

# The James Weldon Johnson Foundation 2022 Report

*The 2022 James Weldon Johnson Writing Cabin Phase I exterior preservation project has been funded in part by grants and donations from:*

**The African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund 2022 of the  
National Trust for Historic Preservation**

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**JAMES WELDON JOHNSON**  
FOUNDATION

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# IN PROCESS IMAGES

## JAMES WELDON JOHNSON WRITING CABIN

*Recreation/installation of missing window sash*

*Replacement of cedar shake roof and copper flashing*

*Fieldstone masonry repairs to chimney and foundation*

*Repairs to wooden slab siding and trim; staining*

*Change Order for digging soil from below the cabin and replacing with stone*

*Additional structural work and exterior site view*

*Site visits and tours*

**December 29, 2022**

*Expected Completion: January 20, 2023*

## Recreation/installation of missing window sash



## WRITING CABIN - SOUTH EXTERIOR

The windows will all be either restored or recreated to match, depending on the condition of each individual window. The small square awning windows have sash that are mostly intact and can be used as the pattern for millwork profiles. The awning sash are in poor condition but have enough material remaining to provide profile information. The larger double casements that show in historic photos are gone, but the photos show the muntin divisions, the hinging and other details. The window frames and trim themselves are mostly in good condition apart from maintenance and small repairs. The window sash will be restored and recreated in a specialty shop devoted to that purpose. Since the cabin was not heated and will not be heated apart from the small fireplace, the sash is single glazed and will remain as such. It remains possible to install storm sash, although none show in the early photos of the cabin. Metal fittings and hinges will match as nearly as possible the ones that can be seen either inside or in the photos. The built-in roller shades will be restored.



## Replacement of cedar shake roof and leaded copper flashing



### WRITING CABIN - UPPER VIEW

The original roof was cedar shakes on closely spaced wooden board sheathing on top of tongue-and-groove beaded board, with the beaded board fastened from above to the rafters and running at 90 degrees to the rafters. No roofing nails penetrated the beaded board when constructed. The roof is restored using a two-way ventilating wood grid on top of building paper ("tarpaper") laid over the beaded board, with the lower members parallel to the rafters, directly on top of them and secured through the beaded board to them. On top of those new strips, which run from the eaves to the ridge, a second set of strips at 90 degrees are placed, to serve as spaced board sheathing for the new cedar shakes. The shakes are nailed to these spaced boards. A continuous ventilation slot running along the eaves just below the shakes are formed by holding the eaves trim below the bottom of the overhanging shakes approximately 1/2 inch. The slot is continuously screened to keep insects and vermin out. A continuous ridge vent allows the roofs to vent at the highest point of the roof. The 15-lb. building paper will provide protection of the beaded board from any leaks in the shakes, as will the ventilation grid below the shakes.



## Fieldstone foundation and chimney masonry repairs



### WRITING CABIN - FOUNDATION AND CHIMNEY

The fieldstone foundation and chimney are in generally good condition and required repair in places. The original stones were mostly where they fell and have been collected for reuse. They are reset using a mortar like 1 part Type I or II Portland cement: 2 parts hydrated lime: 8 to 9 parts bulked sand, with small quartzite inclusions to match various areas of the existing. Weakened joints were deeply scraped and repointed. The introduction of small amounts of Portland cement into masonry mortar was underway at the time of the cabin's construction and may explain why the masonry is still in relatively sound condition.



## Repairs to wooden slab siding and trim; staining



### WRITING CABIN - WOODEN SLAB SIDING

The wood slab siding is mostly intact, as is the trim, but has areas needing repair. The species is believed to be white cedar, and has been matched for repairs. It has held up extremely well, in part because the amount of direct sun on the cabin was limited by tall well-spaced surrounding evergreens. Yet the trees did not create an overly moist environment either, which would tend to compromise the building's outer services with moss and discoloration due to mildew and fungus. Most damage that has occurred to the siding has been either a result of proximity to grade or invasion by pests such as bees and raccoons. The finish of the exterior wood siding and trim will be linseed oil. A light coating of linseed oil will rejuvenate the cedar, which is naturally oil-infused wood.



