

The Albemarle Observer.

Only Newspaper Published in Chowan County.

"LOOK FORWARD AND NOT BACK"

Vol. 6. No. 25.

EDENTON NORTH CAROLINA, FRIDAY, JUNE 11, 1915.

Subscription: \$1.00 a Year

THE CUPOLA HOUSE AND ITS ASSOCIATIONS.

THE ESSAY WHICH WON THE HINTON MEDAL--WRITTEN BY GEORGE PRIVOTT OF THE EDENTON HIGH SCHOOL.

In the southern part of the town of Edenton, near Edenton Bay (a northern indenture of the Albemarle Sound), west of Main street and commanding when it was built an unobstructed view of said bay (which many say rivals the far famed Bay of Naples) on the south, the suburbs of the town and the rural district on the north, is so located an old building of colonial architectural style, commonly known as the Cupola House.

It does not face Main street, (a thoroughfare eighty feet in width) as might be supposed, but fronts the bay, built thus, presumably, for the reason that at that time (1758) there was not very much business transacted by land, but a large amount was carried on by water (at that time we had developed large trade with the West Indies) of which this position gave a splendid view, and because a southern exposure afforded the advantages of the cool, summer breezes.

It stands about the same distance from the water, in a line with other noted residences, such as the Page Place, Paxton House, the Bond Place and others.

The grounds of the house proper, were supposed to have reached originally from the waters of the bay on the south to King street on the north, and were surrounded by a tall evergreen hedge with a high, picket, board fence. Inside the yard and on its border were all species of flowers and shrubbery (some roots and shrubs can be seen there now) many of which, undoubtedly, were planted by its first owner.

This house is square built with a pointed roof having two main gables one at each end and a third, smaller gable, on the south or front side.

It has three large outside chimneys, one on the eastern and two on the western end. The foundation and chimneys are of brick. It is commonly supposed that these bricks were brought on ships from England; this however is exceedingly doubtful, because the same kind of bricks was used in the construction of the county court house and St. Paul's Church, which were built about the same time (1758), and the large number of bricks required for these buildings, hardly would have been brought across the ocean when there was such an abundance of clay here and straw too if that should be used in making bricks. The house is of frame construction, with cypress weatherboarding, laid horizontally, like most modern frame houses, and with wide cornerboards. The boards, however, are twice the thickness of those, usually used now. The cupola is boarded in the shiplap or the flat block design, the same as used on Washington's home at Mount Vernon. On the south side is the only porch, this has a pointed roof, supported by four columns. Above this, mainly to make the house proportional, is a gable, before mentioned, built out from the main roof, from which is suspended

a gable post or finial, bearing the inscription, F. C. 1758. The house contains in all, thirty large windows, those in lower story, eighteen panes, and in the upper story, fifteen panes, while those in cupola have twelve, all placed symmetrically, a window on the second story offsetting the door on the floor below, which gives it a pleasing effect.

The shutters on the lower story are solid, while those above have fixed lattice. It has only two outside doors, opening, one on the rear, the other on the front.

The roof, though now tinned was formerly shingled, and with its valleys and hips was a specimen of perfect architecture and workmanship. Its dimensions are about thirty feet in width and forty in length. The cupola from which the house takes its name, it being the most conspicuous feature, rising about eight feet above the ridge of the main roof, has a conical shaped roof surmounted by a large metal ball. Its wide cornice set off by little blocks is very ornamental. It has a window in each of four of its eight sides, that is, a window in each alternate side of the octagon. It is about eight feet across from one side of the octagon to the opposite side. On the front or southern side, the second story projects beyond the lower by about twelve inches (this projection supported by brackets placed equidistant to relieve the effect) thus giving it a foot more floor space. Each gable is finished by a small pointed square post which extends about eight inches above the ridge of roof. On the rear the house is plain, not having a projection of any kind, probably because at that time the slave quarter on that side hid it from view of the public.

Hardly any trace of its original painting remains on account of the destructive effect of time and weather, though it is said to have been painted white with green blinds; the boarding, and in fact all the timbers of the house seem to be perfectly preserved. To the northwest corner outside of the house, is attached a bell, with wires running to each room for accessibility in calling the servants from their quarters nearby. Though this is not as convenient as modern electric fixtures, in old times it was so considered and was indeed a luxury.

Having viewed the premises and the building from the outside, we ascend the steps to the front porch, with a sense that we, too, some day will be old, but we hope, never so antique, and from the porch, opening the large carved paneled door, with its brass knob and knocker, suggestive of former luxury (especially when the brass is clean and bright) we enter an eight foot hall, which extends the length of the house, and take a survey of the interior.

