

A Preliminary Architectural Assessment of the Long Point Road Elementary School in the Snowden Community, Charleston County, South Carolina



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HISTORIC PRESERVATION
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Long Point Road (Snowden) Elementary School Documentation (Preliminary Draft)

Project Introduction

In May 2018, Pat Sullivan communicated to the researcher that the Snowden Community (an un-incorporated entity bordering Mt Pleasant, South Carolina) located along Long Point Road were concerned with saving a school house located there. They were planning to move the building as a developer had purchased the property.

The researcher offered to assist by visiting the site and determining whether College of Charleston Historic Preservation and Community Planning students working with a Graduate Assistant from the joint College of Charleston/Clemson Graduate Program in Historic Preservation could document the building. The researcher subsequently visited the site on 15 May 2018 and determined that a joint undergraduate and graduate student team could competently complete the initial recording work in 2-3 days. The recording documentation began on 17 May 2018. Digitization of these drawings in CAD and Sketchup is ongoing at the time of this writing.

Site Location

Address:

603 Long Point Road
Mt Pleasant, South Carolina, 29464

Coordinates:

32°50'25.9"N 79°51'38.7"W or 32.840540, -79.860758



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Site Overview

The structure is located approximately 600 ft ENE of the intersection of Long Point Road (State Road S-10-97) and Interstate 526 on the north side. It is located approximately 600 ft WSW of a Waffle House (at 609 Long Point Road). The site is currently forested with trees approximately 20-30 years old. The site is accessed via a small paved single lane road that runs from the site to the NW towards Seacoast Parkway. It is part of a 3.17 acre parcel that appears to have gone into foreclosure in October 2017. The area to the NE of the schoolhouse structure is relatively clear while the other three sides are shaded by extensive mature trees. The site is level and the soil is a sandy-loam typical for the area. There is a chain-link fence between the site and Long Point Road. To the east is a manufactured home that is also slated to be moved from the site. Vegetation was kindly cleared from around the building by Snowden Community volunteers prior to the commencement of documentation activities.

Building Overview

The wooden building is XX in total length and XX in total width. It currently consists of two separate apartments that have not been occupied for some time. These apartments were converted from the two-room school house sometime after 1954 when the school was abandoned after construction of nearby Jennie Moore Elementary in 1953. The following sections provide an initial physical description

Exterior Treatment

The exterior is currently covered in pressure-treated T1-11 siding, a textured, vertically grooved plywood commonly used in less expensive building applications since the late 1960s. The T1-11 is applied over wood clapboard siding that covers the wood framed structure along both sides of the building. The porch ends are not covered in T1-11.

Roof

The roofing material is zinc coated steel formed into sheet roofing panels. In the case of this building it is a very common type known as "5V Crimp" that permits a sturdy overlap of panels and strong fastening to roof framing below. The roof is in generally good condition and has been repaired on occasion in the past. It is not painted.

Brick Piers and Chimney

The entire building is elevated on XXX brick piers that are around 16 inches on each side. There is a brick chimney stack visible from the outside at the center of the structure. Both the piers and the chimney feature "running bond" brick courses. The piers are one brick wide while the chimney stack is three bricks wide. The bricks are the common American size of $7 \frac{5}{8} \times 3 \frac{5}{8} \times 2 \frac{1}{4}$ inches (194 × 92 × 57 mm).

Porches

There are porches at either end of the structure which lead to doorways that pierce the center of each end. Concrete steps lead up to the porch on the end facing Long Point Road while

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wooden stairs lead into the porch at the opposite end. At this, the northern end, the porch has been partially enclosed to form a storage shed currently containing typical household storage items including bicycles.

Windows

The twelve window openings are currently covered by non-pressure-treated ½ inch plywood nailed into the window frames. This was likely done at some point relatively recently as hurricane protection. The wood window sash were originally six-over-six or six lights (or panes) over six panes. These appear to be original to the school house.

Interior

The interior space has been modified over time, however, the observable evidence indicates that much of the original structure remains intact. Details will be provided in the Documentation Results below.

Building Documentation Process

The project director recruited three undergraduate and one graduate student to assist with the documentation process (Trent Humphrey, Alden Finholm, Aiden Lillie and Rucha Kamath). The structure did not have utilities hooked-up during the documentation period so potable water and portable lighting devices were used by the team while on site. Per Historic American Building Survey (HABS) guidelines steel tapes were used for most measurements. Nikon laser measuring devices were carefully used to measure areas that were inaccessible. All four exterior elevations were documented, a plan view has been produced and the four interior wall elevations of the southern room were documented. Digital photographs were taken of the same with a metric scale present in the photos. Detail images were also taken by the team. The documentation team was careful to not disturb any objects in and around the building.

