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Colonial Architecture
in
VERMONT

With Introductory Text by
George S Chappell

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GEORGE F. LINDSAY, *Chairman*
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An Architectural
MONOGRAPH on
Colonial Architecture
in VERMONT



With Text by
GEORGE S CHAPPELL
Prepared for Publication by
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THE GENERAL STRONG HOUSE, VERGENNES, VERMONT.

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AVAILABILITY TODAY AS A STRUCTURAL WOOD

Vol. IV

DECEMBER, 1918

No. 6

COLONIAL ARCHITECTURE IN VERMONT

By GEORGE S. CHAPPELL

Again we are fortunate in having in Mr. Chappell another close student of the domestic architecture of the Colonists. After graduating from Yale, Mr. Chappell continued his studies at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts until 1902. Since then he has been practicing architecture in New York, for a time in partnership with Charles Ewing and at present independently.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY KENNETH CLARK

CURIOUS and interesting indeed is the invariable accuracy with which the architecture of a particular locality mutely spells its history. Not less engaging is this historic aspect when its lesson lies not on the surface but deeply buried in the meshes of circumstance which must first be explored before arriving at glimmerings of the truth. Such is the case with the fair Green Mountain State. The architectural history of Vermont is yet to be written. It exists, doubtless, not only in the noble houses which have been preserved, but likewise in the town records of many a valley village,—records, praise be, which are gradually being crystallized into useful collections by the beneficent agencies of various societies of portentous and dignified titles, such as the "Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities." But, as yet, the historians have said little specifically of the charming towns west of Connecticut which, by leaps and bounds, are attaining a national pre-eminence as foci of rest and recreation for thousands of brain-fagged urbanites.

Other sections of what we may properly call our Colonial country have had, each, their scribes. The coast towns, without exception, accessible by main railway lines and the more alluring water routes, have long stood as milestones on the itinerary of the zealous draughtsman, the prying historian and, last but by no means least, the man behind the camera. Who, among the architectural profession or in the splendid brotherhood of kindred souls to whom our old houses are precious, vital things, can

look back with aught but keenest pleasure to the occasional visit of that rare character, Frank Cousins, whose valuable records of Salem, Portsmouth, Newburyport and Marblehead were invariably illumined by his quaint anecdotes and observations? The very accent of the man went with the pictures, and his point of view and method of what I can only tactfully term "distribution" were in wonderfully refreshing contrast to the cock-sure briskness of many a brick merchant, refrigerator vendor or miscellaneous patent-pusher who, in normal times, form an unending line at the outer portals of an office.

"Are these pictures for sale, Mr. Cousins?" I asked him, at our first meeting.

His reply was preceded by a look of gentle surprise and reproach which I shall never forget.

"No, Mr. Chappell . . . no,—they are not for sale. I am merely showing them to you. I will leave them here. I know you will enjoy them, and I give them to you. You will note that they are numbered. Keep what you find most interesting,—later, perhaps, if you wish to make me a present, you may mail me a check. What a lovely mantel that is in the Peabody house! I had to bribe Mrs. Peabody with two baskets of Northern Spies before she would let me photograph it," etc.

In Dutch Colonial, Long Island and New York, along the Georgian River James, in Charleston and Savannah,—up and down the coast have ranged the recorders of our historic past,—but of Vermont we find nothing. It is, then, with a peculiar elation that I have undertaken this little monograph, with something of



THE OLD CONSTITUTION HOUSE, WINDSOR, VERMONT.



HOUSE AT MIDDLEBURY, VERMONT.

the feeling of a humble explorer, a traveller into "green fields and pastures new" in our fragmentary world of architectural letters.

The mass impression, the total result, is perhaps the most trustworthy gauge of value by which to standardize an appreciation. In many cases this is extremely difficult. New England Colonial architecture, in the general sense of the term, runs a wide gamut of expression from the early 17th century survivals—in many ways the most absorbingly interesting of our relics—to the late 18th century period whose delicate life

colonies, waged for years a most desperate struggle for her political existence. Planted between the great and vague grants of the Colonies of New York and New Hampshire, the green hills and valleys between the Connecticut and the Hudson were a veritable no-man's-land, constantly in dispute, constantly changing hands according to who drew the last map or last had the ear of the King's Council, and, consequently, constantly neglected. While thriving towns were being built in the defined areas of Massachusetts and Connecticut, the wildernesses of the interior



THE GENERAL STRONG HOUSE, VERGENNES, VERMONT.

was finally crushed out by the heavy hand of the Greek revival. Each type and phase must be considered and appraised separately, for they are distinct links in the chain.

