



Historic Structure Documentation and Existing Conditions Assessment

Caretaker's Cottage

Booker T. Washington Park
233 Orange Avenue, N.W.
Roanoke, Virginia

July 2026

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Executive Summary

The Caretaker's Cottage at Booker T. Washington Park is a rare surviving example of early Roanoke architecture and an important link to the city's African American history. Constructed circa 1837 as a brick hall-and-parlor dwelling, it retains much of its historic form, masonry, fireplaces, interior partitions, and early materials. During the twentieth century, it housed African American caretakers who maintained Washington Park when it served as a segregated recreational facility for Roanoke's Black community. As the park's only surviving historic building, the cottage possesses substantial architectural, historical, and cultural significance.

In June 2026, HistoriCorps personnel documented the structure's configuration, construction, surviving fabric, and physical condition. This report includes site and topographic information, measured plans, elevations, sections, architectural details, and diagrams of exterior-wall movement. Together, these materials establish a baseline for future stabilization, rehabilitation, maintenance, and interpretation.

The investigation found the cottage to be severely deteriorated and structurally vulnerable. No conventional foundation was observed, and the three-wythe brick walls appear to have been constructed directly on grade. Soil settlement and load shifting have fractured and displaced the masonry in several locations, with evidence that movement remains active. Roof failure has also caused extensive interior damage, including the loss or severe deterioration of floor framing, wall finishes, and first-floor windows and doors. Without timely intervention, partial or complete wall failure is likely.

Important character-defining features survive, including two fireplace mantels, portions of the original chair rail and window casings, the staircase, and the second-floor board-and-batten partition. Preservation should begin with emergency wall stabilization and protection from further weather exposure. Structural, geotechnical, and preservation professionals should evaluate foundational conditions, masonry movement, and damaged wall sections before permanent repairs are designed. Historic components removed during stabilization should be photographed, measured, labeled, mapped, and stored for conservation and reinstallation.

This report provides essential documentation for those efforts but does not constitute engineered stabilization plans or construction documents. Immediate action is recommended to protect public safety, prevent further loss of historic fabric, and preserve this irreplaceable Roanoke cultural resource.

Project Overview

The Caretaker's Cottage in Booker T. Washington Park is significant both as a rare surviving example of early Roanoke architecture and as a tangible reminder of the city's African American history. Constructed around 1837, the brick hall-and-parlor dwelling retains much of its original form, plan, masonry, fireplaces, interior partitions, and other historic materials, making it one of the few remaining antebellum houses of its type in Roanoke. During the twentieth century, the building was adapted as housing for African American caretakers who maintained Washington Park when it operated as a segregated, Black-only recreational facility. As the only surviving building associated with the historic park, the cottage illustrates the development of recreational spaces for Roanoke's Black community during the Jim Crow era.

The site and structure were evaluated by a team of HistoriCorps specialists in June of 2026. The crew examined every aspect of the building. The findings of this evaluation are presented in the dimensional drawings found in this report.



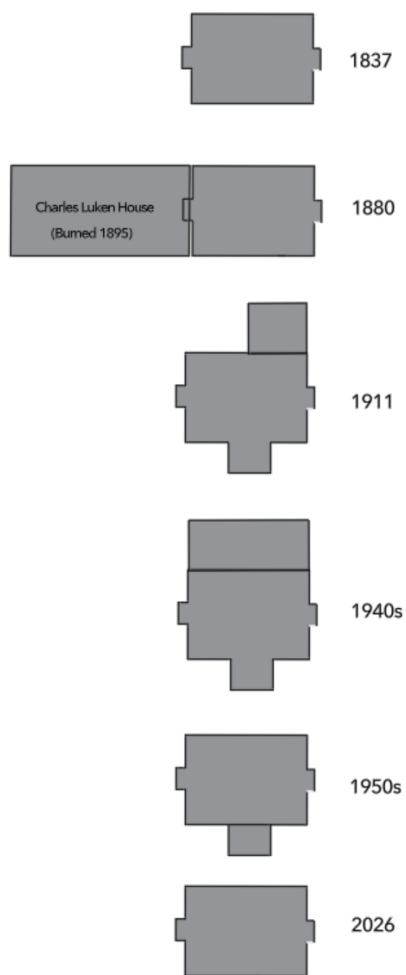
Construction Chronology

The core massing and fenestration (window and door locations) of this building are unchanged since its construction in 1837. It has, however, undergone several porch configurations and, during the 19th century, a large residence, The Luken House, was directly adjacent on the western elevation.

The construction chronology provided here is not authoritative but is based on close observation of the extant building in 2026 and analysis of historic photographs and a historic map.



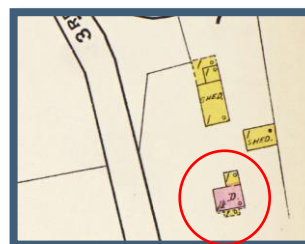
Washington Park Caretaker, Sam Callaway, on porch. Undated.



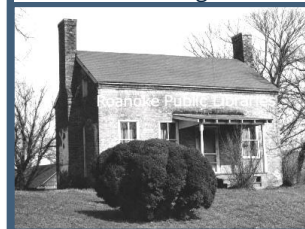
Caretaker's Cottage – mid-19th c.



The House at Eagle Tract Dairy.
Undated. Caretaker's Cottage on right



1919 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Plate 84.
Caretaker's Cottage circled.



1 Undated photograph from Roanoke Public Library

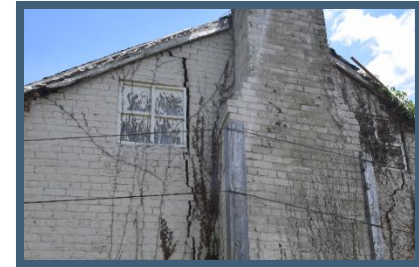
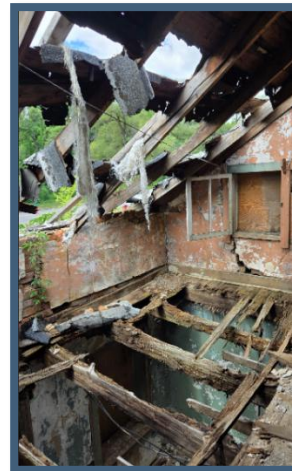
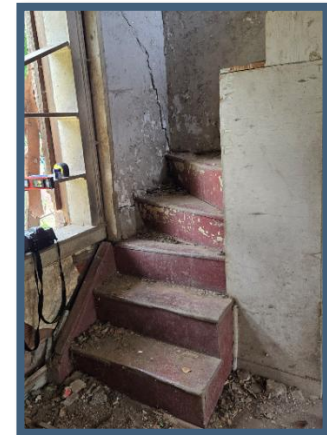
Assessment Brief

No evidence of a foundation was observed on this building. Its three-wythe brick walls appear to have been constructed directly on grade. As a result, settlement and soil compaction have shifted the building loads which has fractured the exterior walls in several places. These ruptures are significant and indicate the movement is active. Without stabilization, full or partial wall failure is likely within the next five years.

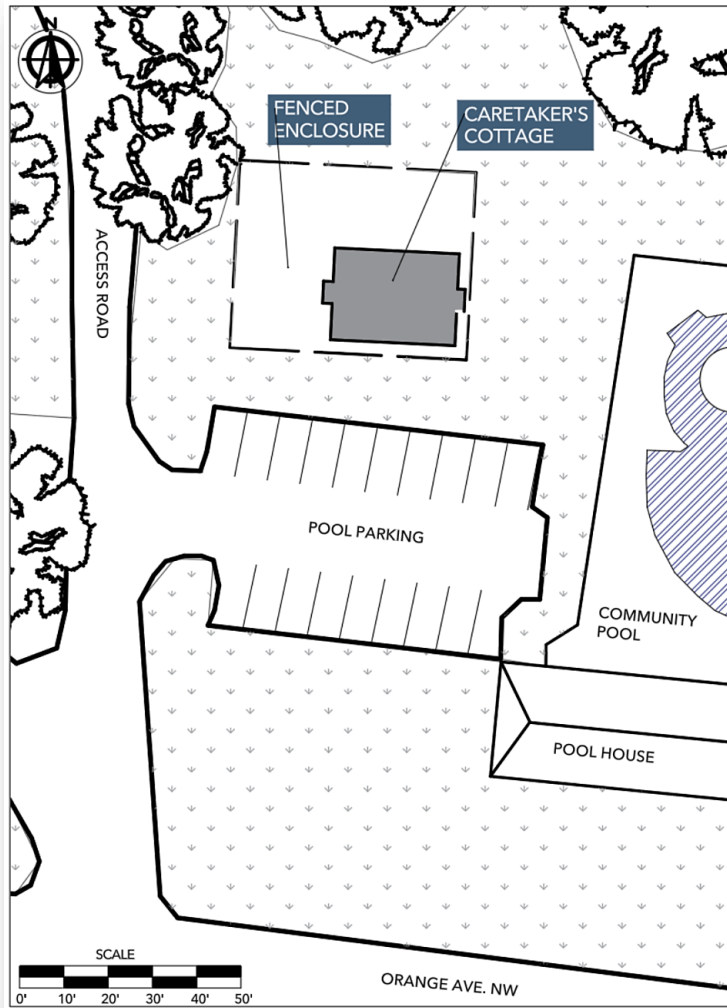
The interior of the building has suffered irreparable damage due to the failure of the roof. The floor system, historic wall finishes, and all the first-floor windows and doors are either entirely lost or in very poor condition.

