

The House of Doors

The Wesson House at 520 Jamestown Road is a late 1880's addition to a pre-1869 home. On top of that are many 1930's and 1950's accretions. The two story house stands on a corner lot at the intersection of Jamestown and Indian Springs Roads, across from Phi Beta Kappa Memorial Hall at William and Mary. A picket fence surrounds the property. The house was built in two main sections. The first build, now the west wing of the house, was built with running bond masonry load-bearing walls. The second build used post and beam construction with clapboard exterior and waddle and daub interior plaster walls. A cross-gable grey shingle roof shelters the two main branches of the house. The gables face the roads. Behind the crossing to the west, a series of additions are covered with successive lean-to roofs. Two interior brick chimneys protrude from the peak of the east gable, while an end-wall chimney rises from the far end of the crossing gable. The chimneys have inverted step-shaped caps. The front gable has a variety of decorative shingle patterns while the east gable presents fish scale shingles balanced on the west gable with shingles laid in a staggered pattern. Dentil work trims the roof line. The house has double hung, four pane wooden sash windows with cords and weights. For the most part they are 2'10" X 5'10".

One enters the house after passing the front plane created by the extended eastern gable. A step up leaves visitors on a brick front patio facing a solid wooden door. Over the door, an inset fan light arches over matching side lights. The door and

decoration is one unit is set within the clapboards that cover one-third of the west wing. A triangular pediment surrounds the top of the door arch.

Through the doorway is the entry hall. The wainscoting around the entry hall follows the stairs as they rise to the right up to the second floor. The walls throughout the house are painted white plaster, while the woodwork in the entry hall, featuring the dart motif, is slate blue. The floors throughout the house are stained pine. A parlor which projects toward the street is to the left as one enters the front door. A bay window at the front of the room is the architectural focus. One window facing east balances the door to the room. The fireplace wall is covered with 1940's bookshelves.

On the right of the front hall, at the foot of the stairs, a doorway leads to the apartment. The apartment is the 1860's part of the house, renovated in the 1950. Wood panelling covers the entire room. A large dart medallion is the central feature of the unusual ceiling panelling. The room's molding features fan-shaped joints and is painted tan. Centered in the west wall is a fire place between a shallow closet and a bookshelf. One window with a deep sill faces Jamestown Road. Opposite it, a doorway leads into an efficiency kitchen which has an exterior door as well as a small bathroom.

At the back of the entry hall, there are four more doors. Of the two doors on the back wall, one leads to a small rear vestibule, and the second leads to a little storage room. A third door hides the insulation around the apartment bathtub,

while a fourth leads to under stairs storage.

The last door from the entry hall leads to the family sitting room located behind the front parlor. There are two closets along the front wall to either side of the fireplace massing. A pair of windows faces east across from the door. A chair rail divides the painted and wall papered walls. Through a tall set of louvered folding doors is the dining room. The chimney climbs to the immediate left, disguised with the paint and wall paper decor of this room. A built-in glass china cupboard stands to the left of the chimney. On the east wall is a full-sized window. Beside it, on the southern wall, is a smaller window. A door leading to a mud porch also cuts through the south wall. On the west wall of the dining room yet another door leads to the small vestibule off the entry hall, and a second door leads to the kitchen. The kitchen has an exposed beam running across it. The refrigerator sits to the right, across from a small pantry to the left. Immediately left, there is another entrance to the house from the mud porch. The kitchen has one window centered on both the south and west walls.

The upstairs hall copies the dimensions and features of the entry hall. As people ascend the stairs, the first thing they see is the bathroom door. The bathroom at the rear center of the house is large, servicing three bedrooms on the east side of the house. The rear bedroom was equipped with kitchen facilities, but now houses the laundry machines as well as a bed and some books. The windows in this room mimic those in the dining room below. The center bedroom has a pair of windows like the

television room. There are two narrow closets and a door way into the front bedroom. This bedroom has double windows at the front of the house, with a closet to either side, and a single window on the east wall. The master bedroom on the west has a front window as in the first floor apartment. Behind this room, over the apartment kitchen, is a master bath and walk-in closet. The upstairs bedroom moldings are fan-shaped, but the molding in the public rooms has the dart motif. Window treatment in the two front east bedrooms is a mixture of the fan and dart motifs.

The house's furnace sits in the basement and has ducts running to floor vents on each floor. The plumbing is in the rear, more recent additions. Electric outlets are set in the baseboards while miscellaneous high capacity outlets have been installed on some of the walls.