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382/133756

THE EARLY HISTORY OF "HYDE PARK" ESTATE  
(VANDERBILT MANSION NATIONAL HISTORIC  
SITE) 1705-1894

FEBRUARY, 1955

BY: CHARLES W. SNELL

Vanderbilt 1  
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THE EARLY HISTORY OF "HYLE PARK" ESTATE  
(VANDERBILT MANSION NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE)  
1705 TO 1891.

By  
Charles W. Snell, Historian

Dated: February 17, 1955.  
76 pages.

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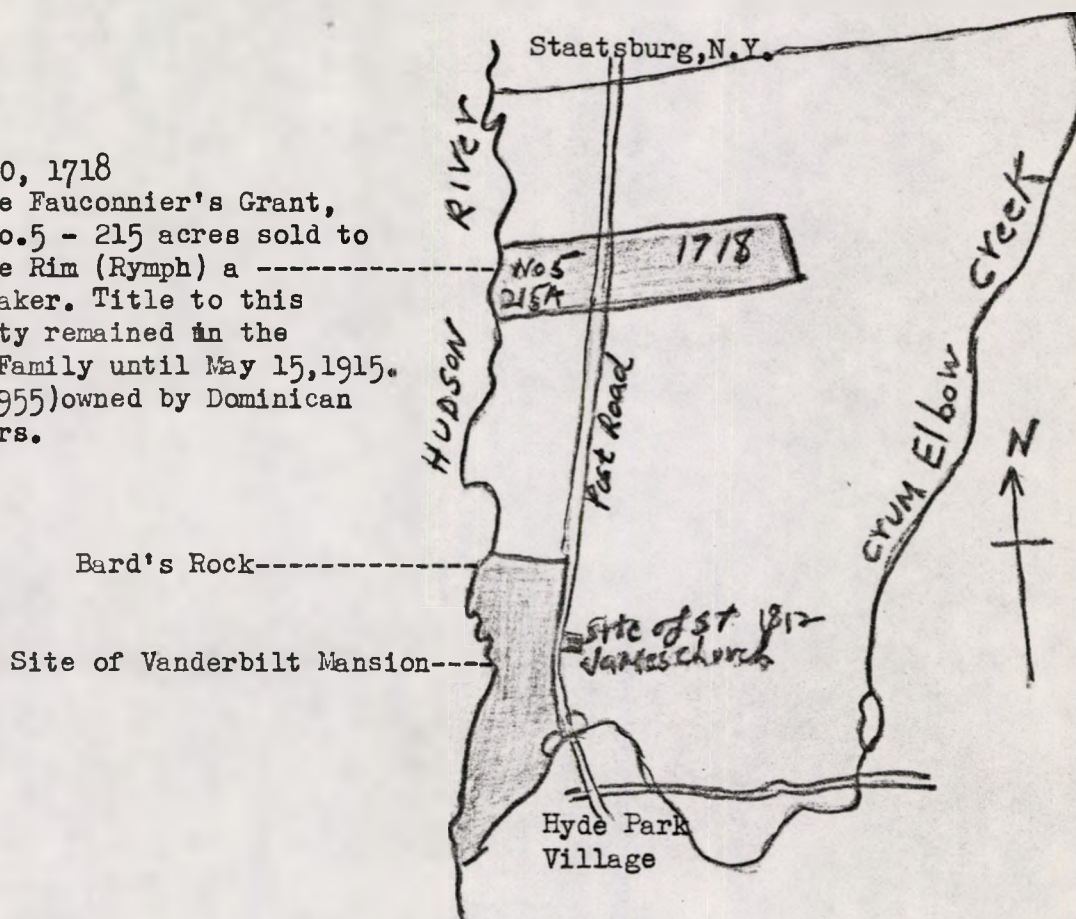


I. HYDE PARK IN COLONIAL DAYS, 1705 - 1746.

<sup>1</sup>  
On April 18, 1705, the Governor of the Province of New York from 1702 to 1708, Edward Hyde, Viscount Cornbury, and later third Earl of Clarendon, fixed his signature to a paper which practically gave away, in the name of Her Majesty Queen Anne, about 3,600 acres (see Map I, page 2) of the most scenic land in British America. The recipients of this princely gift were "Peter Fauconnier, Esq., Benjamin Ask, Merchant, Barne Cosens, gentleman, and John Parsons, gentleman, all of New York." The land in question lay "on the east side of Hudson's River in Dutchess County, called by the Indians Maquaquanesick," in the immediate neighborhood of <sup>2</sup>Crum Elbow Creek. Representatives of these owners met at "James Harding by the Ferry on Long Island," on September 8, 1730, for the purpose of "justly dividing the same by casting of lots," and there executed a deed <sup>3</sup>of partition.

1. Langstaff, John Brett, Doctor Lord of Hyde Park, The Famous Physician of Revolutionary Times, The Man Who Saved Washington's Life. (New York, 1942), p.22. Book of Patents, 3. 303-306. April 18, 1705. Patent of Hyde Park, recorded at Albany, State of New York.
2. Book of Patents, 3.303-306 (In "Abstract of Title to Premises of which Frederick F. Vanderbilt died, seized and possessed, situated in the Town of Hyde Park, Dutchess County, State of New York, to Be Conveyed to United States of America." (Hereafter called "Abstract of Title"), pp. 8-9.

Nov. 10, 1718  
 Pierre Fauconnier's Grant,  
 Lot No. 5 - 215 acres sold to  
 George Rym (Rymph) a -----  
 file maker. Title to this  
 property remained in the  
 Rymph Family until May 15, 1915.  
 (Now, 1955) owned by Dominican  
 Fathers.



PIERRE FAUCONNIER'S GRANT \*THE HYDE PARK PATENT. 1705-1746 - 3,600 acres.

Map I. based on Hackett's Map, Abstract of Title, pp.12-13.

Fauconnier to Dr. John Bard in 1746, about 3,385 acres.



Land sold off by Fauconnier prior to 1746.



One of this group of "patentees," Peter (Pierre) Fauconnier, was a Frenchman by birth, but had fled his native land in company with thousands of other Huguenots who became religious exiles under the provisions of the revocation, in 1685, of the Edict of Nantes. Going first to England, where he served under the Duke of Marlborough, Fauconnier finally emigrated to America. Here his fortunes fared well. He occupied a number of offices under Lord Cornbury, and, in 1702, was appointed private secretary to the governor. Later he was made one of the three commissioners for managing the office of collector and receiver general of New York. In yet another capacity, as surveyor general of the province, he was afforded frequent opportunities of speculation, which were apparently not neglected, as his name is found in many of the land patents of that period. None of these acquisitions are known to have come down to his descendants, however, except for his interest in the Hyde Park patent.<sup>4</sup>

Peter Fauconnier died in 1746.<sup>5</sup> The Hyde Park estate, which he is said to have named in honor of his patron, was apparently not developed in his lifetime, but was left as wild and untouched as when it first came into his hands.<sup>6</sup> The town of Hyde Park, established in 1821,<sup>7</sup> took its name from Fauconnier's estate.

4. This sketch of Fauconnier's life follows the one given in Langstaff, Dr. Bard, pp.19-22.
5. Ibid., pp.36-37. Langstaff cites Deed of Gift on record at Secretary of State's Office, Albany, N.Y., as his source for the date of Fauconnier's death.
6. This statement is based on letters of John and Samuel Bard, written after 1763. For the one exception to this statement, see Map I, page 2.
7. Roosevelt, Franklin D., ed., Records of the Town of Hyde Park, Collections of the Dutchess County Historical Society, Vol.III, (Hyde Park, N.Y., 1928), p.3.

CHAPTER II-Section A: DOCTOR JOHN BARD AT HYDE PARK, 1746-1759

Fauconnier's share and interest in the Hyde Park patent passed  
6  
to his daughter Magdalene, wife of Peter Vallean. Mrs. Vallean sold her  
2 $\frac{1}{2}$  shares to her son-in-law, Dr. John Bard;<sup>9</sup> and he later purchased the  
other outstanding shares, thereby becoming the sole owner of the patent  
10  
by 1763. (see Map II, page 5 of this report.)

The first evidence that Dr. John Bard was considering developing  
his Hyde Park estate appears in a letter to him from his son, Samuel Bard,  
11  
dated Edinburgh, November 24, 1763:

"...I hinted at a very successful method taken by some gentlemen  
here, to encourage agriculture and the arts immediately depending on it,  
on their own estates, by proposing small premiums to their tenants. I also  
mentioned to you a scheme for rising madder in America; I am credibly  
informed that, for this article, the British pay the Dutch above two hundred  
thousand pounds per annum; it is a hardy plant, and stands the severe  
winter in Holland, so that I dare say, it would answer very well with us.  
At a moderate computation an acre of ground will yield thirty pounds sterling  
in three years; and the labour attending it is not more than that of Indian  
corn. I have not yet had an opportunity of becoming thoroughly acquainted  
with the manner in which it is managed, but if you think it worth while,  
I can easily be informed..."

8. Langstaff, Dr. Bard, p.37, cites as source, Deed of Gift on record at  
the Secretary of State's Office, Albany, N.Y. as showing Fauconnier left  
his entire estate to his daughter, Magdalene Vallean. See also "Abstract  
of Title," p.12.

9. Langstaff, Dr. Bard, p.73.

10. Ibid., p.73. "Abstract of Title," p.12.

11. McVickar, Rev. John, Domestic Narrative of the Life of Samuel Bard,  
M.D., LL.D., (New York, 1822), p.54.



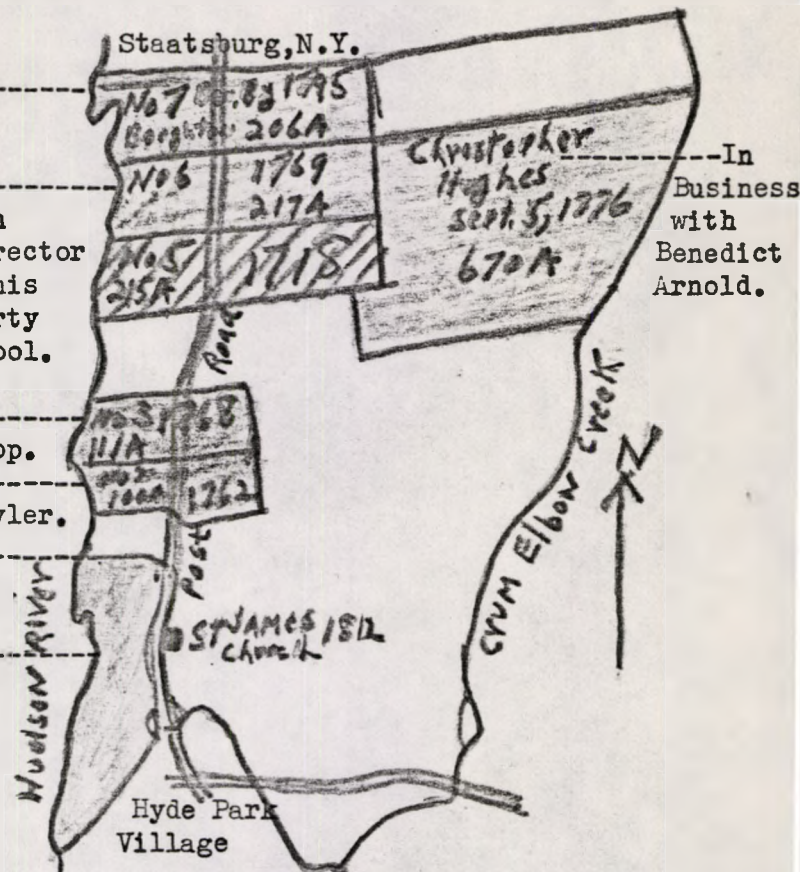
Lot. No.7 to Benjamin Boughton -----  
by 1795, 206 acres.

Lot. No.6-217 acres, Deed dated-----  
May 3,1769, to Joseph Bouton. In  
1809 the Rev.John McVickar,1st rector  
of St. James Church purchased this  
property called "Inwood". Property  
Now(1955) owned by Anderson School.

Lot.No.3-Nov.10,1768, 111 acres-----  
to Thomas Banker, Now Huyler Prop.

Lot. No.2- to Anne Lazear,-----  
prior to 1762,100 acres, now Huyler.  
Bard's Rock-----

Site of Vanderbilt Mansion-----




Fauconnier's original grant- 3,600 acres.


Fauconnier to Dr. John Bard, about 3,385. Dr. J. Bard and Fauconnier  
sold off from 1718 to 1795, about 1,519 acres.

Dr. John Bard to Dr. Samuel Bard, 1795, about 2,081 acres.

DR. JOHN BARD'S HYDE PARK ESTATE, 1746- 1799.

Map. II. Based on Hackett's Map & Abstract of Title,pp.12-13.

 Land sold off by Fauconnier.

 Land sold off by Dr. John Bard.



Samuel Bard's letter from Edinburgh, April 1, 1764 to Dr. John  
Bard, strongly suggests that development of the Hyde Park estate was  
12  
actually underway in 1764:

"I heartily wish I could be with you at laying out your grounds, as I imagine I could be of some assistance, although I may find it impossible to convey my notions upon that subject in writing. From what I have yet seen, I find these the most beautiful where nature is suffered to be our guide. The principle things to be observed in planning a pleasure ground, seems to me, to be the situation of the ground, and the storms and winds, the country is most liable to. By the first I mean, to distribute my plants according to the soil they most delight in; to place such as flourish most in a warm exposure and dry soil, upon the sunny side of a hill; while such as delight in the shade and moist ground, should be placed in the vallies. By this single precaution, one of the greatest beauties of a garden is obtained, which consists in the health and vigour of the plants which compose it. By considering well the predominant winds and storms of the country, we are directed where to plant our large trees, so that they shall be at once an ornament, and afford useful shelter to the smaller and more delicate plants.

"Next, I think straight lines should be particularly avoided, except where they serve to lead the eye to some distant and beautiful object, - serpentine walks are much more agreeable. Another object deserving of attention seems to be, to place the most beautiful and striking objects, such as water, if possible, a handsome green-house, a grove of flowering shrubs, or a remarkably fine tree, in such situations that from the house they may almost all be seen; but to a person walking, they should be artfully concealed until he suddenly and unexpectedly come upon them; so that by the surprise, the pleasure may be increased; and if possible I would contrive them so that they should contrast each other, which again greatly increases their beauty. The last thing I shall mention, which, indeed, is not the least worthy of notice, is to throw the flower garden, kitchen, and fruit garden, and if possible, the whole farm, into one, so that they may appear as links in of the same chain, and may mutually contribute to the beauties of the whole. If you could send me an accurate plan of the situation of your ground, describing particularly the hollows, risings, and the opportunities you have of bringing water into it, the spot where you intend your house, and the situation of your orchard, I would consult some of my friends here about a proper plan, and I believe I know some who would assist us, and as I cannot obtain your gardener before November, if you send the plan immediately, I shall be able to return it by him..."

12. McVicker, Narrative, pp.37-38.



In a letter from Edinburgh, dated June 8, 1764,<sup>13</sup> Samuel Bard informed his father:

"...I have lately received great pleasure and improvement in reading Lord Kames's late work, and recommend it to your perusal, especially that part of it relating to gardening and architecture, before you go on in improving your place on the north river (Hudson River). He most justly condemns the cutting of gardens into formal parterres, or forcing nature in any respect, at the same time, points out, in a beautiful and philosophical manner, where we are implicitly to follow this amiable mistress, and when and how we may improve, by modest dress, her native beauties..."

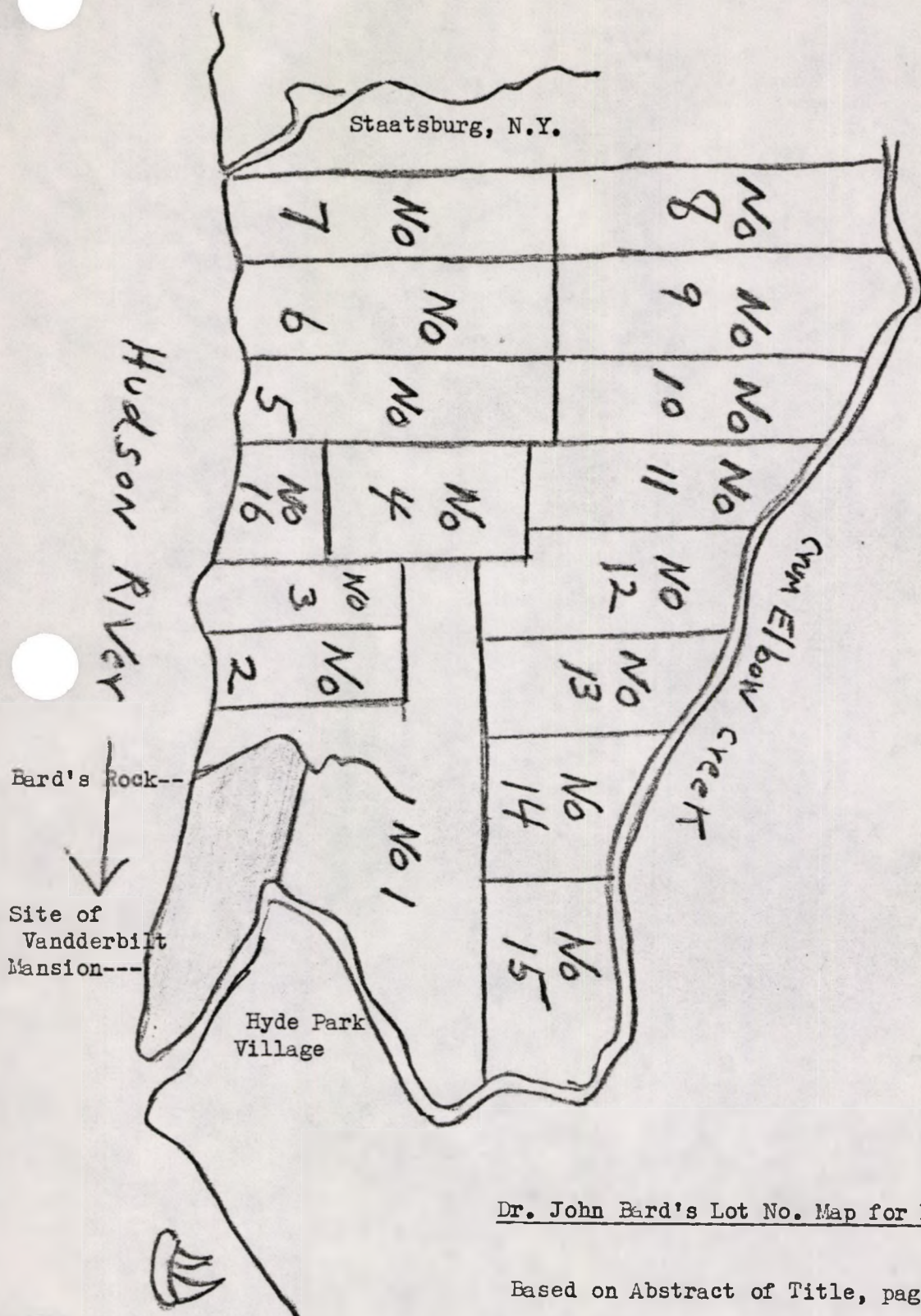
Samuel Bard's letter of April 7, 1765, from Edinburgh, to Dr. John Bard, throws further light on the development of the estate:<sup>14</sup>

"My brother informs me of your intention of building a paper-mill upon the globe farm, in which, I may perhaps, have it in my power to be of some service to you. As soon as I knew this to be your intention, I made it my business to inquire into the state of that manufacture in this country; there are about Edinburgh five or six, most of which, I have seen, and as they seem to be built upon a plan different from those with which you are acquainted, I have sent you a draught I made of the wash-tub, &c. As I saw nothing else about the mill which seemed new, or uncommon, I have sent you no more drawings; but if there is anything you desire to be particularly acquainted with, let me know of it, for I think there is no object more worthy the attention of a gentleman, than the introduction of new manufactures into his native country. Before I visited the paper-mills, I read Postlethwaite upon that article, and received so much instruction from him, that I recommend him to you..."

13. McVicker, Narrative, p.61.

14. Ibid., pp.67-68.





Dr. John Bard's Lot No. Map for Hyde Park Patent

Based on Abstract of Title, page 18.

Map III.



Professional success, however, seems to have been attended by some financial difficulties, and, in 1768, this apparently brought Dr. John Bard to decide on the sale of all his Hyde Park property. A broadside published for this purpose throws interesting light on the status of the estate at that time:

"New York, May 12, 1768

ADVERTISEMENT

"To be sold by the subscriber, living in New York, either all together or in distinct farms, a tract of land in the county of Dutchess, and province of New York, called Hyde Park - bounded to the northward by Staatsburgh; to the westward by Hudson's River, along which it extends three miles and a quarter; and to the southward and eastward by the Fish Creek (now called Crum Elbow Creek); - containing 3,600 acres. The tract in general is filled with exceeding good timber, fit for staves, ship-timber, and lumber of all kinds, and abounds in rich swamps; a great part of the upland exceeding good for grain or grass, and has on it some valuable improvements; - particularly to the southward, a LARGE WELL IMPROVED FARM, with a good house, a large new barn, a young orchard of between 5 and 600 apple trees, most grafted fruit, and in bearing order; between 30 and 80 acres of rich meadow ground, fit for the scythe; and about 150 acres of upland cleared and in tilling order. There is belonging to the said tract, three good landing places, (particularly one on the above farm), where the largest Albany sloop can lay close to a large flat rock, which forms a natural wharff; and which is an exceedingly fit place for a store, as a good road may easily be made from it through the tract into the Nine Partners (another patent to the south), which is now a fine wheat country. The title is warranted to the purchaser."

John Bard."

15. Langstaff, Dr. Bard, p.101. Original listed as in possession of New York Historical Society and Bard College Library.



The particular landing place mentioned in this broadside was Bard's Rock, which may still be seen on the east shore of the Hudson River near the mouth of a small stream (known as "Mariannetta") at the northwest corner of Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site. Dr. Samuel Bard himself later built a storehouse there. Near the rock was a spring where old whaling ships from Poughkeepsie used to fill their casks with drinking water before putting out to sea. Later there also appears to have<sup>16</sup> been a ferry across the Hudson at this point.

Dr. Bard never carried out his intention of 1768 to dispose of the entire Hyde Park property,<sup>17</sup> but between that date and 1795 he did sell<sup>18</sup> off a large portion of it, roughly about 1,500 acres. (See Map II, page 5). He continued to live principally in New York, however, until 1772, when he retired and moved his home to the estate.<sup>19</sup> In 1772 he built a house just<sup>20</sup> north of the present St. James Church. There at "Red House," as he called his residence, he found a lonely retreat during the troublous days of the Revolutionary War.<sup>21</sup> Becoming enthusiastic about the possibilities of pomology and forestry in Dutchess County, he tried endless experiments on his own grounds, realizing the Ciceronian ideal of old age - planting trees for the benefit of generations yet unborn. The doctor thus became a country squire.

