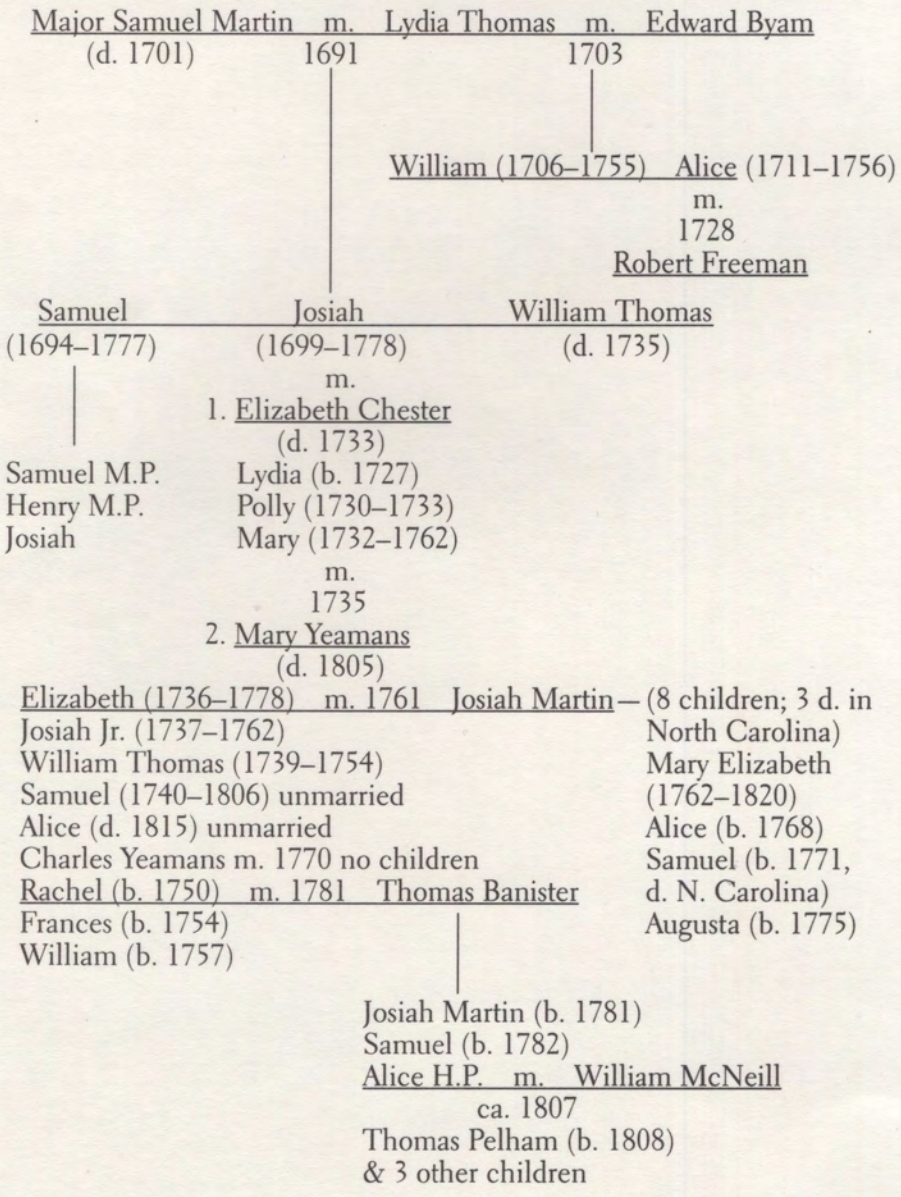
ROCK HALL

A NARRATIVE HISTORY

Shirley G. Hibbard

Martin Family Tree

(Note: Only those Martin family members who play a role in the story are included here.)



ROCK HALL

A NARRATIVE HISTORY

Shirley G. Hibbard

THE FRIENDS OF ROCK HALL, INC.
in association with
DOVER PUBLICATIONS, INC.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Friends of Rock Hall would like to express their appreciation for the generous assistance in funding and sponsorship for these New York support groups:

An appropriation was provided by Senator Dean G. Skelos and administered through the State Education Department.

This book was made possible in part by funding from the New York State Council on the Arts.

This publication is also funded in part by the Nassau County Office of Cultural Development.

Special thanks are due also to Hayward Cirker, founder and President of Dover Publications, Inc., who has been for many years a member of the board of directors of the Friends of Rock Hall, Inc. The Friends of Rock Hall are proud and very grateful to both Mr. and Mrs. Cirker for their special support in the publication of *Rock Hall: A Narrative History.*

Rock Hall Museum is owned and administered by the Town of Hempstead Department of Parks and Recreation.

Bibliographical Note

Rock Hall: A Narrative History is a new work, first published by The Friends of Rock Hall, Inc. in association with Dover Publications, Inc., in 1997.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Hibbard, Shirley G.
Rock Hall : a narrative history / by Shirley G. Hibbard.
p. cm.
Includes index.
ISBN 0-486-26420-3 (pbk.)
1. Rock Hall (Lawrence, N.Y.) 2. Martin family—Homes and haunts—New York (State)—Lawrence. 3. Hewlett family—Homes and haunts—New York (State)—Lawrence. 4. Lawrence (N.Y.)—Buildings, structures, etc. I. Friends of Rock Hall, Inc. II. Title.
NA7238.L34H53 1997
728.8'09747'245—dc21 97-17295
CIP

Book design by Carol Belanger Grafton

Manufactured in the United States of America
Dover Publications, Inc., 31 East 2nd Street, Mineola, N.Y. 11501

Foreword

ROCK HALL, described by one of today's young visitors as "The Beautiful House," is a treasured heritage from the past. Tended with care by two families over two centuries, this home echoed with love and joy that seemingly entered the fabric of the house itself. That warmth and charm seems evident today, reaching out to welcome visitors who arrive on the doorstep.

When the tenure of the families ended, the Town of Hempstead was given the deed of the house and land by the last owners, the Hewletts. The Town accepted the challenge of creating a Historic House Museum, and aid was enlisted from SPLIA, the Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities, to oversee curatorial responsibilities. The Town and SPLIA were joined by many local residents deeply interested in preserving the old house and ensuring its survival into the future. When the research and restoration were completed, the museum was opened. In time the residents organized themselves and assumed a formal role as the Friends of Rock Hall, Inc. The three groups worked together well, and Rock Hall Museum settled happily into its new role. However, this is not the end of the story.

As time went by, new thinking started to grow and shake up the field of historic preservation. Slowly but surely, new interpretations were being drawn from existing knowledge, and new techniques were refined that led to new deductions. The preservationists of many historic houses began to reassess their own past conclusions. The Friends were encouraged to seek a modern, up-to-date reinterpretation of Rock Hall in a comprehensive Historic Structure Report, a detailed scholarly document compiled through intensive research. This was a big venture. In deciding to go ahead, the Friends were exceptionally fortunate to find Shirley Hibbard, a trained Historic Preservationist, who agreed to undertake this important task. When the report was completed, the new research, added to the original knowledge, turned out to be invaluable. A fresh, realistic picture of the house had been developed.

Now it seemed to the Friends that the right time had come to write a book on Rock Hall. They persuaded Shirley to be the author. Having worked so closely on the subject, and for so long, she was in a unique position. Knowing the subject so well, she has succeeded in giving us a wonderful picture of the life and times of the families over the centuries.

It is a real pleasure to meet the Martins and the Hewletts and to walk through Rock Hall as they knew it. Shirley has captured the special quality of Rock Hall, and her insight has made this home and these people live again.

NANCY B. BALDRIDGE
for the Friends of Rock Hall, Inc.

ACRONYMS IN THE TEXT

HABS	The Historic American Building Survey
HSR	Historic Structure Report
SPLIA	The Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities
SPNEA	The Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities
WPA	The Works Progress Administration

List of Figures

Unless otherwise specified, figures are of Rock Hall, Lawrence, Long Island.

Contents

Introduction

THIS IS THE STORY OF A HOUSE and the lives of members of two families who lived there, the Martins and the Hewletts.

Since there are three Josiah Martins in this story, they are distinguished by referring to the builder simply as Josiah Martin, or Josiah Sr. His oldest son is identified as Josiah Jr., and his nephew, who married his daughter Elizabeth, and thus became his son-in-law, is labeled Josiah nephew. At times Elizabeth and Josiah nephew are called Betsey and Joe, as they were familiarly known.

The Samuel Martins are equally complicated. Josiah's father was Major Samuel Martin, and he named his first son Samuel. When that son's identity is unclear, I refer to him as Samuel Sr. since he also named a son Samuel. The most important Samuel in this story is Dr. Samuel Martin, Josiah Sr.'s son, because he became head of the family during the American Revolution and was a known Tory when rebellion against British rule was at a boiling point. He also played a key role in altering the house that his father had built.

The Hewletts appear onstage at the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth century. From the beginning, their involvement in the community left a trail that could be followed. Rock Hall was the childhood playground for talented Hewletts whose gifts were recognized nationally and, in James Monroe Hewlett's case, internationally.

All of the characters and events in this story are presented as accurately as possible, and any resemblance to fiction is purely coincidental. When the builder, Josiah Martin, or his relatives speak for themselves, I am quoting from family letters that are preserved in the British Library in London.

Deeds, wills, land surveys and maps, receipts, newspaper articles, and old photographs have also served as documentary evidence for this narrative. An inventory of everything in the main house and outbuildings was made at the time of Dr. Samuel Martin's death in 1806. That long list of furnishings and household objects, some of great value and others for everyday use, helped to make possible a picture of life at Rock Hall in the early years of the nineteenth century.

Modern techniques for investigating old buildings brought to light many alterations and additions made in the more than two centuries Rock Hall has stood. Lee Dassler and Morgan Phillips joined the team to coax alteration secrets from the old fabric. Paint layers, types of nails, molding profiles, and different building methods used by carpenters were studied to assist in piecing together the story of the house. Lee discovered the completely unexpected early-nineteenth-century change from an original hipped gambrel roof to the gambrel form with dormers that we see today. Morgan identified with precision different first paint finishes on various parts of the central stairhalls, making it possible to distinguish the Georgian and Federal-style appearances of that key space. When the data collected through historic research was coupled with the discoveries made by physical examination, pieces of the puzzle slipped into place, producing images of the original house and the different architectural styles it wore through the centuries.

The research behind this book was detective work, but the story uncovered is a romance. The colorful events, heroic achievements, and unusual experiences of the Martins and Hewletts recounted here are drawn from life. Rock Hall is a tangible record of those two families' journey through history.

SHIRLEY HIBBARD

ROCK HALL

A NARRATIVE HISTORY

1

The Background—Setting the Stage

JOSIAH MARTIN (1699–1778), the builder of Rock Hall, had an extraordinarily eventful life. He was born at Green Castle, his father Major Samuel Martin's prosperous sugar plantation on the British island of Antigua in the West Indies *(fig. 1)*. In the early hours of Christmas morning, 1701, Major Martin, then speaker of the assembly of Antigua, was brutally murdered by his own slaves. The governor's report of the shocking event suggested that the planter must have subjected his slaves to a great indignity, for they were members of an African tribe of the highest character but unforgiving when mistreated. Other accounts of the bloody rebellion reported that Martin had refused his slaves their usual Christmas holiday in order to harvest a crop that he feared might be lost. The hoes that saved the crop hacked the master to death. Lydia Martin escaped with her three young sons to the cane fields. Josiah, the middle child of Samuel and Lydia, for the remainder of his life lived in fear of slave insurrection on Antigua.

The Martins could trace their ancestry in Britain to a general in the army of William the Conqueror, the French duke who had himself crowned king of England on Christmas day, 1066. Loyalty to the ruling British monarch over the centuries led the Martins to northern Ireland, then to Surinam in South America and finally to Antigua in 1667. Their migratory history in search of a prosperous life under the protection of the crown may have set the restless pattern Josiah followed in moving

1. Detail of a watercolor by Nicholas Pocock (1741–1821), painted in 1805. The scene is believed to represent Major Samuel Martin's plantation, Green Castle, with the great house (shown from the rear) on the highest land. Canes were processed into sugar in the various outbuildings in the foreground by slaves, whose living quarters are probably also illustrated. The two prominent stone windmills are the source of power for the refinery and signify the large size and importance of Martin's plantation. Hipped roofs seem to be represented on many of the buildings. That roof form has earned a reputation for surviving the hurricanes that can devastate the islands. Born in Bristol, Pocock was encouraged by Sir Joshua Reynolds to choose a painter's career over that of a sea captain. He came to London in 1789 and enjoyed considerable success as a painter of marine subjects that included the naval battles of the Napoleonic campaigns. *The Museum of Antigua and Barbuda, St. John's, Antigua. Photograph, Douglas Wilke, PE/RA.*

his family back and forth from Antigua to North America. The last swing of the pendulum was from Antigua to America.

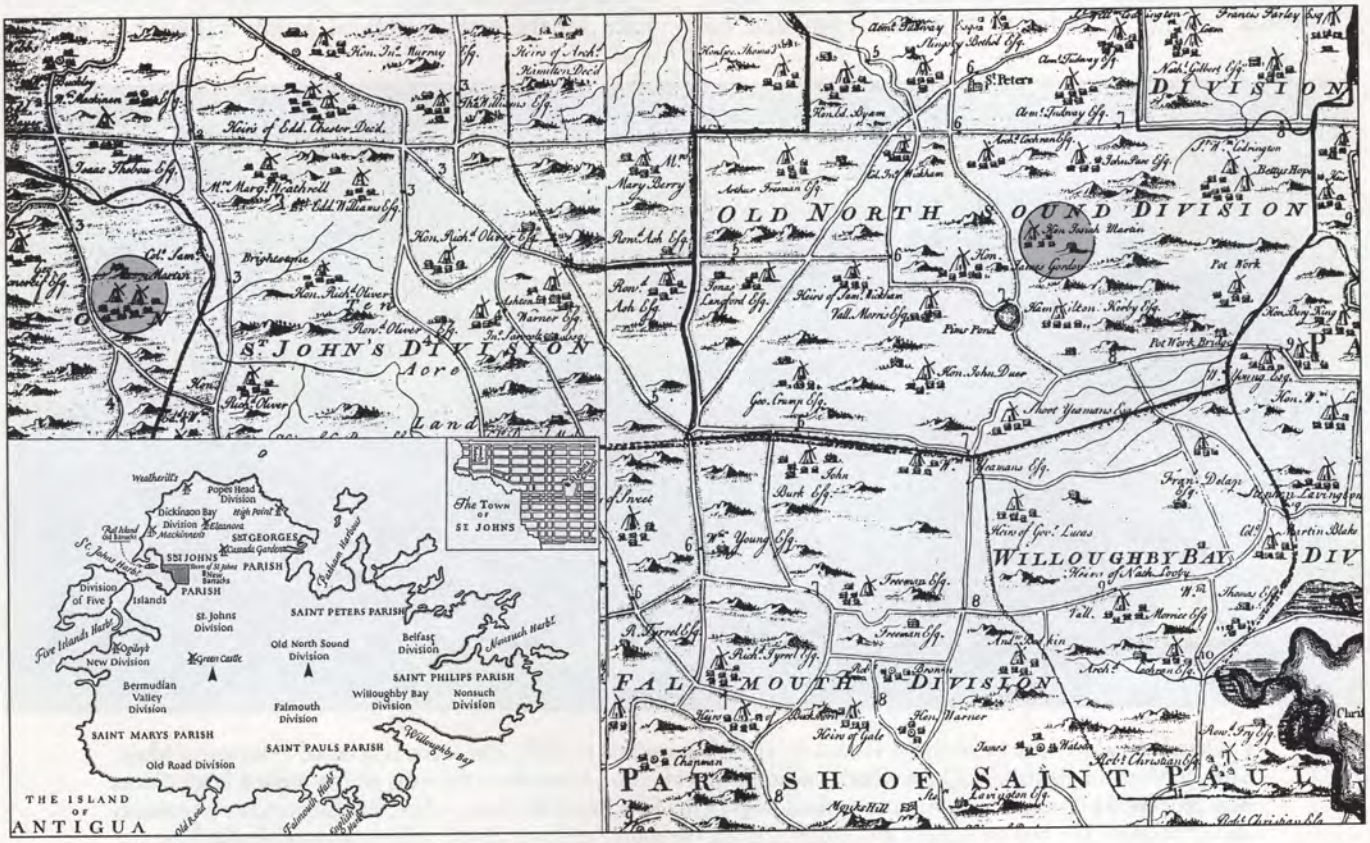
By the English system of inheritance, which favored the first-born male, Green Castle passed to Josiah's older brother, Samuel Sr. Josiah chose his father's profession of sugar planter and began his pursuit of financial independence in his teens, passing up higher education and travel abroad. His younger brother, William Thomas, followed Samuel to the university at Cambridge, England, and then studied medicine at Leiden, in the Netherlands, the outstanding center for such training.

Although Josiah shunned these privileges of his class, he later gave his sons such advantages. In his own youth and early adulthood, he was intent upon earning a place for himself among the landed gentry that fate had denied him as a younger son. Like many of the West Indian colonials, including his older brother, Samuel Sr., Josiah cherished the dream of an absentee planter's life in the mother country, with a plantation manager in Antigua bearing the burdens of sugar production. In these early years Josiah labored to free an undeveloped estate in the Old North Sound Division from heavy debt and to make of it a profitable sugar plantation:

> . . . coming to an estate entirely unsettled, & not having the least convenienceys either to make Sugar, rum, nor even a place hardly good enough to keep my family . . . besides the prodigious expense in building many houses, buying Negroes, Cattles, Stills, Coppers, etc. that I assure you I have been hitherto as poor as any man in my family.
>
> [Letter to Dr. William Thomas Martin, Josiah's younger brother, May 1730]

Many circumstances made it expensive on the small island to cultivate canes and process them into sugar, rum, and molasses to supply the British market. A planter's profits were wholly dependent on the labor-intensive work of his slaves. Contagious diseases could spread among the workers with devastating effects, just as the whims of an unpredictable climate with frequent droughts, severe rains, and hurricanes could be disastrous for the crops.

Letters from this period before Josiah's first venture away from Antigua are eloquent documents of the special trials of the planter's life. Because every patch of land that could be cultivated was devoted to cane culture (*fig.* 2), all necessities and luxuries of life had to be imported into Antigua. Eyeglasses, silk coats and slip-



2. Detail of Robert Baker's 1748 map of Antigua showing the concentration of sugar plantations on the island. Green Castle in the St. John's Division and Josiah Martin's plantation in the Old North Sound Division are circled. The Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division. ***Inset:*** This map of Antigua (by W. A. Dwiggins, 1921) shows the relationship of the two Martin plantations about five miles distant from each other. *E. W. and C. M. Andrews, "Journal of a Lady of Quality," Yale University Press, 1923.*

pers, cooper's nails, and windmill sails were asked for, often in the same sentence. There were delays, errors in shipments, damaged and lost goods. For years Josiah struggled to balance the value of his sugar products on the London market with the cost of the goods he requested for his plantation and his family.

Like Barbados, Antigua did not have adequate rivers to generate water power, so that a windmill was vital as a source of power. At Green Castle and other large estates, there were two large stone windmills *(figs. 1 and 2)*. In 1730 Josiah undertook the building of his own windmill, an added financial burden that involved him in prolonged frustrations. Letters to London merchants advised that no more sugar could be shipped until windmill parts were received. Josiah faced these frustrations with characteristic determination. He asked friends abroad to "send such news as is stirring as also any new book which comes out that is worth the reading" to help "make Antigua as pleasant to me as possible." "Future profit" and "expectations to come" supported Josiah during these difficult years.

The "long'd for place" toward which all of his efforts had been directed eventually changed from England to the North American continent. With his wife, Elizabeth, and two young daughters, Josiah visited New York in 1731. Their introduction to Long Island came as a haven from smallpox, which was then raging in the metropolis. Long Island's closeness to Josiah's New York agent and its relative safety from the contagious diseases that swept urban centers drew him back to its shores repeatedly. The Hempstead Plains satisfied his natural choice for a rural environment, and he was impressed with the economy of life there. Above all, the comfort of having other members of his expanded family—a half-sister and a half-brother who settled there with their families—appealed to his family-loving nature.

By the summer of 1733, Josiah and his family had returned to Antigua, prompted by Elizabeth's grave illness from a breast tumor. Surgery failed to save her, and her death followed quickly on that of "brave, cherry-cheeked" Polly, a child who had suffered from a fever throughout the arduous twenty-seven-day ocean voyage from America.

In the eighteenth century few parents were fortunate enough to see all of their children reach adulthood. Women in the childbearing years and infants were in most danger. Families were large, and second and third marriages common. Both of Josiah's parents married for a second time when a spouse died prematurely; that history was repeated with Josiah and his older brother. In 1733, lonely and mourning his loss, Josiah took comfort in his two remaining children and set about building a large house on his plantation. His stature among the island gentry was recognized by his appointment to the council in 1735, the year in which he and Mary Yeamans married.

The next year a slave plot to massacre all white inhabitants of Antigua during a ball celebrating the anniversary of George II's coronation was discovered at the last moment. This brush with death, combined with dissatisfactions with the resident planter's lot, led to Josiah's second visit to the east coast of America. By the spring of 1737, the growing family was established on a rented farm eight miles from Boston, at Watertown, Massachusetts. Josiah was invigorated by the brisk New England weather and took great pride in introducing improved agricultural methods developed by Jethro Tull in England. He bragged to his relatives of the "green peas, winter beans and bacon [Boston baked beans], and colly flowers, with other things all of our raising."

By July 1738 Josiah's restless nature led to an advantageous purchase of the Hermitage, the four-hundred-acre Long Island estate of Governor George Clarke (1676–1760), which was situated only five miles from his relatives. The estate was known to the Martins, who had often visited there during their first Long Island retreat, and, although now in need of repairs, was appropriate for the life of a country gentleman and his family. A year later they moved into the refurbished home, where intensive planting of household gardens and orchards of imported fruit trees had been enthusiastically directed since its purchase.

Twenty years of settled country life followed. Documents at St. George's parish, Hempstead, record Josiah's generosity to the church and the baptisms of five more children, two sons and three daughters. Charles Yeamans is not listed there, and he may have been born during the only extended visit to Antigua made between 1747 and 1750. During that period Josiah served as president of the council of the island and, back in America, as a member of the governor's council of the province of New York.

Josiah described himself as "grown old" in 1760 and complained that the severe American winters were disagreeable. He had always associated health problems with climate and now Antigua's tropical warmth beckoned. His brother Samuel had returned to Antigua in 1750 after a score of years in England and had become a leader of considerable prominence in colonial society. He had found Green Castle badly in need of an owner's attention and devoted the remainder of his life to restoring the soil and improving cane-growing through new methods of cultivation he developed and better management of the slave force. Josiah would have known of his brother's success in increasing productivity and also of his book, *Essay Upon Plantership*, which was in its third edition by 1756. He may have felt that he, too, should be tending his own garden. Certainly his son Josiah Jr.'s plans to go to Antigua to inspect his father's plantation and to practice law there must have encouraged Josiah and Mary to plan their own return to the island.

Neither father had given his consent when Betsey,

Josiah and Mary's oldest child, married her first cousin in 1761. The bridegroom was Col. Josiah Martin (1737–1787; "Josiah nephew"), Josiah Sr.'s namesake, his older brother's third son, and a career soldier of frail constitution who had not yet satisfied his father's aspirations. Betsey remained in her parents' care at the Hermitage when her husband returned to his regiment, a pattern that was repeated over the years. The young couple's daughter, Mary Elizabeth, was born in April 1762. She became the joy of her grandparents' lives and enlarged the family party that traveled that summer to Antigua.

Josiah Jr.'s death on the island in 1762 shattered the prospect of shared management of the plantation and his company in his father's old age. Family letters began to report Josiah's own declining health. Mary Yeamans outlived Josiah by more than a quarter century and must have been considerably younger than he; it may have been Mary's courage that sustained their spirits at this time. Now, all eyes seemed to turn in hope once more toward America.

Betsey's husband was intent upon the purchase of a farm in the province of New York, where he had been assured he could support his family "decently, with industry and economy." Even his father considered buying land there against the time when "America is the seat of British Government and this Island is ruined, as Barbados is." He, more than any other family member, understood that the high cost of sugar production on Antigua could not compete indefinitely with expanded production in other parts of the empire.

Samuel Sr. traveled to America with his retinue of servants and horses in November 1767, intending to spend the winter with his son and brother's families. He found the cold intense, his relatives living in temporary farmhouse quarters that he saw as small country hovels without conveniences, and was back in Antigua by April 1768. Josiah nephew never did purchase land in America but did have his brief moment of glory on American soil. He ended his days as a widower back in England. But for Josiah Sr. and his wife Mary Yeamans, the die was cast; America was to be their home for the remainder of their days.

2

Josiah Martin, the Builder of Rock Hall

THIS THEN IS THE STORY of the final chapter of Josiah Martin's life when, at sixty-seven years of age, he arrived back in New York with his family in May of 1767. Through the spring and summer, an unsuccessful search for a suitable estate was made in the Hempstead area of Long Island that the Martins already knew well. On September 21, Josiah purchased a farm of six hundred acres at Far Rockaway (now Lawrence) from John Cornell of Hempstead for £2000 as the site for his new home. Through the remainder of 1767 and probably for much of the following year, Josiah's concern would have been the planning and construction of Rock Hall. Their temporary home was the "poor little hovel . . . too small by half for his family, and in every respect extremely inconvenient" already on the land. The story of the building of Rock Hall is told in the next chapter.

We do not know if Josiah Sr. foresaw the coming rebellion of colonists against British restrictions. His extremely poor health, "gout in his stomach," and concern for sheltering his large family may have protected him from such observations. His son-in-law, however, wrote of New York as "this seat of Libertinism political" the year they arrived.

There was family rejoicing in 1770 when Josiah nephew (Joe to the family) was chosen for provincial governor of North Carolina and preparations began for the removal of Betsey's family to New Bern. Their home there was to be Tryon's Palace, one of the grandest buildings in America (*fig. 3*). When Mary and Josiah learned that the famous Boston painter John Singleton Copley was accepting portrait commissions from wealthy Tory families in New York, they commissioned an oil portrait of their beloved granddaughter, Mary, who was now to leave their home with her parents. Copley visited Rock Hall in July 1771, and his record of Mary's appearance at nine years of age was framed within the paneling over the mantel in what is considered to have been the "best" parlor in the original house (*fig. 4*).

Governor Martin's unbending support of British rule did not equip him for the task confronting him in North Carolina. Discontent was quickly fanned into open rebellion when he blocked provincial representatives from attending a continental congress. He was not only outmaneuvered but eventually forced to flee to Cape Fear

3. ***Top:*** Tryon's Palace, New Bern, North Carolina, as it has been faithfully rebuilt (1952–59). The original structure was designed and erected (1767–70) at great expense for royal governor William Tryon, by John Hawks, a master builder Tryon brought with him from England. The Palace served as both capitol and governor's residence. ***Bottom:*** A pigeon house in eighteenth-century style is part of the reconstructed historic site. Although Josiah Martin commented publicly on the "great charge to the Province" of "the elegant taste of Mr Tryon," he, too, used Hawks to design smoke and poultry houses and a "Pidgeon House." *Photographs courtesy of Tryon Palace Historic Sites and Gardens, New Bern, North Carolina.*

4. Portrait of Mary Elizabeth Martin (1762–1820) by John Singleton Copley (1738–1815), 1771. Mary alone of Josiah's grandchildren was a beneficiary in his will. She was left £200 specifically for the purchase of slaves, an eighteenth-century planter's version of a trust fund. *Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts.*

with his family, leaving most of their possessions behind. Betsey, pregnant and accompanied by her sister-in-law and her children and burdened with the family silver, escaped on board a small vessel to New York. The refugees eventually found safety at Rock Hall, where they remained for the duration of the hostilities. The governor took refuge on a British sloop-of-war, where he worked on a plan to reduce the southern colonies to submission. He was reunited with his family when British forces regained Long Island in August 1776.

Augusta was born to Betsey at Rock Hall in September of 1775. The following January, their home was ransacked for arms and ammunition and occupied for a time by soldiers they considered to be rebel troops. Dr. Samuel Martin, whose Tory affiliations made him suspect, was taken with others by General Heard's troops to the congress at Philadelphia, where he was imprisoned for several weeks, and then sent to the provincial congress in New York, where he was kept under close guard. Like many colonials of English extraction in Hempstead, Samuel Martin believed differences could be settled by peaceful means. On at least one occasion he protested against the British when they wanted to use St. George's Church as a granary. Dr. Samuel Martin won his freedom by a carefully worded statement guaranteeing that he would not oppose the Whig cause. His word was backed by a bond of £500.

During this dangerous time at Rock Hall, Josiah Sr. must have been too incapacitated to have openly resisted. Josiah nephew's vivid account, written to his brother in England after he was reunited with his family, is our most accurate record of the Martins' experiences under occupation, for he heard the details from the family:

> . . . having passed an age in the most painful anxiety, exposed to the most mortifying insults of the ruling mob, from whose caprice they were in constant dread of every species of violence. Upon the whole however they escaped fortunately, in suffering only the mortification of being obliged to entertain all the raggamuffins who thought fit to quarter themselves at their house, and to command what it afforded as they listed. . . . Our friend Doctor Sam, whose unoffending character one would have thought might have protected him, even from the busy impertinence and malice of sedition it is true, was made a Prisoner, and carried to Philadelphia, to answer some fake impeachment but he got off happily for three weeks confinement among a parcel of blackguards during which, his Father and mother, and family, suffered more a great deal for him, than his Philosophic temper lets him feel for himself.

Josiah had fallen into "a state of second childhood" by April 1777 and died on November 21, 1778, aged seventy-nine, a month after his daughter Betsey's death. He had lived a long and active life in two countries separated by waters that were dangerous to navigate. He had moved vigorously about the world he knew to achieve prosperity as a successful sugar planter over a period of half a century. His sons were well educated and his large family enjoyed the luxuries wealth could provide in the eighteenth century.

Josiah's nature was family-loving, optimistic, proud, and resilient. He endured the blows of fortune—deaths of loved ones, droughts which swept away his dreams, and the anxieties of a changing world that he could not control. Rock Hall is the product of this enterprising spirit. After more than two centuries, the mark of Josiah Martin is indelibly present.

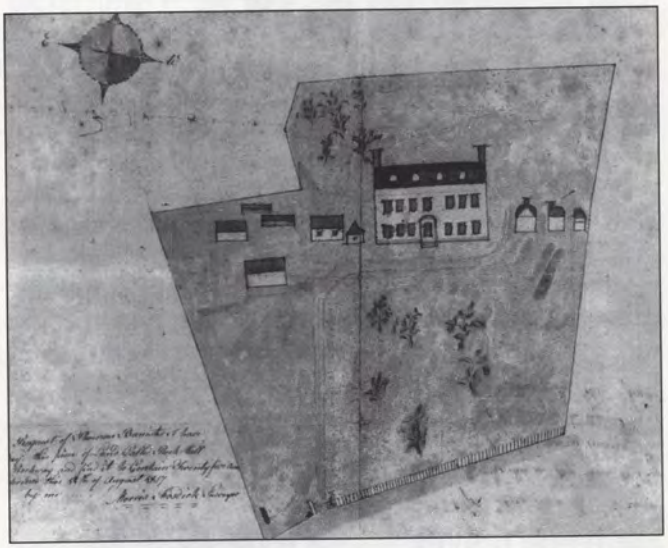
3

The House

THE HOUSE JOSIAH BUILT was large, as his plantation home had been; his two houses may actually have been very similar. Wealthy colonial planters tended to create "great houses" in their commonwealth outposts such as the landed gentry lived in back in the mother country. "A good gentleman's house" like the Hermitage was important to Josiah as a visible symbol to the community of the stature he had achieved in the world. The prevailing style for fine homes in the British world was Georgian, and Rock Hall was built in that style to the extent that pressure of time, and available labor and materials, allowed.

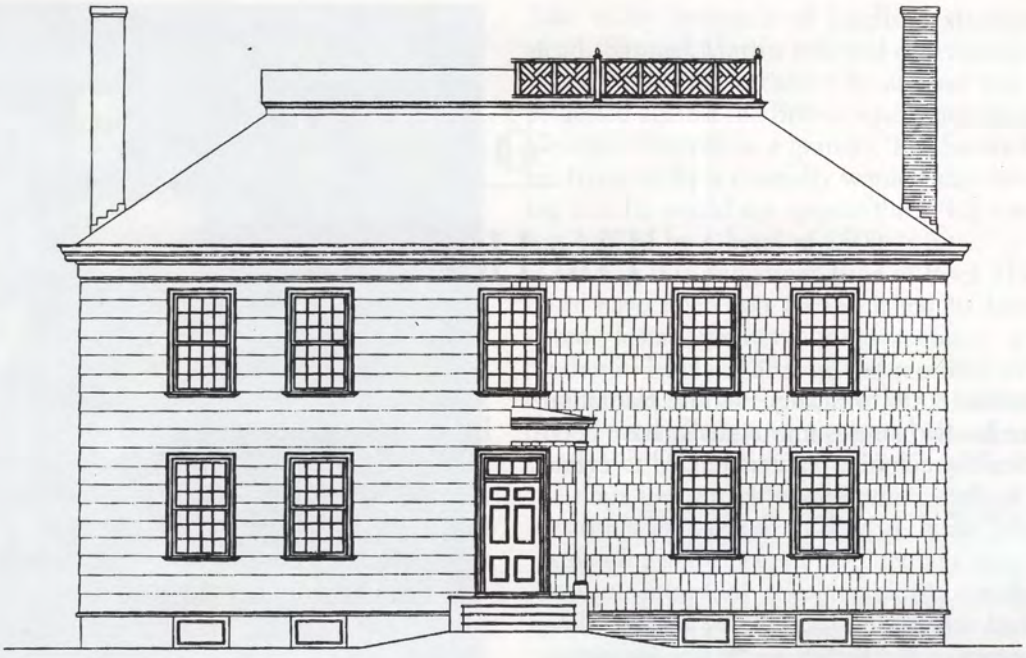
No precise documentation has been discovered for the origin of the name Rock Hall. Since rock was not the building material of the house, perhaps Rock Hall was a shortening of Rockaway Hall. It seems that Josiah was the one to have chosen earlier to name the Governor George Clarke estate the Hermitage. Rock Hall may have been his way of identifying his new home by its location. The name Rockaway, in turn, was the English spelling of the Dutch phonetics, "Reckouw Hacky," for the Indian name meaning "a sandy place." The Rockaway was a subgroup within the Matouwac tribe of Native Americans who populated Long Island (Suan Hacky). They identified themselves as a group living in a certain area. Whatever the origin, by 1817 the words "commonly called Rock Hall" were repeated in mortgages and deeds.

Since Josiah's purchase of land was not completed until September 21, 1767, he must have pressed forward to accomplish all that could be done in the fall and winter months. His family was obliged to continue to live in the farmhouse that his older brother Samuel described as "a poor country hovel" until his new quarters were ready. A magnificent high site was chosen for the new home with access on the north side to the road, now Broadway, which led from Hempstead to Rockaway. The southern view was across open lands leading down to the ocean and water traffic. Josiah's slaves no doubt excavated the hole for a spacious storage cellar with a packed dirt floor and hauled the red sandstone blocks for the foundation. These were quarried along the Hudson River in New Jersey and transported by barge to the site. The many outbuildings that supported plantation life—slave quarters, a freestanding kitchen, a carriage house, barns, a smokehouse, a dairy, and an icehouse were needed. Structures already on the land could be moved, taken apart for materials, or put to use as service buildings. The earliest image of the estate (*fig. 5*), which jumps ahead in our story, illustrates a somewhat random collection of outbuildings to the east and west of the main house.



5. A survey of twenty-five acres of land with Rock Hall and outbuildings, prepared for Thomas Banister by Morris Fosdick on August 15, 1817. 15″ × 18¼″; handcolored. *Hewlett Bequest, Rock Hall Collection.*

The dignified wood structure that Josiah erected was two stories high with a third storage level under a roof that sloped inward from all four sides and was finished by a shallow upper gable section (a hipped gambrel roof) (*fig. 6*). There may have been a decorative roof railing where the two slopes of the roof met but there were no dormer windows at this time, as seen in the Frontispiece. The north and south walls had central doors flanked by two windows illuminating parlors to either side on the first story and five windows neatly aligned above on the second story. Smaller windows in the same symmetrical scheme brought light into the cellar. In the

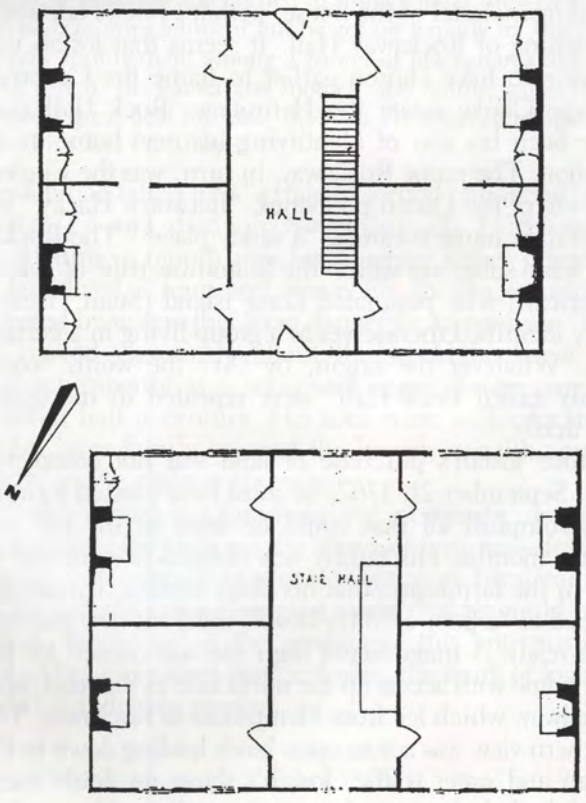


6. Hypothetical appearance of the north facade of Josiah Martin's first-phase house. The decorative roof balustrade, small porch, and transom window over the central door are likely, but undocumented, architectural features. *Drawing, Brent Kovalchik for the Friends of Rock Hall.*

original house there were no windows in the end walls. Perhaps this was to shut out the view of the daily labors of plantation life. Also it afforded protection from extremes of heat and cold. Paired chimneys built into the end walls served the fireplaces in each of the four large rooms, which opened off a central stairhall on the two main floors.

