

Early Lancaster Architecture

by John W. Lippold

In the elder days of art,
Builders wrought with greatest care,
Each minute and unseen part,
For the gods see everywhere.

Longfellow

The history of early architecture and building is quite worthy of note. Unfortunately comparatively few of the early buildings of Lancaster remain, and those of the county are fast disappearing as well. Helpfully some photographs of the exterior of former buildings remain. Most unfortunately there are no descriptions of them, and no photographs of what must have been, in many instances, beautiful interiors, to show the handwork of those artisans who had migrated to this then far inland area remain.

There are several factors that did much to affect the early architecture and building of Lancaster County. The first was its location, then a considerable distance from the cities of the Atlantic seaboard. These were the main centers of building activity, to which the skilled carvers and designers were attracted by the demand for their work. Another arises from the various nationalities of those who dwelt in the area. Its architecture is as indicative of their origin as its nomenclature. We find in some instances the tenets of the settlers' religion was restricted, thus restraining the building and decoration of their homes.

The remoteness of the county and the lack of skilled carvers tended to encourage the originality of design and stimulate new methods of building in the early part of the century. We find in some instances crude efforts to imitate the carvings and styles of the fatherland.

Certain sections of the county were settled by peoples of Germanic origin, and hence building characteristics of those sections were distinctly Rhenish. The early dwellings of the Mennonite brethren south of the city had the steep roof and small windows of their European homeland. The monastic cells and halls of the German Seventh Day Baptist community of Ephrata are indicative of the medieval prototypes that may be found in the ancient cities of central and southern Germany.

An earlier writer¹ on the subject states "True architecture begins when construction possesses beauty as well as usefulness, when building, however simple, breathes a charm or gives a pleasure". The originality and peculiar characteristics deserve, however, some attention. Perhaps in this originality we can find some beauty.

The earlier buildings of the county were of course of log construction. They were built generally by the Mennonist settlers in what is now West Lampeter and Strasburg Townships. With the forest primeval on all sides, and the necessity of haste in providing some kind of shelter, it seems natural that this should be the first kind of shelter considered. Being a material subject to rot and decay, few of its examples are extant.

We are told that the first house of any pretensions was built by Martin Kendig² in 1717, of walnut logs, and had a straw or thatched roof. It stands within the Northwest Strasburg Borough line, and is now covered with weather boarding.

John Postlethwait's tavern, sitting place of the earliest courts of Lancaster County, and in existence prior to 1729, is generally supposed to have been of log construction. Since all vestige of the exterior has long since disappeared, we must of necessity depend on the description of the historian, and the concept of the artist.

About a mile south of Lampeter Square, there stood until recent years an ancient log dwelling, covered with weather boarding that may have been the early dwelling of Samuel Miller, since it stood in about the middle of what had been his grant.

The abundance of limestone and sandstone, and in the northern areas of the county a brown sandstone, provided an immediate and ever ready medium for building. Stone provided solid and substantial places of residence, churches, barns, mills, etc., as ability and time became more available. It made a neat and outstanding appearance in the many great farm houses over the county. Rubble

was used particularly in the southern area, and finished with great blocks of stone as quoins at the corners.

The Hans Herr house built in 1719, and now in process of restoration, is typical of the earliest type of stone house of the Mennonite settlers. It is a comparatively small house with a great stone chimney forming the division between two rooms of the interior, one being the kitchen and perhaps living room with an enormous fireplace. Another of this type and of somewhat later date exists on the Weaver farm further east, as well as the Yorde house built in 1740 northeast along the Lampeter Road.

Certain areas south of Lancaster produced a softer sandstone, which was more easily quarried and more readily dressed into the square for easy building. In 1740 Martin Mylin³ built a house of some proportions of this stone on his tract northeast of what is now Mylin's corner. This house, replaced years ago for a modern brick, was known as the "palace of sandstone", and caused some criticism from the brethren and bishops of the church, due to its apparent elegance and size.

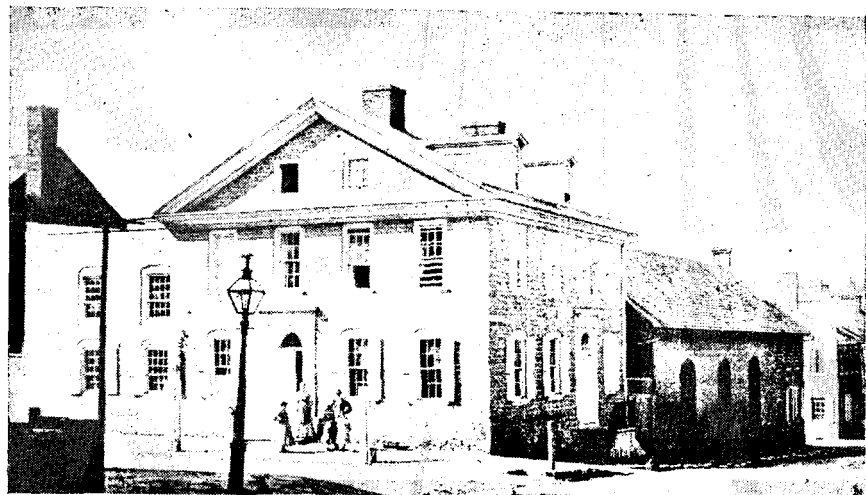
Another structure of sandstone still standing though much altered, was built by Wendel Bowman on his tract north of Lampeter square. All of these ancient dwellings had a cellar beneath them arched with stone, the use of which was generally described as a refuge from Indians, but were probably used for keeping dairy products and a storage place for vegetables for the winter season.

While these examples were all south of the city, there were many fine homes built of stone to be found over the entire county, some of them built well into the nineteenth century. The mansions of the Grubbs, Colemans, Olds and Jacobs and other early ironmasters were built generally of the brown sandstone. Many of the homes, barns and mills of the northern area were built of limestone with great blocks of brown sandstone for quoins. The checkerboard house near Brickerville was built of alternating blocks of dark and light sandstone on the two sides of the house facing the highway.

Until the middle of the eighteenth century, stone was used for many of the buildings in the city of Lancaster. About the period of the Revolutionary war, stone houses are said to have occupied the four corners of the square in the city.⁴ Two examples still standing in the city are the former parsonage of Trinity Lutheran Church and the Reigart house, the former now converted into law offices on the northeast corner of Duke and Grant streets and the latter, still a dwelling, on the northwest corner of West King and Concord streets. The Reigart house is perhaps of a later date as it contains some finer interior detail. The Plow tavern built in 1745 on the northeast corner of West King and Manor streets, the Cat tavern on North Prince street and the Relay House built in 1766 on the southeast corner of Prince and Walnut streets by Nicholas Hitzen-

berger were some of the old stone inns. Demolition of the old Pennsylvania Bank building at the corner of West King and Prince streets revealed a thick stone wall of the old Sorrel Horse Hotel adjoining it on the east. The first church of the Lutheran congregation, completed in 1738 on South Duke Street was built of stone. Those of the Catholic, Moravian and Quaker faiths, as well as many of the Mennonite churches in the county, were of the same construction.

The Bausman house or inn, in the second block of East King Street, is another example of sandstone construction still existing. The Atlee house that stood on the northwest corner of Duke and Orange streets, built by George Burkhart in 1764, and the Jacob



George Krug House at southwest corner Prince and West King Streets.

Krug house on the site now occupied by the Stevens House apartments were both built of sandstone blocks as were others probably long ago removed. About the middle of the eighteenth century bricks for building purposes became more available and thereafter were used more extensively. The first brick building in Lancaster City of which there is any record was the first court house the building of which was started in 1731 on the site of the present monument on the square. It is described as being a "pretty large brick building", and it is noted that it had a cupola.⁵ This building was destroyed by fire about in 1786. Although we have definite record that the brick for the flooring was made in Lancaster, it is almost certain that the bricks for the building were of the type known as glazed headers, and were brought from the Atlantic seaboard—perhaps imported

One of the earlier uses of bricks was that known as half-timbered construction. It was used principally by the Germans apparently in somewhat rare instances. In the use of half-timbered construction, the walls were formed of heavy timbers framed together, the space between being filled with brick. The structural parts were strengthened by horizontal timbers and sloping braces. The framework is left visible and the bricks sometimes plastered.

A house of this type or construction stood on the east side of Middle Street (now Howard Ave.), and was used to accommodate General Forbes troops after the fall of Fort Duquesne in 1758. It was razed to make way for the opening of Shippen Street. Another, the Powell house, stood on the southeast corner of Howard Ave. and Lime Street of which the gable end was half timbered. There were apparently other examples in this area. An entire house of this type of construction stood on the John Gosh farm west of Landis Valley, and was built by Philip Shreiner in 1750. All of these buildings have since disappeared.