In Vermont, however, we find a striking homogeneity of architectural expression, an almost unvarying type which makes it possible to judge the value of this little known contribution by a single standard.

This brings me, by a very devious route, I must confess, to the thought expressed in my initial paragraph, namely, that this very homogeneity must perforce have its reason in the actual history of the State. Nor is this reason far to seek or hard to find. We forget, perhaps, that Vermont, more than any of our original

were left to the Indians and the animals. It was not until 1724 that the first white settlement in the present State of Vermont was founded at Fort Dummer, south of Brattleboro. The real tide of emigration did not set in until 1760, between which period and the outbreak of the Revolution a bitter controversy was waged between the hardy pioneers who had pushed into the forests, and the more calculating governors of the coastal communities who saw in such exploration only an enlargement of their own boundaries. So acute did this quarrel become that Governor Tryon of New York formally placed a bounty of £150 on the head of no less a person than Ethan Allen, who, later, at Ticonderoga, blazed his way to a glory which

has sufficiently dimmed the luster of his former powerful antagonist.

Throughout the entire Revolutionary War, Vermont fought nobly as an independent, unofficial group of settlers, and it was not until 1791 that she was finally formally admitted to the Union,—a belated recognition which, in the light of her splendid history and services, we should not hesitate nowadays to term “a raw deal.”

Be that as it may, here is the plain explanation of Vermont's singleness of style in her early architecture. Of the very earliest, the 17th

century dwellings, the period of the sturdy Georgian detail of Deerfield and Longmeadow, was still too early for the fluctuating, battledore-and-shuttlecock existence of the struggling colony. Vermont came into full architectural being just after the transition in styles had been effected which parallels interestingly what has happened recently in New York City and, in lesser degree, throughout the entire United States. In a word, the first Adam craze was on,—perhaps not the *very* first, but leaving the great original out of the discussion, the first architectural Adam was certainly the great popular style of the



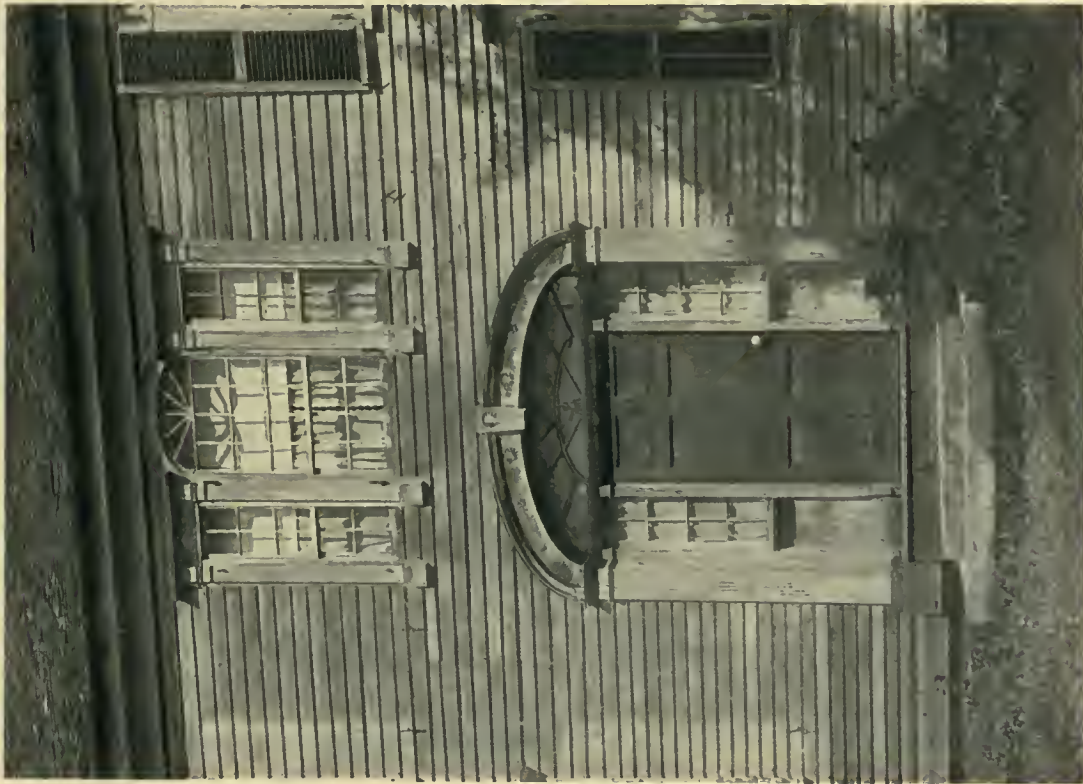
HOUSE AT WINDSOR, VERMONT.