We find the threshold scarcely worn by the many feet that have passed over it. The floor must be of hardwood as it shows little

wear. The walls are smooth plastered composed of old time mortar, made of lime, sand and hoghair, the pitch being about eight feet; and having an angle moulding where it joins the ceiling.

On either side can be seen two doors, the two near the front having very beautiful carving while those toward the rear are plain paneled. On the west side of the center of the hall, we see an 1810 piano, which was formerly in the drawing room but has stood where it is now, they say, over seventy-five years. In the rear of the hall the winding stairway, with its mahogany rail and close set baulsters, begins. Passing through the first door on the left we are in a square shaped room, with its antique moulding and furniture. On the angles is a moulding six inches wide connecting the chairboard to the moulding at the ceiling. The

moulding is especially noticeable because of its superb carving having a three inch indentation wherever there is a window. A five inch washboard, painted so as to represent marble runs around the room. The first thing we see when we enter is a large fire place with mantel of wood, finely carved, and with a marble hearth. The mantel together with the fireplace, reaches nearly to the ceiling. A grandfather's clock, about seven feet high, stands in the northwest corner, and is probably one hundred and fifty years old. A Colonial tilt table is in the center, with Chippendale side and corner chairs about the room. In one corner is a Chippendale tea table with a raised rim or boarder, built about 1760. A Sheriton sideboard, formerly in the dining, but now in the drawing room is one hundred and forty years old. It is a reproduction of Norfolk Board built by Thomas Sheriton in London. On the walls are pictures of Colonial life and the Dickinsons.

Through a door on the north side we pass from the drawing room into a bed room. This is just a plain square room, neither the mantel nor the door being carved.

Crossing the hall we go into the former dining room. This is on the right lower floor, opposite the drawing room and is the same shape and size as it. The walls are completely paneled. There are large portraits of the former owners hanging on the walls. The fireplace here is even more elaborate than the one we have just left, being about seven feet wide and reaching to the ceiling. The carving over the mantel is made to represent the gable of a house. A mirror, with the picture of George Washington in the same frame, hangs on the southern wall and has been there over a hundred years. On the north end is a wooden china closet, containing pretty but antique chinaware and glassware. It is four feet from the floor, set flush with the wall and has plain wooden doors. We see a duck foot tea table, which formerly occupied a corner, but lately removed to the drawing room; this was built between 1720 and 1780. An old Colonial dining table built as early as 1725, is here also. On each side of the china closet is a small door leading into the

butler's pantry. This room is not very interesting having no distinctive features.

In the rear of the hall under the first flight of steps is a small pantry used for storing wood.

Ascending the winding stair we come to a hall closely resembling the lower one, only not so broad. Instead of having a door in each end as in the lower hall they are very large windows. Looking down the hall we see an old Colonial secretary. Opposite it, on the western side is a clothes press built about 1750. On this floor there are four rooms used as bedrooms. They are shaped like those downstairs though the carving is not prominent. Some of the interesting things to be seen are: Two Colonial washstands, Colonial chest of drawers (solid mahogany built about 1800) and old dresses worn by Mrs. Dickinson and Miss Margaret Bond.

Continuing up the stairway we come to the third story. Here, there are three garret rooms used mostly as catchalls or turned into bedrooms when giving a house-party or a ball. Here there is no hall. The posts and columns that support the cupola come down from the roof and rest on the third floor sills. The stairway is completely enclosed but by opening a door we go into a cylindrical winding stairway. Ascending this and pushing up a trap door we reach the cupola.

The color of the walls here hardly can be ascertained on account of the many autographs of distinguished visitors, though, originally, they were supposed to be of the same color and composition as the lower walls. We look through the windows but cannot see now, the balustraded veranda that once surrounded this cupola, to which access was had by a door opening to the south. At the time the house was built, no doubt this was a fine scheme for taking a view of the surrounding landscape, but since then other buildings erected nearby obstruct the view.

Having investigated the building, furniture and grounds, and finding so much of interest, we desire to know something of their original builders, owners and occupants, and upon inquiry we learn that this house was planned and constructed here by Francis Corbin, who was the land agent for Lord Granville, one of the eight Lord Proprietors.