Despite this deterioration, key character-defining elements of the building survive. Two of the fireplace mantels are intact as is much of the original chair rail and window casings. The staircase is also sound and the board and batten dividing wall on the second floor, likely made of historic American chestnut, is in good condition.

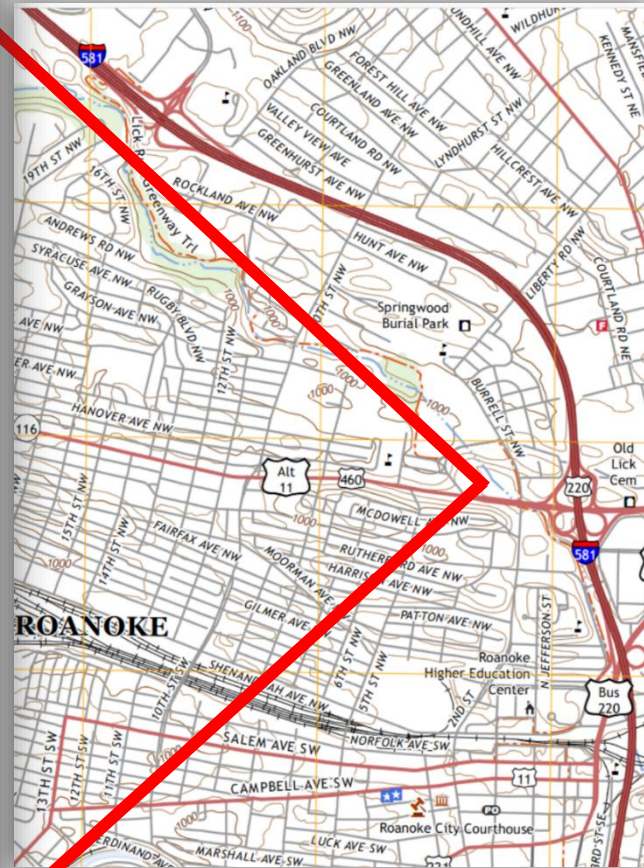
Preservation should prioritize emergency stabilization followed by a carefully documented rehabilitation. The exterior masonry walls should be temporarily braced, and foundational weaknesses, structural movement, and damaged wall sections should be evaluated and repaired by qualified preservation professionals. Where character-defining elements must be removed to permit stabilization, each component should be photographed, measured, labeled, and then carefully disassembled and stored for repair and reinstallation.



