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HISTORIC STRUCTURES REPORT

PART I

STONE LIBRARY

ADAMS NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

September 15, 1960

HISTORIC BUILDINGS SURVEY REPORT -- PART I

STONE LIBRARY

ADAMS NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

Prepared by

Wilhelmina S. Harris
Superintendent

September 15, 1960

APPROVAL SHEET

RECOMMENDED

Director Date _____

Regional Director Date _____

Chief, EODC Date _____

APPROVED

Superintendent Date _____

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1. Administrative data

a. Name and number of building:

The Stone Library, Building No. 2

b. Use and justification:

The Stone Library was built in 1870 by Charles Francis Adams, Minister to England, to provide facility for the proper use and preservation of the books, papers, and maps of our Sixth President, John Quincy Adams. The building is of stone and brick masonry. The roof is of slate shingles and the floor is figured tile. The woodwork is light oak. There is no basement.¹ There is a balcony at the second story level. The contents of this Library, both books² and furnishings, belonged to members of the distinguished Adams Family and was given to the people of the United States in 1946.

This building is an important part of the interpretative program of the Area and the original structure should have adequate repairs for its continued preservation.

When built, the Library was considered necessary as the volumes, maps and other documents of John Quincy Adams were so extensive that they were scattered around in the stable (removed in 1869) and other buildings and also stored in boxes.³ This building was used by Charles Francis Adams,⁴ when he edited Familiar Letters of John Adams and His Wife, 1876; Memoirs of John Quincy Adams published by

J. P. Lippincott & Co., 1874. In this Library, Henry Adams⁵ wrote portions of his History of the United States, and Brooks Adams⁶ revised and enlarged The Emancipation of Massachusetts and wrote other of his works.

c. Provisions for operating the house:

The Library is completely furnished with original Adams furnishings and will continue to be operated by appropriated funds.

d. Preliminary estimate of cost of rehabilitation:

Funds for the rehabilitation of the Library have been authorized. No. 5-61-13 July 22, 1960 \$12,700.

¹ Adams Family Papers, Microfilm roll #82, Friday, November 26, 1869
"...Went to Quincy to look after my men. Found them steadily engaged in filling up the interior of my new foundation with course stone and gravel so as to secure dryness as far as possible..."

² Adams Family Papers, Microfilm roll #83, May 15, 1871
"...Day entirely spent at home and in the arrangement of books in the library. I am trying to accommodate the surplus by using double rows. This will require in its turn, the making of a new Catalogue..." June 27, 1871 "...I am now employing Mr. Wilson to take a Catalogue of the books here, so that the whole business may be simplified, in accordance with my will. ..."

³ Adams Family Papers, Microfilm roll #82, September 14, 1869
"...Busy at home in the morning moving books. I discover that I have not enough cases to hold them all, which puts me in a quandary. ..." Wednesday 15th. "...I succeeded in securing ten or a dozen heavy cases..." Monday 20th. "...I was incessantly employed in transporting and arranging the remainder of the books in the farm house, which is to be sold at auction on Thursday and forthwith removed. I have scattered them about the house as well as I can but the accumulation is considerable every where. There are yet the maps and pamphlets which I reserve for Wednesday. ..."

⁴A.F.P., Microfilm roll #82, May 20, 1871

"...Visit from Mr. J. F. Kirk who comes here from Lippincott on business of the house but also to see me about the great work of printing the Diary. He seems to favor a more condensed and popular publication, which is quite out of the question. ..." May 21, 1871
"...Mr. J. F. Kirk came out to see me and dined with us. I talked over the whole matter of publication, and explained my new impressions of the extent of it, which he seemed to think reasonable. ..."

⁵Henry Adams in a letter to John Hay, June 28, 1887, Quincy, Massachusetts "I write history as though it were serious, five hours a day; and when my hand and head get tired, I step out in the rose-beds and watch my favorite roses."

⁶Refractory Note in The Emancipation of Massachusetts, Quincy, Massachusetts, September 17, 1886. Law of Civilization and Decay, Quincy, 1896; America's Economic Supremacy, Quincy, 1900; The New Empire, Quincy, 1902; The Theory of Social Revolution, Quincy, 1913; The Introduction and Heritage of Henry Adams, Quincy, 1919.

2. Historical data

The Stone Library was built by Charles Francis Adams in 1870. Instructions for a fire-proof building was contained in the Will of John Quincy Adams,¹ our Sixth President. Due to active political life followed by appointment as United States Minister to the Court of St. James, Charles Francis Adams had been unable to carry out his father's wishes until his return to Quincy in 1869. Taking care of his father's books and papers and erecting the library,² occupied the Spring of 1869 and continued until the completion of the building in 1870.

After the books³ were moved into the building, catalogued by Wilson, Charles Francis Adams found it pleasant in which to do his literary work. The extensive republishing of John Adams' twelve volume diary,⁴ The Memoirs of John Quincy Adams and The Letters of Abigail Adams occupied Charles Francis Adams until his death in 1886.