The Pennsylvania Gazette in 1754 carried the following notice "To be sold by Isaac Whitlock and Thomas Poultney the following houses in Lancaster: Four houses and lots on Orange Street, one a commodious brick house, and the other three square log houses."

The "commodious brick house" is the one still standing on the northwest corner of Orange and Shippen Streets and the log houses apparently stood to the west of it and were since removed. There must have been a wave of brick building from that time on—the Judge Yeates house, the Judge Smith house and others on South Queen Street and residences of some style and prominence on East King Street and culminating with the beautiful building of the Lutheran Congregation on South Duke Street. The front of most of the brick buildings in the 18th and many well into the 19th century were laid in Flemish bond. Since this style of brickwork took more time, and was therefore more expensive, the sides and rear of the buildings were usually laid in common bond.

The style of brickwork with glazed headers, frequently seen along the Atlantic seaboard, particularly in Maryland, Delaware and Virginia, was rather rare in Lancaster County. This consisted of alternating headers of a deep brown or purple glaze sometimes worked into a pattern or date on the end of the building. We know of only one specimen of this type remaining in Lancaster County, the Bradley mill house near Wakefield in Fulton township. The Brown house that stood further north and the Stiegel house in Mannheim and perhaps the first court house, as previously stated, were done with glazed headers. Since glazed brick seems to have been somewhat rare in Lancaster, and since most of the builders using them seemed to have transportation connections with tidewater we are led to believe that the brick may have come from abroad.

The statement that many local buildings were made of brick

"brought from England," is rather loosely used. Certainly brick were imported. The reason for doing so, however, was not from any scarcity of good brick clay in this country, but rather the troublesome matter of ballast of ships returning from abroad. In earlier days cargoes coming across the Atlantic from Europe were lighter than those going back. Heavy material had to be carried to stabilize the ship on the voyage west, but once the cargo was unloaded in part, the ballast immediately became a nuisance.⁶ There were laws dating from the 18th century governing the dumping of ship ballast in harbors and waterways. It would seem logical therefore for a ship captain to carry saleable brick as ballast. The amount was negligible, however, and it would not have been practical for Lancaster builders to transport brick seventy miles inland by wagons over rough and sometimes uncertain roads. There were exceptions to this as we will note later and wherein the bricks were used as return cargo. We can therefore ascertain that most of the brick used locally for early building came from local sources. The subject of local brickmaking has been covered ably elsewhere in the publications of this Society.⁷

The earliest dwellings were simple, built for warmth and protection from the elements. The faith of the plain peoples denied them much decoration in their homes. However as time and conditions permitted, other builders indulged in such form of decoration as their ability with saw, chisel and auger permitted.

Lancaster county had no William Buckland⁸ to create such masterpieces of carving as he made for the mansions of tidewater Maryland and Virginia. It had no Samuel MacIntire⁹ to produce the exquisite detail of the mansions of Salem.

The earliest local forms of decoration consisted of simple mouldings, modillions of simple character beneath the cornice, with perhaps pilasters and pediment over the doorway. The interior had a chair rail and panelled chimney end or mantel for the fireplace. There were instances of mantels with somewhat heavy gouging, flutes and reeding, and carvings of tulips and birds in the Pennsylvania Dutch style.

There were efforts made to imitate the decorations of the fatherland. The ruins of an old house on Hammer Creek presumably built about 1740, had a typical Jacobean newel post and rail, ruined by a 20th century vandal. The doorways were trimmed with a carved decoration similar to crossettes, different in each room and unlike any others found in the county.

The culmination of 18th century interior architectural decoration could have been found in the Sehner-Ellicott house on Prince Street at Marion, still standing but stripped of most of its interior.

The latter part of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, introduced the use of more elaborate fireplace man-

tels of the classic period. They are decorated with applied plastic designs of swags, ribbons, sprays of grain, urns and figures of mythology. Most of these were made by Robert Wellford, whose name appears in the Philadelphia directories from 1811 to 1839. His composition was a paste of plaster, resin and size, made in metal, pottery and boxwood moulds. The same form of decoration has been used on chair rails and door and window trim, but there were no known examples in Lancaster.

Fine examples of these mantels were known to have been in the Montgomery house on South Queen Street and the old house on the northeast corner of East King and Duke Streets. The Judge Yeates house on South Queen Street had some fine examples doubtless replacing some mantels of an earlier date. An old house at 132 South Queen Street, razed some years ago, had an early example of this type of mantel that is preserved in a Lancaster home. Numerous other examples are known to have been removed from houses in Lancaster.

The earlier examples of exterior cornice were plain. A few of them that still remain were a concave arrangement of plaster from the wall to the edge of the roof. The house mentioned at Hammer Creek had a cornice of this type. It was backed up by a peculiar arrangement of stone corbelled out until it met the roof line and made a rough background for the plaster. The Baer house near Landisville and a house in the second block of East King Street, have plaster cornices.

The eighteenth century building traditions of England were transported to America. By the middle of the century they had reached inland to effect the new buildings being erected in Lancaster County.

The new architectural publications were being used, and there is considerable evidence of their influence on the architecture of early Lancaster. A sense of proportions was being used, and floor and elevation plans of some balance and regulation were coming into general use.

Cornices were decorated with modillions of plain style. Windows had marble or stone keystones, and doorways were enhanced by pediments. The beautiful edifice erected by the Lutheran congregation is a monument to the architectural efforts of the period. In another decade the keystones over the windows became more decorative and by the beginning of the next century both the modillions of the cornice and the keystones had become highly decorative.

The late Thomas Tyleston Waterman¹⁰ in one of his publications, devotes a paragraph to the English antecedents of Virginia architecture. As a frontispiece he presents a picture of the town of Ludlow in Shropshire. He gives it the title of "An English Architectural Pageant, Gothic to Georgian." The picture shows the corner of

a building in the Palladian style, next to it one of Georgian and adjoining it one of Tudor style, while back of the three is a Gothic tower. Lancaster cannot present such a span of architectural examples, but it once could present a pageant of American Georgian architecture.

Standing on the corner of Mifflin and South Queen Streets, on the northwest corner was the Judge Smith house of the earlier and plain type of Georgian architecture. Across Mifflin Street is the Judge Yeates house with more decorative keystones. The cornice of this building is gone, but it certainly had some form of decoration. Across the street we look on the upper portions of the Montgomery house, with its highly decorative keystones and fine cornice and dormers of the early nineteenth century. Towering back of it is the beautiful steeple of the Lutheran church, of the late classic Georgian period. It might be difficult to find elsewhere in America such a grouping of the periods of the 18th and early 19th century.

The Hans Herr house, regarded as the earliest dwelling house in Lancaster County still standing, is in much the condition as when it was built in 1719. It was built of stone plastered and whitewashed on the inside. It had a roof steep in pitch and small windows with heavy wooden shutters. The windows had wooden frames at the front and stone frames at the ends of the house. A huge chimney measuring ten feet in width divides the house in two parts. One room, apparently used for kitchen and living room, has a great fireplace surmounted by a heavy wooden beam. In a corner is a unique stairway made of hand hewn chunks of wood fitted together forming the steps.¹¹

The floor joists are of hand hewn logs, grooved and with narrow split boards fitted in, spaced to allow rye straw to be woven over and under. Clay was then plastered to the straw to form a floor of earth for each story. It too had its stone arch beneath. The building is noted for its simplicity and charm. There is a note of thrift and practical living in the apparent effort of restraint in it.

In the north corner of Fulton Township, and a few miles southwest of Fulton House, stood a quaint and unusual house built by Joshua Brown in 1760. It unfortunately burned some years ago, and the site is now occupied by a modern house, although a huge sycamore that stood before the earlier house remains. It was built on the side of a hill, the second floor being on a level with the ground at the rear. It was one of a few houses locally built of glazed header bricks, and it is almost certain that the bricks came from the Atlantic seaboard. Brown¹², the builder, was a miller and had several teams hauling flour to tidewater. These teams could well have returned laden with bricks. It would have been a matter of economy as well as furnishing the owner with a modern type of house in this locality at that early date. To the west was a stone lean-to with a great chimney adjoining that of the brick house. It was apparently

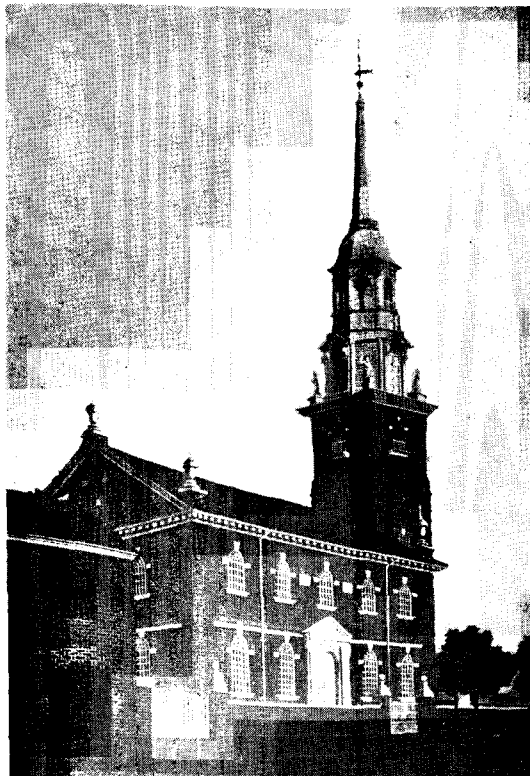


Original stairway between second floor and loft in Christian Herr house. Each step was hand-hewn from chunks of wood.

