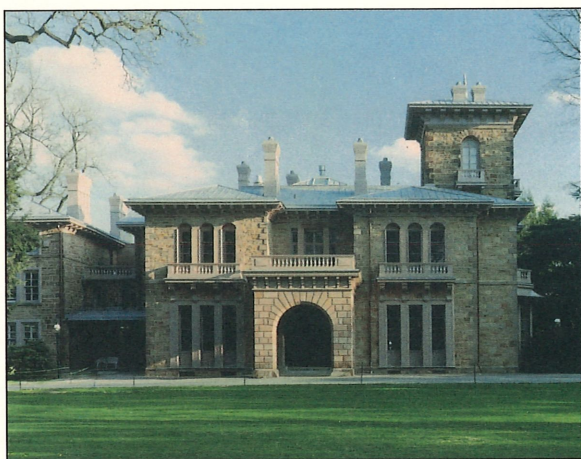


*Prospect House
at
Princeton University*



A NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

William K. Selden



Prospect House
at
Princeton University

A NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

William K. Selden

Printed in 1999 by
Office of Printing and Mailing Services
Princeton University

Copyright © 1999: William K. Selden.
All rights reserved.

Contents

List of Illustrations	<i>v</i>
Foreword	<i>vii</i>
Acknowledgements	<i>ix</i>
Prospect House	<i>1</i>
Land Ownership	<i>2</i>
George Morgan	<i>4</i>
Potter Family	<i>7</i>
Presidential Residence	<i>14</i>
Prospect Activities	<i>17</i>
Faculty and Staff Social Center	<i>23</i>
Appendix	<i>30</i>
Credits for Illustrations	<i>31</i>
The Author	<i>33</i>

Illustrations

Frontal View of Prospect House	<i>Front cover</i>
Second Floor Hallway	<i>Inside front cover</i>
Prospect, 1797	5
John Potter	7
Catherine Fuller Potter	7
Thomas Fuller Potter	10
Prospect Living Room, 1870's	11
Prospect Study, 1870's	12
Prospect Dining Room, 1870's	13
Garden View of Prospect, 1870's	14
Woodrow and Ellen Wilson, and Family at Prospect, 1910	17
Harold and Margaret Dodds in Prospect Garden, 1940's	21
Prospect Study, 1940's	22
Prospect Living Room, 1940's	22
Robert and Margaret Goheen, and Family at Prospect, 1958	23
Exterior Reconstruction of Prospect, 1988	25
Prospect Dining Room, Arranged for Dinner Meeting	26
Prospect Dining Room, Arranged for Social Party	26
Garden Party at Prospect	28
"Moses" in Front of Prospect	29
Main Stairwell of Prospect	<i>Inside back cover</i>
Garden View of Prospect	<i>Back cover</i>

Foreword

This historic account provides me with an excellent opportunity to tell the alumni, alumnae, and many friends of Princeton how much the members of the faculty and staff of the University appreciate the privilege of using Prospect House as a dining and social facility and as a place to hold informal committee and departmental meetings. It also provides me with the opportunity to remind the members of the faculty and staff how fortunate we are to have access to such an historic mansion where we can meet with colleagues and entertain our friends in a setting where six presidents of the University and their families lived over a span of ninety years.

Individuals who visit Prospect for the first time are invariably impressed with the ambience and beauty of the foyer, the brightness of the drawing room, the serenity of the library, and the cheerfulness of the large glass enclosed dining room overlooking the spacious and well-kept garden. The second floor provides rooms of various sizes to meet the needs of concurrent luncheon meetings for the members of the Prospect Association, which includes all full-time members of the faculty and staff. In each of these rooms, in addition to the two main dining rooms, meals that cater to all tastes are served.

We are also grateful that this monograph, describing the history of Prospect, has been written by William K. Selden, a Princeton alumnus, who in recent years has generously produced a series of publications that trace the development of various features of the University.

Daphne Moore, President
Managing Board, Prospect Association

Acknowledgements

The suggestion for this monograph evolved from a passing comment made by Judith D. McCartin, Associate Director of Annual Giving, at a luncheon in Prospect House when she, Henry Martin, Class of 1948, and I were discussing another publication that he and I had agreed to write for the University. Because of its unusual history, Prospect appealed to me as a subject, the history of which few alumni and alumnae, or members of the faculty or staff, are familiar. As a national historic landmark, both the property of Prospect and its mansion deserve further recognition which this monograph is intended to provide.

Among those who have assisted me in this project the following have been especially helpful: John J. Blazejewski, James E. Elbrecht, Robert F. Goheen, Jon D. Hlafter, Phyllis and John Hamel, Michael E. McKay, Mary Jane D. Miller, Michael J. Mills, Daphne C. Moore, Karen E. Richter and Denise M. Zapecza. Laurel M. Cantor and Judith McCartin have been involved in the project from its inception and have provided frequent advice and substantive assistance that greatly facilitated the publication of this monograph.

As on previous occasions, it has been a special pleasure to be associated with Fred W. Plank and Marion Carty, Director and Associate Director of the University Printing and Mailing Services, who generously shared with me their competence in the design and printing of the booklet. To the members of the staff of the Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library I am also indebted for their continuing cooperation in assisting me to locate appropriate reference material.

However, I recognize that writing history, from which I derive considerable personal satisfaction, entails an assumption of individual responsibility for any errors that may have been committed.

William K. Selden

March 1999

Prospect House
at
Princeton University

A NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

Of the more than one hundred fifty buildings on the Princeton University campus only Nassau Hall has inherited a history more significant than Prospect. Constructed in 1851-52, the current Prospect House is a successor to older structures on the same site, a site which shares a history that intimately involved both the development of the community of Princeton and the creation of the United States as a nation.

After serving for over half a century as the home of the Potter family, who built the present structure, Prospect was acquired through a gift in 1878 by the College of New Jersey, the name of the University prior to 1896. After this acquisition the mansion served for ninety years as the residence of six presidents of Princeton and their families during which time it underwent several renovations. In 1968 the mansion was converted to a social and dining center for members of the faculty and staff of the University. Located in the center of the campus and overlooking a well cultivated garden, Prospect now provides a pleasing setting for congenial dining, committee meetings, and social entertaining.