No specific description of the building is recorded by Charles Francis Adams in his Diary and his financial ledger does not reveal the cost of the building.

Upon the death of Charles Francis Adams,⁵ his surviving children formed a Trust to be known as the Adams Real Estate Trust. The four young men had the choice according to age of living in the Old House and protecting the Library. The eldest son John Quincy Adams II had a home and declined the chance to take the property. Charles Francis Adams II also declined.

Henry Adams, being third in line, accepted the trust. Like his father Henry Adams used the Library for writing, and he had it recatalogued by Theodore F. Dwight.⁶ He was responsible for the property until 1891 when he found it financially inconvenient considering that he had a residence in Washington and an apartment in Paris, neither of which he wished to give up. In 1891, Brooks Adams, for the first time, had the opportunity to accept the responsibility for the care and preservation of the Old House and Library. He faithfully maintained the Garden, Old House, and Library as he had always known it until his death in 1927.

The only repairs known to have been made was in 1920 when Brooks Adams⁷ had the shelves over the fireplace reinforced. It was a keen disappointment to Mr. Brooks Adams that the shelves continued to sag and the marble mantle piece cracked.

Upon the death of Brooks Adams, the legal heirs formed the Adams Memorial Society and maintained the Library without much of any change until it was given to the people of the United States in 1946. In 1958-59 the Library was recatalogued by Lloyd A. Brown.

¹Will of John Quincy Adams dated January 18, 1847, Article 16, (Part of the deed in files of the Adams National Historic Site). "I give and bequeath my library of books, my manuscript books and papers, and those of my father, and all my family pictures, except such as may be herein otherwise specifically devised, to my son, Charles Francis Adams, trusting that his mother shall at all times have the use of any of the books in the library at her discretion; and I recommend to my said son, Charles Francis Adams, as soon as he shall find it suit his own convenience, to cause a building to be erected, made fire-proof, in which to keep the said library, books, documents, and manuscripts safe, but always to be subject to his convenience; and I especially recommend to his care the said library, manuscripts, books, and papers, and that he will, as far as may be in his power, keep them together as one library, to be transmitted to his eldest son as one property, to remain in the family and not be sold or disposed of as long as may be practicable, being always confided to the faithful custody of the person holding the legal property in the same.

²Adams Family Papers, Microfilm roll #82, April 1869, Tuesday 6th. "...I also examined the ground for the library with John, and he urged a change of position not without much reason. There is a serious obstacle to that fixed upon in the site of the old well. I must see Mr. Cabot again about this..."

Wednesday 14th. "...Went out early this morning, for the purpose of visiting the office before going with Mr. Cabot to look at the premises and determine the position of the library. He proved able to go and we examined the ground carefully. The result was that he was brought over to John's opinion and recommended the position in the garden. I therefore yielded although with great reluctance. My conviction is that the other plan would have been the better one, could it have been adapted to the ground and especially the well. But to me all this is much less material than to my children, so I submit with grace. The other work does not look much advanced..."

May 1869, Saturday 29th. "At eleven o'clock went to Boston to attend to details there. My chief object was to look after Mr. Cabot's plans of the library. I found them at the Office, and they are so unsatisfactory that I fear he must begin again..."

October 1869, Wednesday 13th. "...Tomorrow is fixed for a commencement of the foundation wall of the library, so that on the whole I feel as if I was getting on. ..."

February 1870, Wednesday 23rd. "...At the office where I completed the contract for the woodwork of my library.

May 1870, Saturday 7th. "...The library too grows apace. A few days will finish the stone work. ..."

July 1870, Saturday 2nd. "...My library still hangs on. It seems

as if the progress was slower than ever, because it is now inside and therefore less appreciable. ..."
September 1870, Wednesday 28th. "...The library may be pronounced complete today. It was cleaned and the last mechanic left it at five o'clock. It has taken about six months to construct a single room. Now the labor of removing the books will begin. ..."
November 1870, Tuesday 1st. "...My library is done and paid for... Returned at three and spent the rest of the daylight in the library not effecting much. ..."

³Adams Family Papers, Microfilm roll #83 September 1870
Thursday 29th. "...I began today the work of removing my library, first taking the largest and heaviest books, and next the manuscripts. The process I foresee will be slow as the shelves must be fitted in some cases to the size of the books. ..."
October 1870, Tuesday 4th. "...Employed much of my morning in arranging and moving the larger books and manuscripts to the library. It is a laborious business and necessarily slow to avoid confusion..."
Friday 7th. "...I also devoted some time to the removal of the books, a slow process especially with the folios..."
Monday 17th. "Fine summer day. At home and busy in removing books and placing them anew. My desire is to classify them as I proceed, which requires time and some thought. The workmen were there again easing the shelves and other places, a process always necessary in a new edifice. ..."
Thursday 27th. "...I was employed all day in pursuing the work of placing the books, and I made so much progress that it is plain a day or two more will suffice to complete the operation. It has been very laborious, but once done, it will be off my mind."

