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**The colonial revival at Cliveden**

**Anderson-Lawrence, Jennifer, M.A.**

**University of Delaware, 1991**

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**THE COLONIAL REVIVAL AT CLIVEDEN**

**by**

**Jennifer Anderson-Lawrence**

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of  
Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Early American Culture

June 1991

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**THE COLONIAL REVIVAL AT CLIVEDEN**

by

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## PREFACE

When I began my study of Cliveden it was with the intention of exploring the adaptation of an eighteenth-century house to changing nineteenth-century aesthetics. I chose Cliveden for three reasons: it was owned through many generations by one family--the Chews, it contained a collection of furnishings traditionally associated with the family, and extensive family papers offered documentation spanning three centuries. The conditions for writing a comparative study of the house over time seemed to be ideal.

As I proceeded with my analysis of the family papers, it became clear that I had presumed too much. In the nineteenth-century, Cliveden was characterized less by adaptation to the present than by continuity with the past. For although Cliveden did not become a house museum until the 1970s, its conscious preservation began a hundred years earlier. The activities of its residents at that time, Samuel and Mary Chew, were informed equally by historic preservation and colonial revival impulses.

In the introduction, I examine the common origin and parallel development of the two movements, providing the basis for a study of their interaction at Cliveden. Chapter One places Cliveden in the context of Chew family history. Chapter Two explores the critical moment following the Civil War when the Chews initiated the preservation of Cliveden and began the collection of materials associated with the house and family. The following chapters elucidate the effect of

the Chews' colonial revival activities on their lives. Since Cliveden was the site of the Battle of Germantown, I also address the ways in which this historical connection influenced public perception of the house and its owners. Through the colonial revival, America's old elite sought to reinterpret the American revolution and make it central to American culture and identity. By promoting their home's public historical significance, the Chews simultaneously advanced their personal status and reasserted their family's link to a revered past.

Many people have contributed their time and energy to assist me in the completion of this thesis. I would like to thank Jennifer Esler, the Director of Cliveden, her staff, and the National Trust for their helpfulness. They opened the house to me and answered innumerable queries. I hope they will find my presentation useful or at least thought-provoking, but I bear full responsibility for any oversights or failings in my interpretation. I would also like to express my gratitude to my advisor, Cheryl Robertson. She encouraged my thinking to go in unexpected directions and then helped me express my ideas more compellingly. Her discipline, insight and encouragement have been constant and unfailing. My special thanks go to my husband, Stuart Lawrence, who has served as a loving counsel in times of perplexity. Finally, I would like to dedicate my paper to my grandfather, Olav Ahlbäck, who died this autumn. Former professor of Swedish at the Helsingfors University in Finland, he inspired others to believe that in literature, music and history, memories are preserved, creating connections between people which transcend the separations of time and distance.

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## ABSTRACT

The colonial revival of the nineteenth century was embraced by many Americans who desired a stronger sense of tradition and family roots. The Chew family, owners of Cliveden, participated in this movement by developing an interpretation of their past based on the historical significance of their family home.

Throughout the eighteenth century, Cliveden was considered one of Philadelphia's most elegant country houses. Today it is still highly regarded as an example of colonial Georgian architecture. During the mid-nineteenth century, however, the house went through a period of decline. Long after its architecture and eighteenth-century furnishings had passed from fashion, the house regained some of its former social status through the efforts of Samuel and Mary Chew. Their preservation of the house and their collection of family-related objects and furnishings reveal the Chew's changing financial circumstances, family dynamics, and different interpretations and uses of the past.

Samuel and Mary Chew benefitted from the revival of Cliveden in different ways. Samuel drew on his colonial past to strengthen his own legitimacy as a member of the Philadelphia elite. Mary's involvement with the restoration of Cliveden brought her into contact with a larger community both during and after the Philadelphia Centennial. For a time, she played a powerful role as an amateur historic preservationist and promoter of history. From a common origin at

Cliveden, the Chews' approaches to preservationism diverged as the colonial revival movement matured and attracted a variety of adherents who held opposing views.

The ideas and feelings embodied in the early phase of the colonial revival, are exemplified in this case history of Cliveden's preservation. Understanding Cliveden's revival can provide valuable insights into choices still being made about the presentation and preservation of the past.

## INTRODUCTION

### Historic Preservation and the Colonial Revival: An Overview

Historic preservation is generally perceived as a specialized vocation drawing upon the various skills of architects, historians, and museum professionals. The colonial revival, on the other hand, tends to be viewed as its nonprofessional precursor, a movement to preserve American shrines that was rooted in popular culture and based on traditional, nonacademic images of the past. Early efforts at historic preservation are often cited as case studies of the colonial revival at work; indeed, the history of the preservation movement is closely tied to the development and interpretation of the colonial revival. As the field of historic preservation has become increasingly professionalized, however, the impact of the colonial revival on individual historic properties and museum collections has tended to be obscured. Today, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century collectors and preservationists are lauded because they saved historic materials for future scholars, but they are often discounted as unsophisticated historians. Yet their approach to preservation reveals as much about their own times as about the past they sought to preserve.<sup>1</sup> Historians can enrich their understanding of the nineteenth century through studying antiquarian assemblages of objects from earlier periods, for like archaeological sites, they offer layers of evidence about successive generations. A

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<sup>1</sup>In recent years the colonial revival has been the subject of scholarly inquiries into its persistence in American culture. See for example, Kenneth L. Ames, "Introduction," in *The Colonial Revival in America*, ed. Alan Axelrod (New York: W. W. Norton, 1985); and William B. Rhoads, *The Colonial Revival* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1977).

study of Cliveden, an eighteenth-century house, in the hands of its nineteenth-century owners Samuel and Mary Chew, gives us insight into the complex social, political, and personal meanings of the colonial revival.

The colonial revival movement in America emerged in conjunction with the Centennial exhibition held in Philadelphia in 1876.<sup>2</sup> This world's fair was an inventory of America's technological and agricultural accomplishments displayed within numerous buildings in the latest architectural fashions. The Centennial celebrated the nation's progress; progress, however, was displacing "old" families whose influence had traditionally rested on land ownership and civic service. As such families in Philadelphia and elsewhere saw their economic and political influence wane, they re-asserted the primacy of status grounded in ancestry, culture and learning.<sup>3</sup> In 1873, a small group of men from Philadelphia's most prominent families launched a nation-wide campaign to amass historical paintings, relics, and antiques for a display at the city's Centennial extravaganza.<sup>4</sup> Concurrently, they supported the restoration of Independence Hall so that it could house the "National Museum" they planned to create. The atmosphere of divisiveness and animosity which still reigned after the Civil War made the National Museum organizers anxious to emphasize the commonality of the country's colonial past. The organizers of the National Museum wrote to Mary Chew of their desire to "brighten

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<sup>2</sup>Jean A. Follett, "Colonial Revival Origins," in *The Colonial Revival in Rhode Island* (Providence, RI: Providence Preservation Society, 1989), pp. 2-3.

<sup>3</sup> Stow Persons, *The Decline of American Gentility* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), p. 55.

<sup>4</sup>Karal Ann Marling, *George Washington Slept Here: Colonial Revivals and American Culture, 1876-1986* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 97.

the chain of friendship," which "once more binds together our fellow countrymen."<sup>5</sup>

While their New England counterparts emphasized the earliest period of colonial history, antiquarians in the Philadelphia area sought to preserve sites and artifacts associated with the Revolutionary period.<sup>6</sup> By the time of the Centennial, the Revolution was seen as a history lesson in unity rather than a divisive conflict. Depictions of the Revolution were gentrified in order to suggest "a falsely consensual view [that] minimized not only sectional partisanship but economic and class conflict as well."<sup>7</sup> Toryism, for example, was seldom discussed although several important Philadelphia families, including the Chews of Cliveden, had refused to break with the Crown until after the war's end. As American demographics altered dramatically due to the Industrial Revolution and the influx of immigrants, a sanitized interpretation of the Revolution helped to legitimize Anglo-Americans' continued hold on power. The rational, enlightened steps taken to establish a legitimate, federal government in the late-eighteenth century were emphasized while the emotional and radical aspects of separation from England were deaccentuated. Statesmanship and republican virtues were stressed over military victories. Most nineteenth-century paintings of Revolutionary battles

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<sup>5</sup> Frank M. Eiting to Mary Chew, inviting her to join the National Museum committee, 23 May 1873, Chew Collection, Independence National Historical Park, Philadelphia (INHP).

<sup>6</sup> Charles B. Hosmer Jr., *Presence of the Past: A History of the Preservation Movement in the United States Before Williamsburg* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1965), p. 76.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Kammen, *A Season of Youth: The American Revolution and the Historical Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 15, 61, 84.

depicted the moment of a battle's resolution and the courtly etiquette of opposing generals rather than a bloody and chaotic clash of armies.<sup>8</sup> Established American families wanted to see their past as evolutionary rather than revolutionary.<sup>9</sup>

The involvement of women, supposedly skilled in the arts of domesticity and peace, was an important element in the creation of the colonial revivalists' consensual and conciliatory historical vision.<sup>10</sup> To lend a spirit of unity to the National Museum project, its director, Frank Etting, invited nine women from Philadelphia, including Mary Chew, to form a Board of Lady Managers. All the individuals recruited by Etting were members of old colonial families, either by birth or through marriage. They promoted a vision of the past which enhanced their own status by stressing their families' roles. Their tendency to romanticize the past and to glorify historical figures formed the basis for the emerging colonial revival ideology.

Another aspect of the colonial revival, promoted by Frank Etting, was overtly progressive. It focused on public education about the past to improve the present. Etting aimed to help people gather and process information about the past from looking at objects. Improving people's ability to approach and understand a tangible past, Etting hoped, would prepare them to take the next cognitive step of

<sup>8</sup> Kammen, *A Season of Youth*, pp. 73, 87-88.

<sup>9</sup> Kammen, *A Season of Youth*, p. 62.

<sup>10</sup> Marling, *George Washington Slept Here*, p. 76. Gail Lee Dubrow also points out that this generalization assumed women were specially endowed with devotion, self-sacrifice, and charity, qualities which made the work of fundraising fall within the bounds of acceptability as "women's work" (Dubrow, "Restoring a Female Presence: New Goals in Historic Preservation," in *Architecture: A Place for Women*, eds. Ellen Perry Berkley and Matilda McQuaid (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989), p. 160).

understanding the values reflected in objects. Through education the American people could thus be taught to recognize that the ideal "the founders of this Republic toiled and fought for was, self government, the Rule of the Best citizens of America, not the Rule of the Worst."<sup>11</sup> Frank Etting and the National Museum committee hoped to mold Philadelphia's school children in the image of the patriots who had gathered in Independence Hall in 1776.<sup>12</sup>

The rhetoric of the 1870s associated with the preservation of Independence Hall and of Valley Forge underscored statesmanship and the patriotic high-mindedness of the founding fathers.<sup>13</sup> The overlapping themes of patriotism, domesticity, and the inspirational power of historic sites were explicitly interwoven at the dedication ceremony of Valley Forge: "We rejoice in the present, and honor those who labored and died to make our country great. Home and country! alike in the heart's best affections; present enjoyment and happy memory increase our devotion to both and intensify our patriotism."<sup>14</sup> The colonial revival memorialized places and things that could inspire contemporary emulation of, and respect, for the moral exemplars of the past. This approach became prevalent in the 1880s-1930s as efforts to "Americanize" new immigrants intensified. It led to conflict within the

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<sup>11</sup> Frank Etting, *An Historical Account of the Old State House of Pennsylvania Now Known as the Hall of Independence* (Philadelphia: Porter and Coates, 1874).

<sup>12</sup> Minutes, Board of Managers of the National Museum, 6 January 1876. Chew Collection, INHP.

<sup>13</sup> Hosmer, *Presence of the Past*, pp. 82-83.

<sup>14</sup> *Proceedings on the Occasion of the Centennial Celebration of the Occupation of Valley Forge under George Washington, June 19, 1878* cited in Hosmer, *Presence of the Past*, p. 83.

arena of historic preservation, however, for professional architects valued aesthetic merits more highly than historical associations.<sup>15</sup> This conflict was clearly discernable for the first time at the Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893.

Whereas antiquarians, knowledgeable amateurs, and energetic volunteers took the lead in orchestrating the Centennial exhibition, professionals shaped the "Great White City" in Chicago. The entire lay-out was planned and organized by an architect. All of the state buildings were designed by architects, most of them in the colonial style. Colonial architecture pervaded the fair in diverse, often fanciful permutations. The revived colonial imagery represented an eclectic selection of regional variations.<sup>16</sup> Also, there were displays of reproduction "colonial" furniture, which were equally imaginative interpretations of colonial forms. In the late nineteenth century, many architects were engrossed in a search for a new style of architecture which could be termed American.<sup>17</sup> Most favored creative reinterpretations of the colonial style; yet a vocal contingent of architects criticized any departure from academically correct colonial architecture, and they deplored inaccurate restorations. These opposing attitudes among professional architects were all represented at the fair. The antiquarians, more interested in the patriotic

<sup>15</sup> William B. Rhoads, "The Colonial Revival and the Americanization of Immigrants," in *The Colonial Revival in America*, ed. Alan Axelrod (New York: W. W. Norton, 1985), pp. 341-361.

<sup>16</sup> Susan Prendergast Schoelwer, "Curious Relics and Quaint Scenes: The Colonial Revival at Chicago's Great Fair," in *The Colonial Revival in America*, ed. Alan Axelrod (New York: W. W. Norton, 1985), pp. 184-185, 205.