16. Hackett, Henry T., "The Hyde Park Patent," In Dutchess County Historical Society Year Book, 1938, Vol. 24.

17. Langstaff, Dr. Bard, p.102; See also McVicker, Narrative, p.94, for a letter of Samuel Bard to John Bard, October 6, 1769, on this subject.

18. "Abstract of Title," pp.12-13. Total-1,519 acres.

19. Langstaff, Dr. Bard, p.109.

20. Ibid., p.109, says Red House built in 1772.

21. Ibid., p.109.

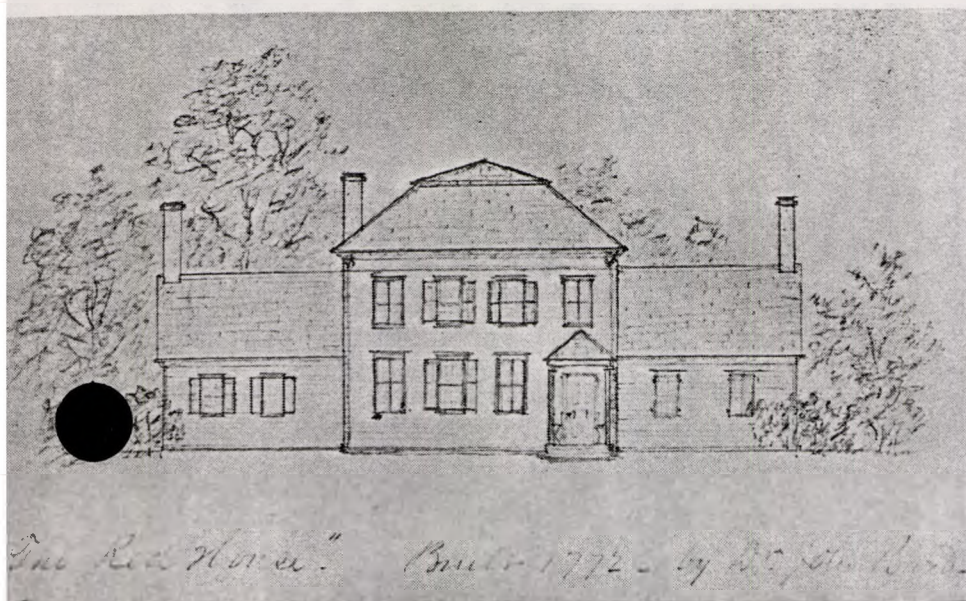


# The HYDE PARK HISTORIAN

Published by  
THE HYDE PARK HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION  
HYDE PARK, NEW YORK

NUMBER 25

JANUARY, 1956



This sketch of Dr. John Bard's "Red House" was made by Mr. Edwin Braman. The original drawing is in the collections of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library. Dr. John Bard erected "Red House" in 1772. The structure is believed to have stood on the east side of the Albany Post Road, just north of St. James' Church, probably on the site of the Vanderbilt barns. "Red House" stood until 1875 when it was torn down by Mr. Walter Langdon. It is interesting to note that President Franklin D. Roosevelt had the architects carefully follow the details of this drawing in constructing the present Hyde Park Post Office. This building is thus a copy of "Red House," the first of the large houses on the "Hyde Park" estate. The only major variation from Braman's drawing is that the President had native field stone used in building the Post Office while the original "Red House" was a frame clap-board structure.

## Election of Officers

The annual election of officers of the Hyde Park Historical Association for the year 1956 has been completed. Balloting was closed on December 30, 1955 and the votes were counted by the Secretary on January 18, 1956. A total of 38 ballots were received and the following officers were elected by an unanimous vote: President, Mr. Gordon L. Kidd; Vice-President, Mrs. Hugh Davies; Treasurer, Miss Evaretta Killmer; Secretary, Mr. Albert McClure; and Membership Secretary, Mrs. Donald Davidson.

## "Rosedale" Painting

In the Sept. 1955 edition of the *Historian*, we printed a 19th-century oil painting of "Rosedale," the Hyde Park estate of John A. Roosevelt. Mr. Corey and Mr. Stickle, of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, have informed us that in the process of cleaning the painting, they discovered that the painting was done in 1855 by Mr. Grube, an artist of the Hudson River Valley school.

## Educational Television

The Hyde Park Historical Association, in cooperation with the Mohawk-Hudson Council on Educational Television, Schenectady, N. Y., has sponsored two series of three television programs each, in 1955 and 1956 on the history of Hyde Park. Each program was televised over Channel 6, Station WRGB, on the "Look and See" series on Thursday mornings from 10:30 to 11:00 a.m. from Schenectady. The first program, April 14, 1955, was devoted to the 10th anniversary of President Roosevelt's death and Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site. The second program was given on May 6 and dealt with Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site.

The first two programs were written, produced and acted by Superintendent George A. Palmer, Historian Charles W. Snell and Museum Preparator Albert McClure, all of the National Park Service.

The third program was given on June 2 and was about the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library. Director Herman Kahn and Curator Raymond Corey of the Library staff presented the third program.

The second series was given on January 5, 12, and 19, 1956. The first program was devoted to the Roosevelt Home and the second to Vanderbilt Mansion. Superintendent James B. Myers, Mr. Snell and Mr. McClure, of the National Park Service presented the first two programs. Mr. Kahn and Dr. Edgar B. Nixon presented the third program which was about the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library. Mr. William F. Stickle of the Roosevelt Library, did the photography for all six programs. The viewing audience for each program was estimated to number 50,000 persons.



# History of "Hyde Park" Estate

1705 to 1894

by Charles W. Snell

DR. SAMUEL BARD AT HYDE PARK, 1793-1821

## CHAPTER III (continued)

Shortly before the death of Dr. John Bard (1799), that remained of the Hyde Park estate, roughly about 1081 acres, was transferred to his son, Dr. Samuel Bard. Dr. Samuel Bard lived principally in New York City, and when at Hyde Park apparently in his father's Red House, until 1795. That year he built a new mansion on the high elevation rising 300 feet above the Hudson and commanding a superb view of the river to both north and south. This was apparently the first house to stand on the site of the present Vanderbilt Mansion. In 1798 Dr. Samuel Bard finally retired to Hyde Park, at the age of 56.

Under the date of February 26, 1799, Dr. Bard wrote to his daughter, Sally Bard, as follows:  
Wednesday. Today for the first time I walk as far as my barnyard—looked at my pigs, my cattle and my workmen & proposed to Caesar to begin our hot bed . . .

"I beg of you or Dr. Hosack will write to Mr. Prince at Flushing for 12 good roots of sweet scented monthly honeysuckle to be sent immediately to you at Doctor Hosack's that you may send them by the first boat of which I shall have notice from hence . . ."

" . . . Tell Hosack that I have been appointed President of an Agricultural Society in this County and that I shall keep an Eye upon him & report his merits and demerits to his masters . . ."

As a matter of fact Samuel Bard had engaged himself in starting a state agricultural society and had added to these activities the construction of a flax and plaster mill on his estate. In reference to the latter he wrote:

"All matters as far as I am yet acquainted with them go on very well and my folk at the mill have abundance of employ—the snow too goes off so moderately that I see very little Danger this Spring of suffering from freshets . . ."

A newspaper of 1797 carried the following advertisement:

### "Fulling and Dying.

"The Subscriber informs his friends and the public that he continues to carry on the clothing business in all his branches at Hyde-Park. The mill has been built anew upon the best construction, so as to do business in the driest seasons; and as he has provided himself with every necessary material, and a first rate workman, he attests himself he shall be able to give general satisfaction to those who shall favor him with their custom.

"Cloth left with Mr. John Montfort, Rhinebeck, Mr. Joseph . . . man, Clinton Town [Hyde Park Village], Mr. . . . r Badger, Poughkeepsie, will be forwarded to the . . . and returned as soon as finished.

Peter C. Brown."

Dr. Samuel Bard likewise continued the lines of work begun by his father, and initiated others. The first greenhouse in Dutchess County is said to have been built by him. Even Thomas Jefferson did not excel him in quest of European trees, shrubs, vines, fruits, and vegetables

that could be successfully grown on American soil. He bred merino sheep, investigated the diseases to which they were subject, and published a useful *Guide for Young Shepards* (1811) embodying his researches on that subject. The Society of Dutchess County for the Promotion of Agriculture made him its first president (1806), and in this connection he encouraged the use of clover as a crop and gypsum as a fertilizer. And certainly not the least among his endeavors was the establishment of Saint James (Episcopal) Church at Hyde Park in 1811, which his generosity and interest helped to found.

Other than this, the family life of the Samuel Bards at Hyde Park appears to have been filled with activity from sunrise to sunset. The good doctor's daughter left a graphic description of it. She wrote:

"My father's time, after his settlement in the country, was passed with much regularity: the principal part of my instruction he took upon himself. Arithmetic, geography, 7c. occupied the early part of the morning; drawing and botany succeeded; and our studies generally ended with a walk in the woods, or a scramble among the rocks, in which I delighted to follow him. His pockets on such excursions, were generally filled with such new plants as we could collect; affording a botanical lesson for the day, and specimens for future illustration . . ."

When the cold Hudson Valley winter came on, and these sylvan studies could be no longer pursued, Dr. Bard and his loved ones gathered around their great blazing hearth, enjoyed visits from their many good friends, and in the long evenings read Shakespeare, Cowper, and other classical writers. As he wrote to his son in February 1802, "We continue to enjoy ourselves with uniform comfort, and uninterrupted, because temperate, pleasure."

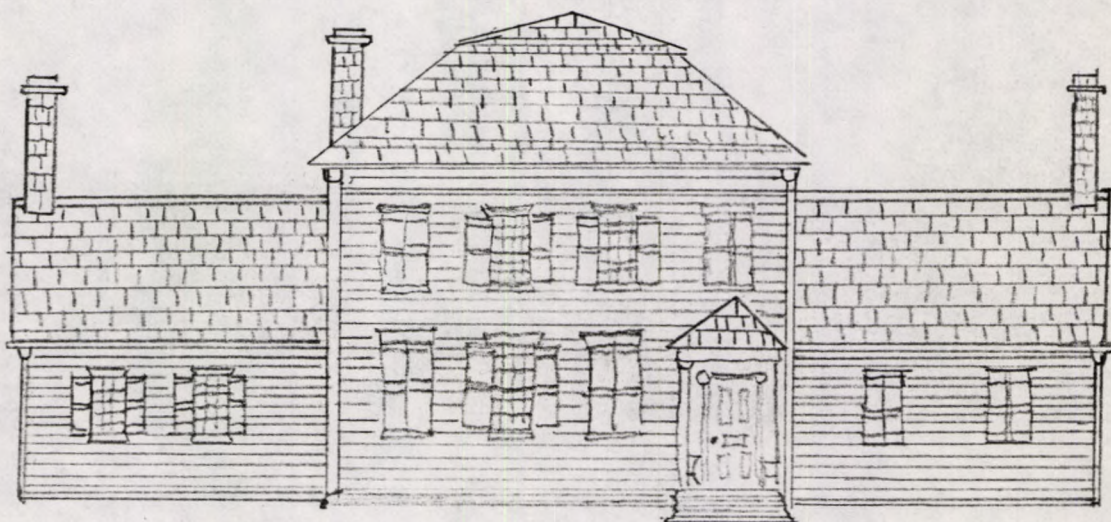
An attack of pleurisy caused the death of Dr. Samuel Bard on May 24, 1821, at the age of 79. His death followed within 24 hours that of his wife who had suffered from the same ailment. They were buried side by side in the little churchyard of Saint James Church. Three of ten children, together with several grandchildren survived them. The Hyde Park estate, now further reduced by sales to about 540 acres, was inherited by the one surviving son, William Bard, later the organizer and first president of the New York Life Insurance & Trust Co. In 1828, William Bard sold the Hyde Park lands to Dr. David Hosack.

## Remarks and Conclusions

On pages 228-229 of *Dr. Bard of Hyde Park*, Mr. Langstaff cites Samuel Bard's letter of April 1, 1764 in discussing Dr. Samuel Bard's gardens in 1806, writing "The plans for landscaping Hyde Park which Sam Bard had sketched on his birthday forty-two years before had been faithfully carried out by the gardener who came from England for this purpose in November 1764." After citing Bard's letter, Mr. Langstaff concludes: "These plans, thanks to the care of Sam Bard and his father, had in 1806 reached a state of beautiful maturity and they can still be seen with no material change in what is now the 'National Historic Site of Hyde Park' (i.e.—the Vanderbilt Italian Gardens)." I have examined all of Mr. Langstaff's material cited in support of this statement and there is little beyond the 1764 letter to justify his conclusion.

(To be continued)





DR. JOHN BARD'S "RED HOUSE," BUILT 1772 - TORN DOWN IN 1875.

Drawn by Charles W. Snell, Based on Drawing in Baman manuscripts in  
F.D.R. Library/,



But this pastoral existence was not to last many years. After the Revolution, having lost considerable money through investment in mining and ironworks, he returned to private practice in New York, where, in partnership with his son, Dr. Samuel Bard, he served as attending physician to George Washington, then in his first term as President of the United States.<sup>22</sup> In 1798, when 83 years old, Dr. John Bard again retired to Hyde Park, where he had his children about him. There he died of cerebral hemorrhage on April 1, 1799, having attained many honors and with the satisfaction of a life of work well done. His remains were buried not far east of the present Saint James Church.<sup>23</sup>

#### LOCATION OF "RED HOUSE."

Jacob Smith's "Map of the Town of Clinton (later Hyde Park), 1797," shows what is probably John Bard's house on the east side of the Albany Post Road.<sup>24</sup> The local historian, Mr. Brame, noted the following information on Red House:

"While rebuilding (in 1847) Mr. Langdon rented John McGroff's house, behind the "Red House"...<sup>25</sup> "The Red House had a square main body, with two wings north and south, at the back corners. There was a long slope of roof at the back." (He states the house was later owned by Dr. S.R. Johnson, and Mrs. Cowan.) "Mr. John Bard had large barns north of the garden, on the brow of the hill. These except a small one were removed by Mr. Hosuck. After that the house was lot with the gardens, lawn and small meadow in the rear, in which is a fine spring of water."<sup>26</sup> "The Red House was built for his own residence by Dr. John Bard either in 1762 or 1772 and torn down by F. Langdon in March 1875."<sup>27</sup>

22. Langstaff, Dr. Bard, pp.140;152;170.

23. Ibid., p.203.

24. Map in Dutchess County Historical Society Year Book, 1926, pp.21-22;40-41.

25. Brame Manuscript, "Genealogy and History of Hyde Park Families," in Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, p.146.

26. Ibid., p.48.

27. Ibid., p.91.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt also took an interest in the "Red House," as the following letter to Mr. Lawson Purdy, dated November 14, 1939, reveals:

"...I come to you in the hope that your memory goes back to the time when you were an infant in arms at Hyde Park.

"We are about to put up a new post office building in Hyde Park village and it has been suggested that we copy the plan of "The Red House" built by Dr. John Bard about 1765 and torn down by Mr. Langdon in 1875.

"There is a sketch of it in a manuscript book kept by Mr. Ed. Braman(p.49) - a tiny pen and ink sketch showing a square center, two stories high and one-story wings on the north and south.

"We would much like to find the original site of this house and perhaps dig down to get its original dimensions.

"Some people describe it as having been in the field east of the Post Road and just north of St. James' Church and what was then the church rectory. Other people say it was north of the road into the Langdon or Vanderbilt farm buildings, i.e. where Mr. Langdon built his superintendent's house. The farm entrance lies, as you know, immediately north of the field which, in turn is north of the church property.

"I wonder much whether you have any recollection of "The Red House" - or its location. Evidently, it had red clapboards but the design would readily reproduce in the fieldstone we like so much and would enable us to have a fireproof building...."

#### SUMMARY:

On the basis of evidence presented, it would appear that the first of Dr. John Bard's houses on the Hyde Park estate was erected in 1764 on the southern end of the estate, probably on the east side of the Post Road near the present site of the Vanderbilt barns. When the Doctor retired in 1772, he apparently erected "Red House," which stood north of the present St. James Church, on the east side of the Post Road. The most likely site for "Red House" seems to have been at the entrance to the Vanderbilt farm buildings. (For a detailed representation, see: "Map No.1-Dr. John Bard's and Dr. Samuel Bard's Hyde Park Estate, 1746-1828," by Charles W. Snell, dated April 10, 1954, revised January 29, 1955). In any case the earliest development by Dr. John Bard appears to have been on the east side of the Post Road, and not

28. Roosevelt, Elliot, ed., F.D.R. His Personal Letters, 1920-45, (New York, 1950), Vol. II, p.956.



on the present grounds of Vanderbilt Mission National Historic Site.

CHAPTER II - Section B: BREV BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF DR. JOHN BARD.

The name of John Bard is well known to every student of American medical history. He was born at Burlington, New Jersey in 1716, and was of French Huguenot descent like his wife, Suzanne Valleeu.<sup>29</sup> He obtained his early education in Philadelphia. There also, at the age of 17, he was bound apprentice to a talented but bad-tempered English surgeon, John Kearsly.<sup>30</sup> Only his determination not to disappoint his mother and his affection for kind-hearted Mrs. Kearsly seemed to have held him up seven long years of rigorous training with this severe in-structor.

John Bard finally began medical practice in Philadelphia and married Suzanne Valleeu, who was a niece of Mrs. Kearsly.<sup>31</sup> In 1746, his lifelong friend, Benjamin Franklin, induced him to move to New York, where an opportunity seemed to open up because of the recent death by yellow fever of two prominent physicians, Dr. Barlow and Dr. Rafie.<sup>32</sup> His sound professional knowledge, personal graces, and amiable disposition soon gained him a large following. Among medical scholars, he became especially noted as the first American physician to take part in systematic anatomical dissection for the purpose of instruction.<sup>33</sup> (This was in 1753.)

29. Largentaff, Dr. Bard, p.27.

30. Ibid., pp.27-29.

31. Ibid., p.30.

32. Ibid., p.33.

33. Ibid., p.40.

In 1759, a Dutch ship arrived in New York harbor carrying cases of malignant ship fever. The town employed Dr. Bard to initiate suitable quarantine regulations in order to safeguard the health of the town's people. The disease was so bad that every attendant and nurse was stricken with it. This experience impelled Dr. Bard to memorialize the town corporation to provide a pesthouse, or quarantine station, where future epidemics of a similar character could be isolated, treated, and suppressed. The town responded by purchasing Bedloe's Island (now Statue of Liberty National Monument), together with a building standing on it, for that purpose. Dr. Bard was appointed health officer.<sup>34</sup> He acted also as agent, physician, and surgeon for the British Navy at New York. This he continued to do until he retired from practice in 1772.<sup>35</sup>

Professional success, however, seems to have been attended by some financial difficulties, and, in 1768, this apparently brought Dr. Bard to decide on the sale of all his Hyde Park property.<sup>36</sup> Dr. Bard, however, never carried out this intention to dispose of the entire Hyde Park estate, but between 1768 and 1795 he did sell off a large portion of it, roughly about 1,500 acres.<sup>37</sup>

He continued to live principally in New York until 1772, when he retired and moved his home to <sup>the</sup> Hyde Park estate. There at Red House, as he called his new residence, he found snug retreat during the troublous days of the Revolutionary War.<sup>39</sup> Becoming enthusiastic about the possibilities of pomology and forestry in Dutchess County, he tried endless experiments on his own grounds, realizing the Ciceronian ideal of old age - planting trees for the benefit of generation yet unborn. The doctor thus became a country squire.

34. Langstaff, Dr. Bard, pp.41&42. 36. Ibid., p.101. 38. Ibid., p.109.

35. Ibid., p.109.

37. Ibid., p.102. 39. Ibid., p.109.



But this pastoral existence was not to last for many years. After the Revolution, having lost considerable money through investments in mining and ironworks, he returned in 1783 to private practice in New York, where, in partnership with his son, Dr. Samuel Bard, he served as attending physician to George Washington, then in his first term as President of the United States.<sup>40</sup> A signal honor came to Dr. John Bard in his selection as first president, in 1788, of the newly organized Medical Society of New York.<sup>41</sup> Seven years later, in 1795, when 80 years old, he gave an address before the society concerning yellow fever, then threatening the city, and methods for its treatment.<sup>42</sup> Three years later he again retired to Hyde Park, where he had his children about him. There he died of cerebral hemorrhage on April 1, 1799, having attained many honors and with the satisfaction of a life of work well done. His remains were buried not far east of the present Saint James Church.<sup>43</sup>

40. Langstaff, Dr. Bard, pp. 140; 152; 170.

41. Ibid., p. 165.

42. Ibid., pp. 189-190.

43. Ibid., p. 203.

CHAPTER III. Section A: Dr. SAMUEL BARD AT HYDE PARK. 1797 - 1821.

Shortly before the death of Dr. John Bard(1799), what remained of the Hyde Park estate, roughly about, 2,081 acres, was transferred to his son, Dr. Samuel Bard.<sup>44</sup> (See Map II, page 5). Dr. Samuel Bard lived principally in New York City, and when at Hyde Park apparently in his father's Red House, until 1795.<sup>45</sup> That year he built a new mansion (see page 13) on the high elevation rising 300 feet above the Hudson and commanding a superb view of the river to both north and south.<sup>46</sup> This was apparently the first house to stand on the site of the present Vanderbilt Mansion.<sup>47</sup> In 1798 Dr. Samuel Bard finally retired to Hyde Park,<sup>48</sup> at the age of 56.

Under the date of February 26, 1799, Dr. Bard wrote to his daughter, Sally Bard, as follows:<sup>49</sup>

"Wednesday. Today for the first time I walk as far as my barnyard - looked at my pigs, my cattle and my workmen & proposed to Cancer to begin our list box....

"I beg of you or Mr. Hosack will write to Mr. Prince at Flushing for 12 good roots of sweet scented monthly Honeysuckle to be sent immediately to you at Doctor Hosack's so that you may send them by the first boat of which you shall have notice from hence..."

"...Tell Hosack that I have been appointed President of an Agricultural Society in this County and that I shall keep an eye upon him & report his merits and demerits to his masters..."<sup>50</sup>

44. "Abstract of Title," p.13.

45. Langstaff, Dr. Bard, p.103.

46. Ibid., p.105. See photograph facing p.198, said to be of painting of Dr. Samuel Bard's house; original painting in New York Public Library.

47. Jacob Smith's Map of Town of Clinton, 1797, Dutchess County Year Book, 1926, pp.21-22; 40-41, shows location of Dr. Samuel Bard's house to be on the present site of Vanderbilt Mansion, and Dr. Samuel Bard's store to be located near Bard's Rock.

48. Langstaff, Dr. Bard, p.196.

49. Ibid., p.200.

50. Ibid., p.201.





DR. SAMUEL BARD'S HYDE PARK MANSION

Built 1795 and enlarged in 1829.

