

Linden Farm, An Overview

By Donald J. Orth

Edited by Jim Melchor & Tom Newbern

Editors' Note: In 1977 when Don and Martha Orth bought Linden Farm, they embarked on a journey to restore a small, eighteenth-century, vernacular farm house. This unimposing, but extremely rare, example of early Virginia architecture was in a poor state of repair and close to being lost. Through the Orth's dedication, hard work, and significant financial commitment, Linden Farm was saved. Today, it stands as a monument to Virginia's early farmers and how they lived. In this article, Don takes us on their Linden restoration journey. Throughout the article, we have supplemented Don's photographs, where appropriate, with photographs of our own. JM & TN

The old house in Richmond County, Virginia, called Linden sits on the northwest side of Farnham, a village boasting a circa 1732 cruciform church (Fig. 1, Farnham Church), a post office, a couple of businesses, and a handful of houses. Linden faces Virginia Route #3, a highway that follows the footprint of a Native American (Chicakoan) path running through the forests of the Northern Neck centuries ago. This path follows along the crest of the Neck on dry, higher ground dividing waters of the Potomac and Rappahannock Rivers. Peninsulas between rivers flowing into the Chesapeake Bay in Virginia are called "necks." Early colonists converted the path into a dirt road which today is a modern highway.

Linden house sits back from the highway over several hundred feet, on what is now about 25 acres, a land area reduced by sales from the 300 acres originally purchased by Andrew Dew in 1661. This was out of what was once John H. Williams' 1,800-acre grant received from the Crown. Andrew Dew's 300-acre parcel of land paralleled the Chicakoan Path on one side and church property on the other. Today, a visitor coming down the driveway from the highway views a story and a half colonial-style, gable-roof house with four dormers across the front and two massive chimneys, one on each end. The building's backside has an extensive "cat slide" roof (Figs. 2, 3, & 4, Linden as it stands today, Front/West, End/North, & Back/East Elevations) (Fig. 5, Linden first-floor plan as it stands today). The siding on the front of the house is partly clad with pit-sawn, beaded weatherboards. The rest of the building is covered with more modern siding.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4

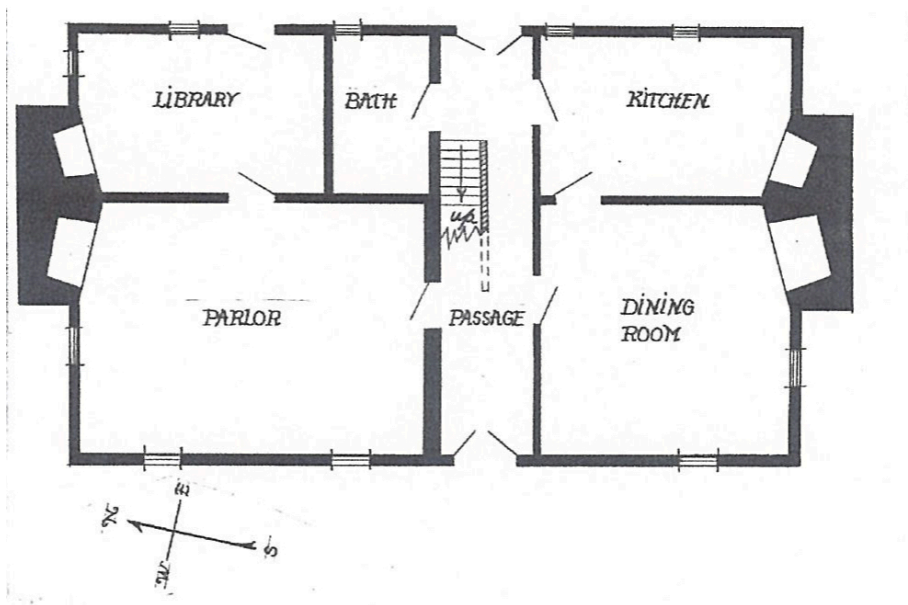


Figure 5

Linden was built in three stages. Dates for each stage of construction were determined by a method called dendrochronology. This is a form of tree-ring matching. It was done in 2001 by Camille Wells, University of Virginia, and her associates. Such dates only determine when a tree was cut for conversion into timber. We assume, for convenience, that the year a tree was cut and its use as timber was the same year. Here is a review of all known and surmised facts of the building's construction at each stage, beginning with the first and earliest. Note, in the three stages, all timber framing (corner posts, braces, studs, sills, plates, and rafters) are pit sawn and joined by mortise and tendon, secured by a wood peg. Also, all lath is secured to studs by hand wrought (rose head) nails. *At end of this paper, read editors' note on dating of historic structures.*

Linden, Stage 1, 1761: Original One-Room House

The earliest stage of Linden began as a one-room and loft house in 1761. William Dew, who owned the farm at that time, was evidently responsible for its erection. This little house was similar to many that once occupied the Tidewater area of Virginia. Unfortunately, almost all are now gone. Man finds old buildings a bother and has an inclination to tear down the old and build anew. Fortunately, Pear Valley (1740) in Northampton County, Virginia has been saved and is now on the Virginia and National Registers of Historic Places. It is carefully looked after by Preservation Virginia (formerly APVA) (Fig. 6, Pear Valley). Linden originally looked similar to Pear Valley in Stage I.



Figure 6

Summary: Linden began as a one-room and loft building (16 x 22 feet) with a brick foundation on which sills (large timbers) were laid. The outside walls and roof were covered with pine-pitch-covered riven clapboards secured to wall studs and rafters with hand wrought

rose headed nails. Its corner posts were braced in two directions (along each of its sills). There was a front door and possibly a back door, two windows (possibly three), a small sliding window on the northeast wall, and a fireplace and chimney on the southeast corner of the building facing diagonally in the room. There were stairs in the room's northeast corner leading to the loft.