Land Ownership

As with the land on which Nassau Hall was constructed in 1756, the adjoining property, known later as Prospect, was part of a grant by the English Crown in 1664 to the Duke of York. The following year the grant, which included what is now New Jersey, was transferred to Robert Berkeley and George Carteret, who were close friends of King Charles II and allied with him in his successful attempt to regain the Crown.

Following this early transfer of title there ensued a series of confusing and entangling transactions that involved a division of the land, originally occupied by the Lenni-Lenape Indians, into East and West Jersey. In 1702 the two Jerseys were united by the Crown into one province in which Quakers played a prominent role. Prior to this date John Gordon, and his brother Thomas, had acquired from the Governor of East Jersey title to some 500 acres along Stony Brook, now a part of Princeton. Most of this acreage was subsequently purchased in 1696 by Richard Stockton, a Quaker who had been residing on Long Island. After acquiring additional land, Stockton in 1705 sold 300 acres to Benjamin Fitz Randolph, whose son, Nathaniel, was the donor of the land on which Nassau Hall was constructed in 1755-56.

By 1760 Thomas Norris and his wife Sarah, daughter of Nathaniel Fitz Randolph, had inherited the contiguous property where Prospect is now located. Following the acquisition of additional adjacent land, they sold to Jonathan Baldwin in that same year the property that was later named Prospect. (See Appendix for chronological list of owners and residents.)

Baldwin was one of twelve graduates of the College of New Jersey in the Class of 1755. After serving a short time as steward for Columbia College in New York he assumed the same posi-

tion at his alma mater in time to participate in its move from Newark to the recently constructed Nassau Hall in Princeton. As Edwin M. Norris, Class of 1895 and editor of the *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, observed —

He must have been of a robust constitution for he continued in the office for sixteen years, while four presidents passed to their eternal rewards... it was part of his job to collect the price of his food from those who had to eat it. The steward also collected the tuition and room rent and even gathered the pew rent from residents of the town who held their Sabbath worship in the college prayer hall. He bought the college furniture, hired the servants, and paid the tutors. He was the original university bookstore, he summoned trustees to meetings, he shooed culprits away from the bell rope, and he even cleaned the college chimneys. It is small wonder that when in 1773 some of the undergraduate humorists hung Jonathan Baldwin in effigy in the college refectory... [he resigned.]¹

The previous year his barn had mysteriously burned, the cause of which he claimed was a malicious act. Apparently, enough was enough. He did, however, resume the position of steward for one year in 1781.

In the meantime he was active both in business affairs and in the political ferment of the American Revolution, serving on various committees including the New Jersey Committee on Correspondence, as well as a delegate to the New Jersey Provincial Congress in 1775. In addition to these and local civic duties, Baldwin was assigned responsibility by Governor William Livingston, the first governor of the State, to distribute ammunition throughout New Jersey.

¹Norris, Edwin M., *The Story of Princeton*, Little, Brown, and Company, 1917, p. 32.

Commencing in 1760 Jonathan Baldwin resided with his wife, Sarah, and eight children on the farm, later to be known as Prospect. She was a granddaughter of Jonathan Dickinson, the College's first president and daughter of Jonathan Sergeant, who served as college treasurer from 1750 to 1777. Although Jonathan Baldwin and his family continued to reside in Princeton for a few years longer, he sold the property in 1779 to Colonel George Morgan, a man held in high respect. Some time after 1782 Baldwin returned to Newark, the place of his birth, and died there in 1816 at age 85.

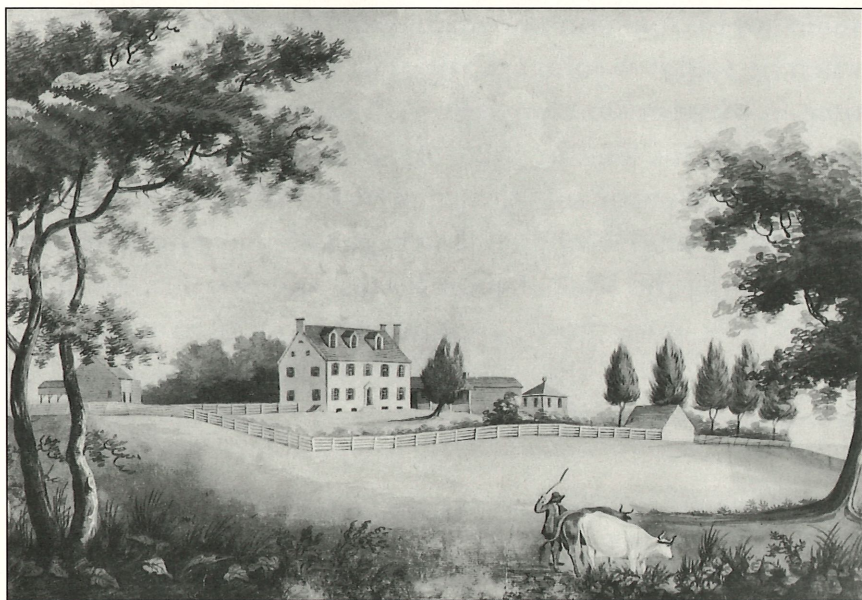
George Morgan

When Colonel George Morgan took title to the property, which he purchased from Baldwin and on which he built a stone house and other buildings, he brought great distinction to Princeton. Born in Philadelphia in 1742, one of eleven children and an orphan at age of six, he became a successful merchant, land speculator and later developed a thriving trade with the Indians in Illinois and Indiana.

During the American Revolution Morgan was Indian agent for the Continental Congress and Deputy Commissioner General for purchases for the western division. Later, during the winter of 1777-78 at Valley Forge, he was a member of the staff of General George Washington with whom he developed a personal friendship. Following this experience he decided in 1779 to settle in Princeton where he purchased the property, which he named Prospect, and on it constructed a stone house and the necessary additional structures to support his interest in agriculture. But first he had to repair the damage to the property that was incurred during the earlier occupation by the British troops.

