

Hoyle House Site Visit -- by John Larson
December 1995

A site visit was made to the Hoyle House after Christmas by Carl Lounsbury and John Larson, They were accompanied by Susan Kern former head of archaeology at Monticello, and currently a Ph.D. candidate at the College of William and Mary. The purpose of the visit was to continue the investigation and recording of the various alteration to the Hoyle House. They were assisted during the visit by David Hoyle.

The modern exterior siding was removed from lower part of the chimney end wall to examine the condition and framing details. Again, evidence of weathering was noted on the pine logs and oak sill but more importantly the chinking between the logs was discovered to be a two part application. A base coat of mud with large amounts of straw mixed in was covered with a finish coat which appears to have a lime content. This top coat was smooth with a slant to shed the water. This is further evidence that the building began as an exposed log structure with well finished chinking between the logs. The top coat shows significant weathering indicating an exposure of some duration. Samples were taken but investigation of this original detail will be useful. There are signs of serious deterioration of the sill particularly in the back corner which should be addressed by the structural evaluation.

Also, in the process of removing the modern siding, a fragment of the extant 19th century siding was recovered. It was unpainted pine, applied with a wrought head/cut nail and had been used as a shim to support the 19th century siding, This was an important find because it showed a unique detail, Instead of simply lapping the siding, the Hoyle House siding is fitted together in a groove or rabbet on the top and bottom of each piece of siding (see illustration below). This is a much more complex system and quite unique. This detail was confirmed by examining other parts of the building. The fragment of siding was removed for further study.

The mortise found in a floor joist on the second floor indicated the possibility of a post between the summer beam and the floor at that location. An examination was made for a corresponding post supporting the summer beam in the first floor. No evidence of a post was found, however evidence indicates that the interior of the Hoyle house was always divided by a paneled walnut partition that was connected to the summer beam and which may have lessened the need for a post, A doorway through this paneling which connected the two larger rooms had been removed and the opening enlarged when the central hall was installed. With the removal of that part the opening was once again closed down to door size. This modern material, which was applied with wire nails was removed in the effort to test for the possible post location and try to identify the original doorway size and location. Although the upper part of the original walnut panel wall remain, the evidence for the exact door location is still vague, more work is A sample of the walnut paneling was recovered which has numerous layers of paint to be tested.

A photographic record was made of the areas tested.



Hoyle House Siding
Detail

Not to Scale