Traced by Robert McGaughey, based on painting of ~~Hyde~~ House in New York Public Library, photo of in Langstaff's Dr. Bard, p.198.



As a native of East Carmel Ford had engaged himself in starting a state agricultural society and had added to these activities the construction of a flax and plaster mill on his estate. In reference to the latter he wrote:

"All matters as far as I am yet acquainted with them go on very well and my folk at the mill have abundance of employ - the snow too goes off so moderately that I see very little danger this Spring of suffering from freshets..." 51

A newspaper of 1797 carried the following advertisement:

"Pulling and Spinning."

"The Subscriber informs his friends and the public that he continues to carry on the clothing business in all its branches at Hyde-Park. The mill has been built anew upon the best construction, so as to do business in the driest seasons; and as he has provided himself with every necessary material, and a first rate workman, he flatters himself he shall be able to give general satisfaction to those who shall favor him with their custom."

"Cloth left with Mr. John Montfort, Rhinebeck, Mr. J. Joseph Forman, Clinton Town (Hyde Park village), Mr. Ebenezer Badger, Poughkeepsie, will be forwarded to the mill, and returned as soon as finished."

"PETER C. BROOK." 52

Dr. Samuel Ford likewise continued the lines of work begun by his father, and initiated others. The first green house in Dutchess County is said to have been built by him. 53 Even Thomas Jefferson did not equal him in quest of European trees, shrubs, vines, fruits, and vegetables that could be

successfully grown on American soil. 54 He bred merino sheep, investigated the diseases to which they were subject, and published a useful Guide for Young Shearers (1811) embodying his researches on that subject. 55 The Society

51. Langstaff, Dr. Ford, p.201.

52. Poughkeepsie Country Journal, November 14, 1797.

53. Langstaff, Dr. Ford, p.239. McVickar's Narrative, p.203. Langstaff says this took place in 1806. McVickar, Narrative, pp.236-37, S. Ford to William Ford, "Christmas 1820: ...I walk, ride, and amuse myself, out of doors in my green-house...My Green-House and flower stands afford me considerable amusement. The plants flourish exceedingly; I spent two hours among them yesterday..."

54. McVickar, Narrative, pp.182-183; 203.

55. Ibid., 183-184; Langstaff, Dr. Ford, pp.252-253.



of Dutchess County for the Promotion of Agriculture made him its first president (1806), and in this connection he encouraged the use of clover as a crop and gypsum as a fertilizer.<sup>56</sup> And certainly not the least among his endeavors was the establishment of Saint James (Episcopal) Church at Hyde Park in 1811, which his generosity and interest helped to found.<sup>57</sup>

Other than this, the family life of the Samuel Bards at Hyde Park appears to have been filled with activity from sunrise to sunset. The good doctor's daughter left a graphic description of it. She wrote:

"My father's time, after his settlement in the country, was passed with much regularity; the principal part of my instruction he took upon himself. Arithmetic, geography, &c. occupied the early part of the morning; drawing and botany succeeded; and our studies generally ended with a walk in the woods, or a scramble among the rocks, in which I delighted to follow him. His pockets on such excursions, were generally filled with such new plants as we could collect; affording a botanical lesson for the day, and specimens for future illustration..."<sup>58</sup>

When the cold Hudson Valley winter came on, and these sylvan studies could be no longer pursued, Dr. Bard and his loved ones gathered around their great blazing hearth, enjoyed visits from their many good friends, and in the long evenings read Shakespeare, Comper, and other classical writers. As he wrote to his son in February 1802, "We continue to enjoy ourselves with uniform comfort, and uninterrupted, because temperate, pleasure."<sup>59</sup>

56. McVickar, Narrative, pp.182,183; Langstaff, Dr. Bard, pp.201;222.

57. Langstaff's Dr. Bard, p.255; McVickar, Narrative, pp.210-211.

58. Langstaff, Dr. Bard, p.210, daughter was Elizabeth Bard, 1801; see McVickar, Narrative, p.161 as the original source.

59. Langstaff, Dr. Bard, p.212; McVickar, Narrative, has the original letter and several others in the same spirit, pp.189; 214-215; 220-221, etc.

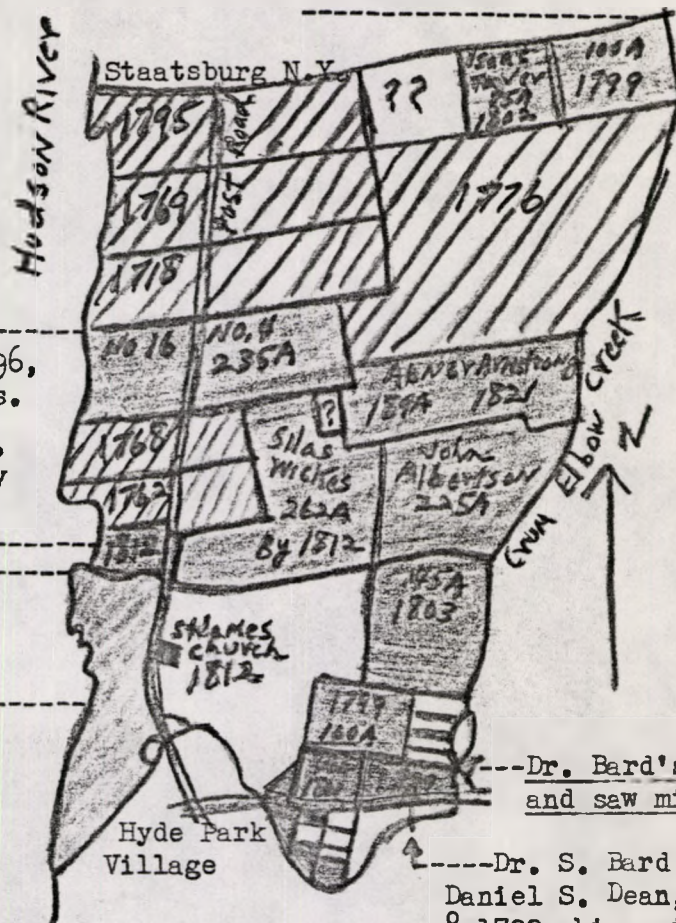


Dr. S. Bard to Bastian Traver, April 15,  
1799, a tract  
of 100 acres

Dr. S. Bard to Mary B. Rymph,  
June 12, 1793, recorded Feb. 25, 1796,  
lots # 16 and 4, total 235 acres.

To Nathaniel Pendleton, Sept. 29,  
1812, 37 acres. Tract eventually  
owned by James Kirk Paulding,  
Secretary of Navy, 1837-41.  
Bard's Rock

Site of Vanderbilt Mansion



Dr. Bard's grist  
and saw mills



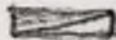
Dr. S. Bard to  
Daniel S. Dean, July  
8, 1799, his grist and  
saw mills on the Crum  
Elbow creek.

Dr. John Bard to Dr. Samuel Bard, 1793-5, about 2,081  
acres.

Dr. Samuel Bard, 1793-1821, sold off about 1,505 acres, leaving  
his son, William Bard, in 1821, about 540 acres

#### DR. SAMUEL BARD'S HYDE PARK ESTATE, 1793-1821

Map IV. Based on Hackett's Map & Abstract of Title, pp. 12-13.

-  Land sold off by Fauconnier and Dr. John Bard.
-  Land sold off by Dr. Samuel Bard, 1793-1821.
-  Land left by Dr. Samuel Bard in 1821 to William Bard.



An attack of pleurisy caused the death of Dr. Samuel Bard on May 24, 1821, at the age of 79. His death followed within 24 hours that of his wife who had suffered from the same ailment. They were buried side by side in the little churchyard of Saint James Church. <sup>60</sup> Three of ten children, together with several grandchildren survived them. The Hyde Park estate, now further reduced by sales to about 540 acres, was inherited by the one surviving son, William Bard, (See Map IV, page 21), later the <sup>61</sup> organizer and first president of the New York Life Insurance & Trust Co. <sup>62</sup> In 1828, William Bard sold the Hyde Park lands to Dr. David Hosack.

#### REMARKS AND CONCLUSIONS

On pages 228-229 of Dr. Bard of Hyde Park, Mr. Langstaff cites Samuel Bard's letter of April 1, 1764( see page 6 of this report) in discussing Dr. Samuel Bard's gardens in 1806, writing "The plans for landscaping Hyde Park which Sam Bard had sketched on his birthday forty-two years before had been faithfully carried out by the gardener who came from England for this purpose in November 1764." After citing Bard's letter, Mr. Langstaff concludes: "These plans, thanks to the care of Sam Bard and his father, had in 1806 reached a state of beautiful maturity and they can still be seen with no material changes in what is now the 'National Historic Site of Hyde Park'(i.e.-the Vanderbilt Italian Gardens)." I have examined all of Mr. Langstaff's material cited in support of this statement and there is little beyond the 1764 letter to justify his conclusion.

60. Langstaff, Dr. Bard, p.278.

61. Ibid., pp.212-213; 327. "Abstract of Title."

62. "Abstract of Title," p.29-On October 7, 1828, Dr. David Hosack paid William Bard and his wife, Catharine, \$40,000 for property; also paid \$9,146.88 for some additional pieces of property from the Bards.

McVickar, in his Narrative, pages 57-58, prints this 1764 letter in full and adds the following note: "These details derive some interest from the fact they relate to the very spot which forty years afterward, he was himself engaged in adorning." That would be 1804. Now if the 1764 plans were carried out at that time or even in 1772, they must have been realized on the east side of the Post Road, north of St. James Church, close by the Red House; hence they have no relationship to the Vanderbilt gardens. Dr. Samuel Bard's new mansion was erected in 1795 on or near the site of the present Vanderbilt Mansion. The new gardens, created in connection with the new house, may thus have been on the site of the present Vanderbilt gardens, but there is no definite proof either way; and as has been shown in the 1941 Vanderbilt Mansion Master Plan and in Charles W. Snell's, "A Preliminary Report on the Frederick W. Vanderbilts of Hyde Park, New York," dated April 1, 1954, pp. 51-52, etc., and in the Chapter on Horack, below, a great many changes occurred in the gardens from Samuel Bard's time down to 1938, so that they bear little relationship to what Samuel Bard may have had on that site. See Map No. 1--Dr. John Bard's and Dr. Samuel Bard's Hyde Park Estate, 1746-1808," by Charles W. Snell, dated April 10, 1954, revised January 29, 1955, for Samuel Bard's probable development of his estate.

The local historian, Mr. Dragan, gives us the following additional information on Dr. Samuel Bard's estate: "Dr. Horack altered and enlarged the house built by Dr. Samuel Bard, removed the old barns, which stood north of the house,... and closing the old entrance gate opposite the house, at the top of the hill above the bridge..." (that is, the original entrance was opposite the house, running from the Albany Post Road directly to the house, without crossing Crum Elbow Creek; Horack added the entrance that cross Crum Elbow Creek over a bridge.)

63. Dragan's "Genealogy and History of Hyde Park Families," p. 102.



CHAPTER III- Section B: BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF DR. SAMUEL BARD.

Among medical men, Dr. Samuel Bard achieved renown surpassing even that of his father, Dr. John Bard. Samuel Bard was born in Philadelphia in 1742, and four years later, when his father moved to New York, began his<sup>64</sup> grammar-school education. After several years work at King's College,<sup>65</sup> he was sent abroad for the study of medicine. A French privateer captured the ship on which he had taken passage and took it to Bayonne. Here he was thrown into prison, there to remain for five months until Benjamin Franklin<sup>66</sup> finally effected his release. Going thence to London, he was admitted as<sup>67</sup> an assistant to Dr. Alexander Russell, a physician at St. Thomas's Hospital. From London the pursuit of knowledge took him to the University of Edinburgh,<sup>68</sup> then the most famous medical school in the world. The year 1765 saw him homeward bound once more, with a degree of Doctor of Medicine, together with a prize for an herbarium containing over 500 indigenous vegetables of<sup>69</sup> Scotland.

64. Langstaff, Dr. Bard, p.31;37. See also McVicker, Narrative, which prints many of Samuel Bard's letters complete.

65. Langstaff, Dr. Bard, p.48. Samuel Bard entered King's College in 1759.

66. Ibid., p.52, sailed from New York in 1761; pp.52-54 for his capture.

67. Ibid., pp.55; 57.

68. Ibid., p.63. To Edinburgh in 1762.

69. Ibid., pp.77; 98.

Upon his return to New York, Dr. Samuel Bard joined with his father in the practice of medicine and soon acquired great popularity and a large clientele.<sup>70</sup> Assisted by five other physicians, who like himself, held their degree from European universities, he was not long in realizing an early ambition to establish a medical school in the city.<sup>71</sup> This new institution, the second of its kind in America, opened its doors as part of King's College (later Columbia), with Bard as professor of the theory and practice of physic;<sup>72</sup> and when its first degrees were conferred in 1769 he delivered an address which was instrumental not only in raising funds for the school, but later (1781) in founding the New York Hospital.<sup>73</sup> The school was closed during the Revolution, and in 1811 it was separated from Columbia College and became the College of Physicians and Surgeons, which now, for a number of years, has been part of the vast educational system of Columbia University.<sup>74</sup> Dr. Bard was connected with the institution for 40 years, the last 20 as dean of the faculty and as trustee.<sup>75</sup>

70. Langstaff, Dr. Bard, p.99.

71. Ibid., p.100, New medical school established in 1767.

72. Ibid., p.100.

73. Ibid., p.102; 178.

74. Ibid., p.126.

75. Ibid., p.155.



The outbreak of the Revolutionary War naturally disrupted the practice of many professional men in America. Dr. Samuel Bard was among them. He moved to Shrewsbury, N.J., and for a time gave the benefit of his chemical knowledge to a salt-manufacturing enterprise, salt being a highly necessary article of war provisions at that time.<sup>76</sup> Funds for this venture finally running out, he returned to New York in the summer of 1777. The city was then under British control.<sup>77</sup> There, amid great difficulties, he finally regained his former practice, and by the end of the conflict was once more in comfortable circumstances.<sup>78</sup> Mary Bard, a cousin, whom he married in 1770, was at Hyde Park during most of this uncertain period; and her letters to her husband, and also those she received from him, are filled with mutual love, courage, and devotion.<sup>79</sup>

Following the close of the Revolution, Dr. Samuel Bard served as personal physician to George Washington, and assisted by his father, performed what was then a major operation on the First President. This involved the removal of a carbuncle on the left thigh.<sup>80</sup> After 1791 when the New York Hospital opened, he became one of its most eminent visiting physicians, spending much of his time in the study of obstetrics. This was his chief field of medical knowledge, and his Compendium of the Theory and Practice of Midwifery (1807) went through five editions.<sup>81</sup> He also made noteworthy contributions to the study of diphtheria and yellow fever, and helped to found the City or "Society," Library and the New York Dispensary.<sup>82</sup>

76. Langstaff, Dr. Bard, p.132 for 1776; p.133 for 1777.

77. Ibid., p.133.

81. Ibid., p.235.

78. Ibid., p.136.

82. Ibid., p.177, Dispensary in 1789; Yellow fever, pp.196-199; diphtheria, pp.105-106; Library, p.109.

79. Ibid., p.104, Married; pp.123-137.

80. Ibid., p.178.

Dr. Samuel Bard lived much, and during his later years entirely<sup>83</sup> (after 1798), on the family estate at Hyde Park. The first green house<sup>84</sup> in Dutchess County is said to have been built by him. Even Thomas Jefferson did not excel him in quest of European trees, shrubs, fruits, and vegetables that could be successfully grown on American soil. He bred merino sheep, investigated the diseases to which they were subject, and published a useful Guide for Young Shepards (1811) embodying his<sup>85</sup> researches on that subject. The Society of Dutchess County for the Promotion of Agriculture made him its first president (1806), and in this connection he encouraged the use of clover as a crop and gypsum as a<sup>86</sup> fertilizer. And certainly not the least among his endeavors was the establishment of Saint James (Episcopal) Church in Hyde Park in 1811,<sup>87</sup> which his generosity and interest helped to found. An attack of pleurisy caused the death of Dr. Samuel Bard on May 24, 1821, at the age of 79. His death followed within 24 hours that of his wife who had suffered from the same ailment. They were buried side by side in the little churchyard<sup>88</sup> Saint James.

83. Langstaff, Dr. Bard, p.219.

84. Ibid., p.230, in 1806.

85. Ibid., pp.252, 253.

86. Ibid., p.201, 222.

87. Ibid., p.255.

88. Ibid., p.278.



CHAPTER IV. Section A: BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF DR. DAVID HOSACK

It was once observed that Dr. David Hosack, De Witt Clinton, and Bishop Hobart were the "tripod" on which New York City stood in the early nineteenth century. David Hosack was born in New York on August 31, 1768, received his arts degree from the College of New Jersey (Princeton) in 1789, and then studied medicine in New York under Nicholas Remyne, Philip Wright Post, and Samuel Bard, and in Philadelphia under Benjamin Rush. Soon thereafter he went abroad to further his preparation at London and Edinburgh. On his return to America in 1794, he brought with him a large collection of minerals and also a collection of duplicate specimens of plants from the herbarium of Linnaeus. The year 1795 saw him appointed professor of botany at Columbia College, and 1797 of materia medica. He continued to hold both positions until 1811.

Dr. Hosack's success in treating his patients during the yellow fever epidemic of 1797 increased his reputation and was partly responsible for his being taken into a partnership by his old teacher, Dr. Samuel Bard. When the latter retired, Dr. Hosack succeeded to his practice. He was a pioneer in the use of the stethoscope, in limiting the use of the lancet, and in advocating vaccination. He was attending surgeon at the Burr-Hamilton duel (1804). Between 1807 and 1808 he taught materia medica in the newly chartered College of Physicians and Surgeons. A few years later, in 1811, he resigned his position at Columbia in order to take a professorship of the theory and practice of physic in the College of Physicians and Surgeons, of which he was also vice president from 1822 to 1826. He withdrew in the last-named year to join in the founding of

89. Langstaff, Dr. Bard, p. 40

90. Ibid., pp. 186; 191-193.

91. Ibid., p. 190.

92. Ibid., p. 216.

93. Ibid., p. 243.

94. Ibid., p. 251.

the short-lived Rutgers Medical College, which he served as president until 1830. The establishment of Bellevue Hospital in 1820, upon the institutional basis of the infirmary previously founded by Dr. John Bard, was also in large part due to his efforts.<sup>95</sup>

Even this long list does not exhaust the catalog of Dr. Hosack's accomplishments, for his interest in fields other than medicine ran deep and wide. At various times he was president of the New York Historical Society, the Horticultural Society, the Philosophical Society, and the Literary Society. Deeply interested in plants, flowers, and trees, he founded the Elgin Botanical Garden (1801), in New York City.<sup>96</sup> This garden covered 20 acres, part of it being on the site of the present Rockefeller Center.

When Dr. Hosack took over the Hyde Park estate in 1828 (see Map IV, page 30), he continued its development along lines laid down by previous owners, but on a much more elaborate scale. Dr. Hosack died in New York City on December 22, 1835.<sup>97</sup>

95. Langstaff, Dr. Bard, p. 161. 262-263.

96. Ibid., p. 210.

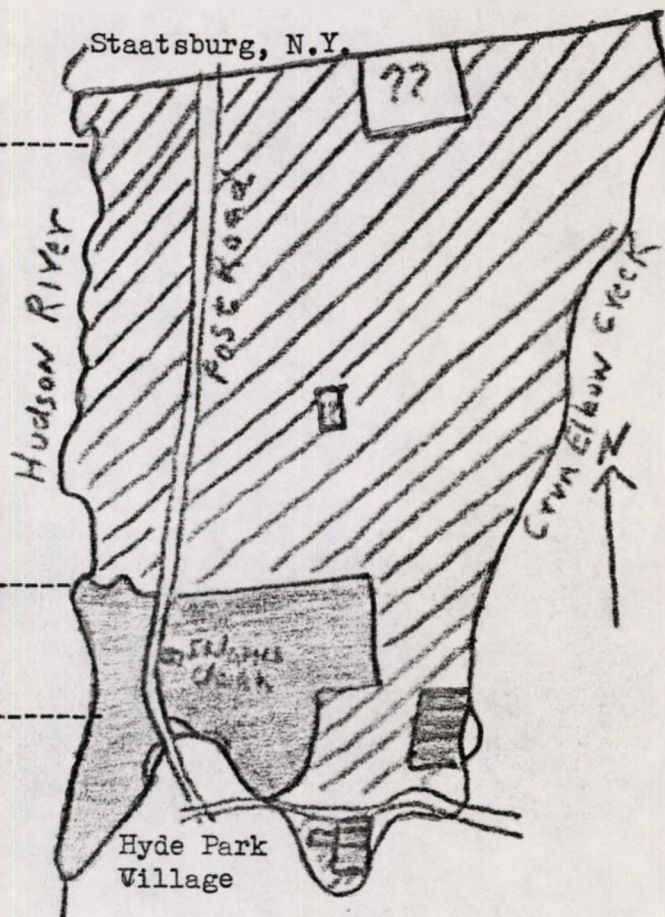
97. Feins, Claire K., "Doctor David Hosack at Hyde Park, A Report for the Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site," dated 1950, p. 19. (This monograph written for National Park Service, and I have rewritten portions of it in this report for our own special needs).



Original Fauconnier Grant of  
3,600 acres in 1705-----

Bard's Rock-----

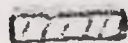
Site of Vanderbilt Mansion-----



William Bard to Dr. David Hosack in 1828, about 540 acres.

DR. DAVID HOSACK'S HYDE PARK ESTATE, 1828-1840.

MAP V.

 Land sold off by Fauconnier and the Bards prior to 1828.

 Land sold by William Bard to Dr. David Hosack in 1828.

CHAPTER IV - SECTION B: DOCTOR DAVID HOSACK AT HYDE PARK, 1828 -1835

When Doctor David Hosack of New York City bought the Hyde Park estate of the son of his deceased teacher and partner, Doctor Samuel Bard, in October 1828, he was a man of 59 planning a well-earned retirement from a life of strenuous activity. He had made himself nationally known in a career of over 35 years as a practitioner of medicine and as a teacher of two generations of students in the changing medical school of New York. Now he would don the mantle of Sam Bard and retire for at least part of the year with his considerable family and fortune to the peaceful premises of Dutchess County. There he already had close friends like Nathaniel Pendleton and his ex-student Isaac Roosevelt (grandfather of Franklin D. Roosevelt) to say nothing of his son-in-law Hamilton Wilks. Thus he wrote to his old friend, the New England historian and biographer, Dr. James  
98  
Thacher, on New Year's Day, 1829:

"I have lately purchased a farm of 700 acres on the Hudson...where I propose to pass my summers - my winters will be spent in town and my time devoted to the college and to my practice as far as I can render it in consultation... agriculture and horticulture will now occupy the residue of my life in which I follow your example - I hope you will gratify me by a visit in the summer when we will attend to the georgics as well as to medicine."

