

HISTORIC STRUCTURES REPORT

001454

PART I

6

ARCHITECTURAL DATA SECTION

ON

McLEAN ICE HOUSE

Appomattox Court House National Historical Park
Appomattox, Virginia

Prepared by
Orville W. Carroll
Architect
November 1963

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Eastern Office, Design and Construction

PART I

ARCHITECTURAL DATA SECTION

McLEAN ICE HOUSE

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

Superintendent

Date _____

Robert H. Hall Date 11-20-63
Chief, EODC

Regional Director, Southeast Region

Director _____ Date _____

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I. FOREWORD

The Ice House is one of the three outbuildings for the McLean House that was programed for reconstruction in fiscal year 1964. The other two buildings are the Kitchen and the Slave Quarters.

The historical background of the outbuildings, including most of the photographs, drawings and documents from the Park files is included in the Historical Data Section of the Historic Structures Report, Part I, prepared by Wescoat Wolfe, Park Historian in 1962.

Further study of these sites was conducted by John Walker, Archeologist, in the summer of 1962. The information he gleaned from the Ice House pit is included in his report on the McLean House outbuildings, distributed in 1963.

The era of the Ice House has long since passed from the scene. Many of the Park workmen have been questioned on their knowledge of cutting and storing ice. None of the Park employees, who were born in this area, can remember seeing ice preserved in this manner. This is a story in itself.

Orville W. Carroll
November 1963

II. ARCHITECTURAL SECTION

A. General Background

The Ice House was one of numerous outbuildings surrounding the McLean House. Its identification is not easily determined when we study the drawings and photographs of the 1865 period. In Wolfe's study of the Ice House, he cites the Colonel Battersby drawing as "the only pictorial view located of the McLean Ice House..."¹ Other evidence is presented in this study to substantiate the location and size of the Ice House and to illustrate its exterior appearance.

It seems logical that the Ice House had a direct relationship to the operation of the Raine Tavern (which later became the McLean House) that was constructed in 1848, by Charles A. Raine. The demand for ice would have been greater during these Tavern days than for any later occupancy. There is also reason to believe that the Ice House coexisted with the McLean House Kitchen and Slave Quarters, since all three of these buildings were constructed of logs.

The Ice House site was partially excavated in 1962, under the supervision of John Walker. His report covers in detail the construction and dimensions of the Ice House pit. The exterior appearance above the ground level can readily be determined by the three important photographs taken in 1892 and 1915.²

¹Wolfe, Wescoat; Historic Structures Report, Part I, NPS Study on the McLean Ice House, November 1962, p. 3.

²Wolfe, Ibid., Illustrations 3, 4 and 9.

B. General Description

The size of the Ice House is shown on the Hancock-Hubard drawings of 1893, as 16' x 16' and located 14' east of the McLean House. The dimensions on this drawing have proven accurate for the location of the well, kitchen, and for the reconstruction of the house itself, so it is reasonable to assume that these dimensions are correct. This was proven when the Ice House site was partially excavated to its original depth of 14'-7". The four corner stones were located by Walker and this measured 16' x 16'. Walker describes the ice pit itself as being approximately 11' x 11' square at the base, sloping outward to nearly 14' x 14' at the top. The upper measurements are speculative since the soil erosion eliminated the original pit size (See Walker's Report, Figure No. 33).

The structure above the ground was a simple "A" frame roof, supported near ground level on a log base. The pitch of the roof was 45 degrees. The roof structure probably was frame with sized rafters, random width roof boards 8" to 10" wide, and covered with square butt wooden shingles. An access door was cut into the north gable end wall. The gable end walls were covered with wide, probably rough sawn, drop-lapped boards. The projecting edge of the roof on the north side was covered with a barge board cut with a serrated edge and having superimposed triangles nailed over each tooth. The use of a decorative barge board such as this is unique in the village area.

No evidence of paint or whitewash can be detected on the wall surfaces even under the overhanging roof boards where good protection is offered. It was probably not treated in any way.

C. Architectural Recommendations

- a. Reconstruct the McLean Ice House on its original site.

Build over a log base, a frame structure with a wooden shingled roof, having one opening in the north end. Reconstruct a portion of the interior log cribbing, to a depth of six feet to represent the appearance of the original ice pit. Allow the north door to be opened during the day to permit the visitor to see the interior of the structure without actually going in.

- b. No utilities are recommended for the building.

c. Reconstruct the fence from the McLean House to the Ice House roof. Allow for a gate in the west fence near the entrance to the north door of the Ice House. Extend the original brick walk from the McLean House porch (partly in place) to the entrance door of the Ice House. The cross fence will naturally dictate another approach to the walk location around the McLean House. Planning for future walks will have to take the Kitchen and Slave Quarter exhibition into consideration as well as the Ice House.