<sup>17</sup> Rodris Roth, "The Colonial Revival and 'Centennial Furniture,'" *The Art Quarterly* 27 (January 1964), p. 57; for more information on architects' opposing views on the role of the colonial in the development of a distinctly American architecture, see Mardges Bacon, "Toward a National Style of Architecture: The Beaux-Arts Interpretation of the Colonial Architecture," in *The Colonial Revival in America*, ed. Alan Axelrod (New York: W. W. Norton, 1985), pp. 91-121.

and historical associations of the colonial style than in its modern architectural uses, received criticism from all sides.<sup>18</sup>

The emphasis on the aesthetics of colonial domestic structures weakened the role of male and female antiquarians alike. Women suffered the greater loss of influence since it was difficult for them to receive architectural training, while architecture schools promised to train any man to become a "gentleman-architect."<sup>19</sup> Still the gentlemen-antiquarians also lost the talismanic power of family heirlooms and homesteads. A comparison of contemporary writings of antiquarians and architects demonstrates that the relationship of amateur to professional was an uneasy one.

Between the 1890s and the 1920s, books by antiquarians proliferated encouraging readers to reclaim old houses. Typical of the genre is the following excerpt:

The old house was not as a rule the brain-child of the professional or even amateur architect; almost always it was conceived in a mind steeped in tradition and born only when the last shaving fell from the plane of the craftsman. . . . The craftsman sought expression by means unfamiliar to the architect, methods which were apart from his training. . . . The forced conditions of the settlers has given us the best of the colonial tradition. To study old houses, one must be

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<sup>18</sup> Schoelwer, "Curious Relics and Quaint Scenes," pp. 185-188, 191-214.

<sup>19</sup> Dubrow, "Restoring a Female Presence," pp. 163-164; Elizabeth G. Grossman and Lisa B. Reitzes, "Caught in the Crossfire: Women and Architectural Education, 1880-1910," in *Architecture: A Place for Women*, eds. Ellen Perry Berkley and Matilda McQuaid (Washington, D. C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989), p. 35.

an antiquarian, even though his researches extend no further than his own dooryard.<sup>20</sup>

Significant in this passage are the appeals to traditionalism, craftsmanship, and the intuition of the self-taught antiquarian. The colonial style, the author argues, was the "natural" response of the early settlers to the requirements of the American environment. He betrays a distrust of the architect's ability to abstain from altering an old structure in order to gratify his professional ego.

When architects published writings on colonial buildings and styles, they usually adopted an impersonal tone. In *Colonial Architecture For Those About to Build*, for example, the authors, Herbert Wise and H. Ferdinand Beidleman, state that appreciation of the past is "of little avail" in preservation so they set out to record colonial designs for use in modern colonial revival construction. The colonial style, they say, is "devoid of mystery or complexity" and perfect for those who love "the sedate."<sup>21</sup> These architects make qualitative judgements about architectural merits and disregard the allure of historical associations.

In 1898, the Philadelphia chapter of the American Institute of Architects entered the field of historic preservation for the first time. They saw potential benefits for their organization in the city's growing interest in saving old buildings, sparked by the ongoing restoration of Independence Hall. The AIA formed a committee for historic preservation, and it espoused a purely aesthetic approach to

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<sup>20</sup> Charles Hooper, *Reclaiming the Old House* (New York: Mc Bride, Nast and Co., 1913), preface; See also Amelia Leavitt Hill, *Redeeming Old Homes: Country Homes and Modest Purses* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1923).

<sup>21</sup> Herbert Wise and H. Ferdinand Beidleman, *Colonial Architecture For Those About to Build* (Philadelphia: J. P. Lippincott Co., 1913), pp. v. 1.

architecture, which required specialized knowledge. They began to systematically force out antiquarians (male and female), as well as builders and architects not affiliated with the AIA.<sup>22</sup> By the early 1920s, the professional organization was secure in its domination of preservation activities in the city, and architects gradually became less adamant about divorcing architectural significance from human and historical perspectives. For example, Harold Eberlein and Fiske Kimball, two of the first professional preservation architects, were less certain about the polarized relationship between antiquarian and aesthetic approaches to architecture.<sup>23</sup> Eberlein actually equated the two. In his volume *The Architecture of Colonial America*, he stated that "architecture is crystallized history. . . some ancient structures are so invested with their erstwhile occupants that it is nigh well impossible to dissociate the two. . . . History and architectural expression go hand in hand and one must study both to have a full comprehension of either."<sup>24</sup> He admitted his own romantic nostalgia for New England kitchens, Dutch houses, and Philadelphia country houses which "tell of the leisurely affluence and open hospitality . . . of a style of life that often rivaled in elegance. . . that of the country gentry of England."<sup>25</sup> Kimball, although still primarily interested in "the evolution

<sup>22</sup> Ellen Perry Berkley and Matilda McQuaid eds.. *Architecture: A Place for Women*.

<sup>23</sup> Fiske Kimball was the Chairman of the American Institute of Architects' Preservation Committee from 1923 until 1926. He then became Director of the Pennsylvania Museum and oversaw the restoration of the Fairmount Park houses. Harold Eberlein was also a preservation architect, in Philadelphia, who wrote numerous books on colonial architecture.

<sup>24</sup> Harold Donaldson Eberlein, *The Architecture of Colonial America* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1915), pp. 1, 5.

<sup>25</sup> Eberlein, *The Architecture of Colonial America*, p. 2-3.

of American art," called for a similar coalescence of aesthetic evaluation and "adequate study of documentary evidence . . . [and] the special literature of individual buildings and localities. What is needed is a synthesis of the individual results so far won."<sup>26</sup>

Cliveden's nineteenth-century history is a case study of the evolving relationship of the colonial revival to historic preservation. Its owners Mary and Samuel Chew used Cliveden to create a self-promotional interpretation of the past that was an integral part of the earliest phase of the colonial revival. As Samuel Chew transformed Cliveden into a repository of his family history, he found his efforts sanctioned by his peers. As others began to copy and adapt colonial forms, he promoted the house through colonial revival art. By manipulating historical imagery, he reinforced his individuality and control over the portrayal of the house, which in turn enhanced his status in the community as its owner. Association with Cliveden also benefitted Mary Chew because it enabled her to enter the company of other elite historic preservationists. She approached historic preservation as a group-oriented activity and emphasized the use of the colonial revival as a force to shape society. From a common origin at Cliveden, the Chews' approaches to preservationism diverged as the colonial revival movement matured and attracted a variety of adherents who held opposing views.

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<sup>26</sup> Hosmer, *The Presence of the Past*, p. 234; Fiske Kimball, *Domestic Architecture of the American Colonies and of the Early Republic* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1922), pp. xviii-xix.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Family Matters: From the Revolution to the Civil War

In 1763, Benjamin Chew, Sr., the Pennsylvania Chief Justice, began building Cliveden in Germantown, on the outskirts of Philadelphia. At that time Germantown, although still a small village, was becoming a very popular "summering" locale for wealthy Philadelphians.<sup>27</sup> Upon its completion, Cliveden was one of the area's most fashionable houses and an appropriate expression of the social and political stature of its owner (Fig. 1). It represented a large investment on the part of Benjamin Chew Senior. He apparently designed most of the house himself and gave considerable thought to the image he wished to project. The house was in the fashionable Palladian style, similar in floor plan and appearance to contemporary high-style English country houses.<sup>28</sup> Most major American eighteenth-century houses and public buildings were based, with varying degrees of success, on the same architectural design books which shaped the neo-Palladian movement in England. Chew's experimentation with classical design suggests his awareness of fashion and his sensitivity to the level of sophistication it implied. His care and thoroughness in finishing the interior of the house is a further indication his concern for the total impression that the house would have on visitors. While

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<sup>27</sup> The high incidence of yellow fever in the city made Germantown a favored summer retreat for Philadelphians during the 1790s. For a history of the eighteenth-century development of Germantown, see Stephanie Grauman Wolf, *The Urban Village: Population, Community and Family Structure in Germantown Pennsylvania, 1683-1800* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976).

<sup>28</sup> Margaret Tinkcom, "Cliveden: The Building of a Philadelphia Countryseat, 1763-1767," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 88 (January 1964), pp. 6-15. Tinkcom analyses the design similarities between Cliveden, other American eighteenth-century mansions, and English country houses.

most of the house was built by Germantown workmen, Chew employed specialized urban craftsmen to execute parts of the house interior. For example, the fine ironwork was done by William Rush, the plasterwork by David Cauthorn and Samuel Hastings, and some of the decorative carving was carried out by Nicholas Bernard and Martin Jugiez, all highly skilled Philadelphia craftsmen.<sup>29</sup>

The furnishings of the house were also of high quality. While some of the furniture was made by Germantown resident Jacob Knor, who served as the master carpenter on the house, most of it was made by leading Philadelphia cabinetmakers.<sup>30</sup> The finer objects were probably made for Chew's city house and relocated to Cliveden in the summers. Chew clearly expected to enjoy the same quality of life in the country as he did in the city. The first floor of the house was dominated by a large reception hall intended for large scale entertaining, and Chew hosted a regular stream of guests.

When the Revolution broke out, Chief Justice Chew did not support the radical position taken by the colonists but remained loyal to England. Since he was a royal appointee, he was distrusted by the colonists, and they sent him to New Jersey where he was placed under house arrest for the duration of the war. During the nine-month British occupation of Philadelphia in 1777, Chew's daughter Peggy became a public figure when she was escorted by Major André to the *Mischianza*, a

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<sup>29</sup>Tinkcom, "Cliveden," p. 26.

<sup>30</sup>The furnishings included objects made by (or attributed to) James Reynolds, Thomas Affleck, and Jonathan Gostelowe. For more information on attributions of the Cliveden furnishings, see Raymond Shepherd, "Cliveden and Its Philadelphia-Chippendale Furniture: A Documented History," *American Art Journal* 8 (November 1976), pp. 2-16.

mock tournament and ball held in honor of the British by Philadelphia loyalists. A few months later, George Washington led a surprise attack against the stronghold of British troops camped in Germantown. Cliveden became the focal point of the Battle of Germantown, for the British barricaded themselves in the house. After bombarding the house with cannon in an unsuccessful attempt to force the English into the open, the colonists were forced to retreat.<sup>31</sup>

The property was not confiscated from Chew Senior after the war, but the house had sustained heavy damage. He did not want to invest the money needed for repairs, so he sold the estate. Several years later, Chew's fondness for the house he had built prompted him to buy it back, and his son Benjamin Chew, Jr., inherited it from him in 1810.<sup>32</sup>

The early 1800s were a period of rapid growth in Germantown. New houses in the area, such as Loudon, were in the Greek Revival style and many of the earlier houses contemporary with Cliveden, such as Wyck House, were updated to reflect current trends.<sup>33</sup> Instead of remodeling Cliveden, Benjamin Chew Jr. built a new town house for himself in Philadelphia. As a young man, he was concerned with fashion, wore clothes in the "latest taste," and fitted out his dining room with

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<sup>31</sup>Robert Middlekauf, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 392-393, 541-545.

<sup>32</sup>For details of Benjamin Chew, Sr.'s repurchase of Cliveden, see Tinckom, "Cliveden." Regarding Benjamin Chew, Jr.'s inheritance of Cliveden from his father, see the letter to his sister, 29 January 1810, Chew Family Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia (cited hereafter as CFP). See also the Appendix (p. 76) for Chew family Genealogy.

<sup>33</sup>Richard Webster, *Philadelphia Preserved: Catalog of the Historic American Buildings Survey* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1976).

expensive English wares, such as elegant knife boxes, green-handled knives and forks, and the latest silverplate. After he inherited Cliveden, however, his expenditures became more modest, in keeping with his new role as family patriarch. He was wealthy, but he chose to invest more in the estate's farming operations than in house furnishings and domestic opulence. He described Cliveden as a healthful haven for his family, albeit overcrowded during the summers with his mother, wife, thirteen children, and various siblings (eleven sisters and one brother).<sup>34</sup> His numerous letters and account books indicate a reduction in expenditures as his financial and family responsibilities increased with time. A major economic burden was paying, in cash, his sisters' shares of their father's inheritance and assisting his own children to establish themselves.<sup>35</sup> Cliveden was not a high priority since he had so many other commitments; in 1811 he even contemplated selling the house to reduce his living costs.

Over time, he became increasingly conservative in his personal tastes and purchases. Late in his life, for example, observers remarked on his old-fashioned

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<sup>34</sup> Benjamin Chew, Jr.'s town house, located on 4th Street in Philadelphia, was designed by architect Robert Mills and constructed 1810-1811 (Benjamin Chew, Jr.'s House Design, CFP); see Benjamin Chew, Jr.'s Household Accounts, 1817-1820, CFP; For example he built a new barn, had a well dug, and planted fruit trees. See Benjamin Chew's Bills and Receipts, 1817-1821, CFP; Benjamin Chew, Jr., to his sister, Harriet Carroll, 1 June 1814.

<sup>35</sup> Benjamin Chew, Jr., owned real estate in Philadelphia, slaves in Maryland, and worked as a lawyer. He had a large amount of money invested in land in Western Pennsylvania as well as money on deposit in England with his factor Robert Barclay. His account books suggest that he spent less on luxury goods and more on necessities over time. Another indicator of this is the steadily decreasing amount of money deposited in England and fewer purchases of English wares. In 1822, he wrote to Barclay that he was depositing only a nominal sum (Benjamin Chew, Jr., to Barclay Bros., 8 May 1822, CFP); a copy of Benjamin Chew Jr's letter, 9 June 1819, CFP, describes his difficulties in raising his sisters' annuities. There are numerous letters to his children describing financial arrangements he was making for them.

practice of wearing kneebreeches and queued hair.<sup>36</sup> This traditionalism did not, however, inspire a conscious preservation of Cliveden as a historic site. He gave away most of the small relics, such as cannonballs from the Battle of Germantown, to curious visitors.<sup>37</sup> The one major social event that took place at Cliveden during his ownership was a reception held in honor of General LaFayette, during his tour of America in 1825. One guest recorded:

I had the honor of breakfasting with LaFayette at Mr. Chews. . . the house was crowded both up stairs and down with men, women, and soldiers. . . I was introduced to LaFayette twice and shook hands with him three times . . . There was so much noise that I could hardly hear a word the General said, every person seemed so anxious to see him eat that a centinal [sic] had to keep guard at the door with a drawn sword. It was very fine indeed."<sup>38</sup>

After the grand party for the Frenchman was over, Cliveden entered a period of quiescence and was untouched by a second wave of expansion and remodeling that swept Germantown in the 1830s, spurred by the advent of rail service.<sup>39</sup> Many neighboring Germantown families profited during this period by selling off land for development, but the Chew estate remained relatively static.

