HISTORIC STRUCTURES REPORT

PART II (PORTION)

ARCHITECTURAL DATA SECTION ON

ADAMS MANSION ~~1869~~ 1836 PASSAGEWAY

Adams National Historic Site
Quincy, Massachusetts

U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service
Washington Service Center--Design and Construction

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~~1869~~ Passageway

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Prepared by
George L. Wrenn
Architect
February 1966

For

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

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1836
~~1869~~ Passageway

Adams National Historic Site

A P P R O V A L S H E E T

RECOMMENDED

_____ Date_____
Superintendent

_____ Date_____
Chief, PSCDC

_____ Date_____
Regional Director, Northeast Region

APPROVED

_____ Date_____
Director

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I. FOREWORD

This portion of the Part II, Architectural Data Section, on the 1836 Passageway brings to a conclusion the Historic Structures Report, Part II, Architectural Data Section, on the Adams Mansion. Other portions of the Report covered the East Wing, the 1869 Addition, the Kitchen Wing and the 1730 House. It will be noted that, as in the 1730 House, and for the same reasons, certain parts of the structure of the 1836 Passageway remain to be explored and these will have to be checked before the work is done. The work to be done on the surface fabric has been quite thoroughly covered. In order that the work be done as well as possible, it is to be hoped that a full-time supervisor will be assigned to the job after the author's resignation from the National Park Service which is effective in June of this year.

George L. Wrenn, III
June, 1966

II. HISTORY & GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE STRUCTURE

The 2-story passageway which connects the Kitchen Wing to the East Wing was built in 1836 by John Quincy Adams. Prior to that time it had been necessary for anyone who wanted to get from one area to the other on any story to go through both rooms in the 1730 House on that story or, at first story level, outside. That the inconvenience of this situation had been considered when the East Wing was built is shown by the correspondence between Abigail Adams and her sister, Mary Cranch, at that time.[1] In response to a suggestion by Mary Cranch that a passageway be built, Abigail wrote that "if Mr. Cranch, Dr. Tufts or Mr. Bates can contrive such a communication, it would be very desirable."[2]

That this projected passageway (or one story of it) was not built in 1800 is proved by architectural evidence. Clapboards remain in place on the west wall of the East Wing below first floor level which are now hidden by the passageway

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1 For more detailed information on this correspondence see Historic Structure Report, Part I, Historical Data Section, Chapter IV, pp. 20-21.

2 Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, Philadelphia, May 5, 1800. This answered a letter by Mary Cranch to Abigail from Quincy dated April 28, 1800.

(see Illustration No. 1). Pieces of these clapboards were examined under a microscope to determine the number of layers of paint and dirt on them which would give some indication of how long each layer and the clapboards had been exposed before being covered. Three layers of paint, each discolored by dirt, were found on the surface of the clapboards indicating that they had been exposed for a number of years before the passageway was built.[3]

A further piece of confirming evidence was found in the elements of the structure itself. The surface of the clapboards has the marks left by a circular saw. Steam-driven circular saws were not in existence in 1800 not having been invented until the 1830's. These clapboards, then, could not have been put on in 1800. It remained to determine whether they might not be replacement clapboards not original to the construction of the passageway. To do this the nails which held the clapboards were

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[3] The research on the paint layering was done by Architect Penelope Hartshorne of EODC in Philadelphia. Her report, now on file at the Adams National Historic Site, was as follows: "There have been three different paint layers applied: 1. white, 2. reddish yellow buff (Munsell 10YR8/4), 3. white. They all appear to be hand ground paint, and dirt is mixed in with them -- but especially a heavy accumulation of dirt covering all the layers (on top that is). My opinion is that these clapboards must have been exposed for some time after they were first erected in 1800."

checked against the nail holes in the sheathing and studding. It was found that every nail hole was accounted for by the nails of the circular sawn clapboards which proved that the structure was of the same date as the clapboards and hence that the structure could not have been erected until after the invention of the steam-driven circular saw in the 1820's. The clapboards and nails which were checked were at first story level so it was not possible, as had long been thought to be the case, that Abigail had erected the first story and John Quincy Adams had added the second.

