

CAPE LOOKOUT NATIONAL SEASHORE  
PORTSMOUTH  
ED STYRON HOUSE

# HISTORIC STRUCTURE REPORT

**Cultural Resources, Southeast Region  
National Park Service**

**2004**



**Cultural Resources  
Southeast Region  
National Park Service  
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2004  
Historic Structure Report  
Ed Styron House  
Cape Lookout National Seashore (CALO)  
Portsmouth Village  
LCS#: 12516

Cover photo of Styron House, 1984 (CALO Coll.)

The historic structure report presented here exists in two formats. A traditional, printed version is available for study at the park, the Southeast Regional Office (SERO) of the National Park Service, and at a variety of other repositories. For more widespread access, the historic structure report also exists in a web-based format through ParkNet, the website of the National Park Service. Please visit [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov) for more information.

# Ed Styon House

## Historic Structure Report

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# Foreword

We are pleased to make available this historic structure report, part of our ongoing effort to provide comprehensive documentation for the historic structures and landscapes of National Park Service units in the Southeast Field Area. Many individuals and institutions contributed to the successful completion of this work. We would particularly like to thank the staff at Cape Lookout National Seashore, especially the park's facility manager Mike McGee and superintendent Bob Vogel. We hope that this study will prove valuable to park management and others in understanding and interpreting the historical significance of the EdStyron House at Portsmouth Village.

Chief  
Cultural Resources Stewardship  
Southeast Regional Office  
December 2004



# Executive Summary

The Ed Styron House is a small, two- room house and one of only twenty historic structures remaining in historic Portsmouth Village in the Cape Lookout National Seashore. The house was leased as a temporary lodge for hunters and fishermen under one of the park's special use permits until 1989 but has been vacant and deteriorating since that time. Whatever its historical and architectural significance, the mere presence of the house upon the Portsmouth landscape is critical, given the small number of historic structures that remain in the village; with repairs the Styron House could again be useful.

## **Historical Summary**

The 1982 historic resource study of Cape Lookout provides extensive documentation for the eighteenth and nineteenth century history of the village but very little for the twentieth century. Most of what is known about twentieth- century Portsmouth in general, and the Ed Styron House in particular, has come from

## Executive Summary

the park's compilation of oral interviews with former residents and descendants of those who lived in the village. Additional research in early twentieth century Federal censuses, county records, and other sources would be useful for interpretation of the Styrons' lives and their contributions to village life.

Founded in 1753 near Ocracoke Inlet, Portsmouth played a critical role as a seaport for over a hundred years, until Hatteras Inlet was opened by a storm in 1846 and provided a more convenient channel into Pamlico Sound.

Evacuated during the Civil War, Portsmouth never regained its vitality as a port; in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the village economy revolved around hunting and fishing. The population declined from more than 600 in 1860 to 227 in 1880 and continued to decline after that.

A hurricane in September 1933 severely damaged Portsmouth and, after that, "everybody just left," according to one former resident. The Styrons' old house was damaged by this storm, and they built a new house closer to the village center. By 1940, there were only 42 residents left on the island; in 1971, the last permanent residents moved to the mainland.

### Architectural Summary

Located on the east side of Portsmouth Village, the Ed Styron House is a two- room building and one of the smallest residences on the island. Wood- framed and end- gabled, it faces in a southwesterly direction, measures about 20'- 8" by 12'- 3", and encompasses about 250

square feet of floor space. The house does not have a porch but does have a large, uncovered deck at the rear. Built after the 1933 hurricane, the house was modified with an addition to its southwest end around 1955. The addition was removed after 1984. Vernacular design and construction broadly define the character of the Styron House. Like most of the other buildings at Portsmouth, the house is a simple, utilitarian structure that was built in response to specific needs and circumstances, with little consideration of architectural style or refinement of detail.

The roof of the house is in ruinous condition, which has allowed serious water damage to the walls and ceilings, but the majority of the building's significant features remain intact. The deck at the rear of the house appears to be a historic feature, but it and exterior siding and trim are also badly deteriorated.

### Recommendations

#### Site

- Preserve brick pad associated with the cistern at northeast end of house.
- preserve wooden piers associated with missing addition at southwest end of house

#### Foundation

- Repair and repoint chimney as necessary.

## MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

- Replace modern wooden piers with wooden piers that more closely match the original.

### Structure

- Repair roof structure, preserving existing rafters and reconstructing exposed rafter ends wherever possible.
- Repair or replace rear sill; raise and level building structure.
- "Sister" new floor joists to broken joists.

### Roofing

- Remove existing asphalt and wood shingled roof, archiving examples of both materials.
- Reroof building with sawn cypress or cedar shingles.

### Doors

- Replace both doors with new doors that match the door visible in the 1984 photograph of the house.

### Windows

- Replace damaged lower sash in the rear window in Room 101 and the mismatched sash in the front window in Room 102.
- Repair remainder of sash.

### Back Porch

- Reconstruct rear porch deck, replicating existing decking and using wooden piers similar to those used under the main body of the house.

### Exterior Finishes:

- Remove existing "brick" siding, archiving as much material as practical for possible later re-use.
- Repair board and batten siding, replacing damaged and missing elements as necessary.
- Paint siding red, trim white.

**Interior Finishes:** Funds are not currently available for any treatment of the interior of the house. When funding is available, repairs to the tongue- and- groove walls, ceilings, floors, and other interior features will be necessary.

