STATE OF DELAWARE

PUBLIC ARCHIVES COMMISSION

Buena Vista Press Releases and Photographs

Press Release - Opening date
List of Commission Members
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Press Release - John M. Clayton

Photographs:

- 1. Dining Room
- 2. Parlor
- 3. Music Room
- 4. South Hall
- 5. Large Library
- 6. John M. Clayton Library
- 7. Bedroom No. 1
- 8. Bedroom No. 2

Press Release

June 14, 1967

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The house will also be used as a meeting place for State agencies and, on occasions, Will be used for the entertainment of distinguished visitors to the State.

DELAWARE STATE MUSEUM

A DIVISION OF THE PUBLIC ARCHIVES COMMISSION

316 South Governors Avenue, Dover, Delaware

LEON DEVALINGER, JR., Director

The restoration of Buena Vista has been the responsibility of the Public Archives Commission:

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Mr. Henry P. Cannon, II, Vice President H. P. Cannon & Son Bridgeville, Delaware 19933

Mrs. Vernon B. Derrickson, Secretary 128 Hazel Road Dover, Delaware 19901

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Senator Clayton devoted his efforts to improving the exhausted farm land through improved practices. At the same time, he apparently engaged an architect to design and construct for him one of the best examples of Greek-Revival houses in Delaware. The architect, unknown, but resembling the work of John Haviland or Thomas H. Walter utilized the Greek-Revival inspiration adjusted to domestic living. The design of the house is a two-storey and attic brick structure with a five-bay block and a service wing to the back. The long wing to the south was added in the third decade of the present century. Notable among the Hellenic features are the six finely fluted Doric columns of the porch, the frontone rising behind the front cornice and the design of the cast iron balustrade surmounting the porch roof. The house was begun in 1845 and completed in 1847. During that time Senator Clayton lived at the Read House in New Castle. This fine new home he named Buena Vista in honor of General Zachary Taylor's great victory in the Mexican War.

Buena Vista with its gardens, tree-lined lane, driveways, outbuildings and large front field (a total of about 52 acres) was bequeathed to the State of Delaware by the Honorable C. Douglass Buck in 1965.

The period of the house and the style of existing furnishings of Buena Vista determined the choice of the furniture placed here to reflect the taste of John M. Clayton, James Douglass and those who followed. The Buck family very kindly gave the interesting library and book cases of John M. Clayton with additions made by James Douglass. The New Castle Historical Society, Edward W. Cooch Jr., President, very kindly presented most of the furnishings in the music room. These had formerly been in Buena Vista and were given to that society about 1926. Now they are returned and become an important part of the original furnishings of the house. These include a handsomely carved Empire style spinet, a large harp and music stand, a piano stool, a pair of Argand lamps, a hymn book and a book of operas in French.

Other gifts included the beautiful suite of carved rosewood furniture in the parlor, the unusually large Kirman rug (size 35' x 24') in the library, a grand piano, a Recamier style Empire sofa made for Joshua Clayton, a large Pennsylvania corner cupboard, a circular carved and guilded Empire mirror andirons, fire screens and fireplace tools throughout the house. Mr. Francis D. Buck generously gave the large Douglass family mirrors on the east walls of the Dining Room and Parlor.

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Physically he was described as a remarkably handsome man, being over 6 feet tall, well proportioned and impressive in appearance. He was considered one of the best lawyers of his time because of his excellent education and natural ability. He was a powerful advocate and an eloquent pleader before a jury. In 1816 at the age of twenty while still a law student he was elected clerk of the Delaware House of Representatives. In following years he also served as clerk of the Senate and was appointed Auditor of accounts by the legislature in 1821. He was Delaware Secretary of State from 1824 to 1828 during which time he was elected to the House of Representatives of the General Assembly.

In 1829 he was elected to the United States Senate by the legislature being at that time 33 years of age making him the youngest member of the United States Senate. He found himself in distinguished company in the Senate with such men as Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, Thomas H. Benton, and John C. Calhoun and very quickly established himself as an equal of these men. In 1836 he resigned to return to the practice of law but in 1837 was appointed Chief Justice of the State. He served in this capacity for three years and it was a mark of his ability that no appeal was ever taken from one of his decisions.