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<sup>36</sup>Harold Donaldson Eberlein and Horace M. Lippincott, *The Colonial Homes of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: J. P. Lippincott, 1912), p. 251.

<sup>37</sup> Some items made their way to the collections of antiquarians and later when Samuel Chew began to seek out such objects. For example, John Fanning Watson, one of Philadelphia's earliest antiquarians recorded that Benjamin Chew, Jr. gave him "three of the last remaining balls and bullets gathered from the Cliveden garret, relics of the Battle of Germantown," see Deborah D. Waters, "Philadelphia's Boswell: John Fanning Watson," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 98 (January 1974), pp. 42-43.

<sup>38</sup>Eberlein and Lippincott, *The Colonial Homes of Philadelphia*, p. 253.

<sup>39</sup>Ellen Rosenthal, "The Interior View: Photographs of Wyck 1871-1906," (M.A. Thesis, University of Delaware, 1979), pp. 7-8.

Following Benjamin Chew, Jr.'s death in 1840, his daughter, Anne Sophia Penn Chew, resided at Cliveden. Her financial resources were meager and, by the mid-nineteenth century, the house was described as old-fashioned and in poor condition. One visitor in 1860 remarked, "We got in at Cliveden and had some talk with Miss Chew . . . the house and grounds [are] woefully out of repair."<sup>40</sup>

The Chew family was sharply divided over the distribution of Benjamin Chew, Jr.'s property. His son Henry Banning Chew and son-in-law James M. Mason were the designated executors. His other son Colonel Benjamin Chew III was excluded from the will. "Colonel Ben" expressed his animosity towards his siblings by initiating a lawsuit to block the distribution of his father's estate. Colonel Ben attempted to collect money that Anne owed him by initiating an eviction suit against her. He may have acquired some of the family furniture from her, for numerous objects from Cliveden were in his possession at the time of his death in 1864.<sup>41</sup>

The personal differences within the family were magnified by the increasingly tense political climate in the late 1850s. The prosperity of the Chew

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<sup>40</sup> Sidney George Fisher, *Diary of Sidney George Fisher, 1834-1871*, ed. N. B. Wainwright (Philadelphia: Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1967), p. 371.

<sup>41</sup> Colonel Benjamin Chew III also convinced his mother, Katherine B. Chew, that her other children were attempting to cheat her and she started another law suit. These suits dragged on for over twenty years, even after Katherine Chew's death. Details regarding these several lawsuits are addressed in numerous documents between 1840 and approximately 1864. The case was eventually resolved in favor of Henry Banning Chew and Mason, but Colonel Benjamin's death in 1864 made the victory irrelevant. The immediate emotional impact of the lawsuits on the family was more important than their ultimate resolution. Henry Banning Chew to Samuel Chew, 22 September 1860, CFP; "Antique Furniture in Cliveden - Data Supplied by Mrs. Samuel Chew 1915," typescript of Mary J. B. Chew, Cliveden Archives, Germantown, Pennsylvania.

family rested on a strong network of family and business connections between Philadelphia and Baltimore. Both Benjamin Chew, Senior, and Junior had depended on income garnered by renting out land and slaves they owned in the South. Personal ties facilitated professional contacts: their law practice served clients throughout southern Pennsylvania and northern Maryland. Marriages of several Chew children to members of important Maryland and Virginia families consolidated this sphere of influence. Now these ties, which had served the family so well, were threatened.<sup>42</sup>

The branch of the family residing in the slave-owning states was divided between sympathy for the southern cause and staunch support of the Union. For example, Henry Banning Chew, a Maryland resident, was a strong unionist and hoped that his neighbors would choose not to secede. His sister Elizabeth, on the other hand, was married to James M. Mason, one of the most outspoken secessionists. Mason was a U.S. Senator known for several controversial measures, notably the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850.<sup>43</sup> He was opposed to any compromise between the North and the South on the issue of slavery. The Chews in Philadelphia were ambivalent. They felt that the Union was important for the prosperity of both North and South but they also empathized with the states rights views of their Southern relations.

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<sup>42</sup> Other Philadelphia families had similar ties to the South, including the Ingersoll and Etting families. See Maxwell Whiteman, *Gentlemen in Crisis: The First Century of the Union League of Philadelphia 1862-1962* (Philadelphia: Winchell Co., 1975), p. 6.

<sup>43</sup> Dumas Malone, *The Dictionary of American Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933), pp. 364-365.

When the southern states began to secede, Colonel Ben saw an opportunity to exploit the political situation to polarize the family. In May of 1861, he circulated a false report to the newspapers that Mason had been arrested for treason, that his Philadelphia property was to be sequestered, and that the Philadelphia family members supported these actions.<sup>44</sup> Henry and Anne Chew heartily denied the report, but it had its effect. Rumors circulated in the press questioning the loyalty of the whole Chew family; newspapers even resurrected the old charge that Benjamin Chew Senior had been a tory. Henry Banning Chew felt so beleaguered that he wrote a letter declaring his loyalty to the Union. His son Samuel was to read it in court if Ben questioned Henry's national allegiance.<sup>45</sup> When war finally broke out, Mason was indeed arrested en route to fill his post as the confederate ambassador to England. He was imprisoned for several months.

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<sup>44</sup> One article stated that "I never saw, in Philadelphia where I was, a manifestation of more wild delight among the masses when it was rumored that he [Mason] was under arrest and on his way to Philadelphia. The Legislature of Pennsylvania has, however, now taken hold of something more valuable than "Jim Mason" himself, viz. - his estates in this Commonwealth . . . Mason was fortunate enough some years ago to marry a lady of Pennsylvania named Chew, whose father the late Benjamin Chew, Esq. inherited from his father, one of the Provincial Chief Justices of Pennsylvania (himself, by the way, a little bit suspected of toryism in the days of the Revolution), a large country seat . . . certified copies of all the Chew title papers are now in a course of preparation; Colonel Ben. Chew, his brother-in-law and other family connections, it is said, will interpose no obstacles. Several persons in and about Germantown - operators in town lots, &c., and patriotically spirited gentlemen - are forwarding the matter, and if Virginia goes off, so does Mr. Mason's estate. . . ." ("Senator Mason in Pennsylvania. Confiscation by the Legislature of the Property of James M. Mason in Pennsylvania," *New York Herald*, 6 May 1861).

<sup>45</sup>"If occasion requires it, I authorize your reading before the court that I have given you above as my sentiments expressing my proclivities on the subject of our present national troubles and of my attachment to the Union. . . . Should there be any further move on the part of BC adverse to my interests, or aspersing my character as a loyal citizen, that can be rebutted before Court by my personal presence, you must let me know forthwith. . ." (Henry Banning Chew to Samuel Chewm 13 September 1861, CFP).

Meanwhile, business relations between North and South came to a standstill. All the Chew family suffered severe financial reverses, and the efforts to settle Benjamin Chew, Jr.'s estate were stymied. Henry Chew wanted Mason to resign his position as an executor of the estate to avoid the difficulty of being unable to obtain his signature when it was needed. Colonel Ben's success in sowing discord was clear in Henry's letter of 13 September 1861, to his son Samuel: "This state of our affairs must greatly embarrass and interfere with our progress in the settlement of the estate, if it does not wholly derange and impede all further action on the part of the executors." He was nonetheless hesitant to ask Mr. Mason to resign because of his apprehension that "any move on my part might be incorrectly attributed to sinister motives."<sup>46</sup>

Samuel Chew was strongly affected by these family disputes. He grew up in Maryland and moved to Cliveden when he was employed in the Philadelphia branch of his family's law practice. A substantial portion of his income was derived from the ground rent of houses he owned in Baltimore. His father Henry had invested most of his money in designing and building rental properties.<sup>47</sup> Having long complained about the high cost of maintaining his estate, Epsom, his father decided to sell it and move into one of his new, trouble-free town houses in

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<sup>46</sup>Henry Banning Chew to Samuel Chew, 4 September 1861, CFP.

<sup>47</sup>"... I am really embarrassed for money to meet the daily demands on me in the erection of the houses I am building. . . for the benefit of my three sons. I have . . . built this season 6 Dwellings - 4 of them rented and the other 2 no doubt will have tenants as soon as finished--which will soon be the case. They are universally spoken highly of as a pretty display of my taste - I say they are very handsome: but 2 more now under way, much larger with modern improvements, are to be "par excellence . . ." (Henry Banning Chew to Samuel Chew, 13 October 1859, CFP).

Baltimore.<sup>48</sup> Samuel too was interested in real estate and building speculations. Following the elder's example, he planned to build a new house. With the outbreak of war, though, Samuel and his father quickly realized that their Baltimore properties would not yield the usual bounty. The city was threatened by mob rule--most people of means fled the city. Tenants, feeling the financial strain of the war, refused to pay the usual high rents and some ceased paying at all. Samuel reacted at first with anger and asked his father to evict the tenants. His father, however, was fearful and took the longer view. He still owed money on his newly-built houses and now was unable to rent them all. He urged his son to keep his present tenants even if they could not pay their rent.<sup>49</sup> He was worried that a glut in the rental housing market would enable the poorer segments of the city population to "invade" and depreciate the value of their property.<sup>50</sup> Samuel did divest himself of one of his Baltimore houses in these adverse circumstances. Trying first to locate a buyer among the "right kind of men," he was forced to sell at a loss.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> "There has been an intimation that a man of fortune might be inclined to purchase Epsom . . . I have said that we all will cheerfully part with all or any part, if a satisfactory price can be got for it . . . as there is and has been only aggravation and unhappiness here for years and every year I am compelled to expend on it more than all my receipts from it -- If a sale could be effected . . . I would forthwith move into one of the new houses I have built." (Henry Banning Chew to Samuel Chew, 8 May 1860, CFP).

<sup>49</sup> Henry Banning Chew to Samuel Chew, 16 May 1861, CFP.

<sup>50</sup> "I am now well convinced that the market space property has depreciated within 6 to 12 months nearly if not one half -- the whole square being now occupied by JEWS --lager beer saloons, etc" [original emphasis] (Henry Banning Chew to Samuel Chew, 2 April 1860, CFP).

<sup>51</sup> Henry Banning Chew to Samuel Chew, 19 March 1860; Anne S. P. Chew to Samuel Chew, 18 May 1860, CFP.

The war was not the only reason that Samuel tabled his building plans. His aunt was on the verge of losing Cliveden, and most of the family was willing to sell the house. Samuel made the decision to help Anne repurchase the house after most of the attached land was sold.<sup>52</sup> Samuel's co-ownership of Cliveden seems to have been prompted not by a strong desire to live there himself but rather by his affection for the aunt who had lived most of her life there. In 1861, however, Samuel became engaged to Mary Johnson Brown. With this new responsibility in mind, he put off plans to build a new house indefinitely and continued to reside at Cliveden. (Figs. 2 and 3.)

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<sup>52</sup>Samuel Chew to A. D. Cash, 18 July 1857.

## CHAPTER TWO Mary and Samuel Chew at Cliveden (c.1860-c.1927)

Samuel's fiance, Mary Johnson Brown, was the daughter of David Sands Brown, a Philadelphia dry goods merchant and owner of a cotton textile factory.<sup>53</sup> Her family was wealthy; therefore Samuel was advised by his father not to let Mary know the depth of the Chews' money problems. His father also urged that the young couple have

as little display, extravagance, or outlay or whatever you may please to call it, in your wedding and attendant plans and arrangements as can possibly be avoided. Every dollar thus saved will be much better enjoyed by being applied to the comfort and support of your wife and yourself. I speak from my own experience. . . .<sup>54</sup>

Samuel probably did conceal the true situation of the Chew family's troubled finances, for Mary mentioned nothing of that nature in her diary in the year preceding her marriage. While Anne had lived alone at Cliveden (circa 1840-1860), she was hard pressed to keep up with heating bills and repairs on the house. Her main investment in the house was an 1856 addition, attaching the outdoor kitchen to the back of the main house. After a few other improvements, such as

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<sup>53</sup>David Sands Brown, Mary's father, was a wealthy manufacturer and wholesaler of printed cottons and dry goods. In 1845, he was already included in a directory of the wealthiest Philadelphians. See *Wealth and Biography of the Wealthy Citizens of Philadelphia (Worth \$50,000 and Up)* (Philadelphia: G. B. Zieber and Co., 1845); also *McElroy's Philadelphia City Directory for 1865* (Philadelphia: Sherman and Co., 1865), p. 103. It is interesting to note that none of the Chew family were included among the city's wealthiest residents.