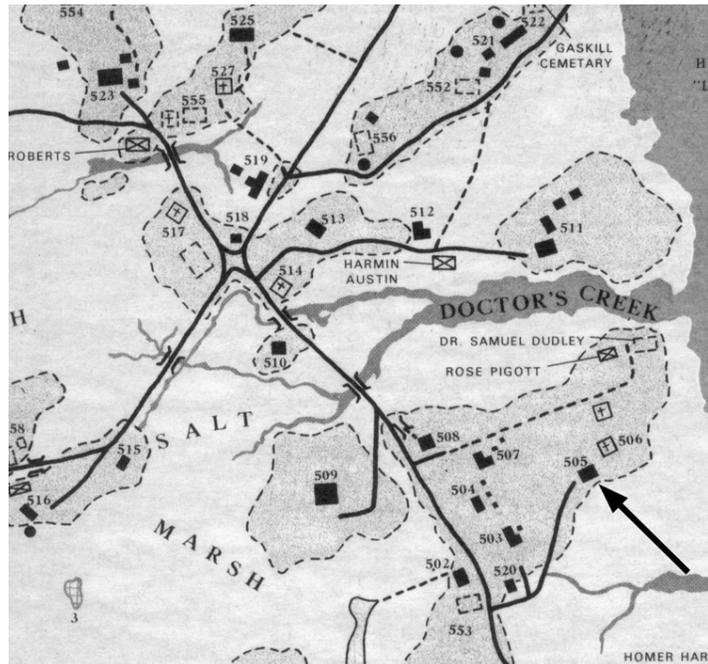
## Executive Summary

# Administrative Data

## Locational Data

Building Name:	Ed Styron House
Location:	Portsmouth Village, Cape Lookout, NC
LCS#:	CALO 12516

**Figure 1** Map of Portsmouth Village



### Related Studies

Burke, Kenneth E. "The History of Portsmouth, North Carolina, From Its Founding in 1753 to Its Evacuation in the Face of Federal Forces in 1861." Unpublished undergraduate thesis, University of Richmond, Richmond, Virginia, 1958. Revised 1974, 1976.

Ehrenhard, John E. "Cape Lookout National Seashore: Assessment of Archeological and Historical Resources." SEAC, NPS, 1976.

Holland, F. Ross. *A Survey History of Cape Lookout National Seashore*. Department of History, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, NPS, 1968.

Olson, Sarah. "Historic Resource Study, Portsmouth Village, Cape Lookout National Seashore, North Carolina." NPS-DSC, 1982.

Van Beck, Sara L. "Cape Lookout National Seashore, Archives and Records Management Review." NPS, 2000.

### Cultural Resource Data

*National Register of Historic Places*: Contributing structure in Portsmouth Village Historic District, listed Nov. 1979

*Period of Significance*: 1890-1930

*Proposed Treatment*: Structural stabilization, exterior restoration

# Historical Background & Context

Most of what is known about twentieth- century Portsmouth in general and the Ed Styron House in particular has come from the park's compilation of oral interviews with former residents and descendants of those who lived in the village. Research in early twentieth century Federal censuses, county records, and other sources had provided additional information for interpretation of the Styrons' lives and their contributions to the village.

## **Portsmouth**

Established by an act of the colonial legislature of North Carolina in 1753, Portsmouth was laid out in half- acre lots “with convenient streets” on fifty acres at the north end of Core Banks. The town is located on the south side of Ocracoke inlet, which was the principal access into Pamlico Sound and the North Carolina seaports until a storm opened Hatteras Inlet in 1846. Founded as a seaport town, Portsmouth flourished in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and the Federal Government estab-

## Historical Background & Context

lished a customs house there in 1806, a marine hospital in 1827, and a post office in 1840. The town reached the zenith of its growth in 1860 with more than 600 residents and 109 dwellings.

Evacuated during the Civil War, Portsmouth never fully recovered its population or its economic vitality and the customs house was abolished in 1867. As the population declined, the number of residences in the town dwindled as well, falling from a peak of 109 in 1860, to 59 in 1870, to 44 in 1880. By 1883, the shifting sands of the Outer Banks had closed Ocracoke Inlet to any shipping at all, forcing a dwindling population to turn to fishing for a livelihood. Many buildings must have sat abandoned, including the marine hospital which burned in 1894; those that survived hurricanes and a generally harsh environment were dismantled or relocated as the village slowly contracted. A hurricane in 1913 destroyed the Primitive Baptist and Methodist churches, but the community was still strong enough to support reconstruction of the Methodist church by 1915.

On August 23, 1933, a moderate hurricane swept across Hatteras, dumping rain but not particularly strong winds on Portsmouth. Less than a month later, on September 16, a strong hurricane hit Portsmouth with 100+ mph winds and torrential rain that flooded most of the island and destroyed many houses. So much damage was done that, according to one resident at the time, “everybody just left.”<sup>1</sup> Particularly hard hit was Sheep Island to the southwest which was essentially abandoned

for residential use after that. In 1937, the Coast Guard's lifesaving station was closed, depriving the town of another reason for being. By 1940, there were only 42 permanent residents; by 1950 that number stood at 14.

A number of the old buildings were adapted for temporary use by sport fishermen, especially after World War II, including the U.S. Coast Guard Station which was used as a sportsmen's club from 1956 until 1964.<sup>2</sup> The post office was discontinued in 1959; and, by the time the Cape Lookout National Seashore was authorized in 1966, only a handful of permanent residents remained. With the death of the village's last surviving male resident, Henry Pigott, in 1971, the only other full-time residents, Elma Dixon and her niece Marion Babb, moved to the mainland and Portsmouth was abandoned except for seasonal use.

### Ed and Kate Styron

The Styron surname is one of the most common names on the Outer Banks, appearing as early as the first Federal Census of 1790. Surprisingly, however, Ed Styron apparently did not believe himself to be related to any other Styrons in the area. While that may be true, it is more likely that familial relationships have simply been forgotten and that he was, in fact, a descendant of the Styrons who established

1. Sarah Olson, *Historic Resource Study, Portsmouth Village, Cape Lookout National Seashore* (NPS, Denver Service Center, 1982), p. 93.
2. Olson, *Historic Resource Study, Portsmouth Village*, pp. 94-95.

themselves on the Outer Banks in the eighteenth century.

Edward Styron was born in North Carolina on July 7, 1876, the son of John and Rebecca Fulcher Styron.<sup>3</sup> A record of his marriage to Katherine Salter, who was born around 1887, has not been located; but the 1910 census indicates they were married around 1907.<sup>4</sup>

Like most Portsmouth residents, Styron was a fisherman, and he and Katherine settled first on Sheep Island, southwest of the present village of Portsmouth. They were surrounded by several families of Salters and Styrons who must have been relatives. Living with them in 1910 was Catherine's eleven-year-old sister Bessie.

