



THE PRESERVATION OF HOLT HOUSE: PHASE ONE

Prepared for the Holt
House Preservation Task
Force of the Kalorama
Citizens Association



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Prepared By

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PREFACE

For nearly two hundred years, a stately residence known as Holt House has stood on a wooded hilltop overlooking Rock Creek. It has seen city founders, American presidents, planters, slaves, and scientists come and go through its doors. Today, unless critical intervention measures are taken, we are distressed to report that Holt House is on the verge of imminent collapse.

This report presents an urgent plea for action by the Smithsonian Institution and the National Zoo, which own Holt House and its surrounding site. For almost a century, the Smithsonian used and cared for the building, despite ongoing budget constraints. In fact, when the Zoo's earliest designers sought guidance on building the park, Frederick Law Olmsted –the father of American landscape design– advised them to look to the graceful architecture of Holt House as a source of inspiration.

The Smithsonian Institution is a unique federal entity that is exempt from preservation laws that prohibit the demolition of historic structures by neglect. Yet exemption from federal, as well as local, historic preservation laws does not excuse the neglect that has been suffered by Holt House. There is obvious irony in the fact that the custodian of the nation's cultural treasures should allow a building like Holt House, listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973, go to ruin.

Community concern over the plight of Holt House has been ongoing for almost four decades. The Kalorama Citizens Association (KCA) formed the Holt House Preservation Task Force in 2000; the same year that the D.C. Preservation League included Holt House on its annual list of Most Endangered Places of Washington, for the third consecutive year. The mission of the Holt House Preservation Task Force includes raising public awareness about the house and its condition while conducting further research into its rich and illustrious history. To date, hundreds of neighborhood residents and visitors have participated in guided walking tours around the site; the fruits of our research into the history of Holt House can be read in this report.

This report, "The Preservation of Holt House: Phase One," was prepared by Baird Smith, AIA, and John Whitaker of Quinn Evans/Architects by way of a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Dorothea deSchweinitz Endowed Preservation Services Fund for the District of Columbia and matching funds from KCA. Mary Belcher, a member of the Holt House Task Force, was the guiding force in obtaining the National Trust for Historic Preservation grant and in the final editing of this report. Thanks also go to Holt House Task Force members Barbara Bates, Eddie Becker, Ralston Cox, Matthew Nowakowski, and John Sandor. Additional thanks go to Mike Gould and Larry Karr, KCA President and Treasurer, respectively, and to Robin Vasa who, as the National Zoo's former Head of Facilities and Task Force liaison, exemplified the kind of constructive cooperation which is necessary if Holt House is to be preserved into the next century.

It is in the spirit of constructive cooperation that we offer this report. Moreover, we hope that the Smithsonian Institution and the National Zoo, while heeding the alarm sounded by the

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findings of this report, will be inspired to devote the same commitment of time, expertise, and resources which the individuals cited above have committed to preserving Holt House for the benefit of future generations.

Wanda Bubriski,
Chair, Holt House Preservation Task Force

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The cover photos date from 1937 and were taken from the Historic American Buildings Survey prepared for Holt House.

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Holt House, which dates from the earliest days of the District of Columbia, in 2003 is on the verge of collapse. This report urges commitment and action by the National Zoo and Smithsonian Institution – the owners of the property – to prevent the imminent loss by neglect of an important historic landmark.

Historic Significance

Architecturally, Holt House is a rare surviving example of a five-part-plan residence of the Federal period. Dating from the early 1800s, the house was constructed on a 42.5-acre site, which extended uphill from Rock Creek to what is now the Adams Morgan neighborhood; it once included a mill owned by John Quincy Adams, Washington's first Quaker graveyard, and a post-Civil War African-American cemetery. Holt House's primary period of historic significance is circa 1810-1889, when it served as a private residence for a series of notable individuals. Its secondary period of significance began in 1890, when it was acquired by the newly created National Zoo and substantially remodeled by several well-known architects for use as the Zoo's administrative headquarters. Holt House has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1973.

Current Condition of the Building and Site

Holt House has been vacant and boarded up since 1988. Its structural stability is in question. Massive collapse of the house is a real possibility; partial collapse or failure of a segment of framing is a distinct probability. The condition of the floor framing and structure is so poor that no one is allowed entry, except for trained professionals. The exterior masonry walls and foundations are in very poor condition, with wide vertical cracks and many areas where the protective stucco coating has long since fallen away. Several of these masonry walls are deemed to be so unstable that they have been braced against collapse with 2 x 4 wooden supports. Water damage to the house has been somewhat mitigated since the 2001 additions of a new roof, gutters, downspouts, and vents.

Holt House was once an imposing presence on the hilltop overlooking Rock Creek, but that is no longer the case. Dense new-growth woods and invasive vegetation, sundry Zoo storage facilities, dumpsters, and encroaching roadways have diminished Holt House's prominence and have contributed to its continued physical deterioration. Simply maintaining the status quo of the house and site will surely lead to further loss of integrity and partial structural collapse of the building.

Critical Intervention Measures

To begin, in earnest, the work of restoration and preservation, the National Zoo should: (1) undertake a comprehensive structural analysis of the building, including foundations, walls and framing, and, if necessary, install additional temporary bracing and shoring to maintain stability; (2) perform ongoing periodic checks of the structure, including checks for movement, masonry cracks, termite/rodent infestation, and moisture problems; (3) keep the recently installed gutters and downspouts in proper working order and ensure that window coverings are secure; (4) check the building's electrical, water, and mechanical systems on an annual

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basis; (5) ensure that fire-detection devices are adequate and working properly on a semi-annual basis; (6) clean debris from the interior of the house; (7) keep invasive vegetation away from the house and trim tree limbs that could cause damage to the house.

Future Preservation Measures

It is of utmost importance that Holt House, which was once a key facility at the National Zoo, be immediately included in the Zoo's "Master Plan" for future growth and improvement of the park. The Zoo should not regard Holt House as a separate and isolated structure; rather, the house and site should be integrated into a cultural resource management plan. The Smithsonian Institution should consider appointing a person to act as an historic preservation officer to manage all of the Zoo's important historic properties.

The Zoo should decide on a temporary or permanent use for Holt House, which then would guide decisions about its restoration. Possible uses might include a small conference center, offices for Friends of the National Zoo, or an exhibit building on the history of the Zoo.

Most pressing, however, is the need for the National Zoo to set priorities and a schedule for preserving Holt House, so that a unique piece of Washington, D.C., history can be appreciated for generations to come.

Holt House Photographs During and After SNZP Occupancy



Main Administration Building – National Zoo, 1937

When the building had a viable use, it was well cared for by the National Zoo.

From the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record, Library of Congress web site.



Current Condition - Exterior

The plywood over the windows is to reduce vandalism and eliminate bird and rodent entry. The wooden bracing is shoring a weakened exterior wall. Prior to installation of the roof and the gutter/downspout system, the exterior walls were severely damaged by roof runoff. This caused the stucco to delaminate. The bare brick is now unprotected from the weather.

Photo by HHPTF - Summer 2002



Current Condition - Interior

The interior wooden structure and plaster/paint finishes have been severely damaged since the building was abandoned in 1988. There are many areas that are unsafe to walk and there remain high levels of mildew and mold on many of the materials. The interior can be successfully rehabilitated, but the costs will be high.

Photo by QEA – Summer 2002

B. INTRODUCTION

Holt House, which sits on a wooded hilltop overlooking Rock Creek, is one of the oldest houses in the District of Columbia and is a rare surviving example of a five-part-plan Federal-era residence once popular in the mid-Atlantic Region. The house has been described also as having neo-Palladian aspects. Neither the exact date of its construction nor its architect or builder is known. There is considerable information, however, about the many prominent individuals who have been associated with Holt House over time. These include people who lived in the house when it was a private residence (circa 1810 to 1889), the businessmen who operated the mills just below the house along Rock Creek, the architects who remodeled the structure for use as offices by the National Zoo beginning in 1890, and the Zoo directors and other personnel who worked in the house until 1988.

In 1967, George Frain of the Kalorama Citizens Association identified Holt House as one of three large-scale residences dating from the early 19th Century located in the Kalorama neighborhood (Bates). Holt House is the only one of these structures still standing. Holt House in 1964 was listed on the District of Columbia Inventory of Historic Sites and designated as a Category 2 Landmark. In its nomination, the house was cited for its "significant contribution to the cultural heritage and visual beauty of the District of Columbia." In 1973, Holt House was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. (See Appendices for National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form.)

Holt House's primary period of historic significance is circa 1810-1889, when it served as a private residence for a series of notable individuals. Its secondary period of significance began in 1890, when it was acquired by the newly created National Zoo and substantially remodeled by several well-known architects for use as the Zoo's administrative headquarters.

The original Holt House site – a 42.5-acre parcel – presents a rich and diverse cultural history as well. It once included an extensive mill complex owned by U.S. President John Quincy Adams, the District's first Quaker graveyard, and a post-Civil War African-American cemetery. Furthermore, several owners or occupants of the house were known slaveholders, and oral traditions state that slaves were kept at the site (Morley).

For these reasons, Holt House should be protected from further deterioration and collapse, and its site should be preserved.

This report gives a brief history of Holt House and an overview of the existing conditions of the structure and its site. In developing this report, representatives from QUINN EVANS/ARCHITECTS, the Smithsonian National Zoological Park, and the Holt House Preservation Task Force of the Kalorama Citizens Association toured the building and site, and walked the lands along Rock Creek. In addition to the visual analysis performed during the site visit, an extensive amount of written documentation was reviewed, including the Smithsonian Institution web site on Holt House, archived drawing files at the Zoo's Facilities Office, and books and old newspaper articles. A full list of sources is included in the Appendices.

The purpose of this report is to outline steps that should be taken immediately to secure the structural stability of Holt House. Furthermore, it suggests possible future uses for the building. It urges the National Zoo to regard Holt House and its site as an integral part of the park that should be included in a cultural resource management plan. This report represents Phase 1 of such a management plan and should be viewed as focused, beginning steps for actions to come. In future phases, additional research, architecture/engineering design, and plans for the building and its site rehabilitation can be made.

This report strongly recommends that the National Zoo make a long-range plan for the preservation and restoration of Holt House and its surroundings, so that a unique historic property can be enjoyed by generations of Washingtonians to come.

C. HISTORY

Holt House: A Brief History

Holt House is located in a non-public area of the Smithsonian National Zoological Park. It sits on a densely wooded hilltop south of the main, public portion of the Zoo and east of Rock Creek. It can be reached from Adams Mill Road through a gated entrance, which is often locked.

Although the exact date of Holt House's construction is unknown, it is believed to have occurred between 1810 and 1820. It might have been built earlier, or there might have been another, older dwelling on the site. Holt House remained a private residence from the time of its construction until 1889, when the newly established National Zoo purchased it from Dr. Henry Holt. From 1890 until 1988, the Zoo used the house for administrative offices. Both the private and public ownership time periods are historically significant.

Holt House and Its Site - 1793 to 1889

Holt House sits on land that was once part of a much larger tract known as "Pretty Prospect." In 1793, the Beall family of Maryland sold the 863-acre parcel to Benjamin Stoddert (1751-1813), who had been appointed by President George Washington to purchase land for the establishment of the new Federal City. Stoddert, an American Revolutionary War major and first Secretary of the Navy, built Columbia Mills on a part of his land along Rock Creek. (See Appendix for a chronology of the mills.) In 1800, Stoddert sold the mills and 42.5 acres of surrounding property to Walter Mackall, a Maryland legislator. This is the parcel of land that now includes Holt House.

In 1804, Mackall sold the site to Jonathan Shoemaker (1756-1837), a Quaker miller who moved to the newly founded District of Columbia from Pennsylvania. Family traditions state that Dolley Madison, wife of then-Secretary of State James Madison, visited the Shoemaker home at the mills. Further evidence that the Shoemakers lived at the mill site is the fact that the family in 1807 donated a small plot of their land to establish the first Quaker burial ground in the District.

In 1809, Jonathan Shoemaker sold the mills and land to Roger Johnson (1749-1831) and moved to Albemarle County, Virginia, to operate Thomas Jefferson's Shadwell Mills. Roger Johnson, a Revolutionary War major, was a successful businessman and the brother of Maryland's first governor. Roger's son, George Johnson, operated the Columbia Mills and lived at the site.

