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# The Colonial Revival and American Nationalism

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JOHN GALEN HOWARD worked in the offices of H. H. Richardson, Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge, and McKim, Mead and White in the 1880s<sup>1</sup> when the Shingle Style was giving way to the more formal and academic phase of the Colonial Revival.<sup>2</sup> Much later, in 1913, Howard observed that "on the face of things, Colonius Redivivus owed his oil and wine to the insight, taste and wisdom of McKim and White, and others of their group." Howard was, however, of the opinion that "he owed his resuscitation fundamentally to his Americanism. McKim, Mead and White were the active instrument of a latent movement larger than themselves."<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, it seems that much of Colonial architecture's popular appeal was based on patriotic sentiment. The Colonial buildings publicly preserved and restored in the nineteenth century were, almost without exception, ennobled by their associations with America's early political and military heroes: Independence Hall, Washington's headquarters at Newburgh, and Mount Vernon head a long list.<sup>4</sup>

\* \* \*

In the early 1780s, Thomas Jefferson castigated the design of Williamsburg's early Georgian buildings.<sup>5</sup> Yet in later years he came to appreciate non-architectural values in eighteenth-century structures. In 1825, when a Philadelphia antiquarian, Dr. James Mease, asked where the Declaration of Independence had been written, Jefferson identified a brick house on Market Street. Ignoring its lack of architec-

tural beauty, Jefferson proposed that such "small things may, perhaps, like the relics of saints, help to nourish our devotion to this holy bond of our Union."<sup>6</sup> Jefferson's conception of the patriotic value of buildings associated with the Revolution is found in the attitudes of innumerable others. In 1850 a committee of the New York legislature appointed to study the preservation of Washington's Newburgh headquarters was of the opinion that, if the pilgrim to the site "have an American heart in his bosom, he will feel himself a better man; his patriotism will kindle with deeper emotion; his aspirations of his country's good will ascend from a more devout mind for having visited the 'Headquarters of Washington.'"<sup>7</sup>

The restorer of Independence Hall for the Centennial celebration of 1876, Frank M. Etting, feared that "the actuality . . . of our Founders is already losing itself in the mists of the past," but, like Jefferson, he believed that "so long . . . as we can preserve the material objects . . . which these great men saw, used, or even touched, the thrill of vitality may still be transmitted unbroken."<sup>8</sup> For James Russell Lowell "patriotism, the love of country," was the force that led him to speak in favor of the preservation of Old South Meeting House in 1877. Like many of his generation, Lowell (born in 1819) could not accept a Colonial building as "a model of architecture . . . in any aesthetic sense." Rather, Old South's importance lay in the fact that it had "looked upon great men and great events," and so had the power to "lift our minds to a higher level of feeling."<sup>9</sup>

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow undertook his own personal preservation project and, in 1843, chose as his residence the house built in 1759 for Major John Vassall in Cambridge. He was drawn to the house primarily because Washington had spent nine months there in 1775–1776. In

1. *Who's Who in America*, 1903–1905.

2. Vincent Scully, *The Shingle Style* (New Haven, 1955), pp. 143–154.

3. John Galen Howard, "The Outlook and Inlook Architectural," *Architectural Record*, xxxiv (December 1913), 534. By 1913 Howard was well known as supervising architect of the University of California.

4. Charles Hosmer, *Presence of the Past* (New York, 1965), p. 264, cites patriotism as the primary "motivating force behind the majority of preservation efforts."

5. Jefferson, in his *Notes on Virginia*, referred to the college and hospital at Williamsburg as "rude, misshapen piles, which, but that they have roofs, would be taken for brick-kilns." See *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Andrew A. Lipscomb, 20 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1905), II, 212.

6. Letter from Jefferson to James Mease of 26 September 1825. *Jefferson*, XVI, 123.

7. Quoted in Hosmer, *Presence of the Past*, p. 36.

8. Frank M. Etting, *An Historical Account of the Old State House of Pennsylvania* (Boston, 1876), p. 1.

9. *Old South Meeting-House. Report of a Meeting of the Inhabitants of Cambridge* (Boston, 1877), pp. 7–8.



Fig. 1. Boston, John Hancock House, 1740 (from Drake, *Our Colonial Homes*). Destroyed 1863.

his poetry, Longfellow celebrated the history of the house:

Once, ah, once, within these walls,  
One whom memory oft recalls,  
The Father of his Country dwelt;  
  
Up and down these echoing stairs,  
Heavy with the weight of cares,  
Sounded his majestic tread;  
Yes, within this very room  
Sat he in those hours of gloom,  
Weary both in heart and head.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> "To a Child," in *The Complete Poetical Works of Longfellow* (Boston, 1922), p. 61.

Many patriots could not find original monuments of the Revolution that might serve as residences, but in the late nineteenth century reproductions became available. The John Hancock house in Boston (Fig. 1), an elegant Georgian mansion, was demolished in 1863; nevertheless, its form was recorded in drawings and photographs.<sup>11</sup> These were used in subsequent recreations of the Hancock house—notably the Massachusetts Building by Peabody and Stearns at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893<sup>12</sup> (Fig. 2), which in turn affected house building in Pittsburgh (Fig. 3)

<sup>11</sup> Hosmer, *Presence of the Past*, pp. 39–40.

<sup>12</sup> Montgomery Schuyler, "State Buildings at the Fair," *Architectural Record*, III (July–September 1893), 57–58.