The somewhat austere formality of the exterior of Josiah's house was reflected inside. The Georgian scheme of two rooms to either side of a central hall was repeated on both floors in perfect symmetry *(fig. 7)*. Two mantels that survive from the original house *(fig. 8)* may have been the finest cabinetwork from that period, since they were retained when changes were made later. The mantels were formed of combinations of handplaned moldings, models for which were readily available from popular builders' handbooks. The spaces to either side of the projecting chimneys in five of the eight large rooms were filled by a closet on one side for hanging clothes and a cupboard with shelves on the other for bedding and general storage. The only other architectural embellishments in a parlor or bedchamber were wood baseboards at floor level around the perimeter of a room, crown moldings at the ceiling level, molded surrounds of windows and doors and a chair rail to protect furniture from rubbing against walls.

In the original house there was considerable variety in the workmanship and use of moldings ranging from highly accomplished to awkward, especially on the mantel walls. Many local workmen may have been em-



7. Conjectural ground plans of (above) first floor of Josiah Martin's original house, ca. 1768, and (below) the second floor. *Plans adapted from drawings of the Historic American Building Survey (HABS), 1935.*

8. Two surviving Georgian-style original mantels at Rock Hall. *Top:* The northeast parlor. ***Bottom:*** The southeast bedchamber. The antique painted tiles on the fireplace surrounds are not original to the mantels. *Photographs, Town of Hempstead.*

ployed rather than a single housewright and his three or four apprentices. Since each carpenter had his own set of specially designed planes that could be used in preferred combinations with different degrees of skill, even local variations were inevitable. There was also on Long Island a free passage back and forth of workers and of techniques and forms that had their origins in Dutch and English building practices.

The Reverend William H. Moore gave no source when he wrote in 1881 that Timothy Clowes of Jamaica was the designer of both Rock Hall and St. George's Church, in his book on the history of that Hempstead Episcopal house of worship. If Clowes or another carpenter/housewright made any drawings for Rock Hall, they have not come to light among the Martin family papers at the British Library in London. Working drawings may not have seemed worthy of preservation once the building was completed.

An inventory made in 1806, when Dr. Samuel Martin, Josiah's heir, died, included a library valued at $500. It is likely that a few of the volumes were architectural books that were introduced from England at this time to guide provincial builders in the preparation and use of the currently popular classical forms. Josiah was resourceful, had lived in Philadelphia, Boston, and New York and had already built a large home in Antigua. By one means or another Rock Hall took form in the Georgian high style favored by the wealthy before the American Revolution. It was a majestic structure prominent enough to serve as a landmark for water traffic.

Wood was the chief building material in Josiah's house—the quantity needed is intimidating to ponder. The heavy oak timbers of the framing are held together by mortise-and-tenon joints. Floors in all of the rooms are formed of handplaned hard pine boards, ranging from 5 to 13½ inches in width. Wood paneling covers every wall surface except the plastered ceilings.

Long handsplit shingles used as exterior cladding are found on homes of families of both Dutch and English backgrounds in the New York area, the Hudson Valley, and parts of New Jersey. At Rock Hall they are 28 inches long with 15 inches exposed to the weather. They are fastened by handwrought nails. Doors were hung with handwrought iron hardware imported from England, which was probably factory-made. American colonists were also encouraged to buy British glass by cheap delivery costs; boxed glass may have served as ballast on ships. Mortar, by its appearance, was prepared onsite.

There were features about Rock Hall which came directly from the Martin family's Antiguan background. Foremost was the choice of an island location but, unlike Antigua, Long Island promised a healthful and economical rural life. Situated on the water and on a main road, Josiah's house was conveniently close to New York City and to his merchant, who sold his sugar, rum, and molasses.

Josiah reproduced on Long Island the West Indian plantation system. This gave his family a comfortable life maintained by slaves whose needs, in turn, were his responsibility. Master and slave living accommodations were separate. The inconveniences of cooking odors and the danger of kitchen fires were kept a safe distance from the main house. Good ventilation and offshore breezes were assured by a high site with many large windows on the two long walls, high-ceilinged rooms, a south-side "Dutch" door, and louvers in some upper door panels and perhaps in a north-side summer door.

The cold winters in the American northeast probably dictated positioning the house to bring full sun in the winter months into the four large rooms on the south facade. There were additional smaller windows at each side of the south door which provided daylight for the large center hall. A transom over the north door was probably the light source at that cooler location. There was crude brick insulation between the inner and outer

walls, at least on the first floor, which would also slow the spread of a fire. Above all, winter warmth depended on fireplaces in each of the eight rooms of Josiah's house. The abundance of local firewood must have seemed unending to the Antiguans, who were accustomed to importing every plank.

Wood paneling used lavishly may have appealed especially to wealthy West Indian colonials from islands like Antigua, where the exclusive cultivation of sugar cane made wood precious. At Rock Hall, Josiah Martin had all eight large rooms, the two halls, and the stairwell fully paneled from floor to ceiling. This is one of the enduring puzzles about Rock Hall, for no local prototype has been found nor explanation given in family letters. It may have been a luxurious means of avoiding the necessary curing period (up to a year) for the three layers of plaster that would otherwise have been applied to handsplit lath above the chair rail before a finish of oil-based paint or wallpaper could be applied. Josiah's poor health and his family's discomfort in rustic quarters were matters that urged speed in construction.

With the curious exception of one chamber on the second floor, where no special finish seems to have been applied, all of the original paneled wood surfaces were painted, mainly in off-whites and creams. In the fine first-floor northeast chamber, a glaze was applied to the original cream paint, which would have reflected fire and candlelight. A surprisingly different first finish color choice was discovered in the southeast bedchamber, where a luminescent "pea green" was achieved by a slightly coarser grinding of pigment in the oil medium.

Eighteenth-century rooms were dark even in wealthy homes, for they depended primarily on natural light, a limited use of candles, firelight, and reflections from mirrors and polished surfaces. The 1806 inventory of household effects at Rock Hall lists candle molds, silver snuffers, five pairs of candlesticks (two pairs are identified as "plaited"), a globe "lanthern," and seven looking glasses. Two hives of bees are also listed; they may have provided beeswax for slow, even-burning candles as well as honey. Daylight hours were fully used, as people had early-to-bed–early-to-rise habits. Except when entertaining guests, families gathered around one or two candles in the evening. At Rock Hall the silver candleholders were probably reserved for the "best" parlor, and clusters of candles would be used when the central hall was the stage for large social functions. Such prized possessions would have accompanied the family from Antigua in their relocation to America in 1767. A glass lantern valued in the inventory at $25 illuminated the main stairhall (at the latest by 1806), a familiar practice. Household inventories suggest that candleholders were collected in the morning and returned to the kitchen or other holding area for readying for use the next night.

In the first-phase house each of the large rooms that opened off the broad central hallways would have had many uses; most rooms probably included sleeping arrangements since the family was large. Josiah, who was in declining health, and his wife, Mary, would certainly have found a bedroom on the first floor convenient. By making selections from the inventory, it is possible to imagine a chamber fitted with a bedstead "dressed" with hangings, bolsters, and pillows, a carpet, an easy chair (since they were reserved for the infirm and elderly for protection from drafts), "2 Sets of curtins," a pair of looking glasses, a tea table, a card table, and perhaps some of the "14 Fancy chairs."

Exactly which family members were present when Rock Hall was completed—very probably sometime in 1768—is not documented. Josiah and Mary may not have known exactly when daughter Elizabeth would arrive with her young family, with or without her husband, Joe. Of those children, Mary Elizabeth, their favored grandchild, was for many years a full-time resident. Daughters Alice and Rachel, both unmarried, were certainly present. Charles's absence, even for a visit from England, was the despair of his ailing father. William's pursuit of a military career probably allowed only sporadic periods of residence.

Samuel Martin was Josiah and Mary's third-born son, but from 1762 he was the oldest of the three surviving males. He must have been living at Rock Hall at least from 1770 when he began being listed as a vestryman at St. George's parish, Hempstead. As his father's body and mind failed, he would have taken over the duties of family head. After Josiah Sr.'s death on November 21, 1778, Samuel was master of both Rock Hall and the Antiguan sugar plantation.

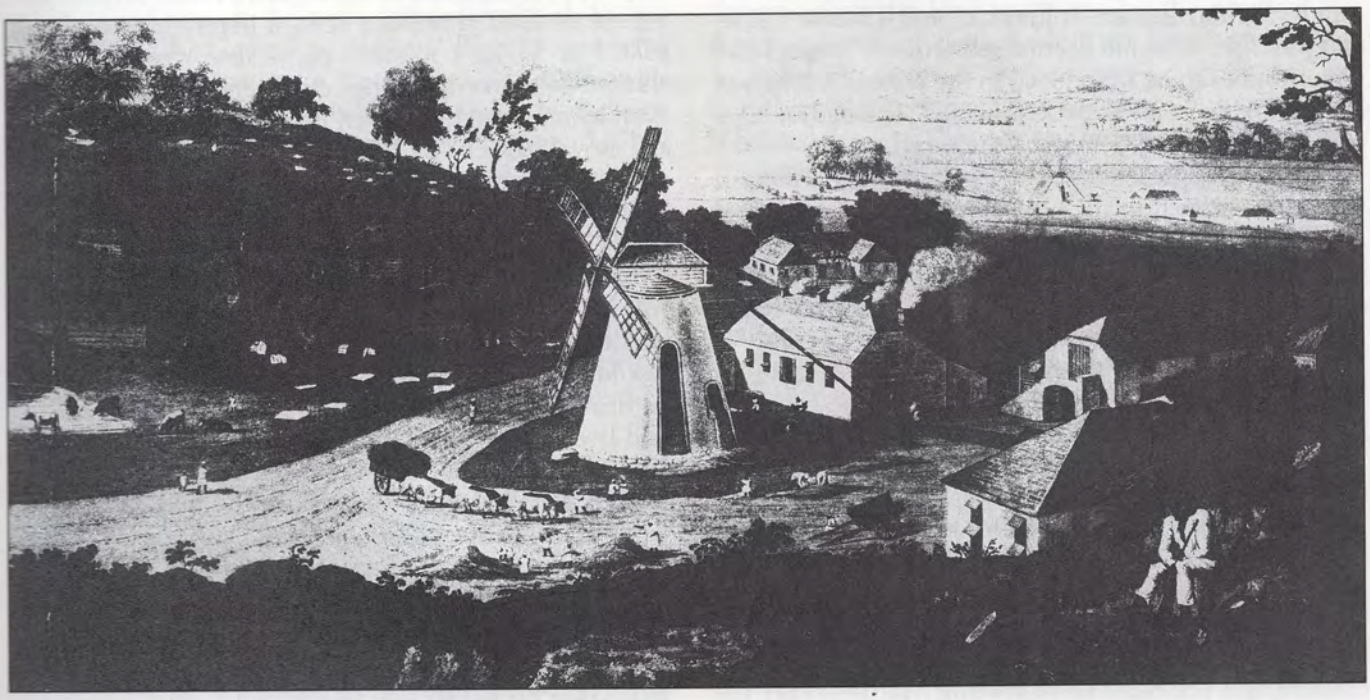
4

Dr. Samuel Martin's Tenure

ALTHOUGH MUCH DETAIL is unknown about the events of Samuel Martin's life, enough records do exist to place him in the midst of many important activities of his time. His personality emerges from the words of family, friends, and other contemporaries as affable, generous, and apparently free from the driving ambition that motivated his father's life. As the second-generation master of Rock Hall, he reaped the rewards of Josiah's earlier efforts.

Samuel was the first American-born owner of Rock Hall; he began life on October 3, 1740, at the Hermitage on Long Island. By 1747, when he was seven, he set off for a prolonged stay on Antigua with his parents, two older brothers, and two sisters. That three-year sojourn in the West Indies was Samuel's first visit to the island where he was later to be the master of the sugar plantation that his father had freed from debt and made productive. As a schoolboy Samuel could hardly have foreseen that role. The sea voyage must have been an exciting adventure, and the semitropical climate and steamy labors of sugar, rum, and molasses production completely different from the mixed farming culture he had known on Long Island *(fig. 9)*.

By 1750 the Martins were back in America, where Samuel may have been one of Reverend Seabury's pupils at St. George's Church, Hempstead. Seabury, like many vicars of the day, supplemented his small church stipend by providing a classical school for local boys. At fourteen, in 1754, Samuel was enrolled at King's College (renamed Columbia in 1783), which received its charter that year. In the eighteenth century, students entered college earlier than they do today, a reflection of a school system that was structured differently. That first class met in the vestry of Trinity Church's schoolhouse on Manhattan before construction began on the college. Samuel remained at King's College for two years; only



9. This view of the complex of buildings on a sugar plantation in the Old North Sound Division, where Josiah's plantation was located, is probably very much like his estate. The planter's house is on the high land at the left. *Vere L. Oliver, "History of Antigua,"* 1894–1899.

eight of the original class were actually graduated in 1758. By 1765 he had earned a medical degree from the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh.

Samuel was clearly among the privileged young American gentlemen of his day. At King's College his classmates were from the most respected families, and like many of them Samuel went abroad to complete his education. He would have spent time in London, where he had relatives and perhaps was enrolled as a pupil in a hospital there, as serious young American medical aspirants did before going up to Edinburgh, Scotland, to the greatest medical school of the day. The first faculty at Edinburgh's medical college was formed of graduates from Leiden, the Netherlands, where Samuel's uncle, William Thomas Martin (1701–1735), had earned his degree. In turn, the professors at the first North American medical school, founded in 1765 in Philadelphia, were drawn from former American students and graduates of the Univerity of Edinburgh.

In Edinburgh, American students usually lived with private families and entered into the life of the community. Eighteenth-century Edinburgh was a cold, dark, windy city of 80,000 inhabitants, crowded by American standards, and without any sanitary facilities in the high buildings. Students from all corners of the kingdom, as well as Europe and the New World, collected in this rather forbidding city. Young Scottish ladies apparently appreciated the good manners of visiting students who outshone their Scottish counterparts, who were by contrast cold and insensitive or preoccupied with cards and drinking. Above all, the university attracted brilliant minds, such as Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Paine, and was alive with intellectual excitement. Samuel had opportunities to be introduced to the famous teachers of his day and to enjoy the scientific and social advantages of two capitals, London and Edinburgh.

Samuel's medical studies and practice as a physician were concentrated in these developing years of colonial and early republican medicine in America. We do not know if he had academic ambitions to be a part of the group of fellow students from Edinburgh who transplanted medical learning to American soil at Philadelphia—probably not. By age twenty-two, in 1762, when his older brother died, Samuel had become the heir to his father's estate by primogeniture—inheritance by the oldest male offspring. Samuel seems to have been satisfied with the prospect of a gentleman's life on a country estate with the added interest of practicing as a physician.

Among the gentry there existed a lively network in which there was much maneuvering for family advantage, and Samuel Sr., Josiah Sr.'s older brother, was efficient and persistent in promoting Martin-family interests. Many offices and a title were granted his sons, two of whom became members of parliament in London. A third, Josiah nephew, as we have seen, was the last royal governor of the province of North Carolina. The prospects of Dr. Samuel were not overlooked by the uncle for whom he had been named. In January of 1768 the elder Samuel was visiting North America with the intention of spending the winter on Long Island with the two Josiah Martin families, who were still living in temporary quarters while Rock Hall was under construction. A letter survives in the handwriting of the nephew but dictated by his uncle and addressed to a third Samuel Martin, cousin and son, respectively, of the authors. The letter requested Samuel Jr. as the member of parliament for Camelford to use his influence to gain the position of Director of the Hospitals and Superintendent of all Regimental Infirmaries for his American cousin. Nothing seems to have resulted from the request but it is of interest as it demonstrates his uncle's concern that Dr. Samuel needed to be helped toward worldly success.

By the end of the same year, the young doctor earned his cousin Joe's high praise for the care of his children when they were stricken with smallpox and were tenderly nursed to complete recovery. Josiah nephew again turned to his cousin's medical skills with excellent results when recuperating from surgery in 1771 prior to his departure for his governorship in New Bern, North Carolina. Ironically, three of Joe and Betsey's young children died during the years in North Carolina. The governor himself succumbed to smallpox in London in 1786 at age forty-nine.

What little else we know of Samuel's medical practice is that "he doctored the whole countryside." The inventory made at his death in 1806 listed a closet of medicine valued at $200, a reading desk, a library of books estimated at $500, a microscope, scales, weights, and a thermometer, no doubt the equipment of his profession. Samuel may also have taken up the recommendation by the Royal Society in London in 1773 that he "make researches and collections in the branches of Natural History in America." Perhaps this honor was also the result of his uncle or cousin's compaigning for favor.

Samuel seems to have moved comfortably into the role of family head as his father's powers failed and Mary needed him to manage the large Rock Hall estate. He would have given up his independent bachelor's quarters in nearby Jamaica in Obadiah Mills's house where he had lived in 1776 sometime before his father's death in November of 1778. Samuel's essential character was conservative and in harmony with the traditional standards of his family. His religion was that of his forebears; he served as a vestryman at St. George's Episcopal church, Hempstead, and took his place as a representative at church conventions as befitted his station. His political loyalties were to the British crown, under whose protection his family had prospered for generations. He was described by Judge Thomas Jones, himself a loyalist, as "a gentleman of a most amiable character . . . of one of the first families in the country and a gentleman

of the most unblemished character, of the strictest veracity, and a first-rate Loyalist." Samuel endured humiliations as part of a group of Hempstead men whose British sympathies were feared as a source of resistance to the fight for independence. His careful responses to questioning and willingness to back his oath of nonintervention led to his being allowed to return home even though he was unanimously judged not to be a friend of the cause for freedom. Once again Samuel had found himself at center stage, and his choice was to play a conciliatory role.

It may have given Samuel particular satisfaction to take Thomas Banister into his home in 1781, when Thomas and Samuel's sister Rachel married. Banister was a loyalist who had joined the British forces when they occupied Rhode Island and had left with them on their march to New York in October 1779. Banister's actions were judged as treasonous, his valuable real estate was confiscated, and he was barred from living again in Rhode Island. Samuel and Thomas's shared loyalties to the British crown grew into mutual trust and a lifelong friendship.

Members of the Martin and Banister families could easily have come into contact with one another earlier. The great wealth amassed by John Banister (1707–1767), Thomas's merchant father, was made through aggressive commerce with Britain, several European countries, and the West Indies. His account books record his cargoes shipped from Newport to the West Indies, containing corn, flour, meal, dried fish, salted mackerel, hams, beef, pork, horses, butter, cheese, and rum, in the same years when Josiah Sr. was president of the council on Antigua. Illegal privateering and active participation in the African slave traffic were other sources of Banister wealth. The senior John Banister divided his personal and real estate between his two sons in a detailed will written in 1767, the year he died. He assured young Thomas, still a minor with two more years of schooling ahead of him, that he had "arriseing out of the profits of his estate sufficient competency . . . to support him and a family" should he not wish to be a merchant. Thomas was apparently not "strongly inclined to look into the Art & Mastery of a merchant or shop-keeper." When called upon to give his profession, Thomas Banister listed himself as a gentleman.

The young man from Rhode Island who risked his fortune in defying the rebel cause may have seemed a knight in shining armor to Rachel Martin, who had experienced the occupation of her home by ruffians, and her father's final illness, and was still living at home and unmarried at thirty-one. Theirs was a wartime romance that joined two colorful and prosperous families in May of 1781. By July, Mary Martin and Dr. Samuel witnessed the baptism of the Banisters' first son, who was named Josiah Martin in his grandfather's memory. Their second child was named Samuel in 1782.

Thomas was one of fifty-five men whose lands had been forfeited when they asked in July 1783 that they be recognized as respectable gentlemen loyalists by receiving grants of land in Nova Scotia, Canada. Rachel, Thomas, and a male servant sailed to St. Mary's Bay (now Weymouth), Nova Scotia, in June 1784, on a brave journey which to many in the fleet of small crafts must have promised a new and rewarding life. The length of the Banisters' stay on Nova Scotia's gray shores is not known; the following year, in 1785, Banister was officially awarded one thousand acres on St. Mary's Bay, Annapolis County, Nova Scotia. A daughter was baptized back at Hempstead, Long Island, in March 1787. This child, named Alice for Rachel's sister and also Hermione Pelham for her paternal grandmother, was to play a pivotal part in the history of Rock Hall. But in 1796 the tract of Canadian land reverted to the province of Nova Scotia, presumably because it had not been occupied or developed. The Banisters had settled in as permanent residents at Rock Hall.

When the first federal census was made in 1790, Dr. Samuel, then fifty years of age, was listed as head of the household, and Thomas Banister was the second free white male listed in the over-sixteen-years category. Those under sixteen were Josiah Martin and Samuel, the Banister sons, then nine and eight years old, respectively. Five females recorded were the widow Mary Martin, her two daughters, Alice Martin (about forty-five) and Rachel Banister (forty), and her two granddaughters, Mary Elizabeth Martin and Alice H. P. Banister, twenty-eight and three years old, respectively. Seventeen slaves worked the land and cared for the needs of this three-generational household. That count presumably included the survivors of the slaves Josiah Sr. had bequeathed to family members and slaves purchased with inherited money. That was the largest number of slaves recorded for a household in Queens County in the first census.

Rock Hall had the resources for an almost self-sufficient existence. There were imported cattle for beef and dairy products, sheep, hogs, fowl, turkeys, ducks, and geese. Corn and other grains were grown for animal feed and household use; flax was cultivated for linen. There were the necessities for making soap and candles and repairing shoes, and supplies for building, such as brick, lath, oak boards, and shingles.

Samuel seems to have enjoyed a convivial life as a wealthy country gentleman. Hunting and fishing could be enjoyed on Rock Hall's vast acres, which were increased by purchases of more woodlands. His inventory lists coaches, a sulky (a light two-wheeled carriage for one), a pleasure sleigh, and horses for each of these. Three boats, two guns, a pistol, and three swords are also enumerated, equipment for a gentleman's sporting life.

Oral-history sources tell of a party for Samuel's niece

to which the whole countryside was invited. The "4 cases of silver, sugar tongs and cream pail" of the inventory must have been gleaming, and the "12 table cloths, 14 decanters, 3 Doz Wine glasses and 2 doz Tumblers" pressed into service. Older guests may have watched the festivities—perhaps dancing in the spacious hall—from the fourteen Windsor chairs and another fourteen Fancy chairs. Others might have been grouped around tea and card tables. It is understandable that an unidentified diarist wrote at the death of the provider of such pleasures, "Our beloved Dr. Martin died today."

Rock Hall's residents had been diminished considerably by 1800 when the next census was made. The youngest generation was elsewhere. Mary Elizabeth may have been living with her aunt Alice, who had purchased farming property in Jamaica in 1794. The same census listed eight persons in that household; one or more could have been Banister children. Alice Martin left bequests to two of them, Alice, her namesake, and Samuel, in her will made that year. It seems very probable that at least thirteen-year-old Alice was a student in 1800, and possibly also one or both of her brothers, who were eighteen and nineteen. Jamaica had better schools than were available at home.

The elderly Mary Martin still enjoyed her dower rights at Rock Hall and had one daughter, Rachel Banister, there with her. Samuel and Thomas are each listed as a head of household but the location is the same for each—Rock Hall. There were now fourteen slaves.

Samuel had given his power of attorney to Thomas Banister in 1792, and he named him executor of his will in 1802, perhaps at the onset of "the lingering illness" that led to his death in August 1806. By that will Thomas was left "100 Spanish Milled Dollars to buy a mourning ring for my sake, and all my guns, also my gold watch chain and key," the only such mementos in the will. It was also Thomas who made the inventory of Samuel's estate after his friend's death.

A familiar human situation of the day is also revealed in Samuel's will. The only slaves freed by this document were the five children of "my late mulatto woman Molly." Polly was to receive an annuity of 250 Spanish Milled Dollars for life. Henry and George received land in the Town of St. Johns, Antigua, and "£200 current money of said Island lent upon bond to Henry." Peter and Edward were to "be kept at school until well versed in reading, writing & arithmatic & then bound to some trade until they have learned it, then each of them must have a complete set of tools for their trades and 250 Spanish Milled Dollars, they are to be supported until they have learned their trades." The large proportion of the will taken up with these practical and caring arrangements strongly suggests that Samuel's concern was paternal.

5

Federal-Period Alterations

AT SOME TIME AROUND 1790, the residents of Rock Hall refurbished the two west-side parlors on the main floor. Decorative changes may have been made for the grand party given in honor of a niece, already mentioned, or perhaps just to bring the most public rooms up-to-date in the popular new style taken up by the wealthy in the years of the new Federal government established in 1789.

In America the term "Federal style" is given to this phase of classical design, which followed the weightier plasticity of Georgian-period work. The more delicate, lighter classicism was brought to America through the publications of two Scottish brothers, Robert and James Adam. The Adam brothers had traveled to Rome, Pompeii, and Herculaneum to study the architectural ruins of the ancient world. Their vocabulary of elegant classical ornament in shallow relief swept England in the 1760s and 1770s and was quickly taken up in France and America.

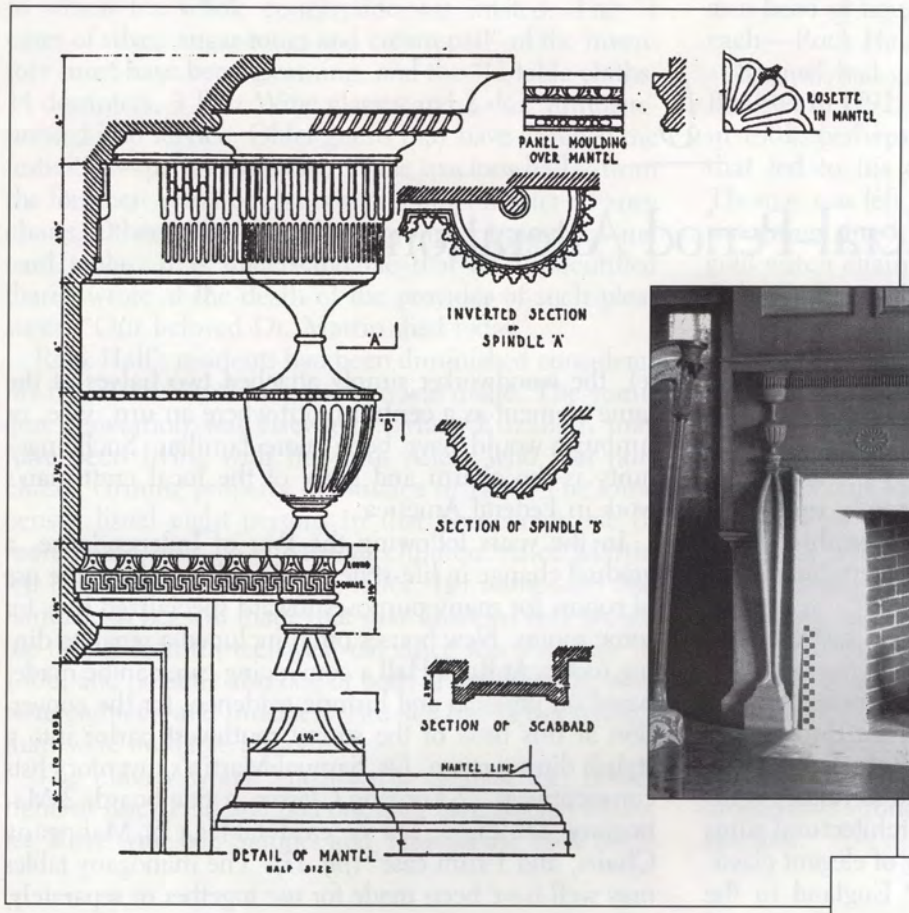
The focal point of each of the two large paneled parlors was a central fireplace with a mantel and overmantel on the west wall. Each had storage to either side of the fireplace and a painting framed by moldings above. Until this alteration these mantel walls looked much like that in the northeast parlor as it exists today (*see Chap. 3, fig. 8, top*). Now both rooms had fine new mantels installed. No architectural feature could more effectively introduce the new fashion. The wood mantels were probably made in a cabinetmaker's shop by using pattern books illustrating the delicate classical moldings that characterize Federal work *(fig. 10)*. Both display bands of carved rope and cartridge-like forms. Light plays in shallow staccato patterns over the precisely carved reliefs. Elongated tapered pilasters flank the marble frame that surrounds each fireplace opening. The unusual spoon-handle shape was also used at Gracie Mansion, Manhattan, on an exterior Federal door surround of about 1800 *(fig. 11)*. At Rock Hall, the shape became a leitmotif over the centuries.

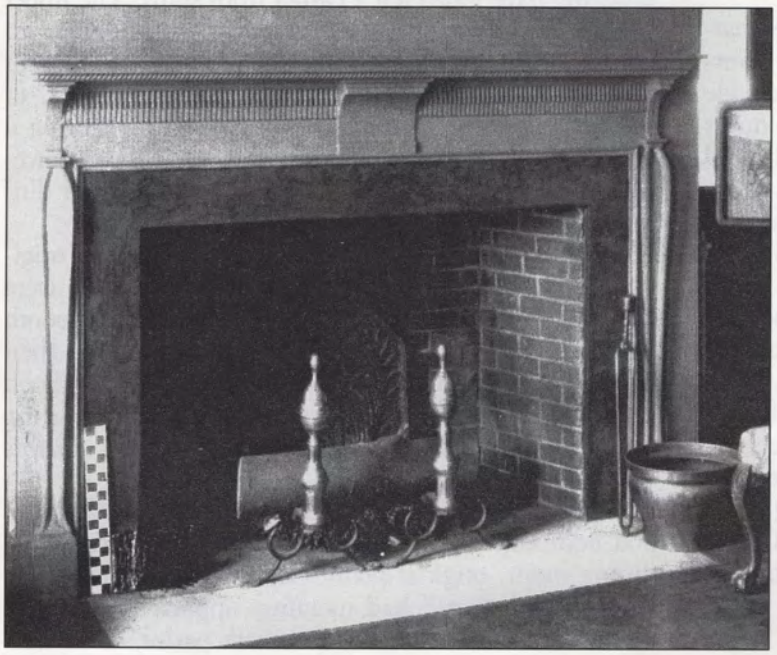
The northwest parlor mantel in particular demonstrates the inventiveness of American craftsmen in using Adamesque forms *(fig. 12)*. There is no slavish copying here. Having created the elaborate lathe-turned and gouge-decorated goblet shapes at each end of the mantel, the woodworker simply attached two halves of the same element as a central motif where an urn, vase, or sunburst would have been more familiar. Such ingenuity is the charm and glory of the local craftsman's work in Federal America.

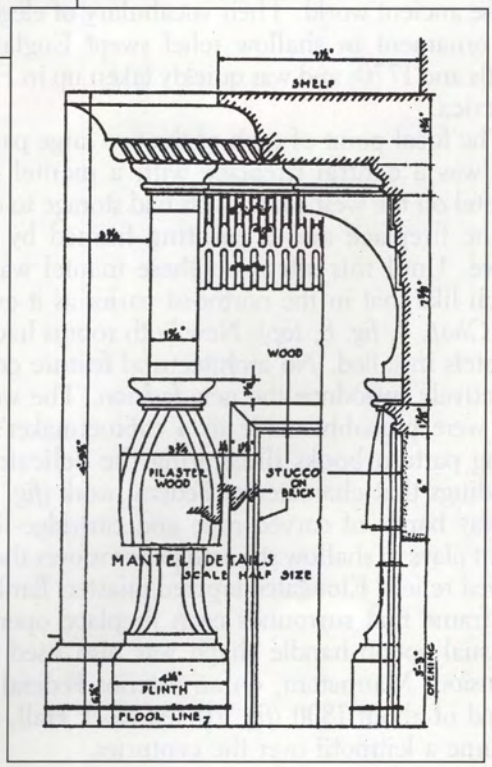
In the years following the War of Independence, a gradual change in life-style developed away from the use of rooms for many purposes toward specialized uses for some rooms. New houses often included a separate dining room. At Rock Hall a convincing case can be made, based on physical and historic evidence, for the conversion at this time of the sunny southwest parlor into a stylish dining room. Dr. Samuel Martin's inventory lists consecutively, "2 Looking Glasses, a side board, 2 Mahogany Tables, 3 Tea & card tables, 12 Mahogany Chairs, and 1 rum case" *(fig. 13)*. The mahogany tables may well have been made for use together or separately, and a crumbcloth or painted canvas floor cloth would probably have protected a carpet from spills. The upper surfaces of sideboards made excellent display areas for crystal, silver, and inlaid-wood knife boxes. Sideboards sometimes had lead-lined drawers fitted for bottles, or the central space between legs was used for storing a portable cellaret on wheels. Other drawers were convenient for linens and flatware. When not in use for dining, chairs were neatly lined up along the walls.

Investigation of paint layers has revealed that the original cupboard and closet in the southwest parlor were removed, probably in the last decade of the eighteenth century. The rectangular alcoves exposed were then paneled and painted like the rest of the room. Such niches were popular in Federal interiors for displaying the new sideboards, settees, or pier tables with mirrors above.

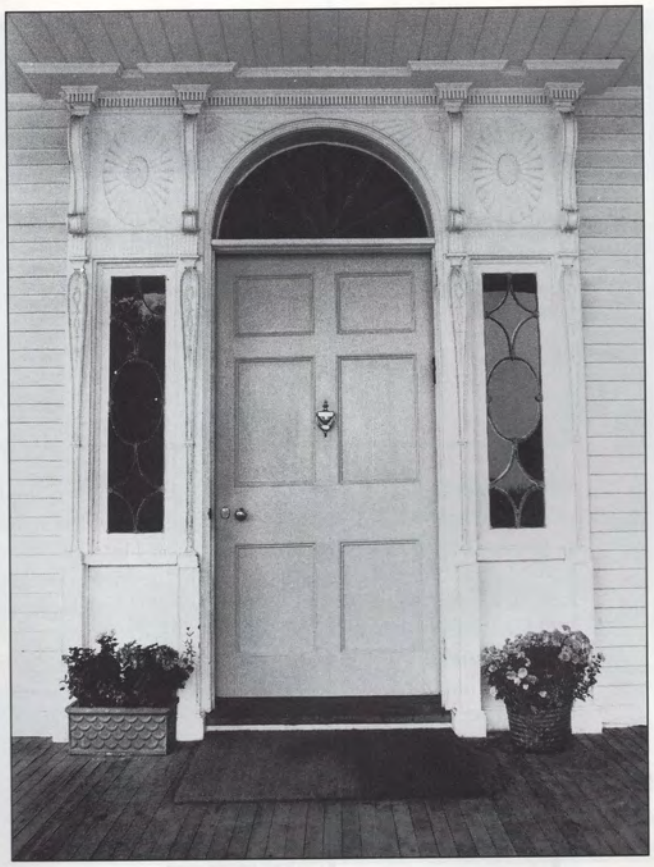
Other enrichments of the two parlors were alterations and additions to the paneling and fresh paint. In the dining room, original plain wide horizontal planks beneath the chair rail had moldings applied to form the appearance of paneling. In the north parlor, an unusually wide baseboard was added and there was extensive rearranging of paneling over the new higher mantel. The dining room was painted a creamy tan; the fine parlor repeated the dark cream of the first Georgian finish. Both rooms appear to have had painted mahog-



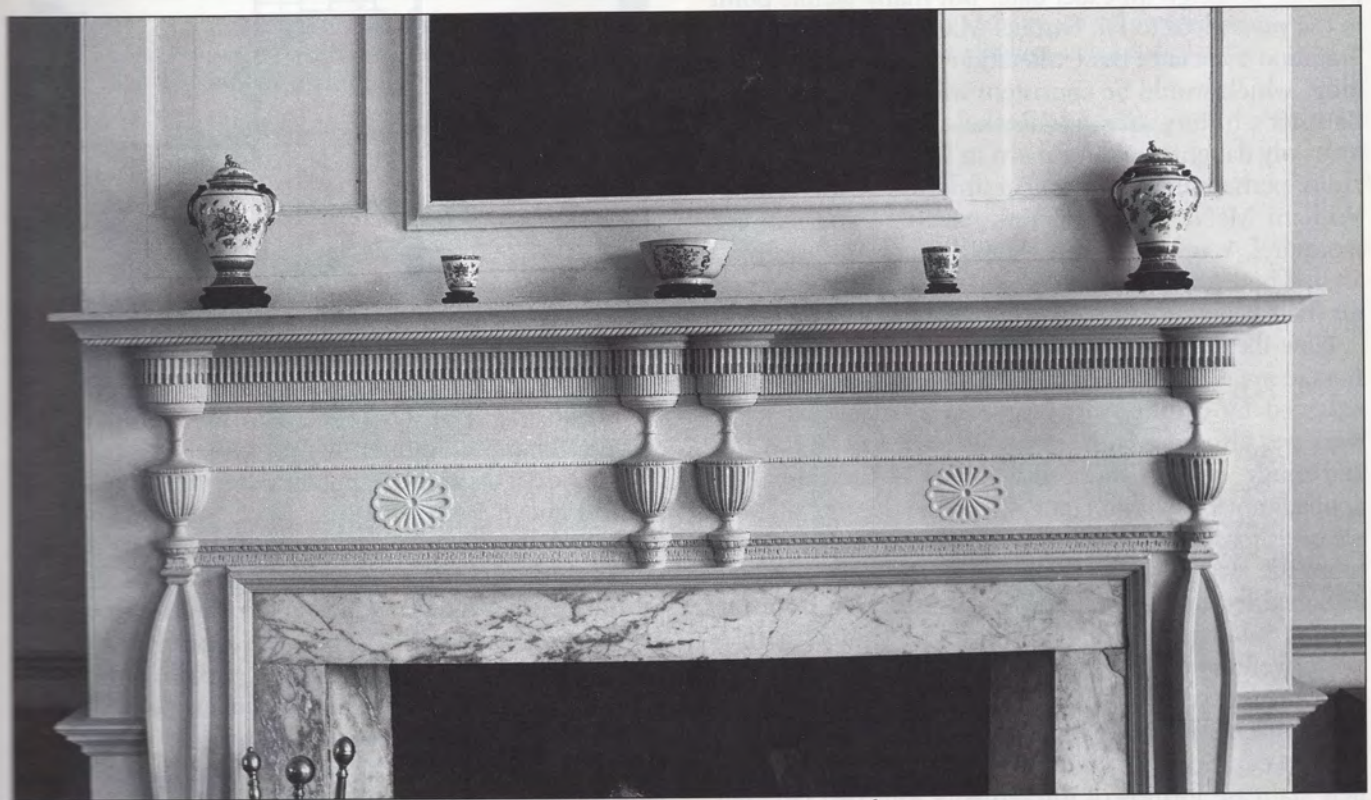




10. Photographs and drawings of details of the mantels in the north and south west-side rooms. ***Top:*** The spirited Federal-period mantel in the northwest parlor, ca. 1790. The confident handling of the swell of the pilasters suggests that this could have been the first expression of that motif at Rock Hall executed by a talented and inventive woodworker. ***Bottom:*** The more restrained and architectural Federal-period mantel in the southwest parlor, which was transformed ca. 1790 into a stylish dining room. *Photographs and drawings of the mantels, HABS, 1935.*

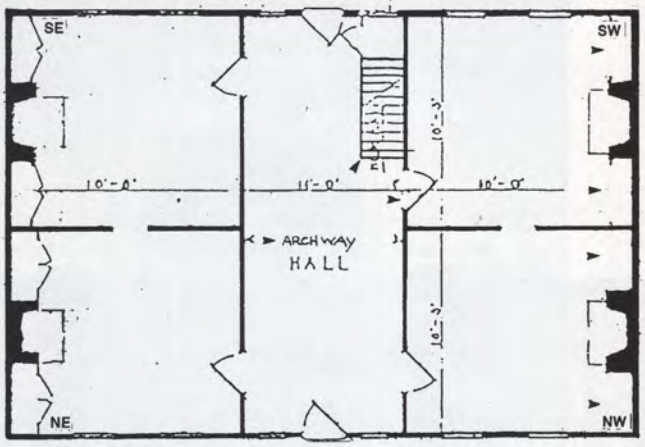


11. Federal-style exterior door and surround, Gracie Mansion, East 88th Street, Manhattan. Ezra Weeks is now thought to be the probable architect-builder for Archibald Gracie's original house and its enlargement early in the nineteenth century. Weeks was also employed by Alexander Hamilton and Rufus King and was the builder of City Hall. Certainly these decorated "spoon handle" pilasters share, at the least, a common source of inspiration with those on Rock Hall's Federal-style mantels. *Photograph, Simon Benepe; City of New York Parks & Recreation.*



12. This detail of the Federal mantel ca. 1790 in the northwest parlor illustrates the skill, precision, and flair in design of local cabinetmakers in America in the popular new fashion. *Photograph, Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities (SPLIA).*

13. A handsome sideboard, such as this mahogany American Sheraton-style example (ca. 1790–1800), may have graced the new dining room at Rock Hall. Stringing of holly delicately outlines the parts, which move in a serpentine curve formed by concave and convex storage areas. Corner accents are fan motifs of inlaid satinwood. *Metropolitan Museum of Art.*



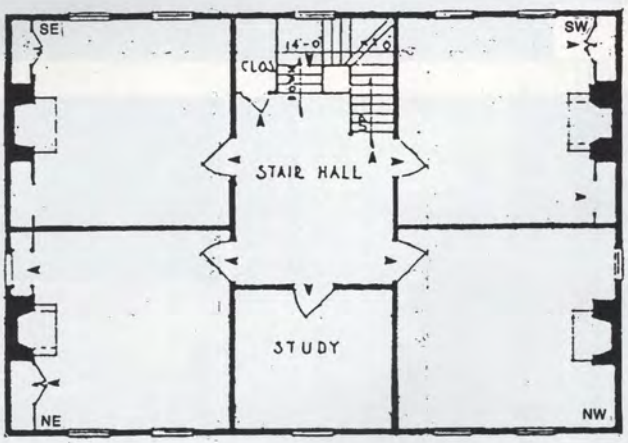
14. Plans of first and second floors with arrows indicating Federal-period alterations. ***Top:*** Note the new position of the staircase and of the door to the southwest dining room. The new hall archway and alcoves flanking the fireplaces in the west-side rooms are indicated. ***Bottom:*** All four doors from the bedchambers to the hall have been moved. Note the new location of the stairs from the first floor and the addition of the staircase to the third floor. There are a new hall closet by the stairs and a central room on the north wall between the bedchambers, two of which now have storage spaces added to their mantel walls. *Plans adapted from HABS drawings, 1935.*

any wood-graining finishes on both sides of their connecting door and on the doors to the hall.