Their first residence was apparently a two-story, wood-framed house at the south end of Sheep Island - "the last house that way," remembered Lionel Gilgo. Like so many others in Portsmouth, the Styrons were devastated by the 1933 hurricane. As Gilgo remembered, the storm "didn't tear [the Styrons' house] down, it didn't tear it up. It didn't wash off the blocks. It just blew off because the blocks had deteriorated under it."<sup>5</sup>

The storm appears to have greatly altered the landscape of Sheep Island, and most of the residents did not rebuild. Although the Styrons' house was not destroyed, they also de-

3. Carteret Co. death records give date of birth and parents.
4. Carteret Co. Federal Census, 1910, Portsmouth, 36/38.
5. CALO interview with Lionel Gilgo, 15 July 1978.

ecided to relocate and had the house torn down. Because Styron was "one of those types who couldn't do anything," Lionel Gilgo recalled, he got Lionel's brother Cecil and Washington Roberts to build a new house near the center of what is now Portsmouth Village. According to Gilgo, it took about three days to complete the small two-room house.<sup>6</sup>

Mindful of the island's summer insect population, Ed Styron is said to have called his new home "the Buggy Bear," but it was better known to recent island residents by the name Philip Ball gave it in the 1950s: "Kitty Cottage."<sup>7</sup>

Additional research is necessary to document, among other things, how long the Styrons occupied the house. They were certainly gone by the end of World War II, probably driven out by the 1944 hurricane that persuaded all but a handful of the island's residents to relocate to the mainland. The Styrons moved to Harker's Island, where they were living when Edward Styron died on 20 October 1954. He is buried at Atlantic, NC.<sup>8</sup>

By the mid-1950s, the Styrons' old house was being used as a part-time fishing lodge, although no deed has been located to record the transfer of the property from Styron's ownership. In 1970, the property was condemned and came under NPS ownership. It continued to be used on a seasonal basis until 1989 when occupancy was discontinued.

6. *Ibid.*
7. CALO interview with Sarah Roberts Styron, 9 February 1982.
8. Carteret Co. death records.

## Historical Background & Context

# Chronology of Development & Use

The house was built after the 1933 hurricane damaged the Styrons' old house on Sheep Island.<sup>9</sup> According to the Gilgo interview, Styron "bought the lumber" for the house, but at least some of the material appears to have been salvaged, probably from the Styrons' original house. The character of the building's materials and method of construction indicates that the house was originally built in more or less its present form with two rooms and, perhaps, the open deck at the rear. Evidence for a porch roof has not been identified but may be found when later materials are removed for repairs. The house was originally roofed with wood shingles and the exterior was finished with board- and- batten siding. The interior was finished with three types of tongue- and- groove boards, much of it beaded. It is probable that the sink and counter were original features in the main room. Shelving may also be original; paint analysis would be needed to confirm that assumption. The exigencies of the Great Depression and World War II kept many, if

9. CALO interview with Lionel Gilgo; Salter, p. 53.

not most, homeowners from making major repairs and exposed many buildings to a long period of benign neglect that did not end until the late 1940s. The Styrons probably made no changes to their house as long as they lived there.

The house has been re-roofed only once, after 1939 when the present textured asphalt composition roofing was first offered for sale by the Rubberoid Company.<sup>10</sup> Textured shingles were widely-used into the 1950s, which is when the present roof was probably installed. This assumption is based on the facts that the original wood-shingled roof would have probably remained serviceable for at least twenty years and that the asphalt roof remained in reasonably sound condition when it was first photographed in 1984.

Perhaps at the same time that the textured asphalt shingles were installed, the imitation-brick asphalt siding was also installed on the exterior, where the siding had deteriorated significantly and the red paint with which it was originally finished had all but disappeared. First offered for sale on the eve of the Great Depression,<sup>11</sup> this “brick” siding offered an attractive, economical way to repair (or cover up,

depending on one's perspective) deteriorated wood siding and was widely used in the 1940s and 1950s prior to the development of metal and vinyl sidings.

The new roof and siding appear to have been installed when an addition was constructed on the southwest end of the house, which occurred in 1955 according to a historic structures survey conducted by the State of North Carolina. Containing less than 90 square feet, the addition was connected to the original house by replacing the window on the southwest side of Room 102 with a door. The addition contained a single bedroom that measured about 8'-4" by 7'-11" plus a small bathroom which finally eliminated the use of an outhouse. According to park staff who removed the deteriorated addition, it was constructed with salvaged material “like what you might pick up off the beach.”<sup>12</sup> The deck at the rear of the house was substantially rebuilt, perhaps at the same time the addition was constructed, and there have also been minor repairs to the roof framing. Besides laying a new vinyl floor covering in Room 101 and, perhaps, repainting of that room, there were no other repairs or alterations to the house after the 1950s. Occupied periodically until 1989, the house has been essentially abandoned and allowed to deteriorate.

10. Thomas C. Jester, editor, *Twentieth-Century Building Materials: History and Conservation* (NPS, 1995), p. 251.

11. *Ibid.*

12. Mike McGee to Tommy Jones, February 20, 2002.

**Styron House Time Line**


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1876	Jul. 7	Edward Styron born to Jack and Rebecca Fulcher Styron.
c. 1907		Edward Styron marries Catherine Salter.
1913		Methodist and Primitive Baptist churches destroyed in hurricane.
1914		Methodist church rebuilt.
1933	Sep. 16	Hurricane devastates Portsmouth.
1933	fall?	<b>Styrons build new house near village center.</b>
1937		Coast Guard life- saving station closed.
1940		Population drops to 42.
1944		One of worst hurricanes strikes Portsmouth, provoking Styrons and many other residents to relocate to the mainland.
1954	Oct. 20	Edward Styron dies at hospital in Morehead City.
1955		<b>Room added and other modifications to Styron House.</b>
1959		Portsmouth Post Office closed.
1966		Congress authorizes Cape Lookout National Seashore.
1968		Three permanent residents at Portsmouth.
1970		<b>Styron house condemned for acquisition by NPS.</b>
1971		Last full- time residents move to the mainland.
1976		Land for National Seashore transferred from State to Federal ownership.
1979	Nov	Portsmouth National Register Historic District established.
1989		<b>Styron House abandoned.</b>

## Chronology of Development & Use

# Physical Description

Located on the east side of Portsmouth Village, the Ed Styron House is a two- room building that is one of the smallest residences on the island. Wood- framed and end- gabled, it faces in a northwesterly direction, measures about 20'- 8" by 12'- 3", and encompasses about 250 square feet of floor space. The house has a large, uncovered deck at the rear. A modern addition that was built at the southwest end of the house was removed after 1989.