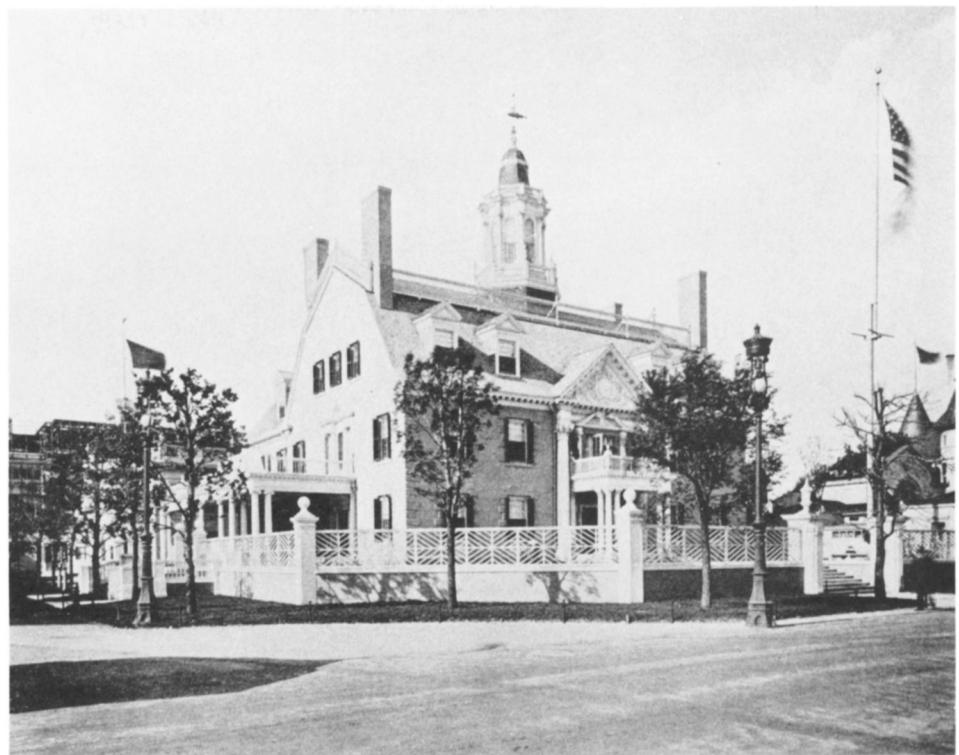


Fig. 2. Peabody and Stearns, Massachusetts Building, World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893 (from Shepp's *World's Fair Photographed*). Destroyed.

to the extent that Montgomery Schuyler remarked that "it is difficult to walk in the East End [of Pittsburgh] without coming on a Hancock house."<sup>13</sup>

Virginia erected a virtual duplicate of Mount Vernon at the Chicago exposition<sup>14</sup> (Fig. 4), and other, less accurate, variations on Washington's home were built in the following years, especially in the East. Touring New England in the fall of 1904, Henry James admired a "great new house . . . apparently conceived—and with great felicity—on the lines of a magnified Mount Vernon."<sup>15</sup> James was referring to McKim, Mead and White's residence for Alfred Pope in Farmington, Connecticut (1898; Fig. 5).<sup>16</sup> Stanford White's best-known elaboration on Mount Vernon is his James L. Breese residence at Southampton, Long Island (1898; Fig. 6).<sup>17</sup> The long, two-story porch clearly evokes memories of Mount Vernon, whose porch was, in fact, the feature that attracted many other architects, including Harrie T. Lindeberg and John Russell Pope.<sup>18</sup>

13. Montgomery Schuyler, "The Building of Pittsburgh," *Architectural Record*, xxx (September 1911), 278.

14. *Architecture and Building*, xv (14 May 1892), 253.

15. Henry James, *The American Scene* (London, 1907; reprint ed., Bloomington, Ind., 1968), p. 45.

16. *Architectural Record*, xx (August 1906), 122–129; *A Monograph of the Works of McKim, Mead and White* (New York, 1973), pl. 146 and Leland Roth's note, p. 66.

17. Barr Ferree, *American Estates and Gardens* (New York, 1904), pp. 172–182; *Monograph of the Works of McKim, Mead and White*, pls. 268–271 and Leland Roth's note, p. 69.

18. For Lindeberg's Gerald B. Lambert residence (about 1922) in Prince-

Another of the nation's principal shrines, Independence Hall, served as a model for numerous public buildings.<sup>19</sup> Again its attraction was at least as much patriotic as architectural. The Pennsylvania State Pavilion (Fig. 7) at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco of 1915 was designed by Henry Hornbostel as a much modified Independence Hall—lacking the famous tower and treated as an open pavilion with colonnades. Notwithstanding these considerable changes, Hornbostel's building brought "a patriotic thrill to the heart of the loyal American," according to one publicist of the exposition.<sup>20</sup>

The great majority of Colonial Revival designs, however, were not intended to recall specific patriotic landmarks. Yet

ton, N.J., see Talbot Hamlin, *The American Spirit in Architecture* (New Haven, 1926), p. 267. Pope's residence for Robert J. Collier at Wickatunk, N.J., is illustrated in *Architecture*, xxxvi (July 1917), pl. 114; his residence for J. Randolph Robinson at Westbury, L.I., inspired an essay, "The Georgian House," *American Architect*, cxvii (7 January 1920), 5–6, which stated that "there is a certain patriotism in the Georgian house."

19. See John Maass, "Architecture and Americanism or Pastiches of Independence Hall," *Historic Preservation*, xxii (April–June 1970), 17–25. Other buildings, not mentioned by Maass, that were partially inspired by Independence Hall include: the State Asylum for the Chronic Insane at Wernersville, Pa., by Rankin and Kellogg (*American Architect*, xxxix [21 January 1893]); the Garden City (L.I.) Hotel by McKim, Mead and White (*Monograph of the Works of McKim Mead and White*, pl. 72 and Leland Roth's note, p. 64); and Samuel Phillips Hall, Phillips Academy, Andover, Mass., by Guy Lowell (*Architectural Forum*, xliv [June 1926]).

20. Louis Christian Mullgardt, *The Architecture and Landscape Gardening of the Exposition* (San Francisco, 1915), p. 194. The quoted passage was written by Maud Wotring Raymond or John Hamlin.



Fig. 3. Peabody and Stearns,  
Nathaniel Holmes House,  
Pittsburgh, by 1907 (from  
*American Architect*, xc1 [15 June  
1907]).

the Colonial Revival was inspired, from the beginning, by nationalistic sentiment—the desire to have in America an *American* style distinct from European modes.<sup>21</sup>

As early as 1857, one writer (perhaps Peter B. Wight), who thought most new houses were spoiled by “inconceivably ugly gingerbread work,” proposed as instructive models the farmhouses of the Dutch and English colonists. These constituted “the nearest approach to an American style of building that we have.”<sup>22</sup>

In 1869 William Ralph Emerson, soon to become a leading practitioner of the Shingle Style phase of the Colonial Re-

21. The revival of a style associated with a country’s early history for nationalistic reasons was not, of course, a peculiarly American phenomenon. The Gothic Revival flourished in England partly because it was viewed as that country’s own style, free from Italian and French domination. This was especially important in the decision to build Gothic Houses of Parliament. See Kenneth Clark, *The Gothic Revival* (Harmondsworth, 1964), p. 99. Later in the nineteenth century Finnish artists sought a national style. Edward Marc Treib, “Lars Sonck: From the Roots,” *JSAH*, xxx (October 1971), 228, describes how Jean Sibelius, Eliel Saarinen, Lars Sonck, and others had a “common goal of seeking a truly Finnish expression” by turning for inspiration to the Finnish folk tradition. Between the 1890s and 1950s many Canadians recognized the château as particularly appropriate for new construction in their country. See Harold D. Kalman, *The Railway Hotels and the Development of the Château Style in Canada* (Victoria, B.C., 1968).