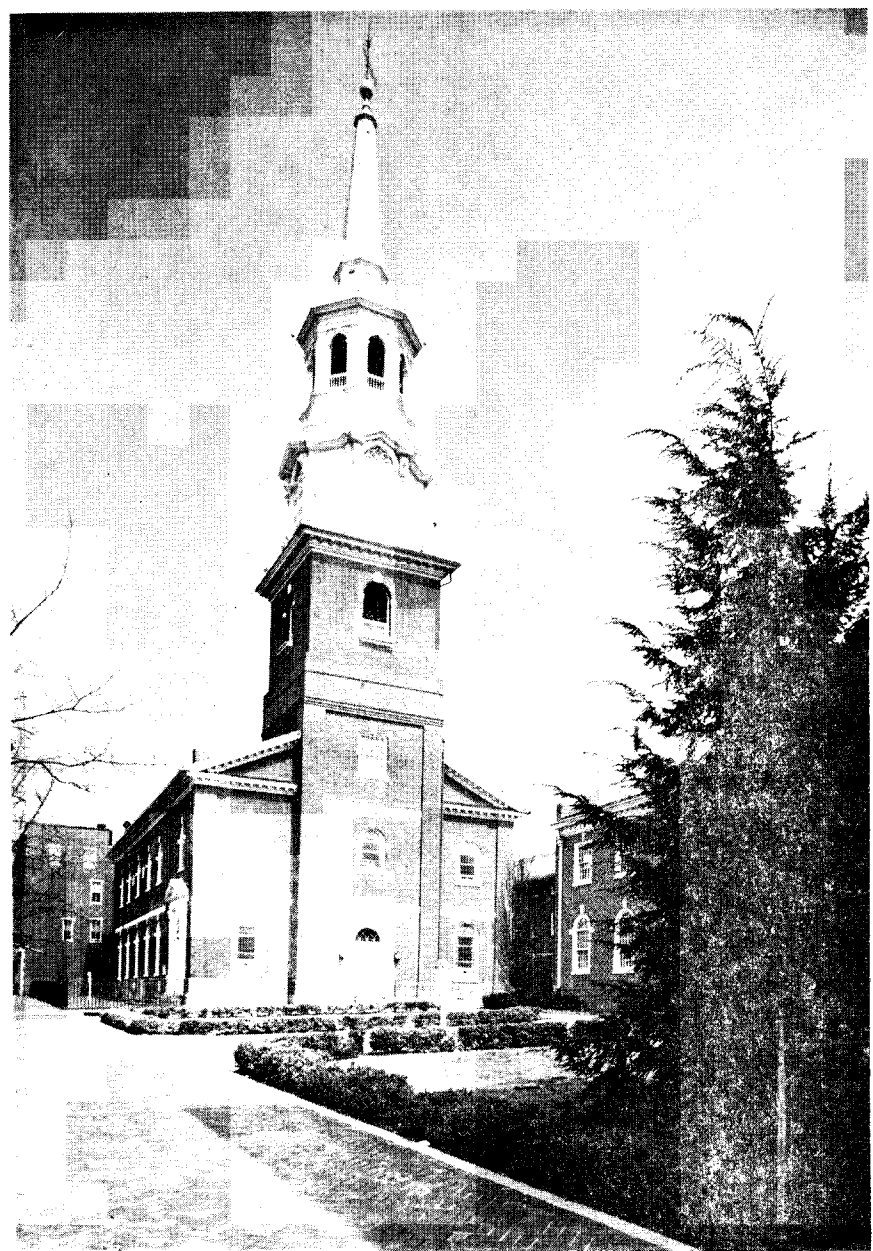
the kitchen and a later consideration, therefore the stone. The house had a pent-eve on the south front, marking the early use of this device held over from its use on log houses. The Bradley Mill house, mentioned earlier, with a glazed header front, was built by the same man.

The Stiegel house at Manheim¹³, of which one remaining wall is perhaps original, was built about the middle of the eighteenth century. The only remaining description of the interior was the great curiosity of the reception room. It seems to have been hung with tapestry, gorgeous in color, representing an equestrian hawking party of life sized figures. The curiously wrought massive ceiling was cut in blocks of yellow pine. Over the old fashioned fireplaces were square plates of delft representing landscapes, set in plaster. It too, was built of glazed header bricks, and here again the builder had transportation connections with the Atlantic seaboard. Stiegel certainly had many teams carrying the products of his furnaces and glass works to Philadelphia and tidewater points that could readily return laden with bricks.

The beautiful edifice erected by the Lutheran congregation in Lancaster at this time is a monument to the architectural efforts



A print showing Trinity Lutheran Church before the main entrance was re-located and the many-lighted windows were replaced with stained glass.



South elevation of Trinity Lutheran Church. The colonial-style modern parish building may be seen at the far right.



**Left: St. Matthew the Apostle-Evangelist. Originally located on the northeast corner of the steeple of Trinity Lutheran Church. According to Dr. Muhlenberg, the statues were placed so that the path of the sun illumined St. Mat-
thew first, and St. John last.**

Right: St. Mark the Evangelist. This statue stood on the southeast corner of the steeple.

of the period. The cornerstone was laid May 18th, 1761, and it was completed in 1766. The beautiful arched windows with their marble trim, the Corinthian pilasters of its doorway and its pediment. The urns decorating the roof line and the plain modillions of the cornice while heavier than the more graceful and more refined lines of the steeple, speak of the architectural accomplishments at this early date.

It was unfortunate in a sense that this beautiful old building was disturbed by the renovations of 1853. Fortunately, the changes were made with good taste so that the interior is still a thing of beauty.

The great pedimented doorway was formerly where the center window is located on the west wall. Its outline can still be seen dimly over the window. The chancel with its "wine glass" pulpit was on the middle of the east wall, and the galleries on the north, west and south sides of the building, with a stairs ascending along the north and south walls. In the renovation the apse was built to accommodate the chancel and pulpit on the north wall. The shell ceiling of the apse and the cornice and pilaster on either side were 20th century additions. During the 19th century renovations the



Left: St. Luke the Evangelist. This statue was located on the southwest corner of the steeple.