⁴A.F.P., roll #83, May 1871
Tuesday 20th. "...Began upon the draft of my introductory biographical chapter to the Diary. This led me to look at the biography which passes under the name of W.H. Seward. With many trifling errors I like it better than Mr. Quincy's. ...Wrote an answer to an invitation to deliver an address to an Art association at Pittsburgh. I cannot fancy this kind of frittering away one's faculties. Mr. Everett did it more than enough."
April 1871, Thursday 4th. "...Returned home and in the afternoon made my first lodgment in the library. A comfortable fire enabled me to write up ten days of arrears in the Diary and to convince myself that I should do very well in it..."
July 1871, Monday 10th. "...Afternoon in the library, which is a very comfortable summer room..."
March 1871, Wednesday 8th. "...Quincy ...My object was to look at some furniture which I proposed to fit up for the library. I looked

into the latter for a moment and was much pleased to find how well it had gone through the winter. I saw no symptom of dampness. ..."

⁵ Declaration of a Trust to be known as the Adams Real Estate Trust made by John Quincy Adams, Charles Francis Adams, Henry Adams, Brooks Adams, and Mary Adams Quincy, dated January 15, 1887. (This Declaration of Trust is a part of the deed in the files at the Adams National Historic Site.)

⁶ Harold Dean Cater, editor of Henry Adams and his friends. Letter from Henry Adams to Theodore F. Dwight, June 2, 1891. Foot note same page: Dwight had been a research worker in the United States State Department. After helping Adams work out the details of publishing his History he catalogued the extensive Adams family archives which occupy a separate building beside the Adams Mansion, or "Old House," at Quincy, Massachusetts. When Dwight completed this work he joined the staff of the Boston Public Library, until his marriage to Sally Loring when he went to Europe to live.

⁷ This work was performed when Wilhelmina S. Harris (then Wilhelmina Sellers), Social Secretary to Mr. and Mrs. Brooks Adams, was living in the Old House.

3. ARCHITECTURAL DATA

A. Description of Structure

The stone Library built by Charles Francis Adams in 1870 was in accordance with the wall of John Quincy Adams. This structure, approximately 25' - 0" x 38' - 0" with the long dimension running generally east and west, is constructed of granite and brick. North and south walls are stone and east and west walls are brick. The roof is slate with one skylight centered on the north slope of the roof. The north wall is pierced with one pair of french doors and the south wall has one pair of french doors and the main entrance door. On the east wall is a fireplace with a black marble mantel sitting on black marble pilasters. The west wall has one pair of french doors centered in the wall. Interior of the Library is well done in light oak columns, trim and balcony. The balcony is supported on simple but attractive iron brackets. The floor is of figured tile. More detailed information on the Library is contained in the Historical Data Section immediately preceding this section.

B. Present Condition of Fabric

This structure is in generally excellent condition. There is a need for raking and pointing of brick and stonework. While this work is not extensive, it should be done as soon as possible to preclude damage by water.

The slate roof is in good condition generally, but leaks have occurred around the skylight.

Exterior millwork has deteriorated in some cases, especially on the west end.

Interior millwork, framing and tile floor is in good condition, except for the french doors which are deteriorating.

Shrinkage around the perimeter has left a space at the bottom shelf that permits the entrance of dirt, vermin and cleaning compounds. Shelving over the mantel has sagged so that the marble mantel has cracked. Attempts to reinforce the shelving by Mr. Brooks Adams in 1920 were unsuccessful.

C. Architectural Investigation Required

As far as can be determined from historical data and previous architectural study, the entire structure is original. Limited architectural investigation will be necessary during the rehabilitation work to obtain any details of framing not presently apparent.

D. Work Previously Completed

Installation of heating system in the Library was completed in May 1959 as part of the relocation of the heating units from the Old House to the Carriage House basement. Hot air heat is installed at the top of the stacks above the balcony on the north wall. This system is activated by thermostatic control through a heat exchanger located in a pit adjacent to the north wall. No other major rehabilitation work has been accomplished on the Library.

E. Recommendations

This building is second only to the "Old House" in importance in the area interpretive program and deficiencies should be corrected to preserve its original integrity.

Exterior work should include raking and pointing of all masonry, repairs to roof, flashing and skylight, and repairs to millwork.

Interior repairs should include replacement of bottom shelf at floor level around the entire perimeter, strengthening of shelves over fireplace, caulking at perimeter of tile floor, general cleaning of interior woodwork and repair and replacement of french doors and trim.

In addition to the above, it is recommended that storm doors of a design to match the french doors be fabricated and installed. This will reduce the heat loss and protect the structure in general.