22. “House Building in America,” *Putnam’s*, x (July 1857), 109, 111. James Early, *Romanticism and American Architecture* (New York, 1965), refers to this article in his chapter titled “Nationalism and American Architecture.” The attribution of the article to Wight is made by Ellen W. Kramer, “The Domestic Architecture of Detlef Lienau, A Conservative Victorian” (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1957), p. 232n.

vival, pinpointed the appeal of early New England architecture, calling it “the only true American architecture” in a “sermon” denouncing the destruction of these relics.<sup>23</sup> Another pioneer of the revival, Robert S. Peabody, suggested in 1877 that there was an alternative to following English architects in their revival of the Queen Anne: “With our Centennial year have we not discovered that we too have a past worthy of study? . . . Our Colonial work is our only native source of antiquarian study and inspiration.”<sup>24</sup> In the same vein, an anonymous reviewer of Arthur Little’s *Early New England Interiors* wrote in 1878 that the use of native models “supplies us with a new motive for architectural composition, a motive of patriotism.”<sup>25</sup>

The critic Clarence Cook was accused in 1882 of being “one of those growling patriots” by the English journal *The Architect*,<sup>26</sup> after Cook advocated “the cottages and small houses of the last century” in New England and the Middle Atlantic states as “the true type of a domestic architecture

23. William Ralph Emerson quoted by Bainbridge Bunting, *Houses of Boston’s Back Bay* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), p. 356.

24. [Robert S. Peabody], “Georgian Houses of New England,” *American Architect*, ii (20 October 1877), 338. William M. Woollett, *Old Homes Made New* (New York, 1878), p. 6, also thought Colonial architecture was “the only type that we can distinctly consider and call our own, and at the same time feel any pride in so doing.”

25. *American Architect*, iii (12 January 1878), 12.

26. *The Architect*, quoted by *American Architect*, xii (21 October 1882), 194.



Fig. 4. Virginia Building, World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893 (from *Shepp's World's Fair Photographed*). Destroyed.

fitted to our climate and to our general mode of living.”<sup>27</sup> Earlier, in 1878, Cook had observed a “mania” for American antiques, especially in Boston. This, he thought, was “one of the best signs of returning good taste in a community that has long been the victim to the whims and impositions of foreign fashions.”<sup>28</sup>

In Chicago at the turn of the century, Sullivan and Wright and their followers were trying to create an architecture for modern America. Their opposition often consisted of Colonial Revivalists. Stephen Denison Peet, a Chicago architectural critic, believed in the desirability of an American style, but he was not impressed with the efforts of his fellow Chicagoans to attain it: “the decorating of a steel frame and making a big ornamental box is not architecture.” Rather, the hope for an American style lay in the design of private residences that would be an “outgrowth of the patterns which we have inherited from England and have embodied in the old Colonial buildings.” These residences would “supplant the ugly excrescences which have arisen as a result of copying the Old World patterns.”<sup>29</sup>

In the East, the architect Joy Wheeler Dow contended in 1904 that, while Georgian houses were a part of the Renaissance tradition, “there is not a building in either England or



Fig. 5. McKim, Mead and White, Alfred A. Pope House, Farmington, Connecticut, 1898 (from *Architectural Record*, xx [August 1906]).

France or Italy like any of them. They are intensely American in every line, and express as much American history as George Bancroft was able to express in his great literary work.”<sup>30</sup>

When the wealthy American chose to live in Continental splendor, he risked the criticism of nationalists. The Vanderbilts and the late Richard Morris Hunt were taken to task in 1905 by the *American Architect* for putting up elaborate mansions in the French or Italian manner: rich Americans can never “really feel at home in buildings that have so little connection with the soil and the customs of the fathers. On the other hand, it is equally impossible that they should not feel at home . . . in such home-like Colonial houses as . . . Mr.

27. Clarence Cook, “Architecture in America,” *North American Review*, cxxxv (September 1882), 244.

28. Clarence Cook, *The House Beautiful* (New York, 1878), p. 163.

29. Stephen Denison Peet, “Architecture in America,” *American Architect*, I.XVI (21 October 1899), 23.

30. Joy Wheeler Dow, *American Renaissance: A Review of Domestic Architecture* (New York, 1904), p. 77. Aymar Embury II, *Early American Churches* (Garden City, 1914), p. 176, insisted that the American Georgian was as different from its English counterpart as the English Georgian was from the Italian Renaissance.



Fig. 6. McKim, Mead and White, James L. Breese House, Southampton, Long Island, 1898. Porch (from *Monograph of the Work of McKim, Mead and White*, III).

J. L. Breese's home at Southampton, N.Y. [Fig. 6] by Messrs. McKim, Mead & White. . . ."<sup>31</sup>

Town halls were frequently designed in the Georgian and Federal styles during the early twentieth century. One ex-

<sup>31</sup> *American Architect*, 1xxxvii (4 March 1905), 74. Wilson Eyre's residence for Frank Squier at Greenwich, Conn., was also cited as homelike and Colonial. Stuart Bartlett, "Some Newport Villas," *Architectural Review* (Boston), xv (March 1908), 33, 37, suggested that Newport's millionaires would have nothing to do with Colonial architecture or scarcely anything else American. They were "a race apart, alien and enduring a short . . . exile from their native Europe."

ample of this tendency, the Town Hall at Huntington, Long Island (1911; Fig. 8), by Peabody, Wilson and Brown,<sup>32</sup> was singled out for praise by the journal *Architecture* in 1912. *Architecture* held that the Colonial Revival "should be the accepted type of design for public or semi-public buildings in our small American towns, especially in the East, where Colonial traditions still survive with some strength." This style was "more nearly real and genuine architecture than

<sup>32</sup> The senior partner was Julian Peabody, not to be confused with Robert S. Peabody of Peabody and Stearns.

any copying of English, French or Italian motives can ever be."<sup>33</sup>

Formal Georgian and Federal public buildings were considered American, but so too was the primitive shelter of the pioneer. The log cabin has long been recognized as an American symbol. Harold R. Shurtleff found that the "emotional association of the log cabin with the American spirit" began with William Henry Harrison's presidential campaign of 1840.<sup>34</sup> Log cabins were popular attractions at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia.<sup>35</sup> Some thirty-five years later, the log house of Gustav Stickley (Fig. 9), the leading advocate of the American Arts and Crafts movement, was the subject of an article by Natalie Curtis in Stickley's magazine, the *Craftsman*. Although Stickley's log house was near Morris Plains, New Jersey, and so within commuting dis-

tance of New York, Curtis extolled the type as "the pioneer of civilization, the sign of the determination of the white man to face the unknown and to conquer all obstacles." Moreover, it might provide the basis for the home of the modern patriot: "the log house has played so important a part in our history its development into a definite and characteristic type of architecture might give us something national, something peculiarly American."<sup>36</sup> Miss Curtis may well have been repeating Stickley's own ideas, for he continually insisted he was "designing and building American homes . . . exclusively for American needs."<sup>37</sup>

33. *Architecture*, xxv (15 March 1912), 33.

