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# THE SHAKER MUSEUM

The Shaker Museum Foundation Inc.  
OLD CHATHAM, NEW YORK

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HUDSON, N. Y.  
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Director  
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Director Emeritus

4 July, 1962

Mr. Thomas H. Raddall  
Liverpool  
Nova Scotia

Dear Mr. Raddall:

I am sure you will recall the somewhat lengthy correspondence I had with you five years ago anent plans for Wentworth House. Those silly plans never turned up, and I am now convinced they never will. Bridenbaugh was not helpful with hints as to where they might be, since they surely do not exist amongst any of the Peter Harrison papers, now pathetically few.

So I was forced back upon archaeology and the history of Georgian architecture in New England. I was eventually able to reconstitute the plans along lines which I feel are both logical and probable. I do think they cannot be too far from fact, except, of course, in matters of detail like door frames, etc. But right or wrong, they are, in my estimation, a vast improvement upon those asinine plans in Parker's history of Wolfeboro.

I have for some time wanted to get those corrections of Parker in print, for it is a shame to have historians continue, as Bridenbaugh uncritically did, to reproduce Parker's plans. I had hoped, if I could come upon the originals, to persuade the New Hampshire legislature to rebuild the palace, but that idea is totally out of the window; the only plans are Meader's, and no State Government is going to part with \$250,000 or more to embody my dream. The Wolfeboro Historical Society has become interested in the site (thank God, for the State seems pretty much to have written it off), and it was not much trouble to induce them to publish this booklet in the effort to raise money to do something with the site. Perhaps you could persuade the Chamber of Commerce or some historical association in Halifax to peddle some of them to help out the good cause. (N/B.: I derive not a penny from any sales, so can tout these sales with conviction!)

It is a pleasure to send you a copy of this little effort, with the hope that you will find it of interest and perhaps a partial answer to many questions that have bothered both you and me.

Very since rely yours,

*Robert F. W. Meader*



July 11, 1962

Mr. Robert F.W. Meader,  
The Shaker Museum,  
Old Chatham, New York.

Dear Mr. Meader,

It was good to see your signature again,  
and I've read your booklet with the greatest interest and  
enjoyment.

Your hypothesis is logical and well calculated, as Parker's  
was not, and I'm glad the Wolfeboro Historical Society has  
put it into print for all to see. Perhaps, someday, Peter  
Harrison's design will turn up. In the meantime you have  
enabled people to envision Wentworth House as it might very  
well have been --- on a good many points as it must have been.

The only thing I would question, as a layman, is your place-  
ment of the ballroom on the upper floor of the house.

Government House in Halifax was designed and built (1800-1805)  
under the direct supervision of Sir John and Lady Wentworth.  
Undoubtedly it includes many ideas that came to them in the  
course of their sojourns in England. Even after they moved  
into the building in 1805 there were interior changes fol-  
lowing their whims. Even so, John always retained a deep  
and affectionate interest in the mansion at Wolfeborough.  
Naturally it contained his happiest memories. And the ball-  
room in Government House, Halifax, is at the north end of  
the mansion and on the ground floor.

However, who knows?

With my thanks and best wishes,



ROBERT F. W. MEADER  
OLD CHATHAM, NEW YORK

21 July, 1962

Dear Mr. Raddall:

I am delighted that my little monograph pleased you. It is as nearly accurate both factually and essentially as ten years of study can make it.

About the ballroom. I have found no documentary evidence for putting it where I did on the second floor. But my reasons were two-fold: (1), a ballroom and a drawing room were provided for, and, at least in New England, the drawing or levée room was seldom or never on the second floor; (2), it was reasonably common to put ballrooms on the upper floor in Yankee mansions -- viz., the Franklin Pierce home at Hillsborough, N.H., the Bump Tavern at Cooperstown, N.Y., the Locust Tree Inn at Old Chatham, N.Y., the Wayside Inn at Sudbury, Mass., to name but a few. Indeed, I would hazard the guess most were on the second floor. Further, we have that awkward height of the second floor, apparently greater than that of the ground floor. A shallow-domed ceiling could have made the difference, a ceiling more suitable to a ballroom than to a drawing room. I have seen one such, at least. Last but not least, the Governor was evidently planning on having the Assembly meet in the Mansion at least until a suitable Capitol could be built -- and he would not, I am sure, have been interested in having the whole Assembly go trooping up his front stairs to a second floor Assembly Room, when they could have as well occupied the ground floor apartment just off the hallway and in the semi-public part of the building. In the meantime, the Wentworths would have used the room as a state drawing room, for which it was apparently originally planned. (For a picture of a simple country ballroom on the second floor, I refer you to Samuel Chamberlain & Henry Flynt's FRONTIER OF

ROBERT F. W. MEADER  
OLD CHATHAM, NEW YORK

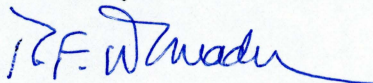
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FREEDOM [story of Old Deerfield, Mass.], p. 92. It even has a barrel vaulted ceiling!)

Well, this is all very minor, but an interesting point. Thank you for reviewing so kindly my little effort. I sent a copy to Bridenbaugh, too, but it was returned, so perhaps the man is dead. Too much bad Wentworth House, perhaps!

I still hope to visit Halifax and see Sir John's last efforts, but it will have to wait until November at least, as I am too tied up here to leave until then.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R.F. W. Meader". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.