George Johnson's mill complex included a plaster-of-paris mill, a grist mill, and several other buildings to house workers and stable horses. Around 1815 he invested heavily in improvements to the operation, and it is possible Holt House was built about this time. By 1818, George Johnson was heavily in debt. The 42.5-acre property was divided into two parcels; the Bank of Columbia acquired the mills and about 28 acres of the land, leaving the Johnson family with 13.75 acres and the house.

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In 1823, then-Secretary of State John Quincy Adams (1767-1848), whose wife Louisa was Roger Johnson's niece, bought the Columbia Mills property, but not the house. In a July 1823 visit to the site, Adams noted in his diary that George Johnson, his wife, and their five small children were there "at the house." Several months after purchasing the mill, Adams became the sixth president of the United States. Columbia Mills over time became known as "Adams Mill," and it would remain in the Adams family's possession for another 50 years.

In 1831, Roger Johnson died and left Holt House and its 13.75-acre site to his family. Four years later, the property was sold to Baltimore physician Ashton Alexander (1772-1885), a founder of the American Medical Association and for whose ancestors Alexandria, Virginia, was named. From 1838 to 1841, Alexander rented the house to Amos Kendall (1789-1869), an influential political colleague of President Andrew Jackson and postmaster general under Jackson and his successor, Martin Van Buren. During Kendall's tenancy, the house became known as "Jackson Hill," which it is still sometimes called today.

In 1841, the Alexander family advertised the house for sale, lease or rent in the *National Intelligencer*. The family complained that the previous tenant (Kendall) had left the house in a state of disrepair and hadn't paid rent. Nevertheless, the advertisement stated: "The House is very superior; it is 126 feet long, two wings and a centre building, rooms of every size, unique and beautiful in its plan; and wants but to be newly papered and painted to make it delightful." (*National Intelligencer*)

In 1844, Dr. Henry C. Holt (1809-1893) of New York bought the house from Ashton Alexander. Holt, a former U.S. Army assistant surgeon, ran a small farm on the land, and early photos and maps of the site show several outbuildings, which no longer exist. These buildings included a creamery, a barn and animal pens. Holt is said to have planted trees on the site, which are most likely the ones still standing today. In November 1889, the Holt family sold their home of nearly 50 years to the newly created National Zoo.

Holt House as Part of the National Zoo – 1889 to Present

In March 1889, Congress established a commission entitling the Smithsonian Institution to select parcels of land for the creation of a National Zoological Park (NZIP). In April 1890, the Zoo took possession of Holt House and began the repairs and adaptations necessary for creating an administration building. At the time of acquisition, Holt House was in need of repairs. Immediately after taking ownership, the Zoo spent \$2,000 on repairs, including new steps, a new roof, plastering, and the addition of a skylight in the large central room. (SI - Holt House: Structural Alterations) Over the next 15 years, Holt House underwent almost continuous design, repairs, and alterations. These modifications could be viewed as maintenance to repair a rapidly deteriorating structure as well as modernizations and modifications for an administration building.

After 1905, work on Holt House slowed down. The deterioration, however, continued. In 1954 there was a reported termite infestation, which caused extensive damage to the framing supporting the basement stairs, the floors, woodwork and baseboards, and to window and door frames. By 1961 the house was deteriorating at an even faster rate and its practical value was again in question. Theodore Reed, then director of the Zoo, stated that "the

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building continues to be dangerous and ... its effective and complete repair is beyond the capabilities of the NZP at the present time." Reed went on to ask, "... who has the power and authority to condemn the building?" (SI - Zoo Ownership [mid 1900s], 1/24/1961) A 1967 Zoo report stated, "To restore the Holt Mansion to its original appearance for service as a museum or some other long-range purpose would involve razing the entire structure and the rebuilding, possibly salvaging the brick for exterior wall surfaces." (See SI - Zoo Ownership [mid 1900's], 1/1/1967) Nevertheless, Holt House remained in service for close to the next 30 years with minimal recorded maintenance. The building was eventually abandoned and boarded up in 1988. This is how the building has remained to the present day.

Major Changes to Holt House by the National Zoo

Three major architects made the designs and plans for repairs to Holt House: William Ralph Emerson, Glenn Brown, and the firm of Hornblower and Marshall. Emerson (1833-1917) was a prominent Boston architect known for his shingle-style houses; at the Zoo he designed the Buffalo Barn in 1890 and the Carnivore House in 1892. Brown (1854-1932) was a Washington architect noted for restoring Pohick Church and Gunston Hall, designing (with his son) Dumbarton Bridge over Rock Creek at Q Street, and documenting the architectural history of the U.S. Capitol; for the Zoo, Brown designed animal enclosures for the deer, llamas and zebras, and a pedestrian bridge in 1894. Hornblower and Marshall also designed Zoo buildings, including the Small Mammal House that opened in 1906. Each of these architects contributed to the modifications of Holt House and can be held responsible for altering its appearance.

Exterior Modifications

The most significant exterior alteration to Holt House was the lowering of the grade around the house. Previously, the house's lower level was partially under ground and the living space was accessed by flights of stairs leading to the second level. William Ralph Emerson, however, recommended removing the earth surrounding the lower level and having this floor become the main entrance. (SI – Zoo Ownership [1890s], 1/1/1890) While lowering grade made the lower level a fully usable office space, it drastically altered the appearance of the house and how it was accessed.

Along with lowering grade, Emerson removed the exterior stairs, porches on the upper level, and the verandahs, which Holt had added to the house. A new door opening was cut to the lower level on the north side. This would become the main entrance to the house for the administration offices. The removal of these elements was significant in that they altered the approach to the house and greatly changed the overall appearance of the building. Previously, the main entrance was up the north stairs to the second level and through the front door. Now access to the house was entirely confined to the lower level. (SI – Holt House: Structural Alterations)

Windows

Another major exterior alteration to the house centers on the lower-story windows. Prior to the lowering of grade, these windows were smaller and were covered by a series of flat bars of an undetermined material. For all intents and purposes, the lower level of the house was a

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basement. While these bars were removed in 1890, by 1901 it was apparent that the lower level was dark and in need of more natural light. The architecture firm of Hornblower and Marshall cut in two new windows to the lower level. (SI – Zoo Ownership [early 1900s], 4/19/1901) It is also presumed that at some point the existing windows were lowered, but the exact time frame is unknown. New iron window lintels, however, are known to have been installed in 1898. (SI – Zoo Ownership [early 1900s], 6/27/1898)

Although it is not specifically a window, the addition of a skylight to the second floor main room has to be mentioned as a major alteration. This change was proposed by Emerson and occurred in 1890. (SI – Zoo Ownership [1890s], 1/1/1890) In 1899, the skylight was modified by Glenn Brown. At this time, the skylight was enlarged and centered above the space. It is also believed that steel tie rods were used to help in the support of the roof during this modification. (SI – Zoo Ownership [1890s], 8/1/1890)

Interior Finishes

Along with the exterior modifications, Holt House went through a series of changes on the interior as part of its conversion from residence to administration building. It appears that the lower level was either not finished or minimally finished at the time the Zoo took possession of the property. As early as 1890 “getting up the basement floor” was discussed. In August of 1890 there was reference made to laying concrete in place of the basement floors and laying down sleepers. It is quite possible that the lower-level floor was either brick, bare earth, or planks laid on grade. It can also be assumed that all finishes at the lower level date to the late 19th Century.

Another noticeable alteration to the lower level can be seen in the vestibule on the south side. The firm of Hornblower and Marshall designed this area. Evidently, there had been a pair of circular staircases leading down into this room from the upper level. These staircases were removed and the floors in both the vestibule and the main room were paved with a yellow brick set on end. In addition to this work, a door was designed and installed to this vestibule in 1901. (Zoo Ownership [early 1900s], 4/8/1901)

The interior modifications were not limited to the lower level. In 1898, Glenn Brown designed a frieze, which can still be seen in the second floor central space. The fireplace surrounds at the upper levels are attributable to Hornblower and Marshall.

By 1903 much of the interior work had been completed and Holt House looked generally as it does today. There were a few modifications, however, which occurred after this initial time period. In 1906 electric lights were installed in the upstairs rooms. (Zoo Ownership [early 1900s], 3/27/1906) And in 1913 a hot water heating system was installed. (Zoo Ownership [early 1900s], 10/27/1913) This boiler system required the addition of a staircase leading to the cellar below. Finally, in 1913 a metal ceiling was added to the superintendent's office. (Zoo Ownership [early 1900s], 12/6/1913) Except for ongoing maintenance issues, the major work at Holt House had come to a close.

Historical Photographs



Summer 1889 – Approach from Adams Mill Road

This approach remains relatively the same today. The notable exception, however, is that the dirt and grass path and surrounding landscaping have been replaced with pavement, leaving a small island of grass and landscaping around the house.

From the Smithsonian web site.



Summer 1889 – South Entrance

Notice the ivy engulfing the house and climbing in through the window. Ivy, if left unrestrained, can cause extensive damage to brick masonry by tearing away the mortar joints. Also, note the collapsing staircase to the right of the photo. The house shows a general sign of neglect at the time the Zoo purchased the property.

From the Smithsonian web site.



Summer 1889 – North Steps

These steps were removed shortly after the Zoo took control of the property. A few years later the Zoo constructed a cantilevered addition at this location. Again, note the general disrepair of the house.

From the Smithsonian web site.

D. EXISTING CONDITIONS – BUILDING

Holt House is an early 19th Century, wood frame and masonry house and one of the few remaining examples in Washington of a five-part Federal-era residence. The five-part plan contains a central volume and two side wings connected to the main body of the house by hyphens. The exterior details include stuccoed brick, blind arches, tripartite windows and low-pitched gables with a denticulated cornice. The main facades of the house are oriented north and south, with the original main entrance being on the north side of the site. Originally, the house was only one full story above grade and was accessed from the second level. In 1890, the Zoo lowered the grade around the house and removed the exterior staircases to the upper level.

Holt House includes a first and second floor and a partial basement, which serves as a mechanical room. Building areas are calculated by taking the floor plate area inside the exterior walls and subtracting any vent shafts. The existing floor areas are as follows:

<u>Floor</u>	<u>Area (Net Square Feet)</u>
Basement	370 sf
First Floor	2,240 sf
Second Floor	2,650 sf
Total	5,260 sf

The house is currently vacant and has been boarded up since 1988. The stability of the structure is in question. The exterior masonry walls are in poor condition and several large cracks are visible at the corners of the structure. The stability of the interior of Holt House is also in question. There are several rooms where the plaster ceilings have collapsed. Additionally, areas of the floor structure are soft and spongy.

Structural: History and Current Conditions

Holt House was badly in need of repairs at the time the Zoo purchased it in 1889. It was even recommended that it be demolished. Immediately after taking ownership, the Zoo began making repairs and alterations to convert the house into an administration building. During this work, however, the District of Columbia building inspector pronounced the walls unsafe, describing them as "old, dilapidated and out of repair, and ...entirely unfit for the purpose of a permanent building." He recommended "their condemnation and removal." (SI – Zoo Ownership [1890s], 8/13/1890) Presumably, corrective repairs were made to the walls and Holt House began use as administrative offices in January 1891.

Evidently, the structural repairs made to the house in 1890 were not as extensive as required. The original walls of Holt House were not laid on a foundation, but instead were set on the bare earth. The architect Emerson noted in July 1890 that in the course of his work "many defects were discovered ... the walls were found to be very weak, cracked in many places, and not extending below the lower floor but resting on the surface of the ground." (SI – Zoo Ownership [1890s], 7/1/1890) For these reasons, a major underpinning job took place

eight years later. Although the project was much larger in scope and cost than anticipated, the repair and underpinning of the walls was completed during the summer of 1898.

For the next 50 years only minimal documented structural repairs were made to the house. In June 1954, termite infestation was found. (SI – Zoo Ownership [mid 1900s], 6/7/1954) By 1955 the condition had worsened and extensive damage had been done to the building's structure, woodwork, and, in some instances, even the books and papers inside the building. (SI – Zoo Ownership [mid 1900s], 4/28/1955) Despite the damage, the termites were not fully exterminated. By 1967, the condition of Holt House had worsened and the building was in need of major repairs. At this time it was concluded that half of the structural framing and 75% of the window frames were in need of replacement. This was not a project that the Zoo was willing to undertake. Although a 1967 feasibility study recommended razing the building, the Zoo made repairs necessary to keeping the building's occupants safe, and the house remained occupied until 1988.

Since being vacated and boarded up in 1988, Holt House has continued to deteriorate. The building stands in poor to very poor condition and can only be entered with the supervision of Zoo personnel. The area of most severe deterioration centers on the masonry walls. The brick is in poor condition with badly deteriorated mortar joints and numerous cracks. The most serious masonry problems are visible at several of the corners of the building. In these locations one can view 1" to 1-1/2" vertical separations in the masonry that run from the ground to the second floor.