Vernacular design and construction broadly define the character of the Styron House. Like most of the other buildings at Portsmouth, the house is a simple, utilitarian structure that was built in response to specific needs and circumstances, with little consideration of architectural style or refinement of detail.

## Associated Site Features

At the northeast end of the house, a brick pad at grade marks the location of the historic cistern for the house. The tank was filled

**Note:** A floor plan of the existing house can be found at the end of this section.

## Physical Description



**Figure 2** Left, view southeast of front of Styron House. (NPS-SERO-CRS, 2001)



**Figure 4** Right, view northwest of rear of Styron House. (NPS-SERO-CRS, 2001)



**Figure 3** View of remains of wooden frame for cistern at northeast end of house. Parts of a brick foundation remain in the ground below. (NPS-SERO-CRS)

through a gutter from the southeast (rear) shed of the roof. The gutter and tank are now missing, but part of the wooden frame that supported the tank remains attached to the northeast end of the house.

.Off the southwest end of the house is a series of wooden piers that marks the location of the modern addition that was removed after 1984. This addition consisted of one room approximately 8'- 4" by 7'- 10" plus a small bathroom. According to park staff who removed this addition, it was built with modern plywood and lumber along with materials that appear to have been salvaged from elsewhere.

The precise boundary of the property historically associated with the Ed Styron House has not been determined. Except for the cedar trees around the house and the Babb- Dixon Cemetery a few dozen yards north of the house, there are no other above- ground site features in the vicinity of the house.

### Foundation

The wood frame of the house is set on a series of wooden piers sunk to an indeterminate

depth into the ground. The original piers appear to be the three 4" by 8" piers on the front of the house, a similar pier at the northwest end, and two 3" by 12" piers under the rear sill of the house. The remainder of the piers appear to have been added or replaced. The most recent piers include the sections of creosoted telephone poles that underpin the four corners of the house.

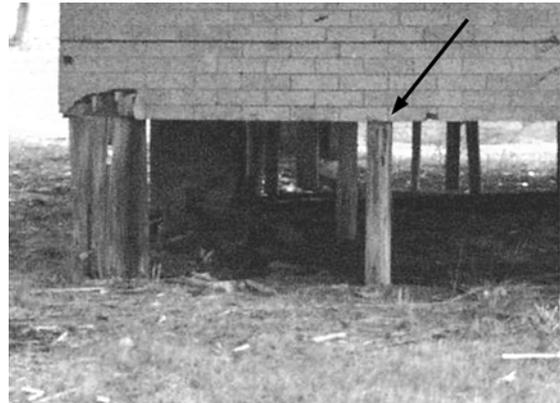
### Structural System

The house is a simple wood- framed building, constructed using wire nails and circular- sawn lumber in dimensions that are typical of the early twentieth century. Sills are 4" by 6" (actual dimension), continuous, and lapped and nailed at the corners. The sill at the rear of the house is in very poor condition, principally from water penetration where the porch deck is attached to the sill.

Floor joists are generally 1- 3/4" to 2" by 5- 3/4" to 6", running from the front to the back of the house and set on centers ranging from 22" to 24". Joists are lapped and nailed to the sills. An added support girder made up with 2 x 6s laid flat on wooden posts runs the length of the building and supports the joists at mid- span. Joists are in good condition except for two under the southwest side of the main room (101) which have split where they lap the sills and are broken where they cross the support girder. This damage is due to the deteriorated sill at the rear of the house which, along with settlement of the piers along that side of the house, especially at the northeast end, has allowed the



**Figure 5** View of southwest end of house; note piers in foreground which supported the modern addition that was removed after 1984. (NPS-SERO-CRS, 2001)



**Figure 6** View of north end of front of house; arrow marks one of several original wooden piers. (NPS-SERO-CRS, 2001)

framing to settle several inches. In addition to allowing the entire house to sink, the sagging joists have pulled away from the flooring above in several areas. Wall framing could not be examined but appears to be composed of standard 2 by 4s on about 24" centers. Ceiling joists

## Physical Description

are generally 2" by 4" (actual dimensions), set on 24" centers. A simple wooden deck extends across part of the rear (southeast) side of the house and was originally accessed by four or



**Figure 7** View of floor framing; arrow at right indicates where joist has split; arrows at center show location of two joists that have broken where they cross the added support beam. (NPS-SERO-CRS, 2001)



**Figure 8** View under north end of rear deck, showing remains of original floor framing. (NPS-SERO-CRS, 2001)

five now- missing wooden steps on open stringers at the north end of the deck. Set on a variety of posts (none of which are readily identifiable as being original) the deck is framed with modern 1- 1/2" by 5- 1/2" joists running the length of the deck and is floored with 1" - thick boards, 4- 1/2" to 4- 3/4" wide. Remnants of two older joists, about 1- 3/4" by 5- 3/4", survive at the north end of the deck and are an indication that the deck is a feature of the original house.