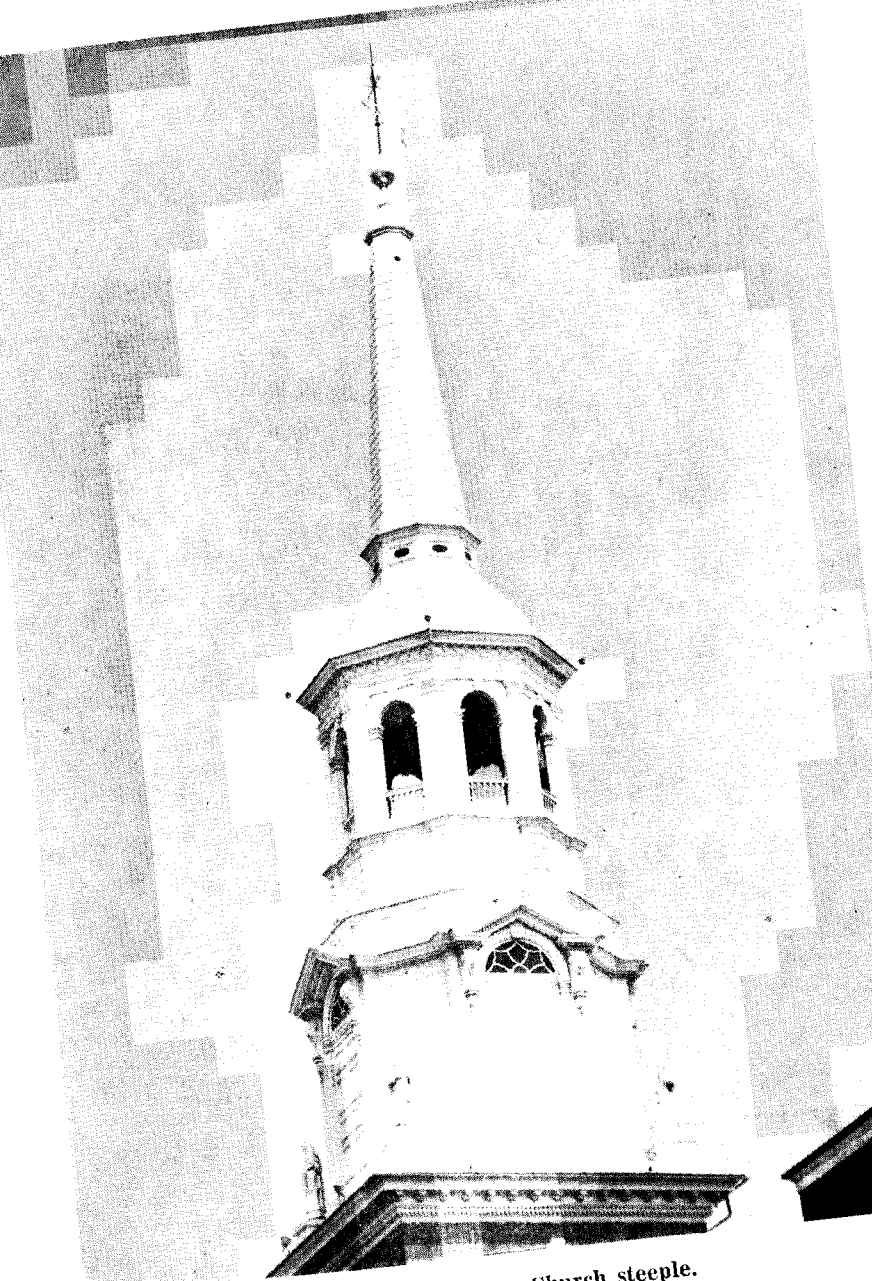


Right: St. John the Apostle-Evangelist. This statue was placed on the north-west corner of the steeple.

brick wall enclosing the yard of the church was replaced by an iron fence in order to provide matching brick for the vestibules on either side of the steeple. The urns on the roofline of the church were 20th century restorations.

The steeple, started in 1785 and completed nine years later, is fully described elsewhere in the archives of this Society.¹⁴ It is important however to note the style of architecture of this later date in comparison with that of the church. It must be remembered that the steeple was built by two Philadelphia contractors, William and Abraham Colliday, who had more resources from which to draw than local men may have had. Records do not state, but we can presume that the Collidays designed the steeple as well as built it.

Ascending, we find the modillions of the cornice just above the brickwork decorated with acanthus leaves. The acanthus leaves are not carved wood but leather. Above this area are the four pedimented doorways, square with the compass. Between these doorways are the four wooden figures of the apostles, reproductions of the original ones that are now preserved in the narthex of the church, and which are carved of solid blocks of pine. Above this is the beautiful octagonal portion of the steeple, trimmed in the swags and drapery of the period



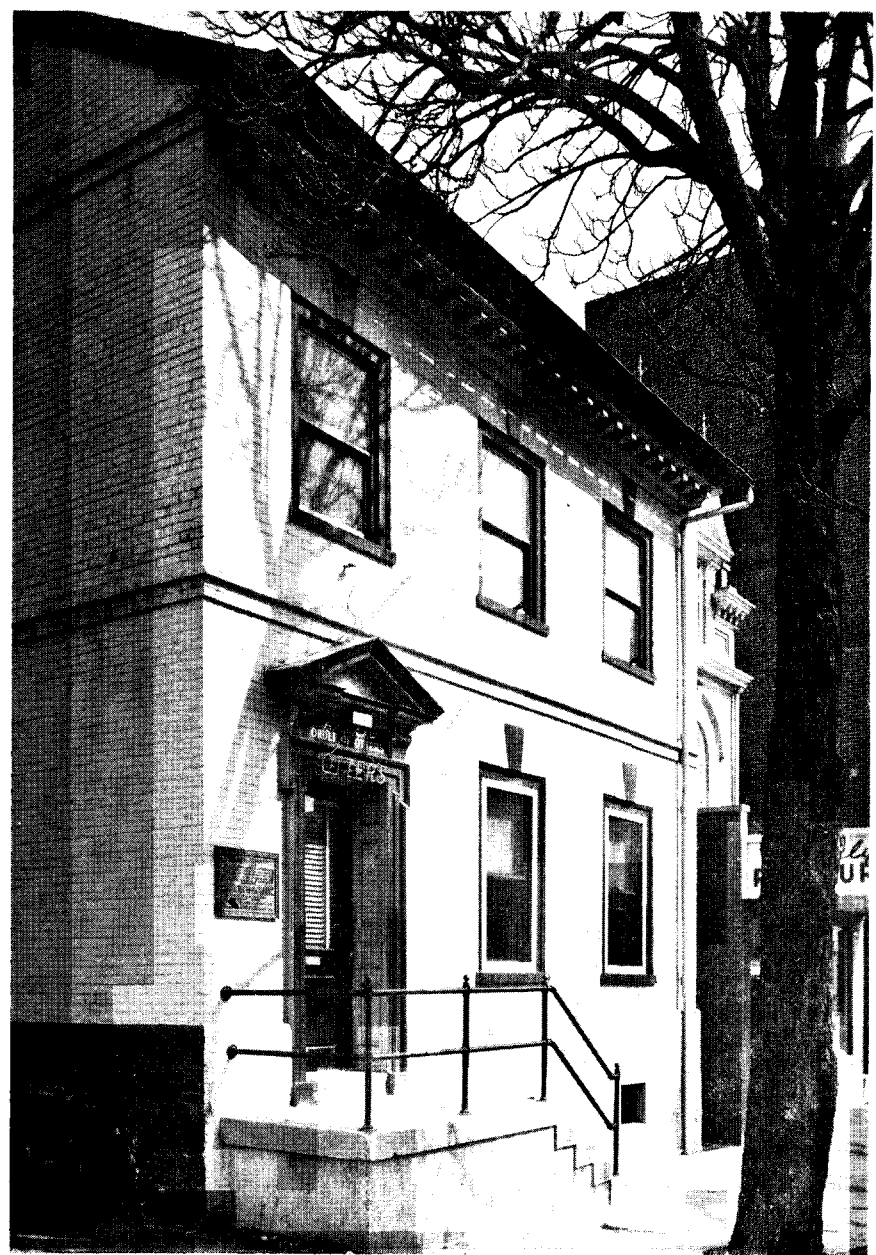
Trinity Lutheran Church steeple.



Detail of the lower steeple section of Trinity Lutheran Church.

The windows of the old church are of sufficient importance to deserve some attention. The original sash until recently preserved in an old building just outside the city, had arched and geometric tops, presumably glazed with clear glass. The clear glass was changed to small panes of stained glass presumably with the alterations of 1853. With the coming of the twentieth century, stained glass of various biblical scenes became fashionable, particularly as memorials. Under the guidance of the late Dr. John E. Whiteker a series of such windows designed and executed by Mr. Joseph Lauber, an artist of New York City, were installed in place of the small paned windows, and are still in place.

One of the finer houses of the eighteenth century in the city of Lancaster, was built by Gottlieb Sehner between 1780 and 1785. It stands at the southeast corner of Prince and Marion streets, although stripped of much of its fine interior woodwork. Its owner was a builder and contractor which perhaps accounts for the beauti-



Sehner-Ellicott House as it appeared in 1968. Buildings to the right (south side) were razed when high-rise parking garage was erected. Sehner-Ellicott House has been condemned, and will be demolished soon.