Site Map

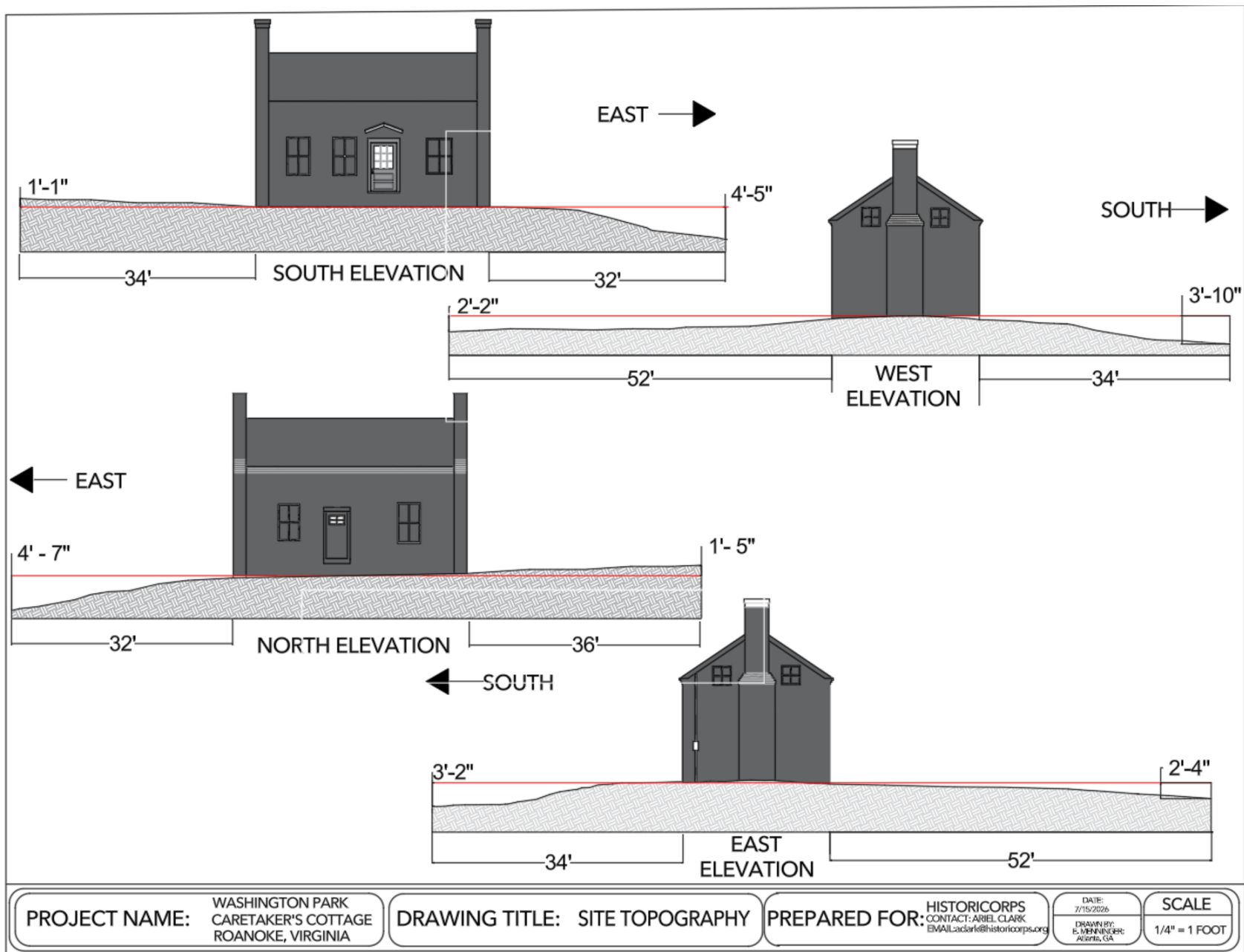


SITE MAP



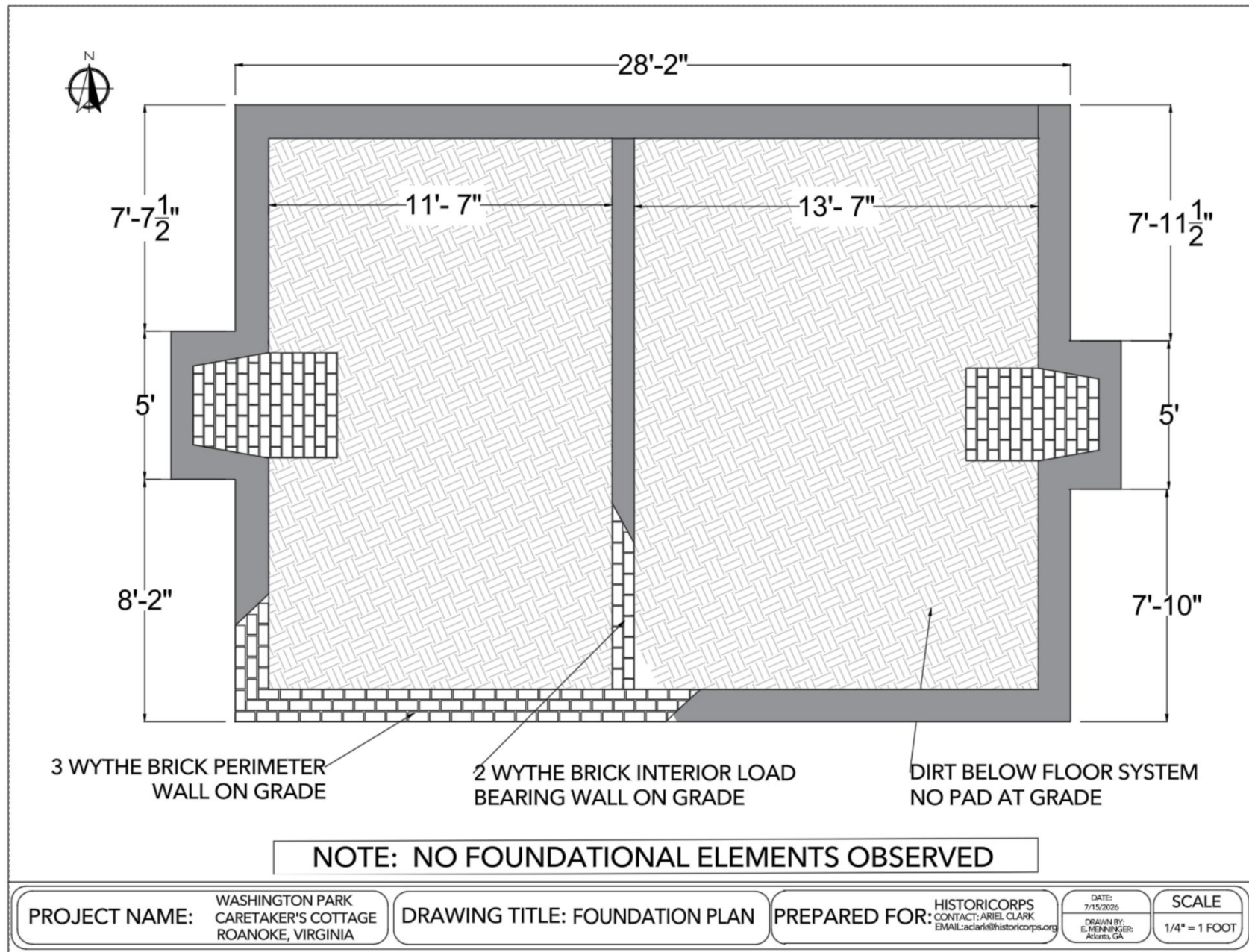
AREA MAP

Site Topography

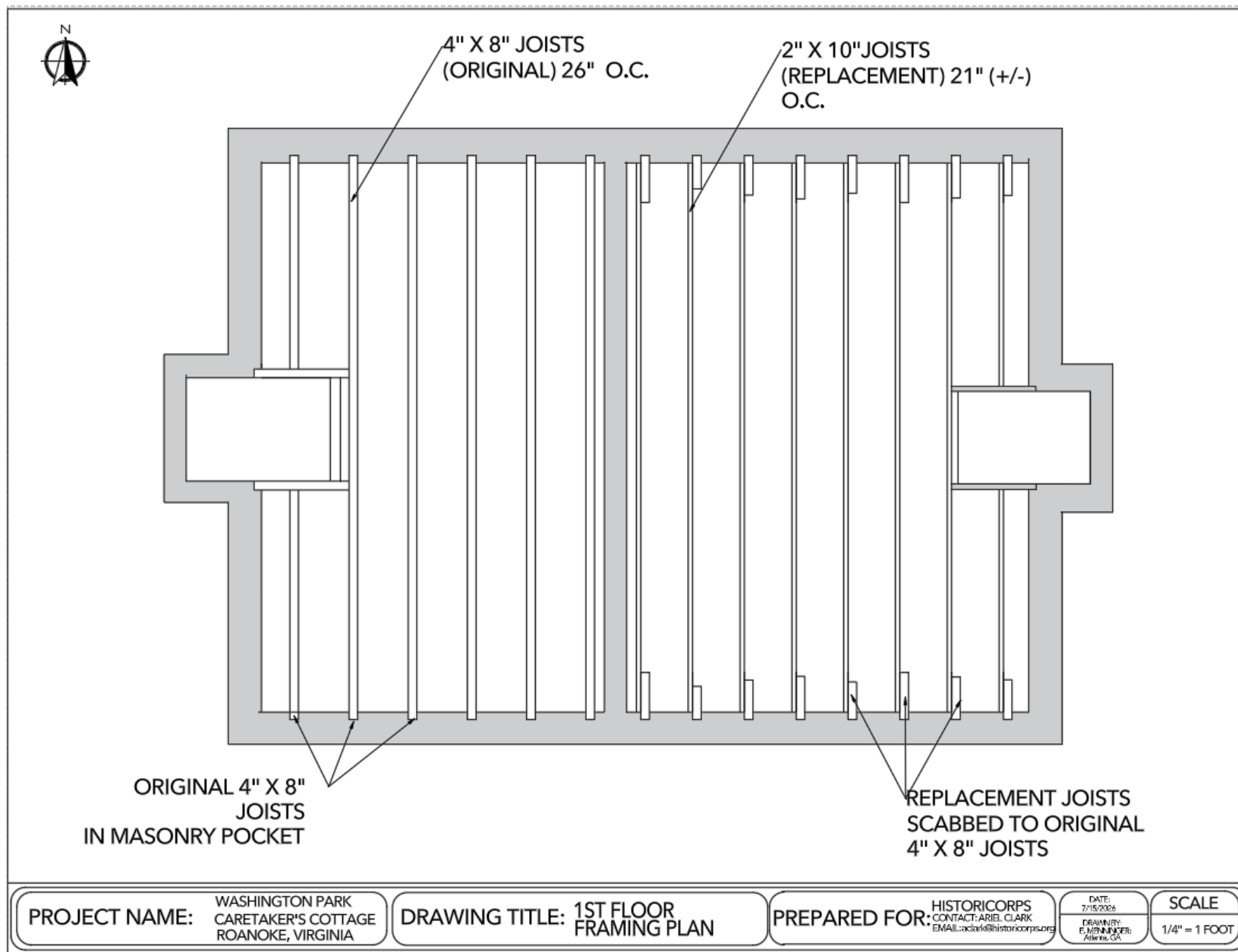


Drawings - As Built

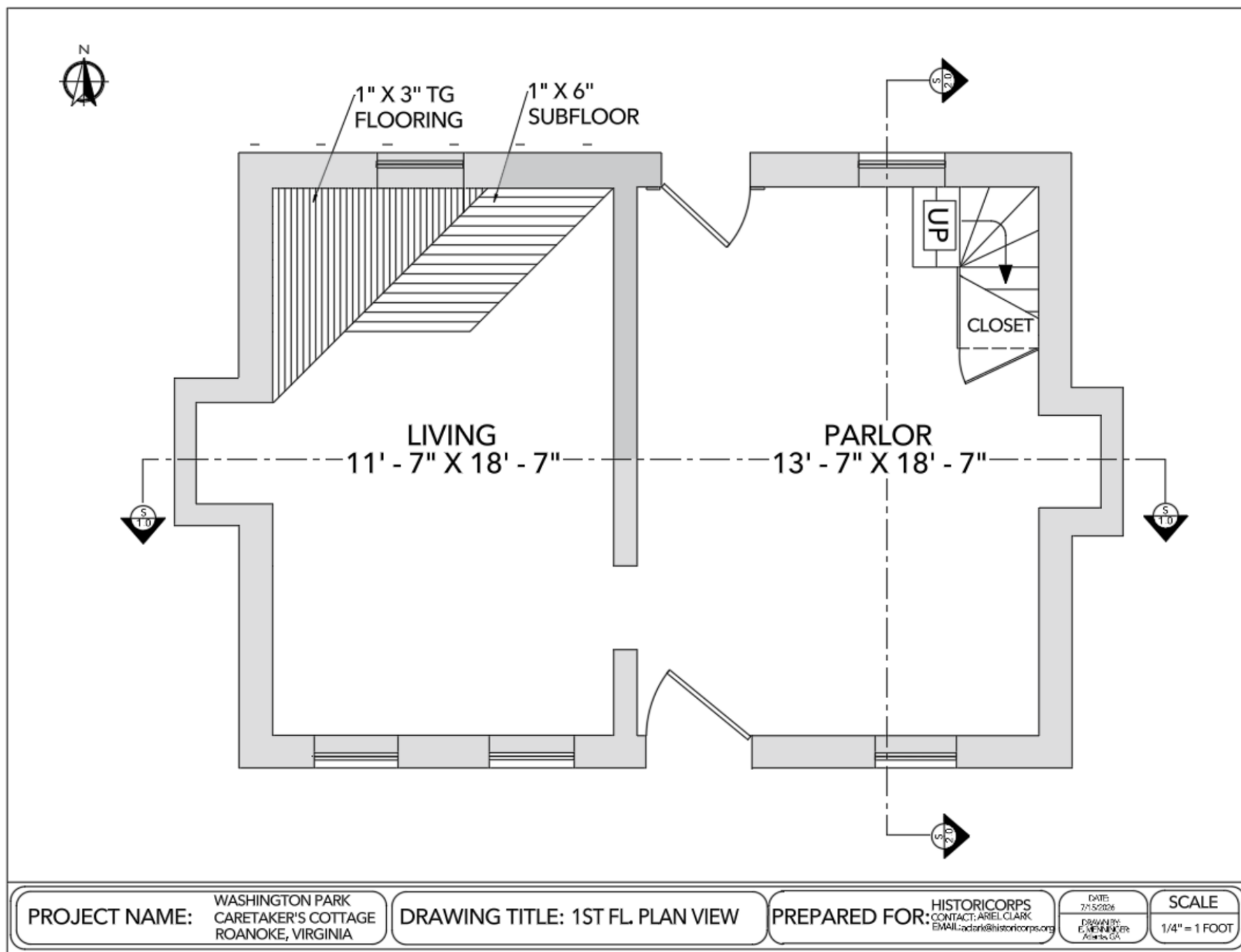
Plan: Foundation



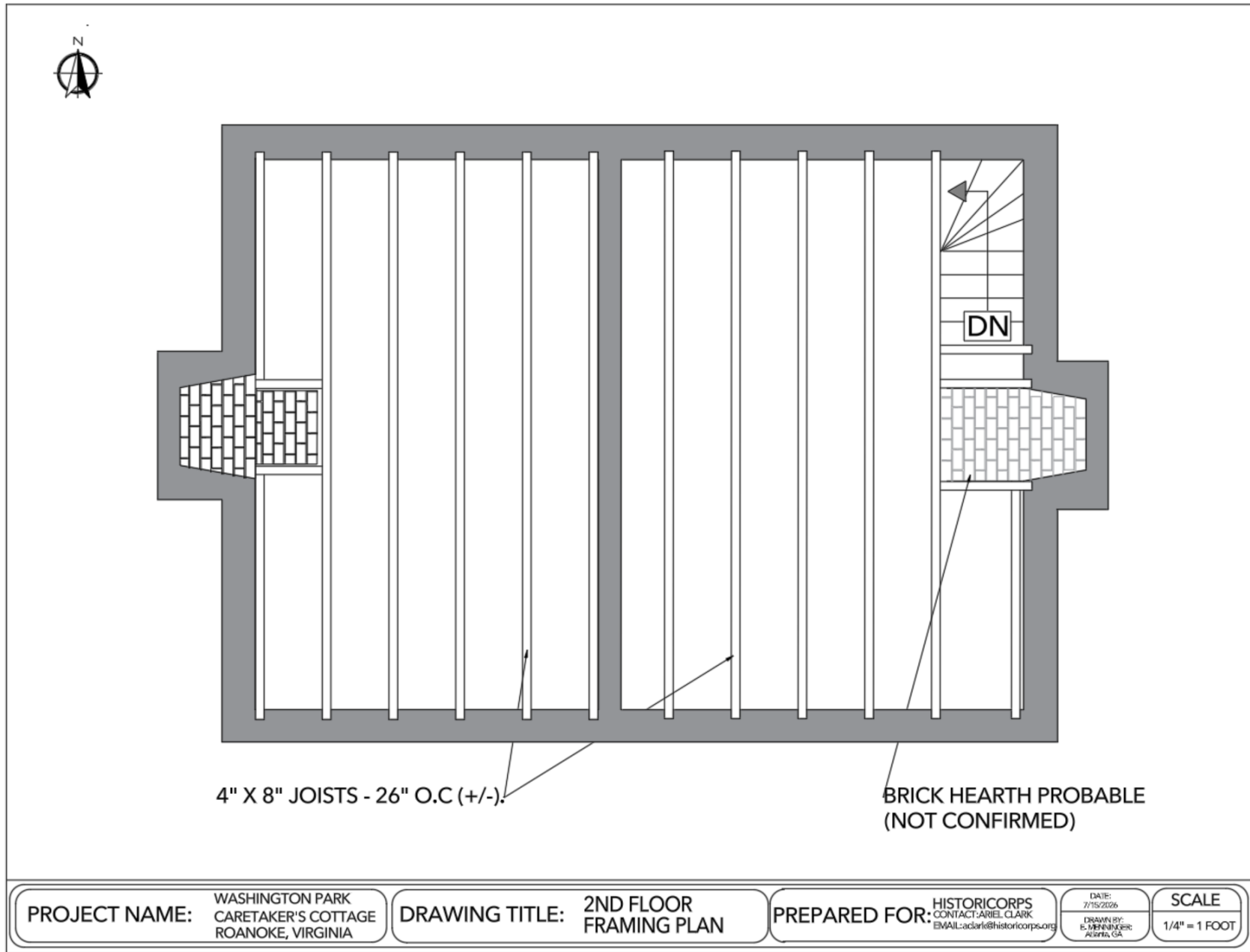
Plan: 1st Floor Framing