### Roof

The roof is framed with a mixture of 2" by 3" and 1- 1/4" by 3" rafters set on approximately 24" centers. Rafters are nailed at the ridge without a ridge board. Roof decking is composed of 1" by 4" boards spaced about 3" apart. The roof was originally covered with wood shingles, many of which remain in place. The last roof covering, which probably dates to the 1950s, is a distinctive asphalt composition roof, much of which survives but in very poor condition. Shingles have a green mineral coating, embossed with a wood- grain texture. Failure of the roof covering has caused major damage to the roof decking and a few joists and has also exposed the interior of the house to major damage, particularly around the north corner of the house and on the northwest side of Room 102.

### Exterior Finishes

The building was originally finished with board- and- batten siding. Boards are generally

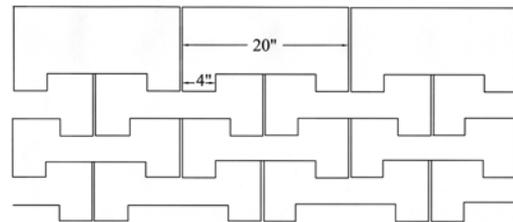
3/4" thick and between 8" and 9- 1/2" wide, although a few boards on the rear of the house are only around 7" wide. Battens are generally 3/4" thick and between 2- 3/4" and 3- 1/2" wide. The siding was once painted red, with remnants of that paint readily visible where battens were removed at the southwest end of the house.

The exterior finishes were considerably altered for installation of the brown, asphalt- composition "brick" panels that now cover most of the exterior. The panels may have been installed around the same time as the asphalt- shingle roof. In order to provide a flat surface for this "brick," battens were removed from the entire house except for a few which remain on the northeast end (see Figure 2, above). In addition, the vertical board siding on the rear (or southeast) side of the house appears to have been relaid horizontally. The lower 12" - 24" of all (or nearly all) of the surviving vertically-placed boards have suffered severe deterioration and rot. It is possible that the boards on the rear were especially deteriorated due to their proximity to the porch deck. To repair the damage, the boards may have been removed, the damaged portion sawn off, and the remainder of the board re- laid horizontally.

Both door openings are also fitted with screen doors hung on the interior side of the jambs. Neither door appears to have ever been fitted with a lock set, although the original doors



**Figure 9** View of southeast shed of roof; note wood shingles still in place. (NPS-SERO-CRS, 2001)



**Figure 10** Pattern of mid-twentieth century asphalt shingles on Styron House. (NPS-SERO-CRS, 2001)

probably had rim locks similar to that found on the interior between the two rooms.

### Doors and Windows

The house currently has three exterior door openings. Only the two door openings into Room 101 are original, but neither of the doors themselves appear to be original. Both openings were originally 2'- 6" by 6'- 0"; the rear door has been reduced to a 2'- 3" by 5'- 10"

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**Figure 11** View of “brick” asphalt-composition siding over original board-and-batten siding at northeast end of house. (NPS-SERO-CRS, 2001)

opening. Both doors are constructed of three vertical boards with cross braces at top and bottom. The rear door uses beaded boards and has cross braces with chamfered edges, indicating it is older than the front door, although it is clearly not the original door in the opening and was probably salvaged from another building. The front door appears to be of modern origin.

The third exterior door opening is at the southwest end of the house and was installed to replace a window when the now-missing addition was built at that end of the house. The door is 2'-6" by 7'-1" with a single, horizontal, raised panel between four vertical raised panels

at the top and four at the bottom of the door. The door's height, design, and construction date it to the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, another example of the use of salvaged and recycled material that is typical of many Portsmouth buildings..

There were originally five windows in the house, all apparently 2'-4" by 3'-10", double-hung with six-over-six sash. As just noted, the window at the southwest end of the house was replaced by the existing door when the addition was built around 1955. The other windows in the house are mostly intact but deteriorating and missing some glass. Only the stiles and top rail remain of the lower sash in the window on the rear (southeast) side of Room 101. On the front (northwest) side of Room 102, a modern sash has been used to replace the original lower window sash. Wire screening has been stapled on the outside of the lower half of all window openings.

Doors and windows are cased with plain 1" by 4" boards and a simple wooden drip cap. Window sills are generally 2" by 6." Door and window casings are currently painted yellow but appear to have been painted white originally.

### **Main Room (101)**

Entered from either the front or the rear of the house, this room is nearly square and encompasses about 125 square feet of floor area. It appears to have always functioned as a combination living room and kitchen and has a brick chimney for a wood- or coal-burning stove in the center of the northeast wall. Next

to the chimney is a simple counter and cast-iron sink that had water supplied by the now-missing cistern outside that end of the building.

*Floor:* Flooring is narrow tongue- and- groove with a face 2- 1/2" wide. It appears to have always been painted gray and remains in excellent condition, having been covered by linoleum at an early date. The floor has three layers of floor coverings, none of them in good condition. The top layer is a modern, sheet- vinyl floor covering, probably installed in the 1970s. Beneath it is a green- and- gold patterned, sheet- vinyl floor covering that may date to the 1960s. The earliest layer probably dates to the 1930s or 1940s and is one of the felt- based imitators of linoleum that were widely used before the mass- marketing of modern vinyl floor coverings in the 1950s.

*Walls and Ceiling:* Walls and ceiling, which is set at 7'- 2", are finished with tongue- and- groove boards in a random mixture of types. Most of the boards are typical double- beaded boards, 3" or 3- 1/2" wide; but a number of boards 2- 1/2" wide are also used. Of these 2- 1/2" boards, some have a single bead along the grooved edge of the board; others do not. The wall that partitions the house into two rooms is unframed and formed by vertical tongue- and- groove boards attached to nailers at the floor and ceiling. The wall boards are also a mixture of dimensions- - 3'- 1/2", 4- 1/2", and 5- 1/4"- - and are double- beaded with an exceptionally- wide center bead. The northwest side of the ceiling has suffered severe water damage; less severe damage is also visible on the ceiling on the southeast side of the room as well. The



**Figure 12** View north in main room (101). Sink is to right of chimney. (NPS-SERO-CRS, 2001)



**Figure 13** View west in main room. (NPS-SERO-CRS, 2001)

remainder of the wall and ceiling boards are in generally good condition.