Documentation Results

Through the documentation process it has been determined that there were at least four significant phases in the structure's life thus far. Each of these phases and supporting evidence will be described in the following sections.

Phase I: The Initial Build

The first construction phase is reflected in a virtually intact framing system for a one room structure elevated on brick piers. The frame is painted white. The exterior was sheathed in white-painted clapboards that were xx in width and covered all sides of the building. At least two fragments of this clapboard were re-incorporated in the roof structure of Phase II. This initial room was XX in width by XX in length. It was pierced by three windows on each long wall and a single door on the southern end. During the course of recording an unidentified photo

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was shared by Robert MacDonald along with a 1955 image of the Long Point Rd School. Upon examination of the unidentified photo and the physical evidence, it can be said with great confidence that this is an image of Phase I of the Long Point Road Elementary School.

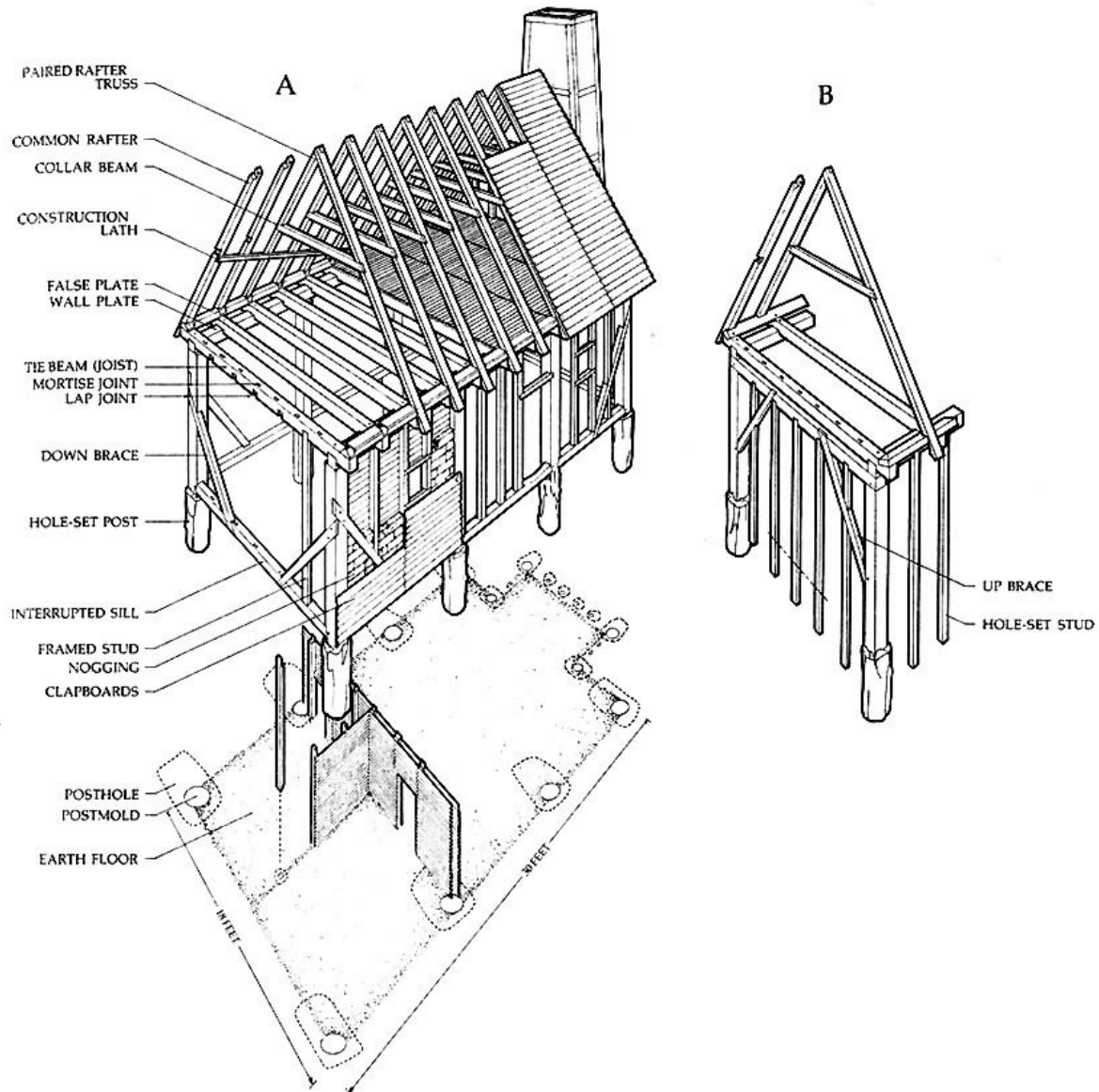