century and early 18th century type, there is practically none. It was not until the State was recognized and established that its staunch citizens began to build the dignified homes which we find in the lovely villages of Rutland, Windsor, Middlebury, and Vergennes.

The architectural derivation is as clear as the historical reasons for it. One has but to turn the pages of Asher Benjamin's delightful "Country Builders' Assistant, fully explaining the Best Methods for striking Regular and Quirked Mouldings" to see the hand of time pointing with no uncertain finger at the skilful carpenter of Greenfield whose name is writ large over the entire State of Vermont.

The period subsequent to our first stark

new State. It was between 1773 and 1798 that Robert and James Adam published the splendid series of engravings of their undying monuments to a phase of English architecture which stands for the utmost delicacy and refinement of Britain as clearly as Louis Seize indicates the culture of France. This was the fount from which Asher Benjamin drew his inspiration. His vessel was no royal tankard, but the water it held was pure. Far from being a servile copyist, he translated the proportions of cornice and column from terms of stone to wood with a niceness of judgment and delicacy of appreciation of the material he was working in that has earned him an undying and enviable place in the architectural history of America.

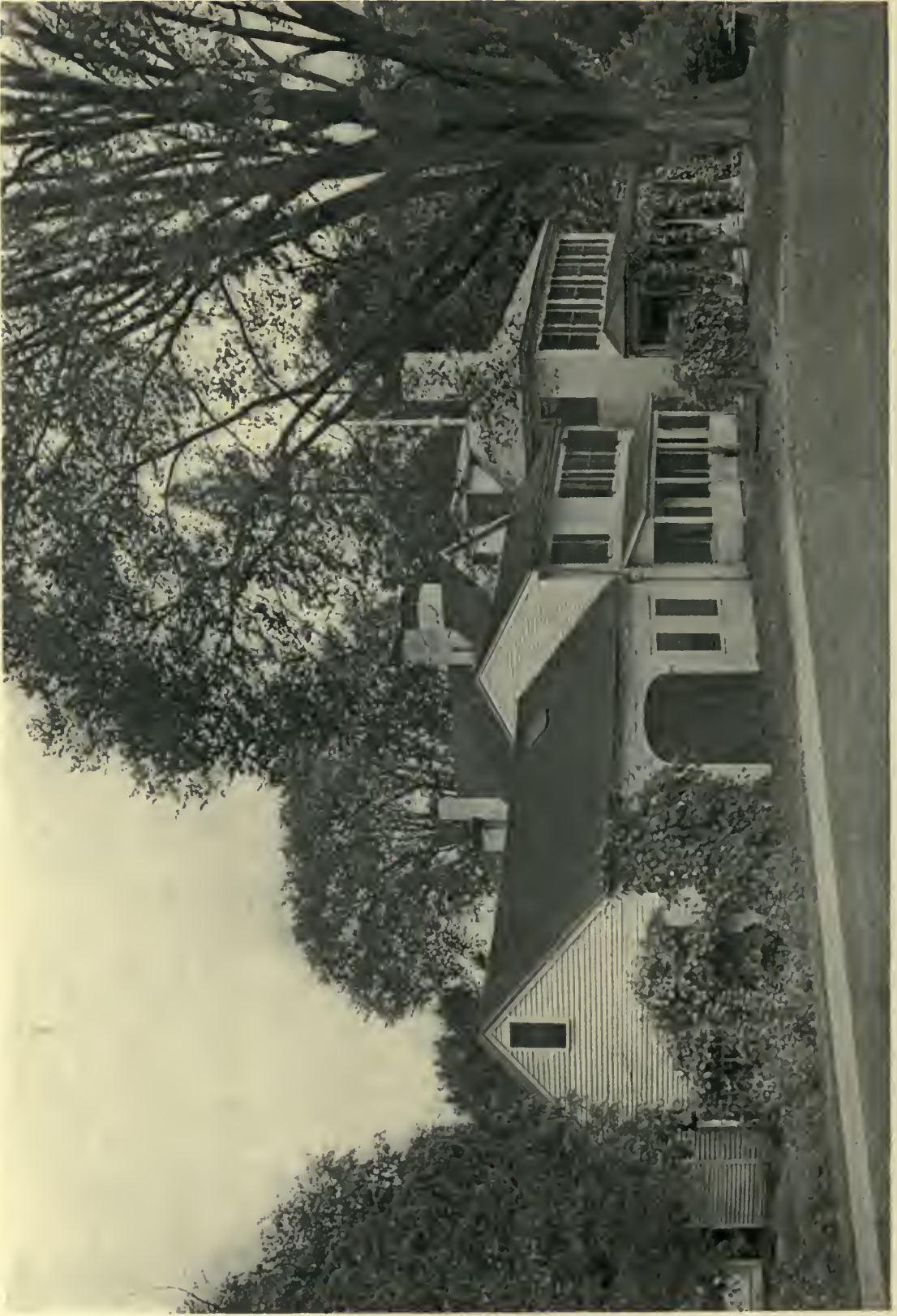


Front Entrance.



Side Entrance.

OLD HOUSE AT RUTLAND, VERMONT.



THE WILLIAM M. EVARTS HOUSE, WINDSOR, VERMONT.



THE WAINWRIGHT HOUSE, MIDDLEBURY, VERMONT.

Strange, how history repeats herself! The Ritz hotels, the Statler hotels, the many new apartment houses on Park Avenue, in New York,—everywhere we are rushing to Adam. It is a fad, a phase, a transitory enthusiasm, but it will leave charming results behind it. If I were asked to coin a modern expression for the early architecture of Vermont, I should say they did "wooden Ritz"—and I think I should be understood.

It is a sophisticated art, but an art still sound and vigorous. Canons of judgment in these matters are peculiarly personal, and my individual rating of our national periods gives first place to the earlier, more naïve structures in which the broader elements of mass and proportion, fenestration and austere profile seem to fall



Cornice Detail.

THE WAINWRIGHT HOUSE,
MIDDLEBURY, VERMONT.