*Trim:* Three- and- a- half- inch, double- beaded, tongue- and- groove boards are used for door and window casings and for a base- board on the wall between the two rooms. The other walls have no trim or baseboard at the

## Physical Description



**Figure 14** View east in main room. (NPS-SERO-CRS, 2001)



**Figure 15** View of floor in northwest corner of main room, showing early felt-based, imitation linoleum under two later floor coverings. (NPS-SERO-CRS, 2001)

floor. One-inch quarter-round molding is used to trim wall corners and the juncture of walls and ceiling.

*Miscellaneous Features:* In the center of the northwest wall is the wood-paneled brick

chimney with its 7-1/2", terra-cotta, stove flue. The foundation of the chimney has deteriorated, mostly due to rising damp. The chimney stack above the roof also has some spalling brick; where it rises through the roof, the brick has been disfigured by repeated applications of tar and other sealants.

To the right (east) of the chimney is a simple wooden counter about 19" deep, 5'-5" long, and 35" high. The base cabinet has a wooden front with two doors and, in the center of the counter, is an enameled cast-iron sink that measures 16" by 24". A sheet of copper forms a crude back splash for the sink; but a single, cold-water faucet, if there was one, is now missing.

Three wooden shelves, 11-1/2" wide, are mounted on wooden cleats above the sink. On the opposite side of the chimney breast, four more wooden shelves are also mounted on wooden cleats, but the top shelf has been badly damaged by the leaking roof in that corner of the room. Another wooden shelf is mounted on metal brackets above the stove-pipe flue. In addition to these shelves, which may be original features of the room, another newer pair of shelves is mounted between the window and door on the northwest side of the room. Finally, on the wall between this room and the bedroom, there is a wooden hat or coat rack to the left of the door and a similar pair of racks, mounted vertically to the right of the door to serve as a gun rack.

**Room (102)**

Encompassing only about 90 square feet, this room was probably always used as a bedroom. This room was originally entered only from the main room; but when the addition was made to the southwest end of the house, the window on that end of the house was converted into a doorway.

*Walls and Ceiling:* Like the walls and ceiling in the main room, these walls are finished with tongue- and- groove boards in a random mixture of types. Most of the boards are typical double- beaded boards, 3" or 3- 1/2" wide; but a number of boards 2- 1/2" wide are also used. Of these 2- 1/2" boards, some have a single bead along the grooved edge of the board; others do not.

The wall that partitions the house into two rooms is unframed, with vertical tongue- and- groove boards forming the wall. These boards are also a mixture of dimensions- - - 3'- 1/2", 4- 1/2", and 5- 1/4 wide." The northwest side of the ceiling has suffered severe water damage from the leaking roof.

*Trim:* One- inch quarter- round molding is used to trim the juncture of the walls with the ceiling. Similar molding is used in the north and west corners of the room; 7/8" by 1- 1/2" stop is used to trim the other corners. A simple 1" by 3" board with a chamfered edge forms a baseboard on the wall between the two rooms; the other walls have no baseboard or other trim at the floor.



**Figure 16** Top, view of chimney stack; below, view of chimney foundation. (NPS-SERO-CRS, 2001)

*Miscellaneous Features:* Three wooden shelves are mounted on the southwest wall, two on metal brackets and the third on a wooden cleat and brace. In addition, a metal pipe set in wooden brackets spans the front (northwest) side of the room, apparently installed as a clothes hanger.

**Utilities**

There is no evidence that the house was ever wired for electricity. Historically, kerosene

## Physical Description



**Figure 17** View south in Room 101. Door to right was originally a window opening, converted into a door to the addition in the 1950s. (NPS-SERO-CRS, 2001).

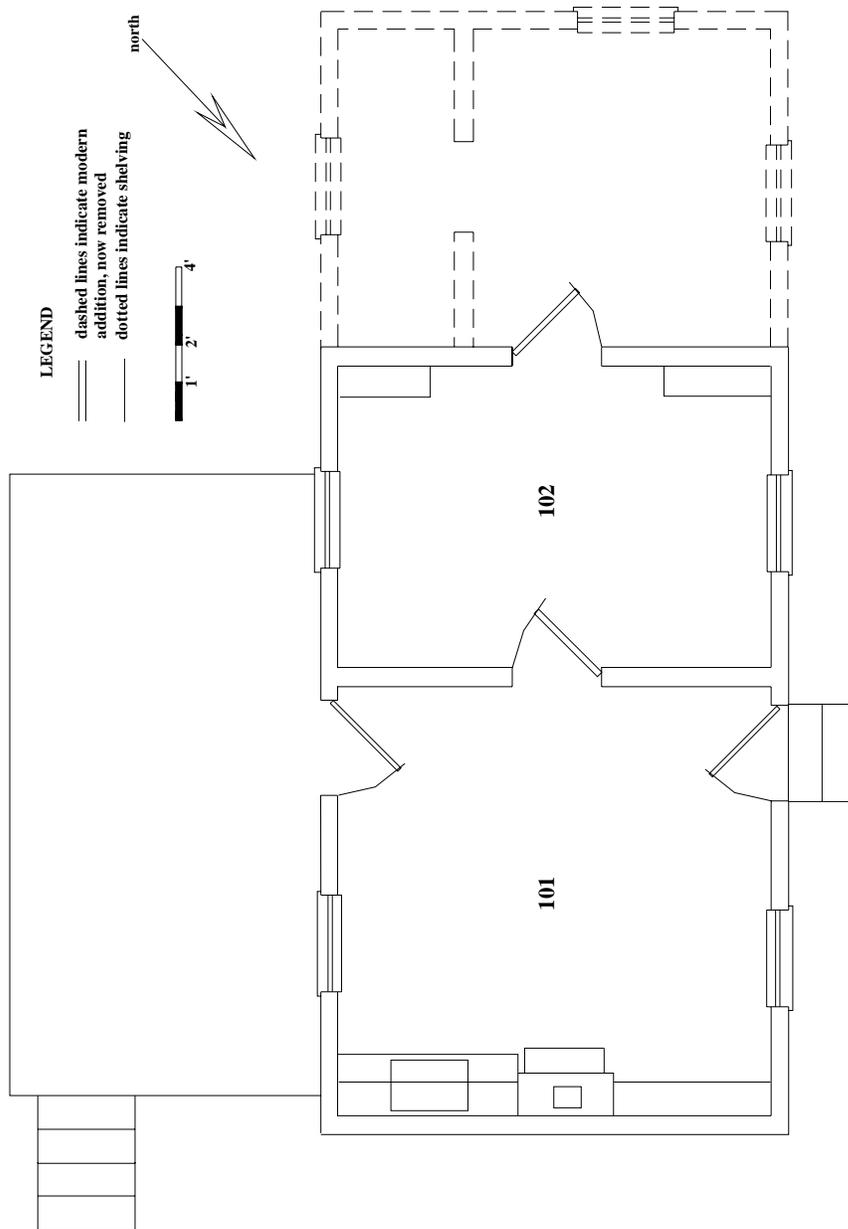
lamps probably provided the only artificial light.

