

Some of New Brunswick's Colonial Homes.

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To study architecture even to a small degree at once makes you realize how the homes reflect both their builders and the life of the times. The people, their life, interests, and economic conditions, all seem so closely bound together, that our attention is drawn ~~is drawn~~ to all these points, though architecture may supposedly be our first interest.

This has been especially true in getting better acquainted with some of New Brunswick's fine colonial homes. In fact points of architecture in most sources of information were almost lost in the greater interest of personalities and local history. To us all three are of interest, and personally, I have found it impossible to separate them one from another.

The three homes of which we will speak - Cornelius Low's, Anthony White's, and Henry Guest's - were all built between the years 1739 and 1760. It was a time of peace and domestic thrift, fertility of the soil, and industry of the people. Substantial wealth had been accumulated both public and private. More ambitious homes were being built, showing a desire for comfort and permanance. It was a time of good living, an abundant table, hospitality, and the necessary servants. Life was full and promising and homes were built to meet these growing needs.

The Home of Cornelius Low.

One of the finest examples of pre-revolutionary homes in this vicinity is to be found at the Landing Lane - the home now owned by the Vorhees family and known as "Ivy Hall". To learn anything of its early history soon turns our attention <sup>to</sup> the village of Raritan Landing, a rival of the town of New Brunswick. It was setteled in the 17th Century and by 1700 was a promising trade center. Produce from near and far was brought here, loaded on boats and sent on to the Amboys and New York. In 1730 Cornelius Low setteled here, building large ware houses and proving himself a leader in the business developement of Raritan Landing. Down the river came boats loaded with grain, flour, lumber, beef, mutton and pork some of these being sent on to the West Indies.

During these prosperous years Cornelius Low built his fine new home. Being warned by floods which covered the meadows in 1739 his home was placed on the bluff on the Piscataway side of the river. By the fall of 1741 the home was finished and the family moved in. In the family Bible there is a record dated Jan. 24th 1742 " son William born at

the new house on the mountain, Raritan Landing."

With good reason it was said to be one of the costliest houses in East Jersey of its time. The sandstone for its walls is believed to have been brought down from beyond Bound Brook. Weighing about 350 tons we realize that this was indeed a transportation problem to be met.

In architecture it is Georgian rather than Dutch. With its central doorway, two windows on either side, and five for the floor above, two chimneys at each side wall, and a slate roof sloping down on all four sides. It shows the usual balanced symmetry so desired at this time. Simplicity yet true dignity. Its proportions are quite unusual being nearly square, 50 ft by 40 ft, which add to the depth of the rooms. On the west side of the house was a two story wing 30 ft square which must have contained the kitchen and servants quarters. This was removed many years ago, but marks of it can plainly be seen on the outside wall stone work.

As we enter the front door we are at once impressed with the spaciousness of the hallway which traverses the house. The wainscoting of Santo Domingo mahogany add much to its richness and warmth. This was covered for many years by countless coats of paint, but fortunately that has been removed and this beautiful wood again is to be seen. To the back is another door leading out, and a wide stairway with mahogany balustrade leading upstairs.

On either side of the hall are two rooms opening through wide hand hewn pine doors. The heavy stone walls, 2 ft thick make possible ample seats in front of each window. On the side wall of each room is a large fire place for ofcourse this was their only means of heating. The fire place as is usually true is the architectural center of each room. On either side of these are closets or cupboards. In what was the parlor are two fine shelltop carved cupboards. These together with themantel make a very handsome paneled wall and adds much to the dignity of the room.

Two of the fire places on the second floor are still lined with the old blue dutch tiles. A glance soon tells you that they depict biblical scenes, and if it were possible , it would be a most interesting study to get better acquainted with these old tiles. On this floor the woodwork is all pine, and where after much labor the paint of two centuries has been removed, attractive pine paneled walls are to be seen. The rear windows of this upper floor still have the old frames of twelve pairs <sup>NES</sup> each.

Surely much thought, planning and the best of material went into this home of Cornelius Low, which he occupied until his death in 1777. This was at the time of the British occupation of New Brunswick and <sup>when</sup> this home was used by British officers. The Low family like all other New Brunswickers suffered much in property loss that winter.

In 1793 the house was sold to John Pool of Bound Brook. Raritan Landing had again recovered after the business depression during the war. The roads leading to the Landing often being crowded with great four and six horse teams hauling great carts of produce to be put on boats and sent down the river to markets. In one day tensloops might be filled with various cargoes. Surely this was a busy center.

But with the post war growth of New Brunswick, later the building of the canal, and finally the railroad to Somerville, business was diverted and the prosperity of the Landing became a thing of the past. So one by one the old landmarks have left us until now we find little to remind us of those days but the fine old Low Mansion still standing on the bluff.