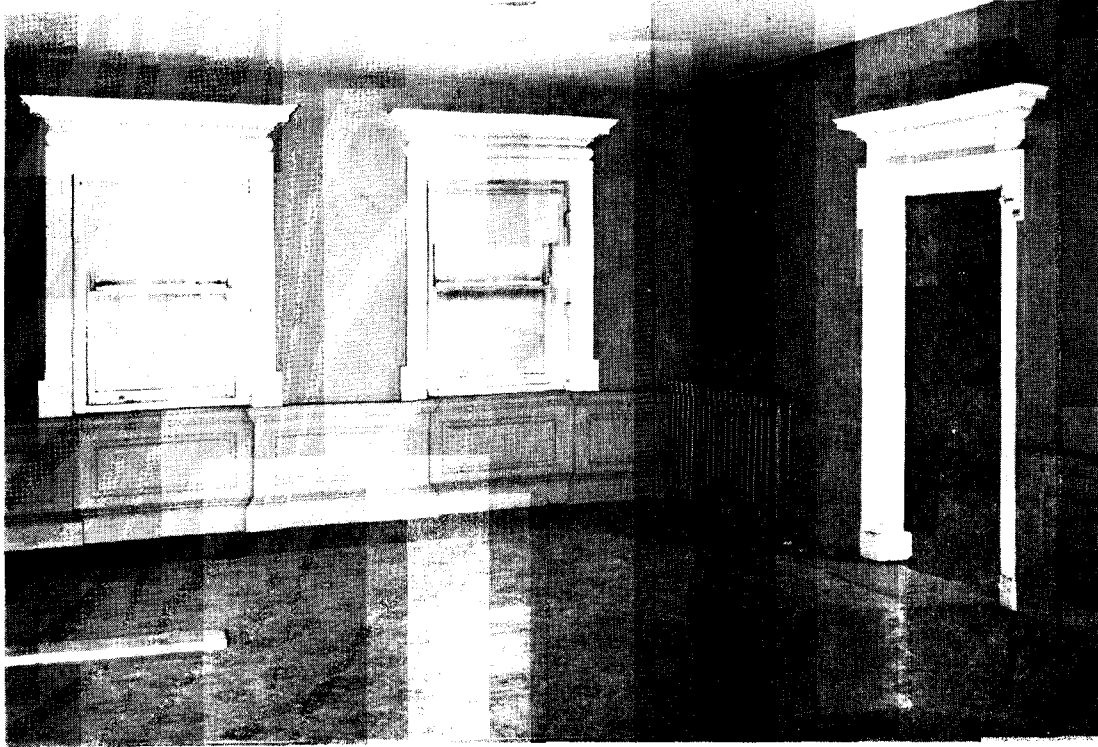
The front has a water table of quarter rounded molded brick, and brick belt course at the second floor line. The brickwork is of Flemish bond above the water table. The doorway has a double architrave with crossettes, and a pediment with dentils. The original door was hung on long strap hinges. It has a double wooden cornice at the roof line with scroll modillions. It was on the interior that the builder put his efforts. The woodwork of the first floor front room was plain. It had a chair rail later sawed off at the window trim, and a plain cornice and fireplace trim. It might have been used for an office for the family contracting business.

The hallway seemed to lead to the finer part of the house through an arch with keystone and half round fluted pilasters, to the stair hall, and an elaborate stairs. The stairs rise on easy risers, three balusters to a step. The step end brackets are elaborate. The handrail follows graceful ramps over the newel posts, and is repeated on the wall by half rails over fluted pilasters and a panelled dado shaped to follow the stairs.

The passageway leading from the stairs to the front chamber is divided by an elaborate lintel with triglyphs and fluted pilasters. It has a panelled dado and a double cornice with dentil and eye decoration. The doorways into the front and rear chambers have crossettes. The front chamber was evidently the finest in the house. The doors have a cornice with Greek key frieze. The windows have a

Detail of stair trim in Sehner-Ellicott House.





Second floor front room of Sehner-Ellicott House. Note wooden "drapery" over door lintel.

pulvinated frieze and a double cornice with Greek key mold. The central chimney stack was at the rear wall of this chamber. Both the architrave of the fireplace and the overmantel panel has crossettes. There are Doric fluted pilasters on pedestal bases at each side of the fireplace. Then arched cupboards with panelled doors and the again Doric fluted pilasters. The entire room was surmounted with a cornice with Greek key frieze and has a heavy panelled dado.

The fireplace of the rear chamber was simply treated with a heavy bolection moulding, for the architrave.

While there is no sign of the professional carver's hand here, such decorative devices as the Greek key and dentil and eye, as well as the pulvinated (or cushion) frieze, and fluted pilasters is used in some of the finest mansions of the period here and elsewhere.

The house that once stood on the northwest corner of Prince and Orange Streets was built by John Sehner (1765-1814), fifth child of Gottlieb Sehner the immigrant. It was a commodious but plain brick house of four bays fronting on Prince Street, with two windows north of a pedimented doorway, and one window south of it. Its interior was plain in later years, and if it ever had woodwork comparative to that in the home of his brother Gottlieb, further north and on the opposite side of Prince Street, it was later removed. It was once leased to George Ross Jr., and the Marquis de Lafayette



Second floor trim of Sehner-Ellicott House.

was said to have been entertained there on his second visit to this country, in 1825.

The house across Orange Street, on the southwest corner, was probably of the same age. It was apparently a two and a half story gabled house, and all of the antiquity remaining of it other than the brickwork, is a return cornice on the gabled end with its plain modillions that was left in place after the front of the building had been raised to a three story flat roof.

Further north at number 120 N. Prince Street was still another Sehner house. It may have been the home of the immigrant as he had bought considerable land on Prince Street. In later years it was the home of John F. Sehner, son of John and grandson of Gottlieb the immigrant. It was a one and a half story house with dormers, and no particular trim.

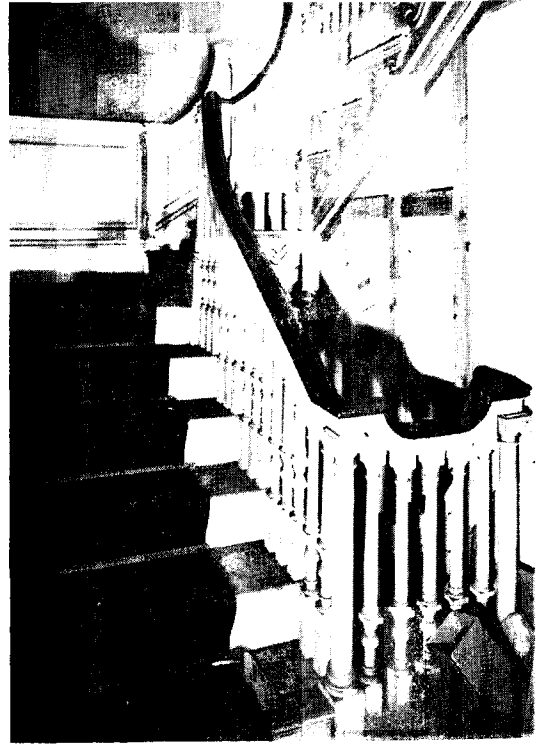
The homes of the gentry of early Lancaster have mostly passed into oblivion. There was once a social circle of the Yeates, Shippen, Ross, Hand, Hubley and other families. Of these the shell of the home of Judge Yeates and the home of General Edward Hand alone remains. The Yeates home was located on the southwest corner of South Queen and Mifflin Streets. It was once a three and a half story building, and of the face of it the upper floors of the Flemish bond brick work and the keystones of linenfold over the windows alone remains. It presumably once had a cornice with modillions, and it was known to have had a pedimented doorway with a marble porch and steps and an ornamental iron rail. The front had four bays, a door and three windows. Its drawing room had doorways with crossettes on the trim, and pediments over doors and windows. Its doors were hung with long strap hinges on pintles. It is questionable whether the fine Wellford type mantels with handsomely decorated overmantels now in use in another house in Lancaster were original to the Yeates house or were a replacement of the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century.

Across Mifflin Street on the northwest corner was the home of Judge Yeates' son-in-law, Judge Charles Smith. The front was of Flemish bond brickwork and plain marble keystones over the windows. It had a pedimented doorway with a marble porch and steps, and an iron railing almost identical to that on the home of Judge Yeates. It had a pediment at the roofline, with modillions, with pediment and modillions returned on the gable end.

The home of one of Lancaster's earlier noted citizens, that of Edward Shippen stood on the northwest corner of East Orange and Lime streets. The great double house, generally known as the Shippen house, and that last existed on the site prior to the building of the Y.W.C.A. was actually built at a later date and the original Shippen house was probably the eastern portion of this house. It was apparently a single masonry house with a hall and two rooms to the east, with the kitchen as a separate building in the rear. It was



Left: Second floor window detail of Sehner-Ellicott House.



Right: Stairway detail. The lower portion of this railing including newel post was stolen recently.

presumably built by the Mayer family and purchased by Shippen when he moved to Lancaster. Apparently for so prominent a family it was a fine one. It was later purchased by the Reigart family and the west room and porch added. If any other type of decoration existed it was changed to be uniform with the added portions.

The home of George Ross the signer stood at East King and Duke Streets, the site of the present Lancaster County Court House. The front was of five bays, a door with two windows on each side of it. The door and windows of the first floor were all pedimented. The second floor windows alternated pediments and crossettes. The third floor windows all had crossettes. When the house was demolished many of the bricks and the exterior woodwork was removed to a house that was erected on the southeast corner of Duke and Lemon Streets, which has since been demolished. Much fine interior woodwork was moved to this house also.