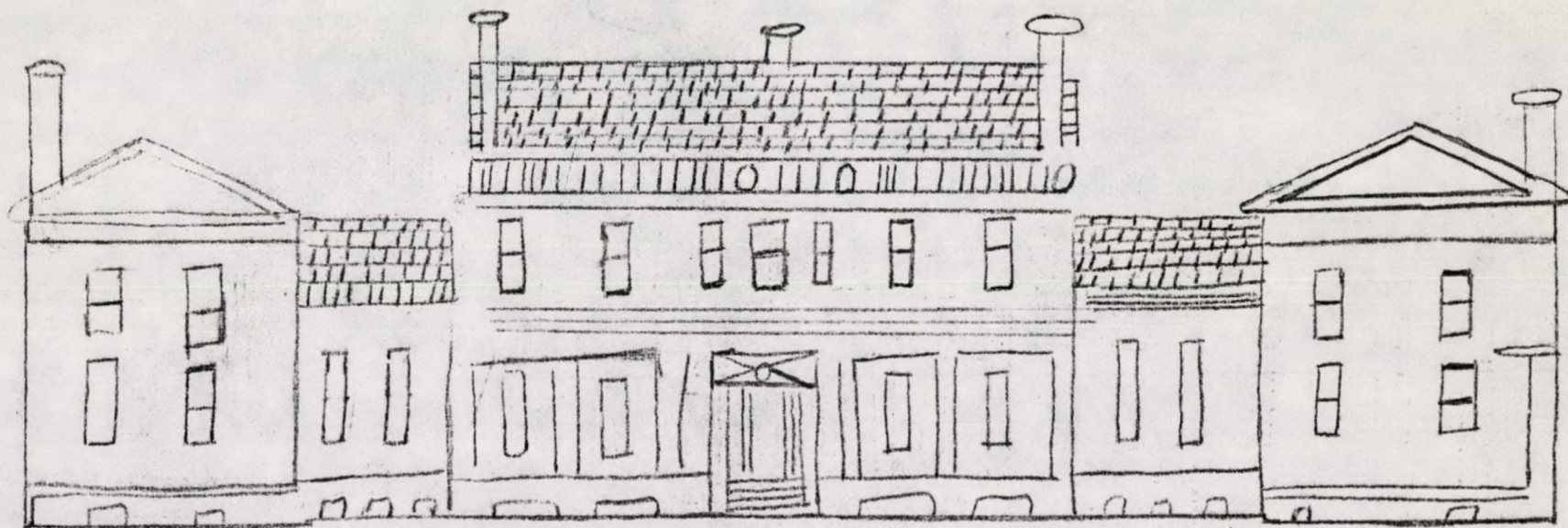
DR. HOSACK IMPROVES HIS ESTATE

It was almost immediately clear that the doctor would approach "retirement" with his characteristic vigor. The intention to waste no time can be seen in his letter of March 7, 1829 to William Bard from whom  
99  
Hosack had purchased most of the estate:

98. Manuscript Collection, Rutgers University Library. (Folms, page 2)

99. Bardiana Collection, Bard College Library. See microfilm copy. Franklin D. Roosevelt Library.





DR. DAVID HOSACK'S HYDE PARK MANSION

Built in 1829 and Burned in 1845.

Drawn by Robert McGaughey, based on an A. J. Davis drawing.



The  
HYDE PARK

# HISTORIAN

Published by

THE HYDE PARK HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

HYDE PARK, NEW YORK

NUMBER 27

OCTOBER, 1956

## Annual Meeting

The Hyde Park Historical Association held its annual meeting at The Kitchen in Hyde Park on Saturday, October 6, from 1 to 4 P.M. Fifty-one members and guests attended the meeting. Following the luncheon, the Reverend Gordon L. Kidd, President of the Association, presided over the business meeting.

Mr. Kidd reviewed the activities of the Association during the past year. Five copies of the *Hyde Park Historian* have been issued and three trustees' meetings have been held since October, 1955. Once again, this year in cooperation with the Mohawk-Hudson Council on Educational Television, the Association sponsored three T.V. programs over Station WRGB, Schenectady on January 5, 12 and 19. The Roosevelt Home and Library, and Vanderbilt Mansion were featured; the viewing audience for each program was estimated at 50,000 persons. The participants were James B. Myers, Charles W. Snell and Albert McClure of the National Park Service and Mr. Herman Kahn and Dr. Edgar Nixon of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library.

The Association has continued its membership in the Dutchess County Historical Society, the New York State Historical Association, and the American Association for State and Local History. Two thousand Vanderbilt Mansion leaflets and 5,000 Information Sheets for School Groups were printed for distribution to visitors.

The Association's brochure "Welcome to Hyde Park," was given wide distribution during the year by the National Park Service, local motel owners, merchants, and by the Town Clerk's Office. Mr. Kidd highly commended Mr. William Schryver, "who has worked long and tirelessly on the production of this valuable source of information to visitors to our community."

Mr. Kidd stated that Mr. Lancelot Phleps is the 1956 winner of the History Award, which is sponsored by the Association for the Fifth Grade of the Hyde Park School. The trustees again voted to donate \$100 to the Roosevelt Vanderbilt National Park Employees' Association in recognition of their work in selling postcards and slides at Vanderbilt Mansion for the benefit of the Association. The Hyde Park Free Library has voted to make our Association the custodian of the Hyde Park Historical material owned by the Library and now in the files of the Association.



DR. DAVID HOSACK'S HYDE PARK HOUSE

This was the second home to stand on the present site of Vanderbilt Mansion. Dr. Hosack's house was remodeled and enlarged in 1829 for Dr. Hosack by the famous architect Alexander J. Davis. Dr. Hosack's mansion was destroyed by fire in 1845. Sketch by Albert McClure after the original drawing in the Alexander J. Davis Collection, Avery Library, Columbia University.

In cooperation with the National Park Service, the Association is sponsoring an audio-visual program for visitors at Vanderbilt Mansion. The Trustees voted to appropriate \$300. for the purchase of audio-visual equipment to aid in this project. Mr. James B. Myers reported on this program, explaining that the money had been used to purchase a LaBelle slide projector and tape recorder. A 20-minute talk on the history of the Mansion has been tape-recorded, and the recorder automatically synchronizes the 85 slides that accompany the talk. The talk was offered to all visitors who wished to see it, seven times a day this summer at the Mansion; it was shown about 350 times for 6,000 visitors and has been very well received. A similar talk has also been prepared on the Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt that is loaned out to schools.

Miss Evaretta Killmer, reading the Treasurer's Report, announced that the Association had \$1,950.94 in its funds as of October 1. Mrs. Donald Davidson gave the Membership Report, stating that there are 138 members in the Association; two of whom are life members, 11 are contributing members and 125 are annual members. 79 members are residents of Hyde Park.

Eighty-one ballots were cast for the election of officers. The results were as follows: Re-elected were Mr. Kidd as President; Mrs. Hugh Davies as Vice-President; Mr. Albert McClure as Secretary; Miss Evaretta Killmer as Treasurer; and Mrs. Donald Davidson as Membership Secretary. Mr. Kidd was also re-elected to a five-year term as a Trustee of the Association.

After the business meeting, Mr. Fred L. Rath, Vice-Director of the New York State Historical Association, former Director of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and former Staff Historian of the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites, gave a most interesting talk on "New Trends in Historic Preservation." No longer merely content with saving historic structures, Mr. Rath stated, preservation societies are now striving to use historic buildings as a three-dimensional educational aid in presenting the history of our nation.

(Continued on reverse side)



# ry of "Hyde Park" Estate

1705 to 1894

by Charles W. Snell

Chapter IV (continued)

## BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF DR. DAVID HOSACK

It was once observed that Dr. David Hosack, De Witt Clinton, and Bishop Hobart were the "tripod" on which New York City stood in the early nineteenth century. David Hosack was born in New York on August 31, 1769, received his arts degree from the College of New Jersey (Princeton) in 1789, and then studied medicine in New York under Nicholas Romaine, Philip Wright, and Samuel Bard, and in Philadelphia under Benjamin Rush. Soon thereafter he went abroad to further his preparation at London and Edinburgh. On his return to America in 1794, he brought with him a large collection of minerals and also a collection of duplicate specimens of plants from the herbarium of Linnaeus. The year 1795 saw him appointed professor of botany at Columbia College, and 1797 of materia medica. He continued to hold both positions until 1811.

Dr. Hosack's success in treating his patients during the yellow fever epidemic of 1797 increased his reputation and was partly responsible for his being taken into partnership by his old teacher, Dr. Samuel Bard. When he later retired, Dr. Hosack succeeded to his practice. He was a pioneer in the use of the stethoscope, in limiting the use of the lancet, and in advocating vaccination. He was attending surgeon at the Burr-Hamilton duel (1804). Between 1807 and 1808 he taught materia medica at the newly chartered College of Physicians and Surgeons. A few years later, in 1811, he resigned his position at Columbia in order to take a professorship of the theory and practice of physic in the College of Physicians and Surgeons, of which he was also vice-president from 1822 to 1826. He withdrew in the last-named year to join in the founding of the short-lived Rutgers Medical College, which he served as president until 1830. The establishment of Bellevue Hospital in 1820, upon the institutional basis of the infirmary previously founded by Dr. John Bard, was also in large part due to his efforts.

Even this long list does not exhaust the catalog of Dr. Hosack's accomplishments, for his interest in fields other than medicine ran deep and wide. At various times he was president of the New York Historical Society, the Horticultural Society, the Philosophical Society, and the Literary Society. Deeply interested in plants, flowers,

and trees, he founded the Elgin Botanical Garden (1801), in New York City. This garden covered 20 acres, part of it being on the site of the present Rockefeller Center.

When Dr. Hosack took over the Hyde Park estate in 1828 he continued its development along lines laid down by previous owners, but on a much more elaborate scale. Dr. Hosack died in New York City, December 22, 1835.

## DOCTOR DAVID HOSACK AT HYDE PARK 1828-1835

When Doctor David Hosack of New York City bought the Hyde Park estate of the son of his deceased teacher and partner, Doctor Samuel Bard, in October 1828, he was a man of 59 planning a well-earned retirement from a life of strenuous activity. He had made himself nationally known in a career of over 35 years as a practitioner of medicine and as a teacher of two generations of students in the changing medical school of New York. Now he would don the mantle of Sam Bard and retire for at least part of the year with his considerable family and fortune to the peaceful promise of Dutchess County. There he already had close friends like Nathaniel Pendleton and his ex-student Isaac Roosevelt (grandfather of Franklin D. Roosevelt) to say nothing of his son-in-law Hamilton Wilks. Thus he wrote to his old friend, the New England historian and biographer, Dr. James Thacher, on New Year's Day, 1829:

"I have lately purchased a farm of 700 acres on the Hudson . . . where I propose to pass my summers—my winters will be spent in town and my time devoted to the college and to my practice as far as I can render it in consultation . . . agriculture and horticulture will now occupy the residue of my life in which I follow your example—I hope you will gratify me by a visit in the summer when we will attend to the georgics as well as to medicine."

## DR. HOSACK IMPROVES HIS ESTATE

It was almost immediately clear that the doctor would approach "retirement" with his characteristic vigor. The intention to waste no time can be seen in his letter of March 7, 1829 to William Bard from whom Hosack had purchased most of the estate:

"I am now ready to discharge my debt to you—when ever you will furnish me with the amount I will pay it to your order—I yesterday paid Mr. McVickar for the wood lot, dale, mill and property connected with it—Robertson's lot and interest due on it.

"If Mr. Allen wishes to remain I will allow his cows and horses to be pastured with mine but being desirous of removing fences and to cut all the hay for sheep I cannot set apart the grounds connected with the cottage—those I wish to reserve and cultivate.

"Be so good as tell Mr. Deidier that he must make the best arrangements for me he can . . . 2 dollars a week for board appears to be more than has been usual. . . . I will be up the moment the river is free—I will then determine the amount of work to be done in the present year—I must reserve some for my occupation in succeeding years—especially if labour and board are more expensive than in ordinary seasons—Mr. Deidier will retain the kitchen gardener if he sees fit—I shall leave all these arrangements to him. . . .

"I hope my french vine has not suffered from your severe frost."

(To be continued)

## Annual Meeting . . .

(Continued from front side)

Members and guests attending the meeting included: Miss Melma Bickley, Mr. and Mrs. Charles W. Snell, Mr. and Mrs. James B. Myers, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Donald Davidson, Mr. and Mrs. Albert McClure, Miss Evaretta Killen, Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Kidd, Mr. Harry Briggs, Mrs. Julia W. Martin, Mrs. Paul Martin, Mr. Saul Kessler, Mr. and Mrs. David C. Tueday, Mrs. Ria Barba, Mr. Frank Campbell, Mrs. Amy Ver Neov, Mrs. John Hackett, Mrs. C. Spell, Mrs. Gloria Golden, Mrs. Theresa P. Farley, Miss T. Aver, Miss Elizabeth Andros, Mrs. Manford Newman, Mr. and Mrs. G. Stoutenburgh, Mrs. Hugh Davies, Mrs. S. Wojohowski, Mr. Robert McGaughey, Mrs. Florence Weigel, Mrs. H. Velie, Mr. William Westcott, Miss Alma Van Curan, Mrs. Charles Van Ran, Mrs. Mohl, Miss J. Frankland, Mrs. George Darlington, Mrs. B. Fredriksen, Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Van Wagner, and Mrs. William Russell.



"I am now ready to discharge my debt to you - whenever you will furnish me with the amount I will pay it to your order - I yesterday paid Mr. McVicker for the wood lot, dale, mill and property connected with it - Roberston's lot and interest due on it.

"If Mr. Allen wished to remain I will allow his cows and horses to be pastured with mine but being desirous of removing fences and to cut all the hay for sheep I cannot set apart the grounds connected with the cottage - those I wish to reserve and cultivate,

"Be so good as tell Mr. Deidier that he must make the best arrangements for me he can... 2 dollars a week for board appears to be more than has been usual... I will be up the moment the river is free - I will then determine the amount of work to be done in the present year - I must reserve some for my occupation in succeeding years - especially if labour and board are more expensive than in ordinary seasons - Mr. Deidier will retain the kitchen gardener if he sees fit - I shall leave all these arrangements to him..."

"I hope my french vine has not suffered from your severe frost."

Doctor Hosack had already hired an architect to make plans for improvements and new structures on the estate, for at the spring annual exhibition of the National Academy of Design there had been shown "Views of Lodges in Hyde-Park, the seat of Dr. David Hosack" and a "Lawn front of the residence of Dr. David Hosack, at Hyde Park." These were credited to Martin F. Thompson of the then popular architectural firm of Town and Thompson, but an unpublished pencil sketch by the draftsman Alexander J. Davis (later to make the firm more famous as Town and Davis) corroborates other guesses that Davis was the man who planned such remodelling of the mansion house as to make it suit Doctor Hosack's very special purposes.

And if we are to follow the testimony of the famous landscape architect Andrew Jackson Downing that the plans for laying out the Hyde Park grounds according to the "modern" or "natural" style of landscape gardening were the work of the Belgian immigrant gardener Andre Parmentier, these plans must already have been drawn. Parmentier had settled as a nursery-man

100. Alexander J. Davis Collection, Avery Library, Columbia University; also Boston, Roger Hale, Town & Davis Architects, (New York, 1942). The National Academy of Design Exhibition Record 1826-1860, (New York, 1943) Vol. II, 1829, p. 159 lists three views by Thompson



in Brooklyn and was well-known for his advanced views and fine gardening in the circles of the New York Horticultural Society of which Dr. Hosack was still president; Parmentier died in 1830 and such extensive alterations as are attributed to him at Hyde Park must have been the work of more than one season. Downing was already active as a young gardener in the Hudson Valley area in the 1830's and his testimony establishes Hyde Park as the one landscaping work undoubtedly attributable to Parmentier. The first edition of Downing's Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening (1841) speaks of the remodelled estate as:

"...one of the finest specimens of the modern style of landscape gardening in America. Nature has, indeed, done much for this place... But the efforts of art are not unworthy so rare a locality; and while the native woods, and beautifully undulating surface, are preserved in their original state, the pleasure-grounds, roads, walks, drives, and new plantations, have been laid out in such a judicious manner as to heighten the charms of nature. Large and costly hot-houses were erected by Dr. Hosack, with also entrance lodges at two points on the estate, a fine bridge over the stream, and numerous pavilions and seats commanding extensive prospects; in short, nothing was spared to render this a complete residence. The park, which at one time contained some fine deer, afforded a delightful drive within itself, as the whole estate numbered about seven hundred acres. The plans for laying out the grounds were furnished by Parmentier, and architects from New York were employed in designing and erecting the buildings..."

101. 1841 edition, p.22. By the fourth edition, 1849 (when the Langdons owned the Hyde Park estate), the respect Downing pays to the estate has somewhat diminished, but he continued to show reproductions of the estate. He added a picture of Hyde Park, but omitted earlier praise for the arrangement of the shrubbery as in the 1841 edition, pp.372-373. For Parmentier, see Springarn, J.E., "Henry Winthrop Sargent and the Early History of Landscape Gardening and Ornamental Horticulture in Dutchess County, New York," Year Book, 1937, Dutchess County Historical Society. Meahan, T.F., "Andrew Parmentier, Horticulturist, and His Daughter, Madame Bayer," Records and Studies, 1904, United States Catholic Historical Society, cites portfolios of Parmentier's landscape plans as extant. (These have not yet been located.) The library of the Brooklyn Botanic Garden has a number of Parmentier items.



The rather extensive Hosack family spent its first summer at Hyde Park in 1825 and watched paper plans become beautiful realities.

William Wilson, a New York nurseryman, reported to the New York Farmer in June that he had been to Hyde Park. His description follows:

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"At Hyde Park a little more than half way between this city (New York) and Albany, I stopped to see the estate lately purchased by Dr. Hosack. It contains six or seven hundred acres of ground, and extends on one side more than a mile in length, on the eastern shore of the Hudson. The natural scenery along the whole line to the distance of about a quarter of a mile from the verge of the river, is highly picturesque; and in no direction can the eye be turned through this romantic situation, without the mind's being impressed with the strongest emotions of reverence of the great Creator. On the highest summit of the bank, terminating nearly a quarter of a mile from the water's edge, to a height of several hundred feet above its level, is seen the celebrated belt of forest trees that extends along the whole line. The ground is broken with many knolls, open glades, and ravines, which are lined down to the water's edge with trees. The more open compartments, too, are enlivened by interspersions of clumps and single trees.

"About a half a mile above Hyde Park landing (which is on the southern extremity of the doctor's estate) stands the Mansion House, not far back from the brink of the descending ground towards the river. In every direction to the east, north, and south of the mansion the ground spreads out in one wide open highly elevated and extensive plain, which at a considerable distance easterly from the house descends to a gentle hollow, through which a fine mill stream, skirted by trees, winds its way gradually around towards the southeasterly point of the estate, where it empties into the North River near the landing. The Doctor intends making a carriage road from the landing in a direction nearly parallel with the course of the stream to a distance of about a quarter of a mile, where it will turn left and pass in an inclined direction through part of the Park and lawn towards the mansion, affording in its course a view of the pleasure grounds, greenhouse and hot houses, etc., which are to be located south of the dwelling. The stables, and the office houses, etc., are all on the north side of the mansion. The main approach is to be brought from the public road that passes a little to the east of the mill stream, alluded to above, which in its passage over the stream, will afford a fine opportunity ~~for~~ for having exhibited an interesting display of architectural beauty, of which the Doctor will no doubt avail himself as well as of every other ornamental improvement, of which this most interesting place is so extremely susceptible."

102. Wilson, William, "Notice of the Gardens at Albany and of Dr. Hosack's Estate, Hyde Park." in The New York Farmer and Horticultural Repository, June, 1829. Article reprinted in Poughkeepsie Sunday Courier, July 10, 1938, p.5.



wrote rapturously of Harvest time at Hyde Park:

"An almost endless variety of venerable forest trees give shade and beauty to the landscape, through which hurries a copious stream, headlong and noisy as the Arno itself, filling the hanging gardens and groves on its borders with murmurs. On the sunny declivity, sloping to this rivulet, I saw (on the 10th instant) cart loads of ripe water-melons, some of them ...forty pound each. Fruit and flowers...are rich and abundant. The woods are vocal with the song of the birds...copious and pure fountains gush... The present enterprising proprietor of this farm has but just commenced improvements... he will doubtless render it still more than it is now, a terrestrial paradise." 103

Philip Hone, ex-Major of New York, and first cousin to the third Mrs. Hosack( of whose seven children, nee Coster, he was still guardian), visited Hyde Park with his wife in 1829 and recorded in his diary:

"Thursday, Sept. 17 - Catherine and I left home this morning at 7 o'clock ...We landed at Hyde Park at  $\frac{1}{2}$  past one, and finding the carriage waiting for us, rode up to the doctor's splendid residence, which is by the road about a mile and a half from the landing. His house is now undergoing alterations and repairs, and he resides at the cottage which is situated at the northerly end of the park, and a more beautiful spot is not to be found on the North River. The remainder of this day, after dinner, was occupied in viewing the improvements which are in progress on every part of the farm."104

Hone speculates on the great cost and mentions that Hosack has married the very wealthy widow Mrs. Magdalena Coster; her fortune together with his earnings allow him to retire at sixty to a fine estate for all but the worst winter months. Another honored New Yorker, once close friend to Hosack, but now estranged by age and interest, wrote that the doctor "has retired to his farm...at Hyde Park, where he is laying out large sums in ornamental improvement, from 70 to 100,000 Dollars it is said. He has great taste & appears determined to exhibit it on a large scale, at the expense of his heirs." 105

103. New England Farmer, September 4 and October 2, 1829.

104. Hone Diary, Manuscript Collection, New York Historical Society, September 17, 1829.

105. Barck, Dorothy C., editor, Letters from John Pintard to His Daughter, 1816-1833, (New York, 1940), III, September 11, 1829.



A visitor who left a very complete description of the estate probably hit the nail most closely on the head when he wrote of the new owner's very active life, his lifelong passion for botany and agriculture, his determination to realize his plans. Of Hosack he said:

"He rises early, and soon repairs to the point where his presence is most required, allowing himself little relaxation either of mind or muscle. He never suffers his talent to be hid in a napkin, nor his wealth hoarded under a miser's key." 106

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE HYDE PARK ESTATE IN 1830.

In September of 1830, a spry gentleman of 76 set out on a trip from Plymouth, Massachusetts to Hyde Park, New York; he arrived there in November and stayed long enough to write two very full letters of description to the New England Farmer. He was Dr. James Thacher, physician, patriot, historian of the American Revolution, and American medical biographer. His very careful jottings give us a reliable and detailed picture of the estate he had come to admire and improve: 107

"The approach is truly enchanting, the house a palace, the landscape a rural paradise... Hyde Park estate was the country residence of Dr. John Bard, and... after him his son Dr. Samuel Bard erected a splendid house and made considerable improvements, while his son in law, Rev. Mr. McNicker (McVicker) erected a beautiful dwelling in the finest style of an English cottage."