into a harmony that is inevitable and was, probably, unconscious. Vermont is not without her examples of this chaste style, as in the old Constitution House in Windsor, illustrated on page 4, built in 1777, and happily restored with a reverent regard to the ancient law of severity.

More characteristic by far, however, are such bits of pure Adam detail as the charming door of the Sherman Evarts House, also in Windsor, illustrated on page 12, or the ingenious interlaced frieze on one of the stately residences of Middlebury, known as the Wainwright House, which strikingly illustrates the addition to a

classic background of a motive which could be properly executed in wood, and wood alone.

Less fortunate, but of singular interest in illus-



HOUSE AT CASTLETON, VERMONT.

trating a subtle approach to the decadence of over-refinement, is the curious porch of the Meecham-Ainsworth House in Castleton, illustrated on page 13, where we see the ingenuity of the skillful workman combining three types of arches, the semicircle, the elliptical and the stilted, in a single motif. Far more than the usual refinement in design and proportion are found in the General Strong House at Vergennes, Frontispiece and page 5. Here General Strong lived while he and Macdonough were building the fleet which won the Battle of Lake Champlain.

In general, we may say of the Colonial architecture of Vermont that it was a true and dignified expression of the economic conditions of its period, nor can we ask more of any generation. In its studious devel-



Cornice Detail.

THE SHERMAN EVARTS HOUSE,
WINDSOR, VERMONT.

opment of classic ornament and general excellence of taste it goes far to rebut the quaint assumption of J. Norman, an earlier precursor of Asher Benjamin, who prefaces his hand-book with the encouraging statement that architecture should be universally practiced, as it is "so easy as to be acquired in leisure times, when the Business of the Day is over, by way of Diversion."

I herewith formally pin upon Mr. Norman's breast a medal, proclaiming him to be the great originator of that vast army of home-builders who firmly believe that they planned their own houses and that the architect merely drew some

white lines on blue paper putting on some figures and arranged the staircase so that it did not end in the living-room fireplace.



THE SHERMAN EVARTS HOUSE, WINDSOR, VERMONT.



HOUSE AT MIDDLEBURY,
VERMONT.