## Change Order for digging soil from below the cabin and replacing with stone

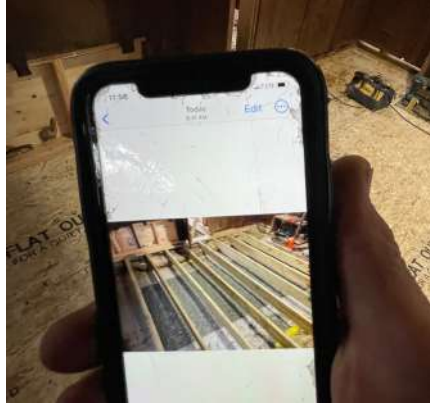


### WRITING CABIN - SOIL, VAPOR BARRIER, STONE, FOAM INSULATION UNDER FLOOR JOISTS

The grade has risen since construction (circa 1926) due to the foliage cycle of its wooded site. The grade has been lowered and sloped away to increase the distance up to the wood siding. Additional exterior site work was needed to bring the grade down in order to create a ventilation space under the floor joists. This includes additional structural work to reframe walls with rotted studs; replacing rotted floor joists; rebuilding the bathroom foundation; and modifying the rest of the foundation in order to accept the floor joists.



**Additional structural work to replace rotted floor joists; sub-floor to support exterior structure**



**EXTERIOR SITE VIEW**

North side view (Front)

West side view



South side view

East side view





# SITE VISITS AND TOURS



Rufus Jones, (James Weldon Johnson Foundation), Alan Petuska and Jacob Caruso (Kronenberger & Sons Restoration); Steve McAlister (Clark & Green Architecture Design); Representative Smitty Pignatelli (Massachusetts), James Weldon Johnson Writing Cabin, 2022



Bard College at Simon's Rock Academic Literature and Social Studies classes; Rufus Jones, (James Weldon Johnson Foundation), John Weinstein (Provost, Simon's Rock), James Weldon Johnson Writing Cabin, 2022



*In preserving the James Weldon Johnson Writing Cabin site, the James Weldon Johnson Foundation is guided by a vision to be a destination for artists, scholars, professionals, and the local community to produce great literature and art and preserve African American cultural heritage.*



# JAMES WELDON JOHNSON FOUNDATION GARDEN GALA

Advancing the Legacy V: A Celebration of James Weldon Johnson  
Saturday, June 18, 2022, Five Acres, Great Barrington



Group Photo, Introduction of the 2022 Fellows in the Arts, Supper and Live Auction



**REFLECTIONS: David W. Blight, Sterling Professor of American History, Yale University**



**Dr. Blight Reading: "Saint Peter Relates an Incident of the Resurrection Day" by James Weldon Johnson in front of the Writing Cabin where Johnson wrote the poem in 1930**





**Five Acres: The Summer Cottage of James Weldon and Grace Nail Johnson purchased in 1926  
Great Barrington, Massachusetts**





Friends and Family





# 2022 James Weldon Johnson Fellowship in the Arts

## Introduction of the 2022 James Weldon Johnson Fellows in the Arts





### Silent and Live Auctions





Supper & Singing





Art and After Party





# 2022 JAMES WELDON JOHNSON FELLOWS IN THE ARTS STUDIO TOURS

Bard College at Simon's Rock, Daniel Art Center  
*June 18 - July 2, 2022, Great Barrington*



“...preparing my work space...”





“...ink on paper...fiber...”



“...YEAH...all night here...”





“...building up layers of texture...”



“...I don't know what it's going to be....”





“...it really is a spiritual journey...”



“Poem of the Day”



**END**

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CALL OR TEXT RUFUS JONES AT 646-894-6023