34. Harold R. Shurtleff, *The Log Cabin Myth* (Cambridge, 1939), p. 214.

35. The New England Log-House and the Mississippi State Building were log structures intended to recall the shelters of early settlers. Joseph M. Wilson, *The Masterpieces of the Centennial International Exhibition*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia, 1875), III, clxiii; Thompson Westcott, *Centennial Portfolio* (Philadelphia, 1876), p. 36.

36. Natalie Curtis, "The New Log House at Craftsman Farms," *Craftsman*, xxI (November 1911), 196. In Finland, Lars Sonck designed log houses following the Finnish peasant type in another, but somewhat earlier (about 1895), attempt to create a national architecture: Treib, "Lars Sonck," pp. 228-229.

37. Gustav Stickley, "Als Ik Kan: 'Made in America,'" *Craftsman*, xxvII (October 1914), 109. The *Craftsman* sometimes publicized orthodox Colonial architecture as America's national style. Gardner Teall, "The Modern Colonial House: What It Holds of History and Beauty," *Craftsman*, xxIV (April 1913), 61-68, contrasted the ugliness of styles learned abroad with the "beautiful definitely national architecture" of the Colonial Revival.



Fig. 7. Henry Hornbostel, Pennsylvania State Pavilion, Panama-Pacific International Exposition, San Francisco, 1915 (from *Architecture*, xxxII [August 1915]). Destroyed.

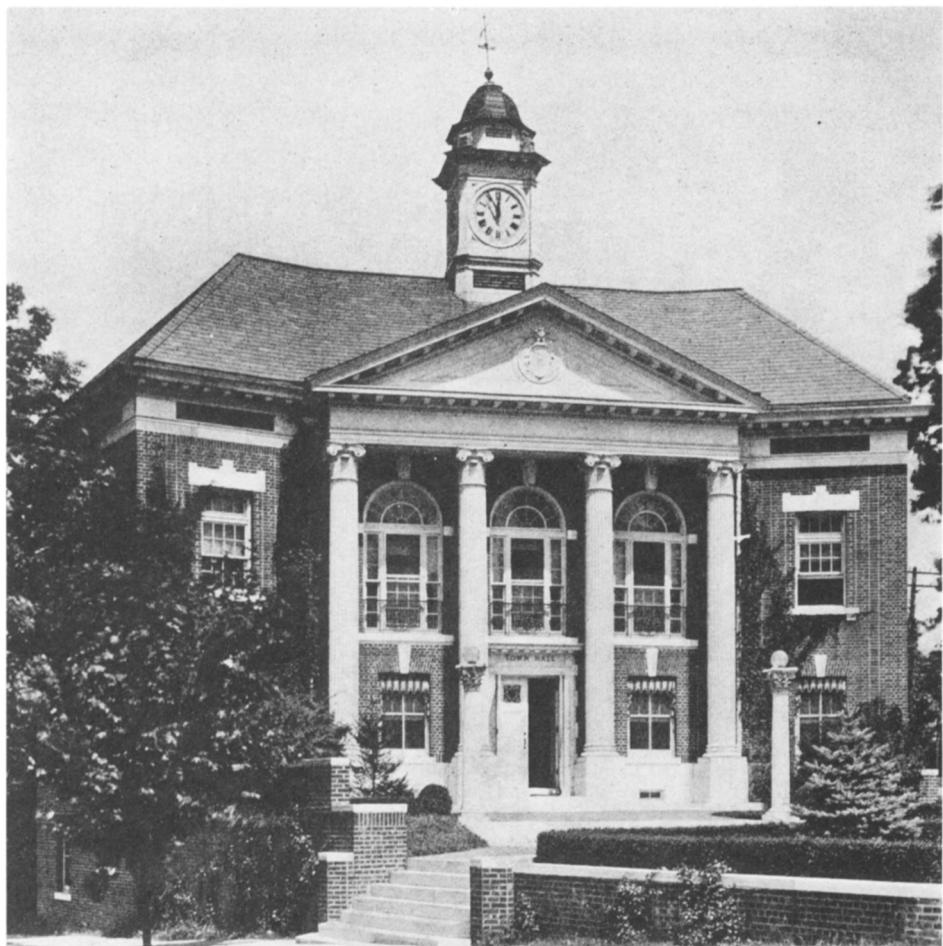


Fig. 8. Peabody, Wilson and Brown, Town Hall, Huntington, Long Island, 1911 (from *Architecture*, xxx [October 1914]).



Fig. 9. Gustav Stickley House, near Morris Plains, New Jersey, by 1911 (from *Craftsman*, xxi [November 1911]).



Fig. 10. Mann and MacNeill, four-family apartment house for employees of the Merchant Shipyard Corporation, Bristol, Pennsylvania, 1918 (from *American Architect*, CXIII [15 May 1918]).

When Europe became embroiled in World War I, American critics and architects proclaimed still more fervently their love of the native Colonial and disgust with imported European styles. In 1915 C. Matlack Price proposed that his fellow critics "who . . . deplore the absence of an architecture essentially American would . . . come nearer the mark if they were to deplore more vigorously the over-supply of imported architecture which not only retards the ultimate development of American architecture but also drowns out such American architecture as really does exist"—namely the several regional types of Colonial which Price believed could "be regarded as logical national property."<sup>38</sup>

Horace B. Mann, senior partner and designer in the firm of Mann and MacNeill, also argued for the Colonial as America's national style before American involvement in the war. A member of the Sons of the Revolution,<sup>39</sup> Mann would design English-, French-, or Italian-derived houses, but he believed that "there remains in our own Colonial or Georgian style . . . a real sense of ownership. . . . It has grown up with the nation, and no more tangible expression of our national character could be found. There is between Americans and Europeans an actual difference of habit of mind.

38. C. Matlack Price, "A Modern Version of the Early Pennsylvania Country House," *Architectural Record*, XXXVII (January 1915), 77.

39. *Who's Who in America*, 1918-1919.

We are less complex and more direct, less formal and simpler, and all this our Colonial work expresses."<sup>40</sup>

When America entered the war and Mann's firm was called upon to design housing for civilian war workers employed by the Merchant Shipyard Corporation at Bristol, Pennsylvania (Fig. 10), and the Atlas Powder Company at Perryville, Maryland (Fig. 11), it was to be expected that Colonial models would be utilized.<sup>41</sup> The designs were of a sort which Mann believed expressed the "national character"—simple and uncomplicated—and apartment houses at Bristol had porches reminiscent of Mount Vernon.<sup>42</sup>

Electus Darwin Litchfield was, like Mann, proud of his Revolutionary forebears (Litchfield belonged to the Society of Colonial Wars<sup>43</sup>) and opposed to the use of alien styles in America. In 1915 he advised his fellow architects that, in designing large or small houses, they should "stick to the vernacular . . . the characteristic style early developed in

40. Horace B. Mann, "Style in the Country House," *American Architect*, CXVII (12 May 1915), 297.

41. C. Stanley Taylor, "Bristol, America's Greatest Single Industrial Housing Development," *American Architect*, CXIII (15 May 1918), 599-615; "Industrial Housing at Perryville, Md.," *American Architect*, CXIV (30 October 1918), 503-510.