Of the several hundred acres that Morgan acquired, he devoted three acres to experimental farming, especially corn and bees about which he became an authority. On the rest of his property he planted a wide variety of grains and vegetables and developed a large orchard consisting of apple, cherry and walnut trees. He also sent a number of elm trees from his Prospect property to Philadelphia to be planted in the square behind Independence Hall.

During his residency in Princeton he was considered to be the most scientific farmer in the country, attested by the fact that people from a distance came to consult with him and observe his operations. Soon after his arrival his friendship with Indians was demonstrated by the hospitality that he extended to a delegation of ten Delaware Indian chieftains who spent a few days in wigwams on the lawns of Prospect in 1779 preparing for a conference with the Continental Congress then meeting in Philadelphia.



Prospect, 1797

Of additional historical interest is his instigation of the arrangements by which George and Martha Washington occupied Rockingham, the former home of Judge John Berrien in nearby Rocky Hill, during the sessions of the Continental Congress held in Princeton in 1783. Morgan also extended the use of his property to the members of the Congress in which he stated, "Any and every part of his Farm and Meadows shall be at their Command."² It is considered likely that for the first few days, as the straggling members of the Congress were assembling, several sessions were held at the Morgan homestead.

By 1796, the last full year of Washington's presidency, Colonel Morgan moved from Princeton to Morganza where he died in 1810. There, on the frontiers of western Pennsylvania, he established a nursery, a vineyard, and cultivated a farm for which he became noted among agriculturalists during his lifetime and subsequently among students of the history of horticulture.³

Upon Colonel Morgan's departure from Prospect, where six of his children were born and several buried, title was assumed by his son John who maintained the property until 1805 when he sold it to John I. Craig. The new owner, active at the time in the civic development of Princeton, was forced, however, to sell his land in 1820. John G. Schenck was the purchaser who, in turn, sold the property in 1824 to John Potter of Charleston, South Carolina. Thus began a fascinating, new chapter involving the sons of John Potter, and also his son-in-law who was the great, great, great grandson of Richard Stockton who had acquired the property in 1696, one hundred and twenty-four years earlier.

²Collins, Varnum Lansing, *The Continental Congress at Princeton*, Princeton University Library, 1908, p. 43.

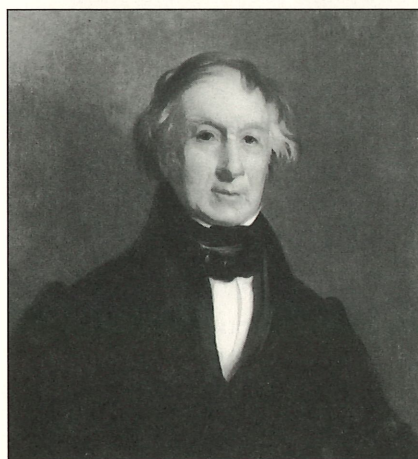
³Hedrick, U.O., *A History of Horticulture in America to 1860*, Oxford University Press, 1950, pp. 83-84.

Potter Family

John Potter was born in Ireland in 1765, emigrated to Charleston in 1784 and there, establishing himself in business, became a prominent and wealthy merchant and land owner. The children of John and Catherine Potter included a daughter and two sons, each born in Charleston, whose lives are important to this narrative. The family association with Princeton evolved as a result of the marriage of their daughter, Maria, to Robert Field Stockton, a descendant of the original Richard Stockton.

Robert Field Stockton, known later as the Commodore, a position to which he was eventually promoted, had resigned at age 16 as a student at the College of New Jersey to join the navy at the time of the War of 1812. When stationed in Charleston he met Harriet Maria Potter whom he married in 1823. This union enticed the Potters to spend much of the succeeding years in Princeton where in 1824 John Potter, Stockton's father-in-law, purchased Prospect, and lived in the stone house built by George Morgan.

For his daughter, Maria, and her husband, Robert Stockton, John Potter engaged Charles Steadman in 1823-24 to de-



John Potter



Catherine Fuller Potter

sign and build the current guest house of Princeton University, located at the corner of Bayard Lane and Nassau Street. It is now known as Palmer House in recognition of the Edgar Palmers who acquired the property in 1923 and later bequeathed it to the University. Here the Robert Stocktons resided until the death of his father in 1828, at which time they moved to Morven (55 Stockton Street), the fifth generation of the family to occupy that historic building, which for a period in the twentieth century served as the Governor's Mansion and is now part of the New Jersey State Museum.

Since Robert Field Stockton's marriage provided the reason for the John Potters to move to Princeton and indirectly led to the construction of the present Prospect mansion, it is appropriate to provide a brief outline of the achievements and exploits of this able and lavish historic individual, known as the Commodore.

The Commodore earned his title as a naval officer, serving in the war of 1812, later in the Mediterranean, and subsequently in California during the war with Mexico. Both the name of the city of Stockton and Stockton Street in San Francisco recognized his military contributions in that conflict. Less well known in recent years are his exploits in Africa leading to the establishment of Liberia as a home for repatriated blacks.

Commodore Stockton was a man of many interests: a United States Senator, developer of the Delaware and Raritan Canal, known as Stockton's Folly, involved with the Camden and Amboy Railroad [in both of which enterprises the Potters invested extensively], an importer of race horses, and a builder of large houses. In all these enterprises he was aided by an inheritance from both his father and his father-in-law.⁴

⁴Selden, William K., *Drumthwacket, A History of the Governor's Mansion in Princeton, New Jersey*. The Drumthwacket Foundation, 1993, pp. 25-26.

