

THE WESSON HOUSE PROJECT

A Project

Presented to

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by

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## BIOGRAPHY

The house at five hundred twenty Jamestown Road has a history of many owners and additions. Currently it is owned by York A. and Ann F. Wesson who purchased the house in 1977. They are the most recent in a string of homeowners who have resided on the property since 1869. The Wessons are among the four owners who have lived in the house for more than twenty years.

The property was originally part of a large tract belonging to John Maupin. Maupin died on November 10, 1851 at which time Samuel Nottingham purchased parts of the property with "several houses" from Maupin's estate. Nottingham acquired the "College tract" containing approximately 147 acres in addition to another 165 acres for \$6012. A deed of sale dated July 6, 1859, declares the completion of the business transactions between Nottingham and the Maupin estate.<sup>1</sup>

Nottingham intended to sell the divided tracts for profit. Even before his purchase had been recorded, he sold fourteen and seven-eighths acres "bounded on the north by the road leading from the City of Williamsburg to the College Mill" to Samuel Bowman for \$1448.48, (November 23, 1854). James E. Joyner contracted to buy land to the west and south of Bowman's plot, while Jenny Johuas's property and a street created its east border.<sup>2</sup> Joyner and Johaus would have been Bowman's neighbors.

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<sup>1</sup> Deed of sale between John Maupin and Samuel Nottingham, July 6, 1859, James City County Deed Book 1, 349.

<sup>2</sup> Deed of Sale between Samuel Y. Nottingham and Samuel Bowman, November 23, 1854, James City County Deed Book 1, 61.

In a land dispute settlement on May 26, 1869, the Williamsburg Circuit Court and James City County awarded to William A. Durfey,

the two certain brick houses and lots containing half an acre each, more or less, situate in the County of James City measuring thirty-five yards on the front and about seventy yards on the sides... bounded on the north by the main road leading from Williamsburg to the College Mill.<sup>3</sup>

For this property, Durfey paid four hundred dollars to Nottingham's special commissioners. Samuel Bowman and Durfey opposed Sydney Smith in the case. Irregularities must have occurred in the property transfer between Bowman and Nottingham since Bowman and Durfey sided together, yet Durfey paid the money to Nottingham. This is the first documentation of a structure on the property at 520 Jamestown Road.

On July 22, 1870, Durfey sold one brick house to Sarah Adams for three-hundred dollars.<sup>4</sup> Adams must have been a prominent and powerful female to be permitted to buy and hold property in 1870. Her neighbors included James M. McClellan to the east, A. Brooks and P.M. Thompson to the south, and Durfey living in a house to the west. The relationship between Durfey and Adams provokes some speculation. She became the settler of his estate at his death in 1880. A well-kept record of "The Estate of William A. Durfey, deceased, In account with Sarah A. Adams," includes an inventory and a table of expenditures and debts of the estate

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<sup>3</sup> Deed of Sale, August 14, 1869, James City County Deed Book 2, 258-59.

<sup>4</sup> Deed of Sale, July 22, 1870, James City County Deed Book 3, 496.

until Adams closed it in 1886.<sup>5</sup> It is likely that Durfey's second house was willed to Sarah Adams, Durfey's designated heir.

Adams sold the 520 property to Sallie Bryant for \$300 on March 16, 1882.<sup>6</sup> Only four months later, Adams sold the lot west of Bryant's to Tyler Davis.<sup>7</sup> Adams occupied a property west of Davis's lot. During Sallie's twenty-nine years in the house, she married James R. Bellamy and built the clapboard half of the structure. As the first married couple to live on the site, they needed more space than prior occupants. On April 5, 1904, The Bellamy's put their house in trust with Thomas H. Geddy. During this period, their property was bound by Jamestown Road, the McClellan lot, and property belonging to W.B. Burns.<sup>8</sup> The reason for this trust is unclear, but they may have used it to secure a loan for building their extensive addition.

On February 13, 1911, the Bellamy's, with Geddy, sold the lot "with buildings and improvements" to Norwood Apperson. There is a note on this deed about the trust, stating that this property was "conveyed...to secure payment of \$400 and \$600."<sup>9</sup> This note, with the first reference to "improvements", supports

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<sup>5</sup> James City County Will Book 1, 354-355, 364-365, 456-457.

