-936], [954-956], [974-976], [994-996], [1014-1016], [1034-1036], [1054-1056], [1074-1076], [1094-1096], [1114-1116], [1134-1136], [1154-1156], [1174-1176], [1194-1196], [1214-1216], [1234-1236], [1254-1256], [1274-1276], [1294-1296], [1314-1316], [1334-1336], [1354-1356], [1374-1376], [1394-1396], [1414-1416], [1434-1436], [1454-1456], [1474-1476], [1494-1496], [1514-1516], [1534-1536], [1554-1556], [1574-1576], [1594-1596], [1614-1616], [1634-1636], [1654-1656], [1674-1676], [1694-1696], [1714-1716], [1734-1736], [1754-1756], 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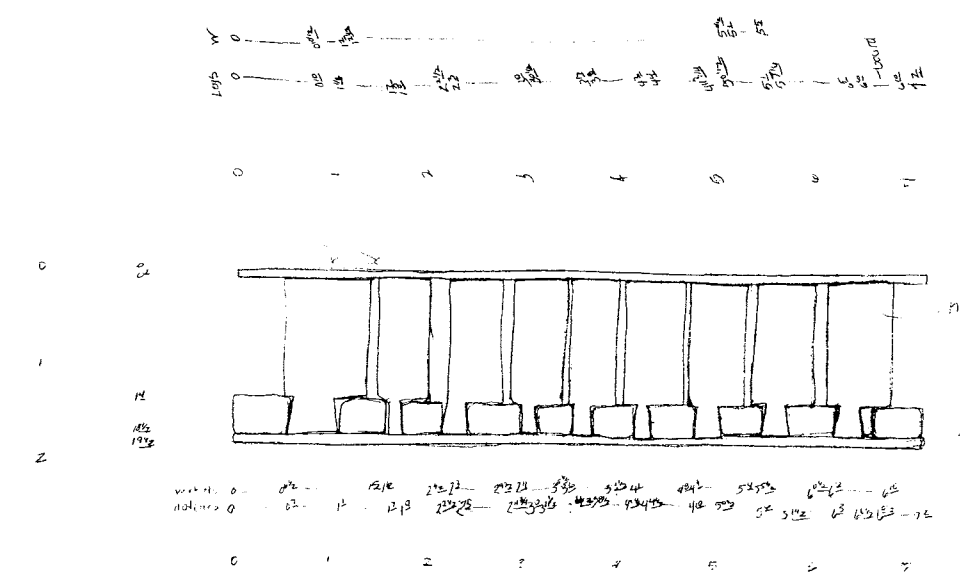
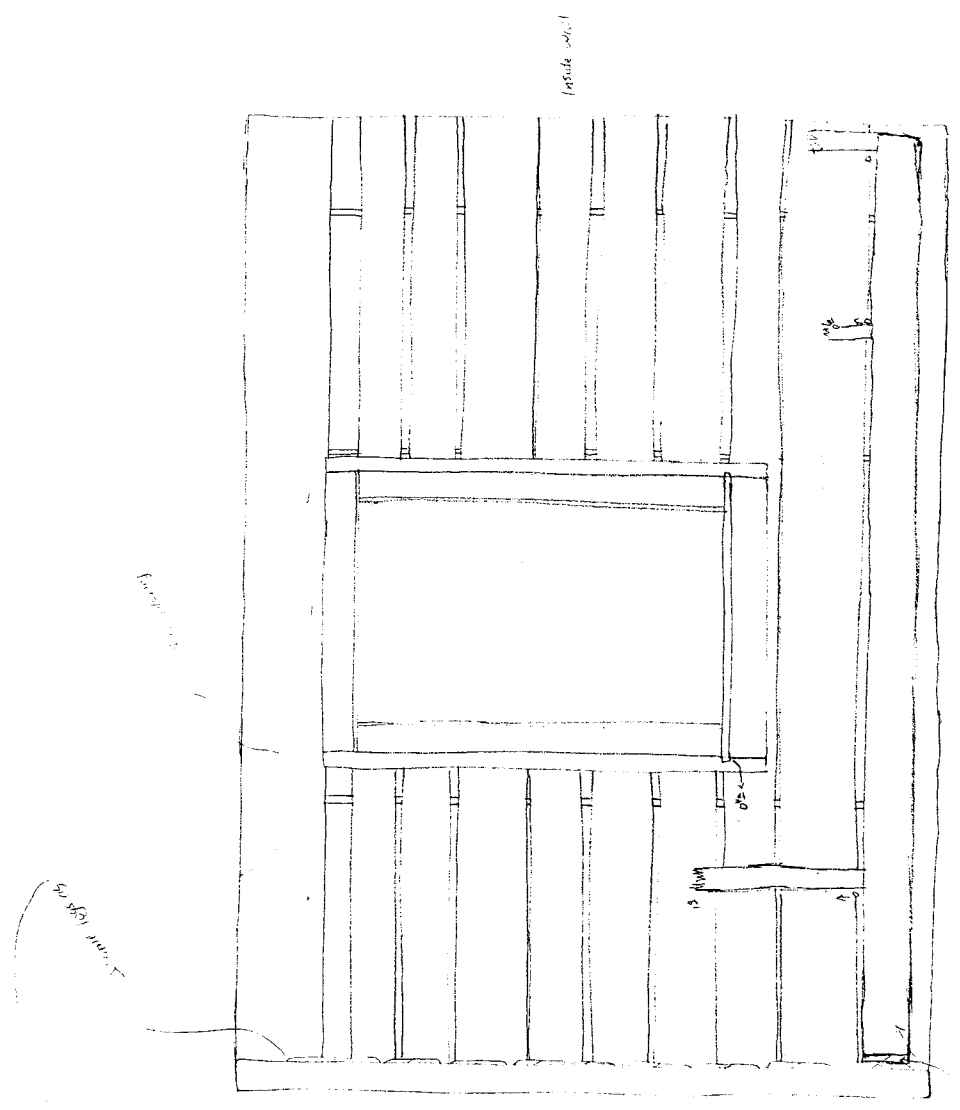


X 2^{3/4}
24

ROSS QUARTER

SECOND FLOOR PLAN
GOVERNOR ROSS TALKING HOUSE
NEAR LEAFORD, SUMMIT COUNTY, DE
d. VAN DUNEN, R. S. D. 1912
SUMMIT CO., 1912
1/2 = 1'

200-Tenants House
 January 25, 1982
 Susan L. &
 Wayne Czeranski
 1" = 1'0"
 Front Wall Detail
 South elevation



Chimney	12-28	32-38	45-54	62-65	71-85	92-105
0-0338	22-28	35-38	45-54	62-65	71-85	92-105
0-0338	22-28	35-38	45-54	62-65	71-85	92-105
0-0338	22-28	35-38	45-54	62-65	71-85	92-105

2.1" - smaller
 1.1" - 1.1"