Perhaps inspired by the success of these cosmetic changes, a much more ambitious alteration was undertaken in the early years of the new century. It is not possible to assign an exact date, but many factors point to the years close to Dr. Samuel Martin's death in 1806. Tradition associates these alterations with a family wedding, which would be consistent with the facts of Alice Banister's history. She was Rachel and Thomas Banister's only daughter and was born in 1787 at Rock Hall. A child, perhaps the first from her unfortunate marriage to William McNeill, a New York merchant and faithless scoundrel, was baptized in 1808. A Rock Hall stylishly altered both inside and out could have been the setting for their wedding.

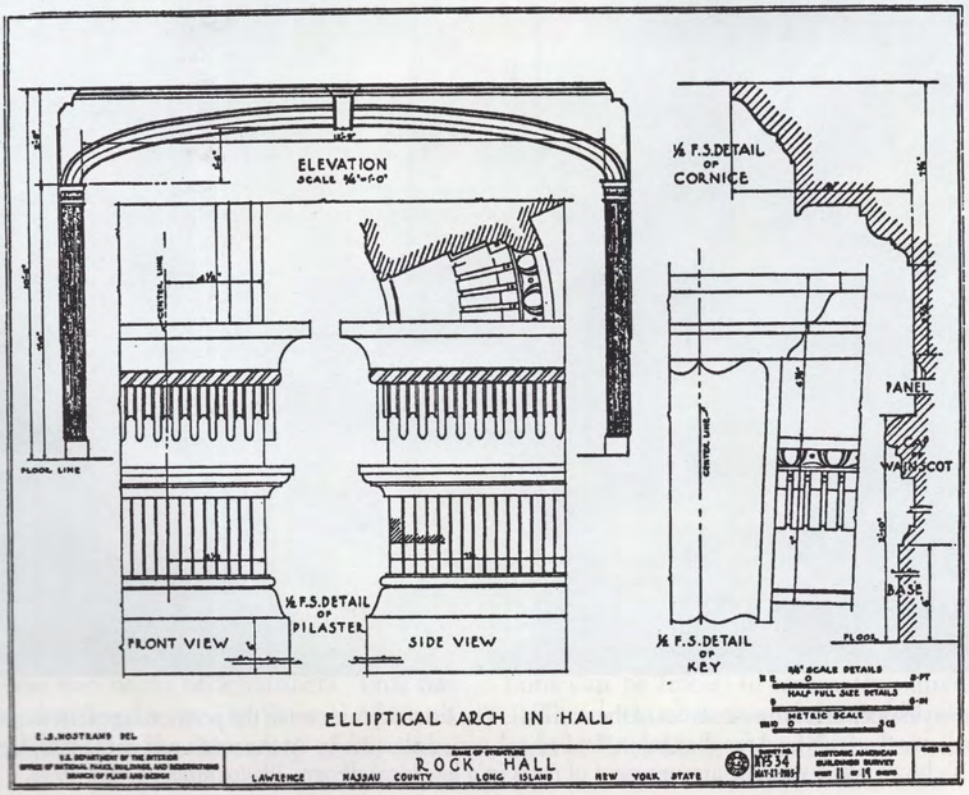
Now the northwest parlor also gave up its utilitarian storage areas on the mantel wall and was consequently enlarged by ceiling-height paneled alcoves. Extensive work was also done to improve the paneling on the east and south walls. A fresh coat of dark cream paint was applied; obviously that color was found appropriate and pleasing for this gracious formal parlor. In the dining room the alcoves created in the first alteration were now enriched by arches with side brackets derived from the mantel pilaster design. The room was painted a sunflower yellow with tan-cream trim.

Changes were structural as well as stylistic. The original hall stairs joined the first two floors in a single run, set between doors on the west side of the halls. Now a new staircase formed of three flights with two landings was compressed into the south end of the house *(fig. 14)*. An elegant and beautifully executed Federal-style elliptical archway was installed midway in the length of the

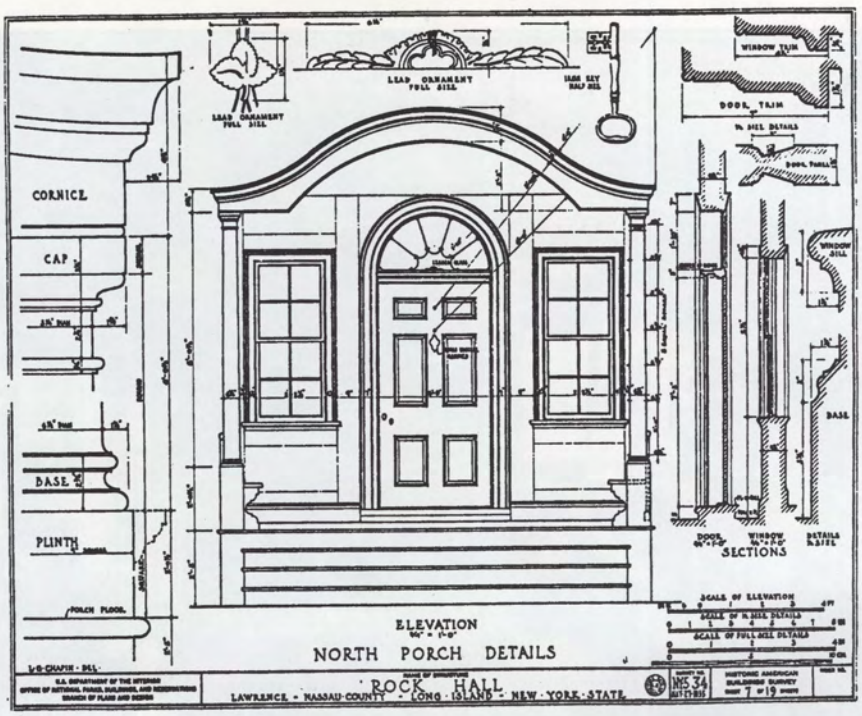


main hall *(fig. 15)*. The effect was to create a stylish entrance chamber into the home, which was enhanced by new sidelights at the north doorway with a half-round fanlight above *(fig. 16)*.

Beyond the archway, at the south end of the hall, sacrifices of symmetry had to be made. The doorway into the dining room was moved forward to accommodate the new staircase location. The window at the west side of the central south door was concealed from view by the paneled wall enclosing the underside of the stair *(fig. 17)*. Unmoved, the window is still part of the exterior symmetry of the south facade *(fig. 18)* and provides light for steps leading to the cellar. Food prepared in the detached kitchen was probably carried up those cellar stairs, having been brought into the house through a central door in the west stone foundation. The many

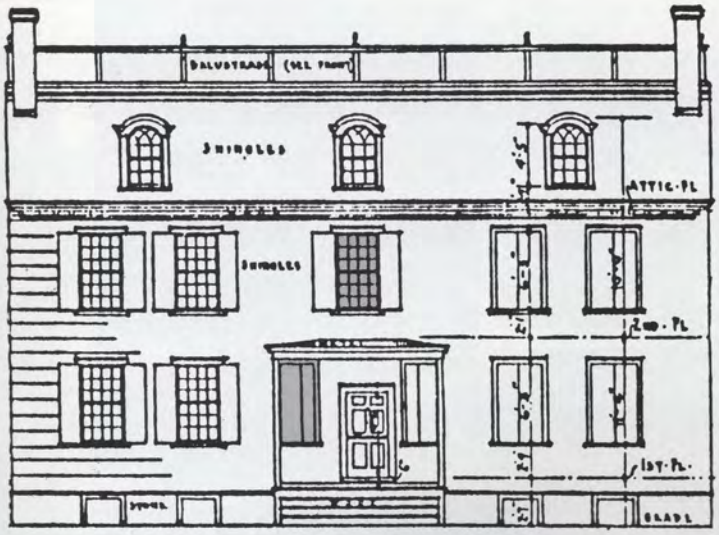


15. ***Top:*** View of the first-floor stairhall looking southward, showing the Federal-style archway and the new position of the stairs at the southwest corner. *Photograph, SPLIA, 1976.* ***Bottom:*** Details of the elliptical arch installed in the first decade of the nineteenth century. *HABS drawing, 1935.*



16. Examination of paint samples in the areas shown here indicated that the sidelights and fanlight at the north doorway were part of the Federal-period alterations. The semicircular fanlight was probably a more decorative replacement for an original rectilinear window over the door. The arched fanlight, together with the new windows to either side of the doorway, achieve the appearance of a stylish "Palladian window." *HABS drawing, 1935.*

17. Closeup view of the southwest corner of the stairhall. The loss of symmetry in the positioning of the doors leading into the hall was the price paid for changes in the Federal-period alterations. At the south end of the hall, beyond the beautiful archway, was a working arrangement of parts in a less ideal design. *Photograph, HABS, 1935.*



18. Elevation of the south facade of Rock Hall. Parts of the interior staircase can be viewed through the two windows that have been shaded—one at the west side of the central door, the other directly above the porch roof. The door had to be moved a little to the east to accommodate the new scheme, but the external symmetry was preserved for all but the most observant viewers. *Drawing, HABS, 1935.*

19. The 1806 inventory lists household vessels for food and drink made of pewter, earthenware, china, and silver. A "plait warmer, water dishes and 12 water plaits" would have retained warmth in food prepared in the detached kitchen. This blue-and-white porcelain water plate was made in China in the early nineteenth century for the export trade. It has double walls and two lips, one of which is open so that the inner chamber can be filled with hot water. *The Brooklyn Museum, Gift of the Winfield Foundation, The Helena Woolworth McCann Trade Porcelain Collection.*

dishes with covers and hot water compartments listed in the inventory become understandable *(fig. 19)*.

In the second-floor hallway all four bedchamber doors had to be moved to provide space for the repositioned stairs *(fig. 14, bottom)*. A new room was constructed between the two north bedchambers. This has traditionally been considered to be Dr. Samuel Martin's personal study, and items in the inventory of his estate were perhaps in this new room—a thermometer, a closet of medicine, a secretary, four trunks, two maps, and a reading desk. The inventory also noted that there was $1,030 "cash found in the desk." The first painted finish on this room was a dark tawny gray.

Two bedchambers now had storage spaces added to their mantel walls, and three new Federal-style mantels replaced Georgian originals *(fig. 20)*. The southeast bedchamber was passed over in this massive alteration plan, perhaps because it was the finest of the original bedchambers or because its owner did not want change. It was necessary, however, to move the doorway to the hall to accommodate a new upper-hall closet and the new position of the stairs.

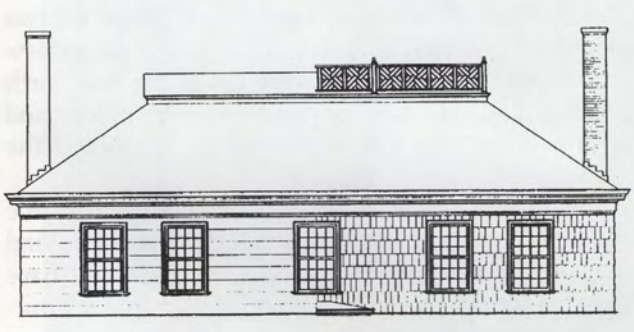
The havoc this structural work must have brought to the household would have necessitated the family's moving out. Even the roof framing was altered from the original lower hipped-gambrel to the more spacious gambrel roof with six dormers seen today *(fig. 21)*. New stairs to a significantly enlarged living space under the new roof were constructed.

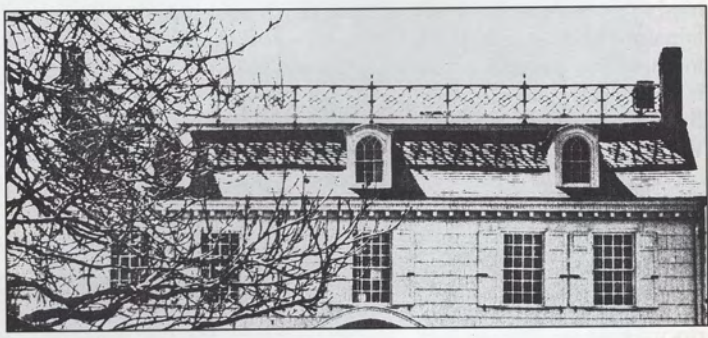
A roof balustrade designed in Thomas Chippendale's "Chinese" manner was placed at the level where the two slopes of the gambrel roof meet. The roofs of the six new dormers repeat the curved roof design of the new north porch *(fig. 22)*. Beautifully crisp classical guilloche and rope moldings, along with modillions, enriched the original simple cornice *(fig. 23)*.

At this time architects were just emerging from the ranks of housewright–master builders. The scope and character of the redesigning of Rock Hall would have demanded the skills of a trained builder–architect familiar with the new Federal style. An attribution has been elusive, but sources for distinctive features of the additions can be traced in fascinating directions.

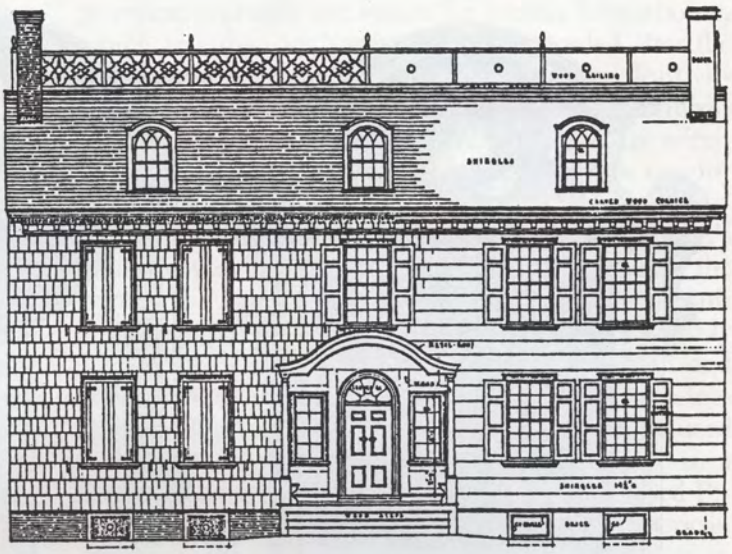
The unusual design of the north porch roof and dormers at Rock Hall, a modified ogee curve, has not been

20. The southwest bedchamber had a new Federal-style mantel and flanking cupboard and closet storage areas installed. The room was given a fresh coat of white paint when this work was done in the first decade of the nineteenth century. The paneling above the mantel was left unchanged and has the distinction of being the only raised paneling in Rock Hall. *Photograph, HABS, 1935.*

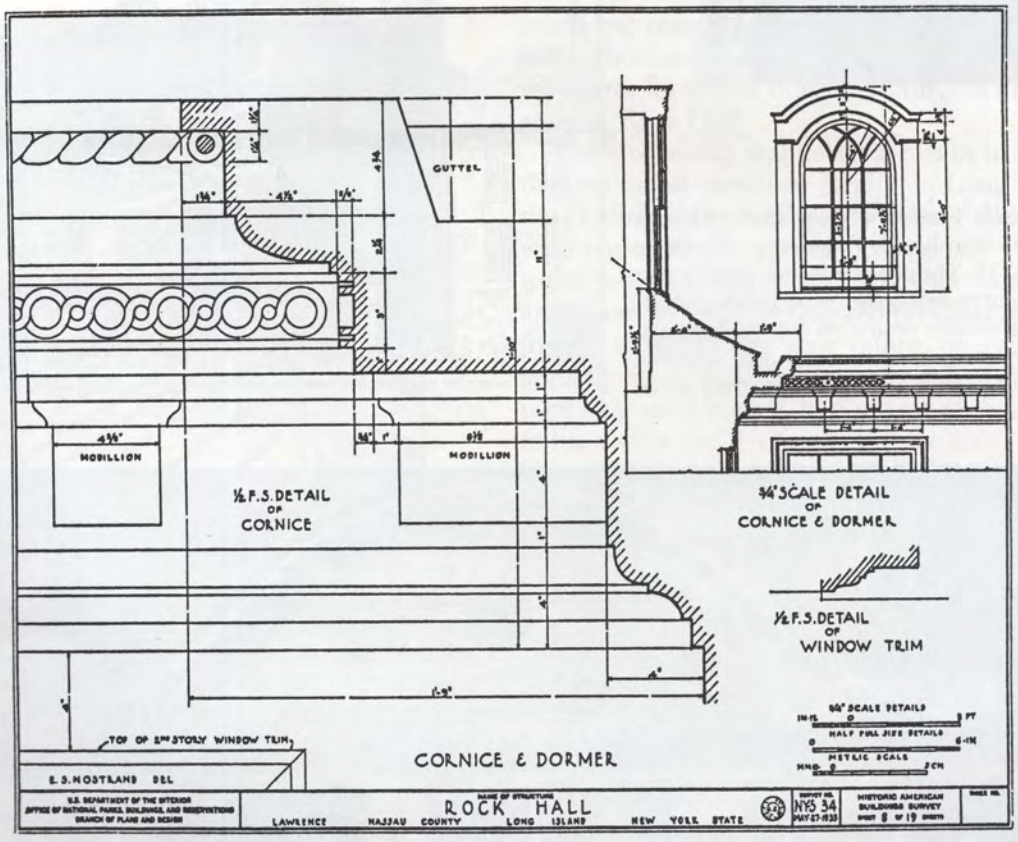




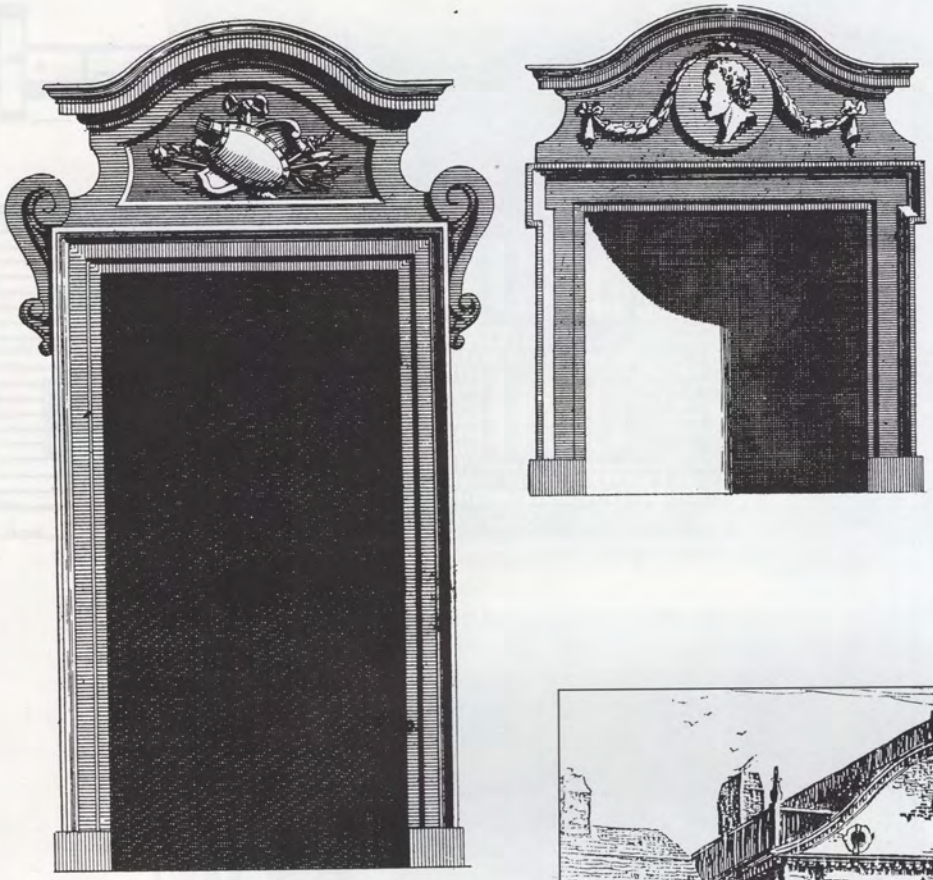
21. ***Left:*** The conjectural appearance of the original roof (ca. 1768) based on evidence uncovered in the physical examination of the roof framing. The possibility of a decorative roof balustrade is raised by letters written by the painter, John Singleton Copley. *Drawing, Brent Kovalchik.* ***Right:*** The altered gambrel roof (ca. 1805/6) with Chinese Chippendale–style roof balustrade and dormer windows. The roof railing is known to have been replaced at least twice by using templates for exact reproduction of the design. *Photograph, Rock Hall Collection.*



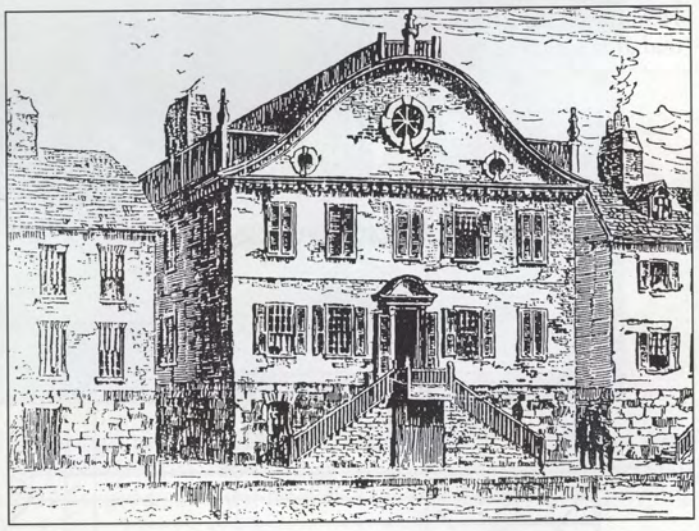
22. Photograph and measured drawing illustrating the similar roof forms of the new north porch and dormers. The round-headed windows with Gothic pointed muntins in the dormers appear in many of the pattern books used by builders. The type appears at Rock Hall well before similar dormer windows were installed at St. George's parsonage, Hempstead, the Platt-Lamb house at Fort Salonga, and the Joseph Lloyd manor house, Lloyd Harbor. *Photograph and drawing, HABS, 1935.*



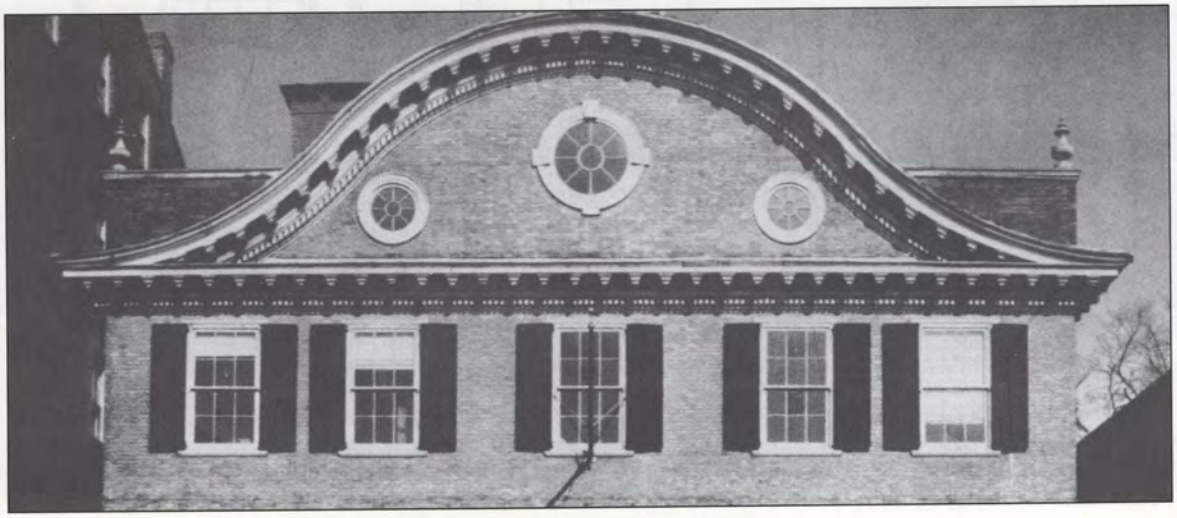
23. These beautiful classical rope and guilloche moldings that were added in the early years of the nineteenth century can be seen at Rock Hall in their original handcarved state on the north-facade cornice and in machine-made reproductions on the south side. Saltwater breezes and hot sun are more destructive than harsh winter conditions. *Drawing, HABS, 1935.*



24. Details from James Gibbs's *The Book of Architecture*, Plate 107, 1728, showing his use of a modified ogee arch on designs for a doorway and a mantel.

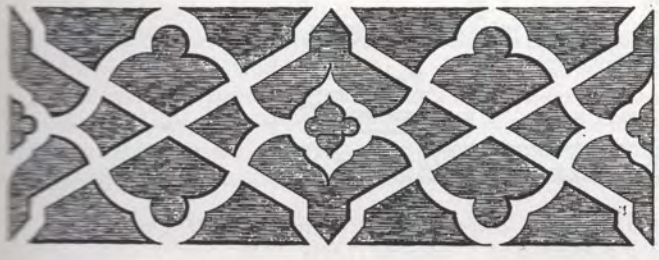


25. ***Right:*** The Main Street facade of Joseph Brown's own house, Providence, Rhode Island, 1774. The curved baroque arch forms a pediment spanning the entire facade and appears as smaller pediments over the front and side doorways (only the front door is visible here). ***Below:*** A photographic record of the pediment, made in 1939.



found elsewhere on Long Island. The source is the English architect James Gibbs's *The Book of Architecture* (1728), where the baroque form appears among ornamental caps for mantels, window, and door openings *(fig. 24)*. Gibbs had an immense influence on building design in America, including that of Thomas Jefferson's Monticello. Closer to our story is the home that Joseph Brown designed for himself in 1774 in Providence, Rhode Island. A member of the illustrious Brown family, Joseph was an amateur scientist and architect. *The Book of Architecture* was in his own library, and he used it in the planning of five important buildings in Providence with which he was associated. In his own home Brown boldly adapted Gibbs's arch to form a pediment on the street facade and repeated it on the porch roofs over the main and side doors *(fig. 25)*. A balustrade of intricate "Chinese" design was the crowning ornament of the roof.

Providence is also the site of a second influential home—the Nightingale house, built in 1792 for the merchant Colonel Joseph Nightingale. There the similarities to the roof railing at Rock Hall are striking *(fig. 26)*. Thomas Banister's daughter Alice made a painting of the Nightingale house, which hung in Rock Hall *(fig. 27)*.



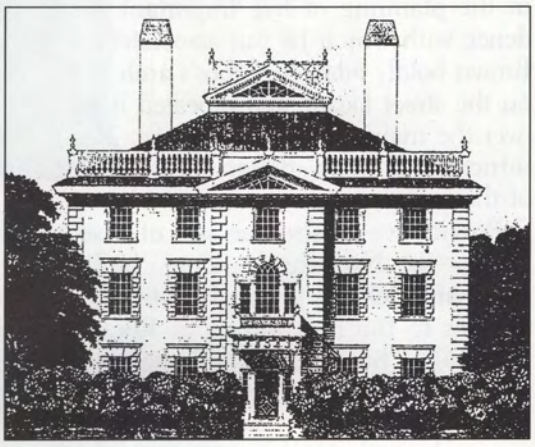
26. ***Top:*** Detail of the upper roof balustrade of the Nightingale house in Providence, Rhode Island, 1792, attributed to Caleb Ormsbee, architect. ***Bottom:*** The patterns of the Nightingale house balustrade and that at Rock Hall ultimately derive from such designs as this, in plate CXCVI of Thomas Chippendale's *The Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker's Director* of 1762 (third edition).

Thomas Banister was forbidden residency in his birth province, and only one visit to his brother John's home, which was then in Narragansett, is recorded after the Revolution. His daughter, however, at the very least visited Providence and perhaps attended one of the finishing schools for young ladies there. Music, embroidery, and painting, accomplishments these schools taught, were among Alice's skills.

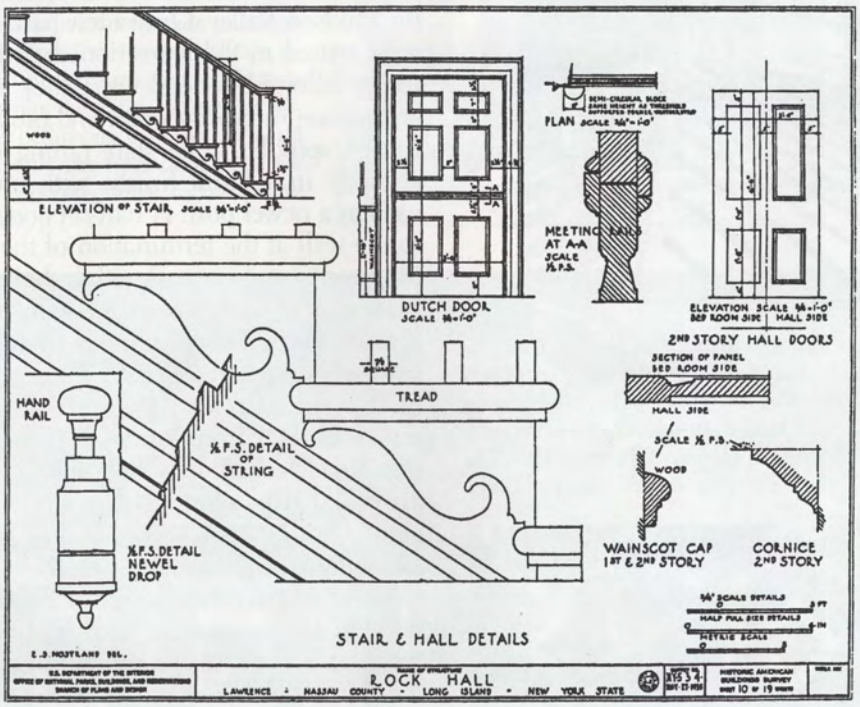
The cultural environment of Thomas Banister's youthful years was one in which fine homes were the norm. His father's associates were affluent merchants who displayed their wealth in homes that were lavishly finished with arched niches, ornamental mantels and overmantels, and carved moldings. English architectural publications provided models that were reproduced and adapted by the woodworking skills available in a shipbuilding center. Thomas's own father employed Peter Harrison, who has been called the first American architect, although for him designing buildings was an avocation—"a delightful recreation." Harrison took his plan for a summerhouse for the Redwood estate at Newport from *A Book of Architecture*. This highly qualified gentleman–architect was married to Thomas's maternal aunt, and the design of one of Thomas's father's homes is attributed to him. This cultural heritage was something the forfeiture of property and changing fortunes could not erase. Circumstantial evidence strongly supports Thomas Banister as the Rhode Island connection, the source for several unusual features of the major alteration at Rock Hall.

There were also architectural details in the new work that are found elsewhere locally on Long Island and in the Hudson Valley. Only a few parts of the original stairs were reused in the repositioned staircase. The new balusters followed Federal taste; they are slender, tapered, and square in cross-section and probably replaced lathe-turned spindles. The stair railing on each floor ends abruptly in a blunt finish, with only a larger baluster used as a newel post. A half-section of the newel is fixed to the wall at the termination of the stair on each level. Step ends are decorated with a shallow, flat scroll design fashioned of thin wood cut with a fret saw *(fig. 28)*. Simple Federal-style mantels in two bedchambers are similarly designed *(fig. 29)*. These features all appear in St. George's Rectory, Hempstead, which James Mackrell, a builder from Jamaica, Queens, erected in 1793 *(fig. 30)*. Mackrell may well have been the builder again around 1810, when Rufus King enlarged his mid-eighteenth-century home, also in Jamaica. All of these elements are again present there.

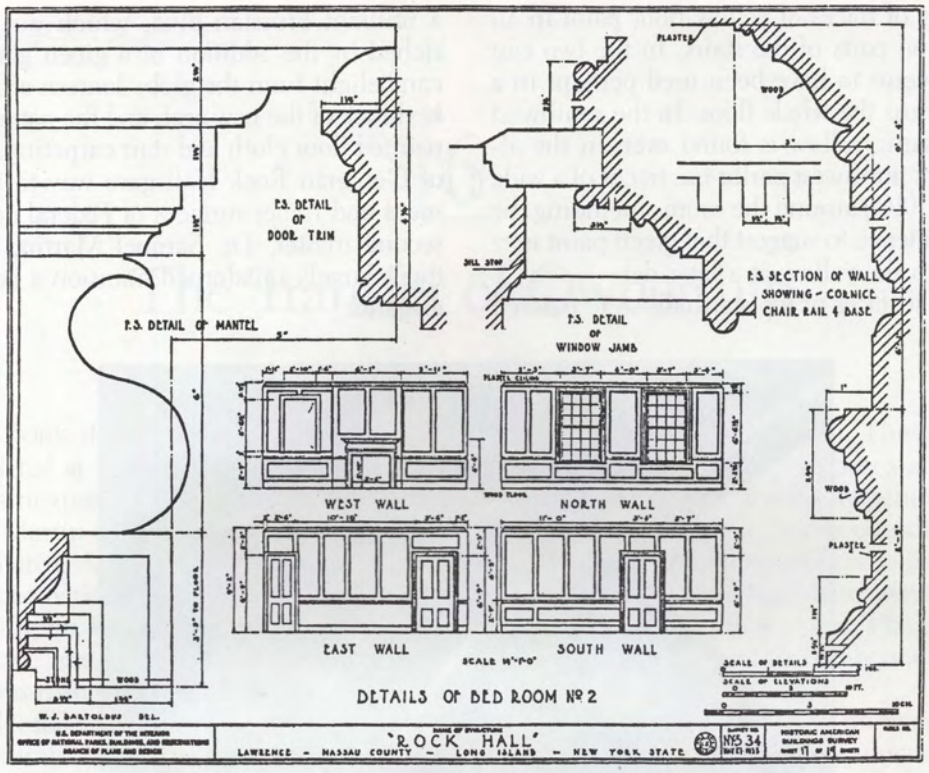
Color was another aspect of Federal design in America. As techniques for investigating layers of historic paint have improved, a much brighter world of color in the homes of Americans after the Revolution has been discovered. A fascinating feature of the Federal-style refurbishing of the main-floor rooms at Rock Hall is the



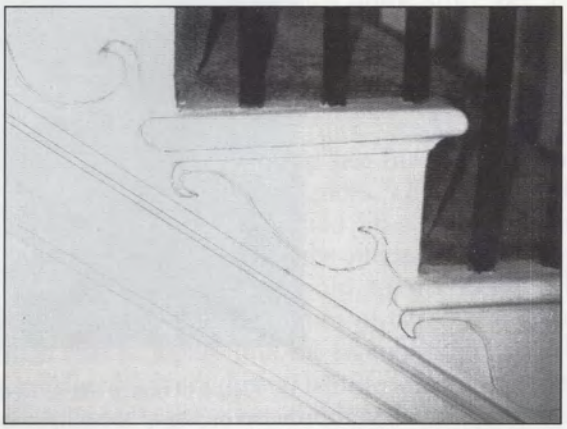
27. The mantel wall of the northeast bedchamber where two of Alice Banister's watercolors still hung in 1935. ***Top right:*** The larger picture represents *Mr. Nightingale's House*; efforts in locating this painting have been unsuccessful. It is tempting to think of this bedchamber as that used by the artist's parents, Rachel and Thomas Banister. *Photograph, HABS, 1935.* ***Bottom right:*** An elevation of the west facade of the Nightingale house. The Brown family acquired the house ca. 1810. Today it is the John Nicholas Brown Center for the Study of American Civilization.