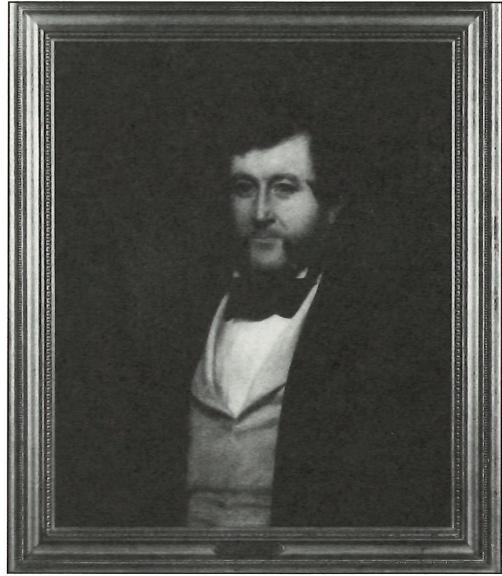
Stockton was responsible for the construction of other houses in Princeton, one of which was acquired by the University by gift, and in 1969 became the home of its president when Prospect was converted to a social and dining center for the faculty and staff. Now known as the Walter Lowrie House (83 Stockton Street), it was designed by John Notman in the Italianate style and built in 1848-49 by Stockton for his son, John Potter Stockton, at one time the United States minister in Rome.

Two years later, with the assistance of the same architect, Springdale (86 Mercer Street) was built for his oldest son, another Richard Stockton. This neo-Gothic house now serves as the home of the president of Princeton Theological Seminary. The third house that Stockton provided for one of his children, Caroline Stockton Dod, was completed in 1854. It was acquired by Grover Cleveland in 1896, and here he resided after his retirement, following his second term, as president of the United States. He renamed it Westland (15 Hodge Road) in honor of Andrew Fleming West, dean of the Graduate School and a personal friend of Cleveland. It has remained a private home.

When Robert and Maria Stockton moved in 1828 into Morven, her brother, James Potter and his family made the current University guest house (Palmer House), into their summer home. The rest of the year they resided in the south. Their parents, the John Potters, continued to live at Prospect until the latter years of their lives when they joined their daughter at Morven. Upon the deaths of the parents in 1848 and 1849, which followed the death of his first wife in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where he had been residing, Thomas Fuller Potter, the second brother of Maria Stockton, inherited Prospect and the surrounding acreage.

A graduate of Yale, where he studied medicine but never practiced, Thomas Potter and his second wife, Sarah Jane Hall Potter, decided to raze both the stone house built by George

Morgan and an adjacent school building. They then engaged the Scottish born John Notman to build in its place in 1851-52 the impressive Florentine style villa that exists today. It should be noted that, in addition to the houses already mentioned, Notman was also responsible for the reconstruction of Nassau Hall after it was devastated by fire of 1855. Fur-



Thomas Fuller Potter

thermore, Mrs. Thomas Potter, as a widow, donated the stone from a quarry on her property to build the towers that Notman designed for each end of Nassau Hall.

Prospect was built to impress and to provide luxurious comfort. With its innumerable rooms, including two on the third floor, it provided many conveniences, including two bathrooms, a plumbing system, and provisions for gas connections. An Englishman, William Petry, Commodore Stockton's gardener, planned the flower garden in which he planted imported special trees, including the cedar of Lebanon, the hawthorne and the yew trees that still stand on the west side of Prospect near the tower.

An architectural description of the house follows:

...the irregularities of silhouette common in the Victorian era satisfied not only aesthetic requirements, but functional ones. No longer were room sizes and circulation limited by arbitrary dictates of symmetrical form, as they had been in the Georgian period. Now the most important rooms took precedence, and the interior space flowed freely from room

to room to provide easy access in public areas, or was carefully controlled to allow privacy where needed.... [The exterior presented] a thoroughly integrated grouping of boxy masses with similar rooflines, thereby greatly strengthening the composition.⁵

Unfortunately Thomas Fuller Potter lived only a short time after he and his family moved into their new mansion. He died in 1853, at age 57, and was buried with many of his relatives in the small family graveyard at Trinity Church in Princeton to which the Potter family gave substantial financial support. After his death his widow continued to live at Prospect with her two daughters, Elizabeth and Alice. A third child, a son, had died in infancy.

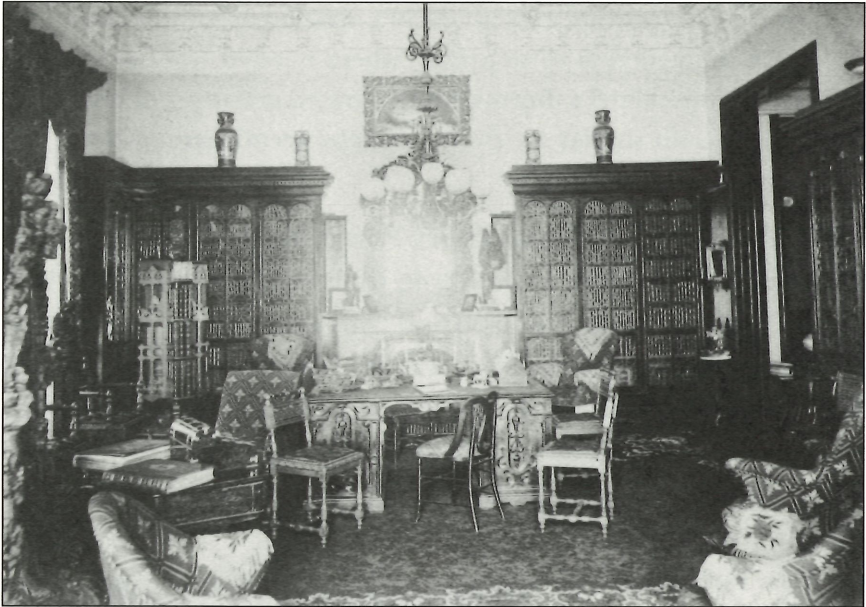
Mrs. Potter, an impressive individual of considerable beauty and distinction, lived in an elegant and grand style, part of the year in Philadelphia and at other times in Princeton. She filled Prospect with Victorian furniture and other possessions, and from reports apparently enjoyed entertaining friends and



Prospect Living Room, 1870's

relatives. In 1866 Elizabeth was married to Henry Ashurst, and in 1867 Alice to J. Dundas Lippincott, each in elaborate weddings with receptions at Prospect. Ten years after the second

⁵Greiff, Constance M., Mary W. Gibbons, and Elizabeth G.C. Menzies, *Princeton Architecture—A Pictorial History of Town and Campus*, Princeton University Press, 1967, figure 140.