John Quincy Adams makes some mention of the work to be done though, as is often the case, he didn't say as much as could be hoped. On July 26, 1836, he wrote in his diary:

> Josiah Adams, junr. was here in the evening, and brought a partial estimate of the cost of a considerable alteration to be made in our dwelling house -- That is for the timber and boards: the stone work and labour to be estimated hereafter.[4]

His reference to stone work is interesting because it probably refers to building the foundations for the first story of the structure.

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[4] John Quincy Adams, Diary, July 26, 1836

On August 18, 1836, he records that he and his wife changed their "bedchamber on account of the plastering of the new entry and passageway at the North side of the House"[5] and, on August 24, he states that they "resumed last Night (their) bed chamber."[6] What room they used in the interim is not mentioned.

Other entries on the subject of the passageway are brief. On November 1, 1836, John Quincy Adams, who was apparently quite strapped for cash at this time, paid "Whiting, the Mason's bill for work done at this house"[7] but on November 5, Josiah Adams Junr. had "to wait for the settlement ... for his new Entry and passage way at the homestead, till December or January."[8]

The construction of the 1836 Passageway changed the exterior appearance of the Adams Mansion very little. It did, however, cause a number of changes to be made in the interior

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5 Ibid., August 18, 1836.

6 Ibid., August 24, 1836.

7 Ibid., November 1, 1836.

8 Ibid., November 5, 1836.

spaces surrounding it. On the first story a doorway had to be cut through from the long hallway in the East Wing to the "new Entry."[9] A doorway also had to be cut through, this time in place of a window, in the north wall of the dining room (then the parlor). From the Kitchen Wing the existing exterior doorway in the east wall was used.[10]

As on the first story a doorway was cut through from the second story hallway in the East Wing to the new passageway. A doorway was also put through from the guest bedchamber in place of the window, and a new opening was cut from the second floor hallway of the Kitchen Wing.[11] Thus, as built, the 1836 Passageway added to the convenience of the house without changing its appearance in any radical way.

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9 Under the trim of this doorway were found remnants of two pre-1836 wallpapers used in the East Wing hallway.

10 As has been described in the portion of this report on the Kitchen Wing, a porch entry of some sort was apparently built at the same time at the corner of the Kitchen Wing and the new Passageway and a new doorway to it cut through from the Kitchen Wing.

11 This being prior to Charles Francis Adams' remodelling of the Kitchen Wing in 1869, the hallway did not have the same shape as at present but occupied the southeast corner of the second floor of the wing. It might, in fact, have been considered more of a room than a hallway at least until the 1836 Passageway was built.

III. THE STRUCTURAL FRAMEWORK

The structural framework of the 1836 Passageway is a wood frame made up of major horizontal timbers, joists and studs but no posts. Both the major horizontal timbers and the joists are built into the frame of the adjacent parts of the building so that, unlike all the other separately constructed sections of the house, it is not a self-contained structure.

The sill, girt and plate are the major timbers of the exposed north wall. Most of the sill is original; a small section near the west end is a replacement. Part of the original sill has deteriorated from the effects of dry rot and the activity of powder post beetles and needs replacement(see Illustration Nos. 2, 3). The replacement section may date from the late 1940's when other work was done on the sills of the house. It is in good condition though the bottom of one of the studs resting on it has deteriorated (see Illustration No. 4).

The girt shows some deterioration at the west end where it is framed in over the girt of the Kitchen Wing (see Illustration No. 5). This method of framing may have been the cause of some of the sagging in the second floor hallway of that wing. It is recommended that a post be installed to carry the west end of the passageway girt and so relieve the Kitchen Wing girt of its weight.