Details: When facing the front of Linden today, the oldest part is on the right (see Fig. 2). It is an early one-room plan building now encased within today's larger Linden. A partial wall of this early building still remains so we know much of what it once looked like. The one-room building's floor pattern was rectangular (15 by 21 feet) occupying what is today's dining room and front half of the passage (hallway). Its front door was located to the right (south) of today's main door. This can be seen by short lath spanning two doorposts along with a header on top (Fig. 7, Location of original door).

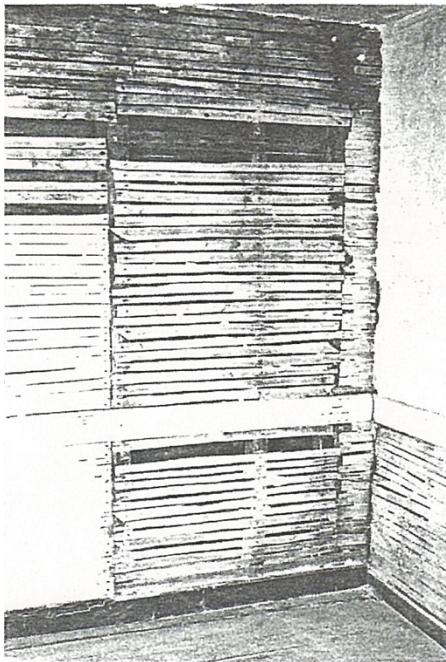


Figure 7

The chair rail and baseboards seen in Fig. 7 are later (Stage II?) additions. The wall to its right in the photograph was probably added during Stage II. The outside walls of this small building were covered with pine-pitch-covered, riven clapboards. We know this because part of the early wall on the north gable side still remains. Its siding was not removed when the Stage III south wall was built against it. A sliding window with trim, along with pitch-covered riven clapboards can be seen through a glass exhibit panel inserted on the last addition's inside parlor wall (Fig. 8, Looking through glass panel: pine-pitch, Stage I clapboards in center, Stage III vertical stud and brace on right, and Stage I sliding window and trim on left).



Figure 8

Early Linden had tilted-false-plate eaves. This early false plate still can be seen on the building's front side. The tilted-false-plate on the back (east) side of the building was removed when the lean-to structure was added to the early house during Stage II. Evidently, builders found the tilted-false plate useful when lining up rafters along the length of the eave. This was an easy way to square-up rafter ends separate from joists. Perhaps later, the extra work to construct a tilted-false plate, made their use obsolete (Fig. 9, False plate eave at Pear Valley) (Fig. 10, Diagram of false-plate eave construction at Linden).



Figure 9

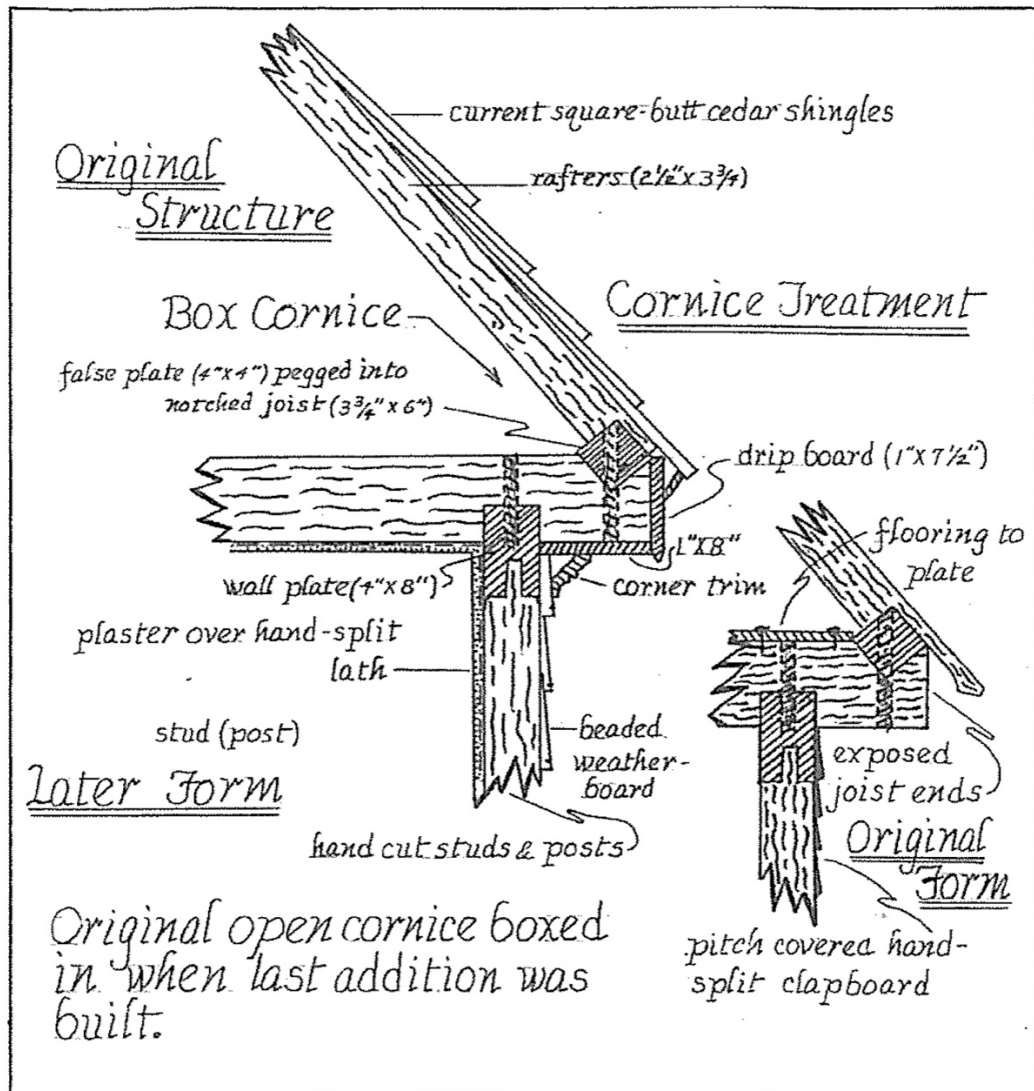


Figure 10

There was found beneath the building's floor, half covered in dirt, a 4-foot long pine-pitch-covered riven board. It is tapered at both ends, suggesting the building's first roof likely had pitch-covered clapboards (Figs 11 & 12, Pitch-covered roof clapboards on Rochester House just over the Richmond County line in Westmorland County) (see Rochester House at: http://www.milaminvirginia.com/Links/HOUSES/rochester_house.html). Also found beneath the original flooring were round-butt shingles suggesting the roof later was covered with newer and more weatherproof shingles.