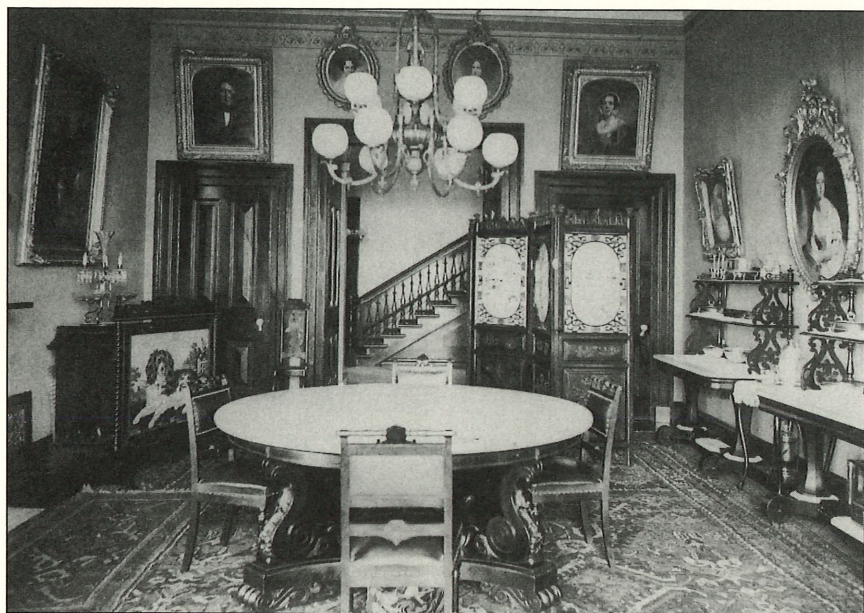


Prospect Study, 1870's

wedding Mrs. Potter died, having outlived her husband by 24 years. At her death the inventory of her estate amounted to more than a half million dollars, in contrast to the financial condition of other members of the Potter family who suffered financial reverses during the Civil War.

In 1878 Prospect was closed and notices were published that the property was available for purchase. Acquired briefly by Mrs. Ashurst, it was shortly thereafter purchased for \$30,200, approximately one-half of its appraised value at the time, with funds provided by two wealthy Presbyterian benefactors from New York, Alexander and Robert Stuart. They donated the property to the College to house its president, James McCosh, and his family, with the understanding “that the property so given will at all times hereafter be used by the College exclusively for its purposes as an educational institution, and will not at any time by the College be sold.”⁶

⁶Minutes of the Board of Trustees, November 14, 1878.



Prospect Dining Room, 1870's

Following their death the brothers were memorialized by Mrs. Robert L. Stuart, who endowed two professorships in their memory, one in philosophy and the other in psychology. These donations from the Stuarts to the College were in addition to their many and larger benefactions to Princeton Theological Seminary.

John Insley Blair, a generous trustee, had earlier proposed that he and a group of individuals jointly donate funds for the purchase of Prospect. However, since the Stuarts provided the necessary financing for this acquisition, Blair's suggestion was not implemented. He then, in June 1880, established the Blair Fund for Prospect with a gift to the College of \$3,000, the interest from which was "to be applied yearly to keep the grounds and fences [of Prospect] in good order and the property in repairs."⁷ Blair is more widely remembered as the donor of

⁷*Ibid.*, June 22, 1880.

Blair Hall, constructed in 1896-97, the first collegiate Gothic building on the campus.

Presidential Residence

Not only did the acquisition of Prospect provide a larger house for the president, it added 34.7 acres to the 30 acres that the College possessed at that time.⁸ It also added a “villa of noble dimensions” to the small campus which then included eight buildings and two houses, in addition to Nassau Hall. Thus began, in the last decade of McCosh’s administration, an expansion of the campus that has been continued under each successive president.



Garden View of Prospect, 1870's

⁸Breese, Gerald, *Princeton University Land, 1752–1984*, Princeton University Press, 1986, p. 37.

Bayard Stockton, a grandson of Commodore Stockton, has provided a contemporary description of Prospect in the last years of its ownership by the Potters. Noting that it was built of limestone and situated on large grounds, which were maintained in perfect order, he added that it is—

situated on the brow of a hill, the highest point between Philadelphia and New York, and commands a very extensive and beautiful view of the easterly half of the horizon...close at our feet are the lawn at the back of the house, beautifully terraced and laid out with flowers and shrubs, and below the terraces some small lakes, one above the other, and connected together by pretty waterfalls... [It has a] view of about ten miles—whence the name Prospect... . In a secluded portion are several graves, in an area that was a famous orchard.⁹

When James McCosh assumed the presidency of the College in 1868 he was 57 years of age, had been married to Isabella Guthrie for 23 years, and had raised four children. By January of 1879, when they moved into Prospect, their children were mature; the daughters were married and the sons had been graduated from the College. The children had previously lived with their parents in the original President's House that was built concurrently with the construction of Nassau Hall, adjacent to which it still stands on the west side. In 1968 this eighteenth century house was renamed for John Maclean, Jr., McCosh's predecessor as president, who had made the original suggestion that led to the formation of the Alumni Association which now occupies the building.

During his presidency Dr. McCosh held regular classes in such subjects as the history of philosophy and psychology, and many of these, as well as his seminars, were conducted in Prospect. Although at this time she had no direct parental responsi-

⁹Stockton, Bayard, "Prospect," *The Princeton Book*, Boston, 1879, pp. 364–367.

bility, Mrs. McCosh continued to minister individually in her caring and friendly manner to students who were confined to their bedrooms at a time when the College had yet provided no adequate facilities for illness. Because of the care that she gave to so many students, she earned a reputation of such respect that the future health center was named the Isabella McCosh Infirmary. It is less well remembered that she also took considerable interest in the garden where she planted rose bushes imported from Ireland.