The framing technology used in this initial phase can be traced back to at least the 17th-century in Virginia and is commonly found in the American south and even throughout the Caribbean (citations). Indeed, the following quote from a 1684 pamphlet published for “Such Persons who are Inclined to America” could describe the current structure as well.

There must be eight Trees of about sixteen inches square and cut off to Posts of about fifteen foot long, which the House must stand upon; and four pieces, two of thirty foot long and two of eighteen foot long, for Plates, which must lie upon the top of those Posts the whole length and breadth of the House for the Gists {joists} to rest upon. There must be ten Gists of twenty foot long to bear the Loft, and two false plates of thirty foot long to lie upon the ends of the Gists for the Rafters to be fixed upon, twelve pair of rafters of about twenty foot to bear the Roof of the House, with several other small pieces as Wind-Beams, Braces, Studs, etc. which are made of the Waste Timber. For Covering the House, Ends and Sides, and for the Loft we use Clapboard, which is Rived feather-edged, of five foot and half long, that well Drawn lyes close and smooth. The Lodging Room may be lined with the same and filled up between (with nogging), which is very warm.

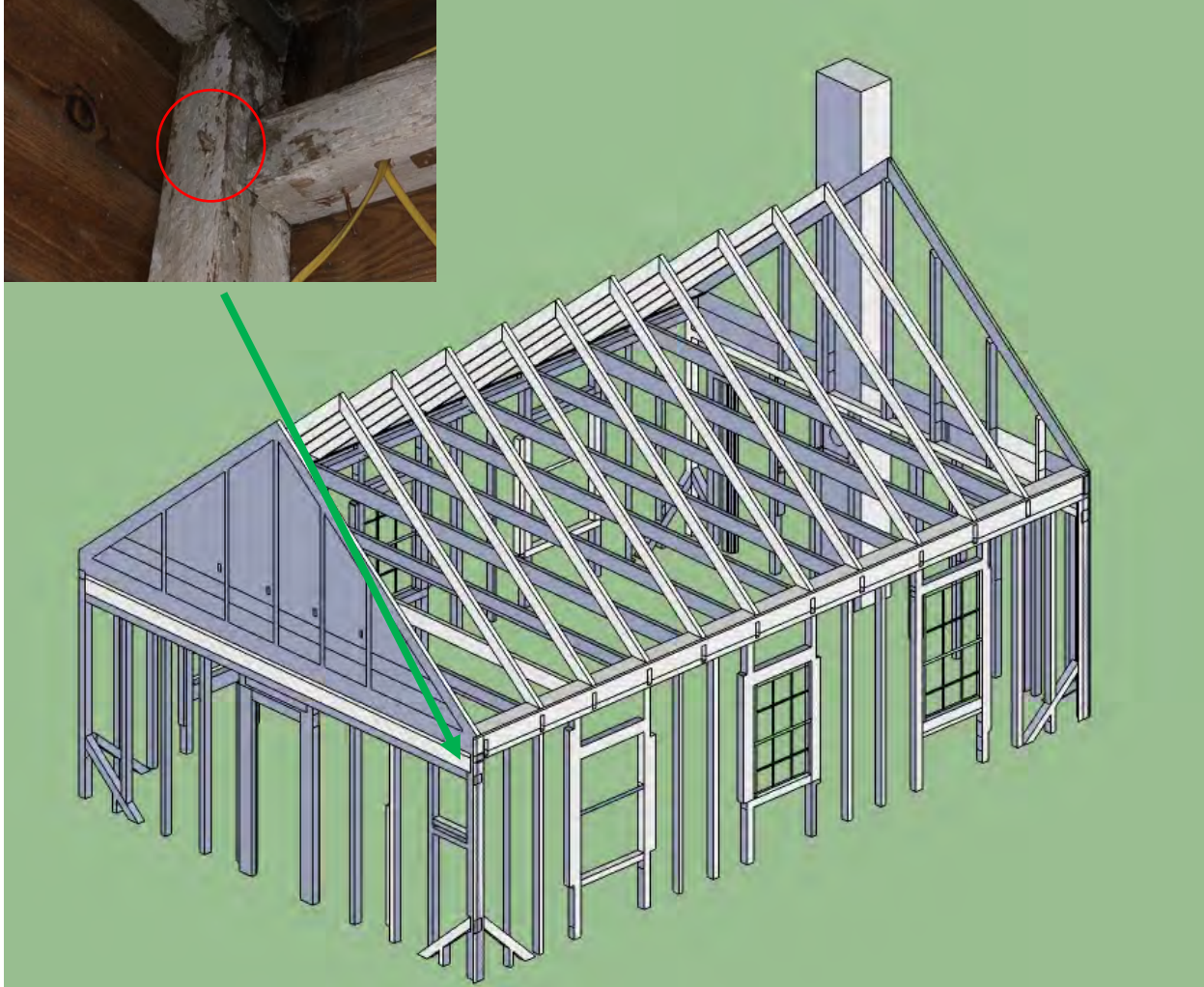
The illustration below is based on the above description and is from the seminal article by Cary Carson and Chinh Hoang on impermanent architecture (citation).