In 1842 Mr. Clayton moved from Dover to New Castle County and occupied the Read House until the new house which he was building, called Buena Vista, would be ready. He was re-elected to the Senate in 1845 and following the election of General Taylor as President in 1848 was appointed Secretary of State. In this office he performed many notable services, the best known of which was his negotiation of a treaty with Great Britain called the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty relating to the construction of a canal across Central America. It is the only official national or international agreement to which the name of a Delawarean is attached. Mr. Clayton's term as Secretary of State came to an end with the death of President Taylor in July 1850.

Although it had been his intention to retire to practice law, Clayton was anxious to return to the Senate to answer accusations made by another senator reflecting upon Clayton's integrity and ability in negotiating the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty. The people of the State were so stirred by the attack on their fellow citizen that Clayton was re-elected to the Senate where he completely vindicated his every action to the satisfaction of his accuser.

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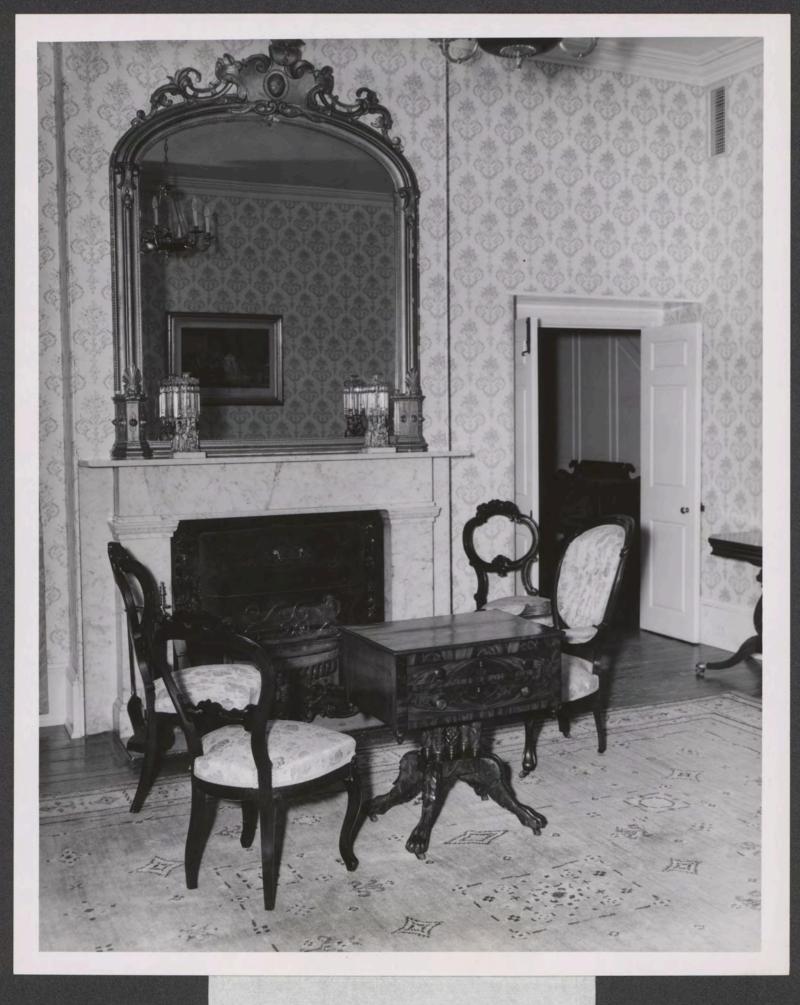


Dining Room of Buena Vista, home of John M. Clayton

Photograph No.

PLEASE GIVE CREDIT

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Parlor of Buena Vista, home of John M. Clayton

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Music Room of Buena Vista, home of John M. Clayton

Photograph No.



South Hall of Buena Vista

Photograph No.



Large Library of Buena Vista

PRINT BY DELAWARE STATE ARCHIVES HALL of RECORDS DOVER, DELAWARE

Photograph No.

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John M. Clayton Library of Buena Vista, home of John M. Clayton

Photograph No.



A Bedroom of Buena Vista, home of John M. Clayton

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