The only heat for the house was that provided by a wood- or coal- burning stove in the main room. The stove would also have been used for any cooking.

The only water supply was from the cistern at the northeast end of the house. It was supplied by a downspout from the gutter across the rear (southeast) side of the house. Except for part of the support frame and a galvanized iron supply pipe that runs through the wall, all components of this cistern are now missing.



**Figure 18** Detail from 1984 photograph, with arrow indicating now-missing cistern. (NPS-CALO, 1984)



**Figure 19** Plan of Ed Styron House. (T. Jones, NPS-SERO-CRS, 2002)

## Physical Description

# Treatment and Use

This section of the historic structure report is intended to show how a plan for treatment of the Styron House can be implemented with minimal adverse affect to the historic building while still addressing the problems that exist with the current structure. The following narrative outlines issues surrounding use of the building as well as legal requirements and other mandates that circumscribe its treatment. These are followed by an evaluation of the various treatment options—preservation, rehabilitation, and restoration—before describing in more detail the treatment recommendations, which would encompass structural repairs and exterior restoration.

## **Ultimate Treatment and Use**

The authorizing legislation (Public Law 89- 366) for Cape Lookout National Seashore mandated the National Park Service to administer the national seashore for the purposes of public outdoor recreation; and one of the recreational resources that exists in the

park is historic Portsmouth Village. The village and the surrounding 250 acres are listed on the National Register of Historic Places and are significant as the only existing village complex on Core Banks south of Ocracoke Inlet. Although the existence of the village can be traced back to the 1760's, the nomination form states:

Today the charm and significance of the area is in the informal placement of the complexes on high ground in the typical low salt marsh outer banks vegetation. These individual sites are connected by narrow, winding, grassy roads or lanes. This site relationship is very characteristic of early coastal villages.

The policy of the National Park Service is to preserve such historic sites when the sites possess, as Portsmouth does, the integrity and authenticity required.

A number of historic structures were generally intact when they were acquired by the Federal Government. Following the policies of the National Park Service, the park began, in consultation with the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Officer and NPS cultural preservation specialists, a program in the 1970's of stabilizing the historic structures of Portsmouth Village in an effort to preserve and protect the village resource for present and future generations. The program has never been fully funded, however, and some buildings have continued to deteriorate and a few are now ruins.

The objective of the management staff of Cape Lookout National Seashore has been to preserve as many of the serviceable structures in Portsmouth Village as possible in order to enhance and facilitate visitor appreciation and understanding of the village's cultural history. It is the belief of park management that such preservation can be effected through a combination of National Park Service investment, private contributions in the form of long-term and binding leases of historic structures, and possibly through other private contributions from universities, etc. who may want to maintain a given historic structure as a public service.

Finally, until the early 1980s, the Styron House was being leased as a temporary lodge for hunters and fishermen under one of the park's special use permits. With repairs, the house could again be useful in that capacity. In any case, the mere presence of the house upon the Portsmouth landscape seems critical, given the loss of historic structures that has occurred.

### **Requirements for Treatment and Use**

The Styron House has a fragile character that can be easily destroyed by insensitive treatment. This character is embodied not just in the vernacular form of the building but also in its structure and its component materials, including bricks and mortar, wood and asphalt siding, flooring, paneling, windows, doors, nails, and hardware. The more these aspects of

the building are compromised, especially through replacement or removal of the historic material or feature, the less useful the building becomes as an historical artifact.

Legal mandates and policy directives circumscribe treatment of the Styron House. The NPS' Cultural Resources Management Guideline (DO-28) requires planning for the protection of cultural resources "whether or not they relate to the specific authorizing legislation or interpretive programs of the parks in which they lie." Therefore, the house should be understood in its own cultural context and managed in light of its own values so that it may be preserved unimpaired for the enjoyment of present and future generations.

Modern building codes and accessibility issues are usually a major factor in designing repairs and often necessitate significant changes to historic buildings. However, since there are no plans for visitor access to the house in the foreseeable future, compliance with codes and ADA is not a factor in considering present treatment of the building beyond what is necessary to ensure a stable structure. Should the building be returned to active use in the future, code-related issues should be re-evaluated.

To help guide compliance with the statutes and regulations noted above, the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties have been issued along with guidelines for applying those standards. Standards are included for each of the four separate

but interrelated approaches to the treatment of historic buildings: preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction. These approaches define a hierarchy that implies an increasing amount of intervention into the historic building. Rehabilitation, in particular, allows for a variety of alterations and even additions to accommodate modern use of the structure. However, a key principle embodied in the Standards is that changes be reversible, i.e., that alterations, additions, or other modifications be designed and constructed in such a way that they can be removed or reversed in the future without the loss of existing historic materials, features or characters.

### **Alternatives for Treatment and Use**

The four main approaches to treatment of historic buildings - - - preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction - - - require increasingly more aggressive levels of intervention into the existing building. Since the authenticity of the historical artifact (i.e., the building) decreases as more and more intervention is needed, several issues must be addressed in order to arrive at an approach that requires the minimum amount of intervention into the historic fabric of the building to achieve the desired goal.

