SUMMER 2005 HOLLOW STABILIZATION REPORT #5, 8 September 2005

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REPAIRING THE HOLLOW STEP BY STEP, *continued, Weeks 12 & 13 –*

1. East gable – Mike removed all twentieth-century weatherboard from this east end to eliminate resistance to the final south sill connection and the furtherance of efforts to straighten the wall and house. This permitted more intensive architectural investigation on this end focusing on the enclosed doors, peculiar joint cut with wrought nails remaining on the NE corner post and full height inspection of the original broad chimney studs. (Was there a pent roof over the NE door? Not enough evidence remains for a conclusive determination.) The exciting discovery of a singed spot on the wide stud to the north of the long-removed east chimney adds another layer of evidence supporting past findings that led toward the certainty that this heating component was indeed executed and not just intended. It appears that fire escaped through the gap between the chimney and the stud to charcoal it to the point of leaving cinders. The fire must have quickly drawn back as no other burning is evident on this stud. There does appear to be smoky residue on the backside of the nineteenth-century interior paneling which remains higher up on this end. Although there were circa 1900 repairs, replacement of the sill and interior girt between the inside stone foundation at the east end, The Hollow now more conclusively does appear to have had two exterior-end chimneys and three heated rooms in period-one construction 1763-64.

The signs of an original 1763-64 east-end chimney are:

1) The pit-sawn broad chimney studs spaced a nearly equal distance to those existing on the west end, and the burn on the north timber.
2) The circa 1900 circular-sawn, wire toe-nailed infill studs and the absence of mortises in the original upper tie beam to receive the studs' tenons if no chimney was intended originally.
3) The relocated window in the second-floor garret.
4) Many remaining stones strewn about in the east crawlspace revealed during this stabilization.

Edward pulls a charred cinder from the north chimney stud on the east wall, 8/29.

5) Albeit a circa 1900 replacement member which we also replaced because of its inferior punky condition, the 8 x 8 x 16 girt (lacking a hearth cut, meaning the chimney was gone by 1900) situated just the right distance from the east end for a hearth similarly to the original fireplace girt at the opposite west end. Not a replacement member, that pit-sawn and hewn west girt does have a hearth cut.
6) The original period-one south sill had a portion left of the hollowed-out bed or seat to receive an 8 x 8 x 16 girt exactly where the replacement member was situated and this stabilization's replacement component has been reinserted via a mortise-and-tenon joint by Mike. Unfortunately, he had to cut off this remaining half of the sill's hollowed-out end for the scarf joint he had to make to piece in the replacement corner. Note that the SE end of that sill and half of the bed had been sawn off previously in circa 1900.

Yet, there is one bothersome inconsistency at this east end. This east fireplace girt is not situated directly above and bearing on the interior stone foundation wall as does the one at the

west end. As stated in the National Register Nomination, this situation continues to support the theory that the east-end interior foundation wall was originally where Thomas Marshall planned to build a 16 x 20-foot house but realized it too small for his growing family and extended the plan several feet eastward. The roof framing above sustains this hypothesis in that the last two east rafters display distinctly different joints from those to the west, keeping in mind that the north and south plates are continuous and uncut. The inconsistency can only be explained by the diversity of workmanship and joinery seen on this house, sometimes well articulated and skilled, while at other locations craftsmanship was imperfect. Note that Mike's floor removal revealed the top of the girders and summer beam for first-time assessment of the framing, enabling certain determination that the west interior stone wall supported the hearth girt.

The above left photograph taken on August 29th demonstrates the northward rack of the disconnected bottoms of the north chimney stud and the south door stud on its right. Mike used steel L-braces to anchor the studs he straightened on this end to the circa 1900 sill, as several were just wire toe-nailed to it. The September 7th picture to the above right shows the screw-fastened plywood solution to brace this east gable which never had down braces because of the door openings. (The north opening may have been a window prior to becoming a door, but the evidence is incomplete.) Mike devised this solution rather than insert the down braces that were mortised for but apparently never executed and received the approval of Louis Malon and myself. The impermanent plywood now braces and holds this end in square, can be easily removed, does not falsify the architectural record with the insertion of down braces that were not inserted and will eventually be hidden by weatherboards. It is important to note that the absence of down braces made this wall vulnerable to movement and contributed to the racking of this end and back corner to the north.