When the McCoshs withdrew from Prospect in 1888 and before their successors, the Francis Landey Pattons, moved in, the building underwent further remodeling and refurbishing under the supervision of A. Page Brown, the architect who designed Clio and Whig Halls in the 1890's. Francis Landey and Anne Stevenson Patton had seven children, three of whom survived and were students during the early years of Patton's presidency of 14 years. One of his sons served as his part-time secretary.

The records indicate no undue activity at Prospect during his incumbency. The paucity of such information is consistent with a lack of vigor that symbolized his presidency. Nevertheless, Dr. Patton was well liked by the students and the alumni; and, furthermore, the College underwent an increasing and noticeable physical expansion during his regime. The high point of his tenure was the sesquicentennial celebration in 1896 when the College became Princeton University. On this occasion Prospect would have served as one of the central points of entertainment for many of the guests attending the commemorative exercises.

Despite the continued expansion of the physical facilities and the growth in enrollment of Princeton, Patton was encouraged to retire in 1902. Concurrently he was elected president of Princeton Theological Seminary, an institution which, con-

trary to many assumptions, has never had legal affiliation with the University. At this time the Pattons moved to the house known as Springdale, which the Seminary purchased from Bayard Stockton, the grandson of Commodore Stockton, who, as previously noted, had sponsored the original construction of the building.

Prospect Activities

With the election of Woodrow Wilson to the presidency in 1902 and the advent of the Wilson family to Prospect, a much more lively atmosphere was created. The family included three active daughters who, during his short presidency of eight years, were students much of the time at the recently established Miss Fine's School for young ladies. They had numerous friends whom the family welcomed, as it did their many relatives, some of whom resided at Prospect for days at a time. The permanent household usually consisted of eight or more, as well as two



Woodrow and Ellen Wilson, and Family at Prospect, 1910

servants. Frequently there was a festive atmosphere: charades, a pool table and other games, laughter and good humor. In these activities, Wilson energetically participated despite his periods of despondency and the ultimate strains encountered when two of his major proposals for rejuvenation of the University were defeated leading to his ultimate resignation in 1910.

Mrs. Ellen Axson Wilson was largely instrumental in creating the atmosphere that prevailed in these short eight years. As the niece, separated by three generations, of Nathaniel Fitz Randolph, who owned the property in the middle of the 18th century, Mrs. Wilson had a singular relationship with Prospect. As an accomplished artist she designed a stained glass window that was installed on the east wall of the front stair landing, only to be removed thirty years later, and subsequently discovered in a restaurant in South Jersey. She was involved in other improvements: addition of another bathroom, installation of electric wiring, improvement in heating, redecoration of the interior by replacing the high Victorian decor, and redesigning the garden which McCosh called his Garden of Eden.

From the stone terrace at the rear of the mansion, steps led to a large, formal French garden laid out in stiff, geometric patterns. This rigidity contradicted Ellen's belief that a garden should portray depth, mystery and spontaneous color. She devised a less formal design by widening the small, narrow flower beds and joining them to form broad, triangular borders. She introduced quantities of white, pink, and yellow tulips; also daffodils, irises, peonies, and dahlias; and she had paths constructed between the beds. In the center of the design she placed a pool with a fountain. Groupings of cedar trees were planted at the rear of the background and, in the corners, as accents. West of this central area, she created her rose garden. Beyond that, in the open space near Brown Hall, Ellen placed a long pergola covered with climbing roses. A sundial was centered in front of the pergola as an accent piece. Purple wisteria grew up in the iron grillwork which ran from ground to roof on a small porch at the southwest back corner of the house.¹⁰

¹⁰Saunders, Frances W., *First Lady Between Two Worlds—Ellen Axson Wilson*, University of North Carolina Press, 1985, p. 143.

The garden which Mrs. Wilson had designed with such care, became a *cause célèbre*.¹¹ Changes in campus life, which began in the 1890s, were the cause; and the undergraduate clubs, which were Wilson's bogy, had begun to assume a dominant position in the lives of the students. On their way to their eating clubs students took short cuts through the Prospect grounds damaging the garden. In response Wilson had an iron fence installed during the summer of 1904. One night, after the students had returned to the campus that fall, some of them destroyed part of the fence that confronted McCosh Walk. Wilson's response of indignation was heightened when the undergraduates in a spirit of revelry conducted a parade displaying placards of derision for the fence. Despite the admiration that most students held for their president, Wilson misconstrued their youthful exuberance, and he and his family never forgot the incidence.

Prospect was also indirectly involved in the other major controversy that led to Wilson's resignation; namely, the location of the future Graduate College. To implement his plan for it to be near the center of the campus, in contrast to the location ultimately selected, the Prospect property would have had to be invaded.

Again in 1944 suggestions were made that threatened the future life of Prospect. When final plans for the construction of Firestone Library were being developed, it was proposed by a few individuals that the new building be located on the Prospect property. From the point of view of a preservationist, fortunately neither course was followed and Prospect and its garden continue to maintain their place of centrality on the Princeton campus.

Following the Wilson's departure there was an interregnum of two years before Professor John Grier Hibben was selected in

¹¹Hillard, Edward H., "Woodrow Wilson and the Fence," *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, February 17, 1956, pp. 3-6.

1912 as Wilson's successor. The house was unoccupied during most of this period and the garden, which had been "a place of fragrance and beauty,"¹² was unattended. Refurbishment of Prospect, whose appraised value at the time was \$51,298, was again undertaken before President Hibben and his wife, Jenny Davidson Hibben, moved to the residence that they occupied for 20 years.

At the time of John Hibben's assumption of the presidency Mrs. Beatrix Farrand was appointed to the newly created position of Consulting Landscape Architect for the University. In this capacity she participated in the rehabilitation of the Prospect garden and introduced some alterations in its design. Then in 1913, shortly after the Hibbens occupied Prospect, an endowment was established by an anonymous donor with a gift of approximately \$12,000, the income from which, the donor suggested, should be used for maintenance of the shrubbery and trees on the campus. This fund was then employed to support the costs of maintaining the exceptionally delightful Prospect garden. By November 1998, in a period of 85 years, the value of the endowment of this fund had increased to over \$400,000 and the annual income to more than \$15,000. Among other gifts to the garden were donations in 1950 of two thousand tulip bulbs from Holland in memory of two alumni: Henry E. Mattison, class of 1897, and Frans van Walsen, class of 1946, the latter, an officer in the Dutch army, killed at the end of World War II.