THE SHERMAN EVARTS HOUSE,
WINDSOR, VERMONT.

ENTRANCE DETAILS.

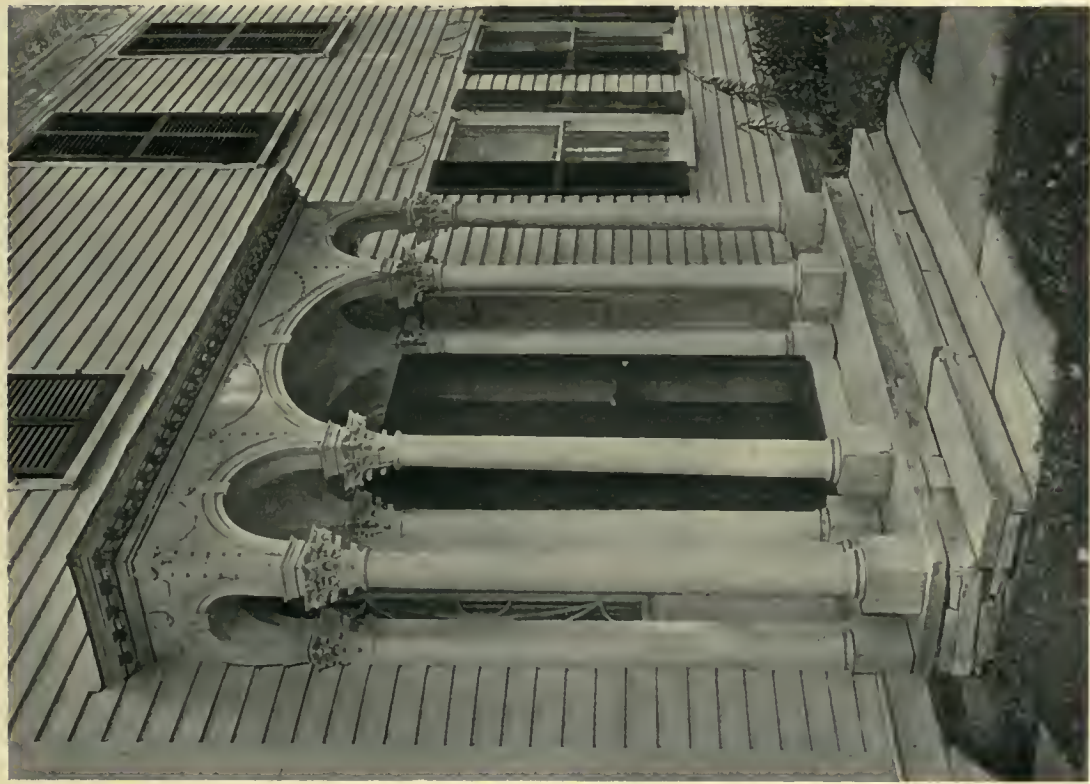


THE JOHONNOT HOUSE, WINDSOR, VERMONT.