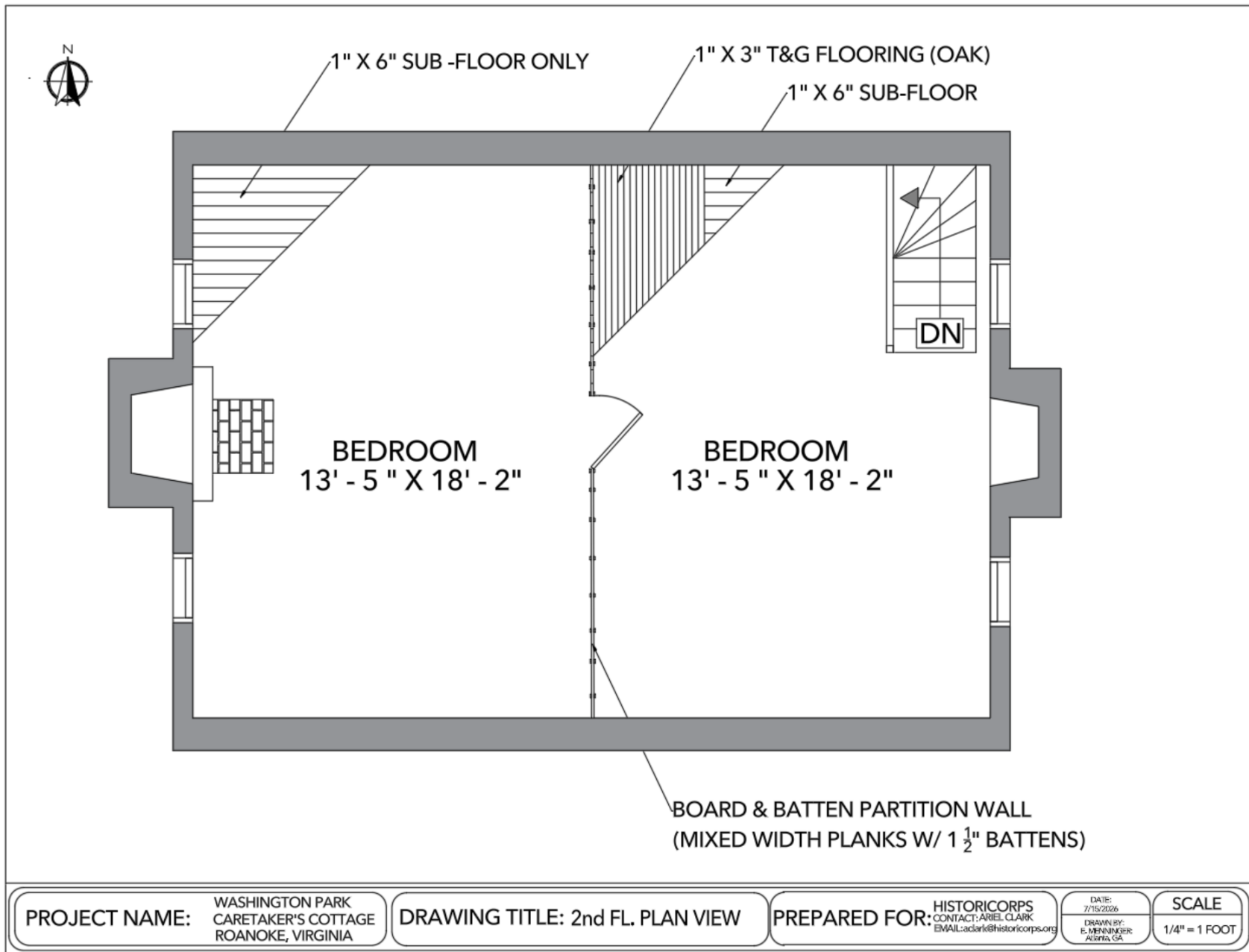
Plan: 1st Floor



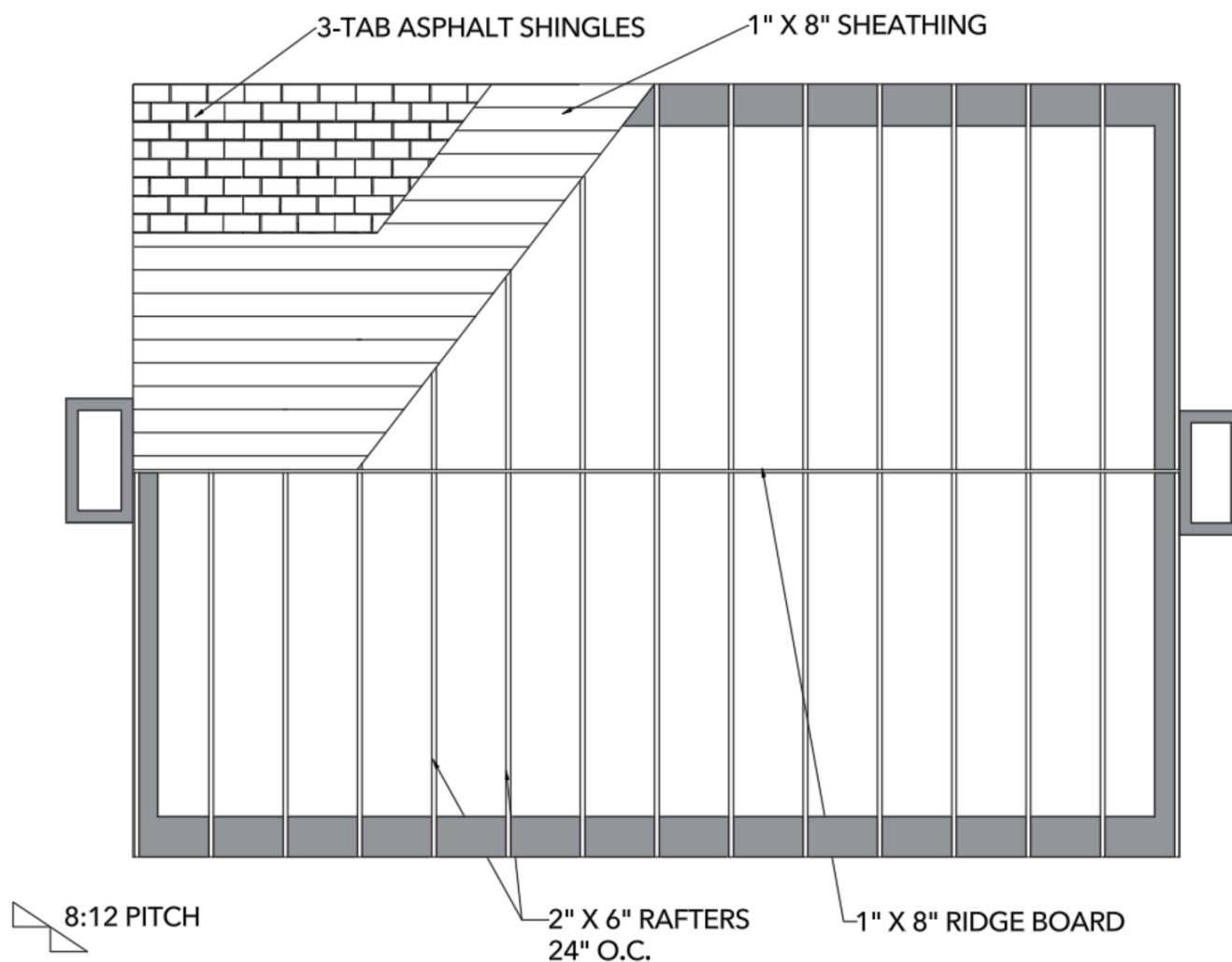
Plan: 2nd Floor Framing



Plan: 2nd Floor



Plan: Roof System



PROJECT NAME: WASHINGTON PARK
CARETAKER'S COTTAGE
ROANOKE, VIRGINIA

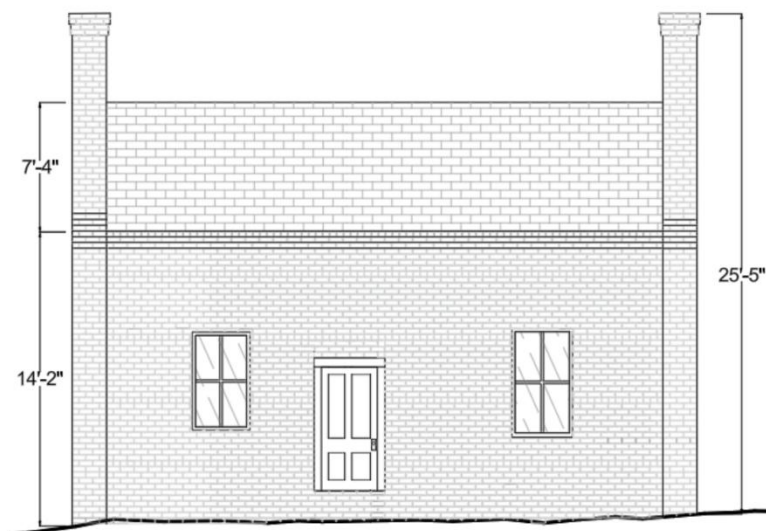
DRAWING TITLE: ROOF SYSTEM

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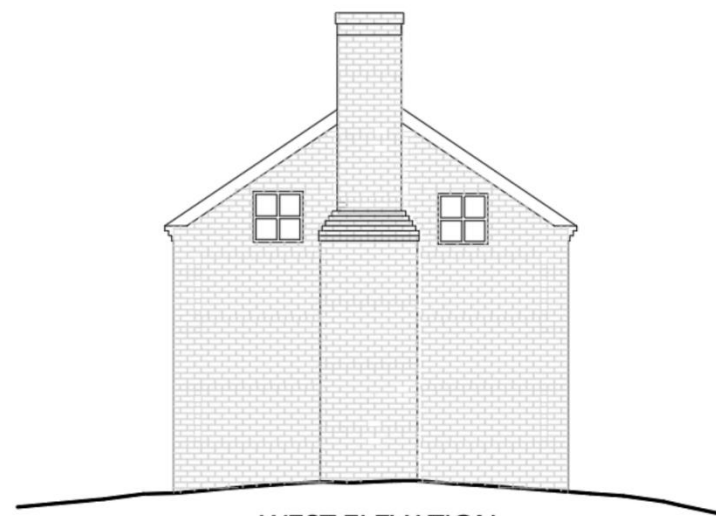