2. South sill – Mike managed to finish positioning the new oak sill and setting the tenons of the vertical studs and corner posts as well as the horizontal girders into the timber. He double-pegged the girder joints and will later peg the major uprights.

3. Foundation work – Edward, Miguel, Francisco and Alejandro continued to restore the foundations including the interior east wall, as much of the east end wall as carpentry progress and jacking permits, at the SW front corner and south front. Where the stone has met the sills, they laid them in a final bed of sand and lime atop the foundation.

Mike demonstrates where he found the hollowed-out sill in alignment with his positioning of the hearth girt, visible in the shadow behind the stud he points to.

Ahead of the photographer's arrival, Mike had nearly single-handedly completed strapping and lifting the south oak sill into its receiving vertical and horizontal tenons. However, he good-naturedly accommodated documentation of the significant event by gently loosening a few still unfastened joints and straps for partial re-creation. Proving more stubborn this time, Edward joined the effort to lift and push the sill into receiving tenons. Note to their credit, the sill is perfectly level and the tenons are fully in place in the two bottom pictures, 8/31/2005.

In the photograph at left, stonemason Alejandro mixes lime putty into pure mud clay, finely sifted sand and water to render a historic common mortar which is of the utmost importance in restoring masonry dating from colonial times through the late nineteenth century. Below, Edward restores the front SW corner using the mortar Alejandro has spent hours mixing. This common mortar requires slow seasoning or hardening before a hard frost. Therefore, the foundation restoration needs to be completed before 30 September 2005.

Above left, Francisco and Miguel are raising the south back foundation up to the new oak sill. The image to the right exhibits the restoration of the exterior portion of the underpinning for the west fireplace girt and the northwest outside foundation up to where the removed stone chimney will someday return, 7 September 2005.

4. East to west lean – A recent storm with high winds and heavy rains loosened the tension on the jack supporting the diagonal brace at the southwest corner of the west elevation that Mike had erected to support and push the upper level of the house eastward back into plumb. Dissatisfied with the resulting two-inch slippage and after his plywood bracing attachment to the east exterior wall, he wrapped a strap around the second-floor tie beam on the east gable and cabled the other end to a tree down the hill. He then cranked to increase the tension on the cable and has decided to leave it in place for awhile and take level readings daily. Mike hopes the building will gently give in to the tension and then become contented in a level state. All workmen and visitors shall maintain a vigilant eye for safety on this side.

East gable end in above photographs taken 8 September 2005.

5. Lastly, Mike started removing the plywood that was fastened to the west elevation after the chimney removal in April 2004 and further jacked the wall to prepare the end for Edward's continuation of the foundation up to the heating component.

Cellar window decision after consult with Louis Malon, Director of Properties, APVA – The team has unanimously agreed to execute option #3, inserting one cellar window on the front foundation and one diagonally northwest in the rear. We qualify this decision as a practical ventilation measure taken without fully conclusive evidence of period-one existence of cellar windows at The Hollow beyond the wrought-nailed lathing strip shims under the sill above a wide hole with a remaining half jamb in the front stone foundation, as documented in year 2000. Additionally, the extension of the west end's foundation beyond the back wall and the straight-cut stones four-feet to the east in the back, not original, foundation provide some indication of a suspected cellar entrance near the northwest corner. We do not have certain architectural evidence of the size or placement of cellar windows on The Hollow but make this decision on the likelihood of some traditional method of lighting and ventilation into that useable cellar space. The model for the design and dimension comes from Yew Hill built for Thomas Marshall's friend and surveying colleague in 1760-61 about four miles distanced on Route 17 south of Delaplane. During measurement of Yew Hill's hewn and pegged windows, a shim strip was discovered at the top of the north window, such as the lathing strips under The Hollow's front sill. A mesh metal screen applied to the inside of the proposed windows will prevent animal invasion through the nine vertical pickets, and a board-and-batten awning shutter will protect the exterior of the opening. Below are pictures of one of the 18" H x 34" W cellar windows and the shim at Yew Hill.

Stabilization Schedule: Work shall continue definitely through September which means Mike still respectfully requests and needs weekly lodging in the generously-provided comfortable cabin at Learning Tree Farm.