After a most praiseworthy sketch of Dr. Hosack, Thacher returns to his description:

"The mansion house at Hyde Park is elevated about 200 feet above the surface of the river. With its two wings, it presents a noble front of 130 feet, and is two stories above the basement. The centre or principal building, has a piazza on both fronts; the west front is open to the Hudson, and the east looks over a spacious beautiful lawn towards the turnpike from New York to Albany. The hall, several apartments above and below, are warmed by heated air from a coal furnace in the basement story... At a proper distance north from the house, is situated the coach house and stable, built

106. Thacher, James, "An Excursion on the Hudson," New England Farmer, November 26 and December 3, 1830. These two letters were reprinted in the New York Farmer in revised form in May, 1833.

107. Ibid., Although Thacher was much older than Hosack, the two men were good friends, exchanging considerable correspondence on historical matters, particularly on the Major Andre affair. - 37 -



"of stone in a chaste style of Grecian simplicity, and is 61 feet in front by 40 feet deep. At an equal distance south, is to be seen the green house and hot house, a spacious edifice...composed of a centre and two wings, extending 110 feet in front and from 17 to 20½ feet deep. One apartment is appropriated to a large collection of pines. Among the rich display of rare shrubs and plants, are the magnolia grandiflora, the splendid strelitzia, the fragrant farnesiana, and a beautiful tree of the Ficus elastica or India rubber, about 8 feet high, 5 years old. Contiguous to the green house is an extensive ornamental garden...trees, shrubs and flowers; among which stands...the magnolia glauca, bearing large white flowers, perfuming the atmosphere... The forest trees which surround the domicile are identically the natives...in our forest; some of the oaks are a century old in age, and all are large and so grouped and intermingled...as to present at every step the most fantastic views... From the turnpike road there are two gates of entrance into the premises, about a half a mile from each other, and a porter's lodge is connected with each gate. The north lodge is 19 by 31 feet, with a portico projecting over the north and south fronts, each supported by 4 Grecian Doric columns. Two wings project from the sides, which serve as lodging rooms. This little building has been much and deservedly admired for its architectural beauty. The entrance gate is finished in a very neat and imposing style of architecture. Mr. Thompson of New York, is the skillful architect employed in the construction of these buildings. The south lodge, connected with a neat gateway, with the improvements of the surrounding ~~lands~~ grounds, present a very picturesque appearance. This is the most commanding point from which to view advantageously the mansion, green house, stable, and out house... This avenue to the mansion is over a stone bridge, crossing a rapid stream precipitated from the mill dam above, and falls in a cascade below...a never tiring scene..."

Agricultural possibilities interested Dr. Thacher. Here were 800 acres of good land, not exhausted by cultivation, well wooded and watered, presenting every variety of soil; the creek had falls for manufacturing and mill seats and was dammed at proper places to form trout and pickerel ponds. Large crops of hay and corn were harvested from the 500 acres under cultivation, and Doctor Hosack's improvements:

"...are not only in the buildings...and the embellishments...but in the more solid operations of the farm, as levelling hills and precipices, opening roads and avenues, erecting bridges and turning water courses. Many acres of rugged, hilly land hitherto deemed almost inaccessible...have this season been subdued, the stones worked into wall and the soil sowed with rye.

"Stock. - This consists of short horned Durham, Devonshire, Alderney and Holderness, all recently imported. His flock of sheep consisting of 600 are Marino, Saxon and Bakewell. Besides these, the Dr. has lately imported the Welsh, so highly celebrated for its mutton... In front of his house, on the lower bank of the river, he has a park stocked with deer, and at present accompanied by 16 Saxon bucks and a pair of Surat goats. The buildings, comprising the farm yard, consists of barns, stables, low sheds, calf and



"sheep pens, cider house, having a cellar to contain 100 barrels, and wagon house forming the three sides of a hollow square of about 175 feet. The centre of the yard is dished out for manure, over which is erected a covering in the form of an umbrella, about 40 feet diameter, to prevent evaporation, and serve as a temporary shelter for cattle and a roost for poultry, &c. The excavation is so contrived as to keep the yard dry, and no manure is wasted, the liquid part being conveyed by a covered drain into the kitchen garden, and nursey. The sheep yard is located between the barn and garden, and a spacious room is provided beneath the barn for the ewes and their young... The hog pens are admirable calculated for the accommodation of about 70 swine, and to keep the different breeds separate, having a cooking apparatus in the rear. The farm house stands a small distance from the farm yard and is well arranged for the purpose intended. The cellar is devoted to the purpose of a dairy, being floored with stone flaggings and the windows wired to exclude flies. On entering the dairy I was struck with a view of a novel process of butter churning. This operation is performed by a single dog. The animal is placed on a horizontal wheel, the surface...covered with coarse cloth to receive his claws, he is tied by the neck, and by pawing with all his feet, the wheel turns under him and moves a crank and shaft connected with the churndash... The dog...is to be well fed as soon as the butter is produced..."

"Apiary. - ...by request of Dr. H. I superintended the construction of an apiary...30 feet long and two tiers in height, and will contain nearly 40 hives. The hives are furnished with two sliding boxes or drawers...and this affords the greatest facility for taking the honey without destroying the bees... Dr. H. is now in possession of a family of bees without stings... from Mexico. He keeps them in his green house that they may enjoy an atmosphere similar in temperature to that in their native climate. There is on the stream belonging to Dr. H. the workshop of Mr. Hale, the ingenious inventor of the patent rotary pump, which...will discharge 160 gallons a minute/ and will elevate a column of water to the altitude of 300 feet... This pump may be applied to ships or fire engines. Dr. H. has two of them in operation at his green house and bathing room... the power is applied by turning a crank, and the water is forced out continuously..." 107

Dr. Thacher concluded his selection of Hyde Park highlights by regretting that the English traveler Sir Basil Hall had not come to Hyde Park, for "...the grand display and the generous hospitality...could not fail of reminding him of some of the noble seats in his own country, and of correcting his unjust prejudices against ours." 107

#### LIFE AT HYDE PARK, 1830 to 1835.

For the next five years Hyde Park was a place busy with the comings and goings of Rosacks, Costers, and visitors. The immediate family spent all but the worst winter months there, and the others made it a center for all kinds of activities. Family letters speak of the loveliness of June and the



desolation of October; visitors were ardently welcomed and reluctantly bade  
108  
farewell. Thus Emily Hosack to her brother-in-law;

"...I cannot offer you great inducement for we are rather dull in the country at present as we have not lately had any persons from the City to furnish us with scandalous news... I indulge in it occasionally when I wish to enliven our country neighbors who seem to listen with the greatest eagerness..."

When the weather made the outdoor glories of Hyde Park impossible, there was always the library, the art gallery, a game of cards or billiards, a visit to a nearby friend or relative. The family worshipped at Saint James Episcopal Church whose records show Hosack baptism, marriage and death; one note lamented the departure of their part-time minister in September: "We perhaps merit this punishment at Hyde Park. Such is the intemperance and  
109  
profligacy of this place -."

And Mr. Hosack quickly joined the Temperance Society of Hyde Park formed in June of 1829 by a few gentlemen for "discouraging the use of ardent spirits among those whom they were about to employ in...  
110  
harvest and...agricultural pursuits."

Visitors from all walks of life came to sample Hosack hospitality and exclaim at the beauties of the property. Most of them wrote rhapsodically of the views along the Hudson as they steamed from New York or Albany. The estate was described in a multitude of travel books, diaries, and letters by Englishmen and Americans. Washington Irving promised to visit "Hyde Park of which I have heard the most delightful account..." and the poet Fitz-Greene Halleck occasionally honored the Hosacks with a call. Mrs. Trollope passed a day there and found at least one American object which she did not scorn. Jared Sparks, the historian and editor of the North American Review,  
108. Emily Hosack to Jacoby Harvey, October 1829-Biddle Collection, Hosack Descendants.

109. David Hosack to Jared Sparks, Sept. 20, 1834. Jared Sparks Manuscript, Houghton Library, Harvard University Library.

110. Dr. Hosack's Address, delivered before the New-York City Temperance Society, May 11, 1830. At this time, Hosack was president of the Hyde Park Temperance Society.



visited Dr. Hosack in 1831 and wrote in his Journal:

"August 13th - Rode in the morning with Dr. Hosack to visit his grounds and farm. His establishment is unquestionably the most complete of its kind in the United States. The view up the river..is unequalled and the grounds are in extremely good order, and disposed in beautiful forms. The house is spacious, and arranged and furnished with elegance and taste."

He met Huxts and Burds and Livingstons and a Miss Allen whom he was to marry  
111  
in October 1832 at St. James Church in Hyde Park.

A British novelist and adventurer, Captain Thomas Hamilton, wrote of Hyde Park and its owner at some length, praising his host's lack of "national prejudice" and his "really very beautiful" domain; he was less impressed with the nearby countryside "in which the glories of the ancient forest have been replaced by bare fields, intersected by hideous zigzag fences...the state of transition...in which the wild grandeur of nature has disappeared, and the charm of cultivation has not yet replaced it." And his widely read Man and Manners in America (1833) distressed Hosack who wrote to a Philadelphia contemporary:

"- Yes altho Cap. Hamilton says we have no libraries, you will find one which I have been all my life collecting... and much more worthy of his notice than were my horses or my Durham short horns that so much attracted his attention...at Hyde Park." 112

111. Washington Irving to David Hosack, May 29, 1832, from manuscript in possession of descendants of Hosack, here called the Barnes Collection. Wilson, James G., The Life and Letters of Fitz-Greene Halleck, (New York, 1863), pp.481-482. Trollope, Frances H., Domestic Manners of the Americans. (New York, 1927), pp.325-326. Jared Sparks Journal, Jared Sparks Manuscript, Houghton Library, August 12-16, 1831. See Roosevelt, Franklin D., ed., Records of the Town of Hyde Park, (Hyde Park, N.Y., 1928), III, pp.304, 331.

112. David Hosack to Peter S. Du Ponceau, June 5, 1834, Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

113. Armstrong, Margaret, Five Generations, Life and Letters of an American Family, (New York and London, 1930), pp.358-359. Maria Church to sister, Hyde Park, October 7, 1831, Church Manuscript, New York Public Library. A very different modern view of the house is expressed by T. F. Hamlin, who in his Greek Revival in America, (New York, 1944), p.260, remarks that the Davis sketch shows "a monumental house of large scale with wide, quiet wall spaces and large windows, entirely classic in its harmonious dignity, and quite unlike colonial work."



A few visitors wrote of the main house as "spacious and comfortable without any pretensions to architectural beauty" and "the least perfect thing on the place - the exterior I mean."<sup>113</sup>

One really dissenting voice on the beauty of the natural landscaping came from one "Patrick Shirreff, Farmer," who in 1835 wrote rather violently:

"Hyde Park, the seat of Doctor Hosack, is the most celebrated in America... The house is situated some hundred of feet above...the Hudson, the intervening grounds being finely undulating. In front of the house there is a road, leading from the landing-place on the river, along a small stream, over which there is an elegant wooden bridge, and several artificial cascades have been formed in its channel. The house is composed of wood, as well as the offices and lodges painted white, and are very neat of their kind. The conservatory had been dismantled a few days before our arrival, by placing the plants in the open air; the collection seemed extensive and well kept. The flower garden is small, the walks limited, and both destitute of beauty. I am aware that most of the evergreens which impart loveliness to the residence in Britain cannot stand the rigours of an American winter, but this circumstance is no excuse for the nakedness of Hyde Park walks, the aid of many native plants having been disregarded. The matchless beauties of the situation have not only been frequently neglected, but destroyed by still, formal, naked walls and the erection of temples resembling meat-safes, without a climbing plant...to hide their deformity, and harmonize them with the surrounding scene. In short, while I greatly admired the situation of Hyde Park, I do not recollect having seen a celebrated place which nature has done so much, and man so little, to render beautiful. The embellishments at Hyde Park, contrasted with those met every day in Britain, place American landscape-gardening immeasurably behind, if it can be said to exist.

"The progress of a people in refinement and taste, manifested in a combination of nature and art, is commonly the work of time, and the decoration of grounds an unproductive investment of capital. Thus the residence of England having descended for ages in the same line, without the power of possessors changing their destination, may be said to represent the accumulated savings, labours, and tastes of many generations. In America the country has not been long possessed by the present owners and property does not necessarily descend on the same line, and if to these causes be added the high price of labour, and the scarcity of capital, the state of the residences will be sufficiently accounted for. Dr. Hosack has great merit in which he has accomplished, but it is mockery to compare his grounds, in point of embellishments, with the fine places in Britain, which have originated from circumstances which America is not likely soon to experience." 114.

113. for footnote, see page 41.

114. "A Tour through North America; Together with a Comprehensive View of the Canadas and United States, as Adapted for Agricultural Emigration," American Quarterly Review, XVII, March and June, 1835, p. 384.



Yet this view can be contrasted with the report made by Harriet Martineau, an educated, inquiring and egalitarian English lady with an ear-trumpet who came to visit the estate in 1834 and proclaimed it the most beautiful country seat on the Hudson and "the prettiest amateur farm I saw... ."

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(over 50 pounds each) at the "Festal Anniversary." He bought new fruits 115. Martineau, Harriet, Retrospect of Western Travel, (London, 1836) Vol. I, p. 73-80. recording her visit in 1834. also her society in America, (New York, 4th ed., 1837) Vol. I, p. 309.



# HYDE PARK HISTORIAN

Published by

THE HYDE PARK HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

HYDE PARK, NEW YORK

NUMBER 28

MAY, 1957

## A Double Loss

Death recently claimed two of the most active and interested members of the Hyde Park Historical Association. Harry T. Briggs died in Poughkeepsie, February 5th, at the age of 82; and Gilbert Stoutenburgh died in Englewood, N. J., January 8, 1957.

Mr. Briggs, former under sheriff and a long time historian, was particularly interested in facts concerning his family. He had a complete genealogical record of his family, and had compiled facts pertaining to other early settlers here. He was the author of "The Crum Elbow Creek, Its Mills and Dams."

Mr. Stoutenburgh was a resident of Rhinebeck until a few years ago when he and Mrs. Stoutenburgh moved to New Jersey. Always interested in Hyde Park historical matters,

Stoutenburgh was formerly president of the Stoutenburgh - Teller Family Association and was continuously its guiding light.

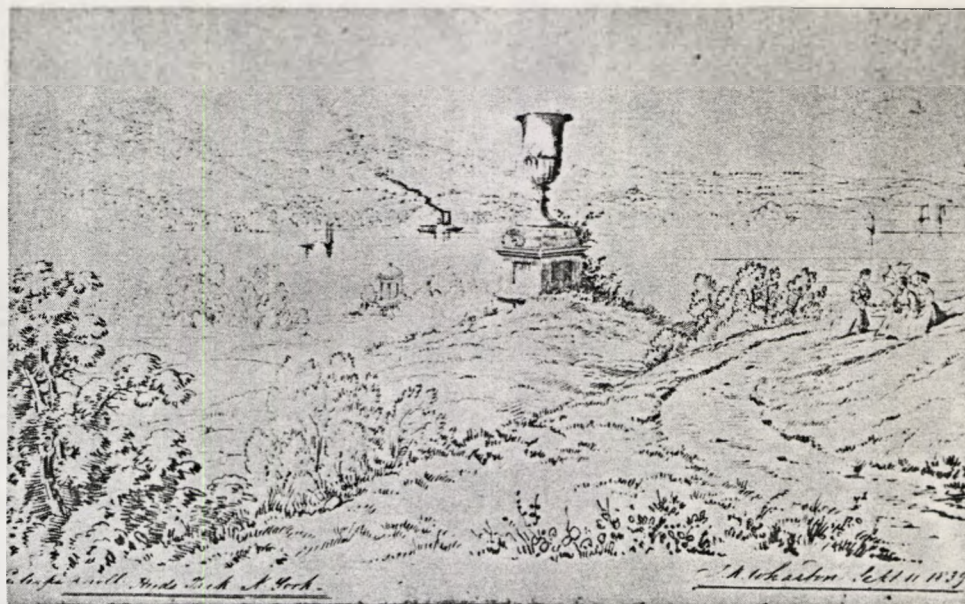
Both men had addressed the Hyde Park Historical Association at various times, and their help and interest will be greatly missed by all those seeking to promote the historical aspects of Hyde Park life.

## Editor Leaving

Mr. Charles W. Snell, editor of the *Hyde Park Historian* from 1951 to 1957, and Historian for the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites, is being transferred to Harpers Ferry National Monument, West Virginia. Mr. Snell will act as Chief of Party and will assist in the planning, development, and historical research to be carried out at this new national historical area.

Mr. Snell was born at Schenectady, N. Y. in 1921 and attended the public schools in that city. He graduated from Union College in 1943, a member of Phi Beta Kappa. From 1943 to 1945, Mr. Snell served in the United States Army. From 1946 to 1947 he attended Columbia University for his graduate work, receiving an M.A. in American History. He entered the National Park Service in May 1948, serving as Historian of Saratoga National Historical Park at Stillwater, N. Y., from 1948 to 1951. In May of that year, he was transferred and promoted to Historian for the two Hyde Park areas, in which capacity he has served to date.

Mr. and Mrs. Snell and their two children will probably leave for Harpers Ferry about the middle of August.



1832 VIEW FROM HYDE PARK

In July 1832 the young English artist Thomas Kelah Wharton visited Dr. David Hosack at Hyde Park and made this drawing from what is now the North Drive of Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site. The sketch was published in 1839. Original in the New York Public Library.

## Membership Dues

Membership dues for the next year, May 1, 1957 to April 30, 1958, are now payable to the Hyde Park Historical Association. Notices will be mailed to all members this month.

## History of "Hyde Park" Estate

1705 to 1894

by Charles W. Snell

Chapter IV (continued)

### DR. HOSACK IMPROVES HIS ESTATE

Doctor Hosack had already hired an architect to make plans for improvements and new structures on the estate, for at the spring annual exhibition of the National Academy of Design there had been shown "Views of Lodges in Hyde-Park, the seat of Dr. David Hosack" and a "Lawn front of the residence of Dr. David Hosack, at Hyde Park." These were credited to Martin E. Thompson of the then popular architectural firm of Town and Thompson, but an unpublished pencil sketch by the draftsman Alexander J. Davis (later to make the firm more famous as Town and Davis) corroborates other guesses that Davis was the man who planned such remodelling of the mansion house as to make it suit Doctor Hosack's very special purposes.

And if we are to follow the testimony of the famous  
(Continued on reverse side)



## History of "Hyde Park" Estate

(Continued from front side)

landscape architect Andrew Jackson Downing that the plans for laying out the Hyde Park grounds according to the "modern" or "natural" style of landscape gardening were the work of the Belgian immigrant gardener André Parmentier, these plans must already have been drawn. Parmentier had settled as a nursery-man in Brooklyn and was well-known for his advanced views and fine gardening in the circles of the New York Horticultural Society of which Dr. Hosack was still president; Parmentier died in 1830 and such extensive alterations as are attributed to him at Hyde Park must have been the work of more than one season. Downing was already active as a young gardener in the Hudson Valley area in the 1830's and his testimony establishes Hyde Park as the one landscaping work undoubtedly attributable to Parmentier. The first edition of Downing's "Treatise on the Theory and Practise of Landscape Gardening" (1841) speaks of the remodelled estate as:

"... one of the finest specimens of the modern style of Landscape gardening in America. Nature has, indeed, done much for this place. . . . But the efforts of art are not unworthy so rare a locality; and while the native woods, and beautifully undulating surface, are preserved in their original state, the pleasure-grounds, roads, walks, drives, and new plantations, have been laid out in such a judicious manner as to heighten the charms of nature. Large and costly hot-houses were erected by Dr. Hosack, with also entrance lodges at two points on the estate, a fine bridge over the stream, and numerous pavilions and seats commanding extensive prospects; in short, nothing was spared to render this a complete residence. The park, which at one time contained some fine deer, afforded a delightful drive within itself, as the whole estate numbered about seven hundred acres. The plans for laying out the grounds were furnished

Parmentier, and architects from New York were employed in designing and erecting the buildings. . . ."

The rather extensive Hosack family spent its first summer at Hyde Park in 1829 and watched paper plans become beautiful realities. William Wilson, a New York nurseryman, reported to the "New York Farmer" in June that he had been to Hyde Park. His description follows:

"At Hyde Park a little more than half way between this city [New York] and Albany, I stopped to see the estate lately purchased by Dr. Hosack. It contains six or seven hundred acres of ground, and extends on one side more than a mile in length, on the eastern shore of the Hudson. The natural scenery along the whole line to the distance of about a quarter of a mile from the verge of the river, is highly picturesque; and in no direction can the eye be turned through this romantic situation, without the mind's being impressed with the strongest emotions of reverence of the great Creator. On the highest summit of the bank, terminating nearly a quarter of a mile from the water's edge, to a height of several hundred feet above its level, is seen the celebrated belt of forest trees that extends along the whole line. The ground is broken with many knolls, open glades, and ravines, which are lined down to the water's edge with trees. The more open compartments, too, are enlivened by interspersions of clumps and single trees.

"About a half a mile above Hyde Park landing (which is on the southern extremity of the doctor's estate) stands the Mansion House, not far back from the brink of the descending ground towards the river. In every direction to the east, north, and south of the mansion the ground spreads out in one wide open highly elevated and extensive plain, which at a considerable distance easterly from the mansion descends to a gentle hollow, through which a fine stream, skirted by trees, winds its way gradually

around towards the southwesterly point of the estate, where it empties into the North River near the landing. The Doctor intends making a carriage road from the landing in a direction nearly parallel with the course of the stream to a distance of about a quarter of a mile, where it will turn left and pass in an inclined direction through part of the Park and lawn toward the mansion, affording in its course a view of the pleasure grounds, greenhouse and hot houses, etc., which are to be located south of the dwelling. The stables, and the office houses, etc., are all on the north side of the mansion. The main approach is to be brought from the public road that passes a little to the east of the mill stream, alluded to above, which in its passage over the stream, will afford a fine opportunity for having exhibited an interesting display of architectural beauty, of which the Doctor will no doubt avail himself as well as of every other ornamental improvement, of which this most interesting place is so extremely susceptible."

A tourist visiting "Country Seats Near New York" in August 1829 wrote rapturously of Harvest time at Hyde park:

"An almost endless variety of venerable forest trees give shade and beauty to the landscape, through which hurries a copious stream, headlong and noisy as the Arno itself, filling the hanging gardens and groves on its borders with murmurs. On the sunny declivity, sloping to this rivulet, I saw (on the 10th instant) cart loads of ripe water-melons, some of them . . . forty pound each. Fruit and flowers . . . are rich and abundant. The woods are vocal with the song of the birds . . . copious and pure fountains gush. . . . The present enterprising proprietor of this farm has but just commenced improvements . . . he will doubtless render it still more than it is now, a terrestrial paradise."