In 1999, as a result of community pressure, the Zoo hired a structural consulting firm to monitor cracks and movement of the structure. Monitors were placed on the cracks, and the results were recorded over a seven-month period. After reviewing the results, it was determined that the maximum movement was less than 1mm and this could simply be attributed to errors in recording the measurements. (Cagley & Associates – Holt House Movement Monitoring) In short, the cracks did not appear to be actively moving. At the same time as the crack movement was being recorded, measurements were taken to determine whether the building as a whole was moving. Again these results indicated that the house appeared stable. Although the central volume of the building appeared to "grow" by 5/8", this was attributed to thermal expansion of the masonry during the summer months. (Cagley & Associates – Holt House Movement Monitoring)

Although the Cagley analysis stated that the building is not actively moving, its structural stability is still in question. The masonry and mortar joints are decaying at a constant rate and will continue to do so until re-pointed and a new coat of stucco has been applied. As of 1898, the foundations were sub-standard and probably did not even exist. The underpinning has certainly improved the condition, but sizes, composition, and depth of the foundation have not been verified for structural capacity. In addition to these exterior structural failings, the termite problem has not been proven to have been eliminated. Many of the floors on the interior of the structure have a "spongy" feeling. This could be due in part to rot caused by constant dampness or could be due to weakened joists caused by termite damage. Again, very little of the structural system of the building can be verified to be in good condition. A structural engineer should perform a complete evaluation of all foundation, masonry bearing

wall, and wood structural members before a recommendation can be made as to the stability of the building as a whole.

Architectural

The existing architectural features at Holt House are in slightly better condition than the structural components, but can still be classified as in poor condition. Since 1988, there has only been minimal maintenance performed at Holt House. The biggest benefit the house received from the Zoo was a new roof in 2001. This now protects the interior of the building from water and debris and will hopefully slow down the deterioration process on the interior of the structure. This work was done to stabilize the building and to keep it from being a safety hazard on the Zoo property.

It is important to note that buildings are not static and have ongoing maintenance requirements. Performing a few maintenance repairs once does not enable one to forget a structure for the next 10 years and expect the structure to be in the same condition as when it was abandoned. While the roof repair, installation of rain leaders, and sealing of the window openings was a big benefit to the preservation of Holt House, the Zoo should continue to maintain the property on a yearly basis. Gutters and downspouts should be cleaned of debris, rain leaders should be periodically checked to make sure they are doing their job, and the window coverings should be checked to see that they are securely fastened to the building. Additionally, careful attention should be paid to the overall structure of the house. If the masonry walls exhibit more cracks or deformation, further action may be required to prevent the building's collapse.

Exterior

The exterior of the building is in poor to very poor condition. In addition to the failing masonry bearing walls and questionable foundations, much of the stucco on the masonry is severely cracked and is now spalling, revealing the brick below. This allows water a clear path into the building through porous brick and deteriorated mortar joints. Much of the paint on the wood trim has peeled away leaving the bare wood exposed to the elements. In some locations this trim is now decaying and pulling away from the building. The windows have been boarded up with plywood and could not be examined. It is assumed, however, that the frames and sashes are in the very poor condition that was noted in the 1967 study. There is a new roof with downspouts and the water is directed away from the building by a series of corrugated plastic pipes. These rain leaders run across the yard and direct the water to the road. This is not a permanent drainage solution and the leaders have been known to come detached from the metal downspouts leading from the gutters. Furthermore, if the gutters become clogged with leaf debris, they cannot properly function.

Interior

The interior of the building is in better condition than the exterior and can be classified as in fair to poor condition. Much of the wood structural system has experienced termite damage and has questionable stability. Several years of water damage has also caused the collapse of the plaster ceilings. Additionally, there is some construction debris present and a great deal of peeling paint, which may contain lead. The interior still looks much the way it probably did

Printed: May 2003

at the turn of the century. Many of the plaster walls are intact, and the woodwork, trim, and detailing are clearly visible. This is a huge asset and would allow the building to be most easily restored to its early-Zoo period.

This preservation of the interior can be attributed to several key factors. The building recently received a new roof and downspout repairs, and the windows were boarded up to prevent water and rodents from entering the structure. These simple maintenance items have kept water from entering the building and damaging the plaster and rotting the wood framing. Another reason for the preservation of the interior is that the structure is vented. A series of screens and plywood awnings were constructed at the exterior windows. This allows air movement throughout the building and eliminates damp stagnant air. In keeping the building reasonably dry on the interior, many problems like mold and rot have been lessened or even eliminated.

Building Systems

Holt House has all building systems, including water, electricity, and smoke detection. Their operability, however, cannot be verified at this time.

Mechanical

A boiler in the basement to heat the building has been abandoned. There are a series of radiators visible throughout the house. Window air-conditioning units were mentioned in the Zoo's 1967 feasibility study but are no longer present. There is no central air conditioning for the structure. All mechanical systems have been abandoned and will need to be completely replaced.

Electrical

The house is fully wired for electricity, but the power has been turned off. This wiring of switches and outlets is done via surface mounted conduit.

Plumbing

There is indoor plumbing that serves two toilet rooms. The Women's Toilet is located in the northwest corner of the first floor and the Men's Toilet is located in the northeast corner of the second floor. We understand the water has been turned off and the system has not been used since 1988.

Smoke Detectors and Alarms

There are active smoke detectors and fire alarms in Holt House. These systems have been wired to the Zoo's central maintenance station so that they will be notified in the event of a fire.

Recommended Critical Intervention Measures

The following items should be performed as soon as possible and will go a long way to preventing immediate structural collapse of the building:

- A structural engineer should perform a complete evaluation of all foundation, masonry-bearing wall, and wood structural members to assess stability. There also should be geo-technical testing of the underlying soil. If necessary, additional temporary bracing and shoring should be installed. Costs could range from \$15,000 to \$25,000.
- The masonry and mortar joints should be re-pointed and a new coat of stucco applied to the house. This is critical, but very specialized work. Both the workmanship and materials must be carefully selected to meet several historic preservation guidelines. Costs could range from \$50,000 to \$150,000.

The following activities should be undertaken within the current annual maintenance program:

- Gutters and downspouts should be cleaned of debris, rain leaders should be periodically checked to make sure they are doing their job, and the window coverings should be checked to see that they are securely fastened to the building.
- Ongoing periodic checks should be performed to monitor and address movement, masonry cracks, termite/rodent infestation, and moisture problems.
- Check the building's electrical, water, and heating systems on an annual basis.
- Ensure that fire-detection devices are adequate and working properly on a semi-annual basis.
- Clean debris from the interior of the house.

E. EXISTING CONDITIONS – SITE

Holt House is situated on a hill overlooking both Rock Creek and the public grounds of the National Zoo. The site is gently sloping and covered with dense mature trees. Although the trees are rather large in size and give a great deal of shade and atmosphere, it does not appear that this is how the site always was. When Henry Holt took ownership of the property in 1844 he described the property as “destitute of trees,” and he is said to have planted many at this time. Many of the trees surrounding Holt House are likely to be 150 years old, and some even older.

The original 42.5-acre Holt House site now forms part of the southern boundary of the Zoo, overlaps into the city-owned Walter Pierce Park, and reaches down to Rock Creek. In addition to the house, the site once included an extensive mill complex owned by U.S. President John Quincy Adams, Washington’s earliest Quaker graveyard, and a post Civil-War African-American cemetery. The historic figures and developments associated with the site make it a unique cultural landscape.

The Holt House site today can best be described as a maintenance yard for the National Zoo. Just a few hundred feet from the house, one finds a series of dumpsters and chain-link fences, which provide storage for the Zoo. To the south of the site is a road leading down to Rock Creek that can be accessed only by authorized personnel. To the north of the house is another service road, which leads to the animal hospitals and research facilities. Aside from a small area of grass surrounding the house, the paved roadway practically covers the entire level portion of the site.

While the site is on Zoo property and is operated by the Smithsonian Institution, it is not open to the public; very few people even know it exists. In fact, the public is discouraged from entering the site, which is fenced in and gated off. One must take a winding service road off Adams Mill Road to reach the house. This road is about 20 feet in width and fully paved. Upon reaching the house, the road loops around the dwelling and proceeds back to Adams Mill Road.

Although Holt House was once an imposing presence on a hilltop overlooking Rock Creek, this is no longer the case. Dense new-growth woods and vegetation, sundry Zoo storage facilities, dumpsters, and encroaching roadways have diminished its prominence.

Recommended Critical Intervention Measures

- The landscape surrounding Holt House should be cleaned up so that views of the house can be opened to the public. Storage and trash facilities on the site should be moved to another location. Invasive vegetation and underbrush should be cleared out, so that more natural light is brought to the site and old-growth trees can continue to thrive. Costs could range from \$15,000 to \$50,000.

F. PHOTOGRAPHS AND MAPS

Building Photographs



Northwest Elevation

Photo by QEA – Summer 2002



View from Southwest

The green awnings above the windows are vents to allow air flow through the house. This circulation allows the interior to remain relatively dry. All windows have been boarded up, keeping the interior dry and free of rodents. Note the bracing against the wall of the hyphen. This bracing protects against horizontal deflection and aims to keep the walls standing.

Photo by QEA – Summer 2002



Typical Masonry Crack

This crack and glass monitor is typical of several locations around the house. Cracks approximately 1" in width have opened up at the corners of the structure and run from ground to the second floor. A structural report prepared in 2000 stated that the building is not actively moving and only 1mm of movement was recorded. This movement could be attributed to errors in taking the readings.

Photo by QEA – Summer 2002



Second Floor Central Room

Much of the work in the second-story space dates to 1898-1899, based on proposals by architect Glenn Brown. His suggested improvements included enlarging the skylight and adding a decorative cornice. The lay-in ceiling shown in this photo dates to about 1973.

Photo by QEA – Summer 2002



Fireplace in Second Floor Central Room

This fireplace was most likely done by architect Glenn Brown. Most of the interior work on the lower story of the house is attributable to the firm of Hornblower and Marshall.

Photo by QEA – Summer 2002



First Floor South Hall

In this photograph one can see "ghost images" of the framing for a pair of spiral staircases that originally went down from the second level to the lower level of the house. The architectural firm of Hornblower and Marshall removed these in 1901.

Photo by QEA – Summer 2002

Existing Site Photographs



Entrance Path to Property Near Adams Mill Road

On the left is a maintenance road that is only accessible by Zoo personnel. On the right is another road that leads to Holt House and the animal research facilities and hospitals. One must travel down this road for approximately 1/4 mile before reaching the house. The house is not visible from Adams Mill Road.

Photo by QEA – Summer 2002



Service Road Approaching Holt House

The beginning of Holt House grounds can just be seen at the center of the photo. Note the collection of maintenance items on the left side of the photo. The Zoo uses this road as a storage facility for construction debris and waste. There is presently a large fenced-in area containing material for the renovated Connecticut Avenue entrance.

Photo by QEA – Summer 2002



Holt House Property

Holt House is visible at the center of the photograph. Areas of pavement presently surround the house on all sides. Note the minimal yard area around the house.