Although the Hibbens, as their predecessors, the Wilson's, and their successors, Harold and Margaret Dodds, were involved frequently in official entertainment at Prospect, one of the largest of these gatherings would have been the reception for some 700 guests that the Hibbens sponsored for their daughter,

¹²Hibben, Jennie D., "Changes in Prospect Garden," typescript, 1920 and 1931, Mudd Library archives.



Harold and Margaret Dodds in Prospect Garden, 1940's

Elizabeth Grier Hibben, following her wedding in Marquand Chapel on November 23, 1915 to Professor Robert Scoon.

To enumerate the guests that the Wilson's, the Hibbens, and the Dodds entertained during the 54 years of their combined residence at Prospect would be endless: authors, scholars, scientists;

kings, queens, princes, princesses; admirals, generals, diplomats; cardinals, priests, theologians; governors, cabinet officers, presidents. During the twenty years of their incumbency the Hibbens maintained a guest book in which over 500 names appeared. A decade later the bicentennial celebrations, which extended throughout the year 1946-47, brought scores of celebrated individuals from far and wide, many of whom were entertained in one manner or another at Prospect by President and Mrs. Dodds.

The use of Prospect and the demands, especially on the presidents' wives, was formidable: receptions for trustees, receptions for faculty, receptions for students, receptions for alumni, formal and informal dinners, garden parties, meetings of faculty wives, meetings of committees — one occasion after another throughout the college year. In addition, Mrs. Wilson, Mrs. Hibben, Mrs. Dodds, and the last president's wife to preside at



Prospect Study, 1940's



Prospect Living Room, 1940's

Prospect, Mrs. Margaret S. Goheen, each gave considerable support to many university sponsored projects, especially the Ladies Auxiliary to the Isabella McCosh Infirmary. One may easily understand the reasons, why, in the middle of Robert F. Goheen's administration, the president's residence was transplanted from Prospect to Lowrie House. Not only was the center of the campus an awkward location in which to raise six young children, it also provided no opportunity at any time of day or night for the president to separate himself and his family from the constant demands of his official responsibilities.

Faculty and Staff Social Center

After serving for 24 years as president, Harold Dodds retired in 1957, and Robert F. Goheen was elected as his successor. At the time, only 37 years of age, he had a young family of six children, whereas the Dodds had no children to share in the occupancy of the Prospect mansion. Not merely to provide for a large family but to introduce electrical, plumbing, heating and kitchen improvements, as well as necessary redecoration,



Robert and Margaret Goheen, and Family at Prospect, 1958

the building, now appraised at \$460,000, underwent repairs amounting to approximately \$100,000. In September 1958 Prospect was prepared to receive the Goheens where for the next decade they fulfilled their official obligations of entertainment and at the same time raised a young family in an historic building at the center of the campus.

By 1968 it was decided that Prospect House could more appropriately meet the long-standing and increasing needs of a faculty and staff center for dining and social gatherings. Such a change of use for the building was possible since Lowrie House, which had been donated to the University in 1960 and was being used as the University guest house, could very adequately meet the needs of a presidential residence in a more desirable and quieter location. In the 19th century, after its sale by the Stocktons, it had been owned for a time by Paul Tulane, for whom Tulane University was named, and then by the George Allison Armours, whose daughter, Barbara, later donated it to the University in memory of her husband, Walter Lowrie, a Princeton alumnus and brilliant theologian.

In planning this change Mrs. Edgar Palmer was consulted since it had earlier been agreed that she would bequeath Palmer House to the University to be used as the president's residence. Having obtained her assent to the change in plans, the administration was thus able on her death in 1968 to make Palmer House the University guest house, and to convert the Walter Lowrie House into a home for the president and his family. Prospect House then became a dining and social center for the faculty and staff of the University.

To prepare Prospect for its new assignment, it was necessary to undertake renovations that included not merely redecoration but the addition of a two-story pavilion. This addition was located on the southeast side of the building to house two dining rooms, one on each floor. With the opening of the house as

a private club for all full-time university faculty, staff, and their guests, a Prospect Association was formed in August 1969 whose purpose has been to foster social and intellectual interchange among members of Princeton University's academic and support staffs. The Association is governed by a Managing Board elected from its membership on a rotating basis. While the Association is responsible for the special operations and services currently provided under contract by Restaurant Associates, a national food service company, the University retains ownership of the building and responsibility for its daily operations and continued maintenance.

In fulfilling its responsibility the University undertook repairs to the plumbing in 1980, and then in 1988-89 found it necessary to close the building for some months in order to bring it into compliance with the New Jersey building codes. Since the mansion had been designated in May 1985 as a national historic landmark,

the University chose at the time of this major reconstruction to restore the many historic elements of the building.

To undertake this significant renovation the architectural firm of Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown of Philadelphia was engaged with the Princeton firm of Short and Ford acting as preservation consultants. Among the many improvements that were instituted, the original colors of the



Exterior Reconstruction of Prospect, 1988



Prospect Dining Room, Arranged for Dinner Meeting



Prospect Dining Room, Arranged for Social Party

exterior paint and mortar were restored, and the original highly decorative paint scheme of the interior was recreated. Since it was necessary to remove as many as eight to ten layers of paint, most recently white, from the interior woodwork, this part of the reconstruction alone required four months. As a result of such careful attention, the wood paneling was returned to its initial impressive appearance. The total cost of the entire restoration of Prospect House in 1988-89 was over \$3.5 million, a project that further justified its designation as a national historic landmark.

With much pride the Managing Board of the Prospect Association reminds its members that its time-honored facilities are available for luncheons, dinners, receptions, and meetings, as well as private parties. In its newsletters and through its website the Association describes the various features of Prospect.