Corbin being a shrewd, active man, soon became a leading citizen of the community, having come to North Carolina a land agent as early as 1744, which position he held until his death. He was chosen commander in chief of Fort Granville and in 1752 was appointed a member of the State Council. Because Lord Granville was in far away England, Corbin, being ambitious and exercising supreme power, soon became a noted extortioner, even going so far as to reclaim land after having sold it. Thomas Childs, Edward Moseley and others who succeeded these, were also land agents and cooperated with Corbin at this time. Colonel Innes, a prominent landowner, whom Corbin represented and who was a member of the State Council, soon became intimate friends; Corbin being a frequent visitor in his home. He here

met the Colonel's beautiful wife and became greatly infatuated with her. After Colonel Innes' death, Corbin married the widow, (1761) Loving his wife intensely, he determined with the unjust taxes he had taken and part of the Innes' estate of which he came in possession, to build an elegant home for her, exceeding in size and appointments any dwelling in the colony. He employed the best masons, carpenters, carvers and painters, and soon had the edifice above described that surpassed anything the colonists had ever seen. He here entertained all the prominent men of the colony, the General Assembly once meeting here, and it is reported the Prince of Wales once danced here.

Shortly after occupying their new home, Mrs. Corbin died and her husband suffered great mental agony, because he loved her so fondly.

During this time the land agents stilled carried on their extortions. Twenty men whom they had wronged, and who could endure them no longer, came from Edgecomb county to Edenton. As they came through the town, and their mission was learned, a large body of Edentonians joined them. That night Corbin and his secretary were arranging their affairs when they heard the mob at the gate. The secretary rushed out through the back door and escaped but Corbin seeing there was not sufficient time for him, ran up the stairs, pushed open the trap door to the cupola, and climbed out on the roof. As it was night, the mob had torches and part of them while going around to the rear discovered him there. The next day they took him to his office at Enfield, Edgecomb county, and forced him to give bond for his appearance at the next term of court. A short while after this, on account of his non attendance, he was removed from the office of State Council. Broken in spirit by the death of his wife and from loss of influence among the colonists, and appreciating that he had not developed a very enviable character, he "took some thought for tomorrow" and reformed in some measure; later, he was again respected by a great many citizens of the town.

After surviving his wife a few years, he died, leaving the house and premises to his brother, Edmund Corbin, who in turn sold it to Dr. Samuel Dickinson in 1777. Since then his descendants have been in possession and occupying this historic homestead. Though there is no proof Corbin's wife is thought to have died about 1763 and he about 1765. The house is now occupied by Miss Tillie Bond, niece of Miss Margaret Bond. We are indebted to Dr. Dillard's "The Vermillion Stage Coach" in the News and Observer 1908, for some of the data herein contained.

This interesting investigation has impressed the writer with a desire to see such an extraordinary and historic house and grounds perpetuated by converting it into a public library and preserved by the community as its sister buildings of the same period.

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BIBLES WANTED

Patients at the State Sanatorium Need Bibles and Books.

"How's your Sunday-school getting along?" an official at the State Sanatorium for treatment of Tuberculosis was asked a few days ago.

"Oh, fine," he replied, "we have more interest shown and a better attendance, according to our population, than you folks have at home." Continuing, he explained that every Sunday afternoon, after the rest period, the convalescing patients assemble, in the main lobby of the Sanatorium where one of their number, usually a minister or former Sunday-school worker, leads in the study of the lesson or in such other devotional exercises as may seem appropriate.

"How about your Sunday-school equipment?" he was asked. "Well, you see it really doesn't take very much" he replied. "A generous friend gave the Institution an organ sometime ago. What we need most now is about 75 Bibles."

In this connection he stated that nearly all the patients read quite a bit, for inasmuch as the rest cure requires that they spend a great portion of their time in bed and sitting around, a great many improve their time by reading. Already, friends of the Institution have contributed various books to the extent of about three hundred. The patients read these at the rate of fifty or more a week. Bibles, New Testaments, books, magazine subscriptions, song books, and a subscription for seventy-five to one hundred Sunday-school lesson leaflets or quarterlies would be of much value to the patients who are waging the battle of life and death with the Grim White Plague. Such books or literature, if sent by parcel post to the State Sanatorium, at Sanatorium, N. C., will receive a hearty welcome by the patients.

Amendments to Revisal of 1905. Bulletin Value

The Legislative Reference Library has a limited number of copies of the Amendments to the Revisal of 1905, passed by the Legislature of 1915, which will be sent free of charge upon request of lawyers, county officers, justices of the peace and business men who desire to be informed as to the laws of the State.

Another bulletin containing the Amendments to the Revisal from its enactment to and including the Extra Session of 1918 will be issued at an early date. Persons desiring copies of this bulletin should make application at once as the edition will be limited to the requests received.

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