Figure 11



Figure 12

The inside wall finish of the early house was plaster on wood lath. The early plaster was bound by a kind of grass. All lath was secured to studs with wrought (rose headed, hand forged) nails. Lighting in the early days was from windows during daytime and candles or oil lamps at night. A broken piece of an oil lamp was found beneath the floor. No evidence was found on the south wall of this one-room dwelling for an early fireplace and chimney. It probably was originally a corner fireplace in the southeast corner of the room.

There were two known windows where they are today. There may have been a third one on the side of the room where the lean-to was built. This could not be determined. Framing of the window on the south, fireplace, side, measures 29 by 60 inches. None of these two (or three) windows were sliding windows like the one found on the northwest end of the room opposite the fireplace. That rare window slid side-ways within the wall to the left. Perhaps it was opened when there was a need to ventilate the room. We currently put in a window with leaded glass panels in order to demonstrate its possible appearance.

The stairs, in the northeast corner, were put in sometime during Stage I (Fig. 13, Evidence of early, Stage I stairs). They were slightly wider than the stairs in the house today and also might have been steeper, being restricted by a back door at its base. The stairs ascended toward the gable-end north wall and then turned left along the gable wall to the loft. This was within the width of what is today, the passage (hallway). There is a wide board on the second floor (loft) parallel to the existing stairs that may cover up the width of the early stairs. The left door in the Stage II wall in Figure 13 is nineteenth century; an earlier door in the same location was smaller. The door on the right is in its original location to the outside of Stage I or into the lean-to of Stage II. The early stairs evidence in the photograph is revealed by the header and short lath. It extended further into the loft floor than the later closed string stairs. The first, early stairs also may have been boxed-in from the beginning. The photograph also shows the lath before modern plastering.



Figure 13

Figure 14 is a fast, at dusk, sketch of the Stage I (original) building (Fig. 14, Stage I floorplan sketch). The stairway shows a platform at its turn. It could have been curved. The number of steps shown are not accurate. The stairs may have been enclosed or partly enclosed. Both front and back doors faced each other in Stage I. The corner fireplace is conjectural, but there are no other signs of it being otherwise. Today's front door (Stage II) is located in wall at the word "UP."

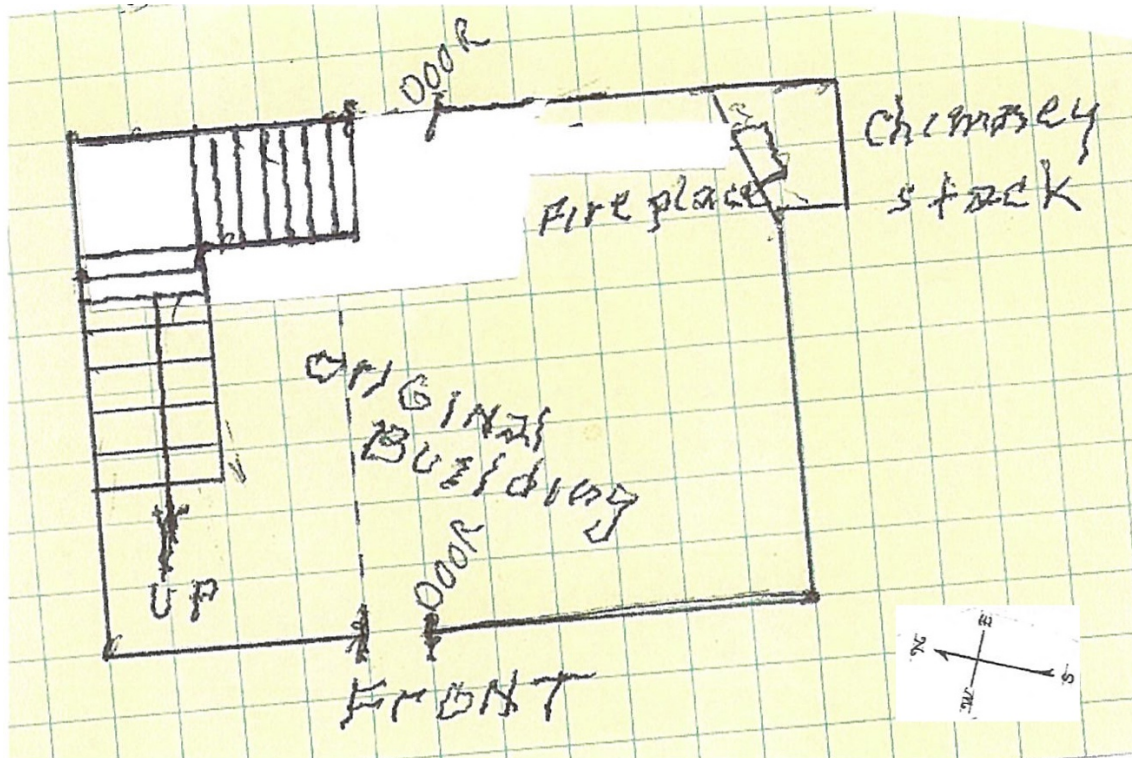


Figure 14

An east-west wall was built across the one-room (Stage I) building, lining up with the bottom of the stairs, and just to the north of the early main entrance. The wall was installed probably during Stage II because it was built against existing ceiling plaster of Stage I. This wall is still in place today with a door connecting what became two rooms. The early door was smaller and lower than the one there today. This wall may have been put in during Stage II, making a narrow room, too narrow for a sleeping area and too big for needed storage at that time. Perhaps the wall was put in to make a closed entranceway. This could have been done by moving the early door to where the front entrance is today. With a closed stairway opposite and a newly placed front door, a narrow closed-in room could be used as a buffer (entrance way) to the weather. This narrow room was partly along today's passage (hallway).