#### Buccleuch Mansion.

To New Brunswickers the best known and perhaps the most interesting of our prerevolutionary homes is that known today as "Buccleuch". But as that was not its original name we must turn back to its earliest records for a fuller story of this old Mansion. Though to most of us this history may be an old familiar tale, still in spite of repetition it must be a part of any paper that includes Colonial Homes of New Brunswick.

Some doubt still exists as to the exact date of the building of this house. Some say 1734, while others, and I believe the majority, hold to the date of 1739. For it was at about this time that Anthony White was married to Elizabeth Morris, the daughter of the Governor of New Jersey, and this fine new home was probably built for his bride. To have been able to start married life in such a home shows Anthony White to be a man of position and means. The estate was known as the "White House Farm."

Though a frame house it is lined throughout with brick walls. These bricks, about half the size of modern bricks, are similar to those brought over from Holland in about 1700.

The plan of the house is typical of colonial homes of that period. A broad central hallway with two large rooms opening on either side. On the river side is a porch larger than is often found at the front entrance, and to the rear of the main hall is another entrance with a larger porch, but it is doubtful that this was a part of the



original house. The wing to the west was also a later addition, for the basement was arranged to accomodate the first kitchen which was under the dining room.

Each room has a large fire place with its usual closets and cupboards on either side. The dining room has always held a special interest as one door beside that mantel leads to a secret stairway to the bed room above. We are reminded of the story of duel ~~h~~that was fought in this upper room, and the escape of the participants by way of this stair case , through the kitchen and down to the river and away by boat. As the fire places are on the inside wall of each room, there is an opportunity for windows on each of the outside walls, adding much to their brightness and giving delightful views of the river. Washington who was a guest in this home made very favorable comparisons between the situation of Anthony White's home on the Raritan and Mt. Vernon on the Potomic.

Though now covered with black paint, the hand rail of the balustrade is of mahogany. From the third floor down are many marks on it, having been hacked by sabres during the British occupation. On the third story floor can be plainly seen the gun marks and sabre cuts of the soldiers once quartered there.

Today there is special interest and value centered in the scenic wall <sup>paper</sup>papers in the hall of the 1st and 2nd floors. It is the first and only put on these walls and was done about a hundred years ago when the property ~~of~~ was the home of Col. Joseph Warren Scott. These papers were printed in France about 1815. On the first floor are scenes of the city of Paris as from the river Seine. It is interesting to note that the scenes are a continuous panama without any repetition. The paper is still in remarkably good condition and the colors bright and clear. On the second floor the paper depicts scenes from India with palms and tropical trees, elephants and tigers, strange buildings and interesting people in colorful dress, surely enough to fire the imagination of any young mind, and to awaken a desire to see something of lands far away. This paper also is in good condition, and to those who know and appreciate old wall papers find this the most interesting. For though the scenes of Paris was very popular in its day and copies may still be found in a number of colonial homes, the India scenes are quite out of the ordinary, in fact, only one other copy is known to be in the United States. It is said that these wall papers are valued at \$25,000. In 1927 special measures were taken to preserve them. They were removed from the plaster and mounted on chassis to keep them from dampness and rot. To do this required an artist of great patience and skill.

To trace the change of the name from White House Farm to Buccleuch Mansion

covers many years of history. The White family held the property until some time during the Revolution . During the war Anthony Walton White , the only son of the builder of this fine home, served as a Colonel and made a splendid record. The property changed hands many times during these years of war, being taken over by the British and then again by the rebels. In 1789 it was bought by John Garnett a man of importance in New Brunswick. He in turn sold it to Col. Joseph Warren Scott in 1821. It is interesting to note that through the years the many owners of this old home have with few exceptions been men of outstanding military distinction, both British and American.

At the time of sale of this property to Col Scott only about one quarter of the of the original acreage was held with the home. The name of the place was now changed to Buccleuch, the family name of the Dukes of Buccleuch being Scott, and in some degree were kinsfolk of this New Jersey Family. Col Scott enjoyed this home for many years as he lived to be 92 years of age. The home then became the property of his married daughter Lavinia Scott Dey, and later that of her son, Anthony Dey.

It was this Mr Dey, being a widower and without children, who in turn presented it as a gift to the city of New Brunswick. We cannot fully appreciate the value of this gift, but it is something that can give us all much pleasure and stir our interest and pride.

#### The Home of Henry Guest.

A fine example of a colonial stone house still stands within the city of New Brunswick. This is the home built by Henry Guest in 1760 on the outskirts of the town, on what was then known as the Old Post Road to Trenton. Most of us remember this old house when it stood on the corner of Livingston Ave and Carroll Place, but which has now been moved to the property of the Public Library.