DATE:
7/15/2026
DRAWN BY:
B. MENINGER
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SCALE
1/4" = 1 FOOT

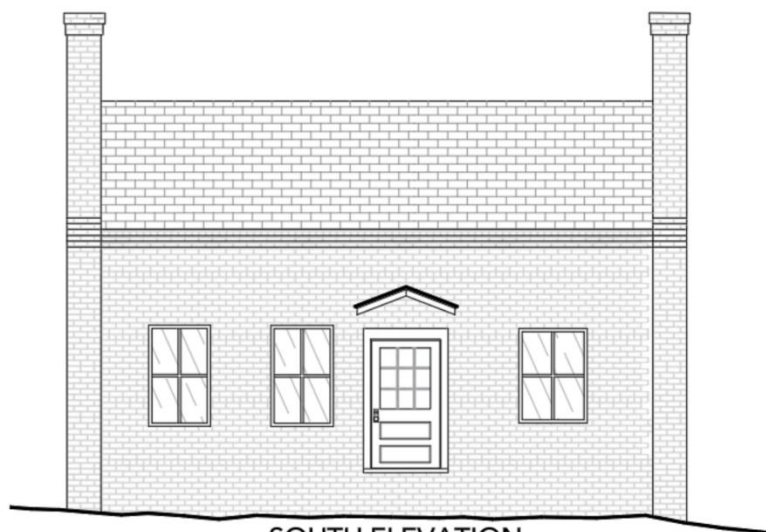
Elevations



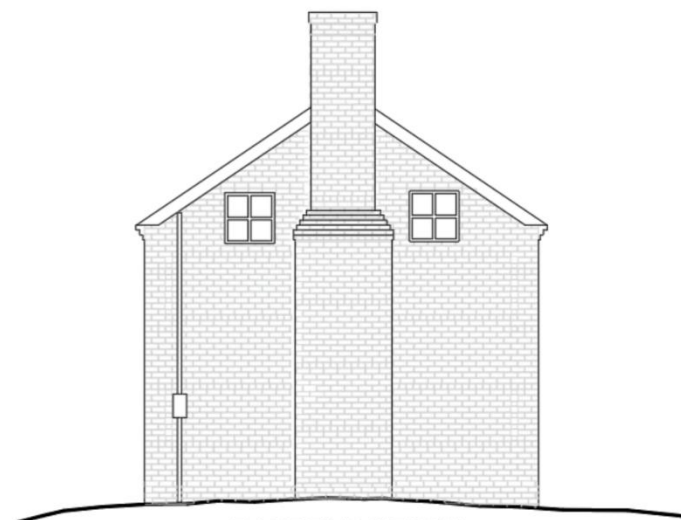
NORTH ELEVATION



WEST ELEVATION



SOUTH ELEVATION



EAST ELEVATION

PROJECT NAME:

WASHINGTON PARK
CARETAKER'S COTTAGE
ROANOKE, VIRGINIA

DRAWING TITLE: ELEVATIONS

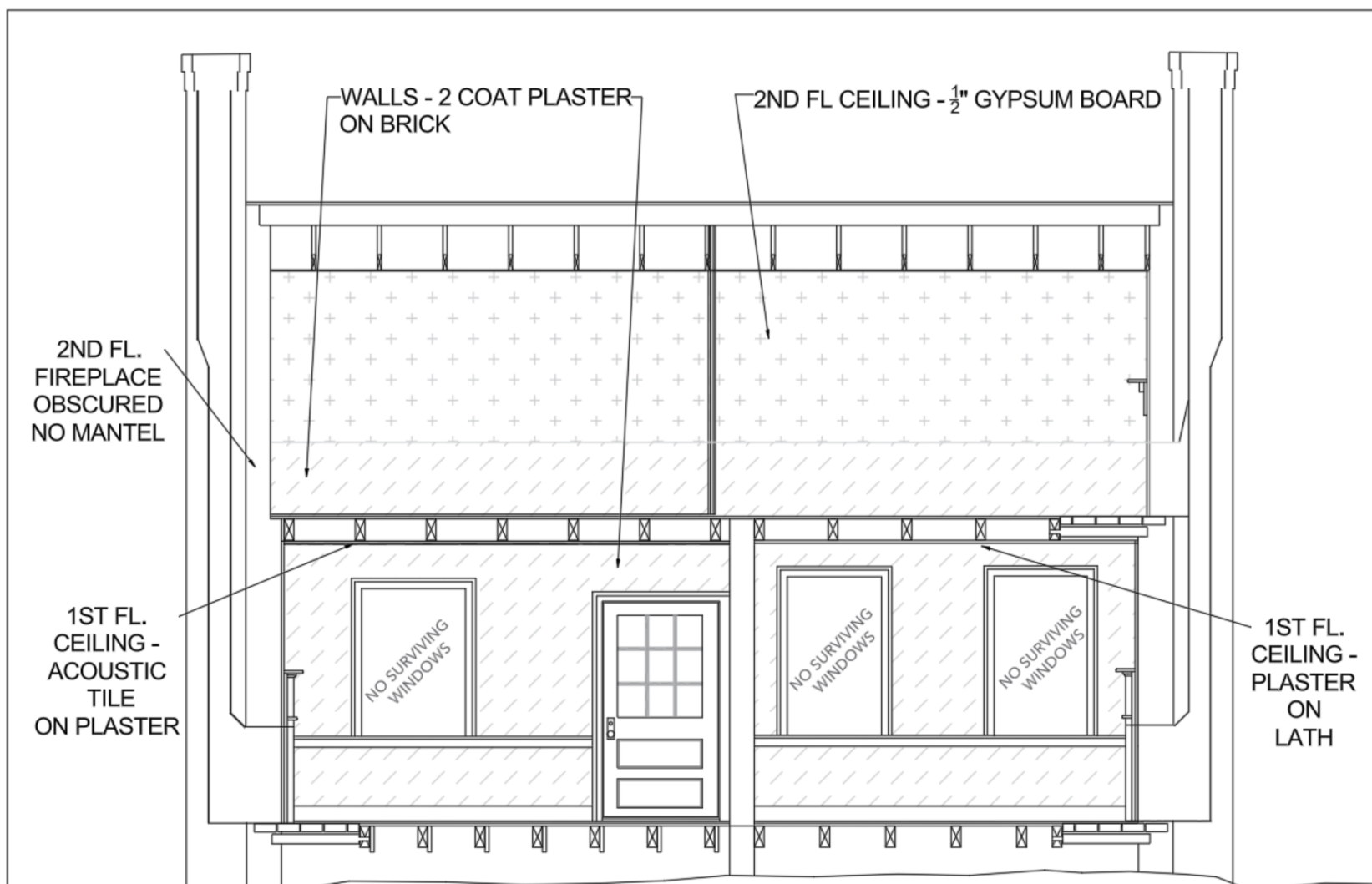
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SCALE
1/8" = 1 FOOT

Section S-1 Longitudinal



SECTION S:1 VIEW SOUTH

PROJECT NAME: WASHINGTON PARK
CARETAKER'S COTTAGE
ROANOKE, VIRGINIA

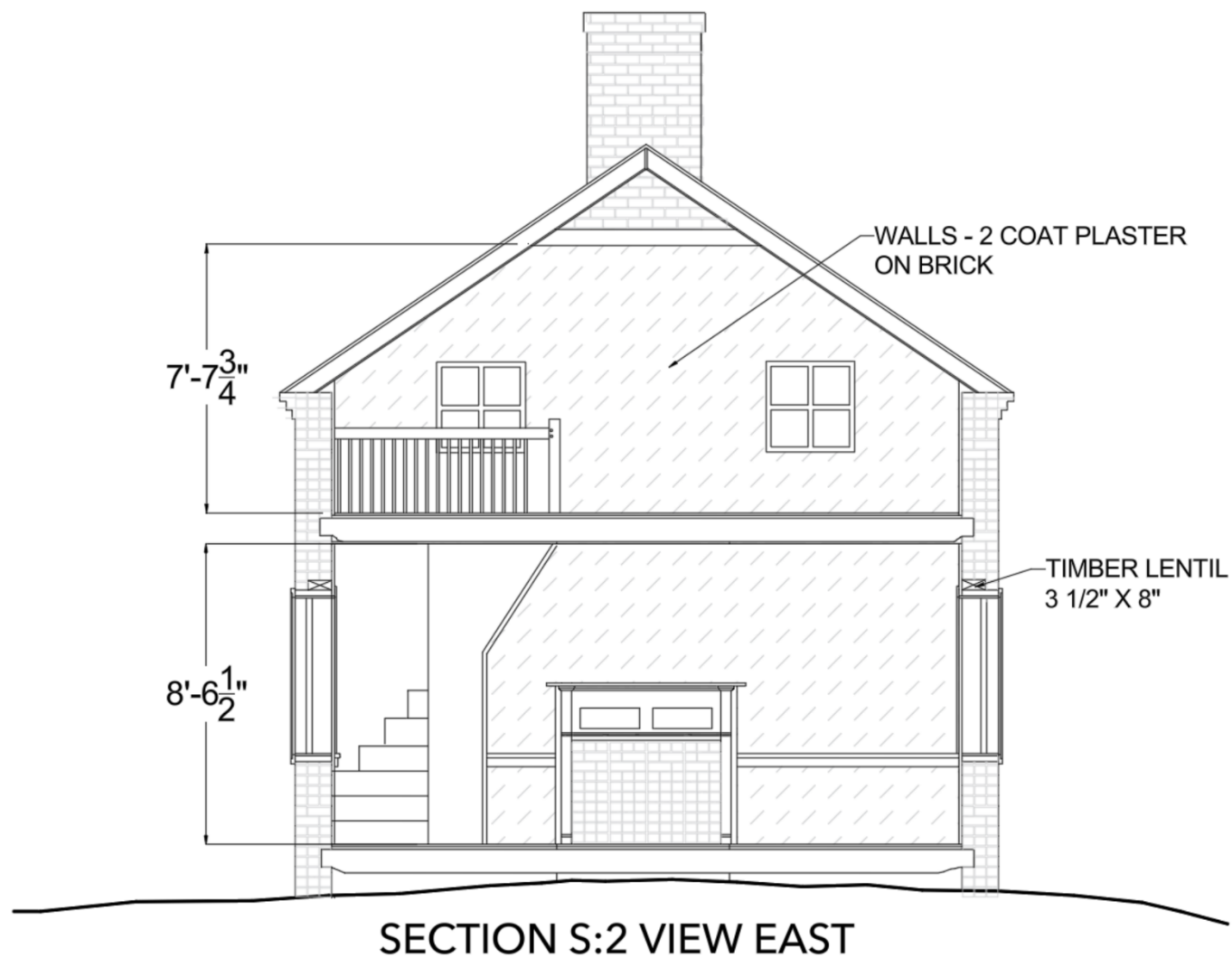
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SECTION

PREPARED FOR: HISTORICORPS
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SCALE
1/4" = 1 FOOT

Section S-2 Transverse



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CARETAKER'S COTTAGE
ROANOKE, VIRGINIA

DRAWING TITLE: TRANSVERSE
SECTION

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7/15/2025
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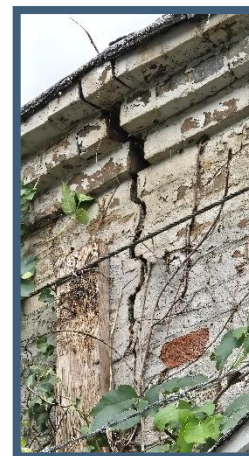
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1/4" = 1 FOOT

Drawings - Existing Conditions

Exterior Wall Movement



West end gable failure - north crack.