<sup>6</sup> Deed of Sale, March 16, 1882, James City County Deed Book 4, 251-2.

<sup>7</sup> Deed of Sale, July 24, 1882, James City County Deed Book 4, 292.

<sup>8</sup> Deed, April 5, 1904, James City County Deed Book 9, 350-51.

<sup>9</sup> Deed of Sale, February 13, 1911, James City County Deed Book 12, 491.

the idea that the Bellamy's put the house in trust for a loan. Apperson and his wife only lived in the house for two and one-half years. They had some trouble selling it, however. On August 14, 1913, they sold the property plus another 8000 square foot lot to A.L.G. Stephenson for \$2600.<sup>10</sup> By April 20, 1915, Stephenson had defaulted on his payments. His property was sold at auction and Apperson bought the lots back. He paid \$1600 for his former home and \$150 for the second lot.<sup>11</sup>

Apperson made a small profit when he sold the house and lots to Frank L. Powell eleven days later. Powell paid \$1800 for both properties.<sup>12</sup> Powell's renovations to the house during the twenty-six years that he lived there included adding a new kitchen and remodelling the dining room. The 1992 tax assesment dates the house from a 1938 remodeling.

On June 17, 1941, Powell sold the house to Thomas Brantley Henderson. Part of the Apperson property was specified for an access road to the property owned by Powell's sister, Mattie Burns.<sup>13</sup> At this sale, Indian Springs Road became the edge of the Jamestown Road property. The Henderson family members lived on the property for over thirty-five years. On

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<sup>10</sup> Deed of Sale, August 14, 1913, James City County Deed Book 14, 207.

<sup>11</sup> Deed of Sale, April 20, 1915, James City County Deed Book 15, 171.

<sup>12</sup> Deed of Sale, May 1, 1915, James City County Deed Book 15, 182.

<sup>13</sup> Deed of Sale, June 17, 1941, City of Williamsburg Deed Book 19, 85.

September 1, 1950, the City granted a permit to Henderson for an "alteration to existing building" to cost \$300 and be built by Russell Holland.<sup>14</sup> On March 7, 1952, Brantley Hederson divorced his wife, Maude Duke Henderson, and she received the property in the November divorce settlement.<sup>15</sup> The same deed records that T.B. Henderson had conveyed their youngest son, Horace E. Henderson, the back sixty-five yards of the property. His lot became the southern boundary of 520 Jamestown Road. During her occupancy, Maude Duke installed the locks and conveniences that allowed her to provide furnished rooms.<sup>16</sup> The apartment, renovated while her husband lived in the house, was rented annually. Residents other than Henderson's also lived at 520 according to City Directories from 1961-1963. At Maude Duke's death in in 1976, two of her children became the executors of her will. Her daughter, Rosalind Westgate, divorced, lived in the house until it could be sold, as Maude Duke had desired.

Westgate finally sold the house on February 16, 1977 to Robert and Dorthy Stevick for \$75,000.<sup>17</sup> The Stevicks were not happy with the house. They added a closet and bathroom off the master bedroom in March of 1977.<sup>18</sup> Only five months after

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<sup>14</sup> Building Permit #156, City storage files.

<sup>15</sup> Deed of Transfer, November 14, 1952, City of Williamsburg Deed Book 25, 319.

<sup>16</sup> Williamsburg City Directories 1959-1967, (Richmond: Hill Directory Co. Publishers, 1959-1967).

<sup>17</sup> Deed of Sale, February 16, 1977, City of Williamsburg Deed Book 54, 739.

<sup>18</sup> Building Permit #156, September 1, 1950.

purchasing the home, they sold it to York and Ann Wesson for \$96,500.<sup>19</sup> The Wessons removed the shutters and refinished the floors, as well as redecorated some of the rooms, but they have lived in the house for almost twenty-five years without any structural changes.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Deed of Sale, July 11, 1977, City of Williamsburg Deed Book 55, 264.

<sup>20</sup> Ann F. Wesson of Williamsburg, Virginia, interview by author, 13 February 1992, Williamsburg.