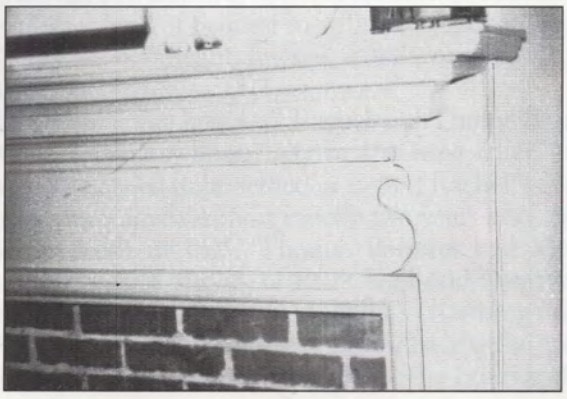


28. Step-end scroll ornamentation at Rock Hall that is also found in the St. George's Rectory, Hempstead (1793), and at the Rufus King Manor, Jamaica, Queens (ca. 1810, period of enlargement). *Drawing, HABS, 1935.*



29. Architectural details of the northwest bedchamber. The S-curve ornamental ends of the fascia, the flat surface of the mantel beneath the shelf, are similar in spirit to the step-end scrolls. The Hempstead parsonage and Rufus King Manor again have strikingly similar mantels. See also the mantel in the northeast bedchamber, fig. 27. *Drawing, HABS, 1935.*





30. Architectural finishing details at St. George's Rectory, Hempstead (1793), are similar to those at Rock Hall that are part of the early-nineteenth-century alterations. ***Left:*** Simple square balusters and newel posts of the stair railing with blunt-ending handrails and half-newels attached to the stair wall beneath the chair rail. ***Top right:*** Decorative scrolls on step-ends. ***Bottom right:*** S-curved mantel fascia ornaments.

presence still today of traces of yellow floor paint in all of the rooms and on parts of the stairs. In the two east parlors the paint seems to have been used perhaps in a random pattern across the whole floor. In the southwest dining room the same yellow is found even in the alcoves. The adjacent northwest parlor has traces of a wide yellow border (6″–10¼″) around the room, including the alcoves; there is evidence to suggest that green paint may have been added to the yellow at a later date.

All of the wood surfaces of the stairhalls were painted a brilliant Prussian blue, which was softened and enriched by the addition of a green glaze *(fig. 31)*. With candlelight from the globe lantern affixed to the central keyblock of the new arch and the patterns and colors of a painted floor cloth and stair carpeting, the bold austerity of Georgian Rock Hall gave way to the greater refinement and richer surfaces of Federal design. Rock Hall's second master, Dr. Samuel Martin, had given his father's largely unadorned mansion a new cloak of stylish elegance.

31. Detail of one of the reeded pilasters and its ornately carved capital and the springing of the elliptical arch that spans the stairhall (ca. 1805/6). *Photograph, Linda Barreira.*

6

The Transfer of Ownership

PERHAPS EVEN BEFORE the alterations and embellishments were completed at Rock Hall, a series of deaths had changed the structure of the family residing there.

Mary Yeamans Martin died on August 30, 1805. She had lived on her native Antigua with her husband, Josiah Sr., during three periods that we know of; in Watertown, Massachusetts; on Long Island at the Hermitage for twenty-one years, and in a humble farm dwelling while Rock Hall was rising. Finally, Mary lived at Rock Hall for the last decade of Josiah's life and for another twenty-seven years until her own death. She bore nine children who survived at least to early adulthood but lost several others, as briefly noted in family letters. Josiah sought to give her all of the luxuries of their class even in the early days, when he was pressed by debts. In her final years Mary certainly saw some, if not all, of the grand alterations that kept Rock Hall in step with changing tastes.

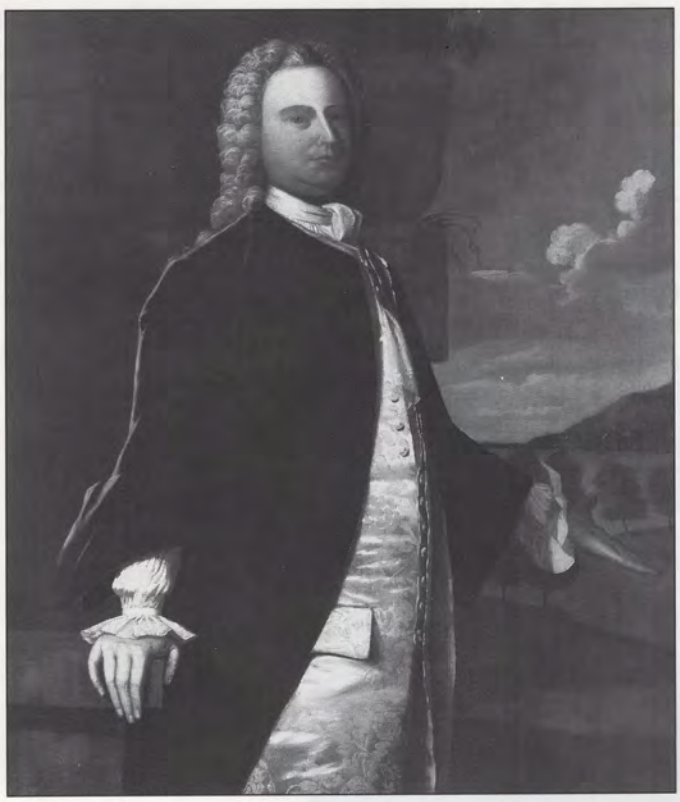
Mary's son, Dr. Samuel Martin, died at Rock Hall less than eight months later on April 21, 1806. His will had been drawn four years earlier, and it named Thomas Banister, as we have seen, as his executor. Some special aspects of the will have been mentioned. The consequences of Samuel's sense of obligation to provide for his sisters on Long Island and his strong inclination to follow the traditional primogeniture system of his forebears proved disastrous. Rachel and Alice inherited Rock Hall, but the Antiguan plantation, as well as all money, books, and papers, went to the surviving male member of the family, William, who was living in England. A stipulation in the will requiring any heir of William's who was not a Martin to take the family name makes clear the strength of Samuel's conviction that the Martin fortune and name should be passed on.

Documented events at Rock Hall after Samuel's death are few. Thomas Banister suffered the loss of his only surviving brother, John Banister, Jr., of Newport, Rhode Island, the next year, 1807. Oil portraits of their parents, painted in 1748 by Robert Feke, were left to Thomas and so came to adorn Rock Hall's walls (*fig.* 32). In later years they were mistakenly identified for some decades as likenesses of Josiah and Mary Martin. In June 1808 Rachel and Thomas became grandparents to Alice's son, Thomas Pelham McNeill. The same year the Cornell Partition Suit, a dispute over the ownership of two thousand acres in the Rockaway peninsula area, tied up holdings of land Samuel had bequeathed to his relatives. It took a year for commissioners to resolve the conflict, but after June of 1809 legitimate owners were free to sell their assigned lots as they chose. The Banisters and Alice Martin did sell parts of their inheritance, but the prices recorded are modest.

Alice Martin's will gives us an insight into a difficult family situation. It was a document filled with good intentions, but, as with her brother Dr. Samuel's will, it was not destined to succeed in its purpose. Alice may have drafted her own will in March of 1811 since many words are mispelled; it was probated in September 1815. Like Samuel, Alice had never married and she seems to have run a farm at her Jamaica home since her assets there are listed as stock and farming utensils. By 1811 she was aware of serious flaws in the character of William McNeill, her niece Alice's husband. She specifically declared that her bequests to Alice should be her separate estate "no way subject to her husbands demands debts aleinations or Incumbrances." Further, her half share of Rock Hall was to be sold "in a convenient time after my decease and out of the money to be obtained therefrom $500. shall be paid to my neice Alice McNeill and the residue put out in Good real security by Bond and Mortgage and the interest thereof shall be paid to Alice McNeill during her life and after her death equally divided among her children."

Alice left her clothing to her sister Rachel Banister. It is a familiar kind of bequest in wills of the period and in our story is significant in that it tells us that Rachel Banister was living in 1811.

We do not know how well Rachel and Thomas Banister were managing financially by the time Alice Martin's estate needed to be settled or even if Rachel was still competent or alive. Almost exactly two years after Alice Martin's death in 1815, Thomas Banister had Morris Fosdick prepare a survey of Rock Hall and twenty-five acres of land (*Chap.* 3, *fig.* 5). Fosdick's charming image of Rock Hall is a key document in unraveling the architectural evolution of Rock Hall. All of the exterior alter-



32. ***Left:*** Portrait of John Banister (1707–1767) painted in Newport, Rhode Island, by Robert Feke (1706/7–1752). The loyalties of Banister's sons fell to opposite sides during the War of Independence. Their warm fraternal relationship survived, and at John's death the oil portraits of their parents were bequeathed to Thomas. They adorned the walls of Rock Hall from 1807, at least until the mid-1930s. *The Toledo Museum of Art; purchased with funds from the Florence Scott Libbey Bequest in Memory of her Father, Maurice A. Scott.* ***Right:*** Portrait of Hermione Pelham Banister painted by Robert Feke as a companion to her husband's portrait in 1748. The controversial military figure, Benedict Arnold (1741–1801), and Hermione Banister were both great-grandchildren of the English colonial governor of Rhode Island, Benedict Arnold (1615–1678). Her sister married Peter Harrison, the talented amateur architect who may have designed one of the homes owned by this affluent couple. *Photograph, The Detroit Institute of Arts, 1995. Gift of Dexter M. Ferry, Jr., 1944.*

ations discussed in the last chapter are present, if somewhat inaccurately represented; Fosdick was making a land survey, not a record of a house. The survey establishes August 15, 1817, as the date before which the Federal-period exterior alterations at Rock Hall had been completed.

When the survey was prepared, its purpose seems to have been to represent one-half the worth of the Rock Hall estate. The mansion on twenty-five acres of land was a parcel equal in value to the remainder of the acreage. Perhaps the plan at that moment was to sell all but the house and twenty-five acres as a fulfillment of Alice Martin's wish, but that was not done.

In September of 1817, Thomas Banister purchased from Alice Martin's estate the half-share that had been left to his daughter. The purchase price was $5,425, which was largely raised by taking a mortgage with a New York City brewer, Charles Reney, for $4,500 plus interest. Thomas Banister's name is given alone as the buyer, but all three of his children and son Josiah's wife signed the mortgage on October 20, 1817. The plan failed.

Less than a year passed before the family estate was conveyed to James Foster and Robert Bogardus for the specific purpose of selling the "Farm and Mansion House." The monies received were to be used to satisfy the mortgage, and any excess funds were to be invested in state and federal securities or bonds and mortgages. During his lifetime Thomas Banister was to receive the interest, and at his death the three children were to share the principal equally. The indenture was signed by Thomas Banister, Alice and William McNeill, Josiah M. Banister and his wife, Cornelia, and Samuel Banister. Rachel's name appeared on none of these documents.

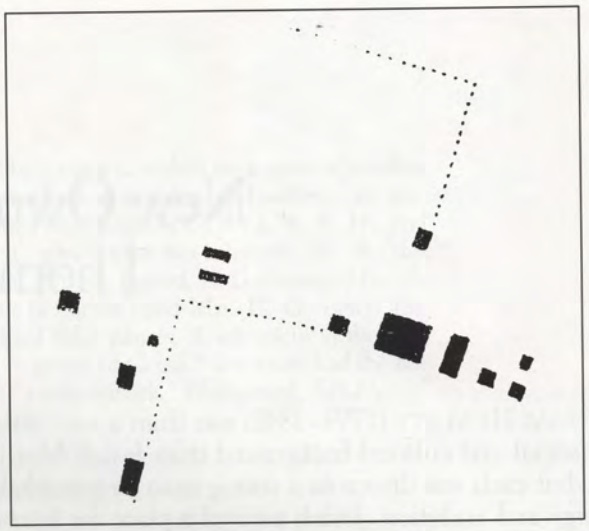
Alice McNeill's predicament must have been worsening, for in the next year her brother Samuel, a bachelor, signed over to her his share of the estate and any future proceeds from it. He, too, stipulated that these funds be "forever [kept] from the control of her husband his debts

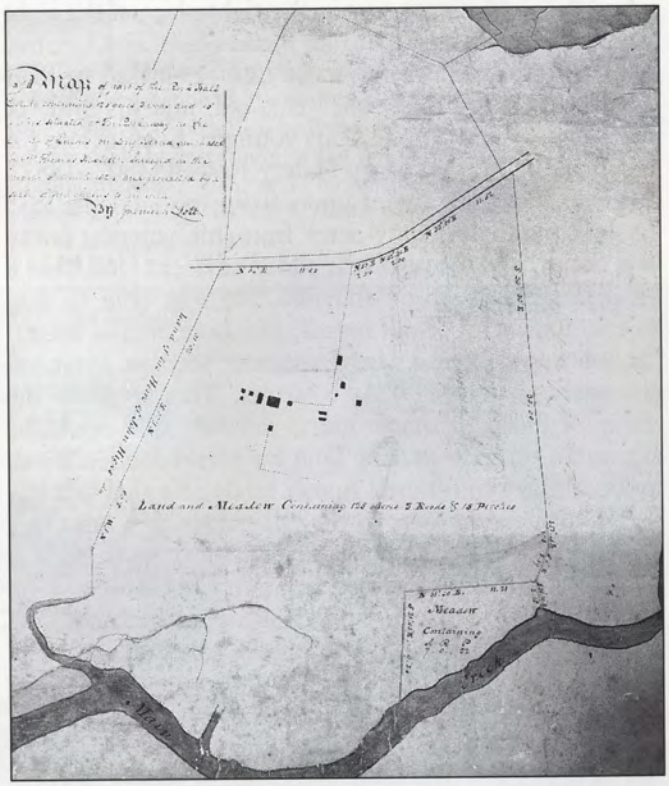
and concerns." And still the worst had not come. Alice and her children were abandoned by William McNeill. Tradition tells of six loads of furnishings being carted from the home and sold. Finally, mortally ill and without further resources, Alice, with her children, was turned out of rented quarters. The great mystery of this period in Rock Hall's story is the whereabouts of Alice's parents. This child of two affluent families, who had been given a gentlewoman's upbringing, was taken in by good Samaritans who were to become the next owners of Rock Hall.

Thomas and Mary Hewlett, a young farmer and his bride, of respected and industrious Long Island stock, cared for Alice until her death on Christmas day, 1823, at age thirty-six. In an effort to return Alice's few possessions to her errant husband through the attorney, James Foster, Thomas Hewlett learned of the impending auction of Rock Hall and was encouraged to bid. With trepidation and after family consultation, Thomas successfully bid and acquired Rock Hall and one hundred twenty-five acres of land for $5,146 on March 27, 1824. Three days earlier, Jeremiah Lott, the leading surveyor of the time, produced his survey of the land with Rock Hall and twelve outbuildings clearly recorded (*fig.* 33). A building present in the 1817 survey is missing; it seems to have been a barn.

A century later Anna Sanderson Hand (1864–1933), Thomas and Mary's granddaughter, was the unofficial Hewlett family historian. In 1924 she collected all she could learn about Rock Hall. Her record of this family oral history, set down by her brother, James Monroe Hewlett, describes the state of the house and farm when Thomas and his family moved in: "The barn had been destroyed by negroes who set it on fire shooting cats underneath. The out-building on the West was separated from the house and was occupied by an old colored couple named Quaugh and Nannie, remnants of Dr. Martin's slaves. The house was approached by a winding road entering further to the East than at present, through orchards, and there were a number of detached buildings to the West of the Mansion."

This is the setting at the time of the transfer of Rock Hall from the Martin to the Hewlett family. The splendor of the estate had come close to dereliction after only fifty-six years. But what seemed to be an end proved to be another beginning.





33. ***Top:*** Detail of Jeremiah Lott's survey showing Rock Hall and twelve outbuildings in 1824 at the time of the Hewlett family purchase. Orientation is with north at the bottom, the opposite of the survey itself. ***Bottom:*** The entire survey, greatly reduced. *Hewlett Bequest, Rock Hall Collection.*

7

New Owners, Mary and Thomas Hewlett

THOMAS HEWLETT (1793–1841) was from a very different social and cultural background than Josiah Martin, Sr., but each was driven as a young man by remarkable energy and ambition. Josiah created a place for himself and his family equal to his older brother's inherited position and wealth. Thomas and Mary Hewlett's generosity of spirit led to the young farmer's being offered the challenge of ownership of a grand estate that had fallen upon hard times. It was one of those rare and happy occasions when the right person was in the right place at the right time and truly deserved to be there.

Oral history reports the move into Rock Hall in 1824 of Thomas, then thirty-one years old, and his bride of two years, who was nine years younger. Even before his marriage in 1822 to Mary Halsey Howell (1802–1887), Thomas had been intent upon acquiring land. In 1815 he had purchased sixty acres from his parents, James and Sarah, and the next year added adjacent land from a relative. The year he married, he was able to buy twenty-four acres of salt marsh, the shore area of irregular inlets and creeks where saltwater seepage overtakes the fresh groundwater. As a farmer, Thomas knew the value of the wild marsh grass, salt hay, that could be harvested on such marshy land for winter fodder. From colonial days communal marsh lands provided salt hay for Hempstead farmers in the fall marshing season in a controlled system that combined hard work with a picnic-like, camping atmosphere.

But buying Rock Hall was a venture into another level of experience, both intimidating and challenging. The purchase price of $5,146 had to be financed by a mortgage held by the sellers for $4,146 with interest at six percent. The specter of the outcome of lapsed mortgage payments must have been made frighteningly clear by the current circumstances.

It was an expanded family that entered the dimmed splendor of Rock Hall. James and Sarah, Thomas's parents, were there, along with his sister Catherine and her daughter Euphemia. Catherine's marriage had failed. Josiah Martin Banister, with his wife Cornelia and their children, came along as tenants. He had been born at Rock Hall in 1781, the first son of Rachel Martin and Thomas Banister. We are told that he lived for a short period in the east rooms "in a poor way." These seven adults and some children began life in a home where "glass was out of the windows, plaster had fallen, a woodpile was in the south end of the hall, and the whole premises were out of repair." The house needed work desperately, and the barn that had burned had to be replaced.

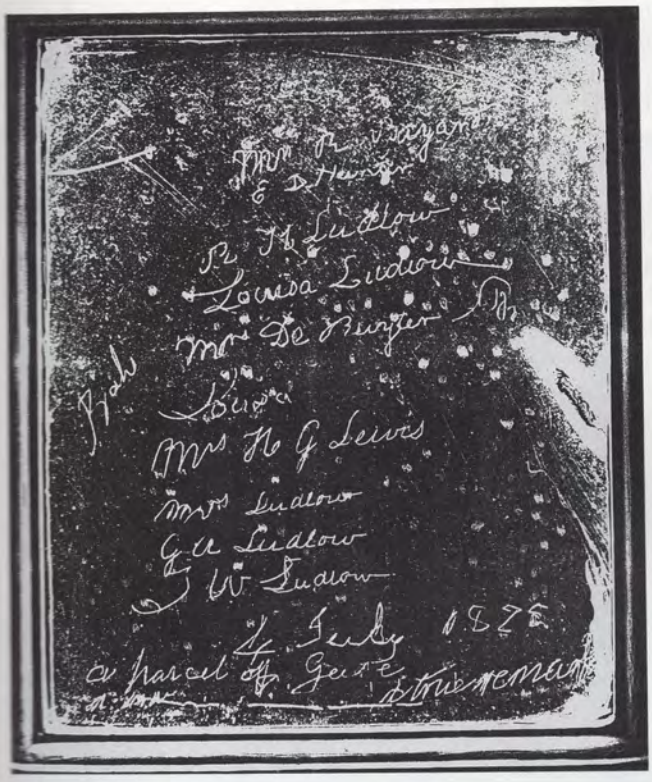
Thomas and Mary were equal to the challenge. In May, the month in which their first child, Frances, was born, $1,000 was paid to James and Charles Foster. Regular annual payments are neatly recorded on the back of the original mortgage document now in the Rock Hall Collection. This mortgage was satisfied by payment early in December 1832 but was replaced the same day by a new mortgage with Hewlett Valentine.

A document that reaches across time in a compelling way is the inscribed glass in a window of the northwest parlor where guests' names were scratched on Independence Day, July 4, 1825 *(fig. 34)*. Only a year after their arrival, the Hewletts celebrated their country's major holiday with friends in their new home.

One project was the replacement of the earlier entrance lane, which had curved past the north facade of the house, by a central straight road lined by trees. Frances in later years remembered setting out cedars and horse chestnuts as a child with her father. John Alsop King, who became governor of New York State, remembered a similar childhood experience shared with his father, Rufus King, at their home nearby in Jamaica, Queens.

With a growing family to support and the increasing popularity of Far Rockaway beach for seaside vacationing, Thomas supplemented his farm income by opening Rock Hall in the summer months to paying guests, perhaps as early as 1828. Frances was followed by John Mitchell in 1826 and Thomas George in 1829. The federal census of 1830 recorded a total of fifteen persons living at Rock Hall, a figure that included three generations and two free black children under ten years of age. The need to bring in extra money is easily understood.

When he could, Thomas added little by little to his property. He bought small parcels of woodland in 1829 and 1833 and two seaside lots near the popular Marine



34. The names scratched on a pane of window glass include a number of Ludlows: an unspecified Mrs. Ludlow, G. A., J. W., R. H., and Louisa, who made two attempts. E. W. Van Winkle, Mrs. R. Bayard, E. D. Hunter, Mrs. De Ruyter (Jr. or Sr.) and Mrs. H. G. Lewis also inscribed their names. A comment at the bottom: "a parcel of Geese." Someone had the last word: "a true remark." *Photograph, SPLIA.*

35. The Marine Pavilion, Rockaway, Long Island. This spacious seaside hotel where four hundred could be fed at one time was built in 1833–4 by the Rockaway Association, a group of distinguished New York City entrepreneurs. James Harrison Dakin (1806–1852) designed and superintended the construction while a partner in the prestigious New York architectural firm of Ithiel Town and Alexander J. Davis. The luxurious watering place was built on the site of the Cornell homestead (1690), which, like Rock Hall, had welcomed city vacationers as summer guests. Bathhouses on wheels were available to be pulled by horses to a suitable water depth and left for daylong enjoyment of the ocean. Rockaway also offered trotting matches, balls, and champagne suppers for its wealthy visitors. *Lithograph, ca. 1843, from Benjamin F. Thompson, "History of Long Island," 1843.*

Pavilion in 1835 *(fig. 35)*. His guest house was reputed to be "one of the best private boarding houses in the neighborhood." B. F. Thompson's *History of Long Island* (1843) rhapsodized: "the atmosphere here, even in the hottest weather, is fresh, cool and delightful; visitors experience new inspiration and increased vigor by repeated plunges in the ocean."

Hibbert's London Brown Stout and Porter, Madeira, Sherry, Port, Champaign, Hock, and other Wines.

NEW-YORK, September 2d 1835

Mr Thos Hewlett

Bought of ROBERT GRACIE, No. 20 BROAD-STREET.

1834 July 2d	1 Basket Grape Champagne	13.25
1835 June 23d	1 Box Sperm Candles 33 lbs @ 35¢	11.45
July 3	1 " " 34 @ 35¢	11.90
	2 " Sup Black Tea	26.40
	1 Bag Java Coffee	5.70
	1 Basket Anchor Champagne	11.00
	1 " Comet "	11.00
	Cartage	25
Aug 10	1 Box Black Tea 22 lbs	13.20
	2 " Sperm Candles	22.91
July 3	1 Cask Porter	20.13
	1 " do	14.00
		164.19
returned Dec 4th	1 Basket Champagne / 1 Box Tea	24.20
		139.99

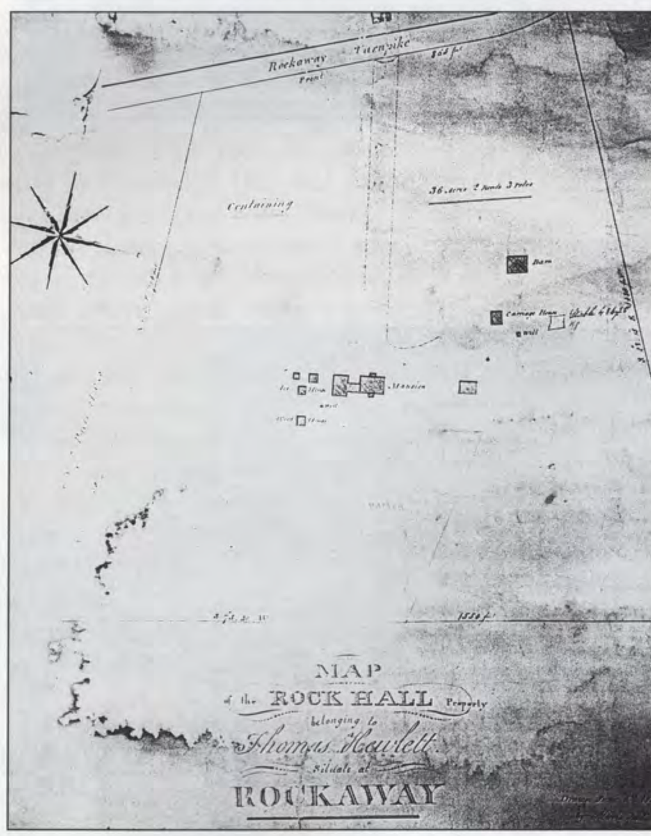
Rec^d Payment Robert Gracie / R K Anthony

36. Robert Gracie (b.1799), the merchant who provided champagne, spermaceti candles, coffee, and tea to Thomas Hewlett, was a son of the Archibald Gracie who built Gracie Mansion, now the home of New York City's mayors. It appears that this invoice was tendered in September and paid in December of 1835, when champagne and tea were returned for credit. The overwritten word in the July 3 order may be "porter," a heavy, dark brown ale. *Hewlett Bequest, Rock Hall Collection.*

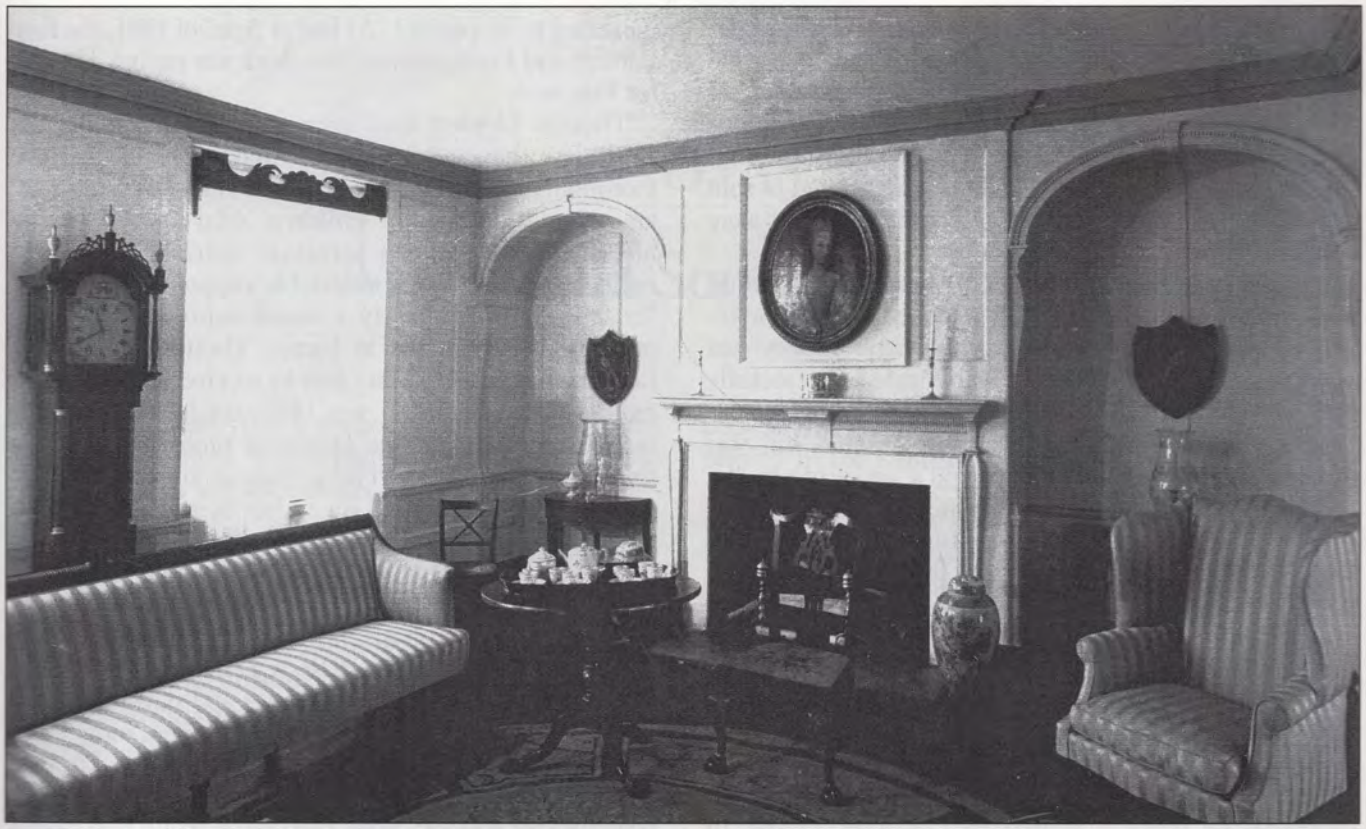
Family papers were generously given to Rock Hall by surviving Hewlett family members in 1967 (the *Hewlett Bequest*), and they enliven our image of life at a seaside guest home in those sun-drenched days and pleasant, cool evenings. There are bills for quantities of tea, coffee, champagne, sugar, candles, and pepper. The simplicity of the host family's life is illustrated by a bill that shows unused quantities of wine being returned to the seller at the end of the season for credit against the sum owed *(fig. 36)*. Thomas stocked the woodlands with thirty pair of woodcock and kept a telescope set up perhaps by the south hall door from which water traffic or other interests could be viewed.

In the spring of 1835, a carpenter worked for eighty and a half days at Rock Hall; his record of time and materials shows that he, too, celebrated the Fourth of July. It seems highly probable that his work connected the west-side detached kitchen to the main house by a building with a doorway into the southwest dining room. His list of materials included eleven frames, one panel door, and twelve lights of glass. James Monroe Hewlett reported in 1924 that his grandfather "moved some out-buildings to connect with the main house."

Another survey by Morris Fosdick, prepared in 1836, illustrates this practical new arrangement *(fig. 37)*. Under the changing conditions of household help and with a rapidly growing family and the summer transformation into a guest house, cooking facilities could no longer be separate. In a very real sense, this one major alteration at Rock Hall made by Thomas Hewlett represents in architectural form the acceptance of, support of, and adaptation to the abolition of slave labor. The institution of slavery that had been physically embodied in the form of the plantation disappeared from Rock Hall. At this date the slow enactment of laws leading to manumission in New York State had not been completed. In 1817 legislation was passed that set free every slave born before July 4, 1799, by July 4, 1827. Children of slaves



37. Morris Fosdick prepared this land survey of Rock Hall and thirty-six acres on June 6, 1836, for $3.75 and an additional $4 for the drawing. Again, Fosdick cannot have been strictly accurate in the relative scale of the buildings. A barn; ice, wood, and carriage houses; two wells; and a stable are identified. Note the orientation with north at the top and Thomas's straight road leading in from the Rockaway Turnpike, another project of the Rockaway Association that built the Marine Pavilion. The Rockaway Turnpike, now Broadway, began its life as an Indian path. *Hewlett Bequest, Rock Hall Collection.*



38. The first-floor southwest museum room furnished as a parlor in 1976. The mantel-wall niches are as they were structurally in the 1830s. Details of the paneling were then picked out in hunter green against a light gray background. Copley's portrait of Mary Elizabeth Martin was then still affixed within the paneling above the mantel. *Photograph, SPLIA.*

born after July 4, 1799, and before March 31, 1817, were free but were bound for service until the age of twenty-eight for males and twenty-five for females. The process, legally and morally, was well under way, and the end was in sight.

Investigation of paint layers in the southwest dining room revealed that it was at this time that the mantel-wall niches were provided with the plaster vaulted ceilings still present today *(fig. 38)*. A two-tone color scheme was applied—light gray with hunter green trim on the verticals and horizontals of the paneling (stiles and rails). The northwest parlor was also given a two-tone scheme, pale yellow and green.

Farming families living on the Rockaway peninsula who were Church of England communicants had to travel to Hempstead to attend St. George's, the closest Episcopal church. Thomas Hewlett wrote in the 1820s that it took him more than two hours to drive his family in his horse and buggy over this ten-mile sandy track each Sunday. These Rockaway residents longed for a place of worship closer to their homes. Thomas was secretary at a meeting in September of 1835 in Richard Hewlett's home when it was decided that St. George's Church would establish a mission in Rockaway and that a chapel would be built. He became one of the founding fathers of Trinity Chapel, Rockaway. A site on what is now Broadway in Hewlett was acquired by gift, purchase, and a matching grant from Trinity Church in New York. The cornerstone of Trinity Chapel, Rockaway, was laid May 3, 1836. A bill from D. Anderson and Sons, Brooklyn, for $8.00 for the stone and the engraving is among Thomas's papers and is now at Rock Hall. Later, after Thomas's death, when the congregation wanted to become a separate church, the cornerstone was moved to the northeast corner of the choir room's foundation in the new church building.

Thomas and Mary's contribution to the chapel where the family worshiped may have been in part or wholly in services. The carpenters who built Trinity Chapel were boarded at Rock Hall in 1836. The fine high-ceilinged bedchambers that were occupied in the summer by the DePaus, Foxes, and Livingstons would not be made available for these workers, but the third floor had adequate space. Perhaps the whole family took up residence on that floor when their house was fully occupied by summer guests, or some or all of the children may have slept there throughout the year. The top floor hallway was paneled and painted when the new gambrel roof and

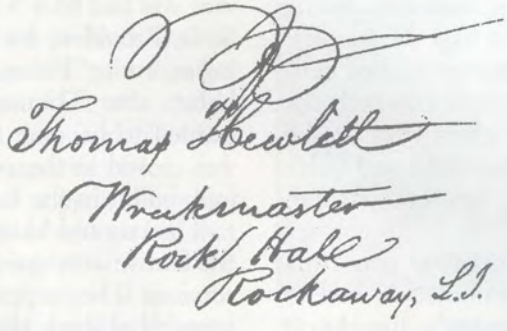
dormer windows made that level a habitable part of the house, but the bedchambers were not finished in that same formal way. No extensive study has been made of the finishes of those upper rooms, but the partitions forming the chambers rest on top of the wood flooring, validating their later addition. Walls were formed of split lath and plaster, and wallpaper and painted finishes were applied.

The temporary inconvenience to the family of changing quarters was probably well tolerated by all, for returning guests became friends, and extra money was always needed. Preserved records indicate how carefully expenditures had to be controlled. Schooling for his large family was provided fairly by Thomas but was limited, according to Anna Hand's account, to "as much as he could [afford] of education in Jamaica." Frances, the first-born, was "sent to boarding school in Jamaica for two winters." A receipt for schooling and the obligatory share of wood for heating, dated April 15, 1837, lists $1 for a *Universal History Book* and $81 for half of John Mitchell's tuition and board at the Union Hall Academy in Jamaica. Of course, these schooling bills grew with the family.

Thomas found other means of using his oceanside location to help pay the bills. In response to his own proposal, he replaced a neighbor as wreckmaster in charge of salvaging iron, copper, and timbers that could be "fished up" from the bottom of the British ship *Reliance*, wrecked on Rockaway Beach. Beginning in December 1839, Thomas received 60 percent of the net proceeds of this venture, and the next year his earnings increased to 70 percent. As late as April of 1841, the firm Barclay and Livingston in New York was paying Thomas for this work.

Thomas Hewlett died prematurely on October 16, 1841, less than a month after making his will. That thoroughly pragmatic document divided Thomas's estate equally among his children. Mary was given all household and kitchen furniture outright and dower rights to a home and comfortable support at Rock Hall "as long as this property remains unsold." The same privilege was extended to Sarah, Thomas's mother. If Rock Hall was sold, Mary was to receive $500, and her mother-in-law, $250. It was little wonder that the women chose to retain the farm and probably also their paying summer guests. The will directed each child "to contribute a fair share of his or her exertions to support the family" to secure a share of the estate when the youngest child had reached age twenty-one.

Nothing could illustrate more clearly the differences in the times and customs of the progenitors of the Martin and Hewlett families at Rock Hall than their wills. Josiah left all of his children money and slaves, and also a horse to each son, but the major bequest of money and land was given to the oldest living son. Thomas Hewlett's will demanded that all contribute equally and rewarded all equally. Both men were proud and ambitious, but the eighteenth-century Briton belonged to an elite gentry; the nineteenth-century American was egalitarian and democratic. Rock Hall, the home of each, reflected both of these philosophies.