<sup>54</sup>In one letter Samuel's father details his financial difficulties, explaining why he can offer Samuel little help with his wedding expenses. He then concludes, "No secrets between man and wife after marriage, but the injunction does not apply during engagement" (Henry Banning Chew to Samuel Chew, 11 April 1861, CFP).

installing stoves, she had little money to spare. To visitors Anne emphasized the age and historic import of the house as a rationalization for its disrepair. Some battlescars were left unrepaired as curiosities, but numerous historic objects had been removed from the house and those *in situ* suffered neglect. Nonetheless, some old objects in the house were modified, apparently in an attempt to update their appearance.<sup>55</sup> Among the numerous bills and receipts from these years, the only record relating to new furnishings was for a "French bedstead." Anne's limited resources afforded her little opportunity to pursue fashionability. A contemporary description of the house's appearance when Mary arrived there as a young bride suggests that Anne had made little effort to create the complex Victorian interiors that observers of the day expected:

Went to call on the young bride, Mrs. Sam Chew. . . . Several people were there & the whole thing struck me rather strangely, the imposing old house with its mutilated statues and grim stone lions, the slipshod Irish chambermaid who ushered us in, the fine large rooms almost destitute of furniture, in which a few heavy, shabby old articles contrasted strangely with the one or two little modern knick-knacks . . . it seemed such a strange old place for two young people to be beginning their lives in; and Miss Anne Chew with her handsome, sad face & and simple high breeding, & the little, insignificant, chattering, chirping bride. (I knew better afterwards, an amiable, admirable woman she turned out.)<sup>56</sup>

Mary's position in her new home is difficult to ascertain. Before her marriage, she expressed anxiety about the proposed living arrangements with

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<sup>55</sup>For example, an eighteenth-century bed had a new, higher headboard added to make it look more like a typical nineteenth-century bed. It is uncertain when exactly such changes were made and dating them must be deduced by analyzing such factors as the family's financial standing.

<sup>56</sup>Fanny Kemble Wister, ed. "Sarah Butler Wister's Civil War Diary," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 102 (July 1978), p. 314.

Samuel's Aunt Anne. Anne was very fond of Samuel but turned a critical eye on Mary. From Mary's diary entries, it seems she reacted angrily in private if not in public. Finally, two months before her marriage, she seemed more resigned:

I spent last Saturday afternoon at Cliveden-- very pleasantly - I had been there but once since January. It was very lovely -- green and springlike and I find that I now meet its mistress without trembling and without the throb of bitter feeling which a sense of injustice [engenders]. It is not that I have forgotten the past or recognize the injustice any less. But that I feel myself too erring to judge another, too human to find fault . . . <sup>57</sup>

Mary ceased writing a diary upon her marriage, as was the custom. Throughout the early years of her marriage, Mary played a secondary role, with Anne continuing to manage Cliveden. Mary had several offspring to absorb her attention; and Anne was very fond of the children. Nonetheless, the communication between the two women seems to have been somewhat strained. Mary relied on Samuel to act as a mediator between her and his aunt on occasions when misunderstandings arose.

Samuel's marriage to Mary was a significant step in bolstering his family's financial and social status, especially after he began to participate in the management of his father-in-law's business.<sup>58</sup> Still, after the tumultuous years his family had just endured, he was uncertain about the stability of his material world. He had seen his family divided, its reputation and property threatened. His father, a guiding force in Samuel's life, died in 1866 without having recovered his former prosperity. Meanwhile Germantown continued to grow at a rapid pace. When

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<sup>57</sup>Diary of Mary Johnson Brown Chew, 10 May 1861, CFP. In her diary Mary also wrote that she was afraid Anne did not think her humble enough; 17 April, 1861.

<sup>58</sup> Samuel Chew to Anne Sophia Penn Chew, undated (circa 1873), CFP.

another rail line was laid on the street in front of Cliveden, Samuel described it as an invasion. As he watched the work advance, he wrote, "They have a gang of hands, say five abreast and closely huddled as far from our gate to Washington Lane--I suppose three hundred men. You may suppose they make quite a commotion. Their red flannel shirts gleaming in the sun reminded me that the Redcoated British soldiers once occupied in the same way . . ."59

Even as Germantown become more populated, the locus of suburban fashion moved away from Germantown to the Main Line. Railroad executives sought to attract buyers among the city's wealthy industrialists for new residential development. Elaborate Victorian country houses sprang up along the Main Line during this period (Fig. 4). Andrew Jackson Downing, for one, urged restraint. He advised Philadelphians to opt for houses "stylish as well as simple and republican," and not too glaringly new.<sup>60</sup> In accord with his prescriptions, more and more colonial revival country houses began to appear along the Main Line. While these houses were not modest or especially republican, they were meant to embody traditional values.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Samuel Chew to Henry Banning Chew, 23 June 1859, CFP.

<sup>60</sup> Sidney George Fisher writes extensively of Downing's influence on the building of country houses in Philadelphia in the *Diary of Sidney George Fisher, 1834-1871*, ed. N. B. Wainwright (Philadelphia: Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1967). See also Larry Edward Gobrect, "Nathaniel Parker Willis: In Search of the Suburban Ideal," (M.A. Thesis, University of Delaware, 1980), p. 61.

<sup>61</sup> See John Marshall Groff, "Green Country Towns: The Development of Philadelphia's Main Line, 1870-1915," (M.A. thesis, University of Delaware, 1981), pp. 20-22, 33, 61-72.

By the mid-1860s, Samuel had the resources to update Cliveden or to build a new house. At this time he was beginning to realize he had inherited a country lifestyle that most Americans envied and he ceased to view living at Cliveden as a temporary convenience. The transformation of the house from its dilapidated state into a memorial to the Chew family rested not on just Samuel's appreciation of country house gentility but also on his deep fascination with his family's history and on his ability to use it to engage the aspirations and imaginations of others.

It is difficult to determine exactly when Samuel's change in attitude toward the house occurred. It seems to coincide with the death of his uncle, Colonel Benjamin Chew, in 1864. Many of the furnishings at his uncle's house, called Hermit Lodge, had once been at Cliveden, acquired originally by Chief Justice Chew from the William Penn family. These objects were later auctioned, and Samuel brought them back to Germantown.<sup>62</sup> Also in 1864, Samuel discovered that the original doors from Cliveden, replaced in the 1770s after they were heavily damaged during the Battle of Germantown, were still extant. They had come into the possession of a Treasury Department employee who was unwilling to part with them. Soon thereafter, an acquaintance of Samuel's alerted him to the existence of some of Chief Justice Chew's original papers and letters, in the hands of a New York bookseller. This acquaintance implied that there was something embarrassing and indiscrete about family papers being owned by strangers.<sup>63</sup> Thereafter, Samuel

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<sup>62</sup>"Antique Furniture in Cliveden - Data Supplied by Mrs. Samuel Chew 1915," typescript of Mary J. B. Chew, Cliveden Archives; Samuel Chew to B. Chew, 30 December 1883.

<sup>63</sup>J. Sabin and Sons, Office of the American Bibliophilist of New York, to Samuel Chew, 9 April 1876; Beverly Chew to Samuel Chew, 25 May 1876, 2 March 1877, 11 July 1877. CFP.

bought any Chew papers that came to light. Apparently his crusade to save the house and family objects was initially motivated by a desire to protect the honor and privacy of his family. He was determined, too, to repossess the "Battle Doors" and as many relics associated with the family as he could find.<sup>64</sup> The "Battle Doors" were brought to Philadelphia to be exhibited at the Centennial, and their owner finally agreed to allow Samuel Chew to purchase them.<sup>65</sup> They were subsequently displayed, along with three guns and bayonets supposedly used at the Battle of Germantown, in the reception hall of Cliveden (Fig. 5).

Today Cliveden has such integrity as a historic site because, in addition to the house itself, many family papers and furnishings survive as well. Some objects did remain in the house throughout its history but much of the Chew patrimony was reassembled by Samuel. After his death, a family legend developed that nothing had ever left Cliveden's sheltering walls. Samuel's central role in amassing the collection at Cliveden was all but forgotten; in fact, it was he who maintained the architectural purity of the house and viewed everything associated with it as integral to preserving its history.

As Samuel became more interested in the house, he tried to learn more about the Chew family. He contacted an agency in England to collect whatever materials could be found there, and he himself compiled as much genealogical information as

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<sup>64</sup> Samuel Chew's first inquiry concerning the doors was made in 1864. Mr. C. Cohn, Special Comptroller, U. S. Treasury Department to Samuel Chew, 3 December, 1864, CFP.

<sup>65</sup>National Museum, Curator's Record, 1877-98, INHP. On 20 July 1883, the curator's records note that a certificate for "the doors of the Chew house at Germantown" provided for their return to Samuel Chew rather than to the lender.

possible in America. One question which especially intrigued him was the origin of the family crest. He favored an account that the family arms had been awarded to the Chew family after the Revolution. He made no further mention of this theory, however, after receiving this response to an inquiry: "As to the City of Philadelphia having conferred the arms on your great-grandfather, that I take to be an absolute impossibility. The City might bestow a medal or special honorary privileges, but it would certainly not have usurped the function of the Herald's College."<sup>66</sup> Another family legend was called into question when Samuel was unable to confirm that his ancestor John Chew had built the first house in Jamestown.<sup>67</sup>

Since Samuel was the first to assemble a Chew family tree, others consulted him when the Centennial gave rise to a surge of interest in genealogy.<sup>68</sup> After receiving Samuel's genealogical tables, one distant cousin responded:

I have often regretted that, when I was in England several years ago, I did not go down into Somersetshire and inquire whether any trace of our race are yet to be found in the region which tradition affirms to have been its cradle. In Murray's Guide to Devon & Somerset mention is made of an old mansion of the middle ages known as Chew Court . . . .

The cousin did confess some skepticism about the merits of genealogical investigation:

. . . regarded in one light, this interest is of a rather illusory character; for if we go back to the eighth generation to which this

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<sup>66</sup> S. C. Chew to Samuel Chew, 13 September 1877, CFP.

<sup>67</sup>R. B. Hunclegrathe to Samuel Chew, 5 June 1876, CFP.

<sup>68</sup> A typical request was for a copy of the "the Chew pedigree," F. B. Herriot to Samuel Chew, 22 January 1877, CFP. Samuel Chew's papers from the 1860s-1870s contain extensive correspondence concerning the family genealogy.

table takes us, we will find that there were some two-hundred and fifty direct ancestors all standing on an equally near relationship to us with the one in whom we are specially interested . . .<sup>69</sup>

One researcher Samuel assisted was criticized for “falling into the error genealogists are prone to in recording the fabulous as well as the real portions of a family history: to one conversant with history this works no harm, but to the majority of those who in fact handle such books false notions of history are apt to be taught.”<sup>70</sup> If Samuel did not purposefully give rise to “false notions of history,” he expressed no reservations about either the accuracy or comprehensiveness of his researches. The language Samuel and those around him employed to discuss genealogy--words such as “high breeding”, “race”, and “pedigree”--reveals their preoccupation with social hierarchy rooted in lineage.

Samuel's relationship with Frank Etting was instrumental in broadening his understanding of the evocative power of Cliveden's physical presence and historical significance. The two men shared a close friendship, a business relationship, and similar social backgrounds.<sup>71</sup> Etting, like Chew, came from an old family that gained wealth and influence first in Baltimore and then in Philadelphia. He expressed anxiety that the changing demographic composition of the cities, and the susceptibility of new immigrants to partisan politics and political huckstering, was

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<sup>69</sup> S. C. Chew to Samuel Chew, 6 September 1877, CFP.

<sup>70</sup> Thomas H. Montgomery to Samuel Chew, 8 November 1877, CFP, regarding a book by Lawrence B. Thomas on the genealogy of several old Maryland families, for which Samuel Chew provided assistance. See also S. C. Chew to Samuel Chew, 6 September 1877, CFP.

<sup>71</sup> Samuel recorded that he was sharing a new office with Etting (Samuel Chew to Henry Banning Chew, 27 June 1860, CFP).

undermining the quality of government. He may have felt threatened by the growing anti-semitism among members of his own class, in response to the large numbers of recent Jewish immigrants, although his family had converted from Judaism to episcopalianism during the eighteenth century.<sup>72</sup> In anticipation of the nation's centennial, Etting initiated the preservation of Independence Hall in order to educate "the masses" about what he perceived as "American values." Education, he believed, could be undertaken effectively at historic shrines through what he called "object-instruction" with a moral message.<sup>73</sup>

The Centennial celebrations in Philadelphia increased public awareness of "living" history embodied in old buildings with historical associations, and Samuel took advantage of this national nostalgia to promote Cliveden. Etting's political agenda had little impact on Samuel's thinking, however. What energy Samuel expended on antiquarian pursuits was channeled into the preservation and promotion of Cliveden. While Etting was a leader in city-wide restorations and preparations for the Centennial, motivated by a belief in preserving historic shrines as unifying symbols for Americans, Samuel left such philanthropic community involvement to his wife.

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<sup>72</sup> Nathaniel Burt, *The Perennial Philadelphians: The Anatomy of an American Aristocracy* (Boston: Brown, Little, and Co., 1963), p. 566.

<sup>73</sup> Etting wrote that he was "persuaded that independent of the sentiment of patriotism thus nourished, we are pursuing a system of object instruction in history for the masses" (*Second Report of the Committee on the Restoration of Independence Hall to the Mayor's Office, 1873*, p. 6. INHP).

### CHAPTER THREE

#### Images of Cliveden: Samuel Chew and the Colonial Revival

Photographs of people and places were an important element of Victorian decor. It was common to photograph the rooms of a house in series and then mount the images in an album to give the viewer a sense of the whole dwelling. For example, photographs from Wyck House, taken in the 1870s, show the back hall as well as the front parlor.<sup>74</sup> At Cliveden, however, nearly all the existing photographs and paintings, prior to 1900, are of two subjects: the exterior of the house and the sparsely furnished interior reception hall.<sup>75</sup> The recurrence of these two scenes was the result of Samuel's personal efforts to mold Cliveden's image. The reception hall and the facade exposed the public face of the house, behind which the more private living spaces were concealed. Thus, Samuel's choice of subject matter was conservative, but his manipulation of visual records and messages was remarkably modern. He sought to promote public awareness of Cliveden and to control how the house was pictured.

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<sup>74</sup> Rosenthal, "The Interior View," pp. 3-4; Rosenthal includes photographs of Wyck. See also Susan R. Finkel, "Victorian Photography and Carte de Visite Albums, 1860-1880," (M.A. thesis, University of Delaware, 1984), p. 26.