Philip Hone, ex-Major of New York, and first cousin to the third Mrs. Hosack (of whose seven children, nee Coster, he was still guardian), visited Hyde Park with his wife in 1829 and recorded in his diary:

"Thursday, Sept. 17 — Catherine and I left home this morning at 7 o'clock. . . . We landed at Hyde Park at ½ past one, and finding the carriage waiting for us, rode up to the doctor's splendid residence, which is by the road about a mile and a half from the landing. His house is now undergoing alterations and repairs, and he resides at the cottage which is situated at the northerly end of the park, and a more beautiful spot is not to be found on the North River. The remainder of this day, after dinner, was occupied in viewing the improvements which are in progress on every part of the farm."

Hone speculates on the great cost and mentions that Hosack has married the very wealthy widow Mrs. Magdalena Coster; her fortune together with his earnings allow him to retire at sixty to a fine estate for all but the worst winter months. Another honored New Yorker, once close friend to Hosack, but now estranged by age and interest, wrote that the doctor "has retired to his farm . . . at Hyde Park, where he is laying out large sums in ornamental improvement, from 70 to 100,000 D[olla]rs it is said. He has great taste & appears determined to exhibit it on a large scale, at the expense of his heirs."

A visitor who left a very complete description of the estate probably hit the nail most closely on the head when he wrote of the new owner's very active life, his lifelong passion for botany and agriculture, his determination to realize his plans. Of Hosack he said:

"He rises early, and soon repairs to the point where his presence is most required, allowing himself little relaxation either of mind or muscle. He never suffers his talent to be hid in a napkin, nor his wealth hoarded under a miser's key."

(To be continued)



## History of "Hyde Park" Estate

(Continued from front side)

not necessarily descend on the same line, and if to these causes be added the high price of labour, and the scarcity of capital, the state of the residences will be sufficiently accounted for. Dr. Hosack has great merit in which he has accomplished, but it is mockery to compare his grounds, in point of embellishments, with the fine places in Britain, which have originated from circumstances which America is not likely soon to experience."

Yet this view can be contrasted with the report made by Harriet Martineau, an educated, inquiring and egalitarian English lady with an ear-trumpet who came to visit the estate in 1834 and proclaimed it the most beautiful country seat on the Hudson and "the prettiest amateur farm I saw. . . ."

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*New York Farmer and American Gardener's Magazine* of May 1833, it told farmers (with a diagram) how to handle "the contents of the barn-yard, as . . . the essence . . . of successful agriculture." In 1834 Hosack was a delegate to the New York State Agricultural Society from Dutchess County and exhibited a "fullblooded Devonshire Bull" at its fair. It must have given him great pleasure to read in the *Poughkeepsie Journal* of his "Beautiful Wheat and Barley," and to find the following praise reprinted in the *New England Farmer* of October 1833:

"Dr. Hosack sent us a few days ago, a sample of wheat grown on his farm at Hyde Park, the present season, which all who have seen it pronounce the finest they have seen. It is of the variety known as the *white flint wheat* and it is said to reach the extraordinary weight of sixty-six pounds to the bushel. We understand the yield was thirty bushels per acre. We have frequently during the season heard Dr. Hosack's field of barley spoken of as uncommonly beautiful, affording promise of a most bountiful crop. The field is said to have contained fifty acres—and we have heard more than one gentleman, accustomed . . . to observe the barley fields of old England . . . speak of Dr. H's as decidedly the best field of barley they had ever seen in America."

Truly Hyde Park must have flourished under Dr. Hosack's stewardship!

### AN ARTIST'S VIEW OF HYDE PARK, 1832

In July of 1832 a young English immigrant artist was invited to leave the cholera-stricken streets of New York City, and spend some weeks at Hyde Park doing some sketches of the beautiful estate for its proprietor. He was only 18 and kept a rather careful diary of his days; the manuscript still preserved gives some pen pictures of the estate and a very full record of Thomas Kelah Wharton's impressions of hospitality and fine living. He described his departure from the city and his arrival at his destination. Pertinent excerpts follow:

"At half past one P.M. I went on shore at Hyde Park Landing—found a baggage waggon to take up my trunk and cloak to Dr. Hosack's, and then followed on foot through the Park gate close by the Landing—the Mansion itself was half a mile further on the brow of a bold eminence full 100 feet above the river—the ascent is gradual by broad winding walks, shaded by richest foliage with gleams of the Hudson sparkling among the leaves — and beautiful lawns, with trees grouped in fine taste — a range of green houses and exquisite flower beds crown the ascent and sweep around a general clump of forest trees leading quite up to the house which presents a noble front to the Park . . . the doctor himself received me most cordially . . . so that in a very short time I felt as much at ease as with friends of long standing. After examining the Picture Gallery and the noble Library occupying a whole story in one of the wings of the building, the Doctor took me over the grounds and pointed out their chief beauties—no expense has been spared in embellishing the splendid domain — which contains 800 acres of richly diversified surface — every feature of which has been made to contribute to the ornamental effect of the whole—and to heighten the magnificence of the River scenery which it commands. The two facades of the building—one fronting the river the other towards the Park show a fine spread of enriched Italian—flanked by large well proportioned wings the whole designed and executed by Martin E. Thompson in his best manner—another very tasteful edifice stands at the north end of the grounds called the 'cottage' with its own separate gardens—and ornamental improvements—the north and south Lodges form elegant entrances to the estate.

(To be continued)



# HYDE PARK HISTORIAN

Published by  
THE HYDE PARK HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION  
HYDE PARK, NEW YORK

NUMBER 30

SEPTEMBER, 1957

## History of "Hyde Park" Estate — 1705 to 1894

by Charles W. Snell

### LIFE AT HYDE PARK 1830 to 1835

(Continued)

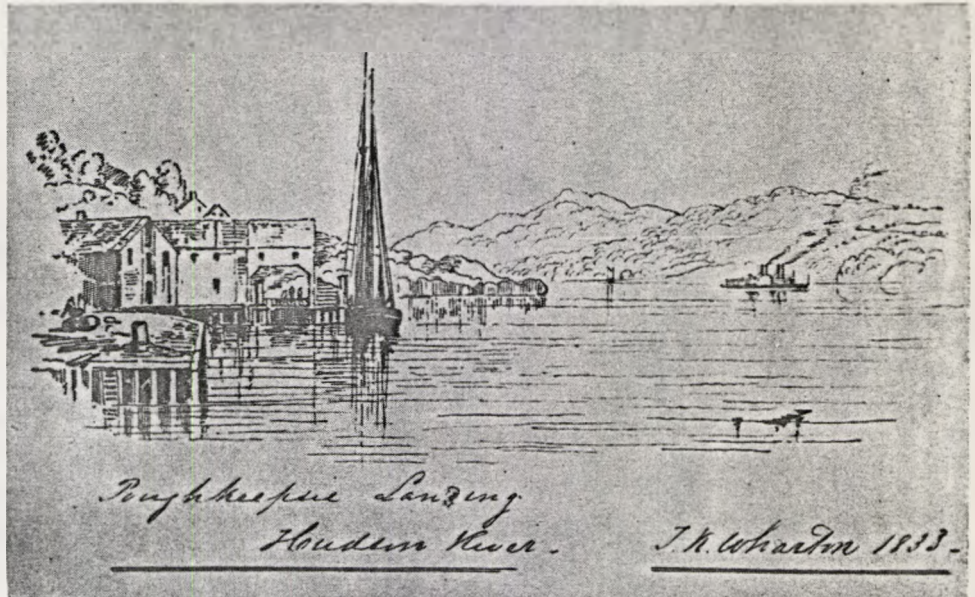
A British novelist and adventurer, Captain Thomas Hamilton, wrote of Hyde Park and its owner at some length, praising his host's lack of "national prejudice" and his "really very beautiful" domain; he was less impressed with the nearby countryside "in which the glories of the ancient forest have been replaced by bare fields, intersected by hideous zigzag fences . . . the state of transition . . . in which the wild grandeur of nature has disappeared, and the charm of cultivation has not yet replaced it." And his widely read *Men and Man-in-America* (1833) distressed a sack who wrote to a Philadelphia contemporary:

"—Yes altho Cap. Hamilton says we have no libraries, you will find one which I have been all my life collecting . . . and much more worthy of his notice than were my horses or my Durham short horns that so much attracted his attention . . . at Hyde Park."

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1832 VIEW OF POUGHKEEPSIE

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## History of "Hyde Park" Estate

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"In the afternoon, Dr. Hosack drove me in his gig round his estate, which lies on both sides of the high road; the house on one side, and the pleasure grounds on the other. The conservatory is remarkable for America; and the kitchen-garden all that it can be made . . . , but the neighbouring country people have no idea of a gentleman's pleasure in his garden, and of respecting it. On occasions of weddings and other festivities, the villagers come up into the Hyde Park grounds to enjoy themselves; and persons, who would not dream of any other mode of theft, pull up rare plants, as they would wild flowers in the woods, and carry them away. Dr. Hosack would frequently see some flower that he had brought with much pains from Europe flourishing in some garden of the village below. As soon as he explained . . . the plant would be restored . . . but the losses were so frequent and provoking as greatly to moderate his horticultural enthusiasm. We passed through the poultry-yard, where the congregation of fowls exceeded in number and bustle any that I had ever seen. We drove round his kitchen-garden too, where he had taken pains to grow every kind of vegetable which will flourish in that climate. Then crossing the road, after paying our respects to his dairy of fine cows, we drove through the orchard, and round Cape Horn and refreshed ourselves with the sweet river views on our way home. . . ."

More fragmentary information exists concerning the farming operations. September 1829 saw Mr. Hosack resigning as president of the New York Horticultural Society and exhibiting royal Muscadine grapes and water-melons (over 50 pounds each) at the "Festal Anniversary." He sought new fruits and shrubbery and planned a catalogue of his plants; he wrote very scientifically a "Description of an Improved Stercorary" in a letter to a member of the Agricultural Society of Philadelphia; reproduced in the

*New York Farmer and American Gardener's Magazine* of May 1833, it told farmers (with a diagram) how to handle "the contents of the barn-yard, as . . . the essence . . . of successful agriculture." In 1834 Hosack was a delegate to the New York State Agricultural Society from Dutchess County and exhibited a "fullblooded Devonshire 'Bull'" at its fair. It must have given him great pleasure to read in the *Poughkeepsie Journal* of his "Beautiful Wheat and Barley," and to find the following praise reprinted in the *New England Farmer* of October 1833:

"Dr. Hosack sent us a few days ago, a sample of wheat grown on his farm at Hyde Park, the present season, which all who have seen it pronounce the finest they have seen. It is of the variety known as the *white flint wheat* and it is said to reach the extraordinary weight of sixty-six pounds to the bushel. We understand the yield was thirty bushels per acre. We have frequently during the season heard Dr. Hosack's field of barley spoken of as uncommonly beautiful, affording promise of a most bountiful crop. The field is said to have contained fifty acres—and we have heard more than one gentleman, accustomed . . . to observe the barley fields of old England . . . speak of Dr. H's as decidedly the best field of barley they had ever seen in America."

Truly Hyde Park must have flourished under Dr. Hosack's stewardship!

### AN ARTIST'S VIEW OF HYDE PARK, 1832

In July of 1832 a young English immigrant artist was invited to leave the cholera-stricken streets of New York City, and spend some weeks at Hyde Park doing some sketches of the beautiful estate for its proprietor. He was only 18 and kept a rather careful diary of his days; the manuscript still preserved gives some pen pictures of the estate and a very full record of Thomas Kelah Wharton's impressions of hospitality and fine living. He described his departure from the city and his arrival at his destination. Pertinent excerpts follow:

"At half past one P.M. I went on shore at Hyde Park Landing—found a baggage waggon to take up my trunk and cloak to Dr. Hosack's, and then followed on foot through the Park gate close by the Landing—the Mansion itself was half a mile further on the brow of a bold eminence full 100 feet above the river—the ascent is gradual by broad winding walks, shaded by richest foliage with gleams of the Hudson sparkling among the leaves — and beautiful lawns, with trees grouped in fine taste — a range of green houses and exquisite flower beds crown the ascent and sweep around a general clump of forest trees leading quite up to the house which presents a noble front to the Park . . . the doctor himself received me most cordially . . . so that in a very short time I felt as much at ease as with friends of long standing. After examining the Picture Gallery and the noble Library occupying a whole story in one of the wings of the building, the Doctor took me over the grounds and pointed out their chief beauties—no expense has been spared in embellishing the splendid domain — which contains 800 acres of richly diversified surface — every feature of which has been made to contribute to the ornamental effect of the whole—and to heighten the magnificence of the River scenery which it commands. The two facades of the building—one fronting the river the other towards the Park show a fine spread of enriched Italian—flanked by large well proportioned wings the whole designed and executed by Martin E. Thompson in his best manner—another very tasteful edifice stands at the north end of the grounds called the 'cottage' with its own separate gardens—and ornamental improvements—the north and south Lodges form elegant entrances to the estate.

(To be continued)



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116. Thomas K. Wharton Private Journal, May 1830 to October 1834, Manuscript Collection, New York Public Library.



Published by

 THE HYDE PARK HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION  
 HYDE PARK, NEW YORK

NUMBER 30

SEPTEMBER, 1957

## History of "Hyde Park" Estate — 1705 to 1894

by Charles W. Snell

### LIFE AT HYDE PARK

1830 to 1835

(Continued)

A British novelist and adventurer, Captain Thomas Hamilton, wrote of Hyde Park and its owner at some length, praising his host's lack of "national prejudice" and his "really very beautiful" domain; he was less impressed with the nearby countryside "in which the glories of the ancient forest have been replaced by bare fields, intersected by hideous zig-zag fences . . . the state of transition . . . in which the wild grandeur of nature has disappeared, and the charm of cultivation has not yet replaced it."

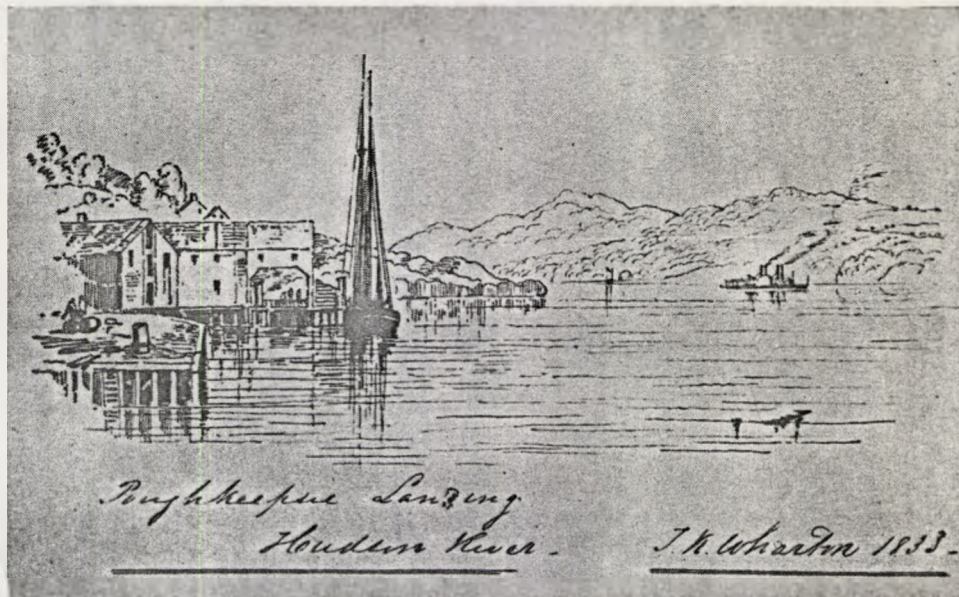
And his widely read *Men and Man-in America* (1833) distressed Hosack who wrote to a Philadelphia contemporary:

"—Yes altho Cap. Hamilton says we have no libraries, you will find one which I have been all my life collecting . . . and much more worthy of his notice than were my horses or my Durham short horns that so much attracted his attention . . . at Hyde Park."

A few visitors wrote of the main house as "spacious and comfortable without any pretensions to architectural beauty" and "the least perfect thing on the place—the exterior I mean—"

One really dissenting voice on the beauty of the natural landscaping came from one "Patrick Shirreff, Farmer," who in 1835 wrote rather violently:

"Hyde Park, the seat of Doctor Hosack, is the most celebrated in America. . . . The house is situated some hundred of feet above . . . the Hudson, the intervening grounds being finely undulating. In front of the house there is a road, leading from the landing-place on the river, along a small stream, over which there is an elegant wooden bridge, and several artificial cascades have been formed in its channel. The house is composed of wood, as well as the offices and lodges painted white, and are very neat of their kind. The conservatory had been dismantled a few days before our arrival, by placing the plants in the open air: the collection seemed extensive and well kept. The flower garden is small, the walks limited, and both destitute of beauty. I am aware that most of the evergreens which impart loveliness to the residence in Britain cannot stand the



1832 VIEW OF POUGHKEEPSIE

In July 1832 the young English artist Thomas Kelah Wharton visited Dr. David Hosack at Hyde Park. While on this visit Wharton made this view of Poughkeepsie. Original in the New York Public Library.

rigours of an American winter, but this circumstance is no excuse for the nakedness of Hyde Park walks, the aid of many native plants having been disregarded. The matchless beauties of the situation have not only been frequently neglected, but destroyed by still, formal, naked walls and the erection of temples resembling meat-safes, without a climbing plant . . . to hide their deformity, and harmonize them with the surrounding scene. In short, while I greatly admired the situation of Hyde Park, I do not recollect having seen a celebrated place which nature has done so much, and man so little, to render beautiful. The embellishments at Hyde Park, contrasted with those met every day in Britain, place American landscape-gardening immeasurably behind, if it can be said to exist.

"The progress of a people in refinement and taste, manifested in a combination of nature and art, is commonly the work of time, and the decoration of grounds an unproductive investment of capital. Thus the residences of England having descended for ages in the same line, without the power of possessors changing their destination, may be said to represent the accumulated savings, labours, and tastes of many generations. In America the country has not been long possessed by the present owners and property does

(Continued on reverse side)



"At half past one P.M. I went on shore at Hyde Park Landing - found a baggage waggon to take up my trunk and clock to Dr. Hosack's, and then followed on foot thro' the Park gate close by the Landing - the Mansion itself was half a mile further on the brow of a bold eminence full 100 feet above the river - the ascent is gradual by broad winding walks, shaded by richest foliage with gleams of the Hudson sparkling among the leaves - and beautiful lawns, with trees grouped in fine taste - a range of green houses and exquisite flower beds crown the ascent and sweep around a general clump of forest trees leading quite up to the house which presents a noble front to the Park... the doctor himself received me most cordially... so that in a very short time I felt as much at ease as with friends of long standing. After examining the Picture Gallery and the noble Library occupying a whole story in one of the wings of the building, the Doctor took me over the grounds and pointed out their chief beauties - no expense has been spared in embellishing the splendid domain - which contains 500 acres of richly diversified surface - every feature of which has been made to contribute to the ornamental effect of the whole - and to heighten the magnificence of the River scenery which it commands. The two facades of the building - one fronting the river the other towards the Park show a fine spread of enriched Italian - flanked by large well proportioned wings the whole designed and executed by Martin F. Thompson in his best manner - another very tasteful edifice stands at the north end of the grounds called the "cottage" with its own separate gardens - and ornamental improvements - the north and south Lodges form elegant entrances to the estate - Pavilions occupy prominent knolls - the lawns, parterres, walks, and broad winding carriage drives are all kept in the highest order - and nothing can exceed the beauty of the forest groups and clumps of ornamental trees and shrubs which are disposed with the utmost skill over the whole place.

"...the rest of the day was spent in examining several valuable works &c. &c. my drawings, too, were brought out and handed around and the Doctor said he wished me to make him several sketches to be engraved on stone to illustrate a Quarto which he is engaged upon descriptive of his place. Dr. Hosack is a delightful companion, earnest and fluent, with a firm dark eye - Mrs. Hosack, formerly Mrs. Coster, is quite advanced in life and has a very pleasant winning manner - her daughters Adeline and Laura, are quite young and pretty - the Doctor's daughters Emily and Eliza are much older, rather plain, but very sprightly, intelligent and well educated, with the large black eye of their father... the Doctor's brother Alexander completes the family group now at home - they all seem to be exceedingly pleasant and live in a style commensurate with their superb residence.

July 10:" Heavy rains, with a pleasant interval at noon... the sun broke thro' suddenly and the clouds rolled away from the distant Catskills, revealing to me for the first time their grand, shadowy outlines - their silvery mists... the whole forming a background to the glorious scene up the Hudson from the north boundary of the estate - after sunset the deep groves of oak and chestnut (sic) between the front lawn and the river sparkled with fire flies innumerable - these woods extend from the bottom of the ridge to the water's edge - the intervening slope is abrupt but well grassed over and is used as an enclosure for deer. The front lawn occupies the whole level plateau on the top of the ridge, and splendid old trees are left standing at intervals with seats scattered here and there from which you can survey at leisure and in the shade, the exquisite beauty of the river scenery below. A little further on a handsome Grecian Pavilion, roofed with a dome, occupies a raised spot near the main walk - and just in advance of the ridge a grassy knoll covered with tall poplars offers a pretty contrast to the heavier foliage - it is ornamental with



"a bust on a pedestal, and is called, ( in imitation of Rousseau) L'Isle des Feuplier(sic)."

July 11: "Wet, cold and gloomy... bad for the fever and ague... Spent the day chiefly amongst the Doctor's books... Played chess in the evening with Dr. Hosack, and then with Miss Emily &c. -

"July 12 - The thick vapours have fled - a firm breeze cools the air - distant showers and great tracts of sunshine give the spectre forms of the Catskill a grand and diversified effect... made a sketch of the Pavilion on a mass of rock which projects into the river at the far north end of the estate - and of the pretty ornamental bridge over the Crumelbow Creek. This stream skirts the eastern portion of the park and is made to heighten its beauty - in one place its clear waters are gathered into a natural basin and spanned by the bridge in question forming with the mossy bank, and patches of gray rock a very sweet composition. In the afternoon commenced a large view of the scene looking up the Hudson...

"July 15 Sunday - Perfectly cloudless - whole day charming... We receive the New York papers every morning at breakfast table - today they report that the cholera is still quite wild... The congregation was very much larger than I expected, especially as there is a good sized Presbyterian church in the village. The Episcopal church is small but pretty - it stands at a short distance from the North Lodge - and the church yard is embowered with the foliage of tall locusts - it presented a lively scene this morning from the large number of handsome, stylish carriages, mixed up with the usual vehicles of a rural neighborhood...

"The gardener furnished the dessert today with fine citron melons, fully ripe - and the Doctor's Pinery gives proof of the superior flavour of the Pine-apple when taken ripe from the plant. The flower beds around the conservatories are perfectly splendid - there are some things I never saw before - the Mexican Tiger flower... and a fine specimen of the India rubber tree. Amongst the larger shrubbery the "fringe tree" is singularly luxuriant...