8

Widow and Son Carry On

FOR THE SECOND TIME a widow named Mary became the mistress of Rock Hall, in name if not in legal status. Each had been left with dower rights to a comfortable home on her late husband's estate for life. Mary Hewlett's situation in 1841, however, was quite different from Mary Martin's circumstances in 1778.

We may safely assume that Mary Martin lived on at Rock Hall for her final twenty-seven years in complete comfort. She was surrounded by family, and her physical needs were satisfied by a large staff of slaves. Her oldest son, Dr. Samuel Martin, was an established figure in the community and was forty-seven years old when he succeeded as master of Rock Hall. She had her daughter Rachel living with her before and after her marriage in 1781 and the joy of three young grandchildren enlivening the household. Mary's daughter Alice also lived at Rock Hall until she established her own farm in nearby Jamaica, Queens, in 1794. Her beloved first-born grandchild, Mary Elizabeth Martin, was sixteen at Josiah's death and seems also to have remained at Rock Hall for most of Mary's late years. And finally, Mary was spared the sorrow of her son Samuel's death, for she predeceased him by eight months.

Mary Hewlett, by contrast, was a young and active woman when Thomas died suddenly at age forty-eight. It appears that she gave birth to their ninth child on or within a day of her thirty-ninth birthday, two days before Thomas's death. Frances was then seventeen; John Mitchell, the oldest son, was fifteen. At the probate of Thomas's will in Surrogate's Court on December 7, 1841, George M. Hewlett was named special guardian of the nine minor children.

Mary did have her mother-in-law, Sarah Greene Hewlett, to help shoulder the burdens of managing the farm and summer guests and to help care for the children. The historian Henry Hazelton reported that Sarah "was a woman of strong character, descended from General Nathaniel Greene, while her uncle Daniel Greene, carried the American colors when the British evacuated New York." Sarah was at Rock Hall until her death at seventy-eight in 1849. Among the treasures in the *Hewlett Bequest* is a small volume, Sarah's childhood copy of *The Fairing or Golden Toy Book*, which was reprinted in the United States in 1778.

The next federal census in 1850 lists John Mitchell at twenty-four years as a farmer; Mary at eighteen was at home; Sarah and Mortimer were fourteen and twelve, respectively, and still at school. At last a live-in servant is found among those listed; Sarah Lee, an Irish-born domestic, was a member of the household.

What we know of the years between has been garnered from family papers in the *Hewlett Bequest*. Mary, with the other executors of Thomas's estate, succeeded by April 1842 in freeing twenty acres of land from the property held as security for the mortgage negotiated in December of 1832 with Hewlett Valentine. She could then sell that land to Robert Mott.

There are receipts for schooling and taxes paid by Mary that would arouse no sympathy from modern readers. In 1841 Rock Hall's taxes were $4.32; by 1851, Mary paid $8.03. School tuition for Augustus and George in 1842 was $1.38 a quarter, and for Mary, eighty-five cents for eight weeks. In line with these figures was the $2 Mary received for seasonal use of beach property.

Mary concerned herself in keeping a roof over her family's heads. A transcription of a letter written in response to one of hers follows:

New York Sept 23 1843

Dear Madam In compliance with your request I have seen a Carpenter who has given me the following estimates for shingling the roof of your house.

With Cedar Shingles 2feet 4inches Long	$60.50
If the Shingles are not too hard to drive nails into which is often the case (Labor)	9.
	$77.50
With Pine Shingles and Boards	$67.

. . . above is what we will promise to shingle the roof for and includes cost of materials & labor—You must board him & send for him to Jamaica, as the expense of hiring would be 4 or 5 dollars. He says there will be two men and they can do it in 3 or 4 days. He is a first rate

workman & has long worked for members of our family. He says you can purchase the shingles & Boards yourself if you prefer but he cannot promise to do it at the above cost unless the articles are first quality as poor shingles take more nails more time & will not last as long. Please inform me as soon as you can what your determination is as no time can be lost if you wish it done in October

Thos. K. Gerry

Mrs Hewlett Rock Hall

Mary's pencilled notes on Gerry's letter indicate that she made the more expensive and durable choice, cedar shingles, in 2′4″ lengths.

It is possible that during the period of Mary's tenure at Rock Hall, a wind-powered gristmill was built *(fig. 39)*. When it burned to the ground in 1947, the *Nassau Herald* reported that it was "90 year[s] old" and "located about 150 feet away from the 176 year old Georgian Colonial mansion." If the first estimate of age is as accurate as the second, the windmill would have been built well within the period when John Mitchell and Mary were managing the farm. This tenuous dating, however, is made a little shakier by the attribution of the same age to the neighboring barn, which burned in the same fire. Hewlett family stories tell only of Thomas's need to build a barn when he purchased the property and of a second new barn raised by his son James Augustus. Whichever family member was responsible for its construction, the Hewlett windmill may have been one of a number of smaller gristmills that serviced the area after the first huge windmill on Long Island, the Vanderveer Mill at Flatbush, ceased to be used ca. 1831. From family records it is certain that the windmill provided water for Rock Hall and also for a home called Martins Lane, built on Hewlett land later by one of Thomas and Mary's grandsons, James Monroe Hewlett (1868–1941).

Three of Mary's children predeceased her: Frances, who herself lost five of her six children in a scarlet fever epidemic; Thomas George, a much-decorated Transit Ranger, who was fatally wounded in 1856 in Ethiopia; and Catharine, the child born in Thomas's last days. In June of 1860 Mary sold her dower rights to the remaining six children. The old mortgage from 1832 had to be satisfied and the six new owners took on two new mortgages simultaneously with the conveyance of the land.

That same year, as so often happens, history repeated itself. John Mitchell Hewlett, with his bride, Margaret A. Hentz (1832–1902), took in boarders at Rock Hall—four young immigrants from Ireland. Many natives from Ireland and also Germany were entering Long Island at the time seeking employment. Room and board was provided for these young people in a number of households. At Rock Hall the partitioning of the northwest room on the third floor, forming three rooms of one (the largest actually without a window), may date to this period.

39. John A. Hewlett in the *Nassau County Historical Journal*, Summer, 1962, identified the location of this wind-powered gristmill, built probably ca. 1857. It was attached to the barn and was between the carriage house and the ice pond. The hurricane of 1944 disabled it, and it burned down in 1947. *Photograph, Rock Hall Collection.*

Mary Hewlett did not spend the remainder of her days at Rock Hall. The census of 1870 identifies her as living in the Third Ward, Brooklyn, in the home of her son James Augustus at 165 Remsen Street. The last years of Mary's life are part of the story of that son's ownership of Rock Hall. Mary died at age eighty-five in 1887 and was buried beside Thomas in the cemetery at St. George's parish, Hempstead.

9

James Augustus and Mary Elizabeth Hewlett's Summer Home

JAMES AUGUSTUS HEWLETT (1835–1890) was Thomas and Mary's sixth child and fourth son. James was sixteen at his father's death. Since his oldest brother, John Mitchell, remained at Rock Hall to farm and assist their mother with its management, James was free to follow his own career interests. His choice was the importing business, and he entered a partnership in New York with Daniel Torrence. Tea, coffee, and sugar were the products they imported and sold as commission agents. In 1860, when Mary's dower rights were purchased by her children, James paid $980.44 for his share.

In September of the Civil War year of 1863, James Augustus Hewlett and Mary Elizabeth Sanderson of Philadelphia were married. The newlyweds established themselves at 165 Remsen Street, Brooklyn, where Anna Sanderson, the Hewlett historian of our story, was born on August 10, 1864. Perhaps to raise money for his business, James sold his interest in Rock Hall early in the next year to his older brother Charles Sidney for $900. The family grew with the arrival of a son, George, in November of 1866.

On August 1, 1868, while the Brooklyn family was still in summer residence at Rock Hall, James Monroe Hewlett was born. A few months later, James arranged the purchase of Rock Hall from his brothers and sisters for $20,000. To clear the transfer of ownership, the mortgages were once more canceled, and a new mortgage with Sarah H. Hewlett was negotiated to pay part of that sum. The importing business had obviously improved in the postwar years. Perhaps also feelings of dynastic pride were aroused in the successful young businessman when a son was born in the family home, as he had been, and in the very year that marked Rock Hall's one hundredth anniversary. The booklet prepared for the 1924 centennial celebration of Hewlett ownership of Rock Hall states that James Augustus's motivation had been the preservation of the fine old house.

Such an interest was in perfect harmony with the spirit of the times. After the war an enthusiasm developed for uncovering and recording America's cultural past. Many newly successful middle-class families wanted to establish stronger ties to the country's beginnings. The Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of 1876 is often credited with sparking interest in reviving the architecture and furnishings of the colonial period. A 1776 New England farmer's kitchen exhibit was set up for comparison with a modern-style 1876 kitchen and attracted large crowds *(fig. 40)*. There were at least six precedents for the Philadelphia colonial kitchen in the Sanitary Commission Fairs, which were Civil War fund-raising bazaars. A forerunner of the Red Cross, the United States Sanitary Commission was a relief organization that had sought to improve the sanitary conditions of the Union army. The Brooklyn and Long Island Sanitary Fair was the first to feature a colonial kitchen *(fig. 41)*.

Some architects began to spend their vacations and after-office hours on old-architecture excursions, sketching, measuring, and photographing colonial buildings. As early as 1863, a young Boston architect, John H. Sturgis, made a set of measured drawings of the plan of the Hancock house. This was the first public recognition of the historical significance of the patriot's home. Interest spread from the homes of famous personages to historic buildings of architectural importance in their own right. Colonial design reference books, composed of measured drawings and photographs, contributed to a broad architectural movement, the Colonial Revival, beginning in the 1870s.

The federal census of 1870 reported that the Hewlett household in Brooklyn was formed of thirty-five-year-old James as head of the household, with his wife, Mary Elizabeth, whose occupation was "keeping house." She was assisted by four young resident domestics from Ireland. James's mother and two sisters, Mary and Sarah, were listed, as were three children, Annie (6 years old), George (4), and James Monroe (2). Arthur Thomas was born too late in the year to have been included. James's younger brother, Mortimer, at thirty-one, completed the large household; he was employed as an office clerk. James's real estate holdings were valued at $50,000.

It was at this moment, in the first flush of real prosperity, that James Augustus seems to have made an initial alteration to the home where he had been born. At considerable structural risk, surely not anticipated, a classical-style archway, echoing the moldings of the

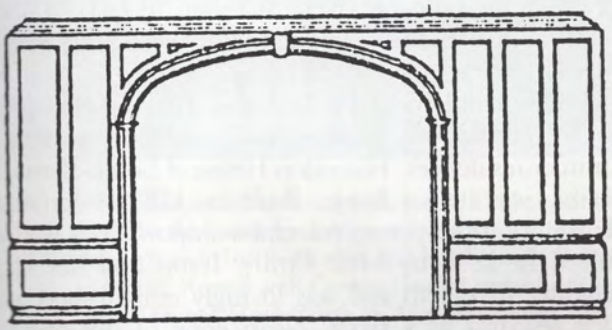
40. The New England Kitchen of 1776 Exhibit was housed in a plain, one-story log cabin at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition with the intention of showing life at the time of the American Revolution. Colonial artifacts, such as a spinning wheel, a cradle, and John Alden's desk, were chosen for their age and historical associations rather than aesthetics. Drawings and photographs quickly spread the image of a simple rural life to a broad and interested public. *"Leslie's Illustrated," June 10, 1876.*

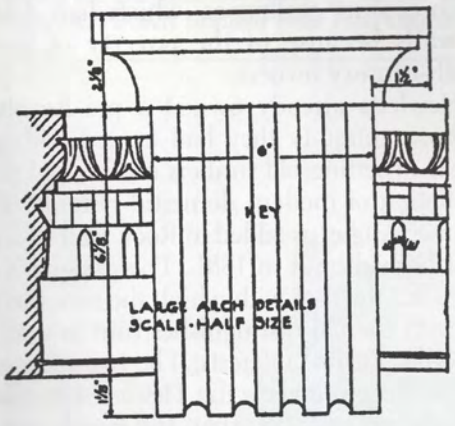
41. The colonial kitchen exhibit at the Brooklyn and Long Island Sanitary Fair had a New England flavor. Old chairs were gathered in collecting expeditions through the New England states for use in the restaurant that shared a room with the exhibit. All of the colonial kitchen exhibits in northern city fairs were focused around a large open fireplace where many household activities were demonstrated. *"History of the Brooklyn and Long Island Fair," Unicorn, Steam Presses, 1864.*

Federal-period niches, was cut between the west-side rooms *(fig. 42)*. There were originally folding doors that separated or united the two spaces. Traces are still visible where hinges were recessed into the jambs, the vertical side members of the archway. On the original flooring, now exposed, one can detect the location of the door the arch replaced.

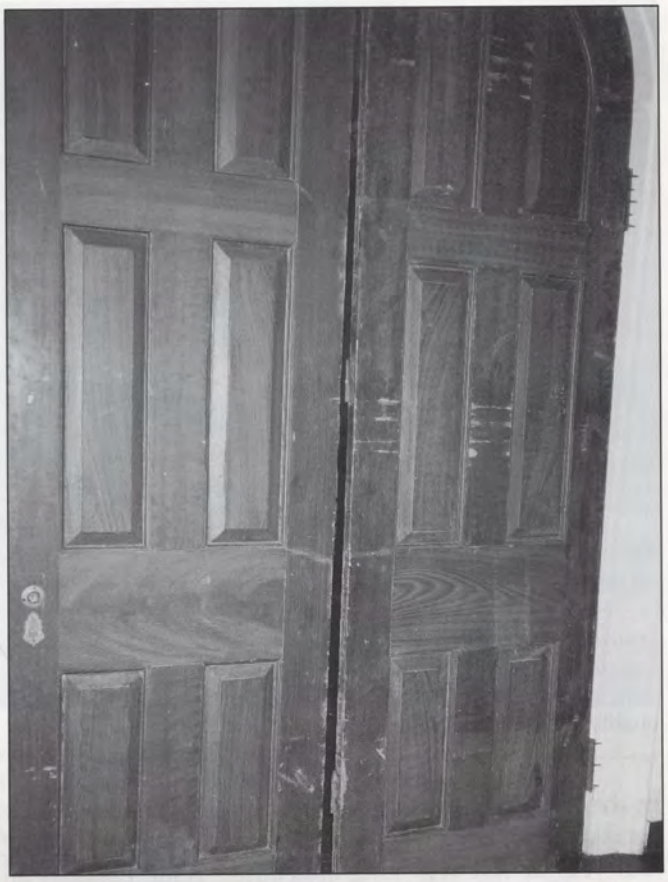
On a hot summer night in August 1995, double-fold wooden doors were discovered in the dark upper reaches of a crawl space under the roof of a service wing that James Augustus had constructed in 1881. That east wing was added to Rock Hall to accommodate the staff of servants who annually moved with the Hewlett family from Brooklyn to their seaside summer "cottage." Tony Barreira, husband of the museum director, Linda Barreira, was intent upon opening a roof hatch to circulate cool air in what is now their living quarters. His find put one more piece of the puzzle of Rock Hall's evolution in place.

When the doors were moved down from their long-





42. *Top:* View of the broad elliptical archway James Augustus Hewlett had cut between the west-side parlors, ca. 1871, opening up the first-floor spaces in the family summer home. The southwest room is now interpreted as a dining room. The room is believed to have been used as such from the 1790s until 1881. *Photograph, Town of Hempstead.* ***Middle and bottom:*** Details of the classical archway and the keyblock. *Drawings, HABS, 1935.*



43. Detail of two sections of the double folding doors as they appeared when retrieved from their dusty storage place. The painted finish was obviously applied by a professional adept at achieving the appearance of the rich color and graining of mahogany. *Rock Hall photograph.*

forgotten storage place and set up in the southwest dining room it was clear that they indeed were made for this archway. The elliptical curves of arch and doors match, as do the placement of the hinge ghosts in the jambs and the actual hinges, some of which still survive in place on the doors. The measure of the sagging of the wall and ceiling above can now be observed; the doors will no longer fit under the arch, even after the removal in the 1950s of a level of nineteenth-century flooring. The archway was much too broad to have been safely cut in the bearing wall between these rooms. In 1978 a steel beam was inserted above the weakened span to successfully stabilize the structure.

Each of the four wood leaves is composed of horizontal rails, vertical stiles, and six panels *(fig. 43)*. The panels are secured by machine-made moldings nailed on as loose strips around the beveled outer margin of each panel, indicating by technique a date no earlier than 1835. Both sides of each leaf have a well-preserved painted finish that gives the appearance of mahogany graining. There are no signs of heavy wear; what damage the finish has suffered seems to have been the result of the removal and storage of the leaves.

The surviving hardware provided the evidence for a secure dating of the doors *(fig. 44)*. Since the hinges and mortise lock on the doors are original and not replacements and since the elaborate hinges were offered for sale by P & F Corbin Co. of New Britain, Connecticut,

44. The distinctive ornamental heavy bronze butt hinges found on the long-lost doors were listed and illustrated in the 1871 catalog of the P & F Corbin Co. of New Britain, Connecticut. With bronze tips, as at Rock Hall, they sold for $13.50 a pair; with gilt tips they were $15.00 a pair. The mortise knob lock, which was designed specifically for use with folding doors, is of equally fine quality.

in their 1871 catalog and not in preceding or following catalogs, the doors seem certainly to have been made that year or not very long afterward. Trade catalogs at Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, and the Lock Museum of America, Terryville, Connecticut, made identifications of the Rock Hall hardware possible. Thomas F. Hennessy, the museum curator, generously provided his expert advice.

It may be that the inadequate support for the ceiling above the arched opening made the doors increasingly difficult to open and close as the bearing weight caused increased sagging. Paint evidence indicates that the doors were removed when new flooring was installed over the original boards (around 1881 according to Hewlett family tradition).

Two photographs from 1874 taken during the family's summer months at Rock Hall are nostalgic records of a prosperous family on vacation *(fig. 45)*. The large structure before which the children pose is very probably the new barn their father is reported to have built. It has Victorian characteristics, a simplified "Stick style" roof over the doorway and sash windows like those in houses of the period. A fragile lantern pierced by arches crowns the gambrel roof.

The second photograph with family and friends arranged before the north facade of Rock Hall is also a document of the evolution of the family home. West-side buildings from the original estate still stand and can be seen at the right. The east wall is penetrated by a window in the northeast bedchamber, about which more will be said later.

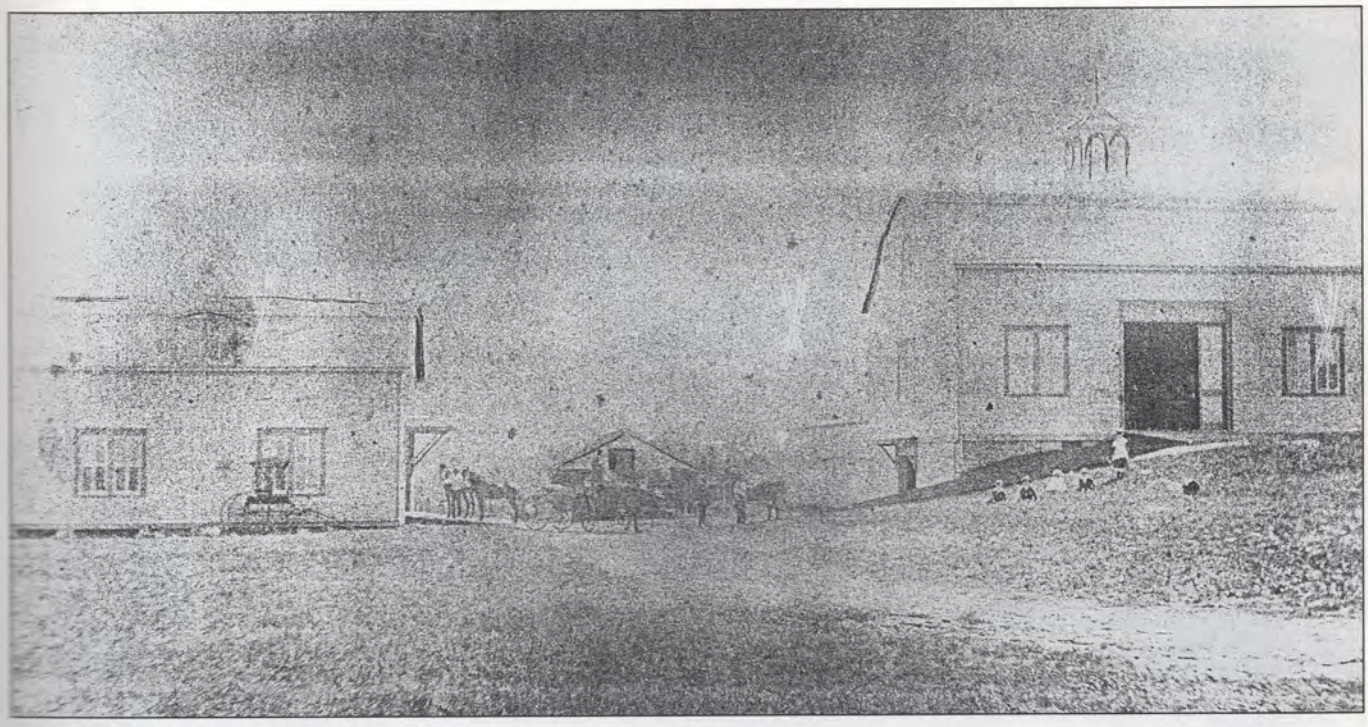
Beers's *Atlas of Long Island* recording the "South Part of Hempstead" in 1873 shows the extent and location of the Hewlett estate and the beginning of land development toward the ocean *(fig. 46)*. An 1879 topographical sheet (traced in 1899) is more specific in illustrating details of landscape and architecture *(fig. 47)*. The western attachments made by Thomas Hewlett by 1836 and two of the original west-side plantation outbuildings are visible. The large barn and carriage house seen in the 1874 photograph *(fig. 45)* are also seen on the map (marked with "X"s), as are the expansive garden to the south and the tree-lined road to the highway.

Other early photographs capture the atmosphere of a large affluent family, their friends, and retainers enjoying the freshness of the sea air and pastoral setting of the old homestead. Monet or Winslow Homer could have recorded the dappled party enveloped by light and atmosphere in the outdoors (plein air), but, in fact, Mathew Brady or his studio is credited with these photographs *(fig. 48)*.

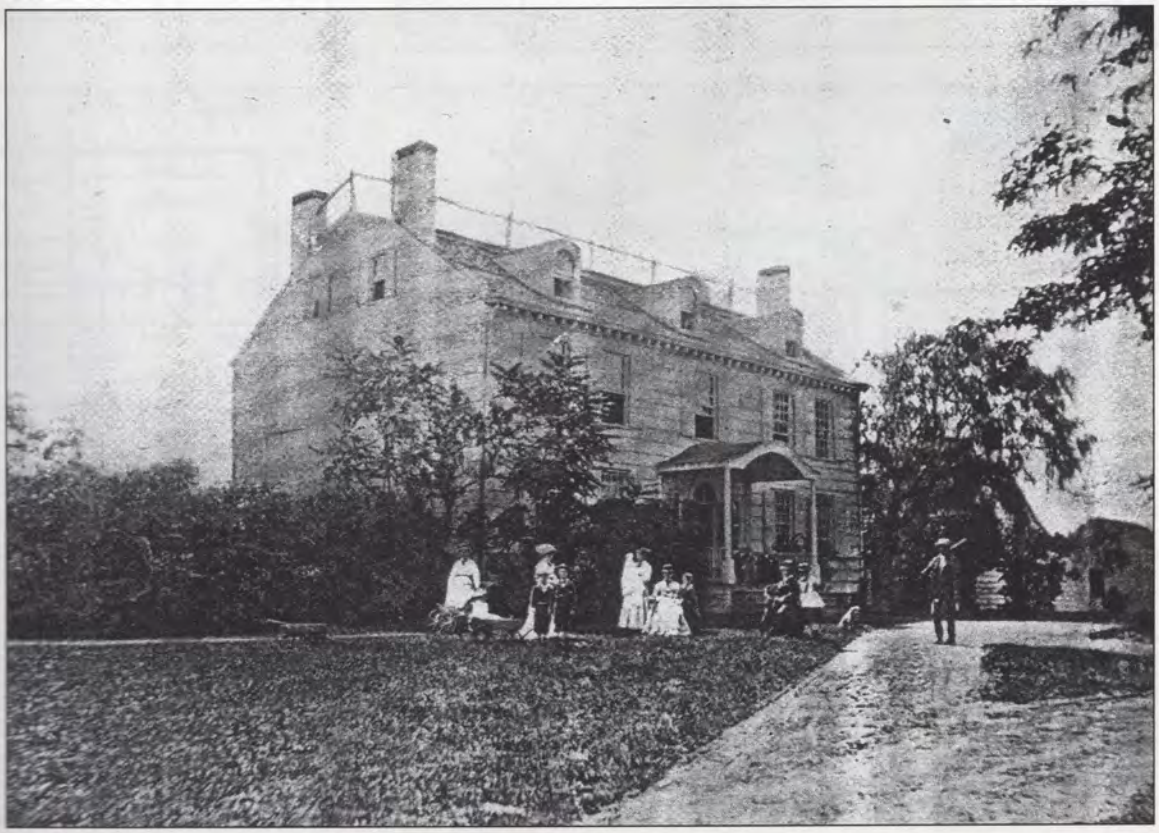
A manifestation of the Colonial Revival movement was the purchase by wealthy families of old mansions as summer residences. Hamilton House at South Berwick, Maine, was such a home. Built ca. 1787 by Jonathan Hamilton, a prosperous merchant-shipowner, it was acquired in 1898 by Mrs. Emily Tyson and her stepdaughter Elizabeth and was lovingly embellished with such features as a fresh, clean copy of the original eighteenth-century wallpaper, which had deteriorated on the walls because of the poverty of the earlier nineteenth-century owners.

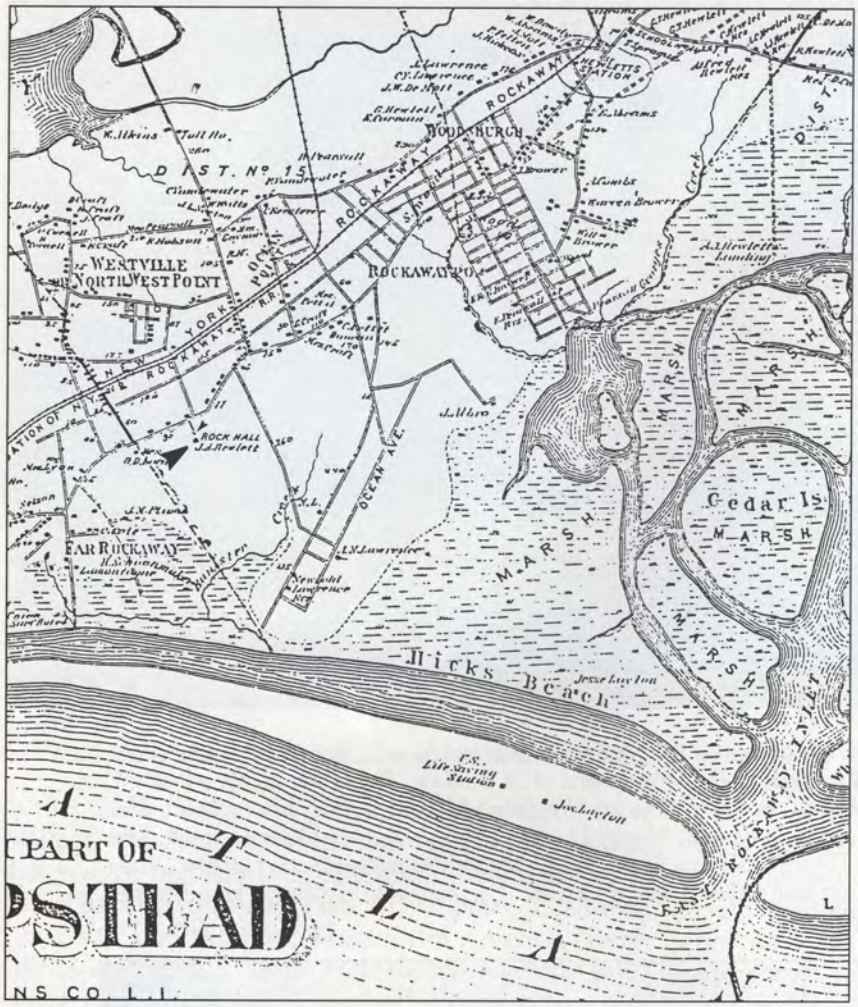
The Hewletts already owned a pre-Revolutionary home whose antiquity they had treated with great respect. Fear of setting old timbers on fire had precluded the installation of modern domestic systems. These facilities James Augustus added to Rock Hall in a new east wing that he had built in 1881. The designer's name is unknown, but the care with which the new was planned to meld with the old distinguishes him as one familiar with Colonial Revival interests. The two-story wing was intended to accommodate the Hewlett household staff during the warm months when the family was in residence at Far Rockaway and also to provide storage space and up-to-date cooking and plumbing facilities.

Drawings and photographs made in 1935 for the Historic American Building Survey (HABS) and a descriptive letter prepared by Hester Hewlett Stearns (b. 1908) give us an understanding of the addition and alterations (fig. 49). On the first floor there were a pantry, servants' hall and bathroom, and a kitchen with a large coal-burning stove and a small kerosene-fired stove for quicker cooking. A laundry room with a pot-bellied stove was in constant use by laundresses who were kept busy washing and ironing white cotton and linen sheets, underclothes, and cool summer dresses. There were also closets and a storeroom, which Rock Hall lacked. Exte-

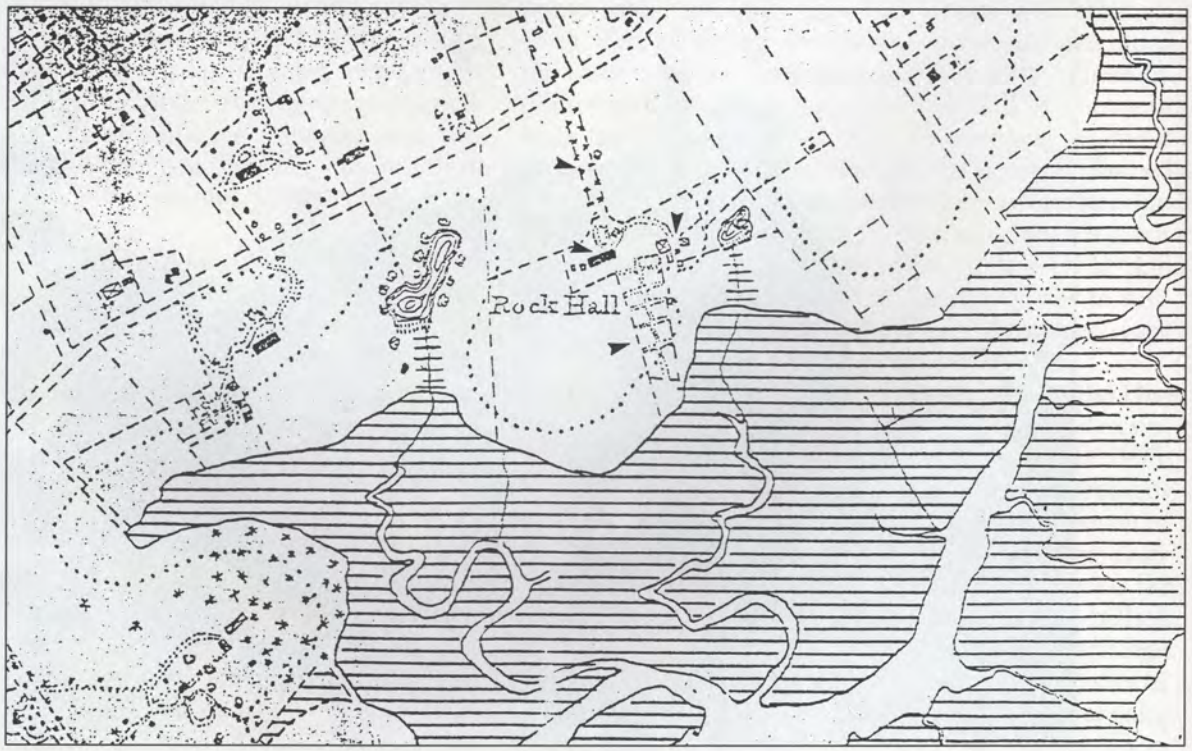


45. Notes on these photographs from 1874 help identify the family members and friends. ***Top:*** Annie, as the oldest, must be the standing child, and Lucy Russell probably is the second child in white. The others are their brothers, Monroe and George Hewlett and Jack Russell. ***Bottom:*** From left to right are: Delia with Lucy in a pushcart, Mrs. Anna W. Russell with George Hewlett and John Russell, Maggie Hopkins (nurse) with baby George Russell, Mrs. John Mitchell Hewlett with W. Monroe Hewlett, and Mrs. James A. Hewlett with Anna Sanderson Hewlett. On the porch are Grandmother Mary H. Hewlett and Arthur Thomas Hewlett. The man with the gun is John Mitchell Hewlett. *Hewlett Bequest, Rock Hall Collection.*

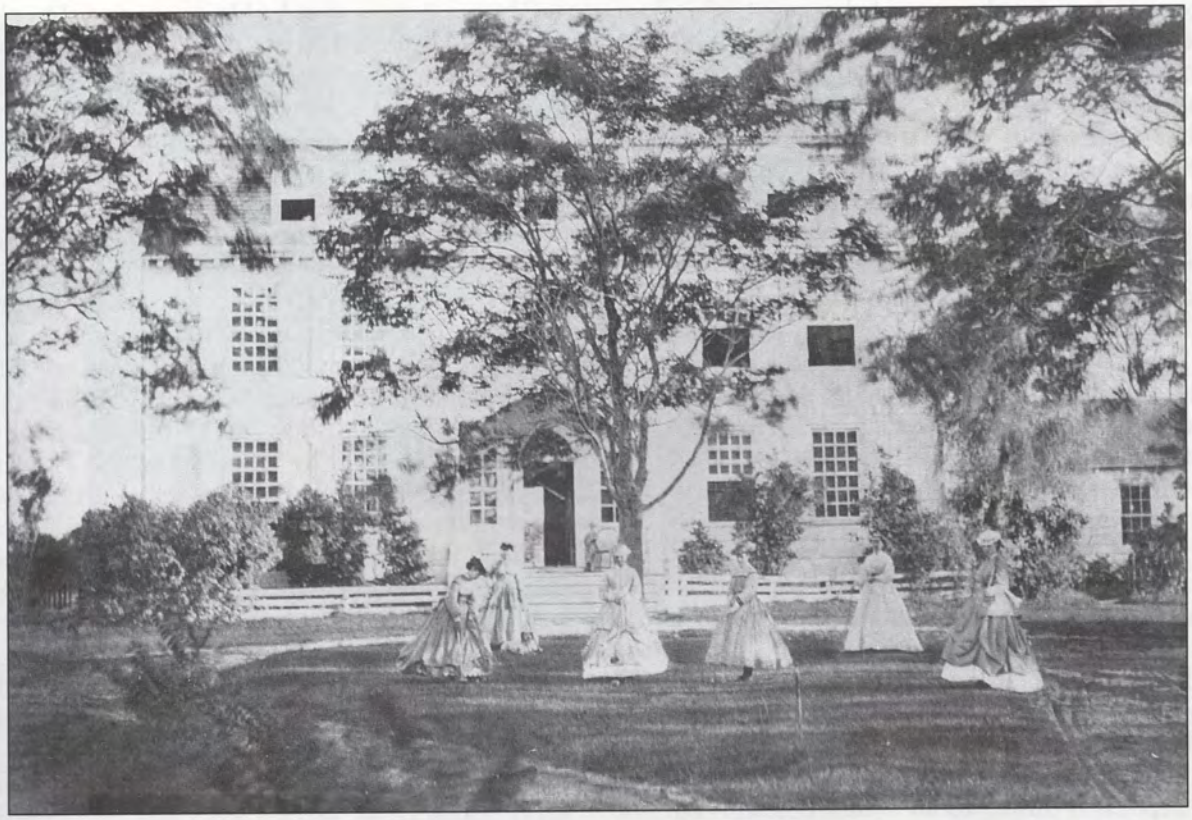




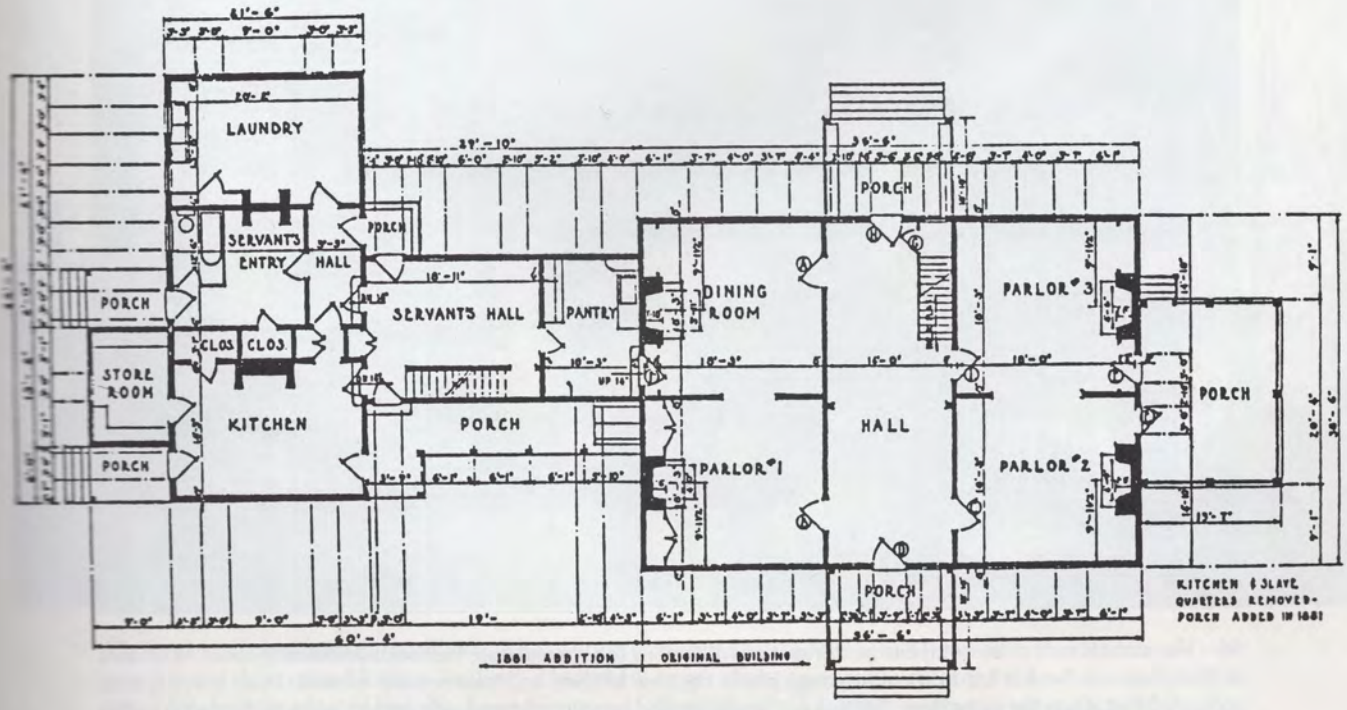
46. Detail from "South Part of Hempstead," Beers's *Atlas of Long Island*, 1873, Pl. #118. Arrows indicate Rock Hall. The land is open until beyond Banister Creek.