<sup>75</sup> The photographic collection remains uncataloged. My survey of its contents revealed a large number of formal portraits of various Chew family members and friends and a smaller number of informal snapshots of Samuel and his children on the Cliveden grounds. There is a large group of exterior views of the house but only one nineteenth-century interior other than the reception hall. There are numerous interior views of different rooms in the house taken in the 1920s, the 1960s, and the 1970s, most of which were intended for publication in various periodicals. It is not known if copies or negatives of the photographs Samuel sent out are still in existence. Further research might uncover them among the papers of his correspondents.

By the late 1860s, Samuel had begun to enclose pictures of Cliveden in his letters both to old friends and individuals with whom he hoped to initiate correspondence. At first, he drew his own sketches of the house, then he commissioned a professional engraving, but finally he settled on photography as his medium of choice. He was well aware that photography was a novelty; hence people were apt to display photographs. Almost invariably the recipients of his images responded with thanks and indicated they had placed the pictures in a prominent place.<sup>76</sup>

In the early 1870s, Samuel turned his attention to fine art. It is no coincidence that his mode of image-making shifted at the very moment the Union League of Philadelphia launched a major promotion of American historical art. The Union League was an elite political club founded during the Civil War. It excluded those who sympathized with the South.<sup>77</sup> The League art collection was begun to decorate the club building on Broad Street with commemorations of the Civil War. Early acquisitions included a portrait of Abraham Lincoln by Edward Marchant

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<sup>76</sup> Samuel's 1867 account book records the payment of \$18.00, paid to Bourquin for "engraving and printing a plate of Cliveden," Cliveden Archives, Germantown. The following letter was a typical response: "I have suspended it [the photographic view of Cliveden] in the parlour where it will remain as a token of your unvarying kindness. . . its value is greatly enhanced in my estimation by the way in which it was conveyed. Your mode of doing these things, which few know how to do gracefully, would give value to the most homely representation of your time-honored and historically renowned home" (John S. Littell to Samuel Chew, 23 January 1863, CFP).

<sup>77</sup> The Union League was founded in 1862 by pro-Union Philadelphians who felt Southern sympathizers in the city were becoming too outspoken. See Maxwell Whiteman, *Gentlemen in Crisis: The First Century of the Union League of Philadelphia 1862-1962* (Philadelphia: Winchell Co., 1975), p. 16.

(1863), *General Meade standing by his Horse at Gettysburg* (1863) and *Thaddeus Stevens* (1868), both by Peter Rothermal.<sup>78</sup>

The League sponsored its first art exhibition, limited to Philadelphia artists, in 1870. By that time, upper-class Philadelphians were already attempting to rebuild their power base and to re-assert class solidarity. Accordingly, the Union League began to emphasize nationalism over sectionalism. This was evident in the following art exhibitions which became increasingly nationalistic. After the first exhibition, the shows were opened to all American artists and included many more pictures with Revolutionary, as opposed to Civil War, themes. Subsequent shows featured paintings with titles such as: *Reading the Declaration of Independence* and *Washington Presenting Governor Dinwiddie's Letter to Chevalier Legardeur de Saint Pierre*. The League commissioned a series of portraits of American heroes by James Reid Lambdin in 1870. Not to be out done, Samuel ordered a portrait by Lambdin of his great-grandfather, which was later exhibited at Independence Hall.<sup>79</sup> Neither Chew nor Frank Etting became members of the Union League, but they both patronized artists the League favored.

Chew's next major art purchase was from Edward Lamson Henry, a member of the New York Union League art committee. Henry established his reputation as a painter of genre scenes and specialized in railroad and Civil War

<sup>78</sup>Whiteman, *Gentlemen in Crisis*, pp. 121-122.

<sup>79</sup> Whiteman, *Gentlemen in Crisis*, pp. 121-122, 129. Lambdin writes that his father, James Lambdin, "will be very glad to see you about the Chief Justice portrait . . ." (George Lambdin to Samuel Chew, 13 April 1874, CFP). Frank Etting also had Lambdin copy portraits for Independence Hall.

themes.<sup>80</sup> He became interested in preservation and historical subjects in the 1860s when he painted the Westover Mansion, which seemed to him "solid and serene, above the confusions of the civil war."<sup>81</sup> (Fig. 6.) In 1865, he painted the John Hancock house in Boston just before it was torn down. This depiction was well-received, and demands for similar scenes of traditional domestic architecture and interiors increased dramatically. Wealthy patrons from Boston, New York, and Philadelphia called on him to create romanticized pictures of the "old homestead. . . [with] those hundred little things that make homelife precious . . . [and] ancestral homes [that] impart the very feeling of security and happy contentment . . ."<sup>82</sup> He often used photography to help him accurately translate landscapes and buildings onto canvas as well as to record activities he observed. His careful attention to detail and color imparted a sense of realism and immediacy that balanced the sentimentality of his subject matter. In 1871, Etting ordered *Independence Hall*, a painting of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, from Henry.<sup>83</sup> Etting then introduced Henry's work to Samuel, who must have been intrigued by the artist's innovative use of photography. Samuel invited Henry to produce a painting

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<sup>80</sup> For more information on Henry, see Elizabeth McCausland's *The Life and Work of Edward Lamson Henry, 1841-1919* (Albany: University of the State of New York, 1945). Today, Henry is classified both as a genre painter and as a colonial revivalist. See also Celia Betsky, "Inside the Past: The Interior and the Colonial Revival in American Art and Literature 1860-1914," in *The Colonial Revival in America*, ed. Alan Axelrod (New York: W. W. Norton, 1985), pp. 242-277.

<sup>81</sup> Marling, *George Washington Slept Here*, p. 61.

<sup>82</sup> Marling, *George Washington Slept Here*, p. 61. At the same time, Henry began to collect antiques and to write letters and articles urging preservation of old houses (Roth, "The Colonial Revival and 'Centennial Furniture,'" pp. 63-64); Newspaper clipping, "Art Notes," 3 April 1879, source unknown, E. L. Henry Collection, New York State Library, Albany.

<sup>83</sup> McCausland, *The Life and Work of Edward Lamson Henry*, pp. 98-100; Frank Etting to E. L. Henry, 28 June 1871, E. L. Henry Collection, New York State Library, Albany.

of the reception held for LaFayette at Cliveden in 1825. Henry responded by coming to Germantown to take photographs of the house.

Samuel was by no means a major art patron. He ordered only a few paintings, and they were carefully staged by Henry and himself to focus public attention on certain themes. The LaFayette painting recorded an event long remembered by Germantown residents as a venerable occasion. Samuel ensured the popular appeal of the work by including in it the ancestors of people still living in Germantown. He collected likenesses of anyone known to have been in attendance and interviewed anyone in the neighborhood who remembered the event. Without this documentation, Samuel wrote, "My picture will be only an imaginative picture and that I do not want."<sup>84</sup> When the canvas was completed, Henry warned Samuel that "You must not forget, however, that some of the principle[sic] faces were painted from black silhouettes and the filling in of the faces and the color was left entirely to the imagination so deal as lenient[ly] as possible under the circumstances."<sup>85</sup>

Despite a stated interest in accuracy of detail, Henry and Samuel countenanced some artistic license. Rather than placing the scene in the dining room where it actually occurred, the completed painting shows Samuel's grandfather, the only figure in the scene rendered in colonial-style dress, beside the

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<sup>84</sup> Samuel Chew to Anne Sophia Penn Chew, undated (circa 1873), CFP.

<sup>85</sup> Henry remarks in this letter that Mr. Etting, Sr., appeared in the picture. Edward L. Henry to Samuel Chew, 17 June 1874, CFP.

great general in the reception hall (Fig. 7).<sup>86</sup> The two men stand center stage, surrounded by other people and framed under the hall's distinctive columns. This was the dignified image Samuel wished to convey. A precedent for this kind of theatrical painting was the 1865 canvas by Daniel Huntington entitled *The Republican Court in the Time of Washington, or Lady Washington's Reception Day*. This picture showed a large gathering of people in fancy eighteenth-century costume over which Martha Washington presided from a dais (Fig. 8). The artist said the scene was not intended to recreate one particular event but to "give the general tenor" of Mrs. Washington's parties. Huntington incorporated in the entourage famous people who had living relatives; he then charged the descendants admission to view the painting. The Chews were represented in the painting by two of the Chief Justice's daughters. The artist was widely criticized for pandering to the wealthy, but his ploy was apparently effective since the same painting was exhibited in 1875 to raise money for the Centennial.<sup>87</sup>

E. L. Henry's second painting for Chew, *The Battle of Germantown*, was unusual for the times in its depiction of a battle in progress (Fig. 9). With the embattled house in the center of the composition and the American soldiers prominently shown in the foreground, the image suggests the sacrifice of the house to the war cause. The scene was intensively researched. In December of 1874, Henry wrote to Samuel, "I have been painting on it for some time and it is now in

<sup>86</sup> Samuel's Aunt Anne later stated that verity was sacrificed "for artistic effect in setting the principal actors between the pillars in the hall" (Marion Harland, *Some Colonial Homesteads and Their Stories* [New York: G. P. Putnam and Sons, 1897], p. 127).

<sup>87</sup> Marling, *George Washington Slept Here*, pp. 47-49; *Harpers Weekly*, 27 February 1875, pp. 176-178.

such a state that I would like to ask you a few questions out at your place in regard to where the 4 statues stood in front of the house and one or two other things. Then if you will point me out those same old statues (lying around somewhere evidently now on the place) I will make sketches of them. . . .<sup>88</sup> In addition to reproducing the original appearance of the grounds, Henry and Samuel employed documentary sources to determine the details of the battle.<sup>89</sup> Henry made a study for another painting depicting British soldiers fighting inside the house. Significantly Samuel decided against its execution. He may have concluded that a scene of redcoats occupying Cliveden contradicted the interpretation he wanted to place on the house as the family's offering in the Revolutionary cause.

Compared with E. L. Henry's other historical paintings, those which Samuel commissioned lack the qualities of reverie and timelessness which characterize Henry's best known colonial revival works, for example, *The Old Clock on the Stairs* (Fig. 10). The paintings of eighteenth-century Cliveden are more closely related in style to Henry's views of contemporary nineteenth-century life. Period critics of the genre paintings often called Henry an illustrator rather than an artist because his pictures were literal representations and enjoyed wide-

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<sup>88</sup>Edward L. Henry to Samuel Chew, 8 December 1874, CFP.

<sup>89</sup>The list entitled "Authorities used with reference to the Painting of the 'Attack upon Judge Chew's House during the Battle of Germantown, Oct. 4, 1877'" cited the following sources: Washington's Official Despatch; J. Pickering's letter, 1823; Days, Penn: Historical Collections 1840; Marshall's United States; Battle of the United States by Henry D. Dawson; Wescott's History of Philadelphia; Lossing's Field Book of the American Revolution; (and others). List by Edward L. Henry, April 1875, CFP.

spread distribution through reproduction in popular publications.<sup>90</sup> It was just this journalistic aspect that attracted Samuel. For his purposes, Samuel made an effective choice of artist. He wanted literal, time-specific "documentaries" of events which would seem realistic to the viewer.

The publicity the Cliveden paintings generated was substantial. Both were exhibited at the New York Academy of Art and then at the Centennial. William Astor saw them in New York and later called on E. L. Henry to request a painting of Cliveden "with some episode of the battle going on." Henry wrote to Samuel:

I couldn't give him an answer till I asked you as it is a private house and I wanted your permission. . . He asked so much about your house and seemed so interested in its history and of the Family and was very anxious to see the place near and the interior too I presume. I told him I knew you would be kind enough to grant him the favor. It's needless to say who he is.<sup>91</sup>

Given all the antique furniture and historical relics which Samuel collected at Cliveden, it seems strange that he would select recently completed paintings to represent the house and the Chew family at the Centennial. It was, however, the image of Cliveden that most concerned Samuel, and he could best maintain proprietorship of the image through the paintings he commissioned. They were viewed by large numbers of visitors at the 1876 exposition.

Samuel continued his practice of sending out photographs to correspondents, but he sent photographs of the paintings rather than the earlier

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<sup>90</sup> McCausland, *The Life and Work of Edward Lamson Henry*, p. 117.

<sup>91</sup> Edward L. Henry to Samuel Chew, 15 December 1877, CFP.

sketches and engravings.<sup>92</sup> Some recipients seem to have developed "false notions" about art as well as about history from viewing Henry's paintings, or photographs of the paintings, since they did not clearly understand that the depictions were but newly made. They presumed that the pictures were contemporary with the events shown in them and accepted the reproductions as completely accurate representations. For example, one person found it interesting "to compare the view of Cliveden a century ago," with its present appearance.<sup>93</sup>

The paintings reached a wider audience through dissemination in several national publications. While Samuel was successful in promoting selected images of the house, he was not able to shape verbal accounts to the same degree. An article entitled "Old Philadelphia," published in *Harper's* (1876) reported:

There are innumerable musty old stories yet extant as to which of the long-dead Philadelphia worthies were rebels and which were loyal to King George, and dark whispers go about . . . But age does not make scandal more savory.<sup>94</sup>

The author promised not to "meddle with the tainted gossip of the past," but then went on to condemn the actions of Philadelphia Tories, mentioning specifically

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<sup>92</sup> One recipient wrote, "I received yesterday the copy of the Reception, and I thank you for it. It shall be framed and hung up. . ." (P. R. Steas [spelling uncertain as the signature is not clear] to Samuel Chew, 22 January 1875, CFP). Another wrote, "I am very much obliged to you for the two photographs Battle of Germantown and LaFayette's Reception at Cliveden which I shall value very highly. They will not be put away in a portfolio but framed and hung in my office where I am sure they will attract much attention" (McHenry Howard to Samuel Chew, 28 September 1875, CFP).

<sup>93</sup> McHenry Howard to Samuel Chew, 28 September 1875, CFP.

<sup>94</sup> Rebecca Harding Davis, "Old Philadelphia," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* May 1876, pp. 868-882.

