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HISTORIC STRUCTURES REPORT  
NORTH SERVANTS' QUARTERS  
CUSTIS-LEE MANSION, VA.  
(Part II)

SIGNATURE SHEET

HISTORIC STRUCTURES REPORT  
NORTH SERVANTS' QUARTERS  
CUSTIS-LEE MANSION, VA.  
(Part II)

Recommended:   
Chief, National Capital Office of  
Design and Construction

3/12/62  
Date

J. Sutton Jett  
Regional Director, Region Six

3/19/62  
Date

Approved:   
Director

4/17/62  
Date

*ass.*

HISTORIC STRUCTURES REPORT

NORTH SERVANTS' QUARTERS,

CUSTIS-LEE MANSION, VA.

(PART II)

Prepared by

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Park Historian

and

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General Architect

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL CAPITAL PARKS

1961

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## ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

a. Name and Number of Building:

The North Servants' Quarters is located approximately 40 feet west of the north wing of the Custis-Lee Mansion with its long axis running east and west. It faces the South Servants' Quarters to form a rear court to the Mansion.

b. Proposed Use of Structure and Justification:

It is planned to repair and recondition the North Servants' Quarters in a manner somewhat similar to the work already completed in the South Servants' Quarters. In keeping with the wishes of the Congress to restore the structures as they were just prior to the Civil War, these quarters should be reconverted to the one story structure which they were at that time. This is the way the building was remodeled in 1854 and in which it remained during the remainder of the occupancy of the Lee and Custis families. In this work, the present basement rooms which were reexcavated and restored in 1932 and the outside stairways to these rooms will be removed. The furnishings for the kitchen and two rooms for servants' quarters when reconditioned will be sufficient for these rooms.

c. Provision for Operating the Building:

The North Servants' Quarters as formerly will be operated as a unit with the Custis-Lee Mansion. Consequently, no additional staff members will be needed.

d. Preliminary Estimate of Cost for Rehabilitating the Structure and Grounds:

A total of \$39,444 is available for this work, which will also include certain repairs to the Mansion itself. For this reason it is difficult to estimate the portion to be allotted to the North Building. This may perhaps be \$25,000.

## HISTORICAL DATA

### General History:

George Washington Parke Custis moved from Mount Vernon to his Arlington estate in 1802 and immediately began the cultivation of crops and the construction of his mansion home. By 1804 he had completed the two wings of the Mansion but due to the lack of ready cash was unable to complete the center section until 1818.

Arlington became the home of Robert E. Lee when he married the only daughter of Mr. Custis in 1831. Mr. Custis increasingly relied upon his son-in-law for advice and assistance in the management of his affairs and the development of his estates until his death in 1857. At that time these responsibilities devolved solely upon Lee until 1861 when they were superseded by the greater duties imposed by a country at war.

### North Servants' Quarters - Summary of Evidence:

Few records exist to document the construction of the Mansion and outbuildings. Nothing is known of the initial construction of the North Quarters except what can be deduced from the structure itself. However, renovation and changes made on the structure are documented and are listed in Part I, Historical Data of the Historic Structures Report. The following excerpt from the above reference describes an important change made in the structure prior to the terminating date for the period of restoration i.e. 1861:

"Originally there were two basement rooms in the North Quarters; one that was used by the coachman, Daniel Dobson, the other served as a summer kitchen. These were separated by an unfinished room with an earth floor. The three rooms above were occupied by Eleanor Harris, housekeeper; Aunt Judy, family nurse; Ephraim Derecks, gardener; and George Clark, cook.

"For some reason, possibly due to dampness, the basement rooms were later partially filled in and abandoned. The earliest known sketch of the building, made by a member of the Lee family, about 1854, shows the basement rooms filled in. The kitchen at this time may have been moved to the ground level, for Robert E. Lee twice refers to this building as the kitchen in his application for fire insurance in 1859."

Documentary evidence of this change is corroborated by architectural evidence as analyzed in this report under "Architectural Data."

Plan for Basic Restoration:

On March 4, 1925 legislation was approved to restore the Mansion in honor of R. E. Lee "as nearly as may be practical to the condition in which it existed immediately prior to the Civil War." In compliance with the law and on the basis of documentary evidence, the Director, National Park Service, has directed that the basement rooms should not be restored, thus incorporating the change made prior to 1854.

Since it is assumed that cooking activities were transferred to the upper level when the basement was abandoned, the kitchen will be restored in the east room in a fashion similar to its prior appearance in the basement. The other two rooms will be furnished as they were prior to this restoration pending the preparation of an overall furnishing plan for the Mansion and outbuildings.