July 16: "...Finished tinting a drawing of the "greenhouses" and commenced one of the East Front of the House.

July 17: "... crossed the Hudson at the horse boat Ferry - and made a sketch of the river front and grounds from the high bank opposite. I then rambled... I returned to the Ferry, under a hot sun... and there I was kept for a full hour, blowing at intervals a tin horn in the vain hope of rousing up the lazy boatman - no response but the echoes of the rocky points... At length the boat began its tardy voyage... and started back at once, landing me also above the Ferry Dock and nearer to Dr. Hosacks...

"July 18 - Very fine weather with sheet lightening(sic) playing behind the mountains - In the evening three dashing Phaetons(sic) drove up with a gay party of friends of the family.

July 19- "Morning very fine and dewy... A little before sunset, as Emily Hosack and another lady and myself were standing on a walk overlooking the deer park, and admiring a pair of spotted fawns which the doctor had lately received from Long Island - a sudden and heavy rain... cut off our retreat to the house so we



"took shelter in the Pavilion close by - but we were not detained there long - the sun broke out again in 20 minutes and painted... the most perfect and brilliant rainbow I ever beheld...

"July 21 - Early in the morning these beautiful grounds seemed flushed with new charms as the mist rolled away from the Catskills and the sun lighted them ... like mother of pearl - the trees, lawns, and parterres borrowed additional brilliancy from the fresh dew - and the new mown grass smelt sweet and spicy in the still morning air. I have today completed the last of five Quarto size drawings for the Doctor...

"July 22 - ...The air is wonderfully pure and the mountain peaks usually clear and beautiful - the mountain house and its piazza is perfectly distinct thro' and excellent Telescope that stands in the Hall - it is 30 miles off and to the naked eye appears like a white spot near the summit of the most easterly mountain.

"Dr. Hosack will not allow a gun to be fired on or near his pleasure grounds and it is surprising what multitudes of beautiful birds - squirrels and other graceful little creatures glance about among the walks and trees... as if conscious of protection...

July 23"...took tea at "The Cottage" with the Allen family who live there...

"July 24 - The black boy has just run the usual 7 o'clock bell and as I am spending the time until breakfast in the library I will try to give a little idea of it. It occupies one story of the south wing - is 38 by 23 feet and lighted by 5 handsome windows - there are two elegant black veined marble mantles with grates for anthracite coal - and the carpet, rugs, sofa, chairs &c. are in accordance with the sumptuous style of the rest of the house. Four stands contain large Portfolios of Engravings, Maps &c. and in the center is a large mahogany reading table, with 18 capacious drawers and covered with useful articles for study - bronze ink stands & candlesticks of elegant patterns, large atlases - and in the center a Convex Lens 7½ inches in diameter, on a neat mahogany stand, to aid in reading the finer types - in short all the decorations and conveniences are admirably adapted to the purposes of the room - it is a luxurious spot to read in - almost too much so to study in. The Books are arranged in large Mahogany cases along the walls - handsomely bound, and consist of from 4 to 5000 volumes purchased at a cost of Twenty Thousand dollars - they have been collected with great care... The "medical department" is of course very rich - but in general "belles lettres" the "exact sciences" and "Theology" are well represented... while the collection of European and American "periodical literature" is, I am told, more complete than any other private library in the country. Then there is a memoir of De Witt Clinton, by Dr. Hosack, of whom Clinton was a near friend - richly bound in Quarto - and reflecting great credit on the author and artist employed in getting it up - several volumes, too, on "Medicine" by Dr. Hosack appear... I ought to mention that the story which corresponds to it in the North wing is fitted up as a "billiard room" and a fine one it is, supplying an admirable alternative of rainy weather and good after-dinner exercise for the ladies...

"July 26 - ...I have now finished seven drawings... and have just washed in the first tints of a large picture... the work of which he (Dr. Hosack) is now engaged will be illustrated by the drawings I have made him, while the originals ... will be enclosed in a Portfolio and placed on the drawing room central table



"for the frequent inspection of his family and guests...

"July 28 - ...The Cholera is now at Foughkeepsie, 7 miles below here -...

"July 31 - ...while the grass was still wet I took a farewell stroll among the splendid embellishments of the garden - lemon trees loaded with fine fruits, the tall India Rubber... and the glossy magnolia exhaling the sweetest perfume... the parting moment came and very soon the delightful scenes of Hyde Park lay behind me." 116

The young artist left Hyde Park with money in his pocket and a prospective position as drawing master at West Point; among the later drawings in this volume of his lifelong journal are two sketches of Hyde Park evidently made (or copied) in 1839.

INFORMATION FROM THE LOCAL HISTORIAN.

Mr. Braman, in his manuscript work "Genealogy and History of Hyde  
117  
Park Families," page 102, gives us the following information on Dr. Hosack:  
"Dr. Hosack altered and enlarged the house built by Dr. Samuel Bard, removed the old barns, which stood north of the house, and built new ones, then considered the finest in the country, on the Red House Farm [on the east side of the Post Road]; laid out the grounds anew, with drives, walks, gardens, green houses, summer houses, deer park, and closing the old entrance gate opposite the house, at the top of the hill above the bridge [the Post Road Bridge over Crum Elbow Creek], opened two new entrances, one at the present [about 1875] south entrance of Mr. Langdon, where he built a lodge on the side hill, next to the Post Road; and the other outlet through the avenue to the "Cottage" the present entrance to the Drayton [or Sexton] House, where he built in 1830 the lodge now standing [in 1875-see below]. He also built the farm house, by the new barns - so long the residence of John A. DeGroff, in 116. For this footnote see page 44.

117. This manuscript was apparently started about December 31, 1875.



" his new vegetable garden, he built a cottage for the gardener... The bridge on the drive from the South Entrance was also his work.

"Dr. Hosack's advent here was the opening of a new era. He spent money freely, and employed many men. Industry of all kinds felt the stimulus. He was very affable, and liked to have people, neighbors and strangers visit his grounds, garden, etc. and parties used to come many miles to see them." On page 42 of the same manuscript, Mr. Braman notes: "Dr. John Bard had large barns north of the garden, on the brow of the hill (on the east side of the Post Road). These, except a small one, were removed by Dr. Hosack. After that the house (Red House) was let with the gardens, lawn, and small meadow in the rear, in which there is a fine spring of water." Braman has one other note on the north gate-house of the Hosack estate: "In April 1890, S. B. Sexton had the Gate Lodge at Drayton House (now Torham) taken down. On a beam was found written Lent & Phillips, April 1830, the builders names. It had stood 60 years to a day."

The evidence presented above thus strongly suggests that the Hyde Park estate took its basic layout, i.e., the location of buildings, entrances, bridges, gates, houses, gardens, roads, trees, etc., that it was to retain from 1828 to 1938 under Dr. David Hosack's direction. These objects have been replaced during the passing years, but in the same general positions. This view is strongly supported by the J. T. Hackett Map - "Drawn from Map of Property at Hyde Park belonging to Dr. David Hosack, (filed October 6, 1849),<sup>119</sup> which shows the improvements in the same locations as on the 1898 Vanderbilt map, except for the Sexton portion of the estate. For a detailed representation of Dr. Hosack's Hyde Park estate, see "Map no.2 - Estate of Dr. David Hosack, 1828 -1840," by Charles W. Snell, dated April 10, 1954,

revised January 29, 1955.

118. Braman Note Book No. 3, p.13-In Franklin D. Roosevelt Library.

119. Map in Collection of Hyde Park Historical Association(In Vanderbilt Mansion).



CHAPTER V: WALTER LANGDON, JR. AT HYDE PARK. 1840 - 1894.

In 1840, five years after the death of Dr. David Hosack, his heirs sold the mansion tract, containing about 106 acres of land located to the west of the Albany Post Road (see Map VI, page 51) to John Jacob Astor for the sum of \$42,000.<sup>120</sup> Mr. Astor almost immediately made a gift of this purchase to his daughter Dorothea Langdon, and her children, Eliza, Louisa, Walter, Jr., Woodbury, and Eugene Langdon.<sup>121</sup> Walter Langdon, Jr. eventually bought out the property interests of his mother, sisters and brothers, and by 1852 had become sole owner.<sup>123</sup>

Except for numerous books in Vanderbilt Mansion, signed by Mr. and Mrs. Langdon, together with a few letters in said books, there are no written records surviving of the Langdon family in Hyde Park. The following account has therefore been gleaned from whatever sources are available.

Mr. Draman, the local historian, has this to say of the Langdon family: "Walter Langdon, Sr. was of the New Hampshire family (see New England Genealogical Record for January 1876)<sup>123</sup> and had reached middle life when he came to Hyde Park. His wife was Dorothea, daughter of John Jacob Astor... Mr. Langdon, Sr. died at Hyde Park, August 14, 1847, in his 60th year and was buried at his own request, on the lawn, east of his house. Some years later his son Walter had a vault constructed in the Episcopal Cemetery and Mr. Walter Langdon's remains were ~~then~~ transferred to it."

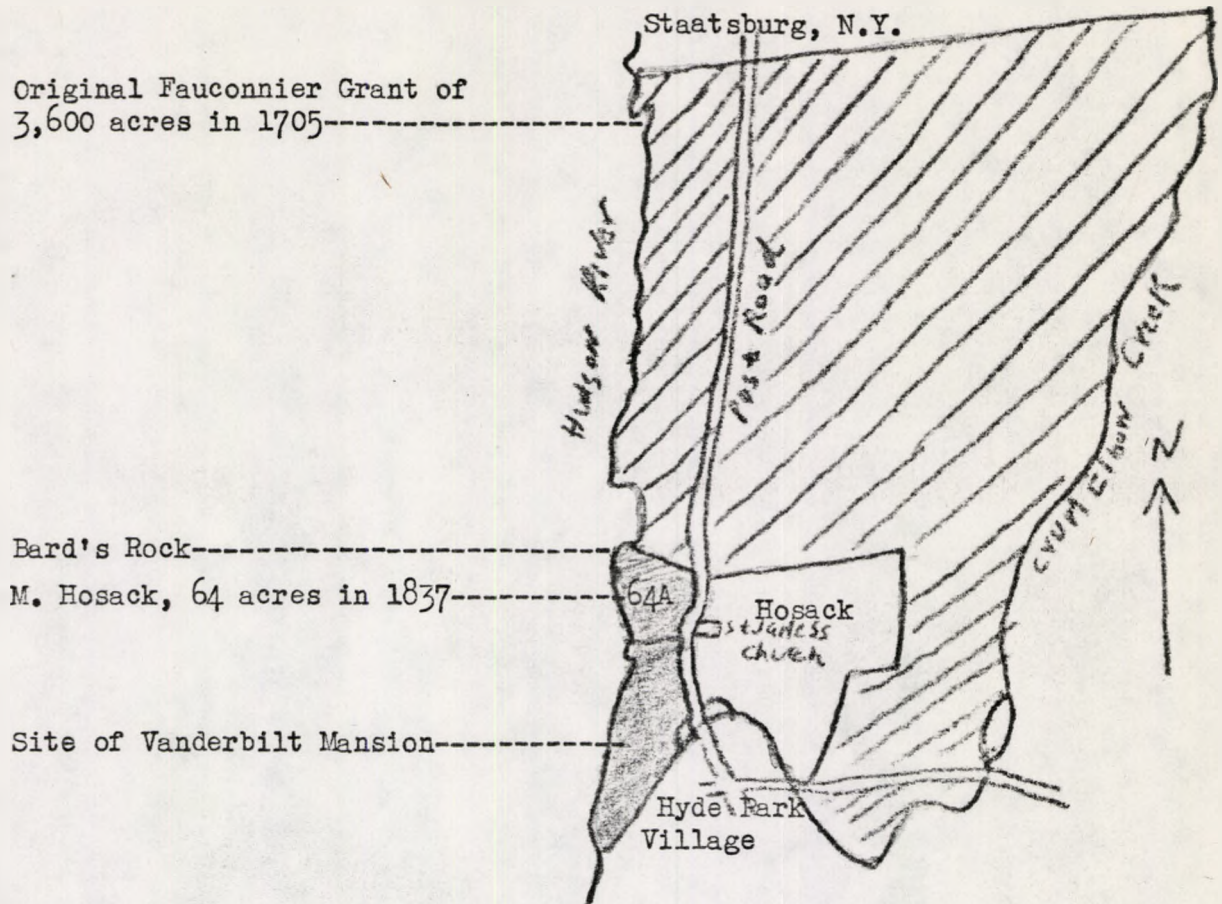
"Mrs. Langdon, Sr. lived much abroad after her husband's death, living at times with her married daughters in Europe and in this country. She died at Nice, France, February 15, 1874 in her 78th year."<sup>124</sup>

120. "Abstract of Title," p.82, deed dated June 20, 1840—also see Feins, "Dr. Hosack," p.20 for Hosack family comments on this sale.

121. "Abstract of Title," p.87—deed dated July 29, 1840.

122. Abstract of Title, pp.88,89,90. 123. Dictionary of America Biography has an account of the John Langdon family of N.H.; He was apparently a wealthy and influential leader during the Revolutionary War.

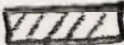






Hosack heirs to John Jacob Astor in 1840, 108 acres for \$42,000.

ASTOR - LANGDON ESTATE, HYDE PARK, 1840.

MAP VI.

-  Land sold off by the Bards and Fauconnier.
-  Land sold to John Jacob Astor in 1840 by the Hosack Heirs.
-  Land retained by the Hosack heirs in 1840.



"Walter Langdon, Jr., born 1824, who succeeded to the property here. He married Catherine, only child of Charles Ludlow Livingston of New York (see Holgate). She was married in 1847. She died December 25, 1883, in her 58th year, at Hyde Park."<sup>125</sup>

Of changes to the estate, Braman noted: "Walter Langdon, Sr. opened up the present north gate<sup>(1875)</sup>, and planted an avenue to connect with the approach laid out by Dr. Hosack, the former north gate being cut off by the new line. In 1845, the old mansion was burned with most of its contents. While rebuilding Mr. Langdon rented John De Groff's house, behind the "Red House," for two seasons. The new house is of brick, and was, at first painted a light drab, but in 1869 it underwent extensive repairs, and was then painted a light blue, with white trimmings, and straw-colored blinds.

"The present owner and his wife<sup>(this written about 1875)</sup> have spent years at a time ~~and~~ in Europe, and this place has been shut up."<sup>126</sup>

On June 7, 1845 the Poughkeepsie Journal reported under the heading: "Serious Fire: We learn from Hyde Park that the splendid mansion just above that village, owned and occupied by Walter Langdon, Esq. has been entirely destroyed by fire. The house which was lately occupied by Dr. David Hosack, was known as one of the handsomest residences on the bank of the river between New York and Albany."

124. Braman's MS, "Genealogy and History of Hyde Park Families.", p.143.

125. Ibid., p.144.

126. Ibid., p.146.



Mr. Langdon appears to have erected his new mansion on the site of the present Vanderbilt Mansion in 1847.<sup>127</sup> In 1859 Henry Winthrop Sargent wrote: "At Annandale and Hyde Park, the extensive ranges of glass [in green houses] have replaced the old ones of the previous owners [Dr. Hosack]. At Hyde Park, a very graceful and elegant house of the composite order, designed and built by Platt, of New York, and with a facade of one hundred and fifty feet, has within a few years, replaced the hospitable old mansion of the late Dr. Hosack."<sup>128</sup>

On October 15, 1872, the newspaper reported: "The barns and sheds on the place of Mr. Walter Langdon, situated near Hyde Park, were destroyed by fire on Tuesday morning about 2 o'clock. Seventy-five tons of hay and a large quantity of grain were consumed... Barns and shed were lost. Firemen succeeded in saving a large dwelling near by, which was several times on fire."<sup>129</sup> This would appear to record the fate of Dr. Hosack's fine barns.

The Walter Langdons, Jr. appear to be the first family residing on the Hyde Park estate to follow the general mode of life that was common among all the wealthy families of Dutchess County in the latter half of the nineteenth century. That is, their life, like the Roosevelts, Rogers, Mills, Astors, and later the Vanderbilts, revolved around three homes: a town house in New York City, used in the winter during the opera and social season of that city; a fall - spring country house, which was their Hyde Park mansion; and a summer house, which in later years was at Shelter Island, Long Island, New York.

127. Interview with Mr. John B. Clermont, October 13, 1954. Mr. Clermont was the former Superintendent of Building for Norcross Brothers, the construction firm which erected Vanderbilt Mansion in 1895-1899. In tearing down the old Langdon Mansion in September 1896, Mr. Clermont came across the date 1847 carved in the timbers, which apparently was the date the house was erected.

128. Downing, A.J. A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening... (Sixth edition, New York, 1859), with supplement by H.W. Sargent, p.553.

129. Brannan's Scrap Book (hereafter BSB), Vol. I, p.126, October 15, 1872.



This statement is substantiated in part by the following evidence from the "Diary" of Rebecca Howland Roosevelt, the first wife of James Roosevelt, who later was the father of Franklin D. Roosevelt: "January 30, 1874, New York City, to a Whist party at the Langdons. February 2, 1874, New York City, a delightful evening at the Langdons. October 14, 1872, Hyde Park, Rosy [her son James Roosevelt Roosevelt] took a drive with Miss [Helen] Astor and afterward dined<sup>130</sup> at Mrs. Langdon."

The Gardener's Cottage and Tool House( still standing on the Vanderbilt site) were erected by Mr. Langdon in 1875. These buildings were designed by John H. Stixgis and Charles Brigham, architects, of Boston, Massachusetts; their plans were dated December 9, 1874.<sup>131</sup> The press reported on this project, October 2, 1875: "The Langdon Homestead. - Walter Langdon, Esq., is making extensive improvements on the old Langdon Homestead, at Hyde Park, Dutchess County. An addition is being built to his grapery, the gardener's cottage, and the boiler room from which the grapery is heated. Mr. Myers, a Hyde Park mason, has the contract, and Messrs. Alexander and John Brown, of this city [Poughkeepsie], are his assistants. The brick for this grapery are all to be laid in black mortar..."<sup>132</sup>

The newspapers also contain the information necessary to fill out a sketch of Walter Langdon's life at Hyde Park and the role he played in the community. In April 1882, the paper announced: "Mr. Walter Langdon has an extra force employed in beautifying his estate previous to his return home in August."<sup>133</sup> In August the press noted: "Mr. Walter Langdon arrived home Tuesday after an absence of five years."<sup>134</sup>

130. The National Park Service has a large collection of notes from this diary. The original is in the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library and not open to researchers.

131. We have a copy of these plans, dated and signed as in text.

132. BSB, Vol. I, p.143, October 2, 1875. 133. BSB, Vol.II, p.8, April 29, 1882.

134. BSB, Vol.II, p.96, August 26, 1882. - 54 -



In September 1882, it was reported: "Mrs. Walter Langdon was prostrated with a paralytic stroke last Saturday. At last accounts she is slowly improving."<sup>135</sup> On January 5, 1884, the paper announced: "Mrs. Langdon died on Tuesday night. She was a great sufferer but a lady of superior qualities. The blow falls heavily on Mr. Langdon. He has the sympathy of the community."<sup>136</sup> And later, "The will of Catherine Livingston Langdon leaves all her real and personal property to her husband, Walter Langdon, he to control and dispose of it as he sees fit. Stipulated, however, is that any property given to him and left at his death, shall not go to his heirs, but to various persons named in Mrs. Langdon's will. The will is dated May 31, 1878."<sup>137</sup>

In the summer of 1883, disaster again struck the Langdon barns:

"July 7, 1883-Shortly before eleven o'clock Tuesday night the extensive barns of Mr. Langdon, in Hyde Park, were struck by lightning and were probably all consumed. Our informant, who was passing the place at the time, saw the bolt descend and strike one of the buildings. He states that in an incredibly short space of time the fire seemed to spread to all of them, and when he left the spot they were all a mass of flame. The Hyde Park engine proceeded to the spot as soon as possible, but its services were doubtless of little avail. These barns are among the finest to be found anywhere in the country and the loss ~~will~~ no doubt will be heavy.

"There are contradictory reports about the burning of Walter Langdon's stables near Hyde Park Wednesday night. One places the loss at \$50,000, another says the loss amounts to about \$12,000 and includes the burning of four tons of hay and a reaper."<sup>138</sup>

In the spring of 1884 Mr. Langdon rebuilt, as we see by the following account:

"April 15, 1884, The fine buildings of W. Langdon, Esq., that were destroyed by lightning last summer are to be rebuilt this spring. Mr. Tilley has the contract for the work."<sup>139</sup> These barns were to stand to 1901.

135. BSB, Vol. II, p.102, September 30, 1882.

136. BSB, Vol. II, p.150, January 5, 1884.

137. BSB, Vol. II, p.164, May 3, 1884.

138. BSB, Vol. II, p.132.

139. BSB, Vol. II, p.162.



Mr. Langdon was living at Hyde Park in 1885 and had begun to take a paternalistic hand in the community: "May 9, 1885, Mr. Walter Langdon's health has not been very good this spring. He received a fall last winter, the effect of which he has felt ever since. We hope he will soon entirely recover. The new pipe organ at St. James Church is in its place, and is a very fine instrument. It is the noble gift of Walter Langdon, Esq." In June, 1885 it was noted: "Mr. Walter Langdon has erected in St. James Cemetery, Hyde Park, a beautiful monument in memory of his parents. It is made of Italian marble, and is the work of Van Wyck & Collins of Poughkeepsie." In August of the same year the paper reported: "Mr. Walter Langdon has discovered that the pond near Hyde Park, claimed by Miss Sherwood, belongs to him and he had taken possession of it. The people of the village are glad of this as Miss Sherwood was very strict, not allowing anyone to fish or skate on the pond at the penalty of the law."

Mr. Langdon was apparently also at Hyde Park in April and November of 1886, for we find accounts of repairs being made to some of his houses, in the newspapers. He was at Hyde Park in 1887, as the following item reveals: "April 30, 1887- The first shad taken from the river at Hyde Park was on last Monday, which were sent to Mr. Walter Langdon. He gave to those who caught it a handsome reward." In the spring of 1888, the press announced: "Mr. Walter Langdon is having his boat house repaired and painted." And the same fall, in an account of the celebrations on the reopening of the newly redecorated Dutch Reformed Church of Hyde Park: "Besides all the church thankfully records the gift of a magnificent pipe organ manufactured by Odell of New York, from Mr. Walter Langdon, which is placed on the left of the pulpit..."

