

Analysis of the Brumbaugh House Structure

By a couple amateurs

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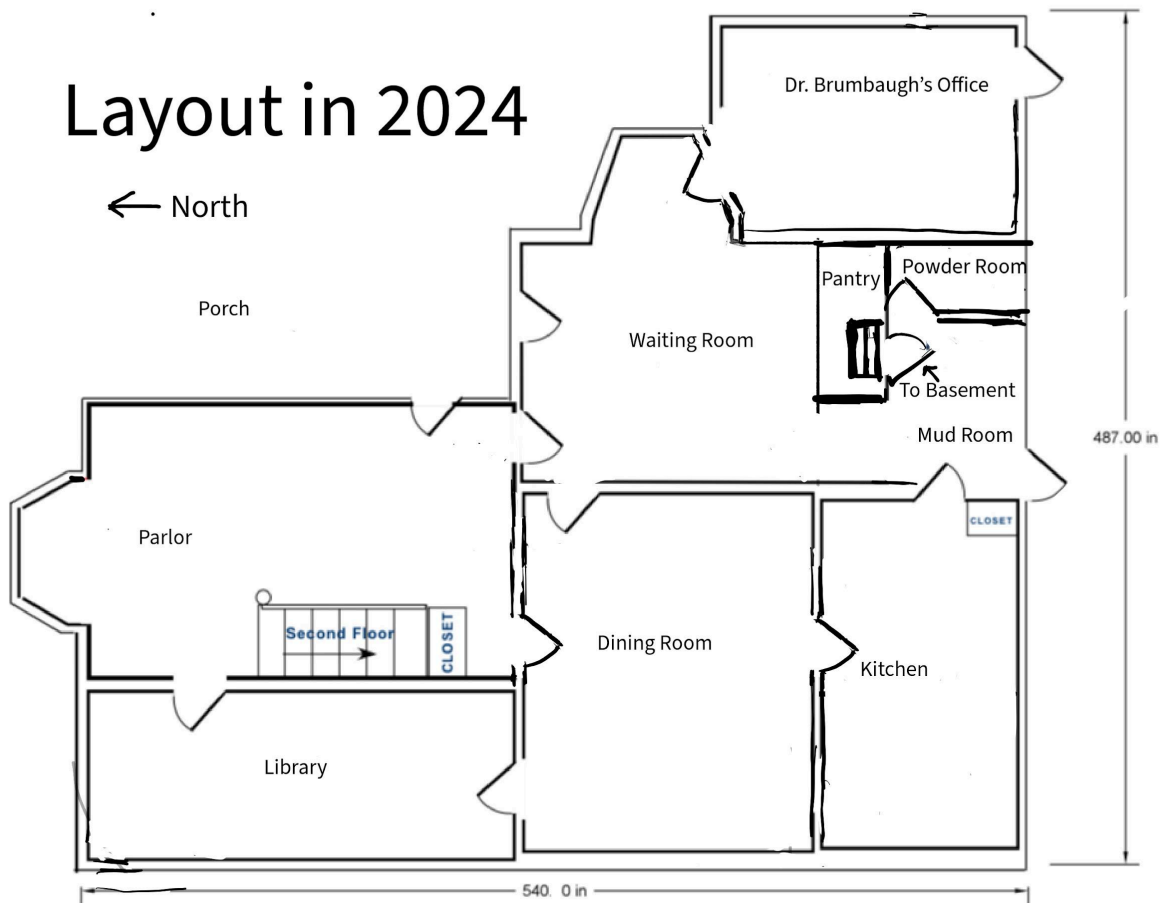
While studying the Brumbaugh House, it is impossible not to draw an analogy with Frankenstein’s monster. The house is a mishmash of different flooring, molding, ceiling heights, styles, siding, roofing, ceiling joists, and basement wall materials. The current style of it is a main gabled wing running east to west, with a bay window on the east end, with a cross wing extending from the center of the “main wing” toward Main Street, with another bay window on the north end. We’ll call the latter the “north wing.” A “shed-roofed extension” was added to the back of the house forming the kitchen and mudroom. A second shed-roofed extension was added to the west side of the north wing. Before the Elkridge Heritage Society took it on as its headquarters in 1986, the house was the home of Dr. Benjamin Bruce Brumbaugh from 1921. It contains his doctor’s office and waiting room on the east side of the house. The top photo above, from the 1930s, shows the structure prior to the construction of the shed roofs. The rear extension once had a nearly flat roof. The second photo was taken in 2024 showing the east side, and the shed roof over the south side.