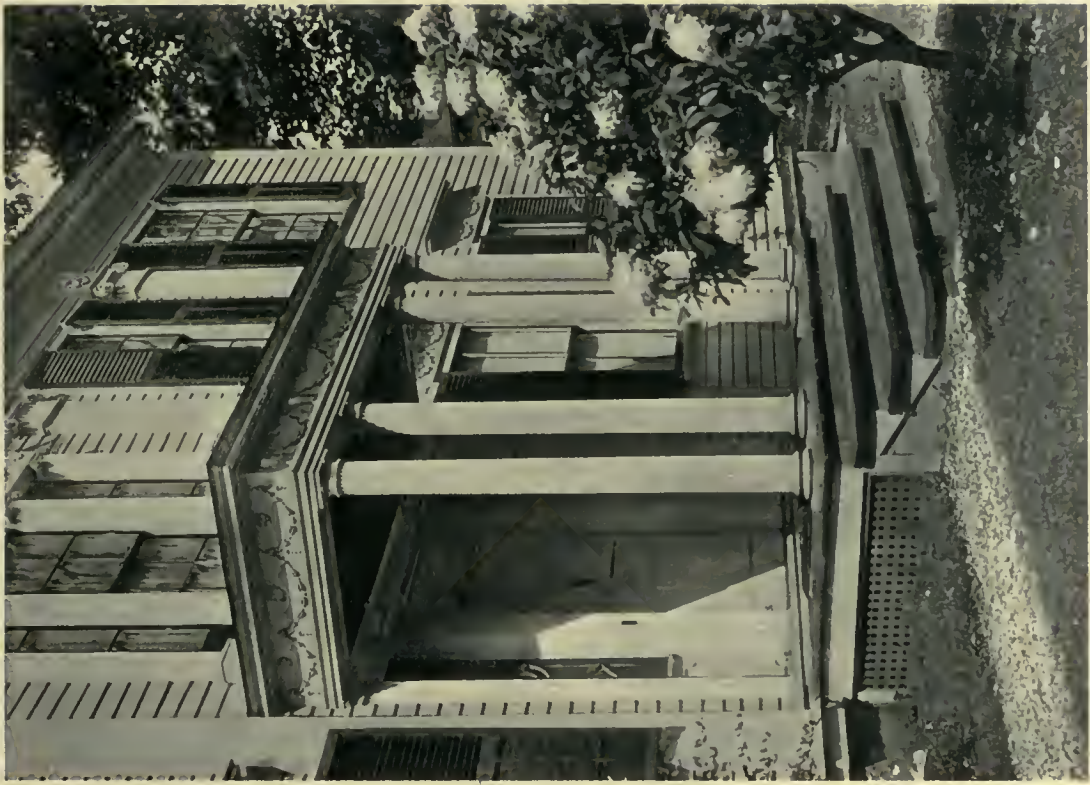
HOUSE AT CASTLETON, VERMONT.

ENTRANCE DETAILS.



ENTRANCE DETAIL.

MEECHAM-AINSWORTH HOUSE, CASTLETON, VERMONT.



ENTRANCE DETAIL.

THE HARRIETT LANE HOUSE, WINDSOR, VERMONT.



THE FULLERTON HOUSE, WINDSOR, VERMONT. Entrance Detail.

WHITE PINE—AND WHERE TO USE IT

II

SPECIFICATION CLAUSES FOR A HOUSE OF THE HIGHEST GRADE WHERE QUALITY IS FIRST AND COST A SECONDARY CONSIDERATION

Prepared by LOUIS ROBERT HOLSKE

Specification Writer for McKim, Mead & White, Architects

In the introductory article to "White Pine—and Where to Use It," it was stated that a short cut was needed to help the architect to incorporate the information contained in the White Pine Standard Grading Rules Book into his specifications. It is hoped that the data presented in this article is in such form as to be not only of value, but also of practical use.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

THOUGH there is no universal form of specification for a given building, each architect having his own method of indicating the requirements as to material and workmanship, the White Pine Bureau offers the following Specification for White Pine, which may be incorporated into any form in current use. In working it out it has been borne in mind that to be of use to architects it must be as concise as possible. Clause A will be common to the specifications for the three classes of house. The application has been divided into three clauses, B, C, and D, for structural, exterior and interior uses respectively. C and D could readily be united in the interest of greater brevity. This, however, would be affected by the classification adopted by the architect in writing his specification. Some architects classify everything in woodwork under Carpentry, others divide it into Rough Carpentry, Exterior Finish and Interior Finish, etc.

The fact has often been emphasized that "blanket clauses" are ambiguous and that their interpretation invariably adds appreciably to the cost of the structure. In spite of the fact that there are comparatively few instances where it is necessary to use absolutely Clear White Pine, architects often make the mistake of specifying "Clear White Pine" for *all* uses, where in many cases a lower grade would be more suitable and considerably less expensive. The client would have as satisfactory and as durable a house; the architect would gain prestige through creating a house which combines maximum quality with proper cost. Clear White Pine for sash, doors and blinds, however, does not come in this category, as sash, doors and blinds are products of factories and are cut from White Pine stock which yields the required amount of clear wood, although the nomenclature of the grade from which it is cut is not

"Clear." This grade is known as "White Pine Factory Lumber" and is essentially for cutting-up purposes, or other shop uses where sections of clear lumber are required.

There are three fundamental sets of White Pine Standard Grading Rules, one or more of which is familiar to all White Pine wholesale and retail lumber dealers throughout the United States. The architect should determine which of these three is applicable in the territory of the contemplated building before writing his specification. Any contractor or local retail lumber dealer should be able to give him this information. The architect can then specify the grades under whichever of the three sets applies. It may be found that White Pine is sometimes sold by lumber dealers under local names, although the dealer has purchased the lumber from the manufacturers under one of the three standard sets of grades. Every dealer must therefore know the grades as called for in the accompanying Specification, and there is no excuse for any confusion or misinterpretation.

