The Problem

Chimney Corner's decline since change of ownership



Feb 2018: No hole in roof





Progressive silting up of catch basins and resulting creek (not "swale") flooding



(Condition report photo)

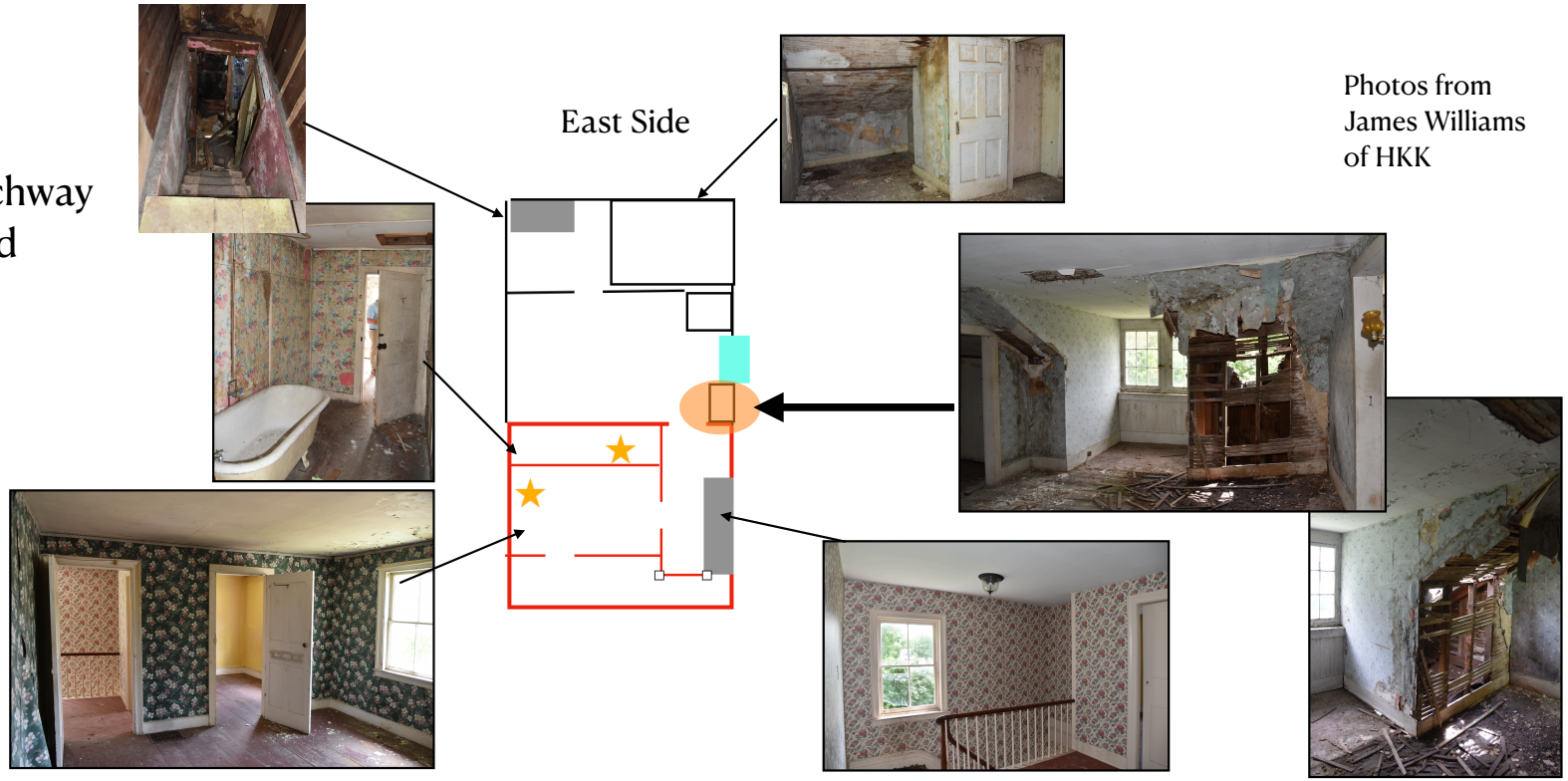
Sept 2026: Hole in roof



How much damage and where?

Second floor. Red outline, 1806 portion; black outline, ca. 1823

Key:
Stars: denote hatchway to Masonic domed ceiling
Gray: stairs
Blue: dormer



Photos from James Williams of HKK

How much damage and where? Continued

First floor. Red outline, 1806 portion; black outline, ca. 1823

Key:
Gray: stairs
Black rectangles: fireplaces









Photos from
James Williams
of HKK

Options

Action	Type	Impact
Demolition	Irreversible	Loss of significant resource (Contributing Structure, Local Landmark) Negative Impact on Integrity of historic District CPP Determination incl. SEQR
Removal	Irreversible	Same as above CPP Determination incl. SEQR
Rehabilitation	An accepted treatment	Retains historic value, adds new use. Generally, repairs do not require permit

Is rehabilitation feasible?
Two local examples

Opendore: less historically significant, much more decayed; “the first floor was in the basement,” “nearly beyond salvaging.” Now beautifully restored.