## ARCHITECTURAL DATA

Part I of this report indicated in sufficient detail the architectural background of this structure so that it is not necessary to go into it again in detail at this time. The basic concept of the restoration is to make the building conform to the terms of the instructions of the Congress which were, in effect, that the buildings, of which this is but one, be restored to the condition in which they existed just prior to the Civil War. Evidence has already been produced to prove without any doubt that the building in question was at the time a one story structure, the basement having been filled in and the first floor lowered by Colonel Lee for an unspecified reason, probably dampness. The War Department, when it restored this structure along with the rest of the complex, seems to have interpreted its instructions to mean restoration as of the Custis Period rather than of the Lee Period and the north outbuilding was returned by them to the condition at which they supposed it existed in that earlier period. Our instructions were very clear, however, that it is the Lee Period which is to be emphasized. It is on the basis of these instructions that the building is being returned to the condition in which, so far as we can determine, it existed circa 1857.

Since the basic premise was very clear, the approach which was followed was that of attempting to document the premise. The attached photographs will indicate the method which was used to do this, that is, by physical research of the building fabric itself. Since so much work had been done on the structure by the War Department it was extremely difficult to date with any great accuracy the various phases of the work. Photograph marked (6), indicates the closing up of a former entrance and gives us, with some latitude, the probable height of the opening. Photograph marked (8), shows a similar condition at another opening. Examination of the north wall of the middle space in the basement identified the lowered floor line which Colonel Lee installed. By projection, this coincided very closely with the floor line shown on the Brady photograph upon which we are relying heavily as the general basis for the restoration.

The building as Mr. Custis constructed it is supposed to have had a summer kitchen in the east end. Since there are no records whatever to indicate the exact function of the structure after Colonel Lee replanned it, except his continuing reference to it as the kitchen, we are assuming that it continued to be used, at least in part, for that purpose and have based our restoration on that assumption. In

view of the extreme crudity of the basic construction of the building and of the extent of the War Department restoration it was very difficult to obtain many physical evidences of the details which existed in the period to which we are referring. Since the evidence of the Brady photograph is incontrovertible, and since such facts as we were able to determine agree with the photograph, we feel, however, that the restoration is as accurate as may be under the circumstances. The attached drawings indicate the method by which we propose to carry this out.

**APPENDIX**

**ILLUSTRATIONS, 8 PHOTOGRAPHS**

**National Park Service  
Photos Nos. 5622-R through Y**

ILLUSTRATION NO. 1

Ground floor, west room, west wall.

Showing fireplace in the Coachman's bedroom as restored by the Quartermaster Corps under the supervision of Mr. L. M. Leisenring. This is as the room probably appeared when Donald Dobson occupied it during the time that George Washington Parke Custis resided in the mansion.

Photo: Abbie Rowe, November 18, 1960  
Copy neg. on file National Capital Parks



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on condition that the following  
credit line is used:  
"Photo by Abbie Rowe—  
Courtesy National Park Service"

5622-X

ILLUSTRATION NO. 2

Ground floor, west room, southeast corner.

Showing portions of plaster removed in order to determine the former floorline as it existed at the time that Robert E. Lee resided in the mansion, and as shown in the Mathew Brady photograph 1861-64, photograph No. 2, in appendix of Historic Structures Report, Part I. See photograph No. 5 for the only evidence of the former floorline which was found.

Photo: Abbie Rowe, November 18, 1960  
Copy neg. on file National Capital Parks



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5622-4

ILLUSTRATION NO. 3

Ground floor, east room, southwest corner.

Showing portions of plaster removed in order to determine the former floorline as it existed at the time that Robert E. Lee resided in the mansion, and as shown in the Mathew Brady photograph 1861-64, photograph No. 2, in appendix of Historic Structures Report, Part I. See photograph No. 5 for the only evidence of the former floorline which was found.

Photo: Abbie Rowe, November 18, 1960  
Copy neg. on file National Capital Parks



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Courtesy National Park Service"

5622-W

ILLUSTRATION NO. 4

Ground floor, east room, north wall.

Showing portions of plaster removed in order to determine the former floorline as it existed at the time that Robert E. Lee resided in the mansion, and as shown in the Mathew Brady photograph 1861-64, photograph No. 2, in appendix of Historic Structures Report, Part I. See photograph No. 5 for the only evidence of the former floorline which was found.

Photo: Abbie Rowe, November 18, 1960  
Copy neg. on file National Capital Parks.



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5622- ✓

ILLUSTRATION NO. 5

Center room, north wall.

Taken through a trap door in the floor of Room No. 3, showing the only evidence found of the location of the nailers for the baseboard of the room as it existed during the Robert E. Lee period of occupancy.

Photo: Abbie Rowe, November 18, 1960  
Copy neg. on file National Capital Parks



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5622-T

ILLUSTRATION NO. 6

First floor, Room No. 4, south wall.