42. In such housing, economy was of course also essential. Mann, "Style in the Country House," p. 297, said that the Colonial Revival gave "the maximum of appearance, taste and comfort with the least expenditure."

43. *Who's Who in America*, 1914-1915.



Fig. 11. Mann and MacNeille, "Colonial house" for employee of the Atlas Powder Company, Perryville, Maryland, 1918 (from *American Architect*, cxiv [30 October 1918]).

America." The following year he wrote: "We have tried almost every type and period of foreign art and have come back home to the styles which flourished among our American ancestors. God forbid that we leave their conscientious and orderly development for the styles of China and Japan—which alone we have left untouched."<sup>44</sup>

Among the most important of the wartime housing projects was Yorkship Village (Fig. 12), a permanent industrial town of 1,700 houses at Camden, New Jersey, designed by Litchfield for the Emergency Fleet Corporation and the New York Ship Building Company.<sup>45</sup> Litchfield created brick row

houses (varying from two to eleven units in length) with gable roofs and Colonial door and window frames, shutters, and porches. Details were said to derive from old houses in the Philadelphia area: Litchfield held that the local type should be maintained using local materials because of the "racial influence of the early settlers."<sup>46</sup>

Housing for war workers was usually Colonial Revival,<sup>47</sup>

44. Electus D. Litchfield, "Country House Architecture in the East," *Architectural Record*, xxxviii (October 1915), 454; Litchfield, "Country House Architecture in the East," *Architectural Record*, xl (October 1916), 392. Litchfield was apparently unaware of the debt men like Stanford White and F. L. Wright owed the Orient.

45. Richard S. Childs, "The First War Emergency Government Towns: I. Yorkship Village," *A.I.A. Journal*, vi (May 1918), 249–251; Hamlin, *American Spirit in Architecture*, p. 275. Before the war, Litchfield had designed row houses in Jamaica, L.I., reminiscent of eighteenth-century American town houses: *Architectural Record*, xxxiv (October 1913), 348–353.

46. Litchfield, "Country House Architecture in the East," *Architectural Record*, xl (October 1916), 363. Walter Kilham (of Kilham and Hopkins) was also a designer of Colonial Revival wartime housing—Atlantic Heights, a U.S. Shipping Board development at Freeman's Point, N.H., was laid out to resemble a traditional New England village. See "The First War Emergency Government Towns: III. Atlantic Heights," *A.I.A. Journal*, vi (September 1918), 429, 433; *American Architect*, cxiv (16 October 1918), 447–456. Some fifteen years earlier, Kilham had called for a return to the Colonial, "the only style . . . which is in any sense indigenous to our country." Walter Kilham, "Colonial Brickwork of New England. II. Portsmouth, N.H.," *Brickbuilder*, xi (January 1902), 3.

47. A. D. F. Hamlin, "The Workingman and His House," *Architectural Record*, xliv (October 1918), 313: "As to style, the most common treatment follows Colonial precedent." Second in popularity was the Voyseyesque manner favored in English war housing.



Fig. 12. Electus D. Litchfield, semi-detached house, Yorkshire Village, Camden, New Jersey, 1918 (from *American Architect*, cxvi [20 August 1919]).

a fact which can be partly explained by the attitude of designers like Mann and Litchfield. Then, too, Lawrence Veiller, Secretary of the National Housing Association and known as "the foremost authority in the United States on housing legislation,"<sup>48</sup> believed in the value of a national architecture. In discussing Eclipse Park (Fig. 13), a community in Beloit, Wisconsin, designed by George B. Post and Sons for employees of Fairbanks, Morse and Company, Veiller found the clapboarded houses "distinctly American—for the whole development is Colonial in treatment. There has been no attempt to transplant to America a style of architecture that is essentially English or French, but the archi-

tects have wisely chosen to give the country a typically American Garden Village."<sup>49</sup>

The same kind of thinking passed over to steamship design under government auspices after the war. According to Francis B. Ellis, hired by the U.S. Shipping Board to transform its S.S. *Hawkeye State* from a troopship to a passenger liner, America had very little experience in building or operating passenger vessels. Therefore, ideas were sought from a study of foreign liners. Their passenger areas, however, did not seem appropriate for an American ship: they were remarkable for their "great massive display of vulgar wealth and imperial splendor," and so were unsuited for a one-

48. *Architectural Record*, XLIII (April 1918), 344.

49. Lawrence Veiller, "Industrial Housing Developments in America: I. Beloit, Wis. Eclipse Park," *Architectural Record*, XLIII (March 1918), 231.

class American liner. The alternative to European pomp was clear: "It was determined that we would start fresh and design our vessels as American—and that we would express throughout, Democracy, as against Imperialism, paintings of God and man as against portraits of Emperors. . . . The architectural style should be Colonial, because of its simple character and its American development."<sup>50</sup> The alterations were completed by 1921, just two years before Le Corbusier published his *Vers une architecture* that celebrated the clean, functional lines of the modern steamship, its "freedom from the 'styles' that stifle us."<sup>51</sup> Not so free of the "styles," however, were the public rooms of the *Hawkeye State*—notably the Smoking Room (Fig. 14) whose mantelpiece was advertised as deriving from Mount Vernon (Fig. 15).

50. Francis B. Ellis, "Architectural Interiors of the United States Shipping Board S.S. 'Hawkeye State,'" *American Architect*, cxix (13 April 1921), 446–451.

51. Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture* (London, 1927; reprint ed., New York, 1970), p. 93. In his chapter devoted to passenger liners, Le Corbusier neither mentions nor illustrates any interiors.

The appearance of American embassies abroad was a concern of Stephen G. Porter, Congressman from Pennsylvania and Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. He proposed in 1920 that a new embassy in Tokyo be modelled after the White House, as he felt it should be "characteristically American." Porter envisioned the day when American embassies "in all capitals of the world" would be replicas of the White House.<sup>52</sup>

Caught up in the isolationist spirit of postwar America, the architect John Taylor Boyd, Jr., took an extreme view of the necessity of adhering to America's native style. Boyd distrusted all things foreign and, in 1920, appealed that the Colonial be adopted universally in America—for all buildings in all locations. He believed that the early American tradition "has driven out whatever foreign importations it could not easily assimilate. . . . The temper of American de-

52. "White House for Tokio," *American Architect*, cxviii (13 October 1920), 484.