Photo by QEA – Summer 2002

Historical Site Plans

Historical Site Plan – Pre-Zoo Acquisition

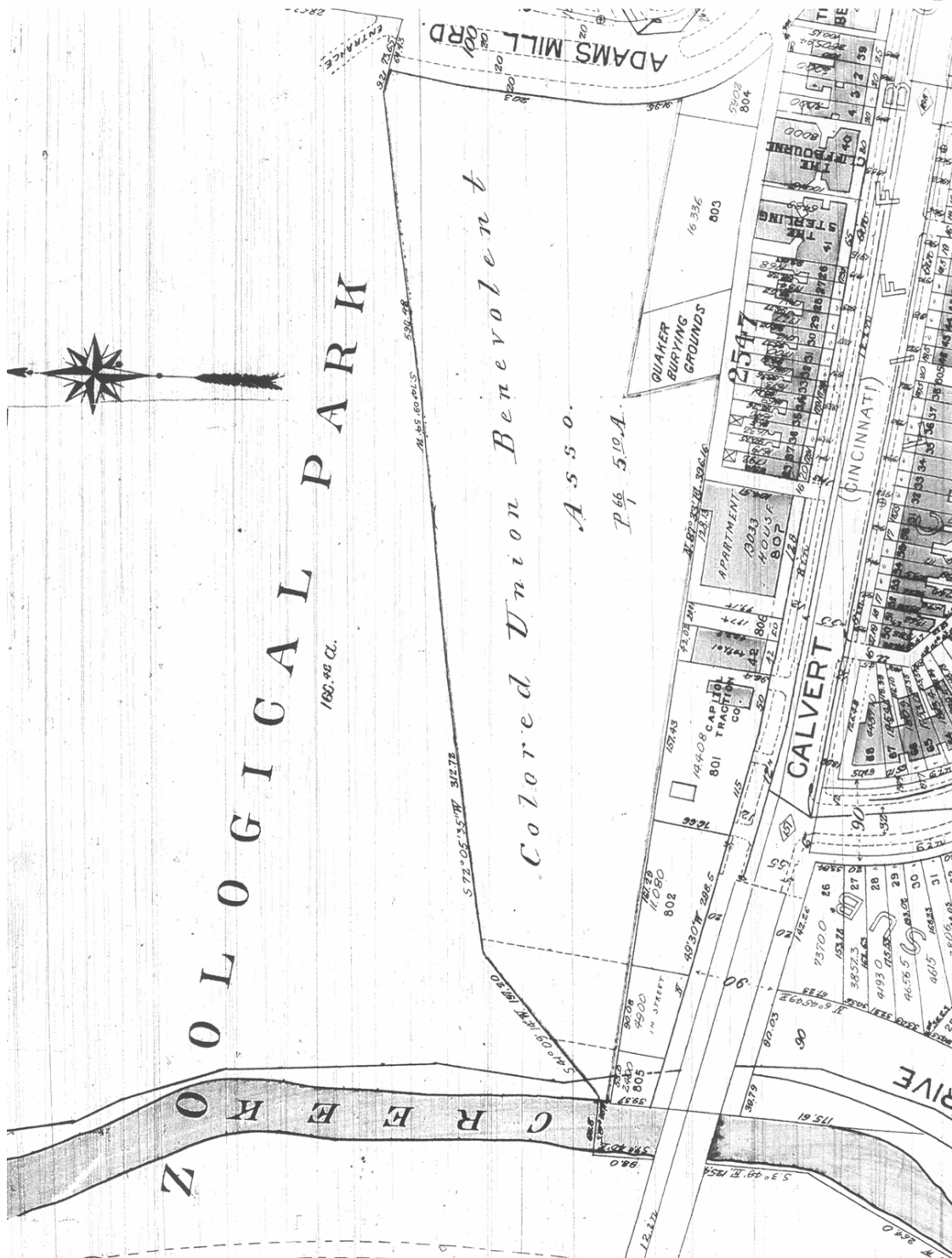
Below is a map of the Holt House site as it stood before acquisition by the National Zoo in 1889. Holt House (A), Adams Mill (B), and The Colored Union Benevolent Association Cemetery (C) are all visible on this map, which was prepared by U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey and engraved in 1892-94.



Engraved by Evans & Bartle, Washington D.C. 1892 – 1894.

Historical Site Map – 1909

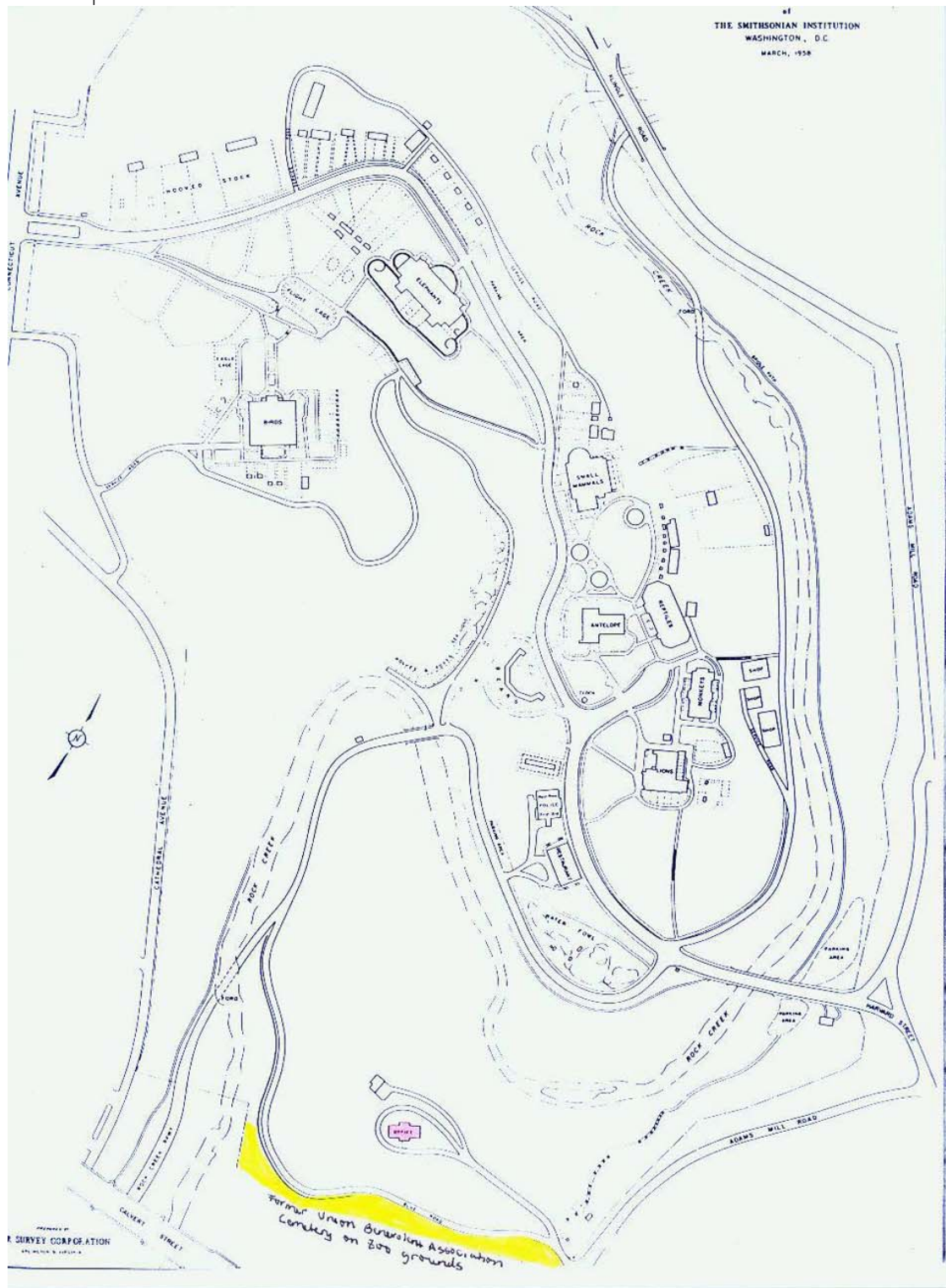
This survey map, dating from 1909, depicts the locations of the Colored Union Benevolent Cemetery and the Quaker Cemetery and their relationship to the National Zoological Park.



Map from Baist's Real Estate Atlas of Surveys of Washington District of Columbia – Volume 3.

Historical Site Plan – 1958

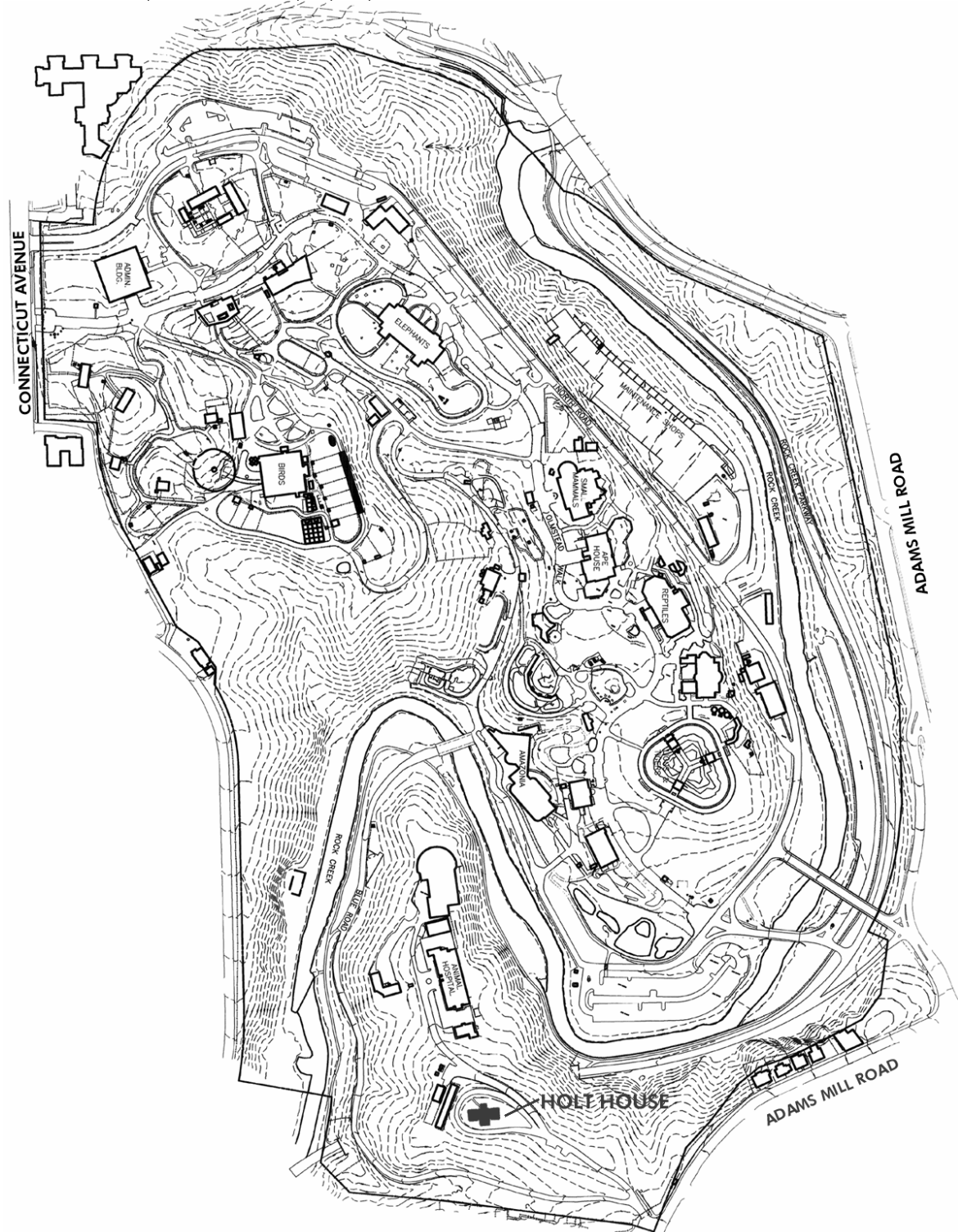
Below is a map of the SNZP property as it stood in 1958. Holt House is found at the bottom of the map.



Map prepared by Air Survey Corporation, Sterling, Virginia, and copied from the Smithsonian Institution web site.

Current Site Plan

Below is a map of the SNZP property as it stood in 1997.



Map prepared by Air Survey Corporation, Sterling, Virginia, and copied from the Smithsonian National Zoological Park's drawing files.

G. POSSIBLE USES AND COSTS

There are several possible uses for Holt House and the surrounding property, including (but not limited to) returning the building to an administrative function, use of the structure as a conference center or meeting hall, and turning the structure into an exhibit building. A possible topic would be the history of the Zoo. Each of these options comes with its own advantages and disadvantages that will need to be fully evaluated before a final decision can be made. Additionally, there may be other uses and options for the site that have not yet been considered or variations on these uses which would better utilize the property. While restoring Holt House may be the end goal, finding a viable use for the property which can be sustained by both the National Zoo and the site itself should take precedence.

Common Upgrades for Any Future Use

Regardless of the proposed use for Holt House and property, there are several items which need to be addressed that affect the usability of both the house and site. These issues include structural upgrades, the vertical circulation within the house, the availability of toilet rooms within the house, and the structure's mechanical systems.

Structural

The structure of the house should be fully evaluated for stability and the necessary improvements made. The house is presently unfit for occupation and will require a great deal of work and effort to even make it habitable. The majority of the window lintels are failing, there are large cracks in the exterior masonry walls, and the interior wooden structure has been ravaged by termites. Additionally, there may be hidden structural problems that were not previously known. After assuring a sound structure, modifications to the house can occur for a new occupant and proposed use.