The first of these issues is the relative historical importance of the building, which is included as a contributing building in the National Register district at Portsmouth. According to the

park's evaluation of the historic structures in Portsmouth in 1984, the Styron House was deemed to have no interpretive value to the story of the village and was not needed for any other park purpose. While it is true that the Styron House has no value to interpretation of the eighteenth and nineteenth century history of Portsmouth, the same can be said of the other extant residences, which with one exception date to the early twentieth century. The Styron House could be useful for interpretation of the village's twentieth century history, especially since its relocation was the direct result of the 1933 hurricane, a major turning point in the history of the village. Not only did the damage done by the storm force many residents to move to the mainland, it also remade the structure of the village by eliminating many outlying residences and provoking those residents who remained to move their homes or rebuild closer to the village's center.

While the 1984 survey of Portsmouth's buildings recommended recording and demolishing the Styron House, subsequent loss of structures in the village forces a re-evaluation of that recommendation. Whatever the building's historical significance, its mere presence on the landscape certainly contributes to a visitor's perception of Portsmouth as a village, a perception that is made more difficult each time another building is lost.

In addition to interpretive considerations, a second set of issues to be considered in deter-

mining a treatment for the house surrounds the building's physical condition. Most of the Styron House's distinctive materials, features, and spaces are essentially intact and convey the building's historic character; but deterioration is widespread and extensive repair and replacement of materials will be required. Unfortunately, the nature of the building's present exterior finishes make a simple preservation approach to treatment impossible. In particular, the unique, textured, asphalt roof shingles are in extremely poor condition and must be entirely replaced. Although the shingle design is no longer manufactured, the shape of the roofing shingles could be rather easily replicated on site using stock shingles in the appropriate color, much as the NPS did with the unusual shingles at the Harry Truman Home in Independence, Missouri.<sup>13</sup> Even so, replication of the shingle's unusual textured design does not appear to be a viable option.

Replication of the "brick" siding, which is entirely missing where the post- WWII addition was removed from the southwest end of the house, does not appear to be a viable option at all. Rolled asphalt roofing in an appropriate color could be used in order to protect the exposed woodwork while preserving the "brick" siding, which might now be considered a distinctive historic building material from the mid- twentieth century.

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13. Thomas C. Jester, editor, *Twentieth-Century Building Materials: History and Conservation* (McGraw-Hill, 1995), p. 252.

However, given the park's treatment of the other buildings on the site and the National Register's definition of the village's interpretive significance as 1890- 1930,<sup>14</sup> restoration of the Styron House's exterior to its appearance before the addition and brick siding were added in the 1950s is the best option. Although the house may have been relocated and reached its current form shortly after the park's stated period of significance, that is not at all certain; and, in any case, its form, design, and materials are compatible with those typical during the historic period. This approach would require

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14. Sarah Olson, *Historic Resource Study, Portsmouth Village, Cape Lookout National Seashore, North Carolina* (NPS, Denver Service Center, 1982), p. 6, gives dates of 1890-1920 [sic] for the interpretive period for the village.

no conjecture since elements of all of the house's historic features and materials remain in place, if badly deteriorated.

Issues of use are typically considered in developing a treatment approach, since use dictates most rehabilitative treatment. If the house were to be occupied, even seasonally, extensive work would be required on the interior. It might even be necessary to introduce modern utilities, although that might be avoided, given the kind of experience most visitors expect at Portsmouth. However, since no use has been identified for the building and there is no prospective tenant at the present time, there is no reason to go beyond repairing the building's structure and restoring its exterior in order to insure its continued preservation.



# Recommendations for Treatment & Use

The key to the success of any historic preservation project is good judgement in determining where replacement of a deteriorated building element is necessary. Deterioration in a portion of an element should not necessitate total replacement of the element, since epoxy consolidants and fillers can repair the damaged area, often without even removing the damaged element to make the repair. While total replacement of a damaged element is often recommended, especially in rehabilitation projects, the success of most preservation projects can be judged by the amount of historic material that remains. Even “replacement in kind” does not typically address natural processes that give the historic materials an aged appearance that cannot be duplicated except by the passage of time.

## Site

- Preserve brick pad associated with the cistern at north-east end of house.
- Preserve wooden piers associated with missing addition at southwest end of house.

### Foundation

- Repair and repoint chimney as necessary.
- Replace modern wooden piers with wooden piers that more closely match the original.

### Structure

- Repair roof structure, preserving existing rafters and reconstructing exposed rafter ends wherever possible.
- Repair or replace rear sill; raise and level building structure.
- "Sister" new floor joists to broken joists.

### Roofing

- Remove existing asphalt and wood shingled roof, archiving examples of both materials.
- Reroof building with sawn cypress or cedar shingles.

### Doors

- Replace both doors with new doors that match the door visible in the 1984 photograph of the house.

### Windows

- Replace damaged lower sash in the rear window in Room 101 and the mismatched sash in the front window in Room 102.
- Repair remainder of sash.

### Back Porch

- Reconstruct rear porch deck, replicating existing decking and using wooden piers similar to those used under the main body of the house.

### Exterior Finishes

- Remove existing "brick" siding, archiving as much material as practical for possible later re-use.
- Repair board and batten siding, replacing damaged and missing elements as necessary.
- Paint siding red, trim white.

### Interior Finishes

Funds are not currently available for any treatment of the interior of the house. When funding is available, repairs to the tongue- and-groove walls, ceilings, and floors will be necessary.

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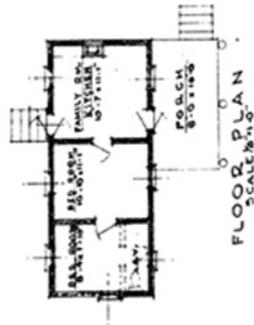
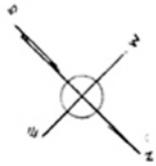
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**T**he National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