With a portion of the plaster removed from the south wall showing a former doorway of the Robert E. Lee period bricked up.

Photo: Abbie Rowe, November 18, 1960  
Copy neg. on file National Capital Parks



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Courtesy National Park Service"

5622-5

ILLUSTRATION NO. 7

First floor, east room, east wall.

Plaster removed from fireplace breast in search of evidence of a  
fireplace of the Robert E. Lee period.

Photo: Abbie Rowe, November 18, 1960  
Copy neg. on file National Capital Parks



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Courtesy National Park Service"

5622 R

ILLUSTRATION NO. 8

First floor, Room No. 2, south wall.

With a portion of the plaster removed showing the opposite side of  
the bricked up doorway shown in Illustration No. 6.

Photo: Abbie Rowe, November 18, 1960  
Copy neg. on file National Capital Parks



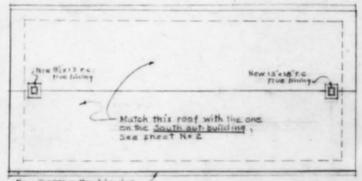
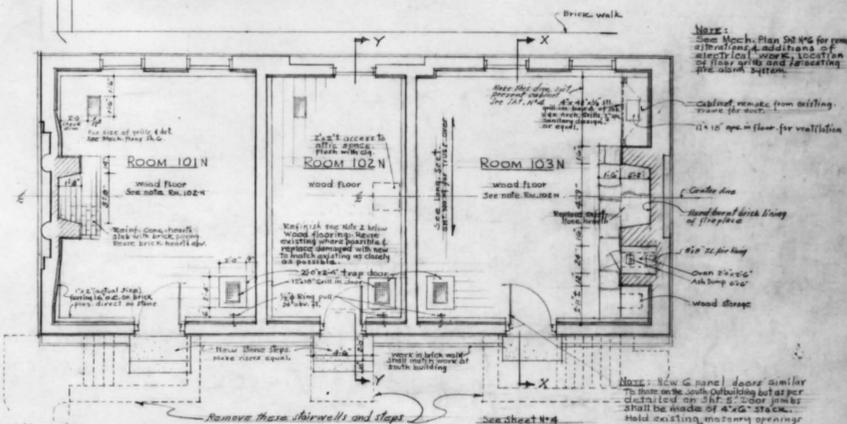
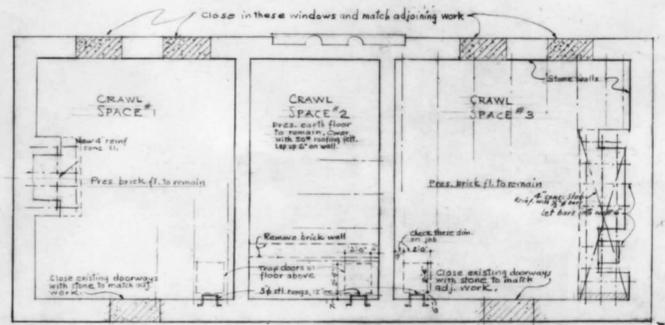
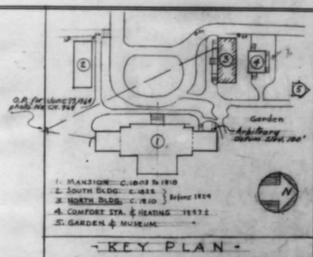
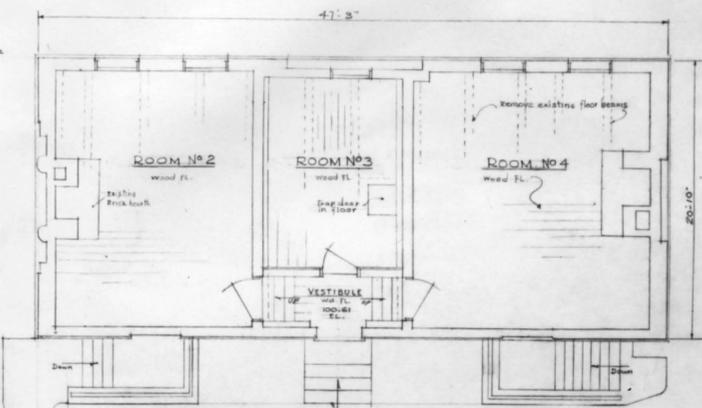
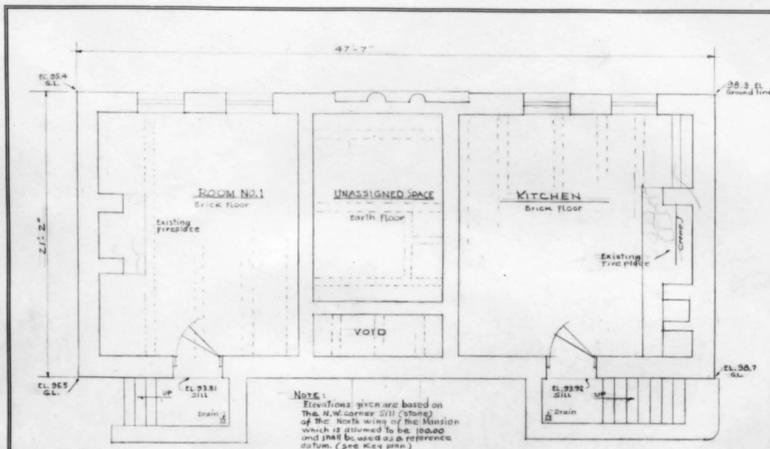
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Courtesy National Park Service"