Vertical Circulation and Toilet Rooms

Both circulation and toilet rooms will have to be addressed for any proposed use for Holt House other than as a residence. Presently there are two bathrooms and two staircases within the house. While these are acceptable for a few occupants or a residence, this is not acceptable for many occupants or a business or assembly use. An elevator should also be provided so that people who are unable to maneuver up stairs can still gain access to the second floor.

Building Systems – HVAC, Electrical, Water, Telecommunications

Another item to be addressed regardless of building use is the building systems. While there is water, electricity, and mechanical systems in the house, these systems are out of date and may or may not even be fully functional. In preparing the building for a new use, a complete replacement of the systems should be provided. A new HVAC system should have the capability of both heating and cooling the building. A new electrical system should make use of modern insulated wiring and should be sized to meet the needs of the proposed use. Additionally, a telecommunications system should be provided to allow phone and data access to all rooms of Holt House. These improvements to the building systems will go a long way toward improving the functionality of the house.

Administrative Offices

One potential use for Holt House is as an administrative office. This proposed use would be identical to the house's previous function as a Zoo facility and would be in keeping with the character of the building. Another possible use for the building would be to serve as headquarters for an organization affiliated with the Zoo such as FONZ (Friends of the National Zoo). Holt House would be a good location for the headquarters of a department or organization with a staff of about 25 people.

Advantages

Holt House would have many advantages if it served in an office capacity. In addition to maintaining its previous use, the function would not necessarily be harmed by its relatively remote location on the Zoo's property. Presently the building must be accessed from Adams Mill Road by driving on a service road. Holt House is located to the west of the Zoo's Rock Creek Parkway entrance and is relatively remote from the Zoo's public spaces. The nearest structures to Holt House are the animal research labs and hospitals. For the most part, the public is unaware of Holt House and rarely sees that portion of the property. With an office use by the Zoo, public visibility is not an issue.

Another factor is the size and configuration of its rooms. Originally designed as a residence, Holt House has a collection of small rooms of approximately 150 to 250 square feet in size. These sizes coincide with the desired size for private or semi-private offices for one to two persons. In addition to the collection of small rooms, there are a couple of larger rooms in Holt House that could serve as conference rooms for 12 to 25 people. Additionally, the central second floor space could serve as a large conference room for 50 people or an open office area for six to eight people.

Disadvantages

Aside from the common upgrades required to make the building useable, there are few disadvantages to using the house as administrative offices.

Conference Center

Another potential use for Holt House is as a conference center. Because of the floor plan configuration of the building, this conference center would include only spaces for small group meetings. If fully developed as a conference facility, Holt House would have six small conference rooms, two medium-sized rooms and one large conference space. The small conference rooms could hold 10 to 25 occupants depending on whether the space included tables or just chairs in rows. The medium conference rooms could hold 20 to 40 occupants and the large conference room could hold 45 to 100 persons. These estimates assume that the floor area is maximized for usable conference space and assumes minimal guest services.

Advantages

One of the biggest advantages of using Holt House as a conference center is that such a use would not be affected by the remoteness of the property. Holt House is located far from the public areas of the Zoo and is not readily accessible. By using the property for a conference facility, it eliminates the need for a direct link between the Zoo areas and Holt House.

Another potential advantage of having a specific conference facility on the Zoo property is the benefit of renting it out to the general public for non-Zoo related functions. The facility could serve as a meeting or lecture house for community organizations, a conference facility for Zoo related events, or a location for parties and receptions. While the Zoo presently has similar spaces, Holt House would offer a more private location in an historic mansion.

Disadvantages

The biggest drawback of using Holt House as a conference facility is the small size and arrangement of its rooms. An ideal conference center has several large rooms of varying size, capable of hosting groups of up to 250 people. Holt House does not offer this option. Many of the rooms are approximately 200 square feet and are capable of holding only 10 to 25 people. Furthermore, the arrangement of the spaces does not lend itself to combining rooms into one large space.

Another drawback to using Holt House as a conference facility is the lack of services to support an event. There is presently no kitchen or room to support a catered event. At the very least, the house would require a kitchen capable of storing, warming, and serving food that is brought in from off-site. Another noticeable absent service are restrooms. With large events come large groups of people, which require a large number of toilets. A conference type use would require the most toilet facilities of the proposed uses. Again, both toilets and a catering kitchen require floor space that would reduce the useable area for events.

The final disadvantage of Holt House as a conference facility is its lack of parking spaces. Large events require a large number of parking spots nearby. Holt House simply does not have that at the present time. It is located far enough from the Zoo's parking lots to make sharing parking an impractical option. The site is also located off a busy street that makes street parking impractical. Therefore, all visitors must find parking on-site. A majority of the site is already covered with paving and a parking lot would only add to the problem. Given the dense vegetation and steep slopes surrounding the property, there are not many locations to expand to provide additional parking.

Exhibit Building

Another option for the re-use of Holt House is as an exhibit space. A possible theme would focus on the history of the National Zoo and of zoos in general. An Act of Congress established the Zoo in 1889 and it has been growing ever since. Over the past century, the Zoo has undergone countless changes and has developed a great deal of history. Both Frederick Law Olmsted Sr. and his son Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., who were among the country's most noted landscape designers, planned the Zoo. Furthermore, the National Zoo was one of the first zoos in the country and its plan marked a departure from the 19th-Century concept of confining zoos to limited areas. As well as having significant planning origins, the Zoo has had a history of fine architecture. (The Zoo is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.) Several structures remain that were built in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Additionally, a number of structures were built in the 1930s and are still standing today. From its founding, the Zoo has had a significant history that deserves to be celebrated and shared with the public.

An exhibit building on the Zoo's history would become a destination in and of itself, as well as informing visitors who have already come to the Zoo to see the animal exhibits. One would spend a few hours in the park looking at the animals, eat lunch, and then head over to Holt House Exhibit Building for an hour or two to learn about the history of the park. A partial-day experience will become an all-day experience. An exhibit building will also broaden the audience attracted to the Zoo. While the animal exhibits primarily capture the attention of children and school groups, an exhibit building would capture the attention of older school children and adults. By diversifying its entertainment offerings, the Zoo could attract a larger audience and gain in popularity.

Advantages

Holt House and the surrounding site are ideal for an exhibit setting on the history of the Zoo. It is the park's earliest structure. A visitor to the exhibit could easily become immersed in history. Holt House has a historical feel that would transport visitors back to 1900 and depict what the Rock Creek Park area was like 100 years ago. Furthermore, the exhibit building could tie the house and Zoo in with the surrounding site and mill. Walking paths could take visitors down to Rock Creek to the site of the mill. Suddenly not just the immediate area around the house is being used and revitalized, but the entire 40+ acres of cultural landscape would be utilized.

Holt House itself would be ideal for an exhibit building. The many small rooms are conducive to small intimate exhibit halls. These rooms could each focus on a different aspect of the Zoo or of the development of the concept of zoos. Furthermore, the large hall on the second floor could serve as a lecture hall or theater for videos or lectures on the development of the park.

Disadvantages

One problem with having Holt House serve as an exhibit building is its remote location. As has been discussed before, Holt House is somewhat isolated from the main portion of the Zoo and is not readily accessed from the park. There is presently no direct link for public access from the Zoo to the Holt House property. Holt House is on the service side of the property and is not meant to be seen by visitors. A walking path or shuttle bus or some other means of getting visitors from parking lot D to Holt House could be beneficial.

Another disadvantage to the Holt House property is its present lack of parking space. Like a conference facility, a large amount of parking would be required for an exhibit use. Visitors who were coming only to the exhibit would need a place to park. The site is already built on sloping land and only a limited portion is level enough for parking. Furthermore, this level land immediately surrounds the house. While parking adjacent to the house is beneficial in that it means a short travel distance from car to exhibit, it detracts from the property and would diminish the feeling of the surrounding landscape. Ideally, visitors could park in one of the Zoo's many parking lots and then either walk or take a shuttle bus to the Holt House property.

Another item often associated with exhibit buildings is a gift shop. By the time new toilets, a gift shop, vertical circulation, and a lobby are included on the first floor, space available for exhibits may be minimal.

Costs

The cost of undertaking immediate intervention measures, as mentioned previously in this report, range from \$15,000 to \$25,000 to conduct a structural evaluation of the building; and from \$50,000 to \$150,000 for performing work on masonry and mortar joints and applying a new coat of stucco.

Given the extent of the deterioration to the structure of the house and the potential work that would be required to rehabilitate this structure, the project cost could range from \$300-\$500 a square foot of building area. This would mean that the cost of a total building restoration for Holt House would range from \$1.6 million to \$2.6 million. This work would include all necessary structural, mechanical, and architectural upgrades to the building. These figures are meant for budgetary purposes. A more detailed and accurate cost estimate should be prepared once an appropriate use for the building has been determined and a detailed scope of work has been drafted.

H. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Holt House is historically and architecturally significant and should be preserved. Its setting – including the adjacent early mills and graveyards – is integral to the history of the house and enhances the building aesthetically.

Even though the building has been unoccupied since 1988, no structure is static. Without ongoing monitoring and maintenance, it will continue to deteriorate. The building is near collapse. Therefore, we recommend the immediate and long-term steps below to ensure the preservation of Holt House and its surroundings, in order of priority.

Immediate Steps

- A structural engineer should perform a complete evaluation of the foundation, masonry bearing walls, and wood structural members. This analysis should include geotechnical testing of the underlying soil.
- The house should be re-pointed and re-stuccoed to prevent the continued deterioration of masonry and mortar joints.
- Gutters and downspouts should be cleaned of debris yearly; rain leaders should be periodically checked to make sure they are working; window coverings should be checked to see that they are securely fastened.
- Debris inside the house should be cleaned out.
- The house should be monitored for signs of termite and rodent infestation, and treated if necessary.
- The operability of building systems, including water, heating, and electricity should be checked and repaired as necessary.
- Smoke detectors and alarms should be checked bi-monthly to ensure they are working.
- The site should be cleared of invasive vegetation, and tree limbs that could damage the house if they fell should be trimmed.

Long-Term Steps: Holt House and the Zoo's "Master Plan"

The National Zoo periodically makes a "Master Plan" for the future growth and improvement of its facilities. It is of the utmost importance that Holt House, which was once a key facility at the Zoo, be included in the Zoo's "Master Plan." Rather than viewing Holt House and its site as separate from the park, the Zoo should view the property as a potential asset worthy of a cultural management resource plan. The Smithsonian Institution should consider appointing a person to act as its historic preservation officer for all of the Zoo's historic structures.

The Zoo should decide on a temporary or permanent use for Holt House, so that decisions can be made about its restoration. As outlined in this report, possible uses might include offices, conference facilities, or exhibit space about the history of the National Zoo itself.

Most pressing, however, is the need for the National Zoo to set priorities and a schedule for preserving Holt House and the surrounding landscape, so that a unique piece of Washington history can be appreciated for generations to come.