While White Pine is the wood *par excellence* for all construction uses, there may be, perhaps, a question as to the advisability of specifying it for general framing purposes. Clause B of the model Specification states the grades which should be used if it is decided to build of White Pine throughout. There are other structural woods, lower in cost and almost equal to White Pine, for sills, posts, girders, etc., but for studding and framing for doors and windows it is particularly recommended. There is no shrinkage nor swelling, no warping nor twisting, in White Pine, and a door or window hung in a White Pine frame will not stick or bind, nor will the plaster crack. In these cases the slight extra first cost is more than offset by the future saving in repairs.

[Over

SPECIFICATION CLAUSES FOR A WHITE PINE HOUSE

CLASS I

HOUSE OF THE HIGHEST GRADE WHERE QUALITY IS FIRST AND COST A SECONDARY CONSIDERATION

Prepared by LOUIS ROBERT HOLSKE

CLAUSE A:

Stock: All white pine used shall be Northern White Pine or Idaho White Pine, known botanically as *Pinus Strobus* or *Pinus Monticola*. It must possess the natural characteristics, viz.: Closeness of grain, evenness of fiber, and softness of texture. It shall be thoroughly seasoned and shall be milled to dimensions under the White Pine Standard Grading Rules of the Northern Pine Manufacturers' Association—or Western Pine Manufacturers' Association—or White Pine Association of the Tonawandas.

(Cross out the two which do not apply.)

	Northern Pine Manufacturers' Association	Western Pine Manufacturers' Association	White Pine Association of the Tonawandas
CLAUSE B: For structural uses the grades shall be as follows:			
Sills, posts, girders or similar work.....	No. 1 White Pine Timbers	No. 1 White Pine Timbers	No. 1 White Pine Timbers
Joists, rafters, studding, partition sills and plates, bridging or similar work.....	No. 1 White Pine Dimension	No. 1 White Pine Dimension	No. 1 White Pine Dimension
Rough floors, sheathing and roof boards.....	No. 1 White Pine Shiplap, or No. 1 White Pine Dressed and Matched, or No. 1 White Pine Common Boards Matched and Surfaced	No. 1 White Pine Shiplap, or No. 1 White Pine Dressed and Matched, or No. 1 White Pine Common Boards Matched and Surfaced	No. 2 Barn, D. and M.
Lath	No. 1 White Pine Lath	No. 1 White Pine Lath	No. 1 White Pine Lath
CLAUSE C: For exterior work the grades shall be as follows: All finished work, moulded or plain, except as below otherwise specified.....	White Pine "B." Select and Better Finishing	White Pine "B." Select and Better Finishing	Uppers, Thick and Inch White Pine Finishing
Beveled siding.....	White Pine "B." and Better Siding	White Pine "B." and Better Siding	White Pine Clear Siding
Sash, Doors and Blinds.....	White Pine Factory Lumber	White Pine Factory Lumber	White Pine Factory Lumber
Ceiling	"B." and Better White Pine Flooring—Beaded	"B." and Better White Pine Flooring—Beaded	No. 1 White Pine Mouldings, D. and M. and Beaded
Flooring	"B." and Better White Pine Flooring	"B." and Better White Pine Flooring	No. 1 White Pine Mouldings or Better, D. and M.
Blocking or work concealed from view.....	White Pine "D." Select	White Pine "D." Select	No. 2 White Pine Dressing, Thick and Inch
CLAUSE D: For interior finish the grades shall be as follows: All exposed finished work, moulded or plain.....	White Pine "B." Select and Better Finishing	White Pine "B." Select and Better Finishing	White Pine Uppers, Thick and Inch
Linings, backings or work concealed from view..	White Pine "D." Select and Better	White Pine "D." Select and Better	White Pine Base and Casing
Flooring	White Pine "B." and Better Flooring	White Pine "B." and Better Flooring	No. 1 White Pine Mouldings or Better, D. and M.
Blocking	White Pine "D." Select	White Pine "D." Select	No. 2 White Pine Dressing, Thick and Inch

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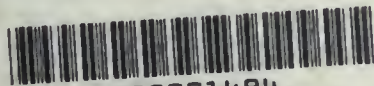
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