Linden, Stage II, 1778: Lean-to

Summary: This stage is a lean-to addition (10 x 22 feet), two rooms, two small windows, and a door through to first building's room, a corner fireplace facing into the room, a small bricked-in area below flooring, and an outside back door. A wall with door forming a small back room or entrance way may have been added to Stage I building during Stage II. At this time, a dormer may have been added to the Stage I building in order to provide light and air to the loft.

Figure 15 shows how the Stage II addition, trussed rafters relate to those of the original house (Fig. 15, Stage II X-section) (Fig. 16, Photograph of Stage II, trussed rafters & framing from

Stage I, loft, knee wall). Note the need for a separate inside foundation and sill. The "Hall" and "Hall Chamber" occupies the original one-room house. The "Kitchen" label can be ignored.

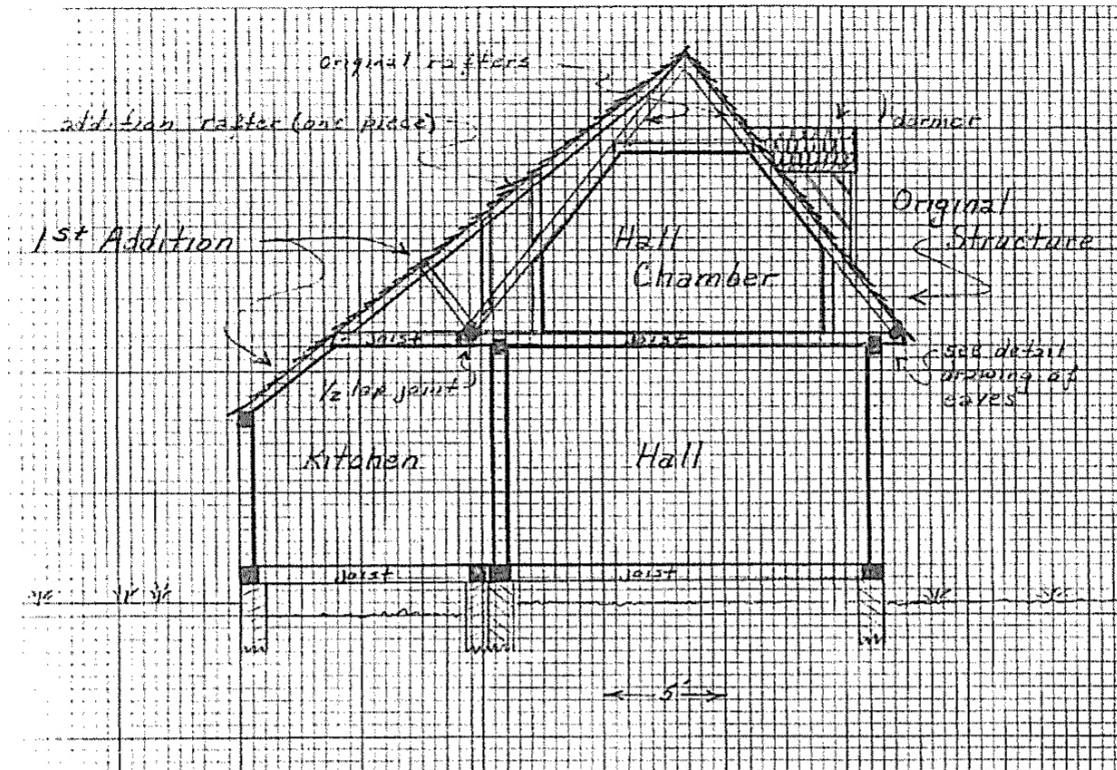


Figure 15



Figure 16

Details: The first known major change to the early one-room house was construction of a lean-to addition on its east side in the year 1778, probably by Samuel Dew who acquired the land shortly after William Dew died. The lean-to addition provided extra space by adding two small rooms. Door-post notches in the overhead ceiling joist that runs across the center of the lean-to gives evidence of two rooms under the lean-to roof. Directly below the dividing wall's flooring is a short brick pier supporting a cross beam (sill) running directly under and along the wall. The beam replaces one floor joist and runs parallel to the other floor joists. Did a sagging floor require such a large support beam? A rectangular patch can be seen in the flooring near the wall in the center of the lean-to. It probably was not a root cellar. It may have been an area cut through the floor to gain access to beneath the flooring in order to put in the pier support. The lean-to's outside door was/is located on the north room's east side where today's passage double doors lead out to the backyard.

At this time, brick, double-corner fireplaces with a massive, two-flue chimney were added, each facing into the rooms to provide heat (maybe cooking) on both sides of the two rooms (Stages I and II). The arched opening in the lean-to is original (Fig. 17, Lean-to fireplace opening). It is the only arched fireplace intact in the house. That on the other side in Stage I originally had an arched opening that was later modified during Stage III into a square opening in order to accommodate a large Greek mantel.