Levanna Community Church: built same year as Chimney Corner (1806), on neighboring lot as second Cayuga Academy building. Converted to church 1835, moved to Levanna 1902-03. Hole in roof, decayed foundation, loose & broken windows. Successfully being restored to use.





A building must have a use
The initial vision may develop over time.
Resources, Part 1

The Aurora Masonic Center (AMC) holds an outstanding collection of historic and educational resources in cramped conditions:

- Lodge minutes from 1801 onwards
- Strong Revolutionary War connections
- A study center for other CNY lodges
- Can feature a display related to 'Grand Order of the Iroquois" (Lewis Henry Morgan)









Above: L. H. Morgan in the era of the "Grand Order"
Right: Nicholson Parker, frontispiece to Morgan's "The League of the Hodenosaunee"
Below: Ely Parker's Masonic apron
Left: cramped storage conditions



A building must have a use
Resources, Part 2

The dining room's hearth is a beautiful example of a Rumford fireplace built for daily cooking, with bake oven and a warmer. Indentured servant girl Jane Tate (born to enslaved parents owned by the nearby Cuyler family) cooked here in the early 1830s.

Hearth cookery is enjoying a revival of interest, along with foodways of the settlement era. Such "immersive learning" benefits all ages.



Left: ca. 2017, under previous owner
Below: Tea room era; 1930s?

The Proposal

The preceding uses fit Pleasant Rowland's priorities and interests:

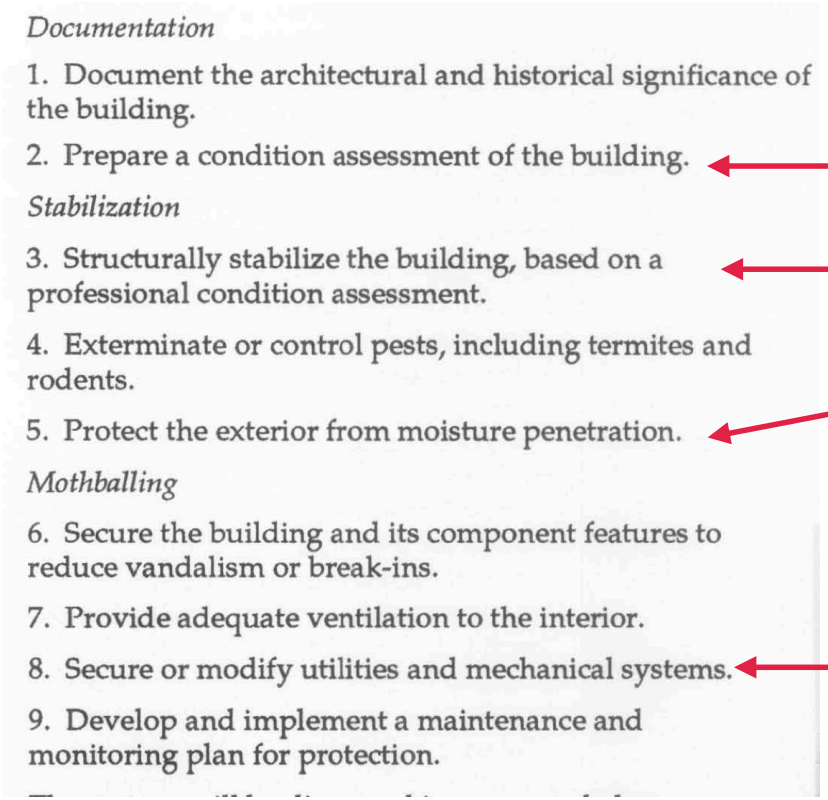
- **Education**: from research scholarship to immersive history for children and adults
- **Historic Preservation**: keeping a key landmark
- **Cultural life**: round-table discussions with visiting scholars and researchers
- **Location**: complements and advances Pleasant's gifts to Aurora

But time is critical. Therefore, we ask:

- **Subdivision** of the house lot and its **gift to the Village** on behalf of an appointed Steering Group.

- **Sufficient starter funding** to "mothball" the building according to National Park Service criteria; estimated at a typical midrange Foundation grant ($40-60K). Note: requires admitting **independent preservation specialists** for documentation and independent assessment.

"Mothballing" stops decay
Gives time for Steering Group to obtain grants



Documentation

1. Document the architectural and historical significance of the building.
2. Prepare a condition assessment of the building.

Stabilization

3. Structurally stabilize the building, based on a professional condition assessment.
4. Exterminate or control pests, including termites and rodents.
5. Protect the exterior from moisture penetration.

Mothballing

6. Secure the building and its component features to reduce vandalism or break-ins.
7. Provide adequate ventilation to the interior.
8. Secure or modify utilities and mechanical systems.
9. Develop and implement a maintenance and monitoring plan for protection.

How the money would be used

Historic documentation complete; independent preservation assessment required

Immediate repairs to roof, removal of debris, structural supports as needed, dredge and open catch basins, drainage

Temporary electrical service for sump pumps, ventilation, monitoring

The Big Picture

Positive impact on Aurora:
This plan will play a role in rebuilding community morale and restoring a cultural life that was lost with Wells' closure.

Positive impact on local economy:
"Studies show that heritage tourists spend more time (and more money) on their trips than other tourists. ...**Successful efforts continue to have an important positive effect on local and regional economies**."
(NYS Historian Devin Lander)