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The illustration below is a rendering of the Long Point Road Elementary School. It can be seen that building technology has changed little in ensuing 250 years. The framing system and even size is virtually identical. In 1684, the building was set in the ground while in the 1920s the building was up on piers. Down braces, size of vertical studs, the interrupted sill, wall plates, tie beams and mortise-and-tenon joints are all similar. Many of the joints are even pegged!

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The structure described here was likely built during the first quarter of the 20th century according to the documentary records currently available. Ongoing research with the Charleston County School District archives may provide some evidence of an earlier build date.

This earliest phase does not show any evidence of hand-wrought nails being used. Therefore, it is unlikely that the structure dates earlier than the eighteen-teens. For the most part, only wire nails were visible during the present investigation. Wire nails were first extensively manufactured in the 1870s and then overtook cut nails by the 1890s (Adams 2002). One example of a machine cut common nail was found in the gloom (figure XX). This type of nail began to be extensively manufactured in the 1870s and continues to be manufactured today. It is designed to hold tightly in soft woods such as pine and has specific applications in holding clapboards well onto framing studs.



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A sawmill operated close by on Whipple Road that was started in and it may be that the lumber used in this structure was obtained from the mill. The site of this mill was known as Woodland Plantation, as noted in an article in the Moultrie News (citation). The Library of Congress has a stereograph image of the saw mill located here that was taken in the 1870s. This sawmill is in Figure XX below and may very well be the source of the lumber for the school.



Kerf marks (marks resulting from the cutting of lumber) indicate what sort of saw was used to mill logs into lumber. In the case of this structure, it is clear that a large diameter circular saw was used as gently curved evenly spaced kerf marks are clearly visible on various framing members (Figure XX). These saws were commonly found in South Carolina from the 1870s through World War II. The stack of the steam-driven sawmill engine is seen in the previous figure and indicates the size of the operation located nearby. John Knox, the proprietor of Woodland Plantation died in 1876 and the plantation was sold to a familiar name in the Mt. Pleasant area—John S. Horlbeck who also owned Boone Hall. He passed in 1919 and Woodland was broken up into parcels and sold. It is not known what precisely became of the sawmill.

The size of the framing, joists and braces are all similar to sizes found on buildings dating back to the eighteenth century in colonial America. These sizes are indicated on the scale drawings in the figures on the following pages.

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Lime mortar and hand-made bricks were used in the construction of the piers and the chimney stack. These were also likely produced locally by the Horlbeck Brick and Tile Company (Figure XX).



The door depicted in the earliest photograph of the structure is no longer present (Figure XX). The interior space in this initial structure was painted white as all of the wall framing and joists are this color. There is a distinct line on all the vertical joists indicating where a ceiling once was in the original building. The exterior was also white during this phase as indicated in areas where later colors of paint have flaked off. The latest color scheme can be seen in the image to the left from the front

entrance. It was painted blue with red trim



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Phase II: The Schoolhouse Extension

At some point after the school was completed, likely in the 1930s or early 1940s the schoolhouse as doubled in size. A room identical in size was added what would have been the rear of the structure. The framing of this extension was not visible during the research period as it is completed obscured by later modifications. It is expected that after the schoolhouse is moved in coming months that a more thorough investigation of this phase may be undertaken.