Figure 17

The two-over-four windows on the east or low side of the lean-to appear to be original. Stages I and II of Linden was similar to the nearby Elmore House, see: <http://www.historicmapworks.com/Map/HB/1165477/BWPhotos+165340/Virginia//>

Figure 18, Stage II lean-to showing new sill and part of the old one on the right. Also shown is a corner post and brace, studs, and two window posts. Lath and plaster have been applied on the inside as has new siding been applied to the outside.



Figure 18

There is a small bricked-in area beneath the flooring at the north end of the lean-to. The feature is smoothly bricked up to the bottom of a joist and the floor, and it ties in with the foundation brickwork and sill. The enclosure is completely sealed inside and has a 28"-wide

opening out to what was then the side yard. It is not a root cellar nor a dog house, but what? It lies just below and at the end of today's staircase. The dirt floor inside the enclosed area did not show signs of animal habitat. I do not know the purpose of this enclosure (Fig. 19, Plan-view sketch of enclosed area under the floor).

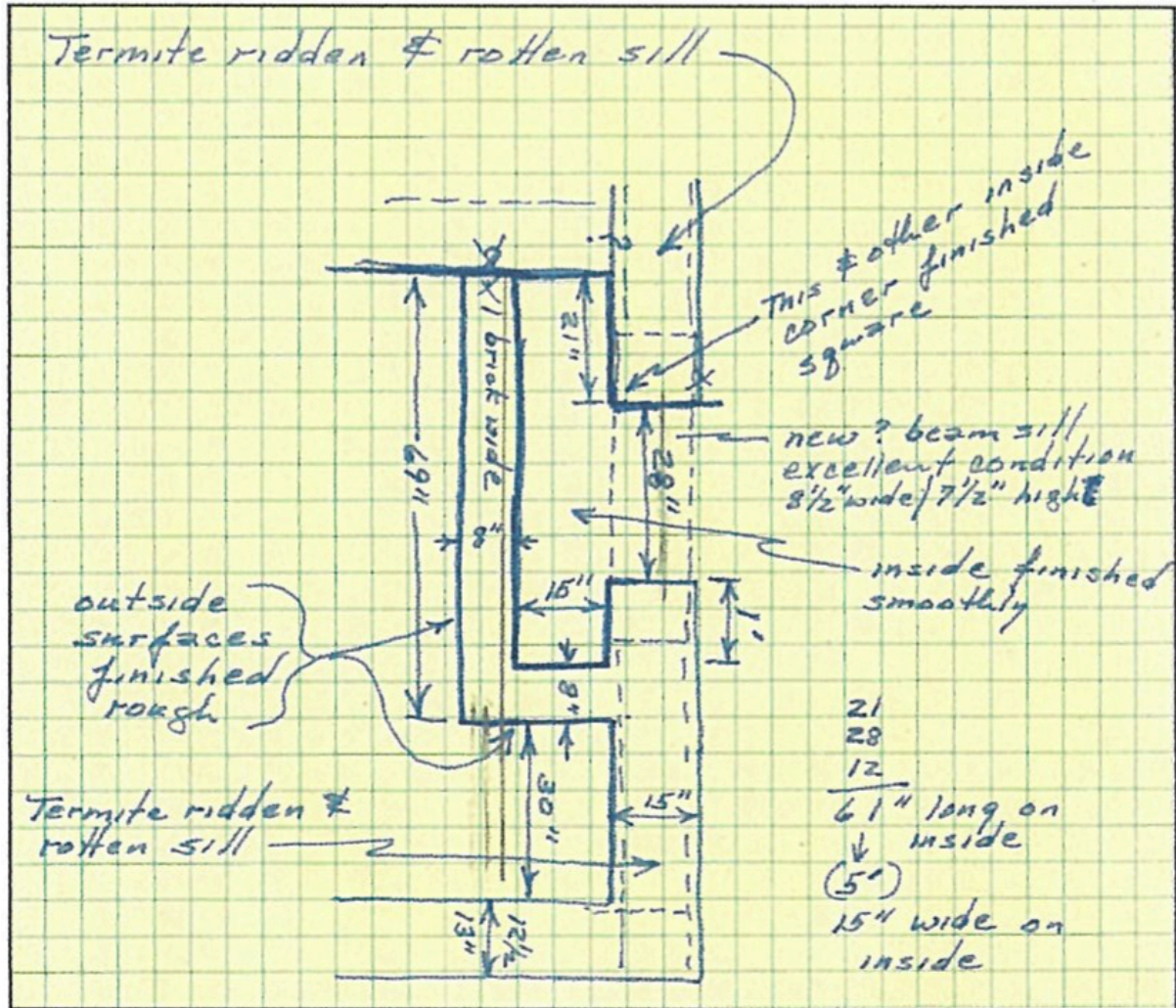


Figure 19

The area near the back doors was in bad condition having a great deal of rot. Evidently there was considerable leakage around the sill and the end of the joists. This apparently was an ongoing problem, as the joist ends near the doors were given extensions (Fig. 20, Sketch of joist extensions). Three wooden pegs holding each extension were missing. Why, when the wood extensions were solid and intact?

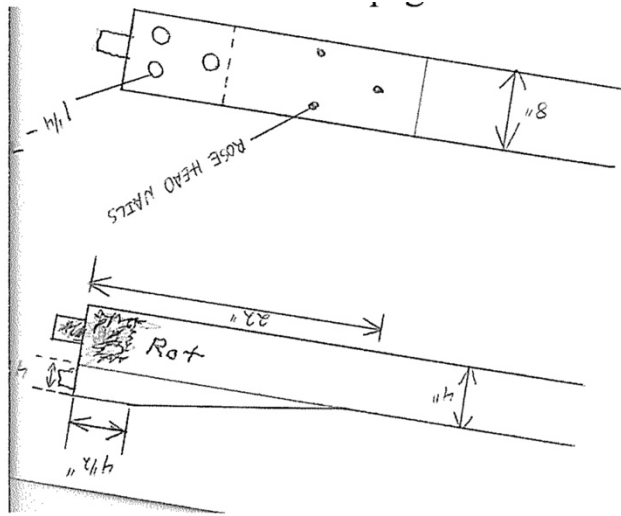


Figure 20

This is a poor sketch, partly up-side-down, but hopefully it gets the idea across. The wood extension attached to the original joist, held by three pegs and three rose headed nails. The extension would attach into the replaced sill.

