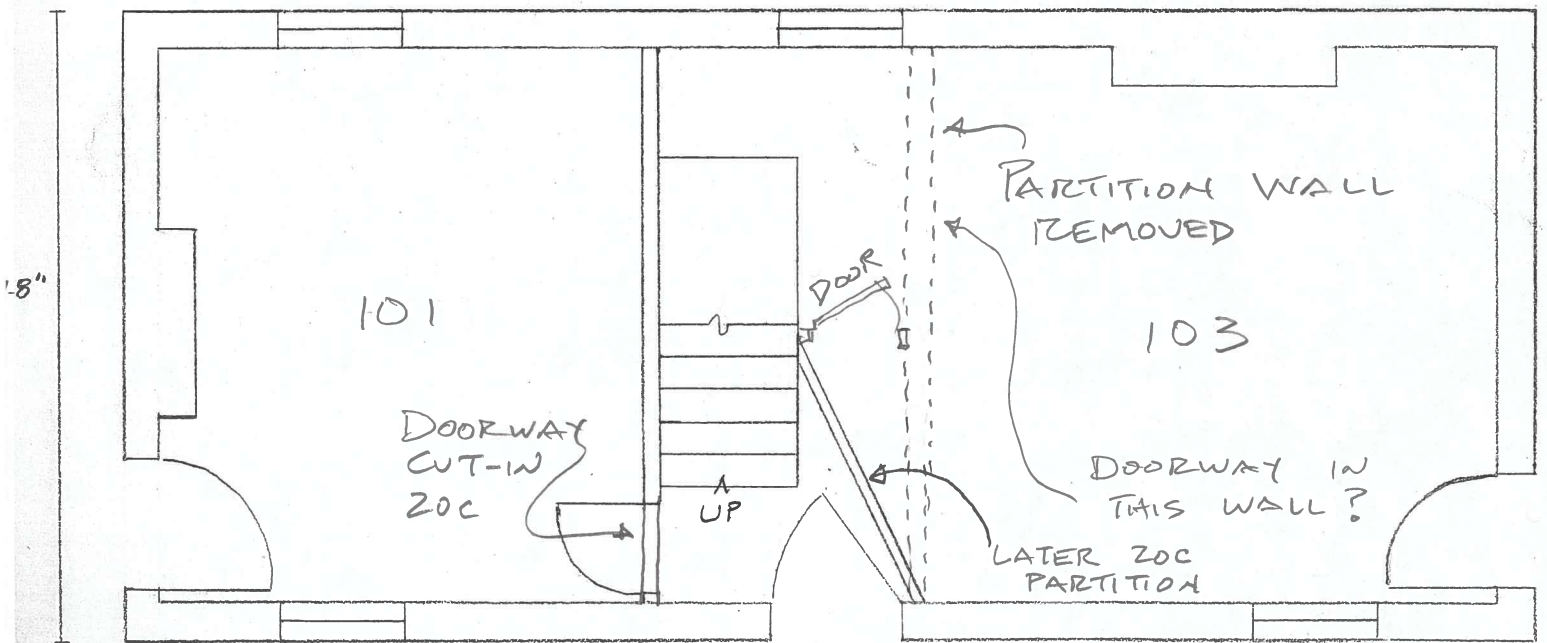
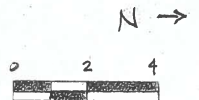


SECOND FLOOR

39'-6"



CHANGES TO FIRST FLOOR PLAN



27 June 2001

Mr. Tom Ledford
Director, Lynchburg Museum System
901 Court Street
Lynchburg, VA 24504

Dear Tom,

This is a brief summary of the Poplar Forest Restoration Field School investigation of the Dabney-Scott-Adams dependency building at 405 Cabell Street. A more complete report will be forthcoming.

The building is contemporary with the main house based on our examination of style, structure and materials. All of these features indicate a mid-nineteenth century construction date and match similar features of the main house. The building was constructed in one campaign. In this letter and in the report the principal façade facing Cabell Street is considered the east elevation.

The building's use cannot be definitely assigned except through documentary research, which was beyond the scope of this project. The plan, rooms and fireplaces would indicate a domestic use, most likely for house servants. It is also possible that one or both of the first floor rooms could have been used for other purposes, such as offices for the owner or staff. This non-domestic use is suggested by the fact that the first floor rooms each have two doorways. Both were accessed from the principal east façade entrance and hallway, and from a side entrance. The north room's principal entrance was later closed, leaving only the north doorway (this was most likely done in the late-19th or 20th century when the room became a separate apartment.

The relative high finish for a service building is explained by the fact that dependencies closest to the main house, and especially adjacent to the house and facing the principal approach, are frequently designed with a higher level of finish than other dependencies out-of-sight and further away. The mantels and trim in the building are comparable with the basement level of the main house.

My recommendation is to preserve the building. It is architecturally significant as a contributing part of the Dabney-Scott-Adams House and its neighborhood, especially due to its location and design as a companion building presented to the public. The fact that so many dependencies of early houses in Lynchburg have been lost, due to the prejudice that dependencies have no value, makes this building even more important. Further research might reveal the actual use of the property, enhancing the history and

interpretation of the main house and of Lynchburg's cultural, social and architectural history.

I disagree with many of the subjective "engineer's observations" stated in the Charles Parker report of May 17, 2000, particularly the conclusion that the building should be demolished. Mr. Parker's professional structural assessment of the building is acknowledged, although I find fault with some of his evaluation of structural integrity. While there is obvious damage to the roof structure, stair landing, stair structure, and first floor joists and trim, and masonry, these are small in area compared to the rest of the building and confined to one specific area associated with a hole in the roof. The extent of repairs called for in the engineering report is drastic. For instance, the entire attic roof framing and second floor ceiling joists are sound except for a small area associated with the hole in the roof (approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ of the roof; or about 6 joists/rafters on the west side). Rather than replacing the entire west side of the roof framing on the back side of the building, rotted wood pieces can simply be repaired or replaced without wholesale rebuilding. I also disagree that 50-75% of the second floor structure would need to be replaced or that the entire stair needs to be replaced. My opinions are based on a non-occupancy status.

The other reason suggested for demolition, that the parts are plain and therefore not significant, is typical of a narrowly focused and misunderstood viewpoint of architectural and historical values. Mr. Parker's concession that his viewpoint on this subject is not professional confirms the reasons for this disagreement. While I respect Mr. Parker's experience and knowledge, my 30 years in the field of preservation have taught me that architects and engineers trained to work with modern buildings frequently do not value the inherent qualities of traditional construction or vernacular architecture and consequently recommend a non-preservation approach.

To be reasonable, the building does not need restoration work right now, simply stabilization work. To hold the building for any future work it needs: carpentry repairs for a limited roof replacement in open areas; structural shoring for the first story ceiling/second story floor; spot repairs related to structure or weathering; mortar repointing on the exterior to keep out water; minor brick rebuilding (all masonry work with a lime-based mortar); a good drainage system; removal of all vegetation off and away from the building (ivy should be completely dead before it is pulled off the building); and openings need to be secured with plywood coverings (with vents). Spending a smaller sum on emergency stabilization in the near future will keep the building standing for a decade or more, given some periodic attention and maintenance.

I recommend that the City keep this building in a stabilized and mothballed condition. The fact that the roof was allowed to remain open for a number of years has exacerbated the problems common to any buildings of this age. A little routine maintenance will prevent a larger capital outlay for this and other significant buildings owned by the City. The City is responsible for the stewardship of its cultural resources and needs to act with a long-term vision.

Sincerely,

Travis McDonald
Director of Architectural Restoration