Peggy Chew and Major André. The writer recalled the Mischianza, the infamous loyalist festival held during the occupation of Philadelphia:

When we remember that these were adult men and women who dubbed themselves knights and ladies . . . and for twelve solid hours carried on with the clumsy trickery of sham tournaments, and a sham palace, and a pageant of which nothing was real but the thunder of cannon and death waiting without, the Mischianza becomes not a magnificent spectacle, but one of the most significant events of the Revolution. It was the last formal effort to assume the manners of a court and a social life to which the country and the people themselves were in character and purpose alien and unsuited.<sup>95</sup>

This vivid description of the Mischianza was illustrated not with a scene of Peggy Chew at the sham tournament but rather with a line drawing of the Henry painting, "Reception in Chew House a Century Ago" (the 1825 reception for LaFayette), an event not even mentioned in the text of "Old Philadelphia" (Fig. 11).

Despite such occasional negative publicity, Cliveden gained stature as an American shrine. For example, Albert Myer in the United States War Department, commended Samuel:

You cannot imagine how warmly I thank you for the graceful courtesy of sending me as you did inscribed on the Centennial anniversary of the day of [the Battle of] Germantown the picture of Cliveden as it on that day appeared. The exquisite idea of enveloping the picture in the American flags of then and now was that of a scholar, artist, and patriot - the picture will be cherished in my family.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Davis, "Old Philadelphia," pp. 868-882.

<sup>96</sup> Albert Myer to Samuel Chew, 6 April 1878, CFP.

Myer then went on to request from Samuel the twigs of a tree at Cliveden, “touched by each one of the Chew blood now in the mansion . . . . They shall grow to be known as the *Chew House Trees* a memorial and incentive to my children. I trust that if ever the house is to be fought for again against any kind of enemy there may be some of their race to defend it.”<sup>97</sup> In an era when physical and cultural environments were perceived as molds in which individuals were shaped, Cliveden came to define the character of its occupants. In 1926, Cliveden was praised as “Such a house [as] eloquently bespeaks the stability and the culture of a people whom an uncompromising British government drove to revolution.”<sup>98</sup> Samuel’s image-making had borne the fruit of public approbation he so greatly prized.

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<sup>97</sup> Albert Myer to Samuel Chew, 6 April 1878, CFP.

<sup>98</sup> Talbot F. Hamlin, *The Pageant of America: The American Spirit in Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926) p. 26.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Beyond the House: Mary Chew and the Colonial Revival

While Samuel Chew's antiquarianism was narrowly focused on his own family and on Cliveden, Mary's interest in preservation was oriented towards the community, both in Germantown and in Philadelphia. Her subordinate position at Cliveden and her own less illustrious family background may have diluted her interest in Chew family history, or she may have felt it was her husband's terrain. It was by virtue of her marriage to Samuel that Mary was invited by Frank Etting to serve on the Board of Lady Managers for the Independence Hall and National Museum project. Etting asked the women to knit together a network of female representatives in all the states for the purpose of gathering relics.<sup>99</sup> Mary had had little previous involvement in public life, but she ardently pursued materials for the Museum and was soon elected secretary of the Lady's Board. (Figs. 12 and 13).

In 1875, the Women's Centennial Executive Committee requested that Mary Chew and two other Lady Managers of the National Museum organize a cooperative exhibition of historical material to be located on the fair grounds.<sup>100</sup> The Centennial organizers wanted artifacts to emphasize the domestic aspects of American life as the basis for common social and cultural ties. For example, the "New England Kitchen," located in a reproduction log cabin, featured not only old

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<sup>99</sup> For an analysis of the Mount Vernon Women's Association's organizational structure and its adaptation by other preservationists, see Hosmer, *Presence of the Past*, pp. 29-62.

<sup>100</sup> The three women selected were Mary Chew, Anna D. Scott, and Catherine K. Meredith. See Minutes, Board of Managers of National Museum, 27 February 1875, recorded by Mary Chew, Secretary, Chew Collection, INHP.

kitchen implements but also "colonial" food served in front of an open hearth. Women in colonial costume served as hostesses and guides. By romanticizing the colonial home and family life, the organizers suggested an atmosphere of cooperation and order untouched by political and military concerns. As Karal Marling has pointed out, even George Washington's uniform and other Revolutionary War paraphernalia were exhibited in a cozy camp-like setting.<sup>101</sup> The Women's Centennial Executive Committee also organized a pavilion called "The Women's Building." It showcased a few exceptional women in specialized professions, who had successfully combined "feminine virtue with professional achievement," but most of the exhibits reiterated the domestic theme of the fair's historical venues.<sup>102</sup> By and large the organizers of the Women's Building, drawn from the ranks of Philadelphia's established families, were guided by "traditional, old-order values associated with stability, individual skills, and women's domestic and moral order."<sup>103</sup> Thus the main emphasis of the Women's Building was on products of women's labor in the home, specifically the material culture of upper-middle-class women.

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<sup>101</sup> This exhibition is typical of the way in which domestic life was depicted as a shared memory among nineteenth-century Americans. . . 'olde tyme' kitchens appeared all over the country from before the Civil War until after the Columbian exposition, and they were all very much alike. See Rodris Roth, "The New England, or 'Olde Tyme,' Kitchen Exhibits at Nineteenth-Century Fairs," in *The Colonial Revival in America*, ed. Alan Axelrod (New York: W. W. Norton, 1985), pp. 160-165. Mary Chew may have served as a guide since her "centennial dress" was a colonial costume. See also Rodris Roth "The Colonial Revival and 'Centennial Furniture,'" p. 60; Marling, *George Washington Slept Here*, pp. 34, 75-76.

<sup>102</sup> Mary Frances Cordato, "Toward a New Century: Women and the Philadelphia Exhibition, 1876," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 107 (January 1983), p. 123.

<sup>103</sup> Cordato, "Toward a New Century," p. 124.

The catalog of objects which the National Museum Board of Lady Managers loaned to the Women's Centennial Executive Committee is revealing.<sup>104</sup> None of the individuals who decided the exhibition content had any formal historical training, and only occasionally did they consult outside authorities when making their choices. Their criteria for selection rested solely on a shared sense of what was important and appropriate. Two significant observations may be made about the catalog. First, the vast majority of objects chosen were the property of the National Museum Board organizers themselves, of their immediate families, or of related families; the names of owners and donors were prominently listed in the catalog. What was purportedly a national representation of the American colonial past illustrated, in fact, the hegemony of Philadelphia's colonial elite. Second, the exhibition catalog contained two categories of subject matter—relics of American history or domestic life, and curiosities from the old world and Asia. By displaying their possessions at the Centennial, long-established Philadelphia families asserted their ownership of, and command, over the past. Incorporating colonial furniture, ceramics, and architectural fragments into a broader collection of international artifacts—contemporary Chinese carvings, as well as the ancient statuary and master paintings which were typical mementoes of the Grand Tour—gave proof of their gentility and sophisticated taste, in accord with commonly accepted late nineteenth-century aesthetic standards (Figs. 14, 15, and 16). Thus the Philadelphia gentry were able to convey the dual message that their

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<sup>104</sup>*Catalogue of the Centennial Loan Exhibition, Philadelphia, 1875* (Philadelphia: J. P. Lippincott and Co., 1875), Chew Collection, INHP.

proprietorship and superior knowledge of the exotic and unfamiliar extended from the localized colonial past to the international arena of the present.

Ironically, the colonial material culture exhibited to diverse audiences at the fair inspired new views at odds with the lenders' conceptions. Many people, including architects, came away from the fair with a greater interest in the colonial design vocabulary. One architect/design reformer stated that it was fitting to revive the "good old colony days, [which] put to blush some of the meretricious upholstery of an age of perverted taste."<sup>105</sup> He illustrated his own interpretation of an eighteenth-century dining room modified for modern use in *Harper's* for July 1876 (Fig.17). While he recommended visiting the Centennial for decorating ideas, he condemned the "general impression that good design comes naturally to gentle blood, and that while a young lady is acquiring all the accomplishments of music and the languages, she is unconsciously developing that sense of the beautiful which will . . . fit her to judge correctly in aesthetic matters. . . [It] is as absurd to suppose that art is indigenous to even the most highly cultured . . . without serious study and years of preparation."<sup>106</sup> He was unaware of, or unsympathetic to, the assumption that the organizers of the Centennial historical exhibitions, most of them women with no special training, "naturally" understood the colonial aesthetic.

As Frank Etting proceeded with the restoration of Independence Hall, he tried to impress upon the Board of Lady Managers his objectives for the National

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<sup>105</sup> H. Hudson Holly, "Modern Dwellings: Their Construction, Decoration, and Furniture," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, July 1876, p. 225.

<sup>106</sup>Holly, "Modern Dwellings," pp. 217-218.

Museum. While relics associated with famous people or events held a special attraction for Etting he approached historic preservation from a holistic perspective. Uncertain of the significance of individual objects, he did not exclude anonymous artifacts but incorporated them into contextual displays. It was after acquiring one chair made for Independence Hall, that Etting got the idea to return it to its original public setting. When he found the building in poor condition, with the steeple serving as an apartment, he initiated the campaign to restore and furnish the Hall as a public museum. The scenario he envisioned was the restoration of the architecture and original furnishings of the Hall, complemented by portraits of the men who had presided in the Hall and cases of relics and everyday objects such as clothing, papers, pamphlets, and personal articles, collected by the National Museum committee. Other structures surrounding the Hall were incorporated in his grand plan. It was Etting who enlivened public interest in saving other buildings on Independence Square, notably Congress Hall. Mary Chew came to share Etting's broadly-conceived approach to historic preservation, and she continued to follow it even after Etting abandoned this vision.

Following the Centennial, Etting became disillusioned when the "National Museum" failed to gain federal support and official recognition as *the nation's* museum.<sup>107</sup> He concluded that the government and public were not ready for the educational benefits of the museum he anticipated. Etting wrote to Mary that the establishment of a National Museum "did at one time form a hub in my scheme of education - a scheme to which I gave the best years of my life, but it proved a

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<sup>107</sup> Frank Etting to Mary Chew, 26 November 1877, INHP.

failure. . . in part, it still goes on in the object-system in the primary school as I engrafted it and when the children taught by it grow up, the time will come for a National Museum." Etting withdrew from the museum project and Mary assumed many of his administrative duties. At the same, the Mayor's office of Philadelphia began to appoint men to the Museum's board as a form of patronage and as a means to exert more control over the organization.<sup>108</sup> The change in the Museum board's composition did not escape notice. One of Mary's associates felt neither the pre- nor the post-Centennial board was effective, arguing that a national museum could only succeed when created by "the people (not party or politics or government) . . . [and] not as [a] local, but as [a] national [entity]."<sup>109</sup>

At the next major international exposition in the United States, the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 held in Chicago, an exhibition from the National Museum was again prepared. This time, however, the mayor of Philadelphia appointed a group of his male political supporters to organize a display drawing from the collection of the National Museum. This committee sought to undermine the power of the Board of Lady Managers.<sup>110</sup> Unlike the Centennial, where Mary and two other women had determined the exhibition content, the women had little influence regarding what was sent to Chicago. Instead, Mary was put in the

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<sup>108</sup>Frank Etting to Mary Chew, 5 September 1882, INHP.

<sup>109</sup> Joseph Leeds to Mary Chew, 23 April 1879, INHP.

<sup>110</sup>George Vickers, General Agent of the "Joint Special Committee of Councils of the City of Philadelphia on World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893" to Mary Chew, 16 November 1892, INHP.

position of defending the right of the Board of Lady Managers to have any role at all in decisions concerning the Museum.<sup>111</sup>

The materials selected by the mayor's special committee were almost exclusively objects associated with Independence Hall or with great men--John Hancock's sword, a death mask of Washington, the inkstand used in signing the Declaration of Independence, the Liberty Bell, etcetera. The choices were in keeping with the Revolutionary theme of the Pennsylvania state building at the Exposition, an exact replica of the Independence Hall tower surrounded by Beaux Arts wings (Fig. 18). Of course, the content of the exhibition no longer reflected the interests of the original National Museum Board; individual ownership of various objects was not specified, and there was none of the international flavor which had pervaded the Centennial exhibition effort. While other colonial sections at the Chicago World's Fair continued to be organized by women and to play out the theme of domesticity so prominent at the Centennial, the increased control exercised by men over Philadelphia's material heritage was indicative of an incipient decline of women's influence in historic preservation.<sup>112</sup>

In the early 1890s, two patriotic associations, the Colonial Dames and the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), were organized by women who sought their own voice in matters of genealogy and preservation. They pursued, as

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<sup>111</sup>K. F. Wilson, caretaker of the National Museum, to Mary Chew, 2 May 1892.

<sup>112</sup>For a list of the objects selected from the Museum for the Chicago fair, see George Vickers to Mary Chew, 16 November 1892, INHP; Schoelwer, "Curious Relics and Quaint Scenes," pp. 184-216.

Frank Etting had, the objective of utilizing history for public education.<sup>113</sup> After the 1893 fair, Mary Chew joined the newly formed Colonial Dames, who petitioned the city for custody of Independence Hall. The request was denied on the grounds that the group was too small to care for the building adequately. Mary's Chew family connections may have been a hindrance since critics charged that the Colonial Dames admitted members whose ancestors had opposed the Revolution. The somewhat less exclusive Daughters of the American Revolution were granted permission to undertake the restoration of the Hall's second floor, which had not been completed in 1876. Although not a member of the DAR, Mary participated in this work, due no doubt to her stature as an early appointee to the Museum Board.