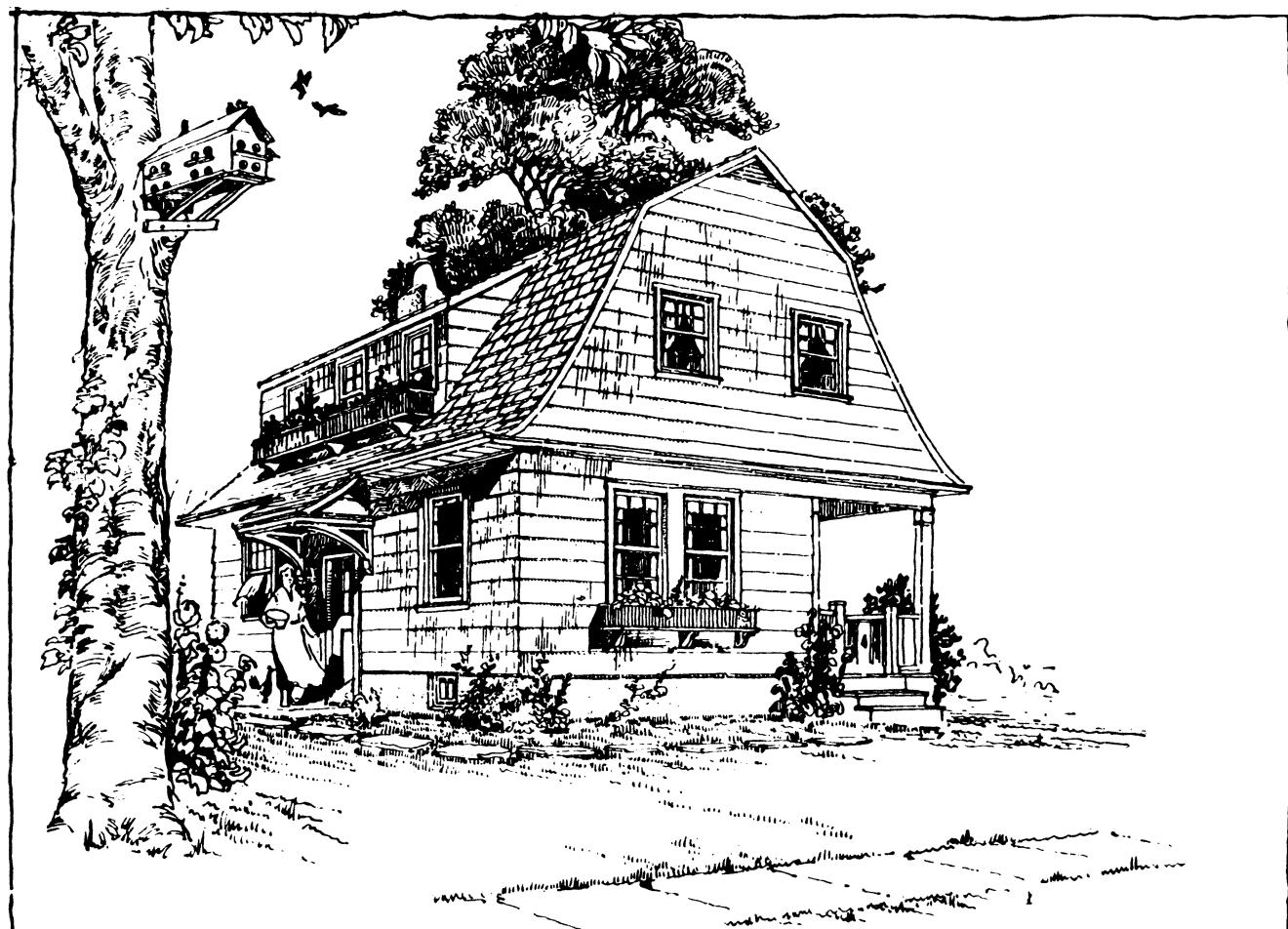


Fig. 13. George B. Post and Sons, house type c-8, Eclipse Park, Beloit, Wisconsin, 1918 (from *American Architect*, cxiii [22 May 1918]).

sign is coming to a point where it can hardly accommodate itself to any foreign spirit in form."<sup>53</sup>

Only slightly less vehement was Aymar Embury II, an architect who acquired a modest reputation as a popularizer of the Dutch Colonial house.<sup>54</sup> Embury welcomed the decline after the war of "strange, traditional styles." French, Italian, Spanish, and Japanese influences were, he thought,

less common in 1922 than ten or fifteen years before. Filling the void were houses in the Colonial, English Georgian, and English cottage modes; and Embury expected that the latter would soon be absorbed into the Colonial.<sup>55</sup>

53. John Taylor Boyd, Jr., "Some Principles of Small House Design. Part VI," *Architectural Record*, xi.vii (April 1920), 292.

54. See Aymar Embury II, *The Dutch Colonial House* (New York, 1913).

55. Aymar Embury II, "Current Tendencies in Country House Design in the East," *Architectural Record*, I.II (October 1922), 256. A decade earlier the *Architectural Record* defended Embury's own Colonial work by asserting the superiority of "indigenous architectural precedent" and insisting that "the Georgian Colonial can ill afford to be entirely discarded for any style from overseas." See "Conservatism in Design: Notes on Some Recent Work by Aymar Embury II," *Architectural Record*, xxxii (October 1912), 329.

Fig. 14. Francis B. Ellis, Smoking Room, S.S. Hawkeye State, by 1921 (from *American Architect*, CXIX [13 April 1921]).