To help us picture it as it was in Colonial days may I quote a notice published in the New York Gazette and Weekly Mercury of June 27th, 1774.

" On the banks of the Raritan, rising gently from the city of New Brunswick at a convenient and agreeable distance from the river, in a remarkably healthy air, surrounded by most luxuriant fertile country, where nature forms a most delightful landscape, and in good neighborhood, is to be sold an acre of land, on which is one of the best stone houses in the province, 48 by 24 ft, with four apartments in the cellar, partitioned off by brick walls two of which are floored with square tile. The two upper

stories contain proper entries and six convient rooms with fire places; adjoining there to is a large convient kitchen, and a good out house, two stories high 21 by 16 ft, with a well of excellent ~~y~~ soft water, kitchen garden, stables etc. near the premises.

Also to be disposed of, one acre of ground on which is a tan yard containing 27 vats and hand - lars, two ponds fed by never failing springs, beam house, bark house, and a stock of bark that will tan 1500 hides. At a small distance from the premises is likewise to be sold 7 acres of improved meadow. Enquire of

Henry Guest "

And so we are helped to picture this home and feel the justified pride of Guest in his fine stone residence and successful tannery. The home facing toward the town of New Brunswick with its few hundred inhabitants, and to the side Lyles Brook and ponds where was located the tannery, and on the other side were fertile sloping fields.

The house is made of sandstone probably taken from a quarry owned by Guest on Burnett St. The stones have been carefully selected, and the walls  $2\frac{1}{2}$  ft thick very well built. Over the front porch cut in the stone on the face of the building in letters 6 inches tall is the name "H. Guest 1760". So in this case we have no doubt as to the builder and date of building.

As we see the house today we realize that these 177 years have brought many changes. A two story wing which probably extended to the back has been removed. This was the kitchen with bed rooms above. There was also a two story porch across a part of the back of the house. Still the main part of the building stands in large measure as it did in its early days, and we can appreciate the substancial, yet simple "homeieness" of which Henry Guest was proud. The dignified spacious door way that leads us into the main hall with attractive window and seat at the back, and stairway with slender mahogany spindles leading upstairs, gives you a true welcome as you enter and a sense of hospitality. On either side of the hall are well proportioned rooms with windows on two or three sides and fine wide fire places. The room to the right still has its carved mantle piece, but whether or not it is original I cannot say, but could easily believe it to be true. Changes have been made in the windows as can be seen from the outside stone work. Doors leading to the back porch which have been closed, and also windows have been filled in by more recent stone masonry. The windows though not wide show the depth of the heavy stone walls. On the second floor besides the central hall way are now two large rooms. No doubt originally there was one large bed room and two smaller rooms. We must remember that the



wing which no longer stands must have added considerably to the spaciousness of the home. On the third floor are no finished rooms, but you can see there the heavy hand hewn timbers and the fine materials that went into the building. While the house stood on Carroll Place the square dutch tiles were still in place in the basement of the building. But when the house was removed these tiles seem to have been lost. Many of the doors are original though the door frames have been renewed. Henry Guest is said to have made the remark in speaking of his home " Provided a roof is kept on the place this house will stand until the Angel Gabriel blows his horn."

Such was the home of one of New Brunswick's leading citizens. Carrying on a successful business in tanning hides, and active in public life. Like many others Henry Guest suffered heavy losses during the Revolution, and especially during the British occupation of the city.

One story in connection with the old house should be mentioned. The British troops were camped across the river and expecting soon to see American troops coming up from Trenton. Early one morning they were sighted in the neighborhood of Guest's house and cannons began firing. But the rebel troops did not disperse or even break ranks. Finally it was discovered that the British had been firing on a great number of hides which Guest had the evening before set out in his tan yard to dry. Soon laughs went up on both sides of the river when they realized their mistake. Fortunately no damage was done to the home.

Tradition also says that Lafayette was a guest in this home, and during the winter of '76 - '77 it quartered British officers.

After the war Henry Guest returned to his home but during the years that followed his business suffered many reverses, but he with his son carried on until his death in 1815. In 1817 the property was sold to Charles Gilmour. During the years the house has had seven owners, the last being the Vails who lived there for 60 years, longer even than the Guests. Though the building a few years ago was moved from Carroll Place to the property of the Library, it still stands on the original estate of Henry Guest as he owned the land as far as is now Welton St. We are thankful that the city has shown interest in this fine old residence, to keep it as a reminder of days long ago, when men put their best of skill and material into their building and made their homes a real center of hospitality.