There has been a problem of leakage on the north wall of the passageway which has occurred during certain storms perhaps once or twice a year. When it happened in the winter of 1964, it was found that there were only four inches of flashing along the edge of the roof above the gutter. This had been put on when the roof was redone in the 1950's. The slope of the roof at this point is quite shallow, and it was thought that back-up had caused the leakage so the flashing was extended up to 20". There was leakage again in the winter of 1965 which occurred from the window over to the west end of the space. This was probably caused by water coming in at the west valley because the roof along the east side of the valley slopes away from rather than towards the valley (see Illustration No. 6). It is recommended that the flashing of the west valley be redone to provide a stop for water along its east edge. The flashing over the second story window should also be checked very carefully as it may be part of the problem. The effects of this leakage on the plate should also be checked.

The 1836 Passageway at both levels has to hold large numbers of people who are on tour through the house. In addition to this there is a great deal of weight on the second story of the passageway from the bookcases along each wall. There is a slope

in the floor of the passageway which can best be seen from below where the ceiling touches the forward edge of the china cabinet on the south wall (see Illustration No. 7). This situation has existed for many years[12] but may have gotten worse recently because, though the sliding doors are free with no pressure on them, there appears to have been some pressure on the frame at the north-west corner resulting in the west door not closing properly. The connection of all the joists to the framing of the 1730 House and to the girt should be carefully checked and the structure strengthened so as to make it safe for the tourists and relieve the pressure on the china cabinet.[13]

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[12] Recollections of Superintendent Harris.

[13] It should be noted again that this area has not been checked because of factors involved in the timing of this report.

IV. THE NON-STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS, THEIR CONDITION AND REHABILITATION

The non-structural elements of the 1836 Passageway are in need of some work. On the exterior some clapboarding must be replaced after the structural work is completed. Where original clapboards cannot be reused new clapboards should be circular sawn to match those in place. This might also be the place to mention that this cellar bulkhead and the others around the house were rebuilt in 1960. It cannot be determined how accurately the earlier ones were copied though it looks, at least in matters of hardware, as if they weren't. Prior to the rebuilding there were posts to catch the doors but no boards between the frame of the bulkhead and the posts (see Illustration No. 3). It is recommended that these boards be removed because they do not conform to the historic scene and because they are not necessary.

On the interior of the passageway a number of changes have been made, especially at first floor level, in the historic fabric, that is the fabric as it existed in 1927, the historic cut-off year. The uses to which the spaces have been put over the years as well as the changes made, both during the historic period and after, will be discussed the following paragraphs.

Whether the spaces were put to any use other than that of passage in the years immediately following construction is not

known, but in time each came to serve an additional purpose, the first as a pantry, the second for book storage. It is not known exactly when the passage on the first floor was converted into a butler's pantry. It may have been done by Charles Francis Adams when he remodelled the old parlor, the east room of the 1730 House, into a dining room in 1855 or perhaps it was done later in the century at some time when convenience called for it. At some point a soapstone sink was installed in the southwest corner of the space, and the aforementioned china storage cabinet was built in on the south wall. A wooden ice box was put in the southeast corner. This has since been removed apparently by the Adams Memorial Society. Restoration of a wooden ice box in the same corner is recommended so that the flavor of that particular era may not be lost forever.[14] Though exact size of the original is not known, it must be of a size to fit between the chimney and the wall which considerably limits the possible variations. The chimney was put up in 1892 to serve a furnace installed by Brooks Adams under the dining room. The furnace fed hot air into the entry of the 1730 House.

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[14] In the 1950's a retired iceman stopped at the Site and recollected the many times that he had filled the icebox in the butler's pantry.

Another change that was made in the fabric of the butler's pantry was the replacement in 1952 of the linoleum which had been on the floor in 1937 and which was in poor condition. Though an effort was made at that time to reproduce small squares neither the pattern nor the color scheme of light areas around dark squares was followed (see Illustration Nos. 7, 8). It is recommended that a linoleum as similar as possible to that shown in Illustration No. 8 be reproduced and installed on the floor. When the work is being done, the woodwork should be painted to match the historic color,[17] which was found under the conduit of the burglar alarm control box when it was moved (see Illustration No. 7).