*Long Point Elementary School
Photograph May 16, 1955*

Modifications of the original building were extensive at this point. It is clear that the majority of clapboards were replaced as well as the roofing system during Phase II. Other modifications also include the installation of beadboard on both the ceiling and the walls. Beadboard was popular in urban contexts beginning in the 1870s and continued to be used in rural areas through the 1930s and thus is not unusual to find it on this structure. The beadboard was removed in the Phase I area after a fire sometime in the 1990s as can be seen below. A porch was added to the front during this phase and the original brick steps were moved to accommodate this addition.

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It was covered by plasterboard in the extension sometime in the 1980s. The beadboard can be seen in Figure XX where plasterboard has been removed.

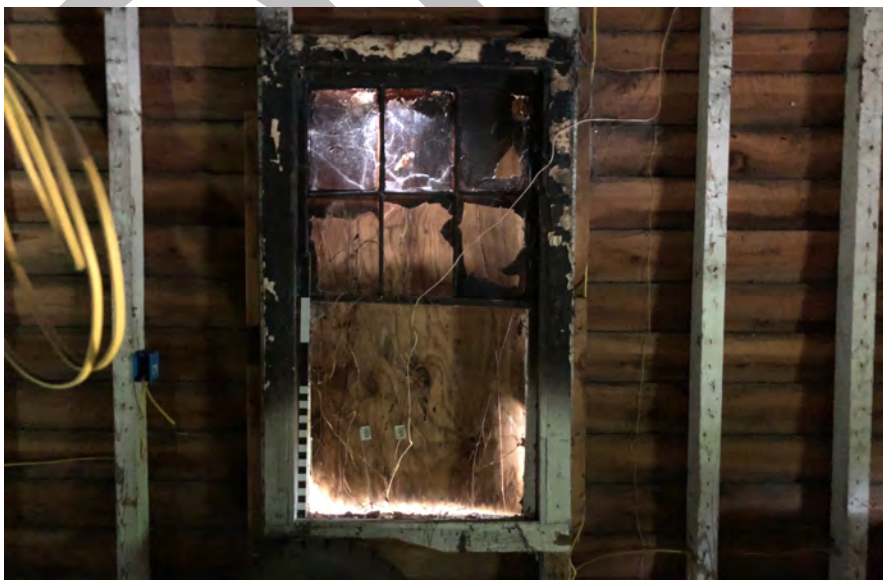


It was also during this period that a flue hole was added to the other side of the chimney stack to accommodate another cast-iron potbelly stove to heat the new classroom. William Henry Brown or “H” as he is more commonly known attended the school (1951-3) during this Phase II period. He provided some details regarding the structure when he was briefly interviewed by the researcher on 15 June 2018. He noted that a sweet potato farm surrounded school. The Phase II room was dedicated to grades 1-3 while the original room was for grades 4-6. Students desks in this room faced towards the potbelly stove and the teacher’s desk towards the north or center of the room. The younger students’ room was arranged in a similar fashion on the other side of the wall.

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Phase III: Domestic Residence

After Jennie Moore Elementary School was completed in 1953, the Long Point Road Elementary was surplus to the needs of the community. It was converted into a residence during the late 1950s and 1960s. The mother of the current owners resided here at this point through the 1980s. A Vulcan brand industrial gas oven was installed at this point and was likely the cause of a damaging fire resulting in the Phase IV modifications.



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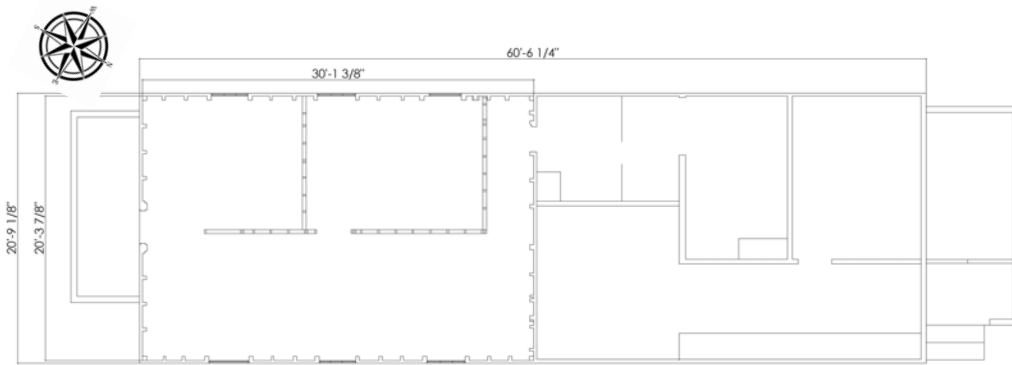
Phase IV: Final Domestic Residence Stage