Linden, Stage III, 1803: Large Addition

Summary: Retaining the room and lean-to shape, a larger structure was built directly against the older two. Like the earlier two stages, there is a large room in front and two smaller rooms in the lean-to addition. There are two iron hooks on the larger front room wall, three windows (two in front and one on the north side), two doors, one to the passage and one to the north back room (with H-L hinges). Four dormers were placed equally across the front of the completed building giving light to the hall and the large and small second-story chambers. The north, small lean-to room has an outside door and one leading to the large front room. There is no evidence of a door connecting the two small lean-to rooms. The south lean-to room's door leads to the (passage) just at the bottom end of the new stairs. New stairs replaced the old with closed string and early turned balusters (Figs. 21 & 22, Closed-string stairs with turned balusters).



Figure 21



Figure 22

A cellar was dug before Stage III was built above it. It now lies directly beneath the large/main room of Stage III.

Details: Stage III addition completes Linden as it appears today. It was built directly and physically against the Stage I and II structures (Fig. 23, Joining of lean-to corner posts of Stages II and III).



Figure 23

Note the rafter plate and corner post of Stage III, on left, are larger timbers than those of Stage II (back side of plastered lath.)

The lower main/large front room, and the second-story chamber above, are the two largest rooms in Linden. Between the two lower front windows were iron hooks imbedded in each of the two middle studs with a header above. Purpose? Support for a loom?

Like Stage II, there were two rooms under the lean-to roof, making four small rooms across the back of the house (Stages II and III). There is a door in the north small room leading outside to the back yard. There is no evidence of a door between the two small lean-to rooms of Stage III. The southerly room has a door leading to the passage. The wall separating these rooms was about 18 inches farther to the north than it is today.

A passage was made between the front and back double leaved doors. It ran along through the narrow room of Stage I and the north end of the room of Stage II. This narrow passage is 5 1/2 feet wide. The old Stage I stairs were removed and a closed string stairway was

installed against the north wall of the narrow passageway taking about half the walkway space. The new closed string stairs have early turned balusters and railing, a feature much earlier than the Stage I building. It appears that they may have been from a seventeenth or early eighteenth century building. In the 100 years that the Dew family owned and lived on the farm, they had a home on their land, but where was it? Late seventeenth century records often comment "at" or "on" the Dew place." Did the Dews live in an early (earthfast) house that had these stairs which were saved and later used in the Stage III renovation? Just a thought.

The large, Stage III chamber upstairs has a large window in the north, gable wall (Fig. 24, Large Stage III chamber).



Figure 24

A cellar lies beneath the large room with an entrance originally to the outside by means of a slanting outside cellar door or bulkhead. Later the cellar door was replaced with a small addition in order better to cover the steps (Fig. 25, Cellar steps). The cellar had a dirt floor that we paved with brick. The cellar replicates the above room except for the large chimney foundation across it's northeast corner. Its headroom is about six plus feet high. The cellar has two, narrow, outside windows through the house's brick foundation on the east side. These windows once had wood framed vertical bars.



Figure 25

During Stage III a massive chimney stack was built on the north end (see Fig. 3) replicating the one on the south side of the first two stages. Both chimneys are laid in Flemish bond with steep paved weatherings and corbelled caps. Both have double-corner fireplaces facing diagonally into each of the four rooms. Also, imbedded in the fireplace breast, above the arched openings in all four rooms is (was) a wood timber set in the brick work. Were these wood emplacements used for securing mantels or possibly for hanging fireplace implements?

Four similar dormers were placed across the front of the house providing light from the outside into the second-floor large and small chambers and at the top of the stairway (see Fig. 2). One door of the large lower room of the Stage III addition leads to the passage (and the main outside front doors), the second enters the north lean-to room that has an entrance to the back yard (see Fig. 5). The door between the large and small rooms are hung with H-L hinges. Compare the cross section of the Stage III addition (Fig. 26, Cross section of Stage III addition) with that of Stages I and II (see Fig. 15).