47. Detail of topographical sheet No. 1471-b in the archives of the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, Washington, D.C. Original dated 1879; traced in 1899. Arrows indicate Rock Hall, which still has the west-side attachments and two outbuildings, the long tree-lined straight entry road, the large barn and carriage house, various other outbuildings, including the icehouse, and the very extensive garden. The east wing had not yet been constructed.



48. One of three photographs reputed to be by Mathew B. Brady (ca. 1823–1896) or his studio, ca. 1865. Brady is probably the United States's most famous photographer. His reputation is based on his portraits of great men and women, on those of U.S. presidents, and on his photographic record of the Civil War. The latter project ruined him financially, and he was forced to close his fashionable New York gallery. Assistants and his nephew, Levin Handy, are responsible for some of his later work. *Hewlett Bequest, Rock Hall Collection.*



49. The first-floor plan after the addition of the east wing and west porch. *Drawing by W. J. Bartoldus, HABS, 1935.*

rior doors on four porches provided access to this floor on three sides. On the fourth (west) side, the wing was connected to the main house through a new doorway into the southeast parlor.

Such a plan could only have served a home where servants were employed in numbers. The distance from the kitchen to the entry into the old house was considerable and not in a direct line. The pantry clearly served as a holding area for food, which had to be carried from the kitchen and kept warm or cool until serving time. It was an "upstairs-downstairs" world, but probably one in which both parties were well satisfied.

The southeast parlor, a room which had retained the original Georgian mantel and storage wall, now became the dining room because of its position adjacent to the new service wing. With Colonial Revival zeal the distinguishing features of the west-side dining room were replicated; wood-paneled alcoves with plaster-arched ceilings replaced the closet and cupboard *(fig. 50)*. The swelling pilaster motif was attached at each side of the niches and also flanked a new archway, which was opened between the dining room and the northeast parlor *(fig. 51)*. The span of the new arch was carefully limited to avoid the structural problems created above the ca. 1871 broader west-side archway. Colors chosen for the replicated dining room conformed with current taste. A warm rose was chosen with a thin red-brown glaze on the rails and stiles.

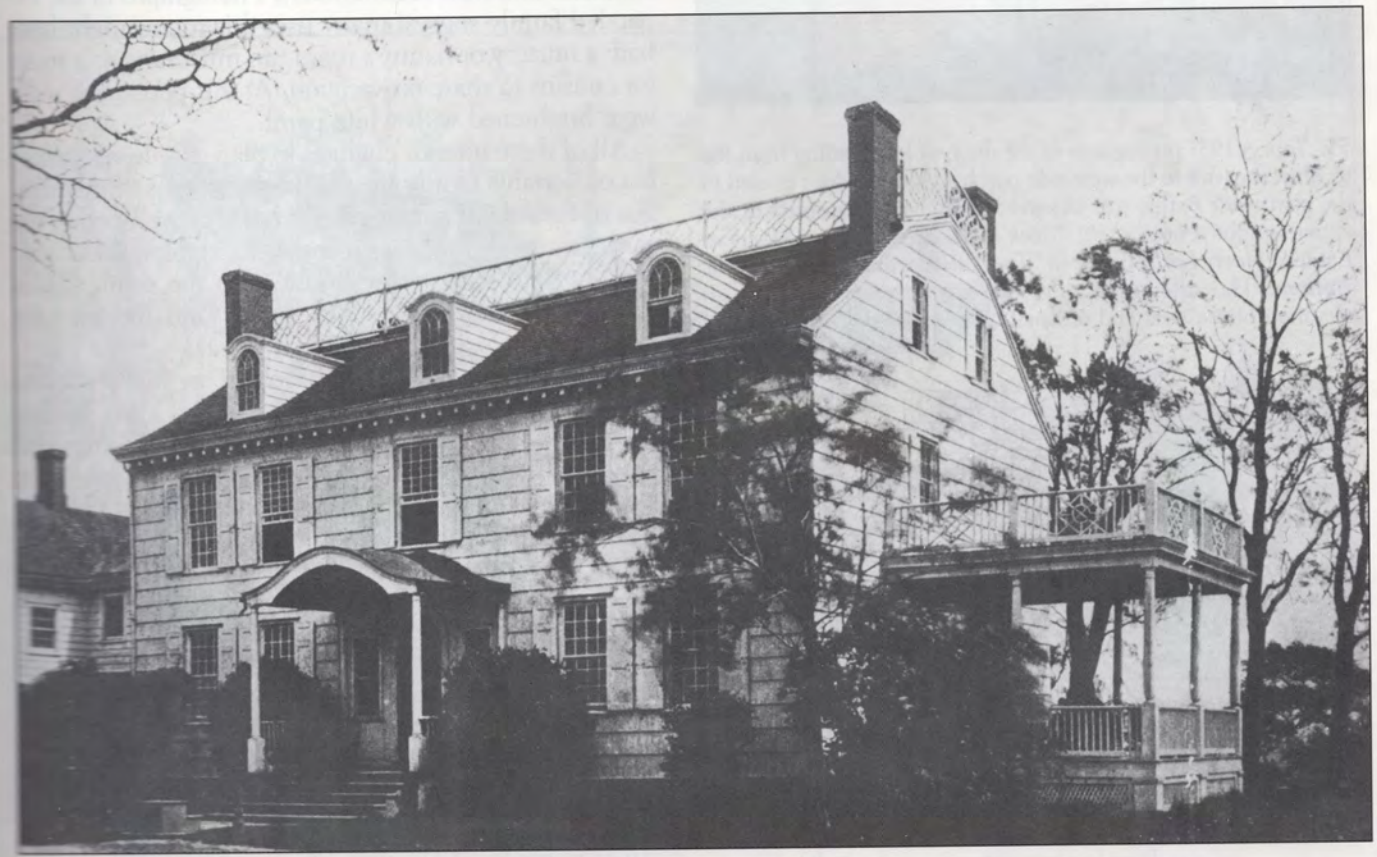
The earth tones that had been promoted by the leading tastemaker of his day, Andrew Jackson Downing (1815–1852), were selected for the wood finishes in the northeast parlor, where a thick pinkish-yellow paint was applied. It may be the "ochre" room remembered by a painter who worked at Rock Hall when restoration work was under way preparing rooms for the house museum.

On the west side, where the first dining room once more became a parlor, olive green paint was applied in two tones, lighter in the paneling. James Augustus now removed the ancient west-side outbuildings, kitchen, and slave quarters and had constructed an attractive porch with a railing pattern adapted from the upper roof balustrade *(fig. 52)*. It was "a lovely cool place to sit after dinner," we are told by Hester ("Hettie") Hewlett, who remembered it from childhood visits with her twin and other siblings to their grandparents' home. Doors with windows opened from each of the west-side parlors to that shady, fresh-air retreat *(fig. 53)*. The folding doors on the archway were removed, and the northwest parlor, now made visible, was painted in harmonizing green tones. Finally, almost all of the floors in the old house were resurfaced with new floorboards as part of the major refurbishing of the summer home.

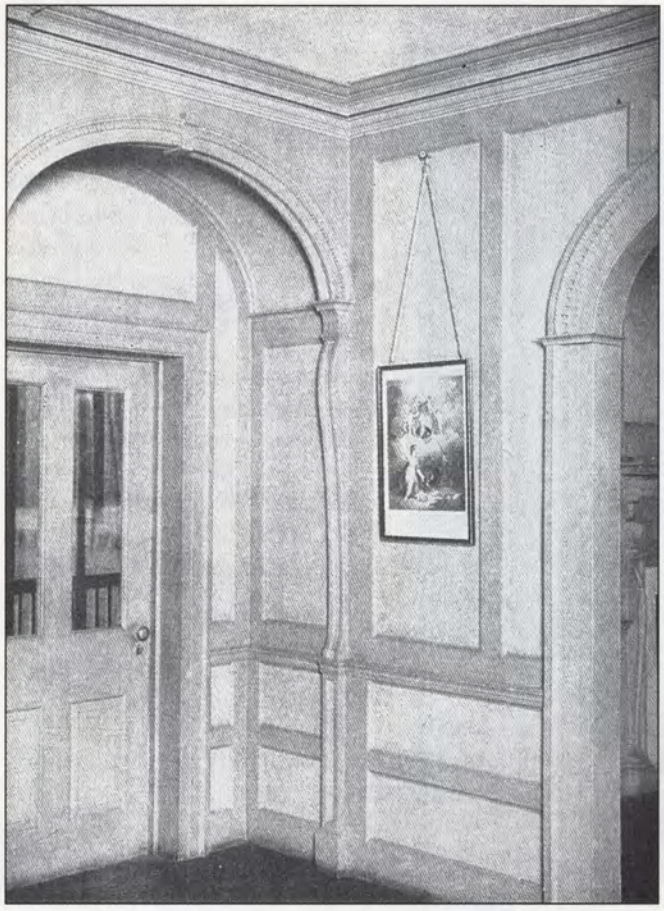
The second floor of the new east wing had five servants' bedrooms of varying sizes and (no doubt) importance *(fig. 54)*. There were, as well, two closets, a sizable storage room, a room for linens, and a hall off which

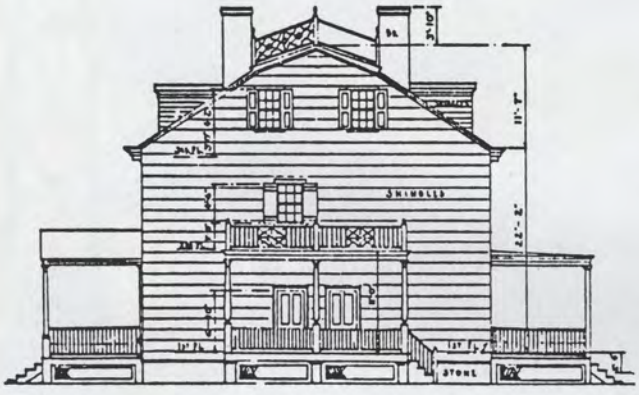
50. The mantel wall of the southeast parlor as it was altered in 1881 to replicate the southwest dining room. The door in the alcove at the left led to the east wing, where the new kitchen and pantry were located. Paint investigation indicated that it was the same door that was originally located between the east-side parlors and was displaced in this alteration by an archway. *Photograph, HABS, 1935.*

51. View looking through the new archway that was installed in 1881 toward the northeast parlor. This amateur photograph is a valuable record of the appearance of the east-side parlors at the time the house was given to the Town of Hempstead. *Photograph, Franklin Benkard, 1948. SPLIA.*



52. Rock Hall seen from the northwest. The new west-side porch was added in 1881 after the removal of the old slave quarters and deteriorated kitchen facilities. Doors with upper glass panels led to each of the west-side parlors. The unknown designer adapted and simplified the upper roof balustrade's "Chinese" design in a sympathetic manner on the porch roof railing.





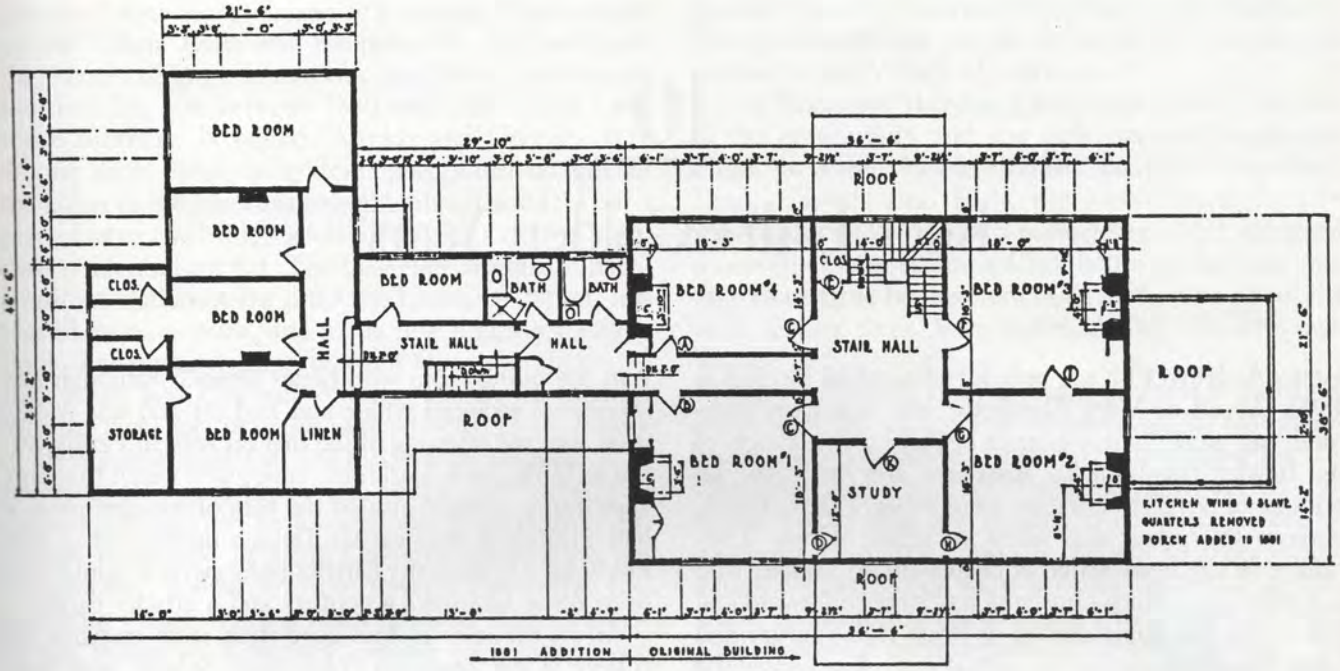
53. ***Top:*** A 1931 photograph of the door, at left, leading from the southwest parlor to the west-side porch. A similar door existed in the northwest parlor just beyond the archway glimpsed at the extreme right. *Photograph, "Rock Hall, an American Manorial Estate," Harry Lorin Binsse in "The Antiquarian," January 1931.* ***Bottom:*** The exterior location of these doors is clear in this elevation of the west end of Rock Hall. *Drawing, HABS, 1935.*

were two complete bathrooms, one with a shower stall and the other with a tub. Hester reported that one was for the ladies, the other for the gentlemen. The upper level of the new building had access to the old by a door and two steps up to the main house level. A narrow passage, created by partitioning off a part of the southeast bedchamber, led to the second-floor stair hall. The east-side chambers had access doors cut into the passage. The arched entrance at the hall end of the passage served all others. It was an ingenious plan that made these new facilities as readily available to the family as possible without violating the spirit of the original house. James Augustus was unwittingly following a basic principle of modern preservation theory—reversibility. Bertha Rose's task of uncovering the original house was made easier in the early 1950s by this design.

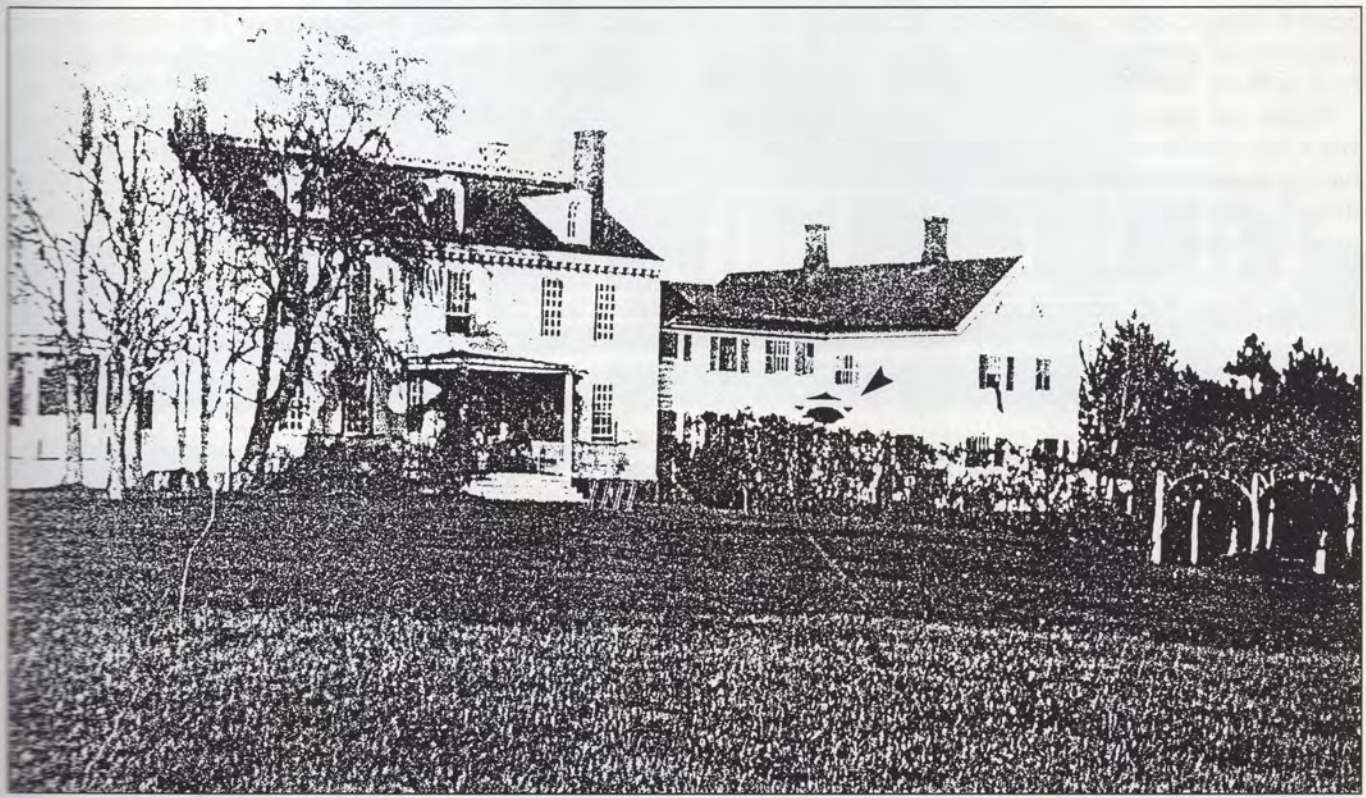
It was probably the practical benefits of easy circulation that prompted the installation of three more new doors between second-floor chambers. The two west-side bedchambers had never before had a door in their shared wall. Now an opening was cut in a position that carefully maintained the bearing section of the wall. Two small doors were also opened in the east and west walls of the central north room, giving easy access to the northeast and west bedchambers. Photographs of the expanded family suggest many uses this room might have had: a nursery or nanny's room, an infirmary, or a room for cousins to share on vacation. At this period the walls were brightened with white paint.

All of these interior changes in plan are closely linked to comfortable family life. Old photographs of the exterior of Rock Hall have a similar sense of well-being; the gardens are bountiful with fruits, vegetables, and banks of flowers. A view of the house from the south that is dated 1890 shows vine-laden arbors and the tip of a gazebo *(fig. 55)*.

James Augustus died in Brooklyn in November of 1890, only three years after his mother, Mary Halsey Hewlett. Like Dr. Samuel Martin, James Augustus Hewlett was the son of a venturesome father. Each of the second generation owners brought about major changes at Rock Hall. James A. Hewlett had the financial means and the concern for Rock Hall's preservation to make the family homestead more than a curiosity with a history of survival. Under his care Rock Hall became a smoothly operating seaside family retreat. He equipped the estate with all of the facilities for a happy and healthful life for his family and their many guests. Rock Hall was never more exuberantly enjoyed than in that robust era of American life.



54. Plan of the second floor of Rock Hall. This is the best record of these spaces after the addition of the east wing in 1881. *Drawing, W. J. Bartoldus, HABS, 1935.*



55. In 1890 there were many restful spots at Rock Hall for enjoyment of the fresh sea air—the west and south porches, the gazebo and the dappled shade of the grape arbors. *Photograph, D. E. Kane.*

10

Rock Hall's Golden Years

JAMES A. HEWLETT was only fifty-five when he died in 1890. Ahead of Mary Elizabeth, who was then forty-nine, lay more than a quarter century as matriarch of the Hewlett family of Far Rockaway and Brooklyn. All but one of her eight children were living; Emma Freed, born in 1877, had died when an infant of two. They ranged in age from Anna, at twenty-six, to Louise, who was only nine. Mary's husband had stepped forward and taken over the guardianship of Rock Hall's future and Mary Elizabeth carried on in that role. As a widow she continued to live in their Brooklyn home during the winter months, and to move for the summers with her household staff to Rock Hall, where she was joined by the expanded family. Her husband had confidence in Mary's administrative abilities, for he named her sole executrix and trustee of his sizable estate. No other mistress of Rock Hall had ever been in that position.

When the inventory of James's estate was filed five years later in October of 1895, Rock Hall was listed as having furniture worth $1,200 and stock and farming utensils valued at $2,000. The principal amount of the inventory was $569,701.45 after all of James's worldly affairs had been settled. Mary Elizabeth was a wealthy woman. Anna had married in 1891 and was living in Brooklyn. George, the oldest son, who remained single, continued his father's importing business as a partner under the firm name, Hewlett & Lee. In 1894 James Monroe married and took up residence in Brooklyn. Two other bachelor sons, Arthur Thomas and Charles Russell, lived near Mary in the winter months at 68 Remsen Street, a home their father had purchased for them. Finally, Mary was made testamentary guardian of her two minor children when the estate was settled in 1895; Mary Agnes was nineteen, and Frances Louise thirteen.

From the beginning of her years alone, Mary Elizabeth continued the protective policy her husband had practiced toward Rock Hall. When electric lights became available in Far Rockaway in 1892, they were not installed in the old home. A great-grandchild, Hester Hewlett, described the row of candlesticks at the bottom of the stairs which could be taken to the bedrooms. "There were also lamps filled with kerosene to give more light in the bedrooms but if you wanted to read, you did it in the living room with better lamps." Although kerosene had replaced whale and lard oil and was widely used after the opening of the first oil field in Pennsylvania in 1859, Rock Hall must have given much the same appearance at night around the turn of the century as it had a hundred years earlier. Hettie's memory of "a soft, lovely light from many candles lit for parties" could have been Alice Banister's a century and a quarter earlier.

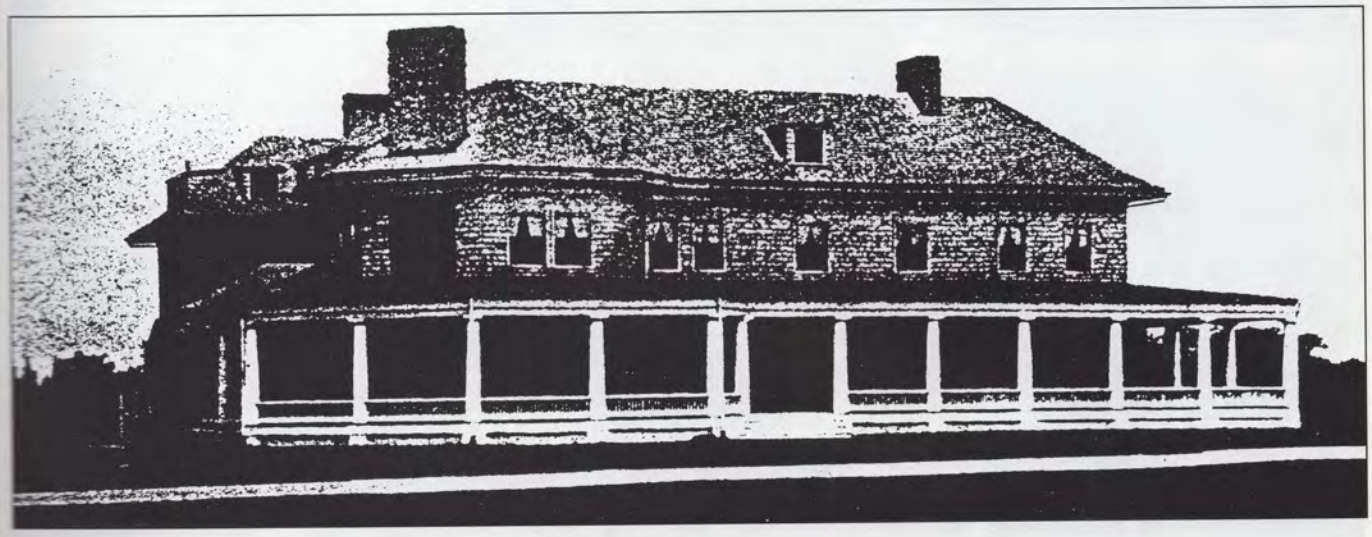
All of the sons in this generation were prepared for college at the Brooklyn Polytechnic School, and three went on to Columbia. All became outstanding achievers in their chosen fields. George, as the oldest, seems to have moved directly into his father's profession; he was a member of the New York Coffee & Sugar Exchange. James Monroe earned a Bachelor of Philosophy degree in 1890, the year his father died, from Columbia's Department of Architecture in the School of Mines, where he studied under its founder, Professor William Robert Ware. After the first of two stints in the office of architects McKim, Mead & White, he was able to go to Paris to study there with Pierre Victor Galland, a celebrated French architect and decorator. Monroe's decorating skills were developed and sharpened in Paris and throughout his career enhanced his work as an architect. Arthur Thomas was graduated from Columbia College in 1892 and then practiced in the New York area as a gifted scenic designer, muralist, and interior decorator. Charles Russell also studied in Columbia's Department of Architecture and then moved on to become dean of the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh.

In 1881, when James Augustus undertook the comprehensive alterations at Rock Hall, the community around the family home was rapidly becoming a fashionable New York suburb. Elaborate summer homes were being designed and built by noted architects, such as Hugh Lamb (1849–1903) and Charles A. Rich (1855–1943). Far Rockaway had become a large village composed of fine hotels and boarding houses. The opening of the South Side Railroad, which was being built in 1869, flagged speculators with an eye for exclusive development. Where the Marine Pavilion had stood in 1834 at the edge of the Atlantic Ocean, there was now an enclosed private park with lodges at the entrance

gates and summer residences of a number of prominent people within. Even with the prices for farmland soaring, scores of large farms were bought for subdivision into building lots between 1880 and 1910. Three Lawrence brothers, Newbold, Alfred, and George, were among these enterprising developers. They bought all the farms in the Rock Hall neighborhood and laid out a plan of attractive building lots for an exclusive and high-class residential district. The Lawrence brothers donated a railroad station on the property, Lawrence station, improved existing roads, and made new highway connections. Lawrence Avenue was cut from the station to Broadway and Central Avenue to Far Rockaway. Wealthy New York residents were attracted by the beauty of the home sites offered, and the project prospered. The residents developed streets and sewers and brought in electric light service, each contributing his share of expenses. In August 1891 the Lawrence Association was incorporated, and by 1897 the Town of Hempstead had granted a village charter. Rock Hall was then officially in the Village of Lawrence, which was separate and distinct from the incorporated village of Far Rockaway. George Hewlett was named as one of the two original trustees of the Village of Lawrence.

The Rockaway Hunting Club became the social hub of the community and was only one of the pleasure clubs to which Hewlett family members belonged. Lord, Hewlett, and Hull, the architectural firm in which James Monroe was a partner from 1894, designed a new Rockaway Hunting Club house in that year *(fig. 56)*. Many fine homes were built in the vicinity of the club, among them, later, James Monroe Hewlett's own home.

Mary Elizabeth Hewlett was a prominent part-time resident in this fashionable community. An old photograph *(fig. 57)* shows Rock Hall decorated for the Christmas season in 1900. The dark, richly carved Victorian furnishings are enhanced by an opulence of greenery, mistletoe, and the American flag. Three daughters' weddings were noteworthy social events. Anna Sanderson married Aaron Allen Hand in April 1891. Sons were born in Brooklyn in 1892 and 1895, the

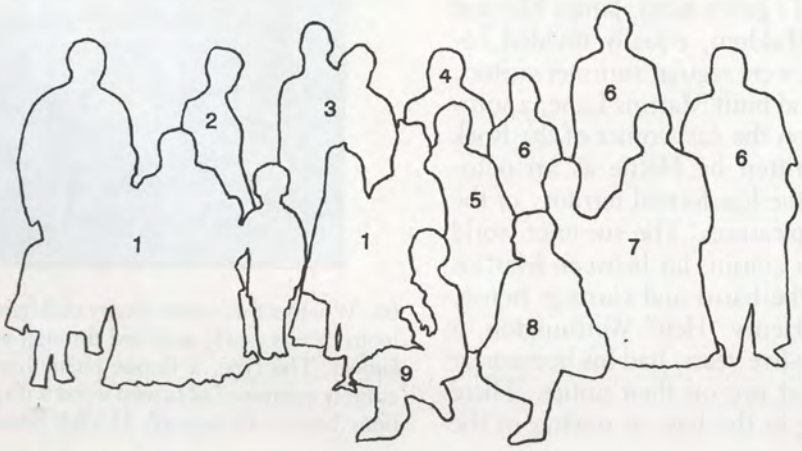


56. The Rockaway Hunting Club, 1894, was built by Lord, Hewlett, and Hull in the Shingle style, an integral part of the Colonial Revival movement, that had its heyday in the 1880s and 1890s. What could be warm and sheltering in a smaller-scale domestic building took on a power and monumentality in hotels and clubs built in the years after 1887. ***Top:*** The clubhouse is wrapped by a long porch that reaches out from comfortably appointed interior spaces. ***Bottom:*** View of the lounging room.

57. This photograph of the north end of the stairhall as decorated for Christmas, 1900, was provided by Anglesea (Lesie) Parkhurst Newman, the second daughter of Hope Hewlett Parkhurst, one of the twin daughters born to James Monroe Hewlett and Anna Willets in 1908.

58. This festive party assembled in 1903 at Rock Hall to celebrate the wedding of Frances Louise Hewlett (1881–1967) to Edward Lyddon Patterson. Louise's father had the remains of earlier outbuildings removed and the delightful porch in the background built the year his youngest child, the bride, was born. *Hewlett Bequest, Rock Hall Collection.*

59. Family gathering, 1904. Identification of family groups and single persons (with their ages) from left: 1. James Monroe Hewlett family, Monroe and Anna (each age 36), Anne (8; next to Mary Elizabeth), James Augustus (7; second from left), Anglesea (5; in front of her aunt Louise), Willets (4; left of Anglesea), Carman (3; extreme left), Laurance, a girl (1; in the arms of Charles Russell), and Arthur Thomas (recently born; in his mother's arms). 2. Mary H. Hewlett (71). 3. Edward L. Patterson (37) and wife, Louise Hewlett (22). 4. George Hewlett (37). 5. Mary Elizabeth Hewlett (63). 6. Aaron A. Hand family, with Aaron A. Hand, sons Allan Furman Hand (12) and James Sanderson Hand (9), and Anna Sanderson Hewlett (40). 7. James Crosby Brown family, with James Crosby Brown and Mary Agnes Hewlett (29) holding James Crosby Brown, Jr. (less than 1). 8. Arthur Thomas Hewlett (33). 9. Charles Russell Hewlett (31; holding Laurance Hewlett). *Hewlett Bequest, Rock Hall Collection.*



first grandchildren. Mary Agnes and James Crosby Brown married in October 1898. Two more grandsons from that union enlarged the clan in 1903 and 1905. Frances Louise was a beautiful bride at Rock Hall, where she married Edward Lyddon Patterson in 1903 *(fig. 58)*.

A wonderful photograph that includes many of the family members from this chapter of our story captures the spirit of health, happiness, and prosperity enjoyed in 1904 *(fig. 59)*. The occasion may be the christening of Anna and James Monroe's seventh child, Arthur Thomas, who is proudly displayed in baptismal finery. There are three generations represented; Mary Elizabeth (age 63) and her sister-in-law, Mary H. Hewlett (71), are the survivors of the second generation of Hewletts at Rock Hall. All seven of Mary Elizabeth's children are present; those who married appear with their mates and offspring. In providing new branches for the family tree, the James Monroe Hewletts outdistanced the others, and Anna Willets Hewlett was still to be the mother of female twins and a fifth son. Alexander Crosby was born to Mary Agnes the following year. Sons-in-law are readily identified by their full heads of hair; the Hewlett men seem all to have tended toward premature balding.

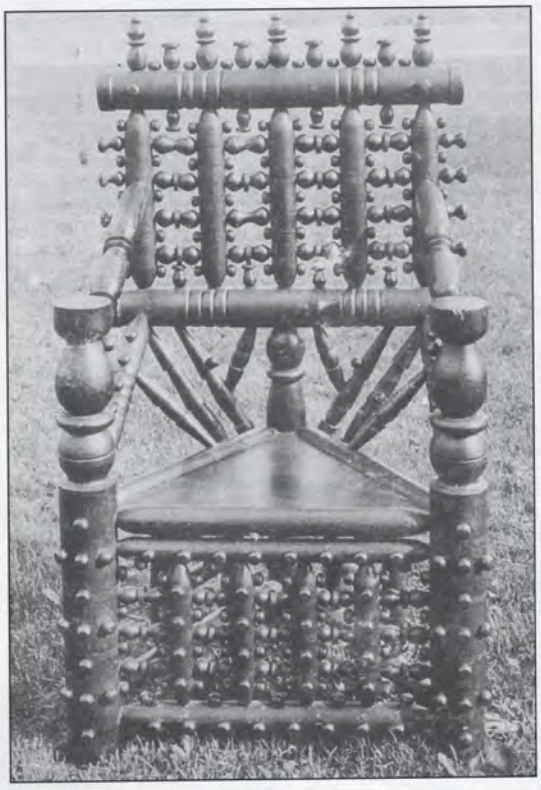
The setting for Louise's wedding must have been much as the estate was described in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* on July 18, 1908:

> Rock Hall . . . the summer home of Mrs. J. Augustus Hewlett is reached by a long lane, bordered on either side by tall, stately trees . . . and from the rear porch an unobstructed view of the Atlantic Ocean is obtained. From the house the ground gradually slopes toward the ocean, which is about one mile distant, and the breakers are plainly visible. To the west of the house is a fine lawn, the grass being like velvet carpet, while to the south, immediately in the rear of the house, is the quaint, old-fashioned flower garden, rich with flowers and blossoming plants. . . . It is only a few years ago that the last of the old slave huts that had stood on the property for generations were torn down.

This is a description of the more formal aspect of Rock Hall in these years. There was another side to summer life on Rock Hall's green acres. James Monroe and Anna Willets's ten children, equally divided between sons and daughters, were regular summer visitors. James Monroe designed and built Martins Lane, a summer home for his family on the east corner of the Rock Hall property. Words written by Hettie as an octogenarian vividly recreate the less formal territory of the grandchildren's vacation pleasures. The summer world of these children and their cousins lay between Martins Lane and Rock Hall by the barns and carriage house, the windmill and pond. Henry "Hen" Worthington, a Hewlett employee for sixty-five years, had his house near the pond and kept an alert eye on their antics. There were the joys of jumping in the hay, or rowing in the pond, or taking turns looking through the telescope set up by the south half-door in Rock Hall to watch the water traffic. This may also have been the generation of Hewlett children whose seventeenth-century throne chair is remembered in a family photograph in the *Rock Hall Collection (fig. 60)*.

It was also Henry Worthington who unearthed a cache of old coins in the ground at Rock Hall. The discovery of a Scottish bodle, a Spanish centesimo, a George III penny dated 1797, and a number of other English and Spanish coins was noted in a contemporary newspaper, the name and date of which were not saved. There may have been many such lessons in history for the children who played on Rock Hall's historic soil.

The pond was called Worthington's rink by the villagers, who enjoyed skating there in winter. Ice blocks were also cut in that season and stored in layers alternating with some insulating material such as sawdust, leaves, straw, or moss. The location of the icehouse is indicated in the survey prepared by Morris Fosdick in 1836 for Thomas Hewlett *(Chap. 7, fig. 37)*. It was formed of a well lined with stone, fifteen to twenty feet deep and ten feet in diameter. The cover was conical and made of louvered shutters. It seems possible that this necessary structure for preserving food may have been



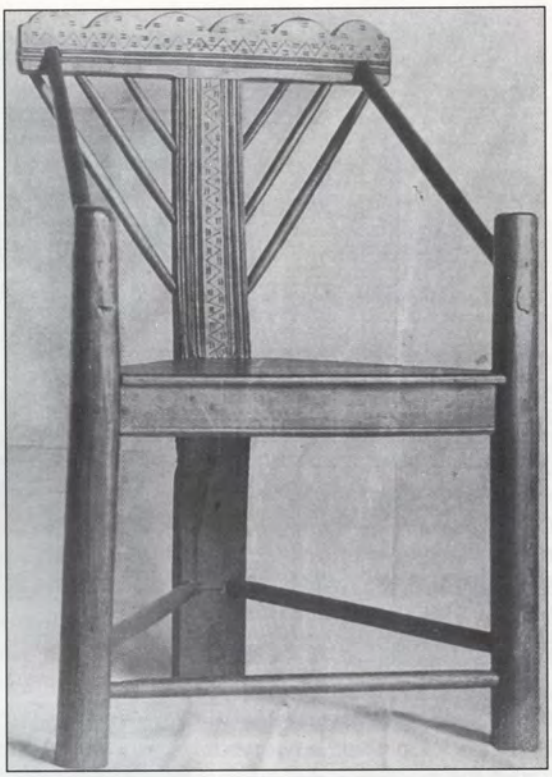
60. Whether this extraordinary children's chair was a family heirloom or was newly acquired through antiquarian interest is not known. The type, a throne chair, has a triangular seat and is entirely composed of turned wood with multiple knoblike projections (bosses). *Photograph, Hewlett Bequest, Rock Hall Collection.*

one of the amenities of the first-phase house that continued in its usefulness.