A relatively recent fire resulted in the removal of the majority of beadboard in the Phase I section of the structure. This exposed the original framing. New rooms have been framed but not drywalled in the Phase I area. The Phase II portion of the structure has been completed with two bedrooms, a sitting room, kitchen and bathroom.



The plan view also illustrates these modifications.

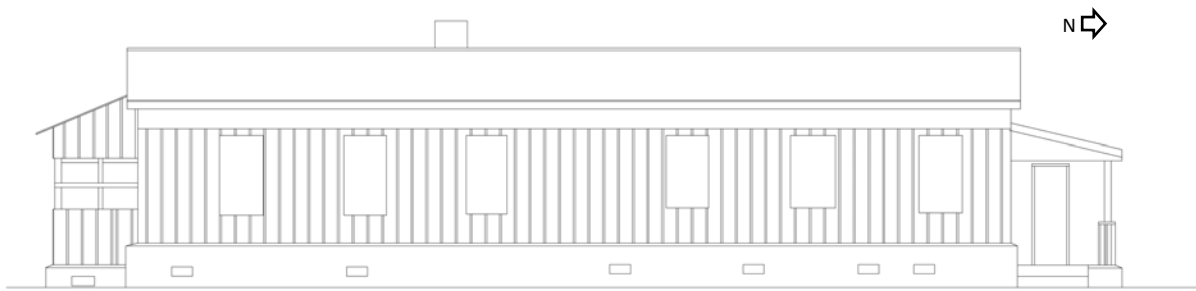
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Phase I with Phase IV framing

Phase II with Phase IV rooms

It was also during this period that a concrete block pseudo-foundation was installed around the base of the structure, perhaps to inhibit animals from occupying the space below the structure. Sections of this addition were falling away at the time the building was recorded. There are vent holes installed in the concrete block foundation as well. The T1-11 pressure treated sheathing was installed during the period. The elevation photograph and drawing below depict the structure as it now stands on the property.



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Historical Significance

The historical significance of this structure for the history of education not only in the region but nationally cannot be overestimated. It is a virtually intact artifact of one of the most pivotal periods in United States history. It is a physical manifestation of the challenges faced by formerly unfree African Americans as they sought to improve their lives through education. It is also illustrative of the facilities provided by the State of South Carolina for African American education. The transition to the Jennie Moore School from the Long Point Elementary School is illustrative of the long struggle toward equal rights for African Americans in a political, social and economic environment that sought to restrict these rights at every turn through every means available. The building itself tells these truths and should be conserved and preserved as a precious reminder of this very dark period in American history. Every nail, every brick, every paint stroke is a historical marker for future generations to learn about where we as a nation have been and how far we still need to move to heal racial and social injustices. There are no other similar educational buildings East of the Cooper. This is the very last one.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are provided by the Project Director based on over two decades of work in historic preservation in the Atlantic World. These recommendations are suggested in the general order that they should be completed. The goal is to preserve and conserve the structure in perpetuity.

1. A complete analysis of the documentary record should be completed
2. Interviews of living former students should be conducted as soon as possible as they are getting older by the day.
3. The building should be moved by a professional mover without removing the roof as this will damage the structural integrity of the structure.
4. A detailed photographic record and 3-D scan should be completed prior to moving the building.
5. The new site should place the building on its original orientation if possible.
6. The new piers and reconstructed chimney should use the same mortar mix and bricks as the original building. In fact, the original piers should be used at the new site after the building has been moved. No Portland cement should be used at the new site.
7. The Phase III and IV periods of the building should be removed after careful documentation.
8. The Phase I period should be restored in the Phase I section to depict this first period (circa 1920-40s).
9. The Phase II period should be restored in the Phase II section to depict this second period (circa 1940s-1954)
10. Shutters replicating those seen in the historic photographs should be produced to protect the historic windows.
11. The T1-11 should be removed only upon completion of a careful conservation plan.
12. A new documentation study should be undertaken after removal of the T1-11 and Phase II and IV materials.