5622-U



GENERAL NOTES -

1. Drawings of both the existing and renovated conditions have been shown so that a proper comparison may be made between conditions as they are now and results desired for purposes of proper restoration.
2. Remove old wood flooring and refinish by thoroughly sanding, treat with 2 coats of Minwax - spiritus pine (Quick-dryed 230 or equal).
3. Verify all information and dimensions shown on drawings on the job. Wherever 1/2" scale drawings are not fully understood full size details will be furnished upon request.

RESTORED FLOOR PLAN

4. All new wood shall be stained in 1X per instructions. Painting: Generally will be the same as the South building for color. Figure on 2 coats of pine oil paint for exterior. One coat of white wash or grade approved by contracting office for interior walls only. Rubbed with or brushed aggregate shall have same in material.
5. In performing work on this historic structure it shall be noted that the work is a restoration and not merely a repair job. The new work must be done in a way that causes it to blend with original work in order to portray the desired antique effect.

BASIC DATA  
 "BGM" photo See Key Plan this sheet  
 "BGM" drawing N.W. 4-4, Oct. 10, 18

RECOMMENDED  
 Chief Designer & Construction: HPS

SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"

FLOOR PLANS

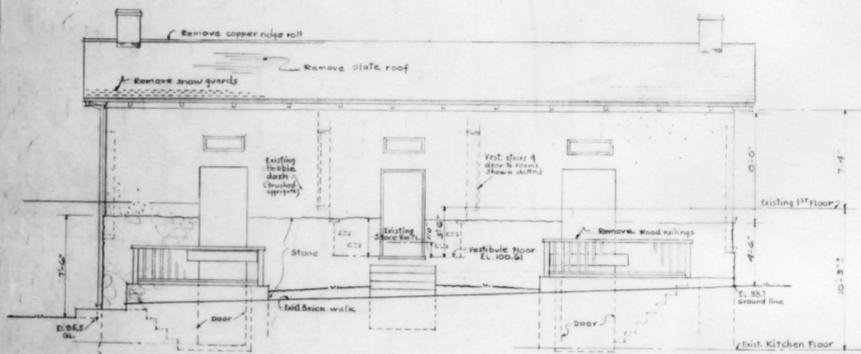
UNITED STATES  
 DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
 NATIONAL CAPITAL PARKS  
 DIVISION OF DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION

Rehabilitation of North Out building  
 Curtis Lee Mansion, Arlington County, Virginia  
 National Capital Park, Reservation N° 691

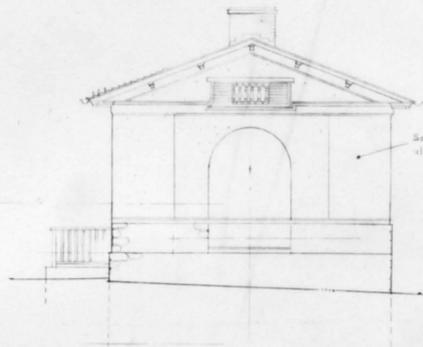
PREPARED  
 DRAWING NO. N.C.P. 5-5-180  
 SHEET 1 OF 6  
 DRAWING NO. N.C.P. 5-5-180-1  
 DATE: 1-2-58



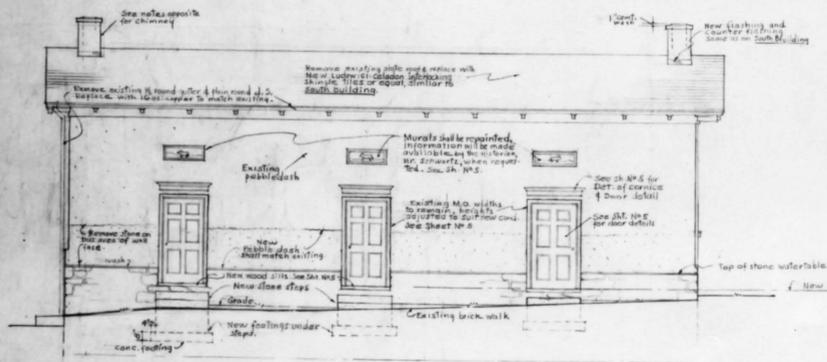
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 DRAWING NO. N.C.P. 5-5-180  
 SHEET 1 OF 6