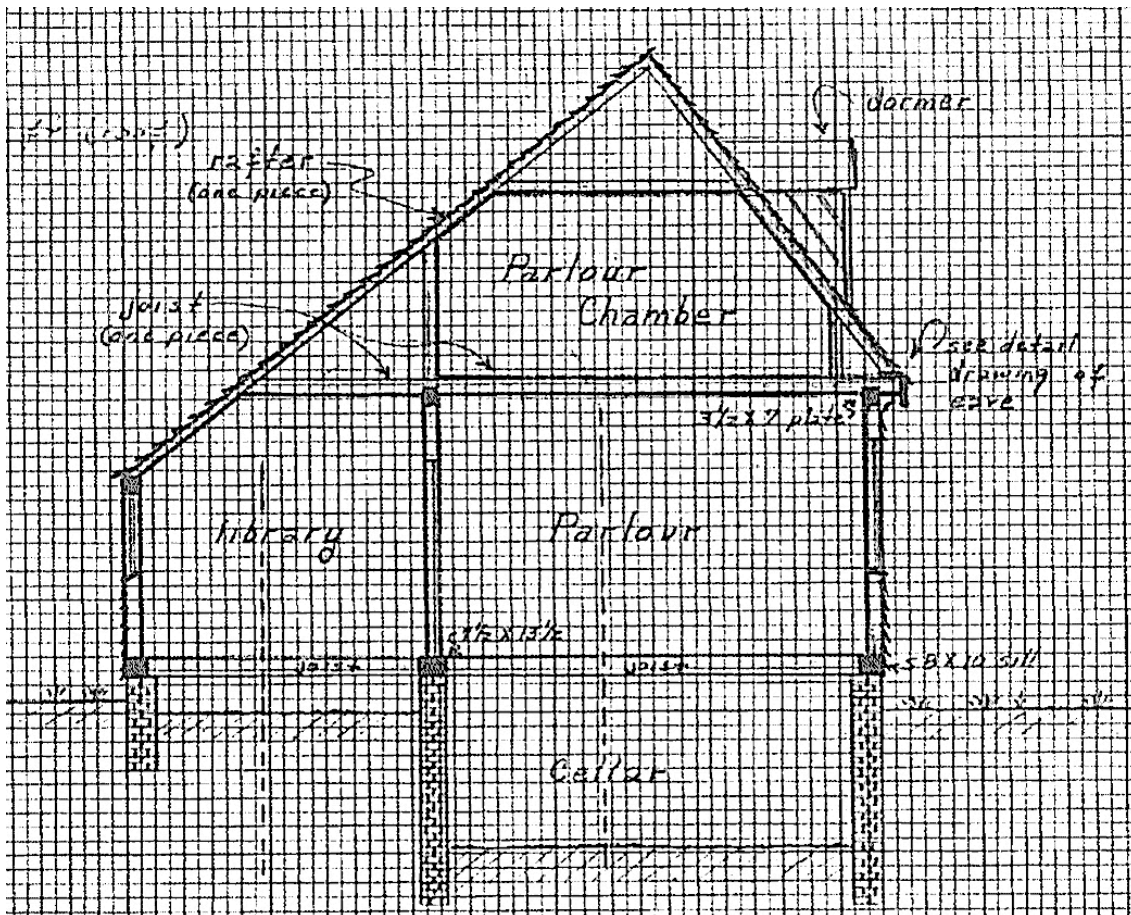


Figure 26

Linden, Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries

In 1846 Carlos Cox (1846-1850) wrote to William Tayloe of Mount Airy, when contemplating buying Linden Farm, that the "dwelling and many out houses were in bad repair." William Tayloe owned Linden 1845-46 due to an unpaid debt by Edward Saunders'

grandson, Edward S. Saunders. Edward S. Saunders owned Linden from 1826 to 1845. The 44 years since Edward Saunders added Stage III to 1846, evidently led to deterioration of the building due to neglect.

Henry Lyell owned and lived at Linden Farm from 1851 to 1871, after which Richard Henry Lyell owned the property from 1871 to 1873. Linden then passed into the hands of the Siller family from 1873 to 1883. There is a good chance the Sillers are responsible for adding a front porch on Linden. Franklin Siller was a poet and artist with considerable money. The family was from the midwest where front porches were common. The porch spanned the front of the house about 15 or 20 feet and about 5 feet wide, with roof and steps (Fig. 27, HABS photograph, 1933, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, VA-566, showing porch on Linden). The porch collapsed sometime in the 1960s and was on the ground in ruins by 1977. There was no way one could measure all the dimensions of the porch at that time.



Figure 27

Naming Linden, 1868

The house was probably named "Linden" by Fannie L. Pitts Lyell after her previous home in Essex County (Fig. 28, Portrait of Fannie L. Pitts Lyell). Her tombstone is located at Indian Banks where she also lived after marrying Henry Lyell in 1852 and died of childbirth in 1854 (Fig. 29, Fannie's tombstone at Indian Banks). The name, Linden, was recorded in a Richmond County deed dated 1868 and was used thereafter.



Figure 28



Figure 29

Orth Restoration, 1977-1882

In 1977, my wife, Martha Orth, and I purchased Linden Farm and house from Virginia Sanders, and we soon began a program of restoration. Also, in 1977, Linden Farm was placed on the Virginia and National Registers of Historic Places. The house and properties were in a bad state (Fig. 30, Linden at time of Orth purchase). Unfortunately, we lived in Arlington, Virginia, and we both had jobs with the Federal Government. Each weekend we would drive 125 miles, one way, to do restoration work on the old house.



Figure 30

I began evaluating and making drawings of the building's construction, and Martha began looking into the history of the people who lived there. After about the fifth week, while I was removing loose ceiling plaster, William (Bill) Duncanson, stopped to visit and indicated a willingness to help restore Linden. He believed in the preservation of old buildings. After a short while, we quickly learned that he was a good and careful worker, and he also was able to work during the week when we were not there. In truth, Bill was a major player in the restoration of Linden and in the construction of all the outbuildings.

The first work done was removal of loose plaster in all rooms of the house. There also was considerable damage in the north, under lean-to, small room of Stage III. Part of the chimney stack and fireplace had collapsed, and the sill was badly rotted on the northeast side of the house. Also, the foundation had crumbled. We found a brick mason in Warsaw who repaired and restored the brickwork on the chimney and fireplace. A new sill replaced the rotted one, and the foundation brick was repaired. The wall on this north side was repaired and secured to the brick of the chimney stack.

From the year 1761 to the 1880s, we knew little about the use of the rooms in Linden. We did make educated guesses. The two, second-story rooms were obviously bedrooms. Virginia Sanders daughter, Norma Jean, was born in the large upstairs bedroom. We are sure many more babies also were born there plus the many old folk who died there. When we bought Linden in 1977, we learned the use of the current rooms. The kitchen, before the chimney collapse, was in the lean-to rooms of Stage III, with the dividing wall removed. A stove sat in front of the closed fireplace with its stovepipe running up and through the chimney breast. Signs of the chimney hole still can be seen. A sink was on the east wall with a hose used for drainage out the window to the yard. The large, Stage III room was the living room or parlor. The two Stage II rooms were made into one by removing the partition, and it was used for a bedroom with a fireplace. The Stage I room became the dining room. Both upstairs rooms were bedrooms.