Those who are given years beyond the Biblical three score and ten must pay the price of seeing loved ones part this earth. Mary Elizabeth was such a survivor. Her oldest daughter, Anna Hand, was widowed in 1910 at forty-six; her youngest son, Charles Russell, died in Pittsburgh in November 1913 at forty-one. The next July, Mary H. Hewlett, her husband's unmarried sister who had shared their homes in Brooklyn and Lawrence, died, leaving her estate to three of Mary's children, George, Anna Hand, and Louise Patterson. The bequests were characteristic of the closely-knit family. When Mary Elizabeth died in Brooklyn on October 30, 1917, she left six children and fourteen grandchildren.

By that date World War I had cast a grim pall on life for three years, and it would be another year before a peace treaty would be signed. R. Buckminster Fuller, the famous engineer and visionary inventor, and his best man wore navy whites at Fuller's marriage to Anne Hewlett, the James Monroe Hewletts' oldest daughter, at Rock Hall on July 12, 1917. The young couple were given another early chair, less ornate but clearly a seventeenth-century antique, as a wedding present *(fig. 61)*. The father of the bride and his son-in-law were later to join in business from 1922 to 1927 in the Stockade Building Systems, Chicago.

The record of Mary Elizabeth's bequests to her children and friends is among the papers in the *Hewlett Bequest* at Rock Hall. Anna W. Russell, whom we have seen in earlier days in a group photograph with her children *(Chap. 9, fig. 45, bottom)*, was left $3,000. A nanny, K. Lane, received $2,000. The main legatees were carefully assigned an equal portion of Mary's handsome estate of $213,676.09 minus whatever advances each had received during their mother's lifetime. James Monroe did not receive any further money from the estate, since he had already received more than



61. A second antique chair, a gift to R. Buckminster Fuller and Anne Hewlett on the occasion of their wedding at Rock Hall, July 12, 1917. *Photograph, Hewlett Bequest, Rock Hall Collection.*

$100,000. Neither George nor Agnes had drawn funds, and each now inherited $51,435.94; Louise received $50,034.94, and Arthur $39,333.85. Curiously, only one other will in the succession of Rock Hall owners followed this judicious system when distributing an estate among children, and that was the first. Josiah Martin left his daughter Elizabeth "£60 to buy her mourning, having already paid to her husband her fortune, as may be seen by my book."

11

George Hewlett and Public Recognition

GEORGE HEWLETT, Mary's oldest son, served as the executor of her estate and trustee for his siblings. Like his younger brothers, Arthur and Charles, George did not marry. His life revolved around the two communities their parents had established as their homes, Brooklyn and Lawrence, Long Island. George represented the family as titular head and through his involvement with many church and civic organizations. He was a successful businessman and a respected member of both communities. He served as a trustee of the Brooklyn Savings Bank, a member of the Long Island Historical Society and the Sons of the American Revolution, and the treasurer of the Episcopal Diocese of Long Island. He was also a member of the Cedarhurst and Huntington Yacht Clubs and the Rockaway Hunting Club. George Hewlett's abiding interest in and deep concern for the preservation of Rock Hall were major forces behind the next chapter of Rock Hall's history.

While the four brothers' achievements differed, there was often an overlapping in their work. Arthur's talents and training were close to Monroe's, and the two worked in partnership on murals and decorations for several institutions in the New York area. Both helped execute the decoration on the elliptical ceiling vault of the main concourse at Grand Central Terminal, which was completed for the opening in February 1913 *(fig. 62)*. They also collaborated on scenery designs for many plays, among them works in which Maude Adams (1872–1953), the first to play the immortal Peter Pan, performed. Maude Adams's demure charm won audiences. The round collar she designed for her costume in the role of Peter Pan still bears that name and is used by many who never knew her whimsical interpretation of James Barrie's boy who never grew up.

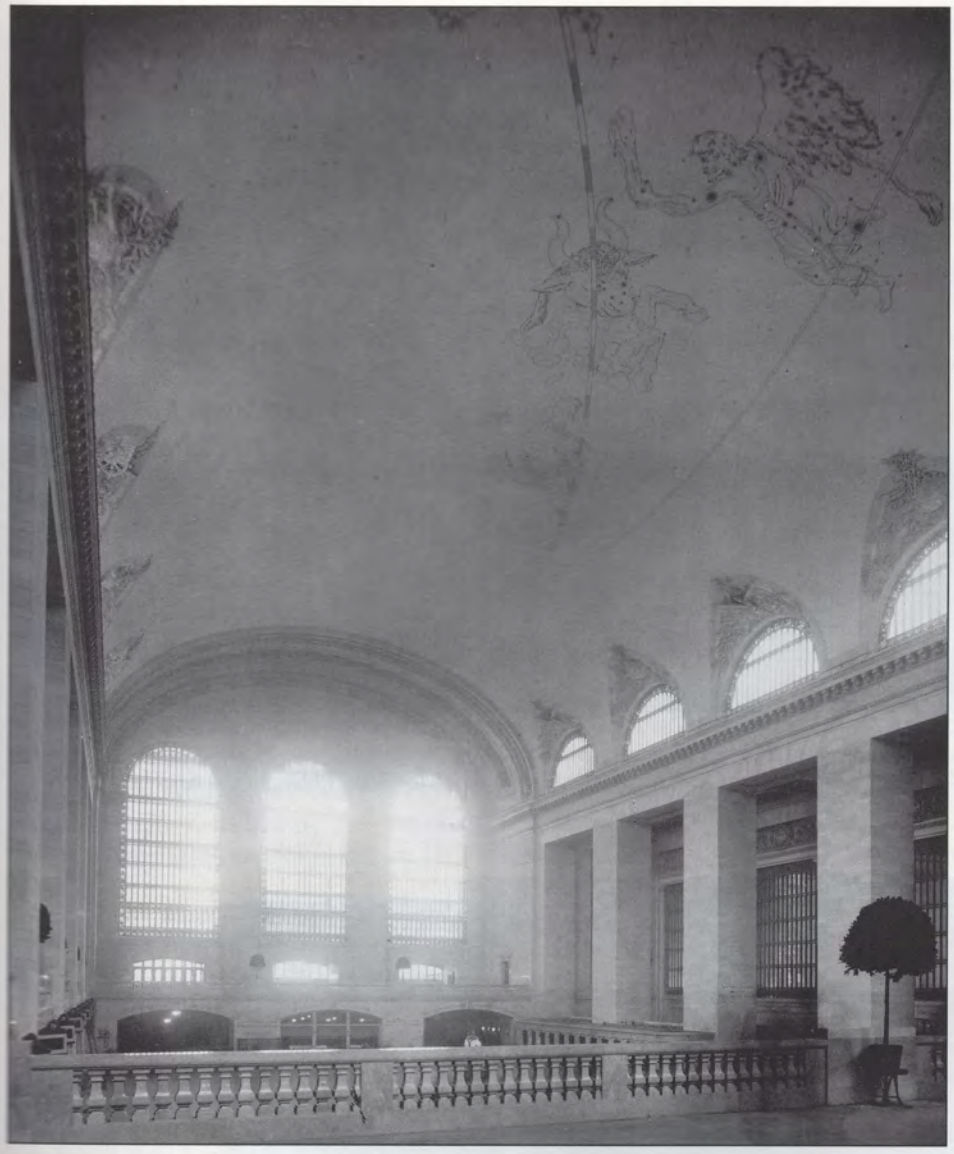
Charles and Monroe were both associated with projects for Andrew Carnegie (1835–1919), that resolute supporter of learning: Charles at the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh, and Monroe as chairman of the committee for erecting Carnegie libraries in the Borough of Brooklyn.

The architectural firm of Lord, Hewlett, and Hull designed the reading room of Grace Episcopal Church, Brooklyn, where George was an officer for more than fifty years. Like their grandfather, Thomas, this generation of Hewletts were Episcopalians. The Brooklyn Hospital where George was a director was built by Monroe's firm. Lord, Hewlett, and Hull placed outstandingly well in major architectural competitions won by other firms. But the firm also won and completed commissions for many elaborate country residences, for the Fifth Avenue mansion of Senator William A. Clark, and for hospitals, schools, and clubs. It could only have helped Monroe professionally to be part of a socially prominent and respected family.

From the time of her husband's death in 1910, Anna Hand shared summers at Rock Hall with her mother and unmarried brothers. In the winter months she joined the men at 68 Remsen Street in Brooklyn. After their mother's death in 1917, this pleasant arrangement continued through the 1920s. That decade began with Anna Willets's death in 1920, leaving Monroe and six minor children, one of whom, Willets, was killed the same year in a motor accident at age twenty. In October of 1922, Rock Hall was the scene of the wedding and reception of Anglesea, the younger of the beribboned sisters standing in front of her aunt Louise in the family portrait of 1904 *(Chap. 10, fig. 59)*. James Monroe remarried the following year, and his new wife, Estelle Rodgers, took over the mothering of the younger Hewlett children.

In 1924 when the family celebrated the centennial of Hewlett ownership of Rock Hall, Anna Hand, with family support, made an effort to learn all that she could of the ancestral home. Her collection of memories from family interviews and the observations from a careful examination of the old house were written down by her brother Monroe and printed as a booklet that is still useful and interesting, as we have seen. No trace was found of an earlier house having been incorporated into the building of Rock Hall; modern techniques of investigation confirm that opinion. The research also established a year for the alterations James Augustus made at Rock Hall—1881. The summing up of family recollections projects the respectful character of Hewlett guardianship maintained from their first contact with Rock Hall a century earlier.

When Monroe designed and built another home near the Rockaway Hunting Club and moved there in 1931, a



62. "Constellations Reversed: New Grand Central Ceiling Has the Heavens Turned Around," *New York Times*, March 22, 1913. A day earlier a commuter from New Rochelle had discovered that the electrically illuminated heavenly bodies in Paul Helleu's design of the sky at night were reversed. Controversy over who was responsible continued for decades. Charles Bassing of Brooklyn executed Helleu's mural with others, among whom were the Hewlett brothers. In 1944, Charles Gilbrandsen copied the original mural, which had been severely damaged by water, on fiberboard panels cemented to a cylinder. Commuters may again see a freshly restored cerulean-blue and gold-leaf sky overhead if a multimillion-dollar rebuilding project is approved. *Photograph, Avery Architectural Library, Columbia University.*

major decision involving Rock Hall was made. Martins Lane *(fig. 63)* became the summer home of George and Arthur, with their sister Anna Hand. For the first time since the interruption in occupancy after 1817, Rock Hall was without even summer residents. It is to the credit of George Hewlett and Anna Hand, in particular, that Rock Hall was maintained with care, for, without inhabitants, Rock Hall could have quickly deteriorated.

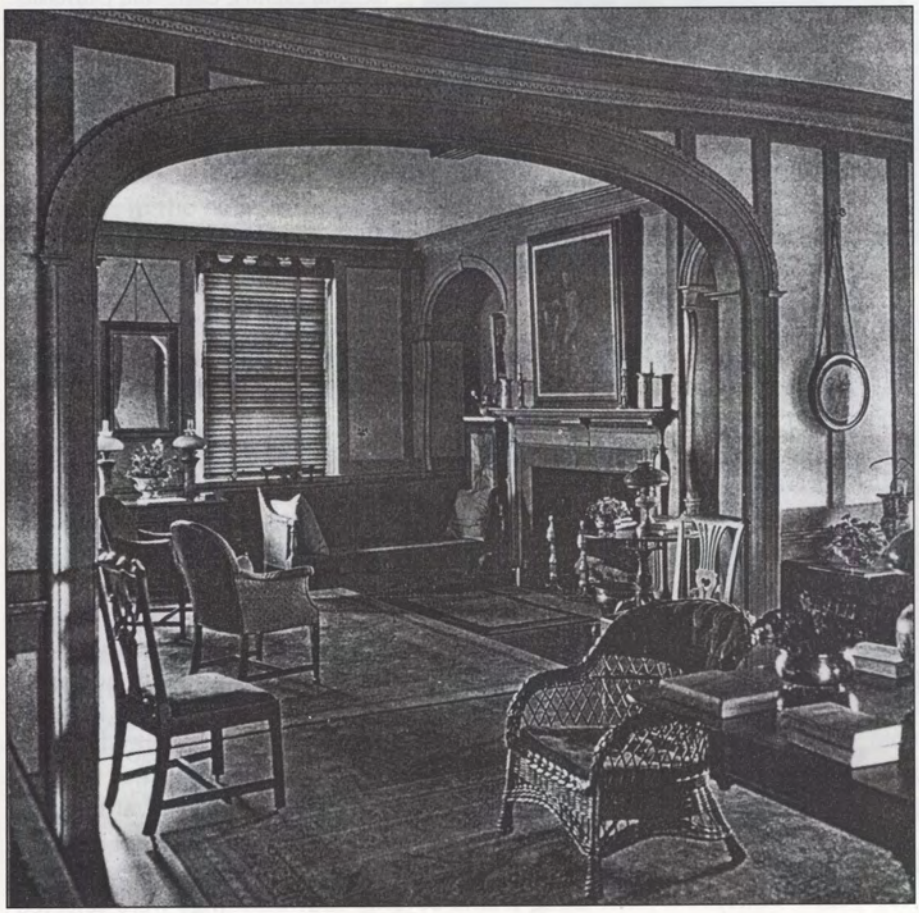
James Monroe's partner in practice, Austin W. Lord (1860–1922), served as the first director of the American Academy in Rome from 1894 to 1896. It was a particularly prestigious position in those days, when intensive study of Rome's classical remains was basic to a young architect's training. Monroe was honored by the same directorship from 1932 to 1934 and, after his return to America, spent his remaining years with his siblings at Martins Lane. James Monroe Hewlett was seventy-three years old when he died there in October 1941.

Rock Hall was not forgotten in these years. Harry Lorin Binsse, in *The Antiquarian*, January 1931, brought, with the family blessing, scholarly information and contemporary photographs to an interested public *(fig. 64)*. That year a new high school was erected adjacent to Rock Hall on land that had formerly been part of the estate. The public was assured by the chairman of the district school board that Rock Hall was not in danger of being removed. That statement of community interest and concern proved to be reliable.

But the project that did most to direct public interest toward Rock Hall was the Historic American Buildings Survey. HABS was part of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), the federal agency charged with instituting and directing public works to relieve national unemployment. The HABS Report on Rock Hall was the first official recognition of the Martin–Hewlett home as an important part of the heritage of Long Island architecture.

On Long Island seventy-four buildings were selected

63. This old photograph gives an impression of the massiveness of Martins Lane, the home James Monroe Hewlett built for his large family, and shows its relationship to Rock Hall, identified at the left. *Photograph, Anglesea Parkhurst Newman.*



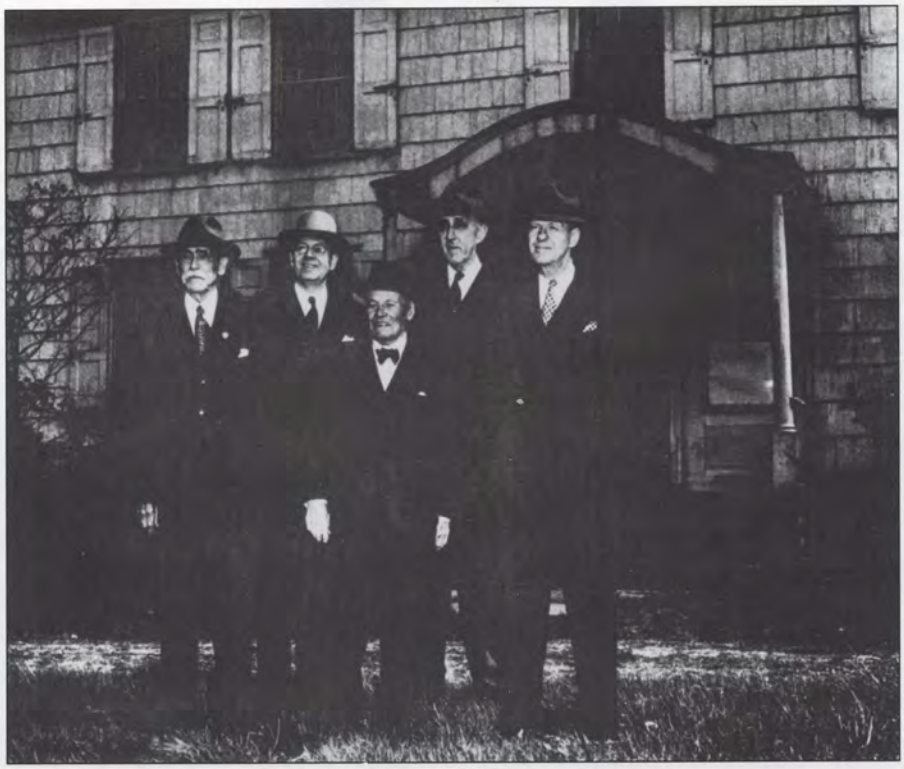
64. The photographs in Binsse's article are of particular interest since they document the appearance of Rock Hall in 1931 just as the Hewlett family's summer residency at Rock Hall came to an end. Two-tone paint schemes are evident even in black-and-white photographs. Oriental carpets, period and comfortable wicker furniture, kerosene lamps, and candles impart an atmosphere of elegant country relaxation. The view is from the northwest parlor looking toward the southwest parlor. *Photograph, "Rock Hall, an American Manorial Estate," Harry Lorin Binsse, "The Antiquarian," January, 1931.*

for inclusion in the survey; Rock Hall was one of nineteen in Nassau County. A short report was written by Eugene Nostrand, leader of the field party for the county. It was a compilation of information available in 1935 concerning Rock Hall's history. Original colors were identified as Spanish brown, grays, greens, and light buffs. If the evolution of the house was not thoroughly understood, the building was carefully recorded in measured drawings and photographs. Their importance cannot be overestimated. The documentation from May 1935 was not concerned with conditions or the accidents of time. Architectural details were drawn without any trace of wear, as if pristine. Color notes are sparse—the wood panels on the west wall of the hall by the archway are labeled "new painted dark brown," and the inner roof of the north porch has a note: "painted light blue."

What was being recorded was, of course, the Colonial Revival home of James Augustus and his family with whatever remained of the three earlier style periods that preceded his alterations. The HABS records serve also as visual evidence of Rock Hall's appearance before the restoration work that created a house museum from a family home. The report noted that George Hewlett and the Hewlett family were "very sympathetic to the study of the structure, its history and the changes it has seen."

Two years later, in 1937, Hester Hewlett, our narrator of childhood memories, had her wedding reception outside in the garden in late May; that was the last wedding at Rock Hall. Such occasional family celebrations could not justify the upkeep of the estate. Some land had been deeded to Nassau County for highway purposes in 1935, but there remained taxes and the fear of fire or vandalism. With the passage of time and changes in the family's structure, Rock Hall became a burden. The love the surviving members of the family bore for their country home sustained their efforts to find some solution for the preservation of Rock Hall.

Two bills were introduced in the legislature at Albany urging the acceptance of the maintenance of Rock Hall by the State of New York. Charles A. Hewlett, an attorney and historian and fifth cousin of the oldest living generation *(see fig. 65)*, worked at Albany for this preservation cause. When neither bill was passed, it was he who ultimately interested the Town of Hempstead in taking on ownership responsibilities. Credit is due also to the Town of Hempstead's Board of Supervisors for their foresight in accepting the challenge of preserving for posterity a local monument of historical, social, and architectural significance. Rock Hall and three acres passed to the Town of Hempstead officially in May of 1948. When George Hewlett died at age eighty-four in 1951, his mission to ensure the preservation of Rock Hall had been accomplished.



65. An evocative image was created when five members of the Hewlett family on Long Island were photographed in 1946 before the north facade of Rock Hall. From left to right they are: Oliver T. Hewlett of East Rockaway; Charles A. Hewlett of Woodmere; George Hewlett of Lawrence; Joseph S. Hewlett of Woodmere and George W. Hewlett of Hewlett. *Photograph by Wendell Kilmer, Hempstead, New York.*

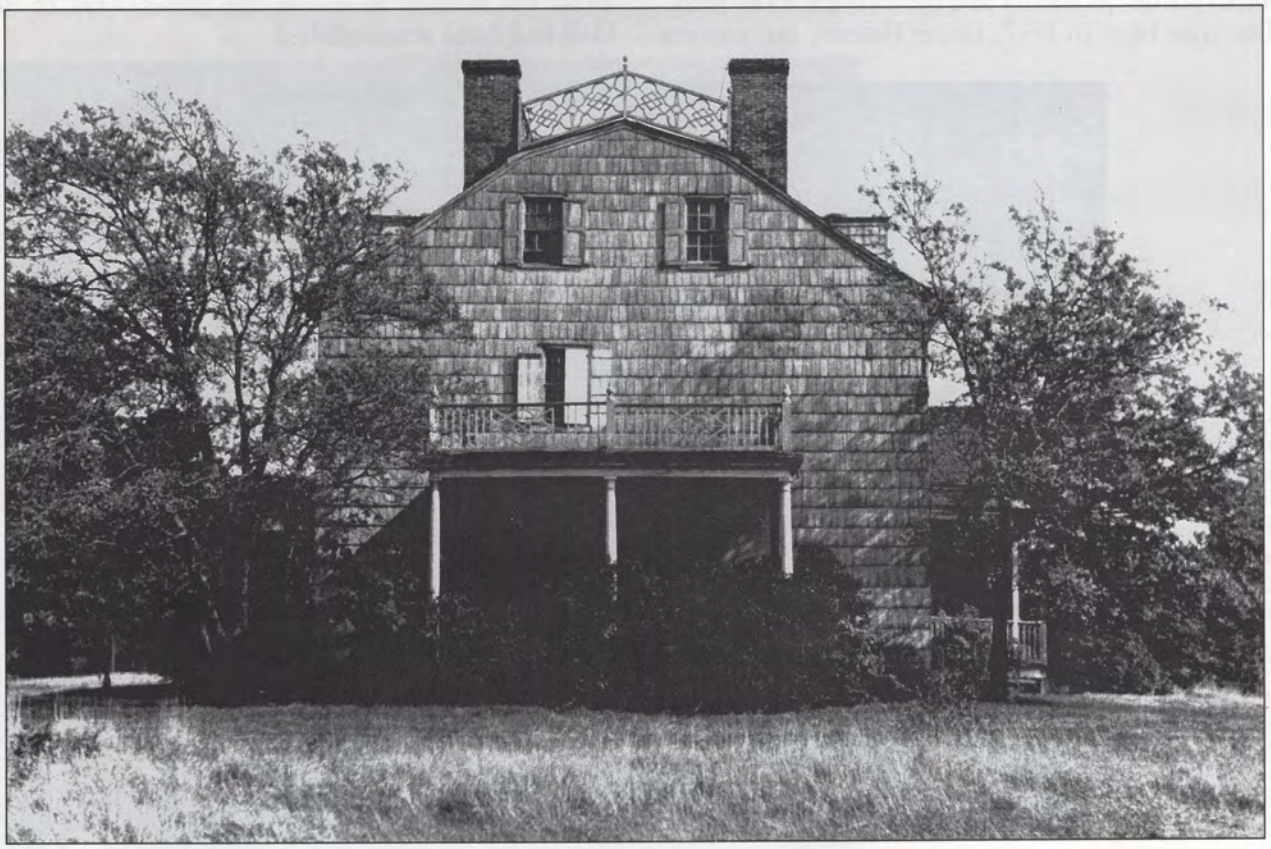
12

The Museum of the Town of Hempstead

AT SOME TIME close to the date of transfer of Rock Hall from private ownership to the Town of Hempstead, Franklin B. Benkard, an attorney and brother of Bertha Benkard (Mrs. Reginald P.) Rose, made a series of photographs of details of the interior and exterior of Rock Hall. Although unprofessional in quality, Benkard's photographs, by design or accident, record some features of the house that would otherwise have been lost. In one of these *(fig. 66)*, the shaggy state of the west lawn bears little resemblance to Mrs. J. Augustus Hewlett's "velvet carpet." Inside, a lifeless gloom and echoing silence shroud the empty rooms after seventeen years of almost complete disuse.

In the spring of 1949, a plan was devised whereby John W. Myer was engaged at a nominal salary to serve as a professional museum advisor, and Mrs. Rose was asked to head a committee to put the house in order and restore it to its original state. Twenty-five thousand dollars was budgeted for 1949, and further money was promised when needed. Bertha Rose wrote her close friend, Henry Francis du Pont, explaining her need for "help from those who really know the subject" and asking him to serve on an advisory committee with Joseph Downs, John Graham, and Hardinge Scholle; all four accepted.

The first task was to equip Rock Hall with the me-



66. This photograph of the west side of Rock Hall at the time of the Hewlett gift to the Town of Hempstead preserves its appearance just before the museum restoration project. Figure 72 illustrates the appearance after the restoration of the 1950s. *Photograph, Franklin Benkard, 1948. SPLIA.*

67. Bertha Benkard Rose on the south porch of Rock Hall. *Photograph, Franklin Benkard, 1948. SPLIA.*

chanical systems necessary to enable the ancient home to serve as a museum. The Hewletts, as preservation purists, had never installed electricity, plumbing, or a heating system in the original building. Their one concession—by 1916—was a telephone tucked in a hidden corner. An agenda was planned: to put on a new roof, to install radiant heating in the ceilings of the rooms that were to make up the museum, to put the east wing in condition to become a caretaker's apartment, and to fence the property. The town board voted a bond issue of $130,000, which sold well. By the end of the year, an architectural firm, Chapman, Evans, and Delehanty of New York, had been employed, and plans were completed for the necessary work.

Bertha Benkard Rose (1906–1982) *(fig. 67)* had close associations with the historic preservation movement from childhood. Her mother, Mrs. Harry Horton Benkard, was an early and noted collector of Americana. Her memory has been honored by bequests to the Museum of the City of New York and the Bertha King Benkard Memorial Fund at the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Bertha Rose brought to the Rock Hall restoration project a broad experience with many institutions and organizations: the Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum in Delaware, the Museum of the City of New York, the New-York Historical Society, and on Long Island, the Theodore Roosevelt Association, the Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities, the Friends of Raynham Hall, and the Oyster Bay Historical Society. She supervised the restoration of Raynham Hall and also directed the restoration of Stratford, the Lee family home in Virginia, after its purchase by the Robert E. Lee Memorial Foundation in 1929.

Through her close friendship with Ethel Roosevelt Derby, Theodore Roosevelt's daughter, Bertha Rose came to the chairmanship of the committee on decoration and furnishing for the original restoration of Sagamore Hill by the Theodore Roosevelt Association. As it happened, Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt's death in 1948 precipitated the movement to preserve President Roosevelt's Long Island home in Oyster Bay in the very year that Rock Hall was acquired by the Town of Hempstead. Bertha Benkard Rose, because of her interest and experience in house restorations, was soon at the helm of both projects, with the firm of Chapman, Evans, and Delehanty engaged as architects for whatever structural renovation was needed at the two sites. Herman S. Murray, a leader in the restoration campaign, served the larger project as chairman of the Administrative Committee of the Town of Hempstead and Administrator of the Museum.

A choice of period to which Sagamore Hill should be restored was easily made—the period of the presidency, 1901–1909. The decision at Rock Hall was more complicated, since there was no single personage or historic event to commemorate. It was therefore decided to take the house back to its original appearance, which had been the goal of restoration work at Williamsburg.

Bertha Rose would surely have been avidly following the pioneering work John D. Rockefeller, Jr. (1894–1960) was doing at the eighteenth-century capital of the Virginia colony. Dr. W.A.R. Goodwin, the rector of Bruton Parish, Williamsburg, dedicated his energies unswervingly to the rescue of the vestiges of Williamsburg's colonial greatness. Fired by Goodwin's zeal, Rockefeller opened his purse, his mind, and his heart to the rebuilding project.

A bound report, *Colonial Williamsburg: The First Twenty-five Years*, gave an accounting of the work of Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated. The work in progress was the restoration of the pre-Revolutionary appearance of the colonial capital where the American dream of freedom and independence had taken form. The golden years had been from 1699 to 1780, when Williamsburg was the political and cultural center of the largest, most populous, and most influential of the American colonies.

What the Board of Trustees believed could be achieved by this tremendous undertaking was clearly stated: to recreate accurately the environment of the men and women of eighteenth-century Williamsburg and to bring about such an understanding of their lives and times that present and future generations may more vividly appreciate the contribution of these early Americans to the ideals and culture of our country.

By the date of publication, the last day of 1951, eighty-two buildings that had survived whole or in part from the eighteenth century had been restored to their original form. Three hundred forty-one buildings, often with only a part of the foundation surviving, enough to identify a location, had been reconstructed. Statistics for the other side of the coin were also listed: six hundred thirty-six modern buildings had been torn down or removed from the restored area to make room for gardens, greens, and the reconstructed buildings.

Bertha Rose and Henry Otis Chapman used the word "modern" in the same sense as it was used at Williamsburg, to mean anything built after the eighteenth century. The "original form" so earnestly sought at Williamsburg from 1926 onward was the work of researchers in archives and libraries in America and abroad. An investigation of house and building forms at Williamsburg and the whole Tidewater area was undertaken. The chemistry of paint colors, the production of brick, hardware, and glass, and much more was painstakingly investigated. After twenty-five years of restoration and reconstruction and the investment of many millions of dollars, it was announced with well-earned satisfaction that eighteenth-century Williamsburg had returned to life. It was also recognized that the search for historical truth was open-ended.

For our story, the message to those who were called upon to save America's architectural past was clear. Rock Hall should present an elevating learning experience to visitors, an opportunity to step back into another time in America's history. The layers of change had to be peeled back to expose a mansion that already existed at the very moment of the struggle for liberty.

Early on, Bertha Rose wrote to her longtime friend Henry Francis du Pont:

> . . . the main house has been left almost entirely as it was originally built. At first I wondered about the Captains walk [roof balustrade] and dormer windows but I have looked at a lot of pictures of houses of that period and guess that they too, are original. . . . I am pretty sure the woodwork is all original though I doubt two of the mantels.

Of course, Bertha was right in questioning whether the details she mentioned belonged to the original Georgian house; they are all part of the alterations to Rock Hall after the American Revolution in the last decade of the eighteenth century and the first of the nineteenth. In poring over books of illustrations, however, she would have found many arches supported by pilasters and some roof railings and dormers like those at Rock Hall on well-documented eighteenth-century buildings. Rock Hall on the Hempstead Plains was not at the cutting edge of American high-style architecture in 1768. In many ways Thomas Banister and Samuel Martin incorporated architectural details that were commonly used in more progressive centers of the Northeast earlier, but these details at Rock Hall now wore the cloak of the Federal, Adamesque style.

Perhaps the most famous and most used source for illustrations of American architecture was a compilation of four hundred fifty plates in twelve volumes made by William Rotch Ware between 1898 and 1902. Illustrations of buildings extending into the Greek Revival period were included, all under the title *Georgian Architecture*. Words such as "colonial" and "Georgian" were often freely used to describe all buildings based on classical sources.

Bertha Rose was a doer and an achiever; with a goal of uncovering the original building, work moved forward. What doubts were aroused by the west parlor mantels may have faded with familiarity. The second of the ten precepts to be followed at Williamsburg may also have influenced Bertha's thoughts about Rock Hall: "Great discretion should be exercised before destroying any buildings of the postcolonial classical period." Architectural details of the postcolonial classical period, the period of the Federal government, were exactly what

Bertha Rose at first questioned and then decided to retain at Rock Hall. It must have been a relief that the distinction between new and old was more obvious in most cases at Rock Hall.

The basement and foundation were the first scene of action. A major structural beam and its supports were replaced. The existing dirt floor was retained, but a door in the east foundation wall was closed up, and exterior cellar stairs were removed. New brick piers with concrete footings were built for both the north and south porches and steps. By repairs, replacements, and new installations, four partitioned basement rooms were formed with interior windows and doorways. Windows in the foundation were made sound, and existing cast-iron exterior grilles were retained and replicas supplied where needed.

On the first and second floors and in one room, the southeast, on the third floor, all wood flooring down to the original plank was removed, and that was restored. The existing plaster ceilings on the first two levels and the hall of the third were removed, and radiant heating coils were installed and the ceilings replastered on modern wire lath. The second-floor ceilings and the crawl space and roof above the third-floor hall were insulated. Where new metal supports were needed to raise walls and floors and where ceiling beams required new or reinforced supports, these were installed. Similarly, fireplaces were lined, dampers installed, and iron trim bands set around fireplace openings as needed. Wood paneling was repaired where damaged, always with existing examples as models.

Now work began on preparing the museum rooms. The southeast room that served as the Hewletts' dining room from 1881 onward was retained for that use in the belief that the original house had such a separate room for eating. Here the changes were radical but were tempered by a curious and probably accidental act of preservation. The east mantel wall was restored to its original Georgian appearance by using the original cupboard and closet doors in the northeast parlor as prototypes for new doors. Concealed behind this new paneling, the upper back wall of the 1881 arched niche, which led into the east wing, still exists in its brown nineteenth-century tones *(fig. 68)*. It has been recorded by a photographer using the small access door above the 1950s museum entrance into the east wing. Dutch blue-and-white antique tiles were set around the fireplace opening.

Inventories for the governor's palace at Williamsburg noted delft tile on fireplaces, and excavators there did find many pieces in the buildling's cellar hole. Probably encouraged by this and other documented uses of delft tiles in colonial America, the Chapman/Rose plans called for setting "antique tile facing, furnished by owner" in five rooms. These were to be the two east-side rooms on the first floor and three bedchambers above. Undecorated tiles in the southeast bedchamber were to be cleaned and kept. The west-side parlors were to have fresh antique marble facing set in the fireplace surrounds and hearths.

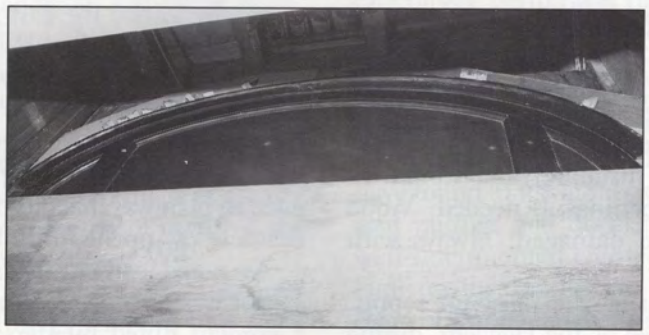
What was done was slightly different. Attractive antique delft tiles were installed in the southeast museum dining room and around the fireplace opening in the northeast parlor. The marble surrounds did not get replaced in the west-side parlors, and the original marble is still there today. On the second level the southeast bedchamber gave up its original undecorated tiles, and Dutch replacements were set in place. In the northeast bedchamber, which was designated as a children's room in the museum, very fine delft Biblical tiles from the first half of the eighteenth century were installed *(fig. 69)*. The two west-side chambers, where antique tiles had been planned, remained unchanged; their simple stone facings are authentic to the original house.

There was no doubt in the minds of the restoration team about the authenticity of the archway between the first-floor east-side rooms *(see Chap. 9, fig. 51)*. It was "modern"! As such, it was removed, wood paneling was replaced, and the door and its surround, which had originally joined the east-side parlors, were returned to their original location. When the archway had been cut in 1881, the old doorway was reused as the entrance into the new east wing. It was now back home again. Since the mantel had never been changed, the southeast parlor had been recreated *(fig. 68, bottom)*. The only difference in plan was that closet doors to the north side of the mantel now opened into the 1881 east wing.

As noted earlier, the mantel wall of the northeast parlor was intact as Josiah had had it built. Perhaps the Georgian fluted pilasters flanking the overmantel and the sturdy elegance of the deep moldings that gave the room a simple grandeur kept it inviolate throughout the generations of change. When the paneling was replaced where the 1881 archway had been cut, all appeared as it had originally. In the preparation of the rooms for visitors, the northeast parlor was designated the Five Towns room, and contributions from residents of Hewlett, Woodmere, Cedarhurst, Lawrence, and Inwood were used exclusively to acquire furnishings from the late eighteenth century *(fig. 70)*. Mrs. Arthur N. Peck was chair of the Five Towns Room committee, on which Herman S. Murray also served.

The west-side parlors and the main stairhall, where updating efforts had been concentrated in the early years of the nineteenth century, were now left relatively unchanged. The archway between the two parlors, which had been installed for James Augustus Hewlett ca. 1871, was also accepted. The northwest parlor was distinguished in the museum as a music room; its companion remained a parlor. The Copley portrait painted for the overmantel moldings had found a new home in the Addison Gallery, Andover, Massachusetts, by 1942.