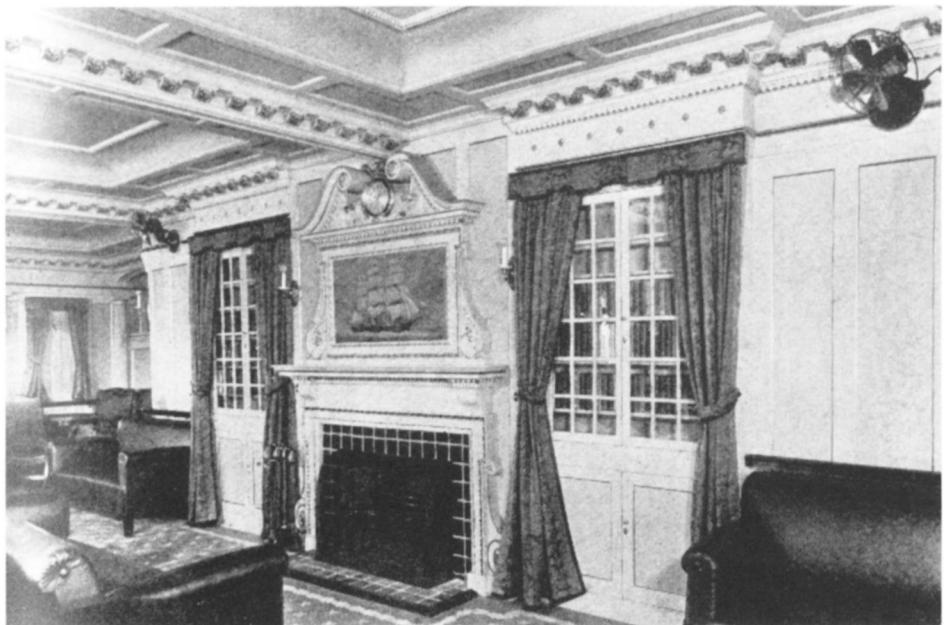


Fig. 15. Mount Vernon, Fairfax County, Virginia, completed 1787. West parlor (from Architects' Emergency Committee, *Great Georgian Houses of America*, I).



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The simplistic view that Colonial architecture was American architecture did not meet with universal acceptance. There were those who recognized, to varying degrees, its indebtedness to England. Henry Cabot Lodge, scholar and Senator from Massachusetts who was simultaneously a patriot and Anglophile, insisted in a speech before the national convention of the A.I.A. in 1907 that "Old Colonial forms" were "so agreeable" because the colonists "did not merely imitate . . . something which had no connection with its surroundings . . ." Instead, "they tried to apply forms which had been tested elsewhere in a way to make them represent the New World."<sup>56</sup> Colonial architecture might derive from English sources, but Lodge believed that it was transformed in America, acquiring its own character.

Frank E. Wallis, an early student of the Colonial,<sup>57</sup> did not claim that the colonists had altered Georgian forms in transporting them from England. He simply maintained that while "we must accept the English Georgian parentage, this Georgian or Colonial happens to be the only style . . . which the colonists understood or desired. That this period of architecture was interwoven in our fabric of free government . . . must prove . . . that Colonial is our national style of architecture."<sup>58</sup>

Ralph Adams Cram approached Colonial architecture as an ardent Anglophile and Gothic Revivalist. He labored under the assumption that America was still an English colony without European ties: the English and Americans "are one people, with one history and one blood." Consequently, English Gothic "is the work of our own race . . . our own inalienable heritage."<sup>59</sup> Cram was incensed by the very idea of French influence—in the form of Beaux-Arts classicism—on American architecture: "blood will tell, and does good, red English blood take kindly to the *argot* of the Quartier",<sup>60</sup> or again, "we are English; neither French, nor Italian; therefore let us not sell our birthright for a mess of—*potage du jour!*"<sup>61</sup>

Cram's firm designed residences, schools, and churches following American Georgian models,<sup>62</sup> and his own home

was a farmhouse near Sudbury, Massachusetts, that was over a century old when purchased by the architect about 1910.<sup>63</sup> In 1913 Cram considered several new Colonial houses that showed a careful study of regional Colonial styles, "notable work redolent of race."<sup>64</sup> For Cram, Colonial architecture was good not because it was American, but because it had English origins. Thus he said of Harvard's eighteenth-century architecture: "English it was, of course, so far as we could make it, for we were all English—or rather British—in bone and blood and tradition down to half a century ago."<sup>65</sup>

Strangely enough, Cram's archrival in the struggle of Gothic vs. Classic, Charles McKim, had a similar understanding of the subservience of American to English Georgian, at least when speaking before a British audience, the R.I.B.A., in 1903. He remarked that "precisely the most interesting, and in their sphere the most admirable, architectural monuments of my native land . . . are those that most strongly recall their English prototypes."<sup>66</sup>

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Others went out of their way to deny the Americanism of the Colonial. The important critic Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer recognized that there was, in 1886, a school of thought which held that Colonial buildings should be faithfully reproduced, because they were "the only examples at once 'American' and good." She admitted that certain Colonial roof types and methods of wooden construction did not have English or European sources, and that Colonial structures were "identified with whatever historic associations we can call our own." Still, she concluded that the Colonial's "patterns were all imported." Only "the wigwam of the North and the pueblo of the South" were truly "American."<sup>67</sup>

56. *American Architect*, xcI (9 March 1907), 99.

57. See Frank E. Wallis, *Old Colonial Architecture and Furniture* (Boston, 1887). F. E. Wallis, "The Colonial Renaissance," *White Pine Series of Architectural Monographs*, II (February 1916), 3–14, includes reminiscences of his youthful passion for the Colonial.

58. Wallis, "The Colonial Renaissance," p. 3.

59. Ralph Adams Cram, *Church Building* (Boston, 1924), pp. 190, 268.

60. Ralph Adams Cram, "Good and Bad Modern Gothic," *Architectural Review* (Boston), vi (October 1899), 115.

61. Ralph Adams Cram, "The Influence of the French School on American Architecture," *American Architect*, LXVI (25 November 1899), 66.

62. For residences, see *American Architect*, XXXVIII (3 December 1892)

and XLVIII (29 June 1895). Cram and Ferguson's Second Church and Parish House, Boston (*American Architect*, cvI [23 December 1914]) and Academy Building, Phillips Exeter Academy (*Contemporary American Architects: Ralph Adams Cram* [New York, 1931], pl. 45), are Colonial Revival.

63. Ralph Adams Cram, *My Life in Architecture* (Boston, 1936), p. 229.

64. Ralph Adams Cram in *American Country Houses of Today* (New York, 1913), p. iii.

65. Ralph Adams Cram, *The Ministry of Art* (Cambridge, Mass., 1914), p. 176.

66. Charles McKim on receiving the King's Medal of the R.I.B.A., quoted by Charles Moore, *The Life and Times of Charles Follen McKim* (Boston, 1929), p. 237.

67. Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer, "American Country Dwellings. I," *Century Magazine*, XXXII (May 1886), 19. Mrs. Van Rensselaer favored free interpretations of Colonial models. These new houses, which now would be called "Shingle Style," she considered "most appropriately 'American'" when found in the East. A master of the Shingle Style, Bruce Price, allowed that the shingled country house was one approach to an "American style": Bruce Price, "The Suburban House," *Scribner's Magazine*, viii (July

The New England antiquarian Samuel Drake denied that new Colonial buildings had any connection with American tradition. In his opinion, the Colonial Revival merely resulted from the fact that architects ("those indefatigable purveyors of public caprice") had run out of new sources "after ransacking the whole earth," and were now happy to find a new style ripe for plunder in their own country. New Colonial houses were rising everywhere; apparently the "old colonial was . . . a fetich before which our national pride loves to prostrate itself." But Drake believed that "reverence for the shadow"—new Colonial structures—was "a vicarious atonement for our sins against the substance"—genuine old landmarks. Drake was appalled by the destruction of such historic shrines as the Hancock mansion (Fig. 1), which, before its demolition, had "taught history; . . . awakened patriotic aspirations; . . . stimulated honest endeavor. . . ."<sup>68</sup> Colonial Revival houses, on the other hand, had no associations and so nothing to teach.