Rock Ford, a home owned and occupied by General Edward Hand, stood along the Conestoga just outside the city. Unfortunately there seems to be no existing records of the date of the building of the mansion. However facts historical, economical and architectural indicate that the exterior and interior brick walls, floors and perhaps the stairway were built in the decade from 1760 to 1770. It seems quite definite that the interior woodwork, mantels, closets,

doors, etc., were completed by General Hand after he purchased it in 1785.

Records indicate that Joshua and Mary Baker transferred the land now occupied by the Rock Ford mansion to their son John in 1743. Little is known of the Bakers except that they, father and son were gunsmiths. It can be assumed that at least the son worked at his trade near the site of the mansion presumably over the hill along Mill Creek.



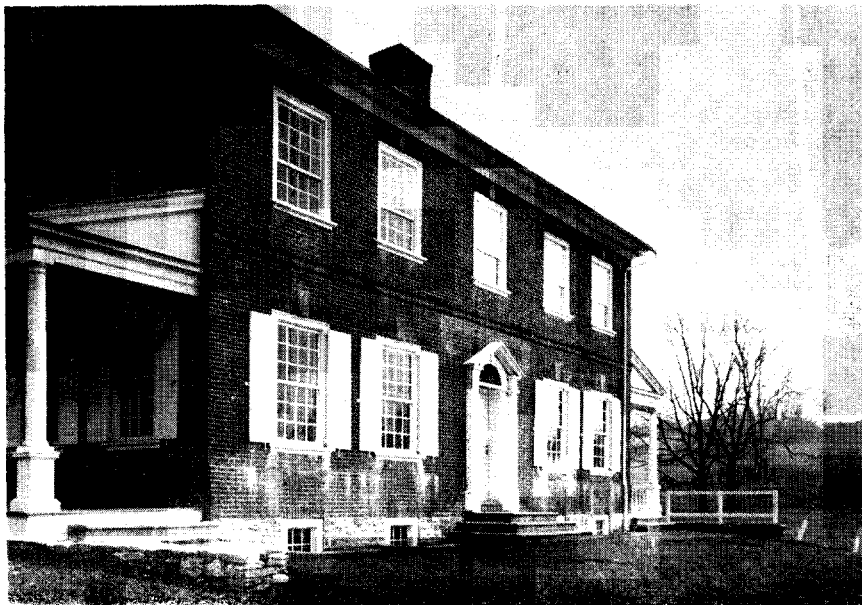
Side elevation of Rock Ford.

John Baker, the son, became so involved financially that the Rock Ford plantation was sold by the sheriff. There is every possibility that he had started the building, a very costly proposition even at that early date, had gone quite beyond his means, and therefore the intervention of the sheriff, and the subsequent sale of the property to James Davis in 1768. There were several Davis families in the county at this date. The purchaser of Rock Ford seems to have settled first in Cecil County of Maryland and later migrated to this area. He subsequently bought the property which we can assume then had on it the uncompleted mansion.

Events leading to the outbreak of the Revolutionary War were taking place at this time. His own activity¹⁵ in the war and the subsequent interference of the war in securing materials account for

his failure to complete the mansion. After his death in 1784 his executors sold the property to General Hand.

Architecturally Rock Ford mansion has every indication of having been built but not completed from 1761 to 1768. Its brickwork and keystones resemble closely that of Trinity Lutheran Church started in 1761. It was frequently the custom in erecting mansions in the eighteenth century, for one group of workmen and one contractor to erect the walls, roof and rough interior work. Another group who were joiners and cabinet makers, carved and made the interior work, mantels, cornice, paneling, etc.



Front elevation of Rock Ford.

A study of the interior of Rock Ford shows that the interior shutters of the second floor windows are equipped with wrought iron H hinges, a type of hardware used in the early houses of America until about 1780.¹⁶ There is also some indication that some kind of door existed under the stairs with this type of hinge. Hand made (wrought) nails, such as were found, were generally used until about 1795, when they were superseded by cut nails,¹⁷ as were also found, and which were perhaps used in the finish work.

Cast iron hinges, called butt hinges, small, compact, and book shaped, because of their superior cheapness, came into use a little earlier than cut nails. They were invented in England in 1775. After the interruption of British trade and house building during the Revolutionary War, they everywhere superseded the old wrought hinges

about 1784.¹⁸ All of the interior closet doors of the fireplace ends of the rooms of Rock Ford are equipped with cast iron butt hinges.

There is some difference of opinion concerning the rough and unfinished band of brick work just over the first floor windows on three sides of the mansion, and consequently eliminating the key-stones of these windows. Unquestionably this was used for a porch on the east, south and west sides of the house, porches built by General Hand upon his coming into possession of the property in 1785.

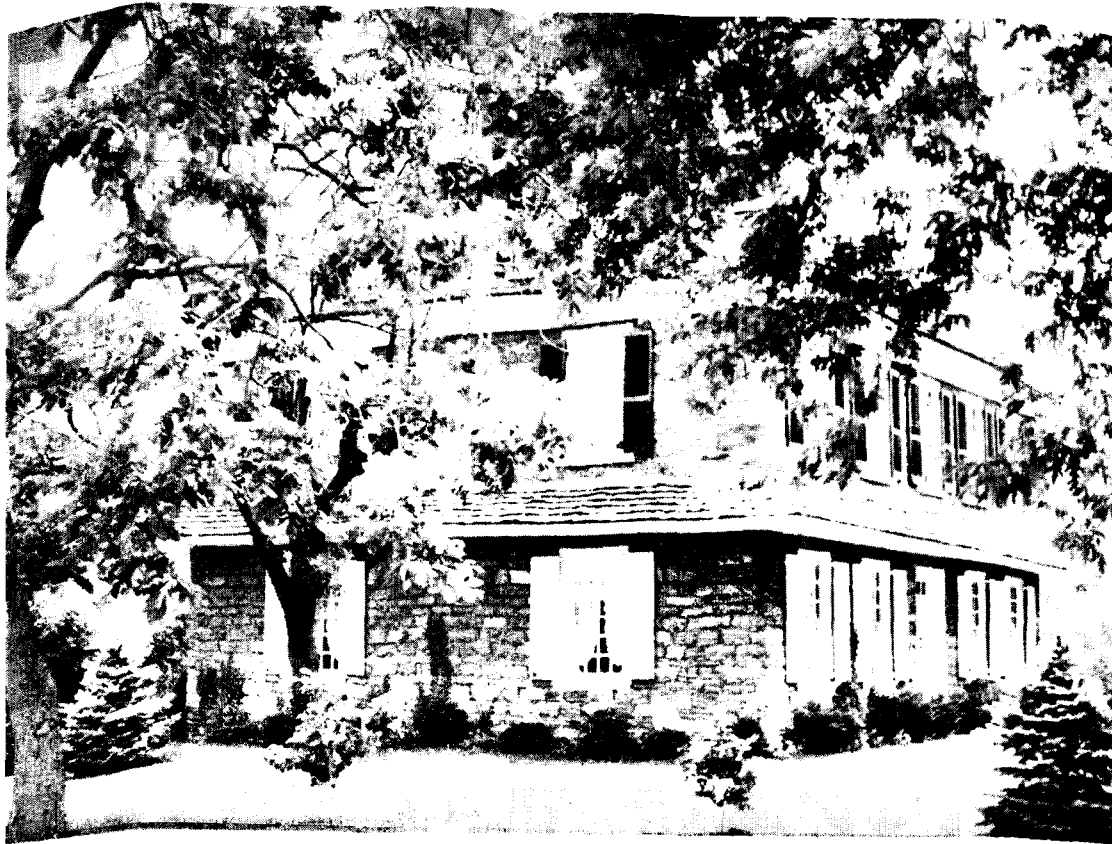
It would seem however that this was intended, although perhaps never completed for pent-eves. The pent-eve, a roofed projection between the first and second floors, originated as a protection for the mud and plaster chings of the old log houses. It was carried along as a form of decoration for brick and stone houses well into the nineteenth century and later. Primitive Hall, an early eighteenth century brick house near Chatham in Chester County, still has its pent-eves on three sides.

One of the oldest existing houses in or near the city of Lancaster is that one built by Andreas and Catharina Graffin (Andrew and Catherine Groff) on the eastern edge of the city. Two fine date stones on the front of the building tell us that it was built in 1767. The Groffs were people of means owning much land in what is now the city and along the Conestoga further east. They operated the mill on this site as well. The house that they built was a mansion and though the mid-nineteenth century remodeling and the twentieth century neglect robbed it of much of its eighteenth century charm, it still retains enough to classify it as an outstanding example. Fortunately it has come into the hands of people who will restore and protect it from further encroachment by the elements and vandals.