South wall failure - mid span @ cornice.

WALL PLANE MOVEMENT

N/W CORNER
3 1/2" OUT @ 14'

S/W CORNER
2 1/2" OUT @ 14'

LOWER WALL
BELLING

FULL ELEVATION
CRACKS
VIEW SOUTHEAST



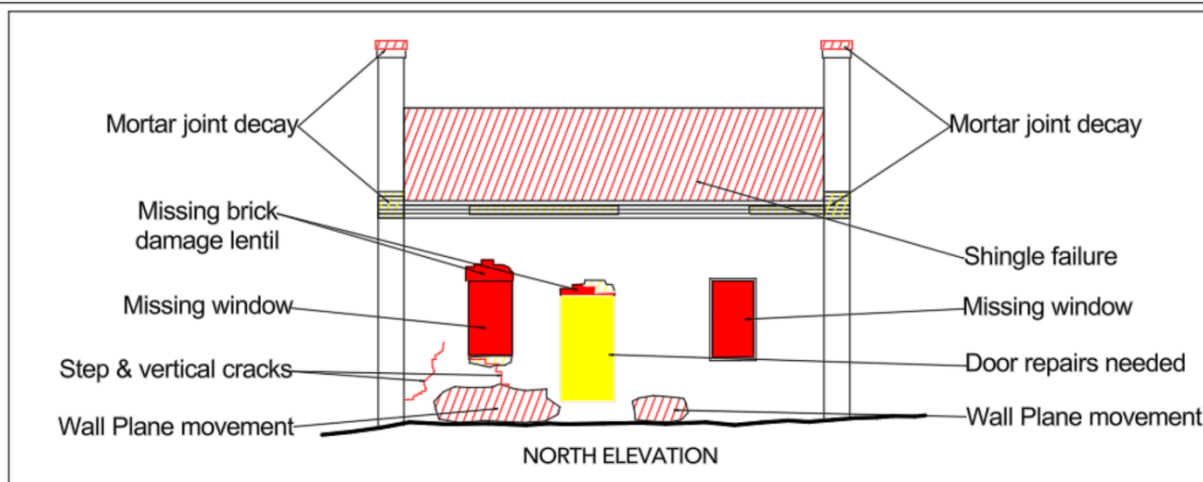
North wall separating from interior dividing wall.



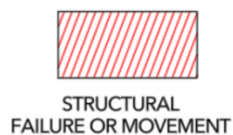
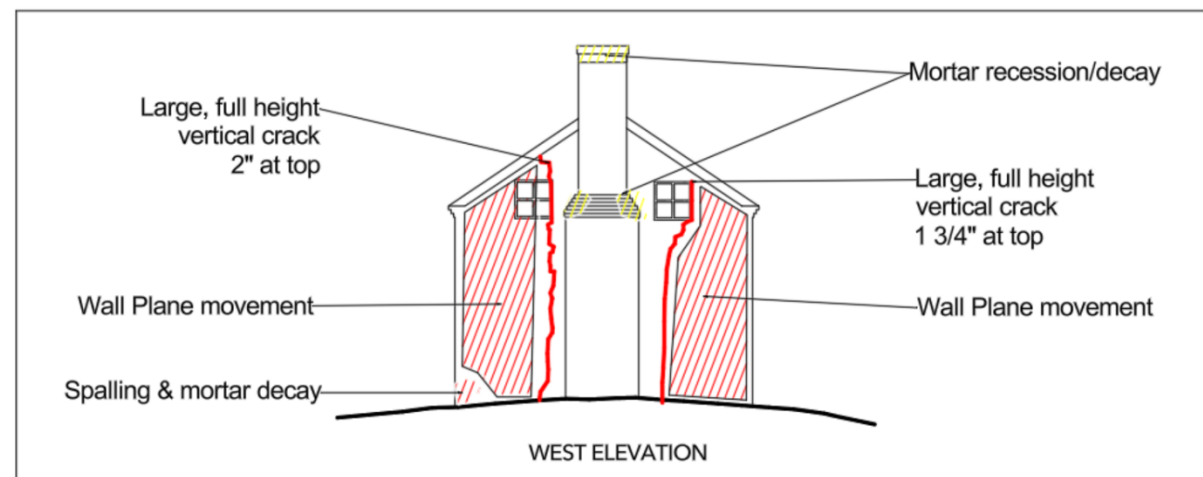
South wall separating from interior dividing wall.

Elevations

EXISTING CONDITION



KEY



PROJECT NAME:

WASHINGTON PARK
CARETAKER'S COTTAGE
ROANOKE, VIRGINIA

DRAWING TITLE:EXISTING CONDITION

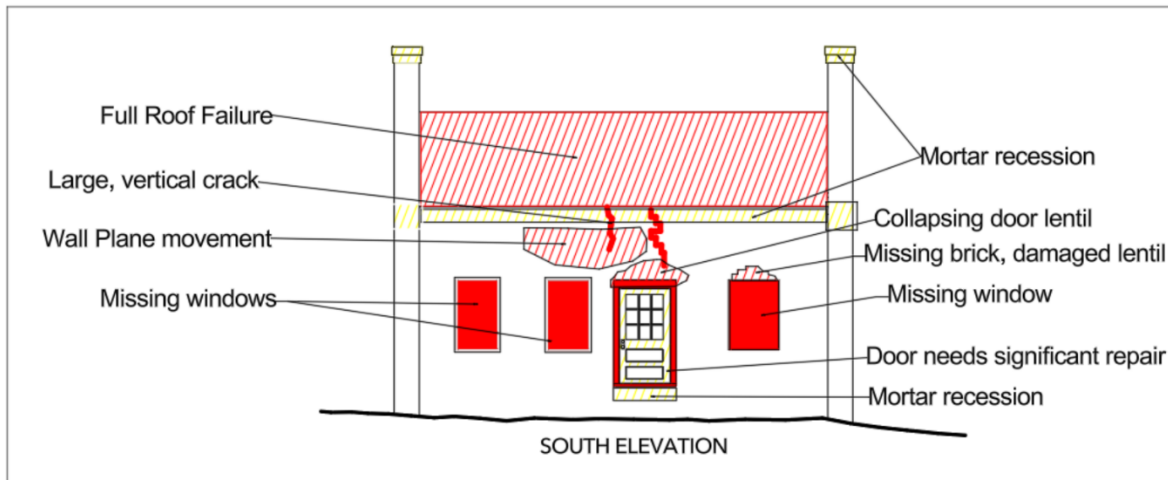
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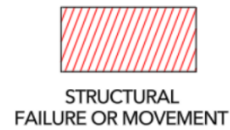
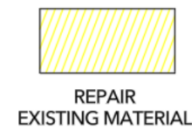
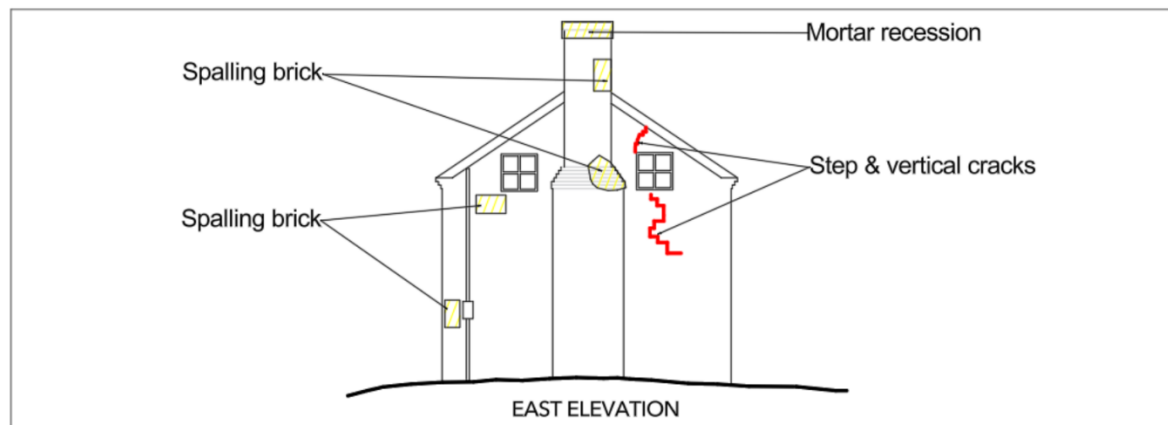
DATE:
7/15/2006
DRAWN BY:
E. MENNINGER
Atlanta, GA