J. APPENDICES

Plans

National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form

National Trust for Historic Preservation – Preservation Services Fund Grant Application

Press Release, National Trust Awards Grant for Holt House Study, April 5, 2002

Kalorama Citizens Association Holt House Preservation Task Force Documents:

Holt House Brochure

A Preliminary Plan For Defined Use of Holt House

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3-C Cover Letter and Resolution

Letter from Mike Gould, President of the Kalorama Citizens Association, to Robin Vasa, Associate Director of Facilities Management and Construction, National Zoo, July 15, 2002

Sources of Information

Timelines – Compiled by Holt House Preservation Task Force

General Timeline – Holt House, The Mills and The Cemeteries

Timeline – Holt House

Timeline – The Quaker and African-American Cemeteries

Timeline – Columbia Mills/Adams Mill

Plans

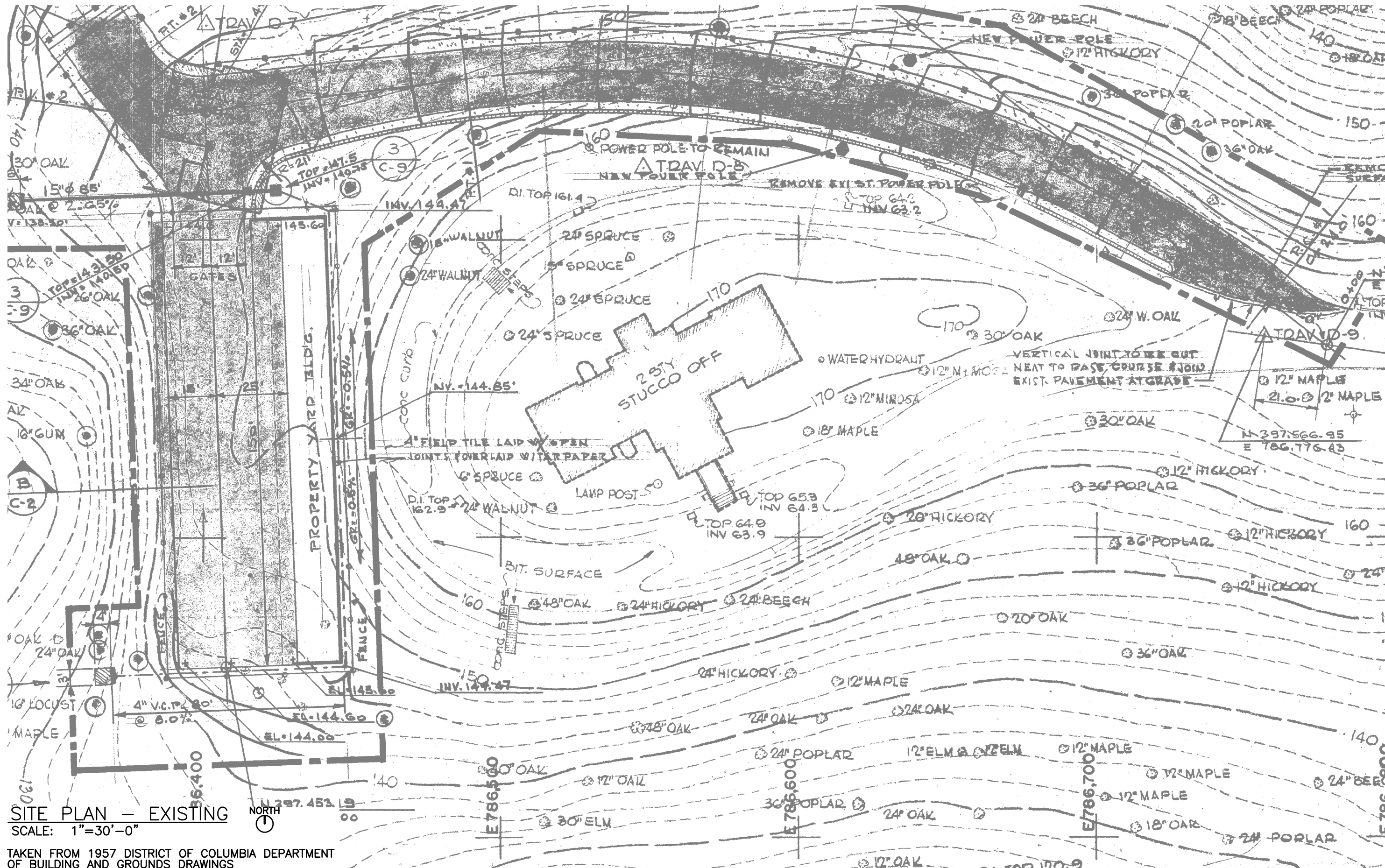
The following pages include plans for Holt House. These documents are scans of the originals prepared in 1957 by the Department of Building and Grounds for the District of Columbia. These are measured drawings based on a field survey during investigations of termite damage.

Site Plan - Existing

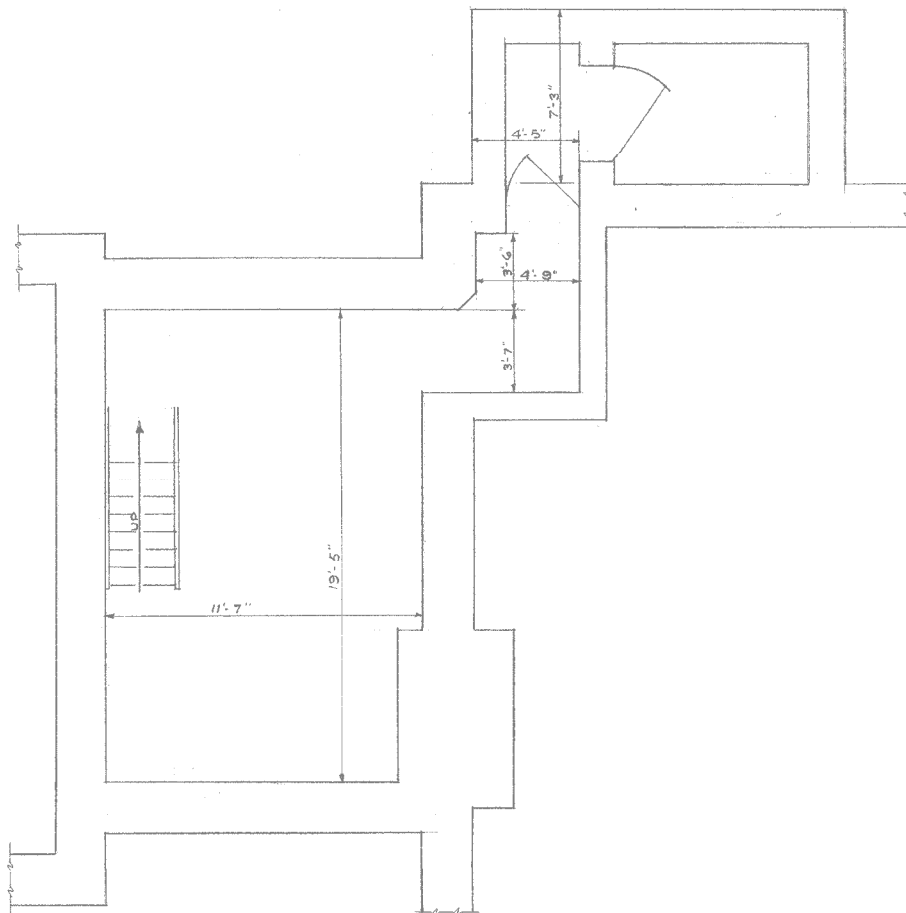
Basement Plan - Existing

First Floor Plan – Existing (Ground Level)

Second Floor Plan – Existing



HOLT HOUSE PRESERVATION PLAN

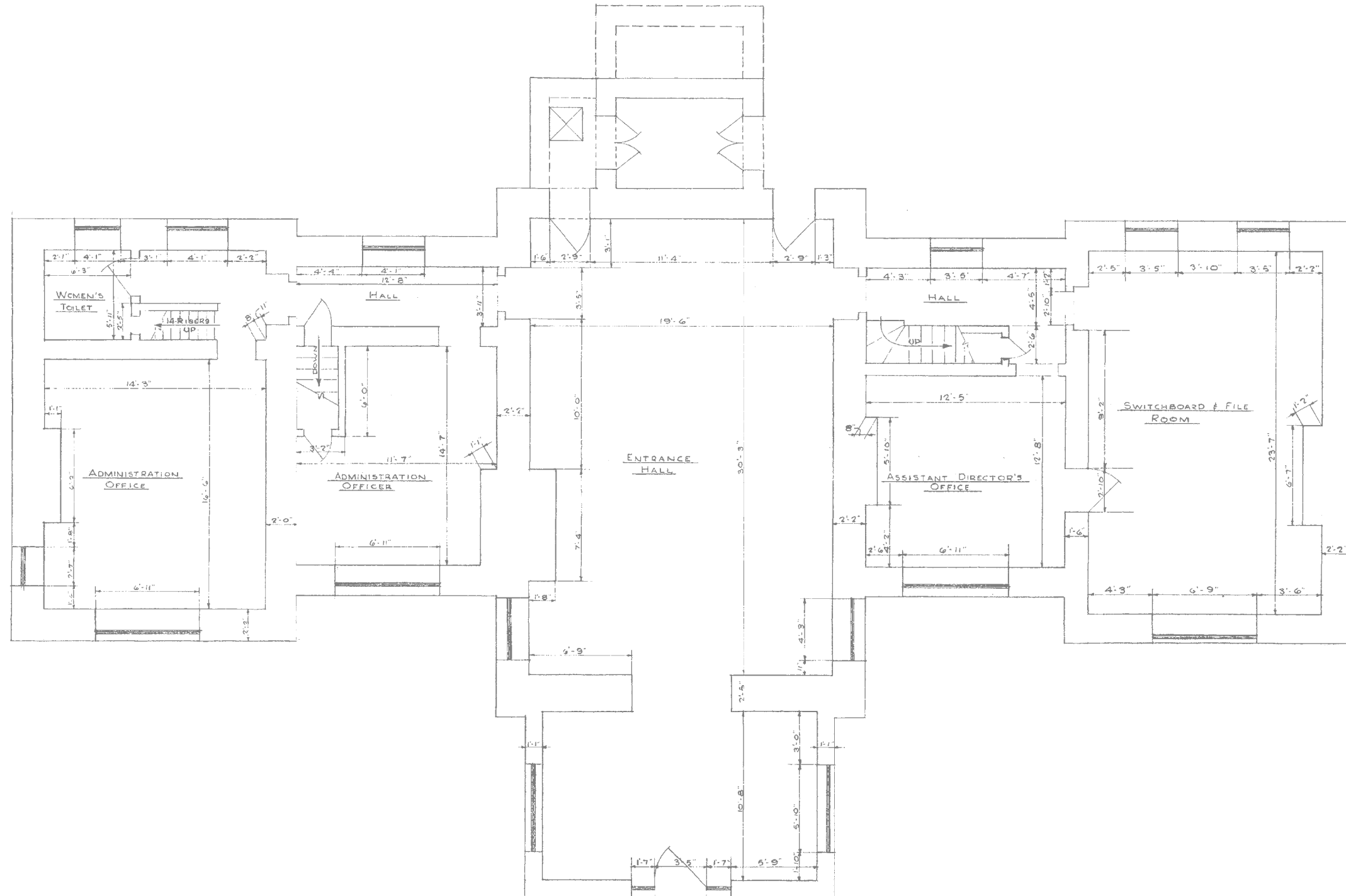


BASEMENT PLAN — EXISTING

SCALE: 1/8"=1'-0"

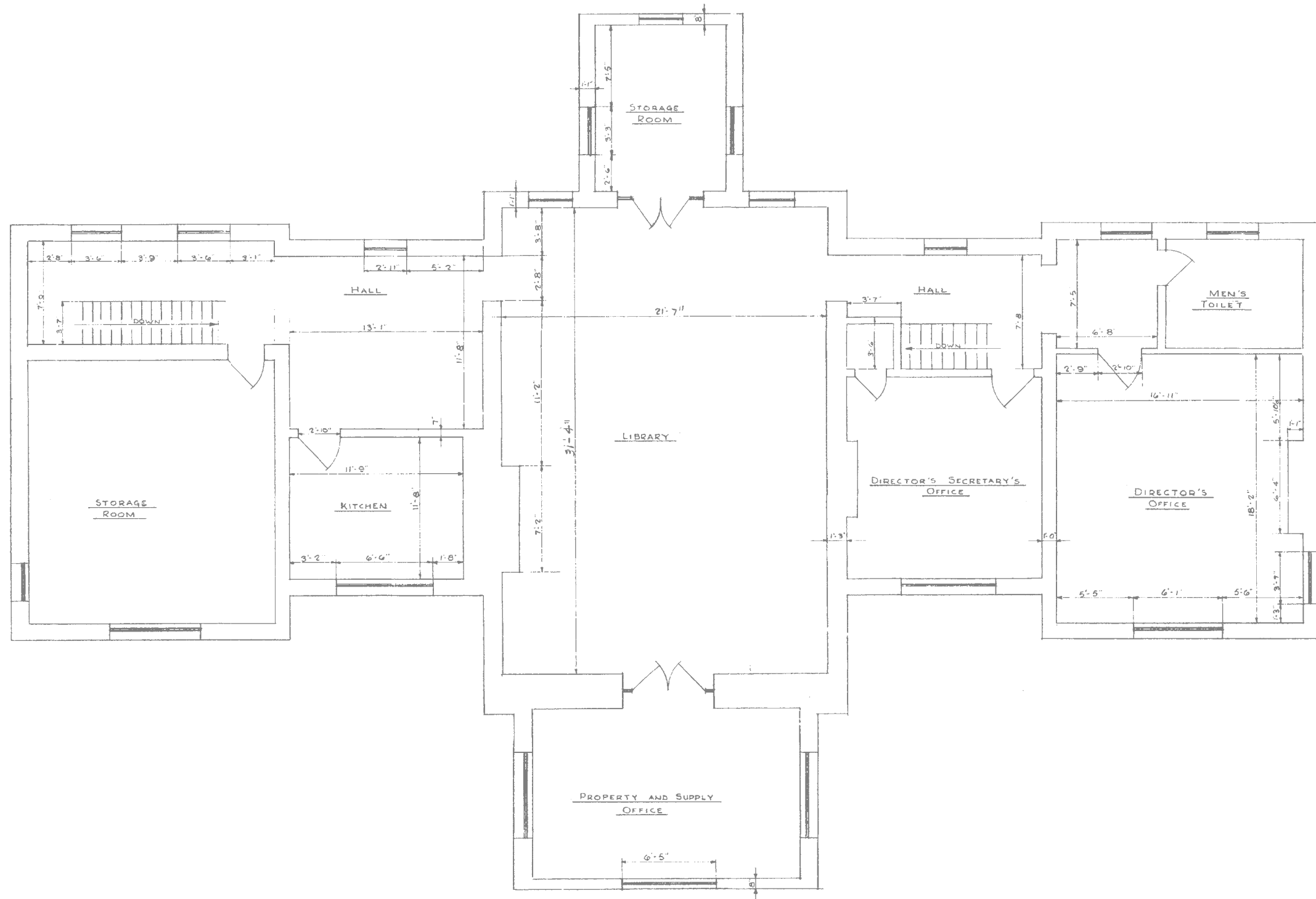
TAKEN FROM 1957 DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA DEPARTMENT
OF BUILDING AND GROUNDS DRAWINGS