The women enlisted T. Mellon Rogers, a Philadelphia architect, to supervise the restoration. In his design, Rogers specified a copy of the well-known archway from Cliveden's reception hall. Mary and Samuel must have been flattered by this "quotation" from their home. When it was completed in 1898, the Independence Hall remodelling received excellent reviews from the city newspapers, but the undocumented installation soon came under fire. Charles McKim, president of the Philadelphia chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) disapproved of Rogers, the DAR's architect, since he was not a member of the architects' professional organization. McKim maligned the less-than-accurate renovation in the press. Furthermore, the reputation of the DAR was seriously marred by McKim's attack.<sup>114</sup> The women were not even permitted to

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<sup>113</sup>Dubrow, "Restoring a Female Presence," p. 160; Hosmer, *Presence of the Past*, p.138; see also Rhoads, "The Colonial Revival and the Americanization of Immigrants," pp. 353-354.

<sup>114</sup>Hosmer, *Presence of the Past*, pp. 86-89.

install a tablet stating that they had paid for the refurbishment. At the insistence of the AIA professionals, the city paid to have the work redone under their auspices.<sup>115</sup> In the end, the architects' rendition of the historic hall was scarcely more authentic than Rogers' scheme. Indeed, the landmark building has undergone several subsequent facelifts.

After this unfortunate incident, Mary encouraged the Mayor to appoint a professional curator to oversee the management of the Museum, and she suggested a candidate from the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. She then turned her attention to the less politically-charged environment of Germantown. Stenton, the Logan family house—like Cliveden a large country house—was slated for demolition by developers. Mary succeeded in "interesting the town fathers in the value of preserving, as an historic object lesson, the mansion, barn and outbuildings."<sup>116</sup> It was unusual for a preservationist at this time to give such importance to the secondary, or vernacular, structures of an estate. Mary, like Etting before her, stressed the holistic historical context. Stenton soon became a popular destination for school trips, and the site still includes the kitchen building, servant quarters, slaughter house, conservatory, and wagon house.

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<sup>115</sup> "Colonial Patterns Not of the Period," 4 March 1899; "Some Feminine Ideas of the State House," 8 March 1899; and "Revolutionary Dames Raise No Protest," 9 March 1899, in the Philadelphia *North American*.

<sup>116</sup> John C. Fitzpatrick, *Some Historic Houses: Their Builders and Their Places in History* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1939), p. 27. This book cites Mary Chew as instrumental in saving the house from destruction.

Mary Chew also became an active proponent of the agenda of the City Parks Association because she felt that the creation of open spaces would improve the general quality of life for all people. She later donated five acres of Cliveden's remaining grounds to the city of Philadelphia as a public park. Her efforts to improve community life did not go unnoticed by her neighbors; after her death the Civic Club of Philadelphia wrote appreciatively of her foresight in saving Stenton and concluded that, in her, "heredity and environment combined to mold a character . . . filled with patriotic purpose and eager to preserve for the city that she loved the best memorials of its past . . . without noise or sensation, [she] fulfilled the obligations of a good citizen."<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> *Bulletin of the Civic Club of Philadelphia*, November 1927, pp. 2-3.

## CONCLUSION

To examine the process through which a family home becomes a museum is to reveal how and why people perceive, appreciate, and edit the past. Through their ownership of Cliveden, Samuel and Mary Chew were drawn into the mainstream of the colonial revival movement. In a time of rapid social change, Cliveden represented for Samuel the best of his family's past and he sought to enshrine artifacts of the Chew family in the house. To other people, Samuel emphasized that Cliveden was sanctified by the blood spilled there during the Revolution and, by virtue of its hospitality to LaFayette, the house was also symbolic of the United States' new position in the world. In creating this public face, Samuel sought to sublimate the contentious history of his family that he could not accept or erase.

Mary, on the other hand, sought to enhance her control over her own life and to expand her horizons beyond the confines of Cliveden. While the colonial revival glorified the domesticity of pre-industrial women, it simultaneously empowered their nineteenth-century descendants. It enabled them to assume positions of leadership in projects like the National Museum and Centennial exhibition, where they had command of financial resources and decision-making responsibilities. Since women were normally excluded from politics and relegated to the realm of moral influence, preservation as a form of philanthropy offered a rare opportunity for females to affect public thinking and civic policy.

The increasing professionalization that characterized the field of historic preservation at the end of the nineteenth century had very different effects on Samuel and Mary Chew. Cliveden was architecturally significant so professional architects and preservationists continued to regard it as important. The Chews' continuous occupation of the house and its Revolutionary battle scars--associations which Samuel valued highly--were downplayed by the new breed of restoration professionals. On the other hand, descriptions of the Chews as loyalist sympathizers all but disappeared. Mary felt the effects of changing attitudes toward preservation more directly. After all she and her female co-workers were publicly rebuked at Independence Hall by well-schooled architectural purists seeking to take over the work the women had started. The ultimate result was that the Chew's roles in historic preservation, both Samuel's at Cliveden and Mary's in Philadelphia, although well documented are seldom remembered.

Today, the role of amateurs like Samuel and Mary is beginning to receive greater attention in preservation history as the contemporary need to mobilize amateurs in preservation efforts is recognized. There has been a tendency among professionals in the fields of historic preservation and material culture to view the development of their disciplines as linear and progressive--from amateur antiquarianism, to architects' exactitude, to scholars' objective research. However, Charles Hosmer, the leading historian of the preservation movement in America, has attempted to bring that narrow view into question:

Professionals . . . have to take the general public, including the amateur preservers, seriously. . . . Historians, planners, architects, archaeologists, and curators need more humor; they are too concerned with what is "right" and what is "wrong," they see these

matters as moral causes. Their arguments create a wall between them and the public.<sup>118</sup>

At a National Trust Conference in 1979, a similar concern was voiced when one speaker warned of the "danger of expertise" and underscored the need for amateur involvement because "preservation is a humanistic movement inspired by basic human motives."<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>118</sup>Charles B. Hosmer, "The Broadening View of the Historical Preservation Movement," in *Material Culture and the Study of Material Life*, ed. Ian M. G. Quimby (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978), p. 139.

<sup>119</sup>Roderick S. French, "On Preserving America: Some Philosophical Observations," in *Preservation: Toward an Ethic in the 1980s* (Washington, D.C.: Preservation Press, 1980), pp. 184-185.

## AFTERWORD

As a case study of the Colonial Revival, Cliveden's history does not end with Samuel and Mary Chew. Another colonial revival phase swept through Cliveden in the 1930s-1950s, when Samuel Chew's great-grandson brought in a professional interior decorator to reinterpret Cliveden's interiors in accord with the standard of "aesthetic" period rooms advocated by Henry Francis Du Pont. Du Pont actually visited Cliveden several times during the redecoration and gave advice on additions and purchases he deemed necessary.<sup>120</sup> The records of the interior decorator who supervised the work remain at Cliveden and are intact to be studied.

In 1972, Cliveden entered yet another phase of "colonialization" when it was acquired by the National Trust (Fig. 19). The Trust described the house as its "oldest and one of its most important historic properties [containing] some of the most important Philadelphia furniture in existence." Cliveden was the focus of the National Trust's bicentennial celebrations.<sup>121</sup> Since the Trust's acquisition of the house, the Revolutionary period has been the main interpretive thrust, to the exclusion of the nineteenth-century history of the residence and its owners. To understand Cliveden's original appearance, however, it is essential to explore its later transformations. For example, without the knowledge that the ground was

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<sup>120</sup>Henry Francis Du Pont to Samuel Chew, Archives, Winterthur Museum.

<sup>121</sup>See Elizabeth D. Mully, *The History of the National Trust for Historic Preservation* (Washington, D.C.: Preservation Press, 1976), p. 167.

leveled in the nineteenth century before the Chews became interested in preserving the site, one cannot appreciate changes in the contours of the landscape or in the configuration of the grounds in relation to the house.

The National Trust has recently undertaken a Historic Structures Report on Cliveden concentrating on the years 1760-c.1830. Hopefully my discussion of the later period at Cliveden, and of the profound effect that the colonial revival had on its preservation and social history, will encourage further research and more nuanced interpretation.



Fig.1. View of Cliveden, c. 1968. (*The Germantown Crier*, May 1969, p.42.)



Fig. 2. Mary Chew in her Centennial Dress, 1876. (Cliveden Archives, Germantown, Pennsylvania.)



Fig. 3. Samuel Chew shown in front of Cliveden with his children, date unknown. (Cliveden Archives, Germantown, Pennsylvania.)

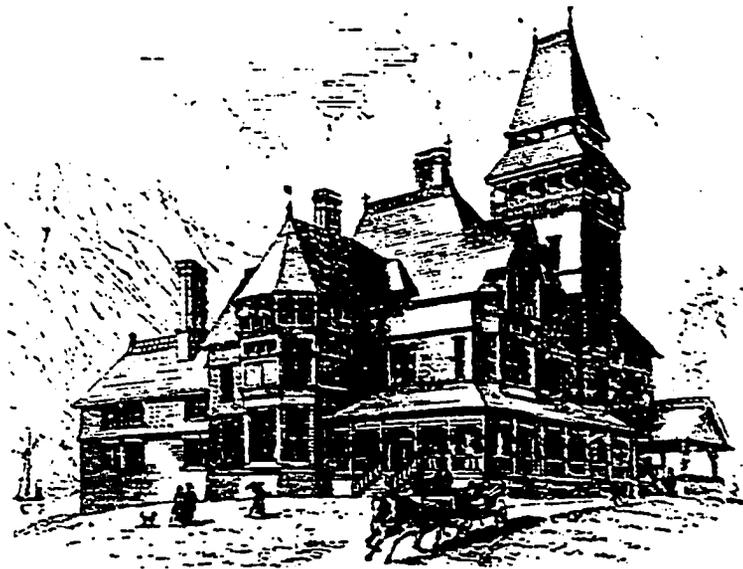


Fig. 4. The "country mansion" of the 1870s. (H. Hudson Holly, "Modern Dwellings," *New Harper's Monthly Magazine*, 1876, p. 54.)



**Fig. 5. The "Battle Doors" in Cliveden's reception hall, date unknown. (Cliveden Archives, Germantown, Pennsylvania.)**



Fig. 6. *The Old Westover Mansion*, by Edward Lamson Henry, 1869. (Karal Ann Marling, *George Washington Slept Here*, Fig. 3.11 ).



Fig. 7. *The Reception for LaFayette at Cliveden, 1825*, by Edward Lamson Henry, 1873-74. (Alice Winchester, "Living With Antiques," *Antiques*, December 1959, p.534.)



Fig. 8. *The Republican Court in the Time of Washington, or Lady Washington's Reception Day*, by Daniel Huntington, 1865. (Karal Ann Marling, *George Washington Slept Here*, Fig. 2.17 ).

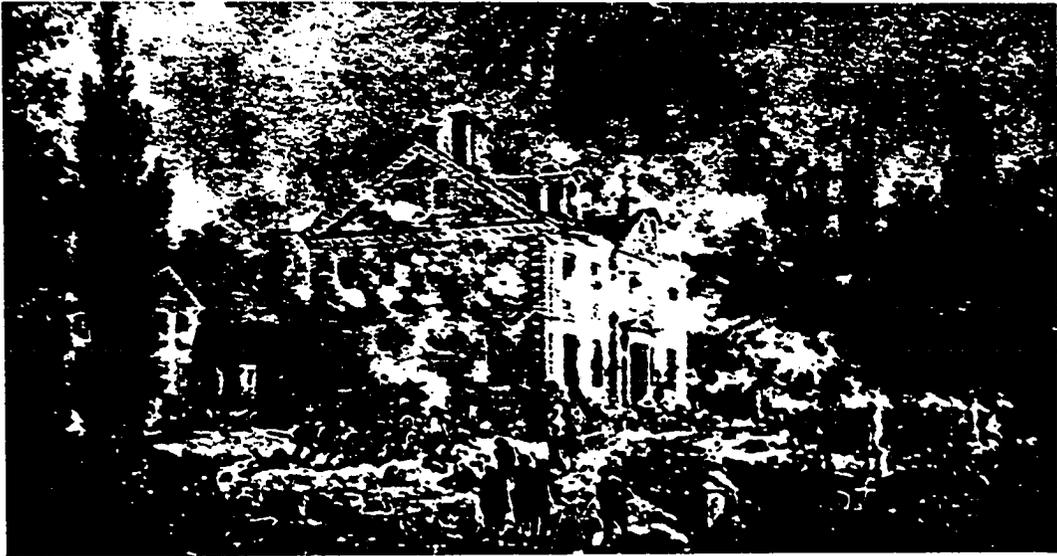


Fig. 9. *The Battle of Germantown*, by Edward Lamson Henry, 1875. (Alice Winchester, "Living With Antiques," *Antiques*, December 1959, p.533.)



Fig. 10. *The Old Clock on the Stairs*, by Edward Lamson Henry, 1869. (Alan Axelrod ed. *The Colonial Revival in America*, p. 247.).



Fig. 11. "Reception in Chew House a Century Ago." (Rebecca Harding Davis, "Old Philadelphia," *New Harper's Monthly Magazine*, 1876, p.877).



Fig. 12. Stereoscopic View of the National Museum, 1876. (Chew Collection, INHP.)



Fig. 13. "Relics in the National Museum," *The Handbook of the Statehouse*, 1876. (Chew Collection, INHP.)



Fig. 14. First Stereoscopic View of the National Museum's Centennial Loan Exhibition, 1875. (Chew Collection, INHP.)