SCALE
1/4" = 1 FOOT

EXISTING CONDITION



KEY



PROJECT NAME:

WASHINGTON PARK
CARETAKER'S COTTAGE
ROANOKE, VIRGINIA

DRAWING TITLE: EXISTING CONDITION

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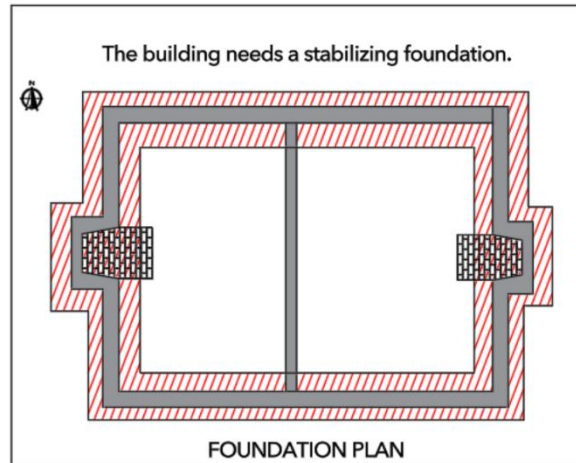
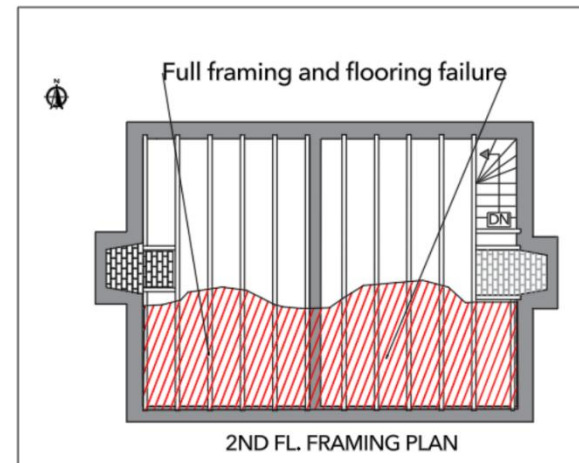
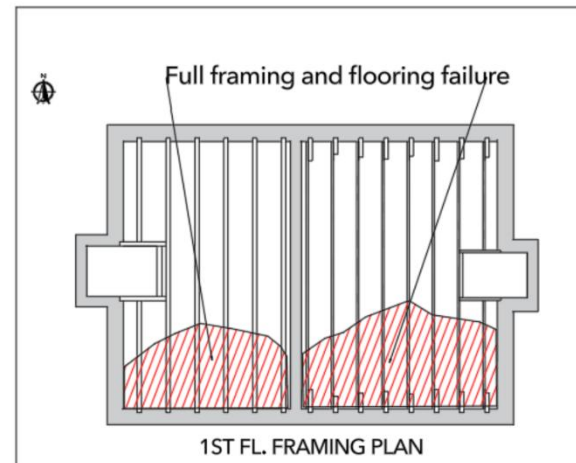
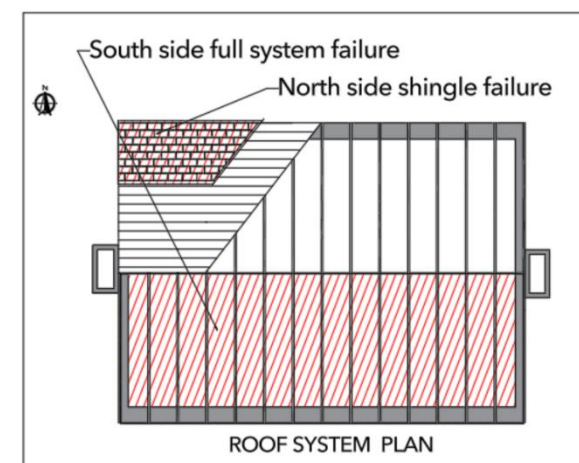
DATE:
7/15/2026
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SCALE

1/4" = 1 FOOT

Plan View

EXISTING CONDITION



PROJECT NAME:

WASHINGTON PARK
CARETAKER'S COTTAGE
ROANOKE, VIRGINIA

DRAWING TITLE: EXISTING PLAN VIEWS

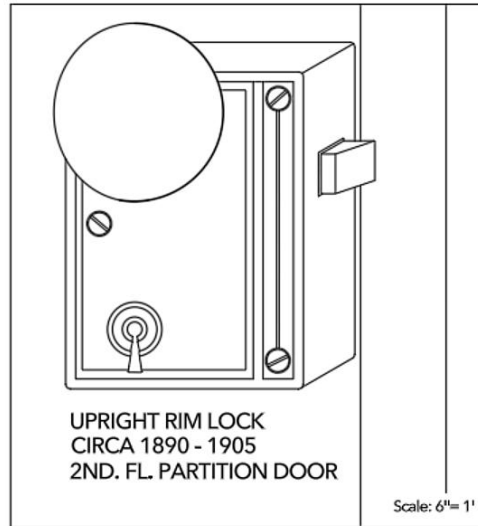
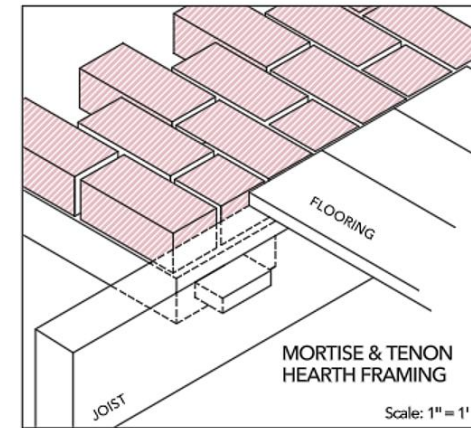
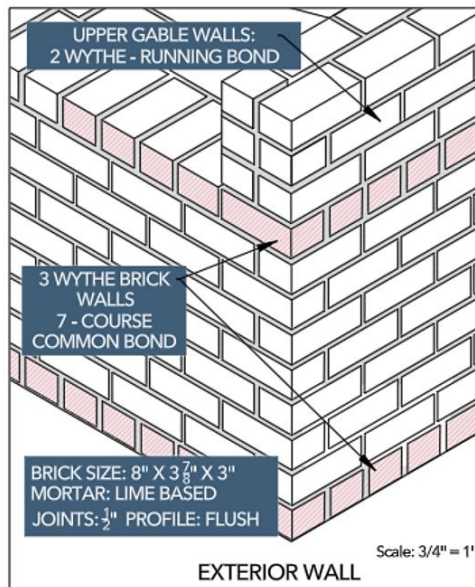
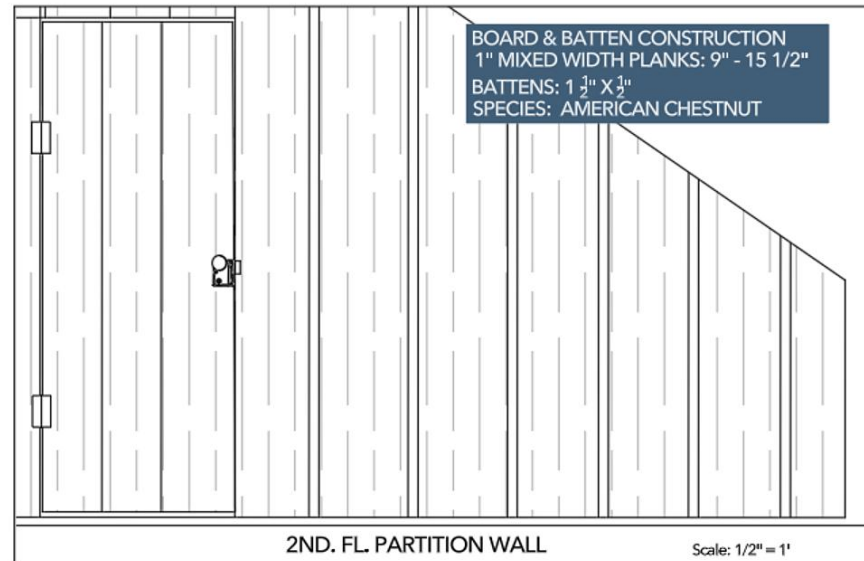
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SCALE
1/4" = 1 FOOT

Details



PROJECT NAME: WASHINGTON PARK
CARETAKER'S COTTAGE
ROANOKE, VIRGINIA

DRAWING TITLE: DETAILS

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SCALE
VARIED