

# **Fox Hall - *Part 2*, Barred Vent**

By

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Houses of today, with crawl spaces and/or basements, have foundation vents for air circulation. These vents are necessary to prevent moisture buildup resulting in mold and unhealthy air. Similar early houses with crawl spaces and/or basements also generally had foundation vents. Fox Hall, circa 1725-30, was no exception.

Foundation vents in today's houses are usually adjustable metal lattices that open and close, often backed with fine-mesh screen. In early houses, however, the foundation vents generally were made of wood with vertical or horizontal bars inset diagonally to the frame.

Fox Hall originally had three such barred vents, two on the front of the house and one on the back. The two vents on the front of the house were removed sometime in the past and lost (Figs. 1 & 2, Openings for barred vents on the front of the house, viewed from basement). Outside, these openings are now obscured by the front porch.



Figure 1





Figure 2



Fortunately, the barred vent on the back of the house remained partially intact. However, it was seriously damaged when parts of it were cut and broken away to allow for access for air-conditioning ducts and plumbing, gas, and electrical lines to pass between the original basement under Fox Hall and the crawl space under the twentieth-century addition. (Fig 3, Original barred vent).



Figure 3

This was a heavy-handed alteration that not only damaged the barred vent, but also the original brick basement wall, and the foundation and sill plate of the addition.

Since the upper part of this barred vent could be seen from the addition, the restoration manager decided that the vent would be partially restored to show another feature of the original house.

To do this, I had to remove the remains of the barred vent and trim off some of the damaged parts (Fig. 4, Disassembled vent frame) (Fig 5. Removed parts of barred vent).



Figure 4





Figure 5

The original three bars were all missing. Space for two bars could be seen from the addition. So, I had to make two replacement bars and fit them into the vent frame (Fig. 6, Trimmed vent frame ready for reassembly) (Fig. 7, Barred vent with two replacement bars). The vent frame is made of yellow pine, and I used old pieces of yellow pine for the replacement bars.



Figure 6



Figure 7

Due to the placement of the barred vent in the house wall and the intersection of the addition floor with this wall, one could see directly into the basement. To close off this view and to block the direct opening into the basement, I had to box off the bottom and back of the trimmed barred vent. This was done with wood painted black (Fig. 8, Restored



barred vent). Figure 9 shows the location of the barred vent in relation to the kitchen-chamber door (Fig. 9, Barred vent & kitchen-chamber door).



Figure 8



Figure 9