FIRST FLOOR PLAN — EXISTING NORTH
 SCALE: 1/8"=1'-0"
 TAKEN FROM 1957 DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA DEPARTMENT
 OF BUILDING AND GROUNDS DRAWINGS

HOLT HOUSE PRESERVATION PLAN



SECOND FLOOR PLAN — EXISTING

SCALE: 1/8"=1'-0"

TAKEN FROM 1957 DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA DEPARTMENT
OF BUILDING AND GROUNDS DRAWINGS



HOLT HOUSE PRESERVATION PLAN

National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form

On the following pages is a copy of the National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form for Holt House. This document is dated April 24, 1973, and represents the submittal to the Department of the Interior, which placed Holt House on the National Register of Historic Places.

National Register Form Goes Here
Page 42 – 47

National Trust for Historic Preservation – Pres. Services Fund Grant Application

On the following pages is a copy of the National Trust for Historic Preservation – General Services Fund Grant Application form, submitted January 31, 2002, by the Kalorama Citizens Association to help fund a study of Holt House. The resulting grant provided funds for this report through the establishment of the Dorothea de Schweinitz Endowed Preservation Services Fund for the District of Columbia.

National Trust Grant Application goes here
Page 49 – 58

Press Release, National Trust Awards Grant for Holt House Study, April 5, 2002

The following is a press release dated April 15, 2002 declaring an award of \$2,500 to the Kalorama Citizens Association's Holt House Preservation Task Force by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Insert Press Release Here

Kalorama Citizens Association Holt House Preservation Task Force Documents

The following pages contain a brochure, planning documents, and correspondence prepared by the Kalorama Citizens Association's Holt House Preservation Task Force in reference to Holt House.

Holt House Brochure

A Preliminary Plan For Defined Use of Holt House

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3-C Cover Letter and Resolution

Letter from Mike Gould, President of the Kalorama Citizens Association, to Robin Vasa, Associate Director of Facilities Management and Construction, National Zoo, July 15, 2002

Insert HHPTF Information:

Page 62 – Holt House Brochure (Double Sided)

Page 63 – A Preliminary Plan for Defined Use of Holt House

Page 64 – 66 – Advisory Neighborhood Commission

Page 67 – Kalorama Citizens Association

Sources of Information

The following documents, drawings and photographs were used in the preparation of this report.

Bates, Barbara D. **"A Preliminary Development Plan for Adaptive Reuse of the Historic Holt Mansion."** October, 1999.

- A comprehensive report including a brief history of the house and site.
- Includes a building use recommendation and a preliminary cost analysis.
- A comprehensive list of references is included at the end of the document.

Bushong, William Brian, **"Glenn Brown, the American Institute of Architects, and the Development of the Civic Core of Washington, D.C.,"** Dissertation for The George Washington University, May 8, 1988.

Cagley & Associates. **"Evaluation of Holt House Shoring."** Memo to Frank Sturgeon at Einhorn Yaffee Prescott. 9, August 2000.

- Letter detailing the conditions at Holt House since their initial report in 1988.

Cagley & Associates. **"Holt House Movement Monitoring."** Memo to Frank Sturgeon at Einhorn Yaffee Prescott. 9, August 2000.

- Brief analysis of the results of the meters on the large cracks at the corners of Holt House.

Eberlein, Harold D., and Cortlandt Van Dyke Hubbard. **Historic Homes of George-Town & Washington City.** Richmond: The Dietz Press, Incorporated, 1958.

- A brief written account of the structure.

Ewing, Heather P., **"First Building at the Zoo: The Buffalo Barn,"** Smithsonian Preservation Quarterly, Fall 1991. (<http://www.si.edu/oahp/spq/spq91f3.htm>)

Gerson, Leonard H. and Suzanne Ganschinietz. **Inventory Nomination Form.** National Register of Historic Places, 24, April 1973.

- Complete nomination form including statement of historical significance.

Gould, Mike and Larry Karr. Kalorama Citizens Association, **Preservation Services Fund – Grant Application.** National Trust for Historic Preservation. 31, January 2002.

- Grant application for an architectural report on Holt House.

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Timelines – Compiled by Holt House Preservation Task Force

The following pages include timelines for the site, Holt House, cemeteries, and the mills. This information was compiled by the Holt House Preservation Task Force of the Kalorama Citizens Association from various sources. The following timelines include:

General Timeline – Holt House, The Mills and The Cemeteries

Timeline – Holt House

Timeline – The Quaker and African-American Cemeteries

Timeline – Columbia Mills / Adams' Mills

General Timeline: Holt House, The Mills and The Cemeteries

Holt House and its surroundings present a unique cultural landscape dating from the earliest days of the District of Columbia. The original 42.5-acre site includes the house, the city's first Quaker burial ground and a post-Civil War African-American cemetery, and mills once owned by President John Quincy Adams. (See following timelines for more specific details on each aspect of the Holt House site.)

1793

- Benjamin Stoddert, a Revolutionary War major, purchases an 863.5 acre-tract known as "Pretty Prospect" from the Beall family of Maryland. Stoddert, who was appointed by President George Washington to purchase land for the creation of the District of Columbia, builds Columbia Mills on Rock Creek just below the site on which Holt House sits, but it is not known whether he builds the house or another dwelling on the site.

1800

- Benjamin Stoddert partitions his land and sells Columbia Mills and 42.5 acres of land to Walter Mackall, a wealthy Marylander.

1804

- Walter Mackall sells the mills and 42.5-acre site to Jonathan Shoemaker, a Pennsylvania miller and Quaker. Family tradition states that the Shoemaker family lived at the site, but it is unknown whether their home was Holt House or an earlier dwelling.

1807

- Jonathan Shoemaker donates a small portion of his land to the Society of Friends for the creation of the first Quaker cemetery in the District of Columbia.

1809

- Jonathan Shoemaker sells the mills and the site (excluding the Quaker cemetery) to Roger Johnson, a successful businessman and brother of Maryland's first governor.

Ca. 1814

- George Johnson, Roger's son, operates the mills and invests heavily in improvements to them. Holt House might have been built around this time.

1818

- The Bank of Columbia forecloses on the mills and about 28 acres of the surrounding property, leaving 13.75 acres to Roger Johnson, including the Holt House site.

1823

- John Quincy Adams, whose wife Louisa is related to the Johnson family, buys the Columbia Mills and surrounding property, but not the house site. Shortly after buying the mills, Adams becomes U.S. President.

August 1831

- Roger Johnson dies and leaves Holt House and the 13.75-acre site to his heirs.

1835

- The Johnson family sells the house and property to Ashton Alexander, a Baltimore physician and founding member of the American Medical Association.

1838-1841

- Alexander rents the house to Amos Kendall, a close political ally of President Andrew Jackson. Kendall is Postmaster General under Jackson and his successor, Martin Van Buren. During Kendall's tenancy, the Holt House site acquires the name "Jackson Hill."

1844

- Alexander sells the house and 13.75-acre site to Henry Holt, a former U.S. Army physician from New York. Holt runs a small farm on the site.

1870

- The Adams family sells 6.75 acres of its Columbia Mills land to the Colored Union Benevolent Association for the creation of an African-American cemetery next to the Quaker cemetery.

March 1889

- Congress establishes a commission entitling the Smithsonian Institution to select tracts of land for the creation of a National Zoological Park.

November 1889

- Henry Holt and sons sell their house and 13.75 acres to the Zoo. The Zoo also acquires the Columbia Mills site.

1890

- The Zoo begins using Holt House for its administrative offices.
- The D.C. Health Department bans more burials at the African-American cemetery.

1940s-1950s

- The Colored Union Benevolent Association sells its cemetery land to developer Shapiro Inc. One hundred and twenty-nine bodies from the cemetery are disinterred and reburied at Woodlawn Cemetery. Shapiro Inc. buys the Quaker cemetery land in a tax sale, but ownership of the property remains in dispute. When Shapiro Inc. bulldozers excavating the site uncover more graves in the late 1950s, development is halted, leading to the eventual creation of the city's Walter C. Pierce Community Park.

1964

- Holt House is listed on the District of Columbia Inventory of Historic Sites.

Printed: May 2003

1973

- Holt House is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

1988

- The Zoo vacates Holt House and boards it up.

1997-2001

- Citizens raise concerns about the deterioration of Holt House. The Zoo takes steps to prevent further moisture damage to the house.

Timeline – Holt House

Holt House is a five-part, stuccoed-brick, Federal-era house situated on a hilltop overlooking Rock Creek in a non-public part of the National Zoo grounds. It was built in the early 1800s, although neither the exact date of its construction nor its architect is known. From the early 1800s to 1889, it was a private residence; from 1890 to 1988 the National Zoo used it as office space.

1793-1800

- Benjamin Stoddert, a Revolutionary War major and presidentially appointed land-buying agent for the creation of the Federal City, owns an 863.5-acre parcel of land on which Holt House now sits. Stoddert builds Columbia Mills along Rock Creek just below the house site, but it is not known whether he builds a house on the property.

1800-1804

- After Stoddert subdivides his large parcel of land, Walter Mackall, a wealthy Marylander, buys the 42.5-acre Columbia Mills site on which Holt House now sits. It is not known whether he builds a house on the site.

1804-1809

- Jonathan Shoemaker, a Pennsylvania Quaker who moves to the newly founded District of Columbia to operate Columbia Mills, owns the land. Presumably, he and his family live at the site, although it is unknown whether they build or live in Holt House, or whether they live in an earlier house on the site. They donate a small portion of their land for the creation of the District's first Quaker burial ground.

1809-1831

- Roger Johnson, a successful Maryland businessman, buys the land on which Holt House now sits. His son George operates the Columbia Mills and invests heavily in improvements at the site around 1814, possibly building Holt House at this time. The house is a five-part, Federal-era, stuccoed-brick building. It consists of a central block flanked by hyphens connecting to east and west wings. Exterior details include blind arches, tripartite windows, gabled roofs and denticulated cornices. Interior details include a large upper-story room in the central block, elliptical arches over doorways, and twin circular stairways leading from the ground floor to the large upper-story room.

1818

- The Bank of Columbia forecloses on the Columbia Mills and about 28 acres of the Johnson property, leaving the family with 13.75 acres, including the Holt House site.

August 1823

- John Quincy Adams, then Secretary of State, buys the Columbia Mills property but not the house. Adams' wife Louisa is related to the Johnson family. In an 1823 visit to the site, Adams notes in his diary that George Johnson is at the house with his wife and five children. A few months after buying the mills, Adams becomes U.S. President.

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August 1831

- Roger Johnson dies and leaves his 13.75 acres and the house to his heirs.

January 1835

- The Johnson family sells the house and acreage to Baltimore physician Ashton Alexander, a founding member of the American Medical Association.

1838 – 1841

- Amos Kendall, a close political ally of President Andrew Jackson, rents Holt House. Kendall is postmaster general under Jackson and his successor, Martin Van Buren. During this time, the house acquires the name "Jackson Hill."