The second floor of the 1836 Passageway was at some time adopted for use as a good storage area. Bookcases, one of which was a cabinet in Abigail Adams' kitchen, line both walls. Brooks Adams covered the walls about 1906 with the same gray forest scene paper that he used in the East Wing Hallway, and, at the same time, he put down on the floor the same dark green covering which he used in the East Wing. The linoleum was found to be in poor condition and was taken up in 1964.

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[17] Munsell color standard paper No. 10YR4/1.

Under it was found the remains of the Brussels carpet type floor covering which had been found under the dark green linoleum on the second floor of the East Wing and which is still in place in the two closets off the study (see Illustration No. 9). A loose section of this earlier floor covering was found under one of the cases along the south wall of the passageway and it is now on file at the Site. New dark green linoleum of the same type as the covering which was removed is still obtainable and should be installed on the floor.[18]

The gray, forest scene paper on the walls of the second floor passageway was put on by Brooks Adams at the same time that he repapered the East Wing hallways. Part of the surface, particularly around the chimney where considerable leakage had occurred[19] has been repapered; other parts still have the original paper some of which is in poor condition[20] (see Illustration No. 10).

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[18] The new linoleum in the East Wing was obtained from John H. Pray & Son, Co. of Boston.

[19] The upper part of the chimney at and above roof level has been rebuilt twice by the National Park Service according to the Superintendent.

[20] When the work was done on the East Wing it was found that it would not be possible to reuse in its original location the paper which had been removed from the wall at the foot of the stairs because of the slight relocation of the light switch. New paper was available for the area but it would have looked too new so old paper was taken off the south wall of the passageway from behind one of the bookcases and used at the foot of the stairs. The paper from the foot of the stairs was hung behind the bookcase to fill the gap even though the space is not visible to the public.

Those parts of the paper which have come loose from the wall because of the leakage should be reglued, and replacement of some sections should be considered, when the leakage is stopped. The wood trim should be repainted to match the color of the historic period which was a darker shade of gray than that now on the wall.[21]

The last section of this report which follows will deal with the utilities in the 1836 Passageway.

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[21] Munsell Color Standard Paper chip No. N6.5/

V. UTILITIES

The burglar and fire alarm systems are included among the utilities along with the plumbing and the electrical system. There is no heating in the 1836 Passageway.

The plumbing consists of the piping for a soapstone sink in the butler's pantry. This sink is used in the work of keeping the house clean. That leakage has occurred in the pipes was determined when a board was removed from the north wall of the basement stair area in the 1730 House so that the space under the pantry could be looked into. There has also been a problem with pipes due to freezing in wintertime. It is recommended that the supply and waste piping be renewed except for its visible parts which should be retained. Some insulation should be put in the crawl space to protect the piping in the future.

As in other parts of the house all the electric wiring should be renewed though again the visible elements that are part of the historic scene should be retained.

In connection with work on the East Wing the circuit box of the ADT fire alarm system on the east wall of the pantry was moved from the south side of the doorway to a less conspicuous position on the north side (see Illustration Nos. 7, 8). The

box on the second floor passage was moved at the same time. Where any of the tubing of this system intrudes on the historic scene it should be reinstalled in neater fashion as has been done in other parts of the house. The same is true of the wiring of the burglar alarm system which runs to the magnetic switches on the two windows and exterior doorway of the 1836 Passageway. The cellar bulkhead door should be included in the burglar alarm system.

