Summerseat Field School, Virginia
August 28 - October 7, 2016

Project Partner: The Cameron Foundation in partnership with Virginia State University and the Citizens Committee for Summerseat Community Dialogue

History: Summerseat is the name of our project building located on the campus of Virginia State University at Ettrick in Chesterfield County Virginia. VSU was founded in 1882 and the historically black college/university campus sits atop a picturesque bluff overlooking the Appomattox River and historic Petersburg.

This unique vernacular building was owned and constructed ca. 1861 by local carpenter Linneaus H James. Over the decades the building changed hands many times and was used as a dwelling by several of Ettrick’s resident skilled tradesman. The most recent occupancy was an antique store which operated from 1973 until shuttered in 2003. The name Summerseat derives from oral histories that claim the building was used by the
local magistrate to hold court during the summer. A 2016 study by consulting historian John S. Salmon commissioned by the Citizens Committee for Summerseat Community Dialogue was unable to substantiate this claim.

According to architectural historian Jeffrey M. Odell in his 1983 book: Chesterfield County: Architecture and Historic Sites, Summerseat is “one of the most unusual dwellings in Ettrick….a one-story frame structure with low hipped roof….and rests on a grade level [raised] brick basement” Replete with Greek revival and Italianate style detailing, the Virginia Department of Historic Resources has deemed Summerseat eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Salmon concludes in his study that “If preserved and restored, it could be an important resource for illustrating the history of Ettrick’s mill and factory workers, as well as its craftsmen.”

**Project Location:**

20829 Chesterfield Ave.
Petersburg, VA 23803

**Scope of Work:**

Over the course of 6 weeks, volunteers worked with HistoriCorps field staff and learned how to:

- Demolish rear (mid-20th century) addition
- Remove vinyl siding from original building and 1st (early 20th century) addition
- Remove fiberboard and deteriorated clapboard siding; retain wood clapboard siding
- Inspect and repair, as necessary, sub-sheathing and framing
- Install wood clapboard siding to match original dimensions and reveal
- Rehabilitate exterior architectural wood elements including roof cornices, cornerboards, porch columns, fascia, and trim
- Rehabilitate front porch and stairs
- Rehabilitate seven windows
- Rehabilitate exterior doors
- Repoint brickwork on porch columns and foundation

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