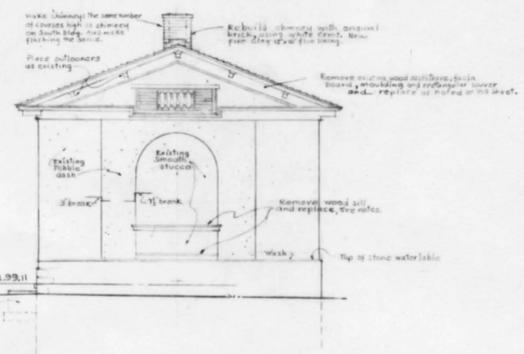
EXISTING SOUTH ELEVATION



EXISTING EAST ELEVATION



RESTORED SOUTH ELEVATION



RESTORED EAST ELEVATION

- NOTE:-
1. Repair entire stone foundation & water table.
  2. Replace and match all pebble dash where necessary.
  3. All wood work shall be carefully removed, protected until used as directed.
  4. All wood work which has been removed and found decayed shall be securely replaced with new members of the same dimension.
  5. Remove all miscellaneous excess hardware and repair holes & etc.

BASIC DATA: Measured drawings of existing cond. & photo taken on 1/26/54, 1/27/54, 1/28/54, 1/29/54, 1/30/54, 1/31/54

SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

**SOUTH & EAST ELEVATIONS -**

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE NATIONAL CAPITAL PARKS	REGION <b>N.C.P.</b> PCP 2-185
DIVISION OF DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION	SHEET 2 OF 6
RESTORATION OF THE NORTH SUB-BUILDING 2045-LEE MASSION, ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA	DRAWING NO. <b>N.C.P.</b> 2-31007-2
NATIONAL CAPITAL PARKS <small>DESIGNED BY: MESSERSCHMIDT, HERRING &amp; ASSOCIATES, INC.</small>	DATE: Sep 55