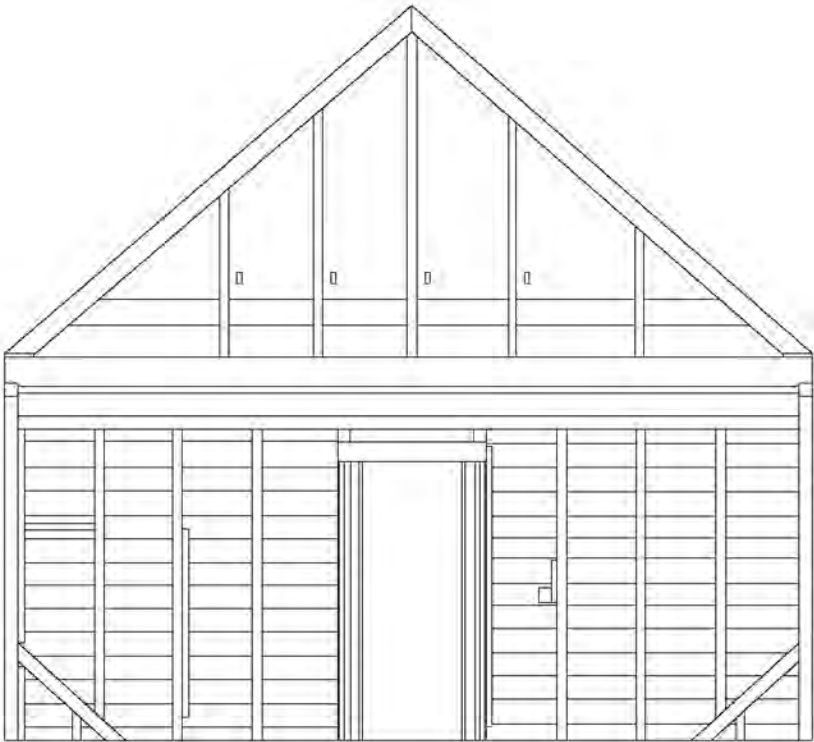
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13. A revised conservation plan should then be developed noting any new discoveries.
14. A provocative education program should be developed in conjunction with the Snowden community with input from former students and the Mt Pleasant community generally.
15. A local, regional and national educational campaign regarding the history of the school should be launched.
16. An endowment should be created (ideally 10-25% of all funds raised) to be placed in a trust for maintenance of the structure in perpetuity.
17. A conservation easement should be agreed to with an appropriate conservation body that is experienced in such things —perhaps the Historical Charleston Foundation.
18. A National Register nomination should be prepared and submitted.
19. A Historic American Buildings Survey report should be filed with the Library of Congress.
20. An interpretive book should be written and printed for the education of elementary and secondary school students in the Mt Pleasant area—perhaps by the Gullah Society.

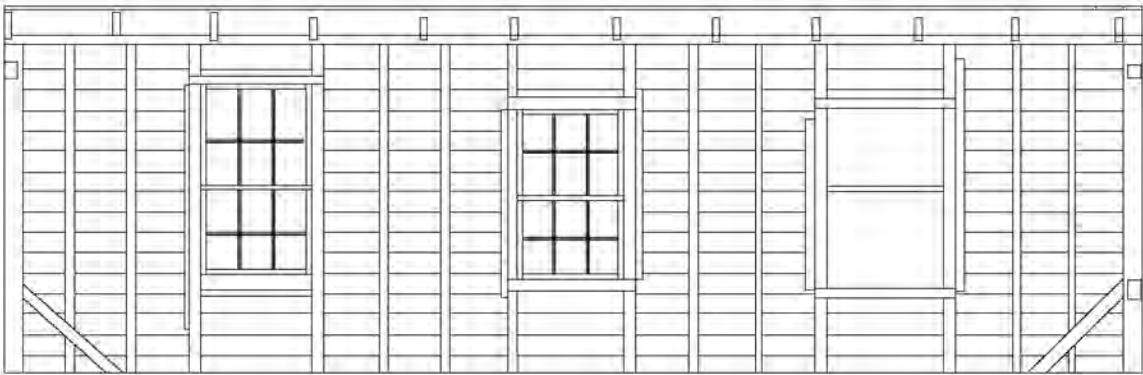
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