Edith Wharton and Ogden Codman, Jr., in their widely read *The Decoration of Houses* sought to inform the public of the true nature of Colonial architecture: "the application of the word 'Colonial' to pre-Revolutionary architecture and decoration has created a vague impression that there existed at that time an American architectural style. As a matter of fact, 'Colonial' architecture is simply a modest copy of Georgian models."<sup>69</sup>

Influenced by the greater richness of English Georgian work, Codman sometimes employed English motifs in preference to their American counterparts. One critic, who acknowledged Codman as an expert in the design of Colonial houses, nevertheless objected to his use of English ingredients in several of his houses. Codman had "followed the type as it exists in the Georgian architecture of England, rather than that which is exhibited by the more generous and agreeable treatment presented by the best examples of Colonial work in this country."<sup>70</sup>

A leading proponent of Beaux-Arts classicism, Ernest

1890), 18. Still, Price felt that country residences could be identified as American no matter whether their details were Colonial, Renaissance, or even Romanesque: Bruce Price, *A Large Country House* (New York, 1887), p. 3. A. D. F. Hamlin, "The American Country House," *Architectural Record*, xi.ii (October 1917), 297–298, called shingled houses of the 1880s and early 1890s "purely American."

68. Samuel Adams Drake, *Our Colonial Homes* (Boston, 1894), p. 2.

69. Edith Wharton and Ogden Codman, Jr., *The Decoration of Houses* (New York, 1897), pp. 81–82.

70. *American Architect*, lxxvi (17 May 1902), 56. This anonymous critic's attitude was shared by Joseph Everett Chandler (best known as the architect for the restoration of Paul Revere's house and the House of Seven Gables) who believed that men who called their designs English Georgian were simply incompetents unable to produce good Colonial work. Joseph Everett Chandler, *The Colonial House* (New York, 1916), p. 2.



Fig. 16. Giles Hughes, Faith of Our Fathers Chapel, Valley Forge, 1967 (photo:author).

Flagg, in 1900 took a stand close to Mrs. Van Rensselaer's: "at no time since the Europeans first began to build in America has there been anything which might be called properly an American style of architecture."<sup>71</sup> Charles H. Israels was, like Flagg, a New York architect who in 1905 thought the Colonial was "mistakenly considered American," when in fact it was an importation. However, Israels, unlike Flagg, was writing in opposition to all forms of eclecticism and in favor of Chicago skyscrapers and suburban Philadelphia houses which he believed essentially unprecedented.<sup>72</sup>

The Chicagoan Louis Sullivan scrupulously avoided the Colonial Revival. In his *Autobiography of an Idea*, he wrote bitterly of the dominance of eclecticism in American architecture of the 1920s: "There is now a dazzling display of merchandise, all imported, excepting to be sure our own cherished colonial, which maintains our Anglo-Saxon tradition in its purity."<sup>73</sup> For Sullivan—who was of Irish, Swiss-French, German, and Italian ancestry—"Anglo-Saxon tra-

71. Ernest Flagg, "American Architecture as Opposed to Architecture in America," *American Architect*, lxviii (23 June 1900), 93.

72. Charles H. Israels, "American Architecture: A Foreign Art with a National Future," *American Architect*, lxxxvii (15 April 1905), 119–120.

73. Louis Sullivan, *The Autobiography of an Idea* (New York, 1924; reprint ed., New York, 1956), pp. 325–326. A recent supporter of Sullivan and his school, H. Allen Brooks, has also rejected the Colonial as a national style: for Brooks, the Arts and Crafts "presented the possibility of evolving a truly national or regional architectural expression—one more in keeping with America than the so-called Colonial could ever be." H. Allen Brooks, "Chicago Architecture: Its Debt to the Arts and Crafts," *JSAH*, xxx (December 1971), 314.

dition" would have had no special meaning.<sup>74</sup> Doubtless he too actually considered the Colonial just another imported style.

Lewis Mumford spoke out strongly against the twentieth-century Colonial Revival in his influential *Sticks and Stones* (1924) and *The Brown Decades* (1931). He admired Richardson's and Stanford White's "shingled houses" of the 1880s for recovering "the spirit of the early vernacular work . . . without even faintly recalling colonial forms."<sup>75</sup> In contrast to these houses, Mumford insisted the Georgian was "manifestly a foreign and unassimilated style."<sup>76</sup>

74. Sullivan, *Autobiography*, p. 11, records his "mongrel origin."

75. Lewis Mumford, *Sticks and Stones* (New York, 1924), p. 117.

76. Lewis Mumford, *The Brown Decades* (New York, 1931), p. 51. See fn. 67 for earlier suggestions that the shingled house was American. In 1936, Henry-Russell Hitchcock followed Mumford in referring to Richardson's shingled houses as "a really national type of modern design" in contrast to "the spurious nationalism of sentiment" represented by the later Colonial Revival work of McKim, Mead and White: Henry-Russell Hitchcock, *The Architecture of H. H. Richardson and His Times* (Hamden, Conn., 1961), p. 205. But when discussing how the International Style might best be ab-

The proliferation of Colonial cupolas and white trim on gas stations and supermarkets of the 1960s and 1970s may be viewed as merely a sign of the laughable ignorance or bad taste of the image-makers, designers, clients, and public. Or it may be understood, as Mumford suggests, "as a vague effort to tie in with the 'patriotism' of the McCarthy period."<sup>77</sup> Certainly when the Freedoms Foundation dedicated its Faith of Our Fathers Chapel at Valley Forge in 1967 (Fig. 16), it was under the impression that Colonial architecture was not an alien style but an appropriate setting for patriotic Americans to meditate upon the piety of George Washington, shown in the chancel window kneeling in prayer at Valley Forge.<sup>78</sup>

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sorbed by American architects, Hitchcock suggested that early American mill buildings might be "emulated in principle." He would have preferred that modern American architecture grow out of American sources: "If we can find them in our own past rather than abroad they should have the greater sentimental power to stimulate us to new achievement": Henry-Russell Hitchcock, *Rhode Island Architecture* (Providence, 1939), p. 43.

77. Letter from Mumford to author of 3 September 1971.

78. "Faith of Our Fathers Chapel," *Report from Valley Forge* (October 1973), p. 4.