This Part II, Architectural Data Section, for the 1836 Passageway brings to a conclusion the Historic Structures Report, Part II, Architectural Data Section, for the Adams Mansion. Other portions of the Part II have covered the East Wing, the 1869 Addition, the Kitchen Wing and the 1730 House. In these reports has been described the work necessary to put in good condition the surface fabric and basic structure of the house. It should be emphasized that even after the work is done constant care will be needed to keep the building in good condition. It is hoped that any and all work done as a result of this report will be guided, as the recommendations have been, by the importance of preserving as much as possible of what remains of the unique and irreplaceable fabric which dates from the historic period and of restoring as carefully as possible to its historic state that which has been changed since 1927.

ILLUSTRATION NO. 1

1836 Passageway, first floor, view looking east down through opening in floor at clapboards on west wall of 1800 East Wing which were covered when passageway was built. Three layers of paint were found on the clapboards.

Photo: National Park Service
George M. Cushing, Jr., May, 1966

Neg. on file at Adams NHS



ILLUSTRATION NO. 2

1836 Passageway, exterior view looking south at section of sill at east end of structure opened up in course of exploratory work. This section of original sill is in reasonably good condition with only a small amount of deterioration from dry rot.

Photo: National Park Service
George M. Cushing, Jr., December, 1963

Neg. on file at Adams NHS

ILLUSTRATION NO. 3

1836 Passageway, exterior view looking south at section of original sill in center of structure which shows considerable deterioration from effects of dry rot. Cellarway door rested on post when open during historic period. Board between bulkhead and post was installed by National Park Service when bulkheads were rebuilt.

Photo: National Park Service
George M. Cushing, Jr., December, 1963

Neg. on file at Adams NHS



ILLUSTRATION NO. 4

1836 Passageway, exterior view looking south at replacement sill at west end of structure. There is deterioration at bottom of one of the studs. Close inspection of the clapboards will reveal marks of circular saw.

Photo: National Park Service
George M. Cushing, Jr., December, 1963

Neg. on file at Adams NHS



ILLUSTRATION NO. 5

1836 Passageway, exterior view of corner formed by passageway (at left) and Kitchen Wing showing deteriorated condition of passageway girt which frames in over girt of Kitchen Wing.

Photo: National Park Service
George M. Cushing, Jr., August, 1965

Neg. on file at Adams NHS



ILLUSTRATION NO. 6

1836 Passageway, exterior view. Passageway to roof to left of valley at west end of structure (right side of photo) slopes away from the valley. Under certain weather conditions this results in water leakage which damages the fabric of the passage.

Photo: National Park Service
George M. Cushing, Jr., May, 1966

Neg. on file at Adams NHS



ILLUSTRATION NO. 7

1836 Passageway, first floor, view looking east along butler's pantry showing slope in ceiling as it passes over china cabinet at right. Same slope exists in floor above.

Photo: National Park Service
George M. Cushing, Jr., May, 1966

Neg. on file at Adams NHS



ILLUSTRATION NO. 8

1836 Passageway, first floor, view taken about 1946 looking east showing the wallpaper and linoleum which were in place during the historic period. Note that slope in ceiling existed at that time. Piece of wallpaper shown in photo was found under fire alarm control box to right of door at end of pantry when the box was moved. Such things as the removal of the tassel on the pull chain of the overhead light fixture as well as the change in the wallpaper and floor covering and the color on the wood trim have altered the atmosphere of the house from what it must have been in the historic period.

Photo: National Park Service
Abbe Rowe, c. 1946

Neg. on file at Adams NHS



ILLUSTRATION NO. 9

1836 Passageway, second floor, view looking west showing floor boards after removal of dark green floor covering. Remains of earlier Brussels carpet type covering can be seen on the boards.

Photo: National Park Service
George M. Cushing, Jr., May, 1966

Neg. on file at Adams NHS



ILLUSTRATION NO. 10

1836 Passageway, second floor, view looking north at north wall of passageway showing damage done to wallpaper by water leakage.

Photo: National Park Service
George M. Cushing, Jr., January, 1966

Neg. on file at Adams NHS