The missing dormer in the large, upstairs room (see Fig. 30) was rebuilt by Bill Duncanson and attached in place. This was done by cutting through the ceiling that covered the hole in the roof when the dormer was removed. Again, there are four dormers across the roof as originally placed by Edward Saunders in 1803. Joe Gaines and his helper applied modern plaster to all rooms of the house.

The standing-seam, metal roof was removed (Fig. 31, Removal of metal roof).



Figure 31

A new roof of redwood, square-butted shingles, based on early, square-butted shingles found under the metal roof, was applied by a company out of Richmond. The division between Stages I and II and Stage III clearly could be seen by a gap between the shingle lath boards (Fig. 31, Roof shingle lath boards, Stages I & II on right and Stage III on left).



Figure 32

The original one-room house had a riven-clapboard roof, apparently followed by a round-butted shingle roof, followed by a square-butted shingle roof, followed by a metal roof, followed by our modern square-butted shingle roof. Bill Duncanson and I worked on the roof removing rotted, lath boards and replacing them with new ones while the roofers applied new roofing shingles (Fig. 33, Linden restoration roof work) (Fig. 34, Shows masons repairing the south chimney cap.



Figure 33



Figure 34

We then put in a wall forming two rooms under the Stage III lean-to. The outdoor privy in the back field had blown over during a windstorm, and a modern bathroom was planned. A

wall was put across the 20th-century kitchen for a bath room. A septic tank was installed in the north yard (Fig. 35, Now-destroyed privy north east of house).



Figure 35

All Linden doors and other interior woodwork were cleaned and painted brown. They were badly dented, and the paint was badly scratched. The original paint on the doors had spiral designs, but the subsequent damage was too great to save them. Bill Duncanson cleaned the doors with paint remover before painting. He also found some infestation (termites) on the north-side chair rail, so he removed the damaged area replacing it with wood putty keeping the same railing profile. Early exterior siding was scraped and painted (Fig. 36, Martha Orth scraping siding).



Figure 36

By 1982, the restoration of Linden was essentially complete (Fig. 37, Linden in 1982 after restoration).



Figure 37

The nineteenth-century barn on Linden Farm north of house was severely deteriorated, could not be saved, and was subsequently destroyed in a windstorm (Fig. 38, Linden Farm barn).



Figure 38

Linden Farm, at time of the Orth purchase consisted of around 25 acres with the old Linden farmhouse (Fig. 39, Plat of Linden).



Linden Farm Stories

A visitor writing a history of the War of 1812 told me British troops occupied Linden for a day. I was busy leading a crowd of visitors at the time, and when I looked for him later, the visitor had disappeared.

Virginia Sanders told me that two children who died during the Spanish flu epidemic in 1918 are buried in the yard near Linden. One is buried off the northeast corner of the house "about where the two big trees are". The other is buried off the southeast corner of Linden "near the old well, now filled in". This was the second time I heard about a well in that location. It would be close to the house off its southeast corner. An archeological search could find such a well and the graves, if they, indeed, exist. The well likely would have had a brick lining.

Virginia Sanders also told me about an "ice house" once located "just this side of the large shed" (south side). It had a wood roof and was lined with bricks. "In winter, the men would get ice from the rivers and cover the ice in the ice house with sawdust and straw". There is a slight hollow in the ground where she pointed. Again, an archeological probe could verify its existence.

Linden Farm was featured in the December 1986 issue of *Colonial Homes*.

Editors' Note on Dating Historic Structures: Traditionally, the tools used in dating early structures are public records, local/family traditions, overall form of the structure, decorative details of the structure, how the structure fits with other local structures, construction techniques, building materials, archaeological evidence, and common sense. In addition, dendrochronology is another important tool in the toolbox. However, it is only one of the tools.

Dendrochronology was initially developed in the 1920s by Andrew Douglass for use in dating prehistoric structures in the arid southwest United States where climatic conditions have remained stable for centuries. The methodology worked very well there. Since then, numerous other researchers have improved on the methodology and successfully adapted it to other diverse locations. One of these researchers was Dr. Jack Heikkinen of Virginia Tech, who was quite successful in applying dendrochronology dating in eastern Virginia. However, in some instances where climatic conditions vary considerably, both locally and through time, dendro dating can be a bit more problematic. Heikkinen even admitted that he didn't get it correct every time but usually did (personal communication with JM).

Sometimes, the preponderance of evidence generated by the traditional dating tools does not agree with the dendro dating. In the case of Linden, the records of early ownership, Dew-family traditions and inventories, the style and framing of the structure, the tilted false plates, the riven and pitch-covered roofing and siding clapboards, the horizontal sliding window, the closed-string stairs with the heavy, turned balusters, the exclusive use of wrought nails, and the massive chimneys laid in Flemish bond with steep weatherings, all indicate construction dates for the three stages of Linden anywhere from ten to forty years earlier than the dendro dates would suggest. If the dendro dates are, indeed, precise, all of the features of Linden indicating earlier dates have to be creatively explained away. Architectural historians, Carl Lounsbury and Camille Wells, in their handbook, "The Early Architecture of Tidewater Virginia", prepared for the twenty-third, annual Vernacular Architecture Forum conference in Williamsburg, opined

that "None of this re-dating of Linden Farm diminishes its significance in any way. On the contrary, the fact that it embodies old colonial Virginia strategies for building, planning, and finishing houses, coupled with testimony that these characteristics lasted well into the early nineteenth century, make it all the more important". That said, dendrochronology is still but one tool in the toolbox for dating early structures. In the case of Linden, it is not beyond a reasonable possibility that the dendro dates are incorrect, and Linden is, indeed, as old as all the other dating tools suggest.

In either case, this academic argument really does not matter. Linden is what it is, a rare, surviving example of an early, modest, Virginia farm house. The Orths are commended for saving this extremely important bit of Virginia architectural history for future generations to study and enjoy. JM & TN