ORIENTATION

PREPARED

DESIGNED

DRAWN

SCALE OF RECORD

CHECKED

DATE

BY

DATE

BY

DATE

BY

DATE

BY

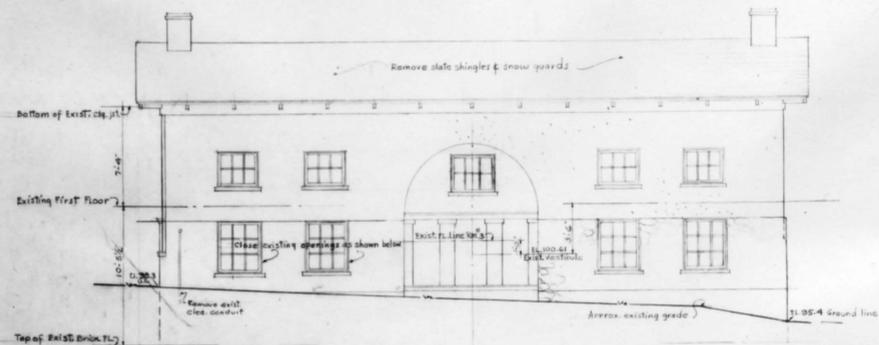
DATE

BY

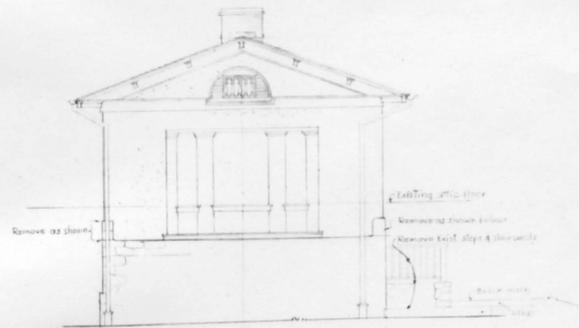
DATE

BY

DATE



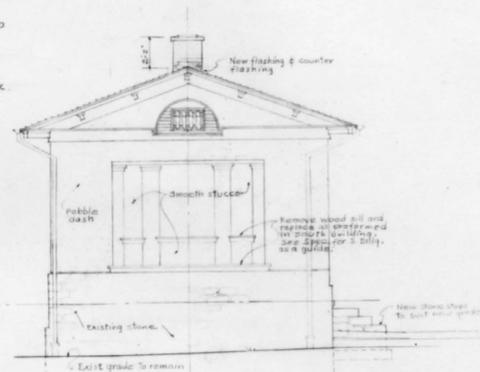
EXISTING NORTH ELEVATION



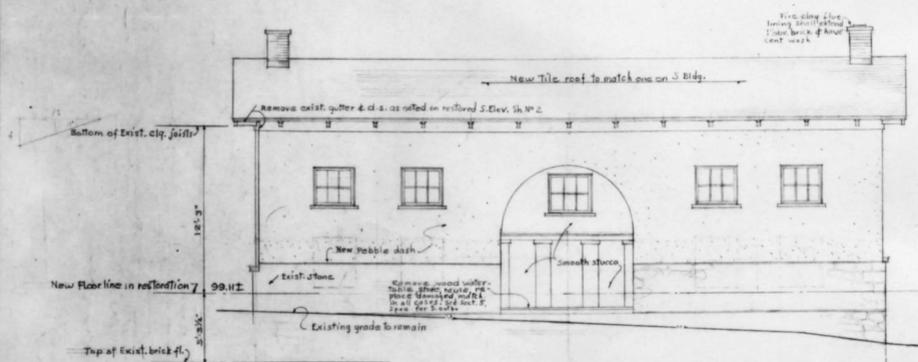
EXISTING WEST ELEVATION

MATERIAL LEGEND for ELEVATIONS

- Pebble dash stucco
- Smooth stucco
- Exposed stone work
- Brick in section
- Wood
- Metal



RESTORED WEST ELEVATION



RESTORED NORTH ELEVATION

NOTE: Elevations given are based on assumed elevation of 100.00' on the N.W. corner of 511 (S.W. 1/4) of the North wing of the Mansion.

- NORTH & WEST ELEVATIONS -

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE NATIONAL CAPITAL PARKS DIVISION OF DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION	REGION N.C.P.
Rehabilitation of the Custis Lee Mansion Custis Lee Mansion, Arlington County, Virginia National Capital Park & Reservation, Inc.	PCF E-108 SHEET 3 OF 6
DRAWING NO. E-5-108-3	DATE Sept. 1967

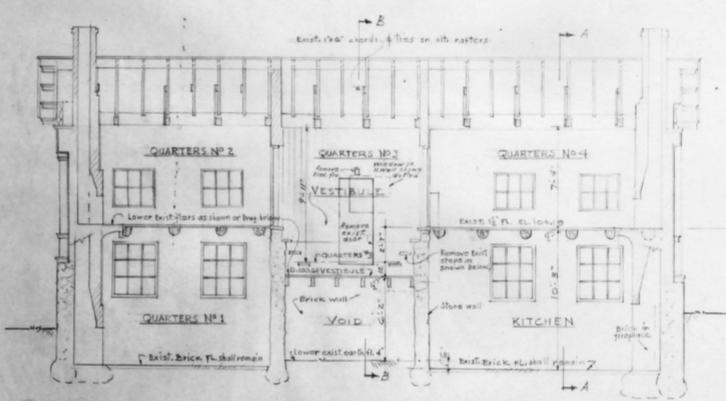
PREPARED

DESIGNED  
BY  
DRAWN  
CHECKED

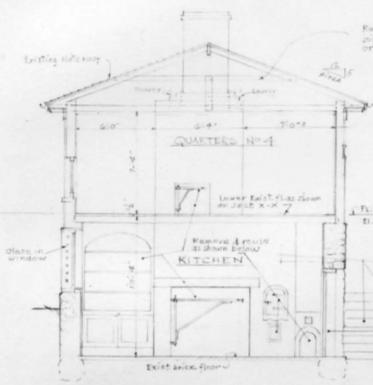
REGION  
N.C.P.

PCF E-108  
SHEET 3 OF 6

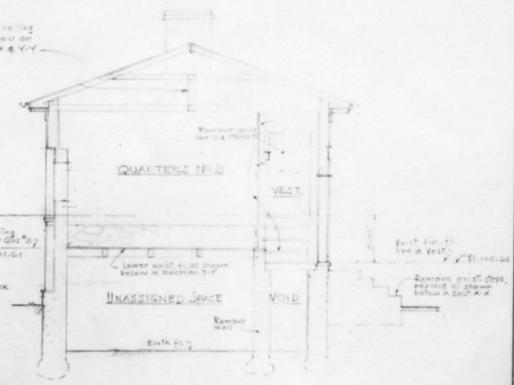
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E-5-108-3  
DATE  
Sept. 1967