It was a well-built double house of cut stone, five bays front and rear and two at each end. The heavy cornice was returned at each end and was repeated by a pent eve, portions of which still exist at the second story line. It originally had four rooms on each floor with central hall and stairway. Central stacks of chimneys between the rooms of the north and south ends of the building took care of the fireplaces in these rooms.

The floor plan of the south end of the building apparently remains intact. The stairway and the partitions of the north end of the building were changed apparently with the mid-nineteenth century remodeling or modernizing as it was perhaps called. A brick addition was added to the northeast corner to provide space for a new kitchen and bath room, and since this closed a window the rear of the hallway was cut off to add light and air to the dining room. Much of the wide flooring of first and second floor is original. A few doors and a large solid door corner cupboard are also original. One room of the second floor retains its original panelled end, although the fireplace is closed. One room of the first floor retains its original panelled overmantel. What was apparently a chair rail in the





Groff House on Ranck Mill Road.

rooms of the south end of the building were cut off at the end of the window sills.

The Groff house was one of the very few in or near Lancaster that had a separate kitchen. Undoubtedly the small stone structure east of the mansion was used as the original kitchen. It still has a bee hive oven and the remains of a large stone fireplace. Andreas Groff was known to have owned at least one slave and had undoubtedly numerous servants, who could have conveyed the food from the kitchen to the dining room as in the old establishments of the south. A frame addition on the second floor of the kitchen likely served as a sleeping apartment for a kitchen servant.

The first floor retains what are apparently original window sills with deep and heavy nosing on the exterior, such as occurs on other important contemporary mansions. It has what are apparently original exterior shutters with long strap hinges hung on pintles. The fact that original sills and shutters remain is apparently due to the pent eave and later porch protection from the elements. The present double front doors are a part of the nineteenth century renovations. The jambs and sills are probably original as double doors would be contemporary with the original house.

Other than the two Sehner houses, the William Montgomery house at twenty one South Queen Street seems to be the only documented house in Lancaster. The fact that a baseboard with the fol-



Montgomery House on South Queen Street. Building is used by Watt and Shand Dept. Store.

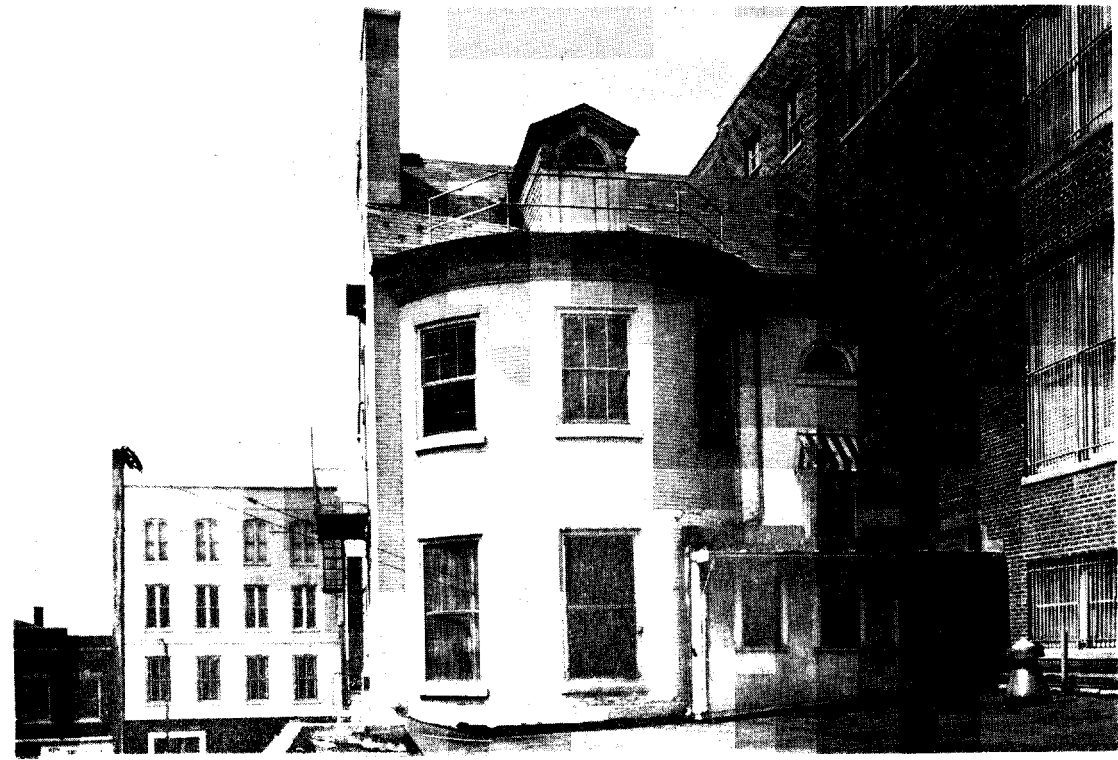
Following carefully written inscription was carefully and thoughtfully preserved by a former owner, Mr. A. S. Groff,¹⁹ gives us the only proof of the work of this building contractor in Lancaster. The inscription written in a bold legible hand "Built by William Montgomery Esq. in the year of our lord 1804. Stephen Hills house carpenter in the year of the Presidency of Thomas Jefferson, Esq. and the 29th year of the independence of the United States of America." The beautiful and highly decorative exterior cornice is preserved. The likewise highly decorative dormers are preserved in the interior, having been removed to make roof repairs. Since there has been many alterations to the first floor front, what was perhaps a beautiful doorway was removed many years ago. The house had the only known oval drawing room in Lancaster. The contour of the rear of this room was carried through to the second floor walls, where some doors still exist to fit this contour.

Some beautiful Wellford mantels were sold out of the house by a former owner. Wellford in advertising in 1807 states that Hills



Montgomery House on South Queen Street. The dormers have since been removed.

Rear of Montgomery House showing rounded end of structure.



Dormer detail on Montgomery House.



was one of those who testified to the excellence of his work. Unless it was removed in one of the various remodelings of the mansion, there was no Wellford work on door, window or chair rail trim, as is characteristic of some other houses using Wellford mantels.

The vaulted ceiling of the great stair hall seems to be typical of Hills' work. A like example of this exists in the Duncan-Styles house in Carlisle²⁰ which was a later work. This house also has an oval drawing room and Wellford mantels.

Further south on a site now occupied by a parking lot, and which was once number 132 South Queen Street there stood an unusual house. It started as a single brick house with an entrance doorway with crosettes and a hallway at the south side of the building, and a living room with two windows on the north side of the doorway. This was apparently of the 1750-1780 period. The woodwork was good but plain. At some time in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century a frame addition was made on the south of the original brick building, thus making it a double house of five bays on both the first and second floors. Since the handsome cornice that was on the building extended across the entire front, and since the third dormer was elaborately decorated as were the two on the older portion of the building, it would seem that this was all done at a later period. The cornice and dormers were quite similar to the Montgomery house and this portion was perhaps added by Hills.



**Unusual ceiling vaulting
in the Montgomery House.**

The first floor of the addition had a plain mantel. The large second floor was perhaps used as a ball room and it had what was perhaps an early edition of the Wellford type mantel. While not as elegant as some other existing ones, it was worthy of note, it is now restored and well cared for in a home in Lancaster. The frieze had what was intended to be a Greek goddess holding aloft garlands, while garlands decorated each end. Above this was a frieze of alternating pine cones and acorns.

Another characteristic of Hills was the use of arched blind panels for the exterior of windows. This was used together with arched windows in the Duncan-Styles house of Carlisle,²¹ as well as a house built by Hills for his own use in Harrisburg, as well as the old capitol. The only use of this style in Lancaster known to exist within the last fifty years was on the old Red Lion Inn built in 1812 on West King Street, (later the St. George Hotel), and lately demolished to make way for a parking lot. This building also had a beautiful winding stairway that might be typical of Hills. A building on the west side of the second block of North Queen Street, that was later remodelled and since demolished entirely, had a handsome

cornice and dormers similar to those on the Montgomery house that may have been done by Hills.

Hutter's Folly, a quaint and small but architecturally interesting building, was built by Christian Hutter²² just north of East Orange Street and west of Sherman Street. It was a one and a half story stone building with a plain pedimented doorway, with crossettes. Over the doorway was a pedimented roof line with a bulls eye window in the tympanum. The effect was of a miniature mansion.

An old house stands on the northwest corner of Walnut and Water streets, formerly the office of the Wacker brewery. Its interior was decorated in such manner as the local carpenter could do, the dentil and eye, that is, frieze had dentils sawed out and above each space between the dentils was a small hole drilled with the auger. The mantels, corner cupboard and chair rail had this decoration.