Note: Main Street is historically part of the Baltimore-Washington Turnpike which runs north to south. The road was rerouted to bypass Main Street. This part of the old road, now Main Street, runs east to west, more or less. We have chosen to maintain that orientation in this description, since the same was used in HO-784, a document by the Maryland Historic Trust, in which the Brumbaugh House is described thus:

“This two-story, frame, gable-and-wing dwelling rests on a brick foundation facing east on the southeast corner of Main Street and Elkridge Heights Road. The front (east) facade of the house exhibits a two-story bay window on the gable-front section and a single-story, hipped roof porch inset into the "L" of the gable and wing sections. The porch has square chamfered posts on square bases and a replacement iron balustrade. Colonial Revival details are found in the dentiled porch cornice, hood molding with keystone over some of the windows and doors, and front entry door surround adorned with dentils and pilasters. Another two-story bay window is found on the north facade of the original building. Two major frame additions have been made to the south and west ends of the structure. On the west facade, a two-story, one room deep addition was made across the entire back of the structure and the roofline was extended and the slope altered to accommodate the new addition. The result is an asymmetrical gable end on the north facade. Another large, two-story, shed roofed addition was made across the entire south facade of the house. This addition has a rusticated concrete block foundation. Almost all of the windows are 1/1 vinyl replacements. Some wood casement windows remain on the west facade in the addition. The entire house is clad in wood shingles painted green and capped with an asphalt shingle roof. Based on the gable-and-wing form and the Colonial Revival decorative details, this structure was probably originally constructed ca. 1900. It is in very good condition and is currently the home of the Elkridge Heritage Society.”

The first floor layout is described by the image below.

Layout in 2024



Taking a tour of the house, one may enter the back of the house (on the south side) through the mud room that has exterior siding as if it used to be a porch. A small room, now a powder room, is a few feet to the right of the door on the far end of a little foyer. A hallway goes straight from the back door, between the kitchen on the left and a pantry on the right which opens into the foyer. A trap door to the basement is within the pantry.

The hallway leads to the waiting room, which has floors that don't feel quite level. The doctor's office doorway is cut into the right side of the bay window, at the angle of where the window pane would have been. To the left of the waiting room is a dining room. The waiting room ceiling is a couple inches higher than the ceiling in the dining room.

Continuing straight from the hallway through the waiting room, one enters the north wing. There is a step down into the north wing and the ceiling is much higher than the other ceilings. The molding is also fancier in the north wing. The north wing is a parlor on the first floor, with an awkward stairway on the left wall of the room leading to the upper levels. On the right, the main front door leads to a porch. On the left, to the north of the staircase, is a pair of French doors

leading to the narrow library. We bypassed the kitchen. It looks to have been last decorated in the middle of the 20th century.

The basement only extends under the waiting room, (where it has old brick walls and some hand-hewn log joists, except under the bay window), and the porch (where it has newer blocks (by no means new, except compared to the brick) and more smooth cut joists). There is crawl space under the kitchen, dining room, and front wing.

The staircase is awkward because a tall person could bump their head on the ceiling a few feet from the bottom. This is because upper rooms over the library extension pass over the staircase. Note that there is a chimney hidden in the library paneling and in a closet in the bathroom above.

Passing up the stairway one comes to the upper rooms of the main wing. The ceilings are low. There are two upper rooms in the main wing connected by a door. They are approximately equal size except the east room has the bay window. The ceilings in the east room are slightly lower than the ones in the west. There is a door leading to a spiral staircase in the east room, against the wall that is between the two rooms.

The attic is interesting. The old gable rafters of the two wings are visible. The new roof line was built above it, leaving the original cedar shingle roof. Because of the raised floor of the north wing, that part of the attic is a big step up, with not very much headroom. Between the old gabled roof and the new, you can see the chimney that was covered in the library addition. That chimney is not visible in the old photo. Next to the stairwell between the east and west gables, there is a patch in the flooring that was probably from a demolished chimney. We see the chimney in the old photo. There was also a third chimney as shown in the photo, and in the north wing attic there is a change in the ceiling where that chimney probably was.

Going back down to the second floor, there are doors from each room in the main wing to the rooms above the kitchen and mudroom. There is a large closet or little dressing room adjacent to a bathroom in that addition. The change in the siding on the back suggests there was another addition when the library was added, giving the west side a straight wall across that side of the house. We think this because of a change in the siding on the back and the uniform style of the windows on the west side of the house.