The Colonial Revival west-end porch, which led into



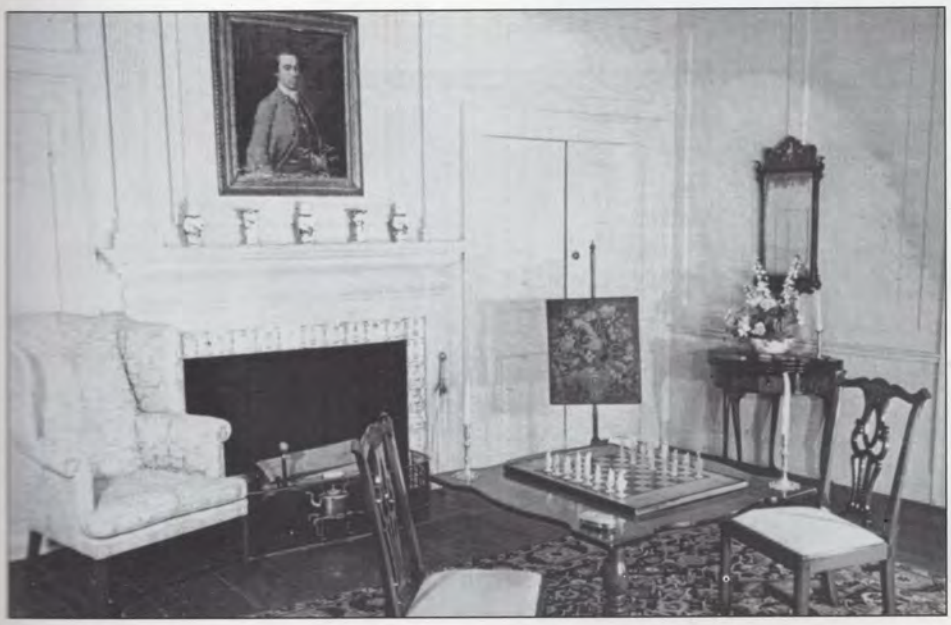
68. ***Top:*** The east wall of the Hewletts' 1881 dining room with the door at the left leading to the new service wing. *Photograph, HABS, 1935.* ***Middle:*** The upper back wall of the left niche survives today, concealed from view. *Photograph, Town of Hempstead.* ***Bottom:*** The museum reconstruction of the east wall of what was interpreted as a Georgian-period dining room. The closed doors give the appearance of a closet as it would have looked in the original house, but they actually lead to the museum office facilities and staff living quarters. *Photograph, SPLIA, 1976.*

69. Detail of the tile surround of the fireplace opening in the northeast bedchamber. The subject is "Moses with the Tablets of the Law," taken from the Book of Exodus. Such Biblical tiles served as decoration and also as visual aids in teaching children the Bible stories. A young Moses, still beardless, can be identified by his rod or wand in one hand and the stone tablets in the other. The tablets are inscribed with the numerals I–X, representing the Ten Commandments. The artist's confusion of the Roman numerals may have misled an observant child. The tradition among artists of depicting horns on Moses' head stems from a word in medieval and early Renaissance Latin (the Vulgate) that meant "flashing with rays of light" and also "horned." These tin-glazed earthenware delft tiles were probably made in the first half of the eighteenth century. Such handpainted tiles decorated many eighteenth-century rooms in America, but at Rock Hall they were installed at the time of the preparation of the museum rooms. Mr. George Jackson, an authority on fireplaces and a member of the Board of Trustees of Rock Hall, was instrumental in acquiring these tiles for Rock Hall. *Photograph, Town of Hempstead.*

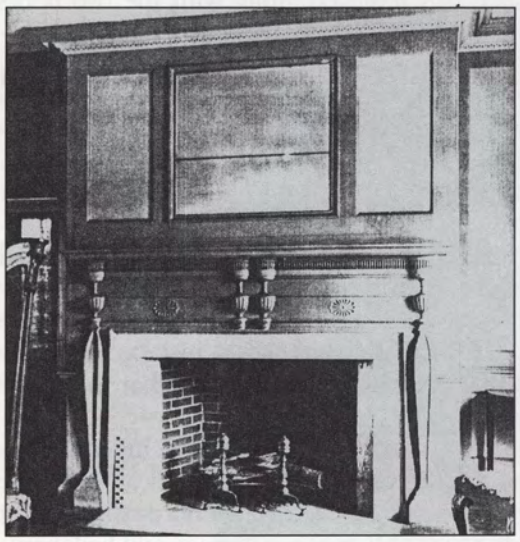
both of these rooms, was recognized as a recent (1881) addition and it was removed along with the two doors leading into the parlors *(fig. 71)*. On the exterior, shingles replaced those that had been disturbed, first by Thomas Hewlett's kitchen attachment, and later by his son's porch. The west-end wall took on what was probably its original appearance in Josiah Martin's time *(fig. 72)*. Windows on the second floor bringing light and air to the northwest and northeast bedchambers were removed, and evidence of their existence erased inside and on the exterior *(figs. 72 and 73)*. It is impossible today without extensive excavating within walls to determine when these windows were originally installed. On the basis of old photographs, we know only that they were there by 1868.

Chapman's restoration changes also included the removal of the passageway built in 1881 to lead from the upper hall to the new east wing. The partition that formed the dividing wall between passage and bedchamber was dismembered and the material used for restoring panels; the chair rail was reused in the central north room. Doors similar in design to those on the closet in the northeast bedchamber were fabricated to mask the second-floor entrance into the east wing *(fig. 74)*.

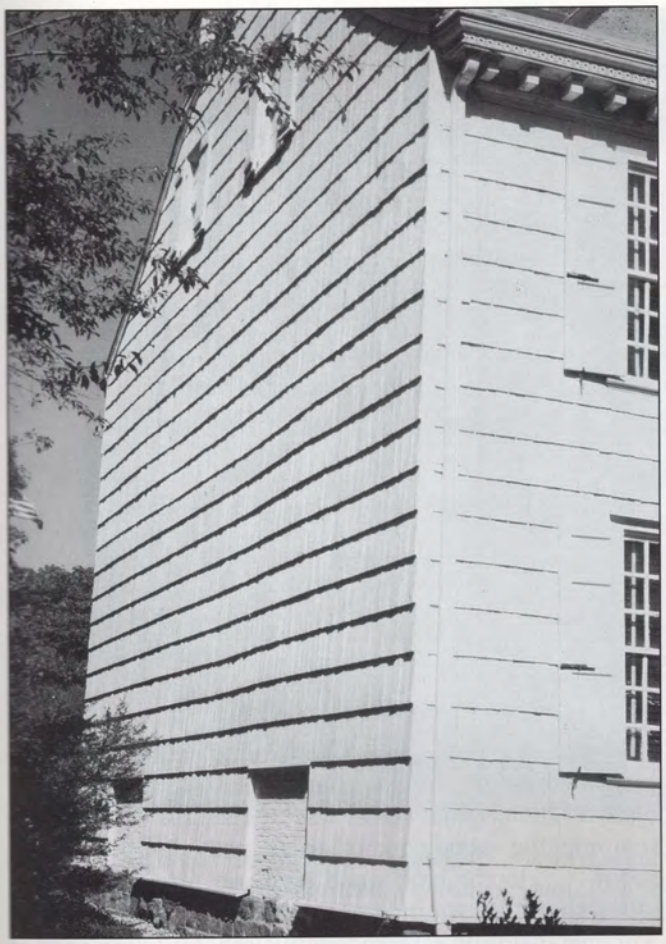
The four other doors that had opened one space to another in the 1881 alterations were now closed, and the paneling affected was restored. With these changes, all later alterations were thought to have been removed, with the exception of the secret hidden-wall section of the 1881 dining room. In fact, the classical archway between the west parlors of ca. 1871 had survived undetected, and its folding doors were safely stored in the upper crawl space of the east service wing. The folding doors very probably had been moved to that space soon after its creation in 1881.



70. Charles Mackey, the brother-in-law of Bertha Rose, did the photographic work for slides, postcards, and accordion scenes of Rock Hall that were sold in the new museum. This is his postcard of the Five Towns Room, as the northeast parlor came to be known. *Rock Hall Collection.*

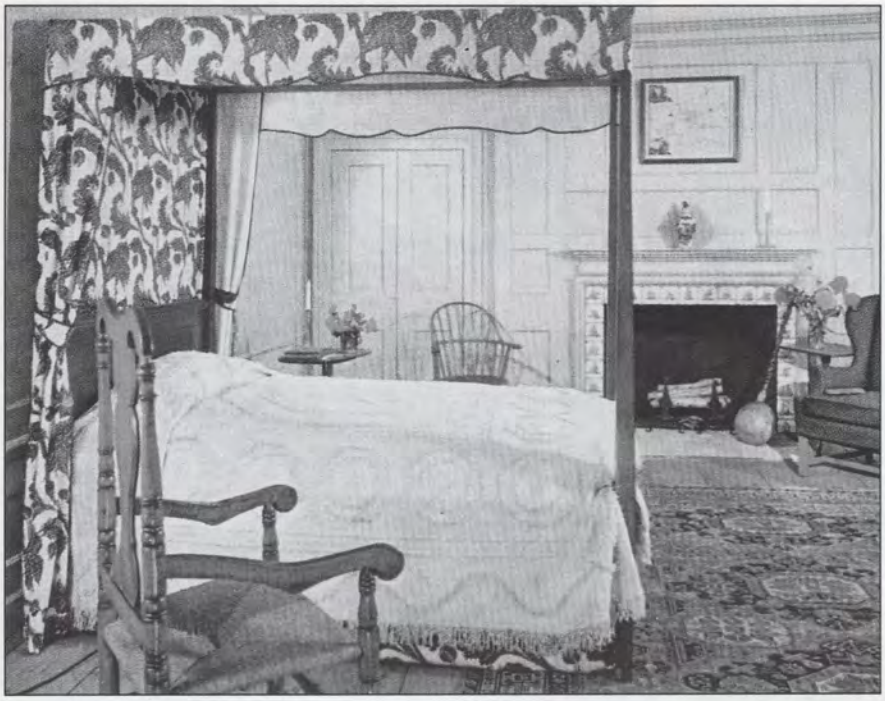


71. ***Top:*** The northwest parlor before and after the museum restoration as a Music Room. ***Left and Bottom:*** The southwest parlor before and after the 1950s restoration. The doors leading from these parlors to the west-side porch had been located in the alcoves flanking the archway wall that the rooms shared. *Photographs at left, HABS, 1935; at right, SPLIA, 1976.*



72. The west wall of Josiah Martin's house probably looked very much as it does in this recent photograph, with the exception of the third-floor windows and the gable end of the gambrel roof. At the level of the ceiling of the second-story rooms, the original roof sloped inward as part of the hipped roof form. *Photograph, Linda Barreira.*

73. The northeast bedchamber before *(top)* and after *(middle)* the removal of a window to the south side of the mantel. *Photographs, top, HABS, 1935; middle, Rock Hall postcard, 1953.* **Left:** A similar window in the northwest bedchamber, of which no interior photograph exists, was also closed at the same time. This bedchamber never had storage areas built into the mantel wall. *Photograph, detail, SPLIA, 1976.*



74. The "closet" doors framed by the bed canopy actually connect the second floor of the old building to the east wing. Dutch tiles added in the museum restoration can also be seen on the fireplace surround. *Photograph, Ezra Stoller, ca. 1967.*

One sad error made at this time was the removal of the louvered upper sections of doors leading to the north central room (Dr. Samuel Martin's study) and the northeast bedchamber on the second floor. As they were vivid references to a distinctive Antiguan architectural form brought to America by the Martins, the house is the poorer historically by their loss. At the time the museum rooms were being prepared, the unfamiliar louvered panels may have appeared to disrupt the harmonious order of the Georgian mansion.

On the third floor the original plank floors were retained, and all plaster walls were repaired. Interior wood shutters on the dormer windows were repaired to operate. The northwest room had been made into three smaller rooms, and now two partitions and two interior doors were removed, restoring the space to one room.

On the exterior, in addition to the structural changes, there were multiple repairs, large and small, ranging from the laying of a new north porch floor to the renailing of loose shingles. Window sash, pulleys, and hardware were repaired or replaced to bring the old house to museum appearance. Salt air from the ocean and solar heat had caused more damage to the south facade than to the north. It may have been at this time that the beautiful rope and guilloche moldings on the south facade cornice were replaced by machine-made reproductions, although the architect's plans instructed: "Patch cornice moldings to match existing."

The south porch was removed and a new porch "to architect's design" was built, which reused floor beams, ceiling boards, and rebuilt porch seats *(fig. 75)*. New panels were installed in the bottom half of the "Dutch" door.

Finally, the time came for Mrs. Rose to choose colors for the museum rooms. The technique employed to discover the original colors was "the simple expedient of scraping the woodwork in small patches all over the room . . . to the bare wood so it was immediately obvious that the original color had been found." Mr. Michael Tumulty remembers this process being used at Rock Hall; he was an apprentice painter to Mr. Patrick Healy, who had taken courses at Williamsburg and had carried paint samples from Rock Hall to match up with colonial colors there.

In 1991 and the first months of 1992, a state-of-the-art technique was used to investigate the layers of paint on Rock Hall's walls. Along with the other layers, the colors applied at the time the museum rooms were being restored were identified and noted. The Five Towns Room (the northeast parlor) was painted a gray tan; the new investigation found that the first paint finish had been cream with a glaze. A postcard from the museum-restoration period shows the room arrangement and restored door where an arch had been removed *(fig. 70)*. Either it was not realized that in the early house the doors were painted with a wood-grain finish or that appearance was not wanted. Throughout the museum, doors were painted to match the color of the door and window surrounds.

The southeast dining room was painted a light gray sand; that change from what has been recently discovered is perhaps easily explained. A lesson that must be learned in identifying old paint colors is that colors are altered drastically by the yellowing of the oil that occurs particularly in the dark after the paints have been covered. Layers of dirt must also be distinguished from

75. ***Top:*** This photograph captures the state of disrepair of the south porch at the time of the Hewlett gift to the Town of Hempstead. *Photograph, Franklin Benkard, 1948.* ***Bottom:*** The new south porch as designed by Otis Chapman. What materials could be salvaged from the old porch were reused, but a new design based on the north porch was followed. *Photograph, Linda Barreira, 1993.*

paint layers. As well, with experience, what might initially look like a single paint layer often proves to be more than one layer. The first color identified in the recent color study was a white cream over a light cream primer, followed by a light gray primer with a cream finish coat at the time of the Federal-style alterations. More powerful magnification and correct color perception of paint samples have made it possible to approximate original period colors with greater accuracy.

The southwest parlor, Josiah's "best" parlor, was painted a dark turquoise green. Such a color, in fact, was used on this room, which over history has had more coats of paint than any other room. The initial finish, however, was light cream, followed by a light blue-green, followed by two more finishes before the turquoise.

The northwest music room was painted a warm white; modern research found dark cream—not so very different.

The hallway of the museum was first painted a turquoise blue. Without realizing that the archway, almost all of the staircase, the fanlight, sidelights, and other woodwork around the north doorway were Federal-period additions to the Georgian hallway, Mrs. Rose's spot sampling must have given some confusing results. The recent color study in the hallways found on wood that had existed there from the beginning "one or more generations of off-white" beneath a gray primer and a strong Prussian blue glazed with green, plus all the more modern layers. Federal-period alterations began with the gray primer and Prussian blue.

Second-floor bedchambers also show different results that will be briefly compared. The museum northeast bedchamber, which was interpreted as a children's room, was painted a jade green, for which no precedent has been found at any period; the recent investigation found a series of dark cream finishes. The southeast chamber was painted a mauve for the museum room but was actually initially a yellow-green followed by a light cream. The southwest museum chamber was painted a blue-gray, which was another innovation; modern investigation discovered early finishes of cream, dark cream, and then light gray. The northwest chamber was not initially painted in Josiah's house and then was given a light gray "sea" green; the museum room was painted a light tan, as it had in fact been in 1881.

The Society of Colonial Dames of America, with Mrs. Robert Marsh as head of their committee, had taken on the restoration of this northwest bedchamber. As with the Five Towns Room, no township funds or furnishings on loan from museums were used in preparation of the museum bedchamber.

The central room on the north wall that began as part of the second-floor hall and was later partitioned to form Dr. Samuel Martin's study became a sitting room in the museum plan. As a study, it had been a dark tawny gray; as a nursery or nanny's room, it had been white; and now, in the museum, it was painted a mustard color.

Mrs. Reginald Rose's deep interest in and knowledge of the decorative arts and her many connections with the museum world were invaluable in her role as curator and chair of the Fine Arts Committee. Furnishings from the Revolutionary period had been designated at the outset of the restoration work with a special goal of reacquiring as many items as possible from the actual house. This meant that it was Martin family furnishings that were being sought. The specter raised by the story of six cartloads of furniture being hauled to Jamaica for sale by the impoverished Alice McNeill was daunting. A similar effort to acquire original furnishings at Sagamore Hill was very successful, but there the circumstances of disbursement were completely different.

A harp made by J. C. Stumpff in London ca. 1810 was reacquired and became a graceful feature of the northwest parlor, the music room. Two beautiful eighteenth-century Chippendale sidechairs came back to the museum *(fig. 76)*; these pieces were thought to be the property of the Martins but no documentation seems to exist. A piano made of satinwood and mahog-

76. Mrs. Louise Hewlett Patterson generously returned a pair of exceptional mahogany sidechairs to Rock Hall for use in the museum. There has been disagreement on their country of origin, America or England, but all experts agree on their eighteenth-century dating and fine quality workmanship. *Photograph, Rock Hall Collection.*

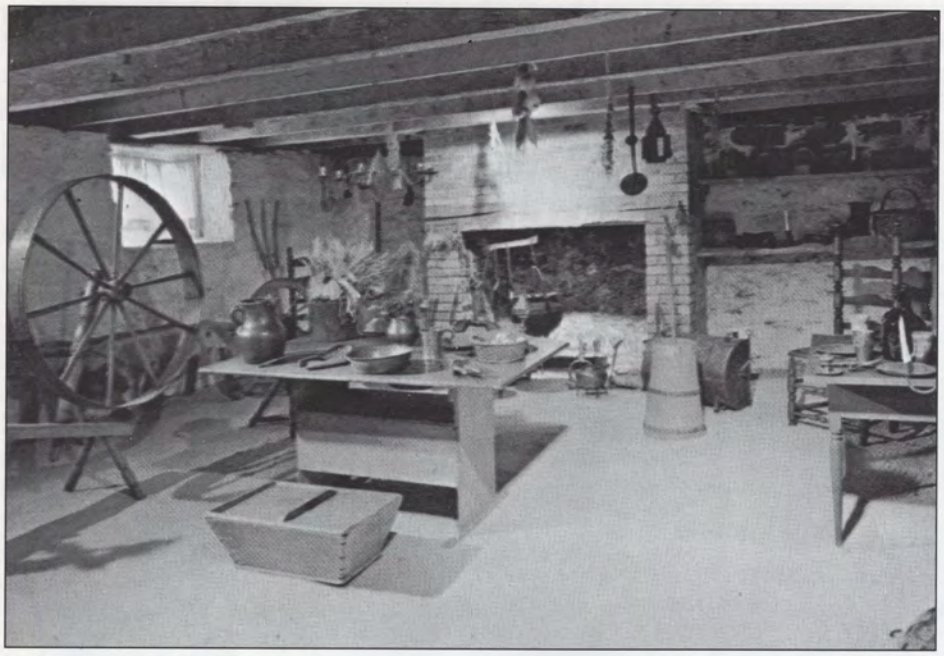
77. The northwest parlor elegantly furnished as the museum Music Room. *Photograph, "The Golden Treasury of Early American Houses," Richard Pratt, 1968.*

any by Johannes Broadwood in London, dated 1792, and a lute with inlaid wood ornamentation made in England ca. 1800 were other instruments displayed in the music room (*fig.* 77).

Bertha Rose and her brother, Franklin Benkard, donated a Sheraton settee and a grandfather clock made by Duncan Phyfe (1768–1854), the preeminent cabinetmaker in New York City in the latter part of the eighteenth century. Mrs. Francis P. Garvan gave a Chippendale carved and parcel-gilded mahogany wall mirror. Her husband had given the nucleus of the Yale University Art Gallery furniture collection in the 1930s in her honor. The Brooklyn Museum was a generous lender of fine New York and Long Island furniture for use throughout the museum rooms, on indefinite loan. The Museum of the City of New York, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Yale University Art Gallery provided beautiful and appropriate pieces. Franco Scalamandre donated fabrics used in making curtains and valances by a New York City decorating firm.

Letters on file at Rock Hall record the bustle of work in progress. A colonial kitchen was created in the basement by using a collection of old kitchenware donated by George Benkhart and historic kitchen furniture donated by the firm of Richard Lennox (*fig.* 78). A driveway was surfaced by the township's workers in "the greystone of earlier days." Signs were painted by the Parks Department; a parking lot was prepared toward the scheduled opening.

The Hewlett gift of three acres of land required extensive landscaping. Dead trees were removed, pruning and planting of flowering shrubs and trees were undertaken, and a brick terrace and paths gave definition to the landscape architect's design. The Garden Club of Lawrence donated some planting of the grounds and also hired Alice Rechnagel Ireys, the designer of the historic gar-



78. The colonial kitchen in the basement of Rock Hall was created so that museum visitors could see the utensils and furnishings that would be found in that very important center of everyday life in colonial America. It was inspired by much the same spirit as the colonial kitchens at the Civil War Sanitary Fairs and the 1776 New England kitchen exhibit at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of 1876. *Photograph, postcard, 1950s, Rock Hall.*

den at the Abigail Adams House, to create a small period garden to the south of the house.

When the grand opening date arrived, May 9, 1953, all was in order. A luncheon at the Rockaway Hunting Club honored the members of the Rock Hall Committee and public officials. Five years of work and about $150,000 of town funds had brought about this day. A brief ceremony at Rock Hall attended by Lawrence High School students in period costume preceded the official presentation of the key to Rock Hall by Presiding Supervisor Harold P. Herman to Herman S. Murray, Museum Administrator. Mr. Herman spoke of the museum's future in predicting that "succeeding generations will be increasingly grateful for the preservation of this historical place." Visitors to the museum from schools and historical and genealogical societies were to be admitted by appointment without charge. Other visitors would pay a nominal fee, and the funds were to be used exclusively for maintenance and attendants' wages.

Everyone involved felt satisfaction and enthusiasm for the future of the museum. No one present that day in May 1953 really understood what had been preserved: Josiah Martin's sturdy great house stripped of its outbuildings but adorned by Dr. Samuel Martin and Thomas Banister's refinements; Thomas Hewlett's welcoming tree-lined central driveway; and his son James Augustus's expansive, if poorly engineered, archway. The house itself and three acres of land, probably a few tenacious plantings, and the generous spirit of preservation were the legacy of later Hewletts. All of these made up the new Rock Hall—the Museum of the Town of Hempstead.

13

The Epilogue

THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF ROCK HALL as a museum was well publicized in the local and New York City newspapers, and from the beginning the restored rooms were appreciated by many visitors. They were also illustrated in many publications on American colonial architecture. Richard Platt included Rock Hall in his *Second Treasury of Early American Homes* (1953) and in 1967 in the *Golden Treasury*, which represented the best of the two earlier books. The Goulds, editors of the *Ladies' Home Journal*, had correctly assessed the interest throughout the country in America's historic architecture. These collections of colored plates with a descriptive text had a great success with a broad public.

In April of 1962, two events of importance for the museum took place. A collection of Civil War mementos was put on display in a room on the third floor named the Civil War room *(fig. 79)*. This added another dimension to the exhibits at Rock Hall. Later in the same month a long and fruitful relationship between Rock Hall and the Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities (SPLIA) officially began. The Hempstead Town Board made an agreement with SPLIA to take on the administration and publicizing of Rock Hall.

79. The American Civil War exhibit, organized on the third floor of the museum in 1962, drew attention to another period of American history that was part of Rock Hall's past. *Photograph, postcard, Rock Hall.*

Five years later, in 1967, the museum collection was enriched by a generous gift from the Estate of Louise Hewlett Patterson and the Hewlett Heirs. Items from the bequest have been referred to many times in this story. Luckily, the Hewletts had been savers, and a wide assortment of objects came back to Rock Hall: a branding iron, a small china pipe stand, historic clothing, family documents and papers—all that remained of the Hewlett family mementos form this invaluable bequest.

Basic preservation of the building has always had to take precedence over purely aesthetic or historic projects. In the tradition of Thomas Hewlett's widow, Mary, a new cedar shingle roof was installed in 1971.

Mrs. Gertrude L. Lynch, a member of the board at SPLIA, with others, became deeply involved with the historic house museum. It was she who realized that Rock Hall needed the sustained support of an organized body of concerned friends. In 1976 the Friends of Rock Hall, Inc., came into existence, with Mrs. Lynch as the first president and a board of seven members. The Friends adopted as their objectives the preservation of the museum as a cultural center and the encouragement of educational programs consonant with the purpose of the organization. Throughout the succeeding decades the Friends promoted fund-raising activities that made possible educational exhibits, lectures, museum improvements, research on Rock Hall, and much more.

The celebration of the United States of America's first one hundred years found Rock Hall flourishing as the James Augustus Hewletts' summer home. In the bicentennial year Rock Hall was honored by official listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The whole country seemed proudly intent upon learning more about America's past. The criteria that led to Rock Hall's selection were both architectural distinction and association with a great historic event in American history, the War of Independence.

In 2076, the year of the tricentennial, a time capsule that was enshrined at Rock Hall on September 12, 1976, as part of the bicentennial celebrations will be opened. Enclosed are many pieces of memorabilia, including magazines and newspapers published that day, a Bible, and letters from Long Island religious leaders and public

officials. President Ford sent a congratulatory message, which was read at the ceremony.

Queen Elizabeth II of England was also invited to visit Rock Hall during that festive year. For these many special events a number of maintenance repairs were made so that the museum could be proudly displayed in perfect order; the exterior of the house was painted, and the chimneys repointed.

By 1978, with Robert B. MacKay as Director of SPLIA, a much more detailed and carefully weighed agreement between SPLIA and the Town of Hempstead was devised. The new agreement left maintenance of the building and grounds and insurance with the town. Hempstead agreed to make periodic sums of money available for projects deemed necessary by SPLIA for research, refurbishing, maintenance, and embellishment of the house. SPLIA took on authority regarding details of interior and exterior decoration and any deaccessioning of inappropriate objects, and assumed an advisory capacity in curatorial matters and administrative hiring. Over the years a harmonious relationship has existed between the two parties, with the Friends of Rock Hall serving as a very active go-between. Their support of progress in presenting living history in the museum rooms, exhibitions, and programs has been unflagging. They have proved themselves friends of the cultural life of the community.

Robert MacKay's training and experience in preservation made him well aware of a changing climate at Williamsburg and at other historic sites. There was a growing awareness of the need to rethink the way in which history and the historic houses themselves were presented to the public at many house museums. In the summer of 1979, important plans for Rock Hall were announced in SPLIA's *Newsletter*. Funding had been found for several projects. A manual was prepared by Adolph S. Cavallo to be used by guides to the museum. Mr. Cavallo also coordinated conservation surveys by experts on the paintings, works on paper, and textiles in the Rock Hall collection.

January of the new year, 1980, found Zachary N. Studenroth, an architectural preservation historian, working in the Manuscript Division of the British Library, London, transcribing a wealth of historic material from Martin family letters. In March, Douglas A. Wilke's architectural office prepared a new set of drawings based in part on the HABS drawings of 1935. By midyear Studenroth had completed a draft of a historic survey of Rock Hall, which was supplemented by an architectural overview and a description of the historic structure by Wilke. This *Historic Structure Survey of Rock Hall* was prepared for the Town of Hempstead.

In May 1981, Robert MacKay summed up his concerns about Rock Hall in a letter to the Hempstead Presiding Supervisor, Thomas S. Gulotta. He wrote of the serious structural problems in the staircase at Rock Hall that had made it necessary to close off the third-floor exhibition area in 1979. Scaffolding had been installed to serve as a temporary safety measure. Structural deterioration also existed in the chimneys and foundation.

MacKay also explained the possibility of presenting a more faithful image of Rock Hall in the Martin period because of advances in preservation techniques. Thirty years had passed since the house was first restored, and the Society wanted to rethink the furnishing scheme. Priority had to be given to structural problems, but equally important was the longer-term goal of a more accurate presentation.

Architect-engineer Douglas Wilke prepared extensive plans for necessary repairs, *Rock Hall Restoration 1982*, dated June 10, 1983, as well as a design for reorienting visiting groups. Progress was slow since all plans had to be approved by the state and federal government because of Rock Hall's landmark status. Once more the Town of Hempstead was looked to for financial support; President Reagan's new budget called for slashing historic preservation funds. A bond issue for $400,000 was floated in May 1984 for essential stabilization of the museum building.

Important aspects of the new restoration were new foundations and footings constructed of wood-enclosed steel columns in the basement. Since the stairs were not viable for use by school groups, reinforcing and repairs were made to the two landings and two stair runs to the second floor, with the work done from underneath. Steel framing was installed under the flooring of the second-level hall, and new steel framing was continued on the third floor. Dormer and roof framing repairs were made.

A separate aspect of the project was extensive work in the east wing. Walls and partitions were removed where necessary, and doors, corridors, steel stairs, and a new porch were built. What had begun as a service wing for the needs of a large family living in the main building now became a museum service wing. Quarters for a resident administrator were now supplemented by efficient and safe office facilities.

Blueprints called for much more radical changes that were not put into effect. The plans would have eliminated the arrival of visitors through the front doorway and instead routed groups through historical exhibits in a reception area where the office area exists at present. Apart from the high cost of this fourth and last stage of the physical improvements of the Rock Hall museum, this scheme would have further interfered with the integrity of the historic house.

In 1984 state funds were sought "for a complete facelift to improve the interpretation of the house." A grant was awarded but it was not large enough to undertake MacKay's project; instead, a series of interpretive panels was prepared by Zachary Studenroth, by then part of the SPLIA staff.

But the goal of achieving a more accurate reinterpretation through research survived through the second half of the eighties; how to achieve this goal and how to finance it with SPLIA's curatorial guidance were continuing concerns of the Friends. In 1987 they agreed that at least the hall and west parlors should be studied, and a project with the Center for Preservation Research, Columbia University, was set up. The Friends and SPLIA shared the cost of a student intern's supervised paint study of the hallway. Time and funds were available only for basics, and the color report was not comprehensive enough for action.

A major step ahead was taken when Anne Grady, a preservation consultant from the Conservation Center at the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA), was brought to Rock Hall to appraise the situation. Her excellent recommendations made in a report dated April 1989 got the reinterpretation of Rock Hall on the right track. She recommended that a historic structure report be commissioned that would provide thorough historical and architectural documentation and examination of the building fabric. Analysis and weighing of this research would direct the new interpretation of the museum rooms. Her recommendations fell on fertile soil; by April of 1991, the historic structure report, an open-ended body of research, was put into loose-leaf binders. The story of the evolution of the house and the details of the lives of the owners discovered in that research have been told in the chapters of this book.

How has the museum changed since the new research probed the secrets of Rock Hall's past? The breathtaking splendor of Prussian blue paint, given sparkle and depth by a green glaze, now covers all the woodwork in the hallways, as it did when the alterations by Dr. Samuel Martin and Thomas Banister were completed in the early years of the nineteenth century. Fourteen reproduction Windsor chairs, approximations of those listed in Dr. Samuel's inventory, grace the walls of the main hall when not in use by visitors hearing background information about the building.

The years selected for presentation for most of the rooms are 1768 to about 1810, since the first-phase museum restoration effectively removed almost everything else. To achieve this end, the collection of furnishings and decorative arts already in the museum is being carefully studied to ensure the appropriateness of each item for the period of tenure of two generations of the Martin family. Rooms with a predominance of Georgian details will be presented as they appeared in Josiah Martin's house. Rooms where the Federal style predominates will be presented as closely as possible to their appearance when Dr. Samuel Martin and the Banisters were occupying the rooms.

Because the Hewletts' story is also very much the story of Rock Hall, even though many features of their architectural interiors no longer exist, Hewlett possessions and memorabilia will be displayed in two bedchambers, honoring their role at Rock Hall. Visitors will also see the Colonial Revival-period elliptical archway installed by James Augustus Hewlett between the Federal-period west-side parlors. When an appropriate means of displaying the newly recovered mahogany-grained doors is found, they, too, will enrich the story of Rock Hall's evolution.

The years ahead will be busy as the museum rooms slowly take on the colors and furnishings appropriate to the surviving architecture. A fine first-floor room that Josiah and Mary may have found convenient for their sleeping quarters, as well as for many daytime activities, is being recreated as it might have been in Josiah's lifetime. Dr. Samuel's stylish Federal-period dining room is reappearing in the southwest room as it is believed to have been toward the end of his life.

Slave quarters and the original detached kitchen and many other outbuildings have disappeared. One subsurface excavation in the area where the original kitchen structure is believed to have stood has already been undertaken by two local archaeologists, enthusiastically assisted by many volunteers. A linear pattern of stone footings for an outbuilding, perhaps the original plantation kitchen, was discovered along with pottery shards, bits of glass, a metal button, and a partial fork—all bits of the past to be studied. Unnumbered oyster and clam shells told of the fruits of Long Island's waters and their importance as foodstuffs.

More may be learned of the everyday lives of the slaves whose labors sustained Rock Hall and of the owners who occupied these rooms. Progress may be slow, for it must follow funding, but the goal is set for a future for Rock Hall as a community resource that will present a living record of life in this corner of the Hempstead Plains.

Glossary of Architectural Terms

baluster: A support for a railing or balustrade.

capital: The upper element of a column.

fascia: In architecture, any broad, flat, horizontal surface.

guilloche: A pattern of interlacing bands in circular or braided form around circular voids *(see fig. 23)*.

keyblock: The central element at the summit of an arch when the building material is not masonry.

light: One compartment of a window; a pane.

molding plane: Colonial-period carpenters made a variety of moldings by using hollow or round planes that were pushed or pulled over wood in chosen combinations. A bead molding, often used on the corner of a beam, was the smallest molding, but even bead planes came in many sizes.

muntin: A bar holding the edges of window panes within the sash.

newel post: A post supporting one end of a handrail at the top or bottom of a flight of stairs.

pilaster: A shallow pier or rectangular column projecting from a wall with a capital and a base in imitation of a column form.

reeding: A form of stylized decoration derived from the appearance of long reed leaves. It is the reverse of fluting and consists of thin, convex parallel moldings.

sash: A framework of a window or door in which panes of glass are set.

sidelight: A window at the side of a door or another window.

stringing: A narrow band of inlay.

Index

References to figure numbers are printed in ***boldface italic*** type.

Hewlett Family Tree

(Note: Only those Hewlett family members who play a role in the story are included here.)

James Hewlett m. Sarah Greene
(ca. 1771–1849)

Thomas Hewlett (1793–1841) m. Mary Halsey Howell (1802–1887) 1822

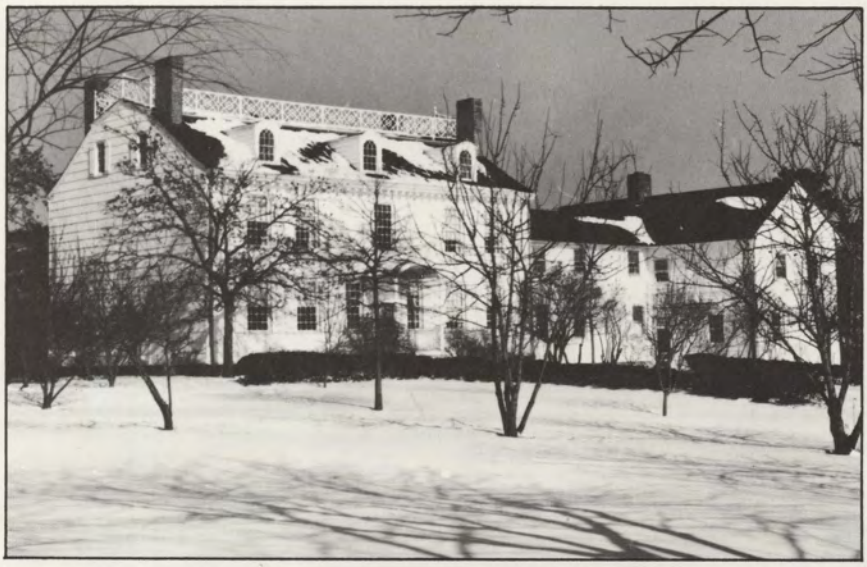
Frances	John M.	Charles S.	Thomas G.	Mary H.	James Augustus	Sarah H.	Mortimer	Catharine
(b.1824)	(1826–1906)		(1829–1856)	(1833–1914)	(1835–1890)	(ca. 1837)	(ca. 1839)	(b. 1841)
	m. 1860 Margaret Hentz (1832–1902)				m. 1863 Mary Elizabeth Sanderson (1841–1917)			

Anna S.	George H.	James Monroe	Arthur T.	Charles R.	Mary Agnes	Emma F.	Frances Louise
(1864–1933)	(1866–1951)	(1868–1941)	(1870–1951)	(1872–1913)	(1875–1919)	(1877–79)	(1881–1967)
m. 1891 Aaron A. Hand (d. 1910)	unmarried	m. 1894 1. Anna Willets (1868–1920)	unmarried	unmarried	m. 1898 James C. Brown		m. 1903 Edward L. Patterson
Allan Furman James Sanderson		Anne James Augustus Anglesea Willets Carman Laurance Arthur Thomas Hope Hester Roger Sanderson			James Crosby Alexander Crosby		no children

m. 1923
2. Estelle Rogers

ROCK HALL
A NARRATIVE HISTORY

Shirley G. Hibbard



One of the finest pre-Revolutionary War houses on Long Island, Rock Hall was completed in 1768 by Josiah Martin, a wealthy West Indian plantation owner. Constructed of wood in the Georgian style then prevailing for fine British homes, the two-and-a-half-story house was home to only two families (the Martins and the Hewletts) before being deeded to the Town of Hempstead for museum purposes in 1948. Today, the magnificent white mansion contains a Federal-period dining room, parlors, a reconstructed colonial kitchen, and authentic bedchambers that offer a splendid glimpse of well-to-do life on Long Island spanning more than two centuries.

In the present volume, Shirley G. Hibbard, a Historic Preservationist, presents a detailed history of this celebrated home: its construction by Josiah Martin as a country retreat far from slave rebellions in the Caribbean and as a place from which to oversee his mercantile interests in New York City; the extensive alterations made to the house during the Federal period; the acquisition of Rock Hall by Thomas Hewlett, an ambitious local farmer in 1824; the construction by James Augustus Hewlett of a large east wing in 1881 to accommodate modern systems, while preserving the historic rooms unaltered; and the mansion's present role as a historic house museum administered by the Town of Hempstead.

These and many other aspects of the evolution of the house, family, and social history, are skillfully documented here. The text is enhanced by over 100 illustrations, including rare photographs, floor plans, elevations, measured drawings and construction details. Painstakingly researched and carefully written, *Rock Hall: A Narrative History* will delight anyone interested in Georgian architecture, Long Island, and the history and background of one of the island's most celebrated residential structures.

Original (1997) publication by The Friends of Rock Hall, Inc. in association with Dover Publications. Foreword by Nancy B. Baldridge. Introduction. List of Figures. 113 illustrations. Index. 96pp. 8⅜ x 11¼. Paperbound.

Cover design by Carol Belanger Grafton.
Front cover photograph by Blanche Cirker.
Back cover photograph courtesy of Rock Hall.

$10.00 IN USA