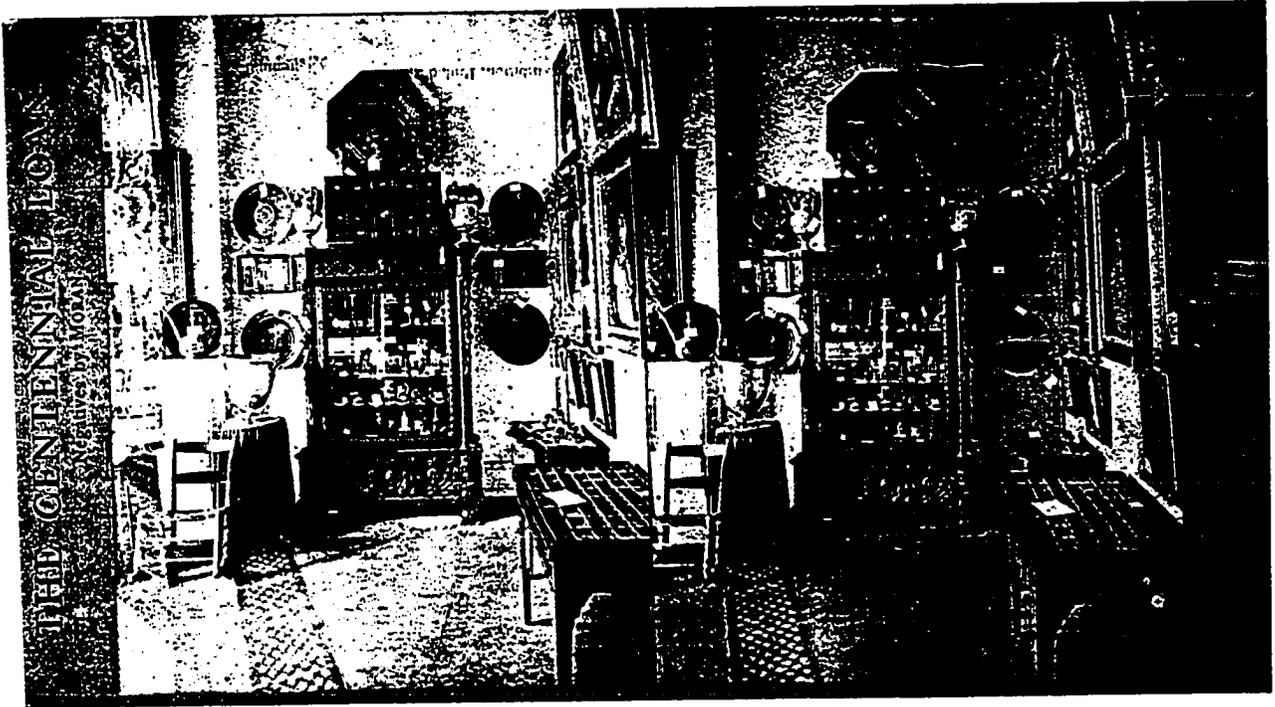


Fig. 15. Second Stereoscopic View of the National Museum's Centennial Loan Exhibition, 1875. (Chew Collection, INHP.)



Fig. 16. Third Stereoscopic View of the National Museum's Centennial Loan Exhibition, 1875. (Chew Collection, INHP.)



Fig. 17. Dining Room. (H. Hudson Holly, "Modern Dwellings," *New Harper's Monthly Magazine*, 1876, p.219.)

"The style is taken from that of the last century, and is characteristic of some of the old mansions built . . . prior to the Revolution." (Holly, p.225)

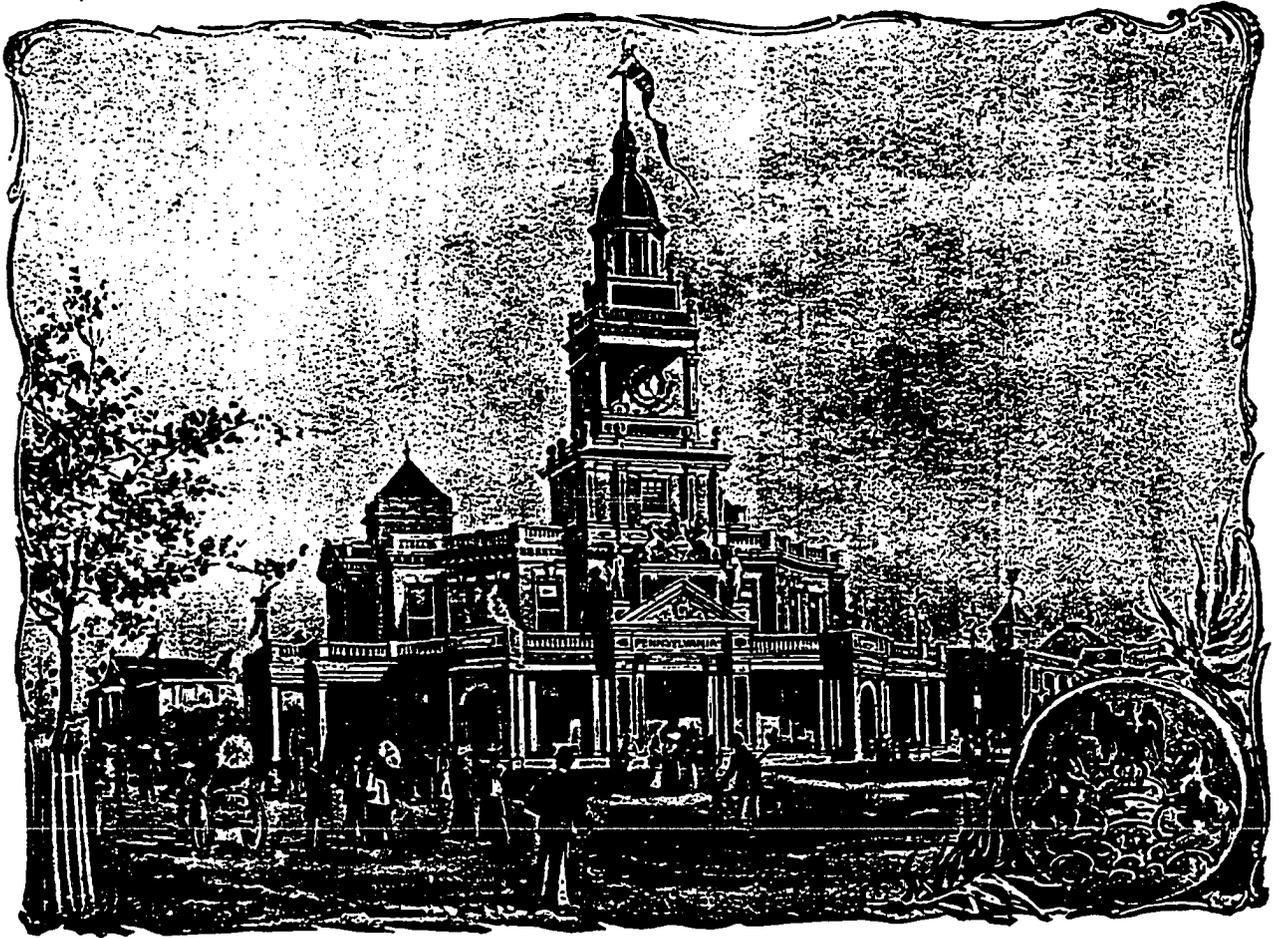


Fig. 18. Pennsylvania State Building, Chicago Exposition, 1893. (Benjamin C. Truman, *History of the World's Fair*, p. 468.)

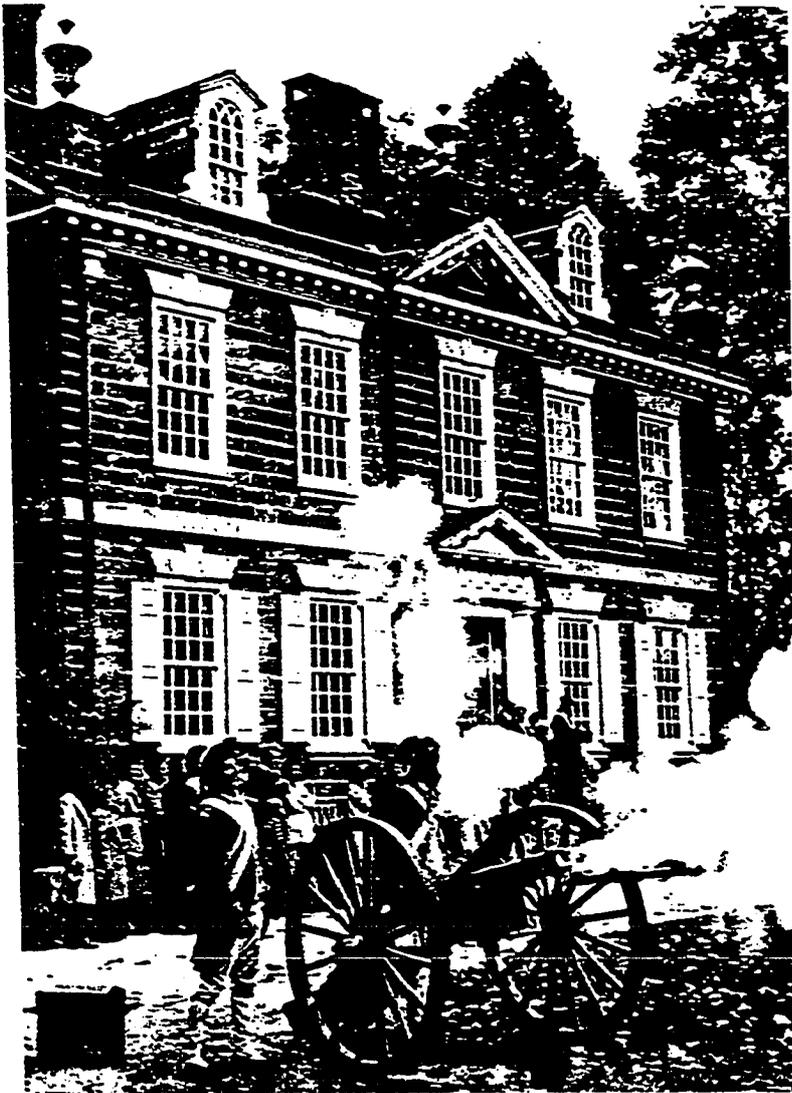
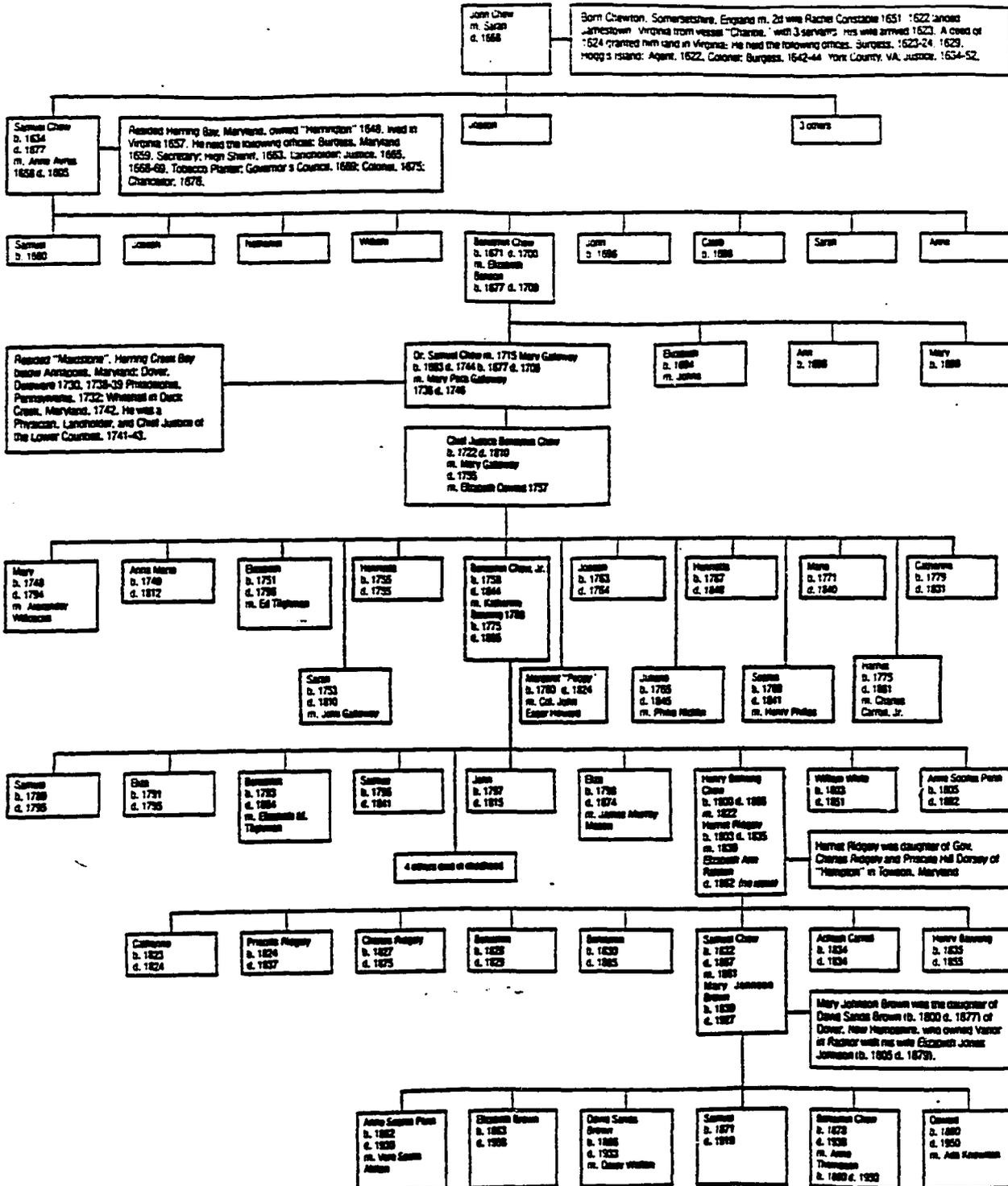


Fig. 19. Cliveden at the National Trust's Opening Ceremonies, 1972.  
(Elizabeth D. Mully, *The History of the National Trust*, p. 163.)

## APPENDIX: CHEW FAMILY GENEALOGY (Cliveden Archives, Germantown, Pennsylvania)



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