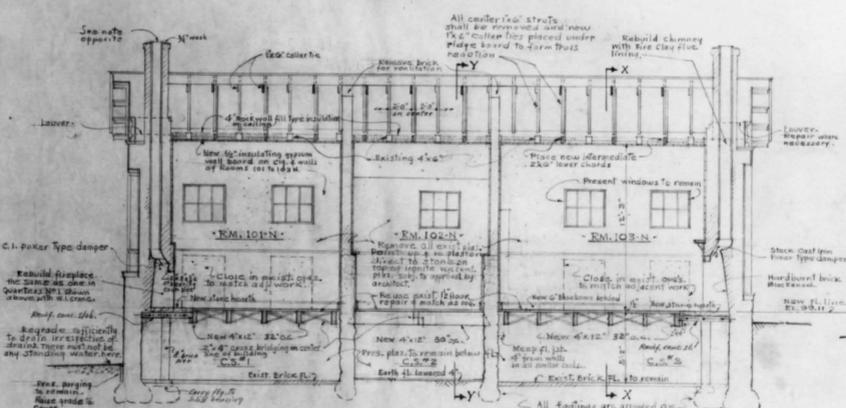
LONGITUDINAL SECTION (EXISTING CONDITIONS)



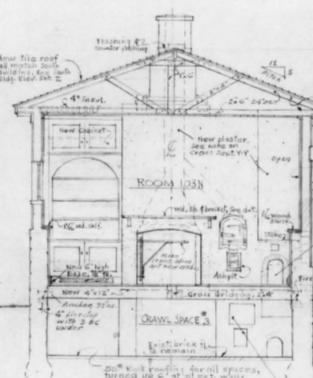
CROSS SECTION A-A THRU KITCHEN (EXISTING CONDITION)



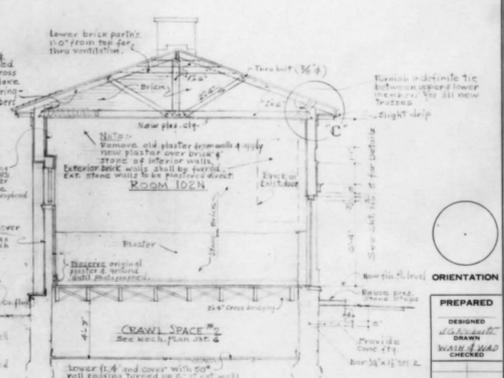
CROSS SECTION B-B THRU CENTER (EXISTING CONDITION)



LONGITUDINAL SECTION (RESTORED CONDITION)



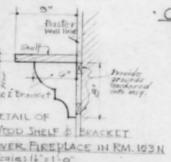
CROSS SECTION ON X-X (RESTORED CONDITION)



CROSS SECTION ON Y-Y (RESTORED CONDITION)

LONGITUDINAL & CROSS SECTIONS

Check condition 'C' on job & call architect for a field inspection.



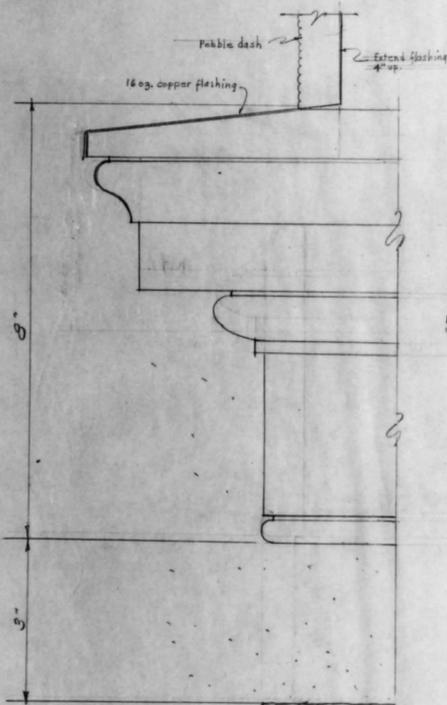
DESIGNED	REGION
DRAWN	N.C.P.
CHECKED	PCP 138
	SHEET 1 OF 6
	DRAWING NO. N.C.P. 23100-138
	DATE Oct. 1947

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE NATIONAL CAPITAL PARKS DIVISION OF DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION

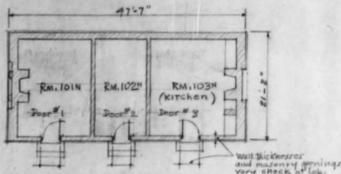
Restoration of Natchez Building Custis-Lee Mansion Arlington County Virginia National Capital Parks, Res. No. 97

BASIC DATA: Measurements taken at job.

SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"

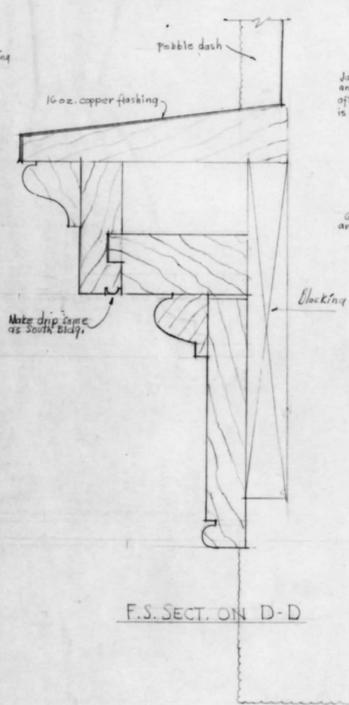


PART ELEV. OF CORNICE OVER DOOR  
Scale: full size

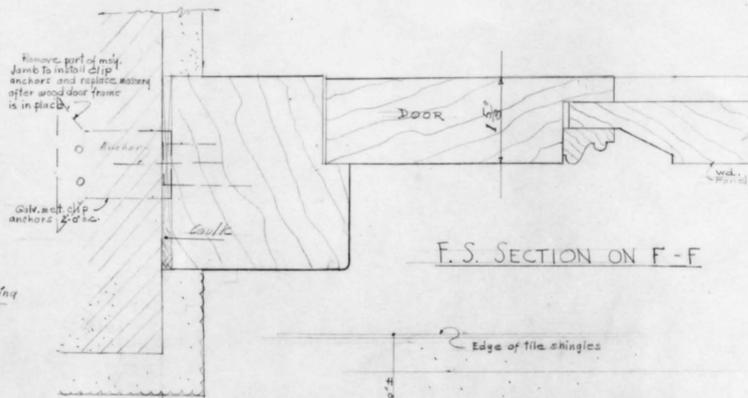


KEY PLAN Scale: 3/4" = 1'-0"

BASIC DATA

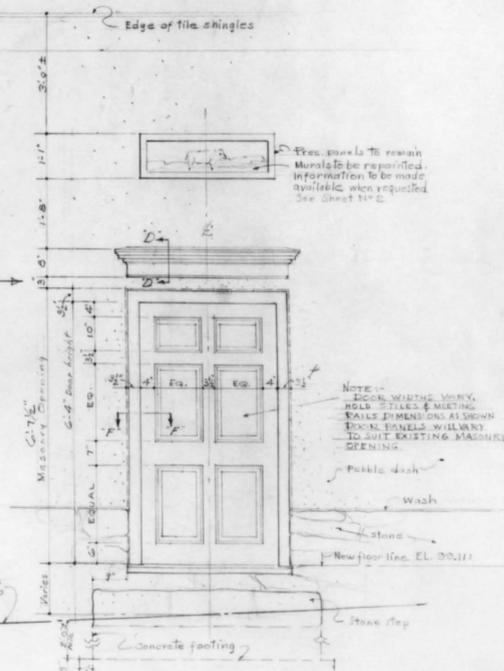


F.S. SECT. ON D-D

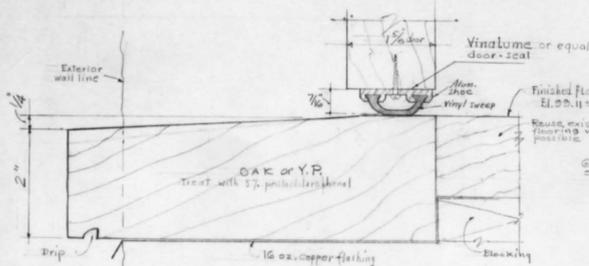


F.S. SECTION ON F-F

EXTERIOR DOORS  
ON ROOMS 101, 102 & 103  
Scale: 3/4" = 1'-0"



NOTE: -  
DOOR WIDTHS VARY.  
HOLD STILES & MEETING  
STILES FINISHED ON AS SHOWN  
DOOR PANELS WILKINSON  
TO SUIT EXISTING MASONRY  
OPENINGS.  
Pebble dash  
Wash  
Stone  
New floor line. EL. 20.111



F.S. DET. OF WOOD THRESHOLD

All wood to be soaked with  
5% pentachlorophenol and primed  
one coat one coat of white lead before  
setting in place. For other information on  
painting see general notes on sheet N01

SCALE As Noted

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
NATIONAL CAPITAL PARKS  
DIVISION OF DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20540  
Custis-Lee Mansion, Arlington County, Virginia  
National Capital Park & Recreation N°207



ORIENTATION

PREPARED

DESIGNED BY  
DRAWN BY  
WASH & SEAL CHECKED

REGION

N.C.P.

POP 2-1983

SHEET 5 OF 6

DRAWING NO.

N.C.P.

23-100-B-B

DATE 02/73