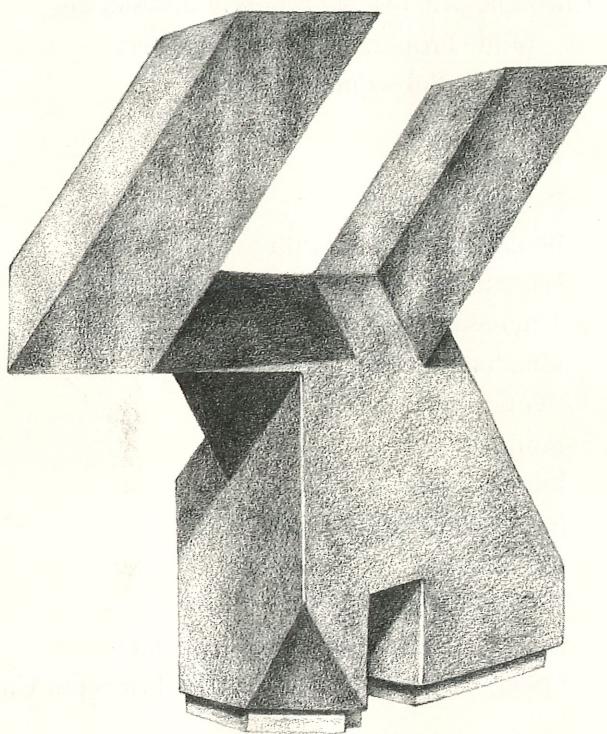
The facilities include three main dining rooms, four reception rooms and seven meeting rooms located throughout the house. The Garden Room located on the main floor features a full-service, a la carte menu, an extensive list of wines and beers and attentive service in the lovely, glass-enclosed room with a spectacular view of the gardens. On the lower level, the Tap Room offers more casual cafe dining. There is a variety of hot and cold lunch entrees, a full selection of beverages and an assortment of delicious deserts.... An extensive Sunday Brunch is served in the Garden Room from late September through the Sunday after Mother's Day.

Writing in 1931, just before her husband retired from the presidency, Mrs. Hibben observed, "The house has always seemed to me a beautiful ugly one, a *jolie laide*, as the French say, and it should be treated with care. The changes have improved the setting of the house and it has gained greatly in charm, in dignity, in simplicity, and in beauty."



Garden Party at Prospect

The more recent changes, which have reinstated many of its original architectural features, have enhanced these characteristics even further, and, in so doing, have accentuated the significance of Prospect. In view of its historic importance Prospect deserves not only respect and care, it also deserves to be enjoyed, as it is, by the wide spectrum of the Princeton University community.



"Moses" in Front of Prospect

Appendix

Chronological List of Owners and Residents
of the Property Known as Prospect
Subsequent to 1695

Owners

1695 -1705	Richard Stockton
1705 -1734	Benjamin Fitz Randolph
1734 -	Nathaniel Fitz-Randolph (son of Benjamin)
-1760	Thomas Norris (son-in-law of Nathaniel)
1760 -1779	Jonathan Baldwin
1779 -1796	George Morgan
1796 -1805	John Morgan
1805 -1820	John I. Craig
1820 -1824	John G. Schenck
1824 -1849	John Potter
1849 -1853	Thomas Fuller Potter
1853 -1878	Sarah Jane Hall Potter and her estate
1878 -	College of New Jersey, after 1896 Princeton University

Residents

1879-1888	James & Isabella Guthrie McCosh
1888-1902	Francis Landey & Anna A. Stevenson Patton
1902-1910	Woodrow & Ellen Axson Wilson
1912-1932	John Grier & Jenny Davidson Hibben
1933-1957	Harold W. & Margaret Murry Dodds
1958-1968	Robert F. & Margaret Skelly Goheen
1968-	Prospect Association

Credits for Illustrations

The illustrations on the front cover, and on the inside of the front and back covers are from the collection of photographs in the possession of Esto Photographics and originally taken by Otto Baitz, deceased.

The illustration of Prospect in 1797, presented on page 5, has been reproduced from a watercolor by Maria Templeton and obtained through the courtesy of the Art Museum of Princeton University.

The illustrations of John Potter and Catherine Fuller Potter on page 7 have been reproduced from oil paintings by Thomas Sully (1783-1872), which were gifts from Robert Potter to the Art Museum of the University, and photographed by Clem Fiori.

On page 10 the illustration of Thomas Fuller Potter has been reproduced through the courtesy of Phyllis Hamel, a descendant and the owner of the oil painting by an unknown artist.

The illustrations on pages 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 21, 22, 23 and 25 are from the photographic files of Prospect in the archives of the Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library of the University.

The illustrations on page 26 are from the files of the Prospect Association.

On page 29 the illustration is of "Moses", a sculpture located on the lawn in front of Prospect. It is a part of the John B. Putnam, Jr. Memorial Collection and was designed by Tony Smith (1912-1980).

The illustration on page 28 was provided by John Blazejewski, and the illustration on the back cover by James E. Elbrecht.

The Author

After graduating from Princeton University in 1934, William K. Selden served in the administration of four universities, was president of a liberal arts college, and executive director of a national educational association. In recent years he has written a number of histories of institutions located in Princeton.

His publications have included:

Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs: Conception and Early Development, 1930–1943 (1984)

Princeton—The Best Old Place of All: Vignettes of Princeton University — 1884, 1934, 1984 (1987)

The Princeton Summer Camp, 1908–1975 (1987)

The Nassau Club of Princeton, New Jersey—Its First One Hundred Years, 1889–1989 (1989)

From These Roots — The Creation of Princeton Day School (1991)

The Heritage of Isabella McCosh — A History of the Health Service at Princeton University (1991)

Princeton Theological Seminary: A Narrative History, 1812–1992 (1992)

Drumthwacket — A History of the Governor's Mansion in Princeton, New Jersey (1993)

Club Life at Princeton — An Historical Account of the Eating Clubs at Princeton University (1995)

Nassau Hall — Princeton University's National Historic Landmark (1996)

The Bonner Foundation at Sheldon House (1998)