Another one of the Lancaster County mansions that fell to the wheels of progress was Hardwick. On April 7, 1795, Judge Charles Smith bought a tract of land from Sebastian Graff northeast of Lancaster in Manheim Township. On it he built an elegant mansion of which we know comparatively little. The front facing west had a rounded portico with four pillars full two stories in height. The building was demolished for the right-of-way for the Pennsylvania Railroad cut-off around the city. For many years a fragment of the mansion was left standing on the bank of the railroad, a corner fireplace with its chimney.

The first block of East King Street had evidently a number of fine mansions of the middle and late eighteenth century. We have mentioned the George Ross house. The Slaymaker Tavern was a fine example of the latter part of the century. An old photograph shows the east or gabled end of the Conrad Schwartz house that stood on the southwest corner of East King and Christian Streets. It had marble keystones and plain modillions on the cornice. John Hubley, Esq., a prominent attorney who lived nearby, must have had a fine home considering some of the furnishings still extant.

A number of mansion type examples of architecture still exist in the county, a few in original condition, others greatly altered. This provides a challenge for another work to preserve their description for posterity.

There seems to be no records that an early carpenters' company ever existed in Lancaster²³ such as existed in Philadelphia and was known to have existed in Carlisle and perhaps other cities. The company founded in Philadelphia city and county in 1724, in 1768 appointed a committee to purchase land and erect a headquarters building. This was the building known as Carpenters' Hall and which seems to have been even more famous as the meeting place of the first Continental Congress.

A constitution of the Carpenters' Society of Carlisle²⁴ was printed in 1795 although there seems to have been some organized plan for uniform prices long before that date.

The first carpenter of whom we have any record in Lancaster was Gottlieb Sehner the first. He came to America on the ship *Fane* landing in Philadelphia on October 17, 1749. He located in Lancaster almost immediately and purchased land which seems to have been on North Prince Street, and was married here on September 18, 1750. Since he had been a carpenter in his native country, it can be assumed that he found plenty to do in this then infant community, even though there are no known examples of his work. His sons Gottlieb II, John and Jacob took up the work in the ranks of the next generation of carpenters in Lancaster, and their sons continued well into the 19th century.

In addition to the Sehners the tax list of 1780 contains the following carpenters, Joseph Algier, Theodore Bartholomew, Nicholas Bartholomew, John Christopher Franciscus, Michael Lind, Frederic Mann, Francis Morrow, Cornelius Switzer, Mathias Zahneiser. We do not know how many of these were master carpenters. There is record however that Frederic Mann had the contract for the carpenter work along with George Lotman, mason, for the building of the lower portion of Trinity steeple. Work on this was done in 1785 and continued for a year or more after that. The work was of course completed by two Philadelphia carpenters some years afterward. Frederic Mann was also the carpenter for the old city hall.

George Brungard was apparently one of the leading contractors near the end of the eighteenth century as is shown by the fact that he advertised for three joiners and three apprentices. The finer work was done by men who specialized in their particular fields. On December 13, 1794 Adam Hart a wood turner produced an invoice for Trinity steeple for one pulley, two roulers, eight pulleys, thirty two hallow plates, sixty metions (modillions) to a cornice four boxes to the bell ropes, 120 large plates, 120 small plates, four dozen bannisters, 24 collums, 4 round balls and 4 pullies.²⁵ Many of these items can be readily accounted for on the steeple. There are exactly sixty modillions on the cornice. We would assume that Hart produced these modillions with their leather acanthus leaves just as they are, and likewise those on Masonic Hall since they are practically identical and were put in place soon after those on Trinity. Excepting for the acanthus leaf decoration, they would probably be the same plain ones used at an earlier date on the Judge Smith house, the Sehner-Ellicott house, the north return of the cornice on the house at the southwest corner at Prince and Orange Streets and doubtless many others earlier demolished. The bannisters mentioned on Hart's invoice were of course those plainly visible on the open portions of Trinity steeple. While some of those more elegantly carved, (if they did exist) may have come from Philadelphia, it is likely that Hart turned many of those that did exist

and perhaps still exist on the stairs of numerous of Lancaster's older houses.

While Stephen Hills was not a native of Lancaster, having been born in Ashford, Kent County, England, he apparently produced some very nice work here and must have lived here for some years. He arrived at Boston and after doing some work there, was probably brought to Lancaster by William Montgomery for his handsome residence. He subsequently moved to Harrisburg and Carlisle, and later having done the capitol building Jefferson City, Missouri died in Illinois in 1844.

Interior trim of note found in Lancaster County

Many years ago the writer found a mantel with gouged trim of tulips and hearts typical of the Pennsylvania dutch area of the county. The mantel, the only one of its kind he has ever seen, seemed to be quite original and must have come from a house in the northern area of the county.

The upper portion of a corner cupboard with sunburst top, apparently carved of wood, and last seen in an antique shop and said to have come from Lancaster County, presumably the city.

A corner cupboard with carved shell top. Removed from the old Western Hotel (The Sign of the Wagon) at West Orange and Water Streets, when the old building was demolished, and removed to the home of the owner, where it remains. The Western Hotel was built in 1804.

A large and imposing corner cupboard, the front of solid walnut. Well moulded cornice with keystone and fluted pilasters at the sides. Top doors arched and glazed, shaped shelves. Bottom doors four panels each, top panels being square. Presumed to have been removed from an old house in the northern part of the county many years ago.

A corner fireplace, the architrave having crosettes, the mantel with dentil and eye frieze, on console brackets. The panelled over-mantel with cornice and eye frieze. From an old house in Lancaster.

A group of fine mantels removed some years ago from the building that was formerly "The Sign of the Grape" (tavern) on the first block of North Queen Street, now preserved in the rooms of a local club.

NOTES

¹ Publications of the Lancaster County Historical Society v. 24 p. 93.

² *Ibid.*, v. 1, p. 98.

³ *Ibid.*, v. 9, p. 63.

⁴ *Ibid.*, v. 9, p. 168.

⁵ *Ibid.*, v. 19, p. 243.

⁶ Maryland Historical Magazine.

⁷ Publications of the Lancaster County Historical Society, v. 50.

⁸ William Buckland (1734-1774) the celebrated architect, designer and carver. He was brought from England under indenture by George Mason of Virginia to complete his residence Gunston Hall on the Potomac. He subsequently did work on some of the fine residences in the Northern Neck of Virginia and many of the fine residences of Annapolis and Tidewater Maryland.

⁹ Samuel McIntire (1737-1811), wood carver who decorated many of the fine residences of Salem, Mass. He is generally considered the carver of many fine pieces of furniture as well, although this is questioned in some sources.

¹⁰ Thomas Tyleston Waterman, former architect and adviser on Colonial Williamsburg, who wrote numerous books on Early American Architecture.

¹¹ This crude but very unusual stairway is from the second floor to the attic. Since the existing stairway from the first floor is not thought to be original, it is possible that something of the sort existed there too. — Since this work was completed some portions of the restoration have been made. The old stone chimney cap, which at some time in the last century was replaced with brick, has again been restored. A new roof of hand split and hand shaved red oak shingles has been put on. Repairs have been made to the stone wall, and the two windows on the front of the house, which at some time had been enlarged and replaced with wood frames have been restored with sandstone architraves with chamfered corners, to match the original ones on the ends of the building.

¹² Publications of the Lancaster County Historical Society, v. 2, p. 60.

¹³ Mr. George Heiges, an authority on Stiegel, states that the tapestries, now in the Hershey Museum were painted, not woven. The architrave of the fireplaces consisted of blue and white Delft tiles, which a later owner distributed to his friends.

¹⁴ Publications of the Lancaster County Historical Society, v. 31, p. 127.

¹⁵ Colonial Records, v. 7, p. 638-646-814.

¹⁶ Dating of Old Houses by Dr. Henry C. Mercer. Bucks County Historical Society, v. 5, p. 536-549.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Mr. Groff thoughtfully retained this piece of baseboard in his store until his death. Thereafter his executors, the Lancaster County Farmers bank thoughtfully presented it to this society for preservation.

²⁰ Carpenters' Companies and Carlisle Architecture by Dr. Milton E. Flower of Carlisle.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Christian Hutter was a printer with a shop on West King Street.

²³ There does not seem to be any records of the existence of a carpenters' company at an early date in Lancaster, the following description of the escort for Lafayette's visit to Lancaster in 1825 seems to indicate that there was such an organization at that time. "The Carpenters' Society, composed of youths between seventeen and twenty one—all handsomely dressed, with sashes, badges and cockades, each company ranged under separate banners, formed in line to the right of the field." Publications of the Lancaster County Historical Society, v. 21, p. 126.

²⁴ Carpenters' Companies and Carlisle Architecture by Dr. Milton E. Flower of Carlisle.

²⁵ Trinity Lutheran Church records,