To get to the rooms above the north wing, one must go back to the top of the stairs and climb a couple more steps in a perpendicular hallway. Remember, the ceilings downstairs in the north wing are high so that is the reason for the extra steps. It's really only one bedroom in the north wing, with a bathroom and closet or dressing room, above the library and stairwell.

Here is a scenario for the different configurations the Brumbaugh House may have had over time. This is speculative, but it is consistent with what we see in the current structure.

1. **A two story, one bay cabin, with a cellar accessed by a hatch at the rear of the house.** This phase is one room over one room. Access to the second story is not clear. This section may be quite old, based on the hand hewn log joists in the cellar ceiling. The back foyer appears to have been a porch, which may or may not have existed at this time. The brick foundation under that portion looks very old.
2. **A two story two-pen house, two rooms over two rooms, with a central chimney.** A two-pen house is created by mirroring an existing structure. This phase has two symmetrical first-floor doors front and rear, which survive as interior doors in the current structure. It also has two symmetrical second floor doors on the front (north) side, which also survive as interior doors. A two-pen is consistent with the slight differences in floor height, ceiling height, and moldings on the two sides of this phase. This phase has no indoor plumbing, and heat is via fireplaces using the central chimney.
3. **A mortuary and funeral parlor, with the north extension serving as a viewing area.** The viewing area has external access via an elaborate entry on the north end of the north extension, which is visible in the 1930s photo. Charles Earp owned the property from 1893-circa 1920, and operated a funeral parlor/mortuary business during this period. Heat would have been via fireplaces, with a new fireplace added in the north extension. It is not clear whether this phase included the rear extension shown in the 1930s photo. Any indoor plumbing is only in the rear extension.
4. **The Brumbaugh family home and doctor's office.** Dr. Brumbaugh owned the property from 1921 until 1986. The 1930s photograph was taken during the early part of this phase. During his ownership, prior to the photograph, the examining room was added to the east rear corner of the building, accessed via the rear part of the funeral parlor era bay window. After the photograph, the door on the front of the north extension was removed and replaced with a bay window. A new front door was installed on the porch. Though it cannot be seen in the old photo, the porch door to the waiting room has trim matching the porch window suggesting it was there when the photo was taken.

The rear extension existed during this phase, as shown by the 1930s photo. There is indoor plumbing in the rear extension. After the photo, the two original chimneys were removed. A furnace to heat the home using radiators was added, along with a new chimney outside the west wall of the north extension.

A later renovation during Dr. Brumbaugh's ownership added a two story addition on the west side of the north extension. The first floor of this extension is a library, and the second story is a bathroom and dressing room which appears to be from the 1940s or 1950s. Another two story addition was added to the southwest corner of the house, which allows for an expanded kitchen on the first floor and a storage room and closet on the second floor. At this time the original shingle roof was replaced with asphalt shingles, and gently sloped shed roof extensions were added over the library addition, and the rear addition.

5. **Joint ownership by the Elkridge Heritage Society and the Elkridge Rotary Club (1986-2011).** Under the terms of the joint agreement between EHS and the Rotary Club to purchase the house from the estate of Dr. Baughman, the two organizations jointly took out a mortgage for the purchase price, and agreed to create a rental apartment on the second floor to pay off the mortgage. Access to the rental apartment is via a second floor exterior door in the center of the rear of the house. There was an external staircase to this door. The apartment encompassed the second floor of the two-pen phase of the house, and the second floor of the rear extension.

6. **(2011-present) Sole ownership by the Elkridge Heritage Society.** The external stairs leading to the apartment have been removed, and the apartment has been unoccupied. The cedar shakes over the south extension were removed to expose the clapboard. When the house was painted in 2012, some attempt was made to expose more clapboard siding but it was too expensive to repair it all. Below is a photo during the 2012 renovation.



Questions that remain:

1. Why is the dining room ceiling lower than the waiting room? One thought is wider ceiling joists.
2. Why is the ceiling in the room above the dining room higher than the one above the waiting room? There is a step up in the attic to explain the higher ceiling on the second floor. Why did they do that? Did they just decide the ceiling should be higher in that room when they built it?
3. Unlike the floor above where the two rooms are the same size, the dining room is bigger. The chimney could have been removed, and it could have been dual sided. Could they have chosen to put the wall on the waiting room side on the far side of where the

chimney was, making that room smaller? Upstairs there is a closet where it might have been.

4. Did the two-pen structure ever have a back extension? Part of the back extension is older than the other. The porch-looking mudroom has a brick foundation that looks old.
5. When the kitchen was expanded was the whole foundation redone? Could the smaller kitchen be part of the older two pen house?