June 30, 1841

- Ashton Alexander in the *National Intelligencer* lists the house and property for lease, sale, or rent. The ad states that the house has undergone "three years of deterioration by the worst treatment by those who unfortunately tenanted," apparently referring to Kendall, but adds that the building is "very superior ... and wants to be newly papered and painted to make it delightful." The ad notes "Hill, valley, and stream, cliffs, rocks, and forest trees, in an unending variety-romantic in beauty of landscape-are there to regale the eye." It adds that the property offers ice-cold drinking water and cool breezes "to save you from the dust of the avenue."

December 1843

- Ashton Alexander sells the house and land to Dr. Henry Holt of New York, a former U.S. Army physician. Holt runs a small farm and plants trees on the land.

November 1889

- The Holt family sells their house and property to the new National Zoological Park. Old photos show that at the time Holt sold the land to the Zoo, there were several outbuildings on the property, including a creamery, a barn, and animal enclosures.

March 1890

- The Zoo allocates funds to make Holt House "suitable for occupancy," with new steps, new roof, plastering repairs, and the addition of a skylight.

April 1890

- The Zoo takes possession of Holt House.

May-June 1890

- Boston architect William Ralph Emerson recommends the following repairs: removal of bars from the cellar windows; excavation of the ground surrounding the house to expose the lower level; removal of the balconies and stairs on the south side of the house; removal of the stairs on the north side of the house. The removal of all three sets of stairs leaves the only access to the house at ground level. Emerson also recommends the removal of all outbuildings from the property.

July 1890

- Frank Baker, Acting Superintendent of the Zoo, writes to Emerson: that he "...had some laborers tearing off the roofs and taking out the floors and partitions," and "getting up the basement floor." He also states that the "amount of weakness in the old structure ... was not dreamed of at first."

August 5, 1890

- Work begins on the following: finishing the roof, repairing the outside walls, laying concrete in the basement and laying down sleepers, outfitting the house with indoor plumbing and a bathroom in the east wing.

August 1890

- A District of Columbia building inspector finds the Holt House walls "unsafe" and "entirely unfit for the purpose of a permanent building."

January 1891

- The Zoo begins using Holt House for its administrative offices.

May 1896

- Zoo Superintendent Frank Baker asks architect Glenn Brown to estimate the cost of renovating Holt House for use as a residence. Although never implemented, Brown's recommendations include: adding a double-curved staircase on either side of the north side of the central block, leading to a portico supported by two sets of columns; an addition to the west wing to be used as a kitchen; and the addition of a semi-circular balcony on the south side central block.

1896

- The house is fitted with plumbing and gas fittings.

Summer 1896

- Repairs are started on the exterior walls; Baker notes that their condition "was altogether worse than had been supposed and more expensive than had been allowed for."

September 1898

- Underpinning the walls is completed.

October 1898

- Glenn Brown recommends: stone sills for the ground-floor doorways; iron beams for the window openings; re-coating the exterior with pebble-dash; finishing a hallway on the north side; repairing the large second-story room and altering the skylight. Baker limits the listed repairs to the second-story room and the north hallway.

1899

- The second-story skylight is enlarged and a frieze designed by Glenn Brown is added to the ceiling surrounding the skylight.

Ca. Spring 1899

- Alterations to the north second-level vestibule are discussed. Prior to removal of the north staircase in 1890, the main entrance to the house was up these stairs and through an enclosed vestibule. Glenn Brown in 1898 observed that this entry vestibule was not original to the house, noting that “two periods of construction are represented; the one of the original design and another of a later restoration, very nearly like, but distinctly inferior to the original.”

June-July 1899

- William Ralph Emerson is consulted about construction of an enclosed, cantilevered second-level vestibule on the north side of the house. Repairs and alterations at this time include: constructing the cantilevered and enlarged north vestibule; new flooring in the second-story large room; work on the south vestibule; and application of pebble-dash to the building exterior.

1900

- Zoo Superintendent Baker discusses Holt House repairs with the firm of Hornblower and Marshall.

1901

- A letter from Smithsonian Secretary Samuel P. Langley to Zoo Superintendent Baker recommends that work be performed on the lower level of Holt House, including: finishing the small entrance hall and the basement room with concrete floors and plastered walls, and the removal of the twin winding staircases leading to the large upper-story room. Hornblower and Marshall remove the staircases and pave the south vestibule with a yellow brick laid on end. Additionally, two new side windows at the lower level are cut in according to Emerson’s 1890 specifications. Hornblower and Marshall design and install elaborate entrance doors between the south vestibule and the main room on the lower level; they also design fireplace details.

1906

- Electric lights are installed in the upstairs room.

1913

- Installations include: a hot water heating system; a staircase at the west end of the house leading to the cellar below; a metal ceiling in the superintendent’s office.

1917

- A survey of Holt House by the Public Buildings Commission states that the building has two staircases and three entrances. (The two staircases referred to are the one in the east wing leading to the second level and the west staircase leading to the basement. No mention is made of the present day staircase in the west wing to the second level.)

1934

- The Civil Works Administration makes the following additions and alterations to Holt House: new electrical wiring; patching of plaster; a new floor in "a portion of the building;" a new heating boiler.

1954

- Termite infestation reported at Holt House, including damage to the woodwork supporting the basement stairs, the floors and baseboard, and window and door frames.

January 1961

- Zoo Director Theodore Reed is concerned about unsafe conditions at Holt House, stating that the "building continues to be dangerous" and that "its effective and complete repair is beyond the capabilities of the NZP at the present time." Reed asks who "has the power and authority to condemn the building?"

1962

- The Zoo creates a master plan that recommends constructing a new administration building.

1964

- The Joint Committee on Landmarks lists Holt House on the Washington, D.C., Inventory of Historic Sites as a Category II Landmark.

January 1967

- A study of Holt House for the General Services Administration states "with respect to internal and external architectural features which were demolished or modified many years ago" the building's "restoration with integrity" is "virtually impossible regardless of cost."

1973

- Holt House is listed on the National Register of Historic Places by the U.S. Department of the Interior.
- New lintels are installed over the windows.
- A dropped ceiling is added in the large second-story room.

1988

- Zoo personnel leave Holt House. It is boarded up.

1997

- Citizens concerned about the deterioration of Holt House begin meeting with Zoo officials to urge that it be preserved.

1998 – 1999

- The National Zoo receives a National Trust for Historic Preservation matching grant of \$1,816 through the Dorothea deSchweinitz Endowed Preservation Services Fund for the District of Columbia to assess the structural stability of Holt House. The architectural/engineering firm of Einhorn Yaffee Prescott is hired in conjunction with Cagley & Associates to conduct a structural assessment and condition survey of the shoring of the house. The house is found to be stable.

1998 - 2000

- Holt House is placed on the D.C. Preservation League's List of Most Endangered Places for three consecutive years.

2000

- The Kalorama Citizens Association establishes the Holt House Preservation Task Force. The Task Force begins public walking tours of the Holt House site and forms joint working committees comprised of community, preservation, and National Zoo representatives.

2001

- The National Zoo installs a new roof, gutters, downspouts and window coverings to prevent further moisture from coming into Holt House.

2002

- The Holt House Preservation Task Force receives a National Trust for Historic Preservation matching grant of \$2,500 through the Dorothea deSchweinitz Endowed Preservation Services Fund for the District of Columbia to develop a plan for the preservation of Holt House. The architectural firm of Quinn Evans is hired to prepare the plan.

Timeline – The Quaker and African-American Cemeteries

The original 42.5-acre site on which Holt House sits included two cemeteries: the first Quaker burial ground in the District of Columbia, and a larger post-Civil War African-American cemetery. Most of the cemetery land is located south of Zoo property in what is now Walter C. Pierce Community Park.

1807

- Jonathan Shoemaker, a Pennsylvania Quaker who moved to the District of Columbia in 1804 to own and operate Columbia Mills, donates a small portion of his land to the Society of Friends for the creation of the District's first Quaker burial ground.

1807-ca. 1860

- The Society of Friends (Quakers) actively use cemetery; among those buried there are Jonathan Shoemaker and his wife Hannah Lukens.

December 1870

- Charles Francis Adams, the son of John Quincy Adams, sells 6.75 acres of the Columbia Mills (Adams Mill) property to the Colored Union Benevolent Association for the creation of a cemetery. The African-American cemetery abuts the earlier Quaker cemetery.

1870-1890

- Numerous burials are performed at the African-American cemetery, which is known by several names, including the Colored Union Benevolent Association Burial Ground, the Free Young Men's Burial Ground, Mount Pleasant Cemetery, and the Young Men's Baptist Cemetery.

November 1889

- The Colored Union Benevolent Association sells 1.7 acres of its land near Rock Creek to the commissioners for the National Zoological Park.

1890

- The District of Columbia Department of Health refuses to allow more burials at the African-American cemetery.

1939-1941

- The Colored Union Benevolent Association sells its land to Shapiro Inc., a development company. Remains are found in 129 graves, disinterred, and reinterred in a mass grave at Woodlawn Cemetery in southeast Washington.

1950s

- Ownership of the Quaker cemetery is in dispute between the Society of Friends and Shapiro Inc. In 1958, Shapiro buys the land from the District of Columbia in a tax sale.

1959

- While excavating former cemetery land for an apartment building, Shapiro Inc. workmen uncover human remains, effectively ending further development plans for the site.

1978

- Shapiro Inc. abandons the property, clearing the way for purchase by the District of Columbia and the creation of Community Park West. In 1995, it was renamed Walter C. Pierce Community Park, in honor of a neighborhood resident who helped create it.

Timeline – Columbia Mills/Adams Mill

The Columbia Mills, built by Benjamin Stoddert in the 1790s, was one of eight milling operations along Rock Creek in the District of Columbia. It included a grist mill and a plaster-of-paris mill, stables and several other buildings. After John Quincy Adams bought the property in 1823, it became known as Adams Mill.

Ca. 1793

- Benjamin Stoddert, one of George Washington's land-buying agents for the creation of the Federal City, builds Columbia Mills along Rock Creek. Stoddert, a Revolutionary War major, becomes the first Secretary of the Navy.

1800

- Stoddert sells the mills and 42.5 acres of land to Walter Mackall, a Maryland legislator.

1804

- Mackall sells the Columbia Mills property to Jonathan Shoemaker, a Pennsylvania miller and Quaker. Shoemaker and his family presumably reside on the property.

1809

- Shoemaker sells Columbia Mills and the 42.5-acre site to Roger Johnson, a successful businessman and brother of Maryland's first governor. George Johnson, the son of Roger Johnson, takes over mill operations. Shoemaker moves to Albemarle County, Virginia, to run Thomas Jefferson's Shadwell Mills.

Ca. 1814

- George Johnson invests heavily in the mills and possibly builds Holt House at this time.

November 1818

- The Bank of Columbia forecloses on Columbia Mills and acquires about 28 acres of the surrounding property, leaving 13.75 acres to the Johnson family, including the site of Holt House.

May 1821

- The Bank of Columbia in the *National Intelligencer* advertises the sale of Columbia Mills as: "A large brick wheat Mill, 50 x 54 feet, 4 stories high, running 4 pair burrs, overshot wheels, 16 feet head and fall, manufactures 100 barrels flour per day with ease. A brick plaster mill, which grinds 12 tons of plaster per day. A two story framed building, 23 by 30 feet. Two other brick buildings for workmen, with stabling for 12 horses, sheds, & all new, and in complete repair, with about 30 to 32 acres of land under good fence."

August 1823

- John Quincy Adams, whose wife Louisa is related to the Johnson family, buys the Columbia Mills property from the Bank of Columbia. Several months later Adams becomes U.S. President. Columbia Mills eventually become known as Adams Mill.

1823-ca. 1826

- George Johnson continues to operate the mills for John Quincy Adams, now sixth president of the United States.

1829-1834

- John Quincy Adams' son, John Adams II, operates the mill.

Ca. 1835

- John Quincy Adams rents the mill and property to tenants.

Ca. 1867

- Adams Mill ceases operations.

December 1870

- Charles Francis Adams, John Quincy Adams' son, sells 6.75 acres of the mill property to the Color Union Benevolent Association for the creation of an African-American cemetery.

1872

- John Quincy Adams Jr., Charles Francis Adams' son, sells the mills and the remaining 23 acres of the family's property to Peter McNamara.

1882-1884

- The mills and land in a series of court settlements are transferred from Peter McNamara to James Christmas and William Whitney, and then to James Edwards.

1884

- James Edwards sells the mills and land to Pacificus Ord.

1889

- The National Zoological Park acquires the mills and land from Pacificus Ord.