140. BSB, Vol.III, p.20.

141. BSB, Vol. III, p.25, June 27, 1885.

142. BSB, Vol. III, p.31, August 22, 1885.

143. BSB, Vol.III, April 10, 1886; p.90-November 13, 1886.

144. BSB, Vol.III, p.106.

145. BSB, Vol.III, p.42-May 26, 1888.

146. BSB, Vol.III, p.151.



Mr. Langdon was active at Hyde Park in 1890, as the following accounts reveal: "August 10, 1890, Hyde Park - Mr. Langdon is having the coal shed at the river taken down."<sup>147</sup> "November 16, 1890- Mr. W. Langdon has ~~just~~<sup>148</sup> purchased property recently owned by Mr. Stager." In December of the same year, the newspaper also mentioned Mr. Langdon's yacht and gave an account of a fire in his woods.<sup>149</sup> In May 1891, the paper reported: "By the kindness of Mr. Langdon, the pupils of the Union Free School (of Hyde Park) attended the circus (held in Poughkeepsie) on Wednesday in a body."<sup>150</sup> In August of the same year, the local correspondent wrote: "Mr. Langdon is having the Livingston house, recently purchased by him, repainted."<sup>151</sup> In June 1893, he wrote: "Brooks and Gernand are erecting a boat house at the Hyde Park dock for Mr. Langdon."<sup>152</sup> This structure is still standing.

January 1894, the paper reported: "D. T. Hewett is making some additions to the (hot water) heating system of the residence of Mr. W. Langdon."<sup>153</sup> In March, "Captain William H. Sterns has been engaged by Mr. Walter Langdon as master for his steam yacht "Laisy".<sup>154</sup> Later the same month, "E. S. Foster has just finished a handsome boat, the property of Mr. Walter Langdon."<sup>155</sup> And in August 1894, the newspaper stated: "Mr. Walter Langdon of Hyde Park has a new keel boat built by the Harrarshoff's at Bristol, which has so far cleaned everything of its size in the vicinity of Shelter Island where he has a summer residence."<sup>156</sup>

147. Poughkeepsie Sunday Courier (hereafter PSC), August 10, 1890, p.2.

148. PSC, November 16, 1890, p.2.

149. PSC, December 7, 1890, p.2.

150. PSC, May 31, 1891, p.2.

151. PSC, August 9, 1891, p.2.

152. PSC, June 11, 1893, p.3.

153. PSC, January 21, 1894, p.3.

154. PSC, March 4, 1894, p.3.

155. PSC, March 18, 1894, p.3.

156. PSC, August 5, 1894, p.1.



On September 17, 1894, Mrs. Sara Delano Roosevelt recorded in her "Diary", "Hyde Park, Mr. Langdon died at 11 this morning at Greenport, a great loss to us." The local newspaper commented:

"The residents of the town of Hyde Park met with a serious loss during the past week in the death of Walter L. Langdon, who expired at his summer residence near Greenport, L.I., on Monday Sept. 17th, aged seventy-two years. The immediate cause of his death was hemorrhage of the stomach. He was a broad minded generous man who practiced charity as our Saviour did in its deepest, truest sense, not letting the right hand know what his left hand was doing. He was not a seeker after fame or popularity, he did not use charity as a medium for self-glorification, but out of the abundance of his means he did his full duty to his fellow men.

"Walter L. Langdon was a grandson of John Jacob Astor and married a Miss Livingston. His wife and their only child died many years ago. His father was a wealthy New York merchant who bequeathed a great fortune to his two sons. Twenty years or more ago Mr. Langdon was a conspicuous figure in New York society. The last social event in which he figured with the occasion of the marriage of his niece, Miss Kane to Augustus Jay, Secretary of the Legation at Paris, which was celebrated with great splendor.

"Since that time Mr. Langdon has spent most of his time at his magnificent place at Hyde Park. He was the uncle of Delancy, Woodbury, and Nicholson Kane, Mrs. Adrian Insling, Mrs. Royal Phelps Carroll and Miss Anna Langdon. He owned the steam yacht "Daisy" and "Sakonnot" and a handsome sloop.

"Funeral services were held over his remains at St. James' Episcopal church, Hyde Park, on Friday. The attendance was large, including all the residents of the village and many from outside, and also the children from the public schools, and relatives and friends of the family from abroad. All the stores in Hyde Park were closed. The bearers were Mr. Langdon's family servants. The interment was in the family vault in St. James' Cemetery.

"By none is the memory of Mr. Langdon more sincerely mourned than by the poor of Hyde Park, who have blessed his bounty for years. The names of worthy poor persons were regularly reported to Mr. Langdon by certain friends whom he requested to keep him informed, and all such cases were promptly relieved. He gave away in this manner a fortune every year. All of this charity was unostentatious. He always requested that his name never should be revealed to his beneficiaries, or his deeds made a matter of public mention. His estate is estimated at between one and two million dollars." 157

157. 189, September 23; 1894, p.8.(editorial).



"The death of Mr. Walter Langdon the past week removes from our midst one of God's noblemen. Always a gentleman, kind and affable, he had earned the love and respect of all our people regardless of their station in life, and now that his life work is ended, all realize the great loss they have suffered. Cold print cannot convey to the outside world any idea of the gloom that is cast over our town by this sad event, as his life has been closely identified with all that goes to make up the history of our town. His one object in life was attempts to do good to all, by every means in his power. The widows and orphans, the poor andibly have lost a friend who could always be relied upon to alleviate and prevent their suffering through poverty and want. This part of the work he attended to in person and scores who have tossed in beds of sickness and pain have had their sorrows soother by his consoling words and kind manners of this charitable gentleman, who always appeared as a ministering angel, never hesitating but pushing straight ahead in his work of charity and love of fellow man. It will need no graven stone to keep alive the memory of Walter Langdon. He will live always in our hearts and for the general loss the babbling infant will be taught to list the name of him who was never dead to the needs and wants of his fellow creatures. The funeral of Mr. Langdon was on Friday, his remains being interred in the family vault at St. James' Cemetery. All business in the town was suspended and the entire community went to witness and participate in the last rites consigning to north earth the remains of one of those who should live forever..." 158

By October 1894, interest had shifted to Mr. Langdon's will:

"A Large Number of Heirs - The Will Remains Sealed But its Substance Given. No. Charitable Provisions Made," read the headline. "The disposition of the estate of Walter Langdon, the late well known gentleman resident of Hyde Park, has been the subject of general interest to his friends principally through the supposition that a goodly portion of it would be set apart for public benefactions. In this respect the will is a great disappointment. It is now well understood that Mr. Langdon made no charitable bequests in his last will and testament and his whole property is devised and bequeathed in various proportions to his heirs at law and next of kin.

"The will enclosed in a securely sealed envelop was filled in Surrogates' office several days ago by Morris, Hackett & Williams, the attorney for the estate... Walter L. Kane, a nephew of the testator and one of the executors, says in an affidavit, that the estate consists of \$450,000 of real estate and \$200,000 of personal property. The other executors are William Borrel and Delancy Kane. The will was made January 10, 1885 and was witnessed by Mr. John Hackett and Edward P. Rogers,..." 159

The following week, comments by the local Hyde Park correspondent show that the towns people thought Mr. Langdon had much more money than was revealed  
160

in the will. In December 1894, Walter Langdon's will was probated in the  
161

Surrogate Court, \$450,000 of real, and \$200,000 of personal property.

158. PSC, September 23, 1894, p.3.

160. PSC, October 21, 1894, p.3.

159. PSC, October 14, 1894, p.6.

161. PSC, December 9, 1894, p.4.



DESCRIPTION OF THE WALTER LANGDON ESTATE IN 1895.

For a detailed representation of the Walter Langdon estate see:  
"Map No.3 -Walter Langdon Estate, 1890 - 1894," by Charles W. Snell, dated  
April 10, 1954, revised January 29, 1955. For details on the Langdon Mansion  
see: McKim, Mead, and White's first set of plans, drawn for Frederick W.  
Vanderbilt, dated September 1895. McKim's original plan was designed to  
preserve the center portion of the Langdon house, tear down the north and  
south wings of that house, and replace them with new wings. The first set  
of plans must therefore give a pretty good idea of the size, locations, etc.  
of the rooms in the center portion of the Langdon house. We also have three  
contemporary photographs of the Langdon house, taken in 1895, just before the  
structure was demolished.

A reporter describing the estate in 1895, noted:

"When Mr. Vanderbilt purchased it..., the place was somewhat neglected  
and run down. Mr. Vanderbilt found a beautiful park all grown up to underbrush.  
The lawns were covered with the wild growth that nature puts forth under  
forest trees; and stone walls appeared in all sorts of inappropriate places,  
the products of tramp labor, for Mr. Langdon was very fond of providing  
employment for these gentry. There were hot houses, ample but empty, the  
stables and farm buildings were in a state of extreme dilapidation, and the  
stately 40 room old mansion of purest Greek architecture was painted a light  
pink... The mansion stood on a high point overlooking the river, and from it  
the land descended to the river in a series of natural terraces. The house  
was surrounded by a noble park of undulating surface, and a lovely brook  
with many a curve and picturesque waterfall went brawling through the  
grounds..." 162

162. PSC, July 19, 1896, p.2.



Another newspaper man describing the estate in 1895, wrote:

"Along the river front of the estate, which covered nearly a mile, there is a thick fringe of wood. The ground rose in natural terraces to the smooth lawns on which a number of old trees stood, like watchful sentinels to guard the venerable old pile (The Langdon Mansion) with its semi-circular veranda, upheld by graceful Corinthian columns. The portico on the east side was supported by Ionic columns. The brownstone staircase led to a fine lawn, beyond which was a grove of fir trees. On the east lawn there were also as on the river side, some fine trees and all through the park could be seen English elms, maples, lindens, beeches and pines with occasional tamarac, dogwood and rare specimens of South American and Japanese trees.

"Beside the mansion, there were picturesque cottages for the servants, greenhouses, stables, barns, and a gashouse. Wooden bridges led over Cruz Elbow Creek. Beyond the park on the other (east of) side of the Post Road was the farm, some of which was still in woodland, although the greater part was under cultivation." 163

Mr. John B. Clermont, former Superintendent of Building for Horcross Brothers, the construction firm which erected Vanderbilt Mansion, in speaking of the Langdon House, said he believed the house had about 40 rooms and confirmed the newspaper account that the building was painted a light pink in 1895. He added ~~that~~ the residence was constructed of brick, with a frame of Michigan pine. The walls were stuccoed and painted pink. The Langdon coachhouse was a barn and stable built of native rock or field stone, located about 540 feet north of the Langdon Mansion. The coach house had a foundation but no basement and was in very poor condition. 164

163. ESC, September 15, 1895, p.9.

164. Interview with Mr. John B. Clermont, October 13, 1954.



LANGDON ESTATE SELL TO FREDERICK W. VANDERBILT. 1895.

By the end of October 1894, the Langdon Hyde Park estate had been apparently placed on the market. The local Hyde Park correspondent commented at the time: "We understand that in the event of the home property of the late Mr. Langdon being put on the market it will be readily sold, as a great many have been here to look at it."<sup>165</sup>

In November 1894 he reported with great pride, that John D. Rockefeller of New York was among the prospective buyers of "Mr. Langdon's fine property."<sup>166</sup> The following week, however, he was forced to confess that the Rockefeller story had turned out to be just a rumor.<sup>167</sup>

On May 12, 1895, however, under the headline: "ANOTHER MILLIONAIRE IN HITCHCOCK," the local paper announced: "Frederick W. Vanderbilt, one of the New York families of millionaires of that name, and a son of the late William H. Vanderbilt, has purchased the Walter Langdon property of 600 acres in Hyde Park, and will spend, it is said, about one million dollars in improving it..."<sup>168</sup>

Mr. Vanderbilt was to take possession of his new property, comprised of 586 acres for which he had paid the sum of \$125,000,<sup>169</sup> on May 21, 1895.<sup>170</sup> (See Map VII, page 63).

FOR VANDERBILT ESTATE AT HYDE PARK. 1895 to 1938. See:

Snell, Charles W., "A Preliminary Report on the Frederick W. Vanderbilts of Hyde Park, New York," dated April 1, 1954, 89 pages.

Snell, Charles W., "Historical Handbook - Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site, Hyde Park, New York," dated February 3, 1955, 100 pages.

165. PSC, November 4, 1894, p.3.

168. PSC, May 12, 1895, p.5.

166. PSC, November 11, 1894, p.3.

169. PSC, July 19, 1896, gives price; also see "Abstract of Title," p.216 for same price & for acreage, deed dated May 16, 1895.

167. PSC, November 18, 1894, p.3.

170. PSC, May 19, 1895, p.3.

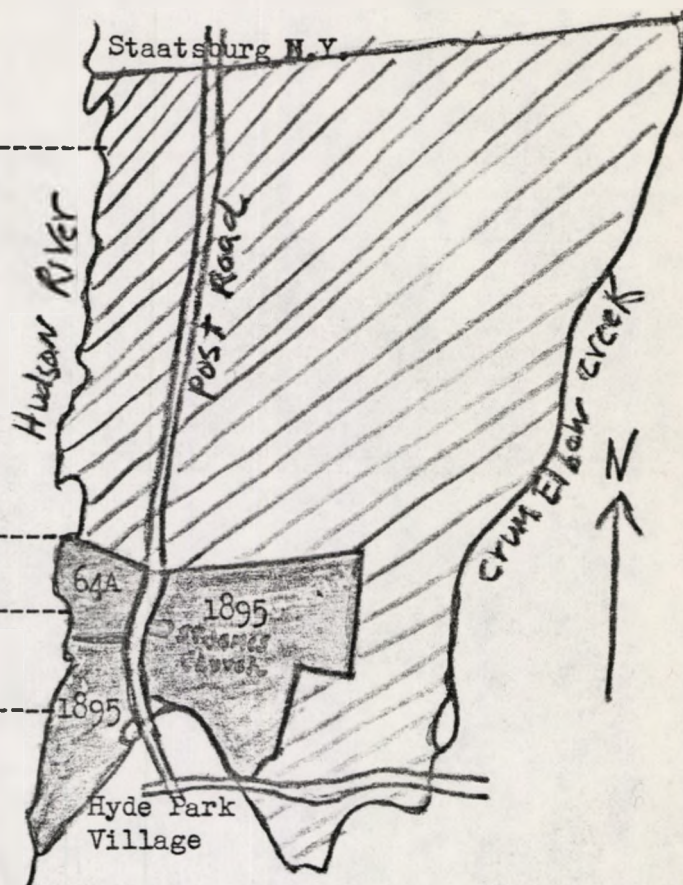


Original Fauconnier grant of  
3,600 acres in 1705-----

Bard Rock-----

S. B. Sexton, 64 acres, 1890-1905-----

Vanderbilt Mansion-----



Langdon Heirs to Frederick W. Vanderbilt in May, 1895, about 586 acres  
for \$125,000.

Sexton heirs to F. W. Vanderbilt in October, 1905, 64.22 acres for \$31,000.

FREDERICK W. VANDERBILT'S HYLE PARK ESTATE. 1895.

Map VII.



Land sold off by Fauconnier, Bards, and Hosacks.



Land sold to F. W. Vanderbilt by Langdon heirs in 1895.



Land sold to F. W. Vanderbilt by Sexton heirs in 1905.



CHAPTER VI - A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE 64 ACRE TRACT OF LAND, LOCATED WEST  
OF THE ALBANY POST ROAD AND NORTH OF THE VANDERBILT PAVILION,  
NOW FORMING A PART OF VANDERBILT MANSION NATIONAL HISTORIC  
SITE, 1837 - 1905.

Following the death of Dr. David Hosack in 1835, his  
children conveyed title in 1837 to the "cottage" and some 64 acres of land,  
located west of the Albany Post Road and extending from just north of the  
present site of the Vanderbilt Pavilion northward to the present north  
boundary of the National Historic Site (see Map VI, page 51), to Dr. Hosack's  
widow, Mrs. Magdalena Coster Hosack.<sup>171</sup> Mrs. Hosack died at Hyde Park on  
July 12, 1841.<sup>172</sup> Her heirs then sold this land to Augustus T. Cowan on  
April 26, 1842 for the sum of \$14,500.<sup>173</sup> In 1849 Mr. Cowan sold off a  
portion of this tract, along the river, to the Hudson River Railroad for  
\$1,375.<sup>174</sup> Mr. Cowan and his wife sold the remaining portion, 64.22 acres,  
to Joseph Curtis on November 2, 1853 for \$30,000.<sup>175</sup>

171. Feine, "Dr. David Hosack," p.20.

172. Ibid., p.20. "Abstract of Title," p.49.

173. "Abstract of Title," p.50.

174. Ibid., p.57.

175. Ibid., p.58.



In 1854 Mr. Curtis, as the following letter reveals, erected a splendid new mansion, later known as "Torham," which was to stand till September 13, 1899:

August 24, 1854

"The place from whence I address you was formerly the well known beautiful country residence of Mr. Hosack, about a mile from the village of Hyde Park, and is now the property of a friend, who, having made his "pile" in California, has settled down here to enjoy his "otium cum dignitate." He is at present up to his eyes, and even over them, in stone, brick and mortar, lumber, plaster, stone and wood carved and ornamental work, masons, carpenters, plumbers and painters, in erecting for himself a new and magnificent chateau, with all the beauties of architecture and modern improvements, conveniences and luxuries. The building, which is now being roofed in, is very extensive, and is not one of those very usual town as well as country residences, in shape resembling a tea chest, and requiring as much ingenuity to plan and erect as does a dog kennel, but both the exterior and interior of this building will exhibit taste, talent and elegance. On the river side is a broad and large stone platform reached by extensive stone steps, and surrounded by a stone balustrade, with a large portico of the same material, supported by pillars, and from this you enter an octagon vestibule, lighted from the roof through a dome, and communicating with the drawing-room, dining saloon, sitting parlor, library, study and conservatory. There are numerous fine and airy chambers on the floor above, besides those in the tower on the northern angle of the building, which rises to the height of 140 feet, with a large iron tank under the roof, which is to be constantly supplied from a beautiful spring on the brow of the hill by means of that little, simple piece of machinery called a "ram."

"The grounds in the immediate vicinity of the building are, of course, in the usual disarrangement which necessarily attends the erection of a large new building; but when it is finished and all put up in its usual neatness and order, which it will be in a few months, with its greenhouse, hot houses, kitchen garden, fruit orchards, it will be hard to find among the many splendid country residences of this country anything to surpass Templestowe, where there will be a greater or more generous and elegant hospitality exercised than by the present host and his amiable lady.

"The great charm of this residence is the natural beauties, without any labored attempt at artificial ornament; beautiful shade trees dispersed over an extensive and elegant greenward, shrubbery of the finest kind and in excellent order; fine and neatly kept serpentine and straight walks, undulating and descending ground to the bank of the river, the surface of which is 250 feet below the ground on which the house stands; and then the never-tiring and ever-beautiful and interesting surface of the noble Hudson, with its ever moving panorama of steam and sailing vessels, pleasure yachts and little boats, and the high and bold ground on the opposite bank as far as the eye can reach up and down, all diversified with cultivated fields, orchards, woodland, and handsome country residences or neat cottages. One is never fatigued with the contemplation of this beautiful and interesting view..." 176

176. BSE, Vol.5, p.114.



On April 15, 1861, Joseph R. Curtis and his wife Maria L., sold  
 this estate to Sylvia Mayton for the sum of \$70,000.<sup>177</sup> Sylvia Mayton  
 apparently remarried, for we find that the heirs of Sylvia L. Kirkpatrick,  
 deceased November 16, 1882, sold this tract of land on November 25, 1889  
 for \$36,000 to Hiram V. V. Braman.<sup>178</sup> On November 18, 1890, Hiram V. V.  
 Braman and his wife Irene B., conveyed the estate for \$1,00 to Samuel B.  
 Sexton.<sup>179</sup>

A detailed picture of the Sexton estate, "Torham," can be gained from  
 the contemporary "Plan of Torham, Estate of the Late Samuel B. Sexton, near  
 Hyde Park, Dutchess County, N.Y., Containing 64.22 acres to the High Water  
 Line, exclusive of Highway and Railroad," by Benjamin Brevcoart, Civil  
 Engineer, 54 Market Street, Poughkeepsie, N.Y.<sup>180</sup> This map is a large  
 topographical map showing location of all roads, carriage house, greenhouses,  
 mansion, servants' houses, etc.. (See "Map No. 4 - Frederick W. Vanderbilt's  
 Hyde Park Estate, 1895 - 1938," by Charles W. Snell, dated April 10, 1954,  
 revised January 29, 1955.) Mr. Samuel B. Sexton and family led the life of  
 an country gentleman at Hyde Park, following the same pattern of life of the  
 Langdons, Roosevelts, Rogers, Mills, Astors, and Vanderbilts, i.e. -using his  
 Hyde Park residence as a spring-fall country house, and coming up on weekends  
 from New York City in the winter for the winter sports.<sup>181</sup>

177. "Abstract of Title," p.59.

178. Ibid., p.63.

179. Ibid., p.65.

180. The National Park Service has four copies of this contemporary map.

181. This statement is based on my reading of the society pages of the  
Poughkeepsie Sunday Courier from 1890 to 1910, for information on all  
 the wealthy families of Dutchess County.



Disaster struck the "Torham" mansion on Wednesday, September 13, 1899, the newspaper (which included a drawing of the residence) reported:

"SAMUEL SEXTON'S HOME BURNED."

"A destructive fire visited Hyde Park on Wednesday morning, destroying the handsome house of Samuel B. Sexton, causing a loss of over fifty thousand dollars. It is supposed that the fire was the result of spontaneous combustion among oil soaked rags, used for cleaning furniture and floors. Mr. Sexton and family have been in Europe. They arrived in New York on Tuesday and their home was being prepared for their reception. Early Wednesday morning Ernest Newham, the butler, who occupied a portion of the house with his family, heard a muffled explosion on the upper floor. He made an investigation and found that the building was on fire and rapidly filling with smoke. Mr. Newham notified the Hyde Park Fire Department. The firemen responded promptly and succeeded in keeping the fire under control for several hours, when the water supply gave out and the building was doomed. Before the flames swept the building much of the furniture was removed. A painting of the Madonna, valued at \$9,000 was saved without a scratch or blister to mar its beauty. The extensive library was removed, also many fine pieces of tapestry, bric-a-brac, mounted birds and animals, ancient fire arms and pieces of armor, valuable china and antiques of various kinds.

The Sexton place is known as "Torham" and adjoins F. W. Vanderbilt's property. The house was built in 1857 (sic, actually in 1853) by Joseph R. Curtis at a cost of \$20,000. It was of brick. There was insurance on it of \$56,325, divided equally between the furniture and the house. The insurance was placed by the firm of Frost, Lusk & Son of this city [Roughneck, N.Y.]."

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Samuel B. Sexton died at Augusta, Georgia on Sunday, April 19, 1893, and his funeral was held at St. James church in Hyde Park. Mr. Sexton, in his will, left \$45,000 in real estate and \$450,000 in personal property.

182. PSC, September 17, 1899, p.7. An account by the Hyde Park correspondent will be found on page 3 of the same issue. Excellent contemporary photographs of the "Torham" house will be found in the C. F. Piersaull Collection of Hyde Park photographs, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library.

183. PSC, April 26, 1903, p.7, a full length obituary of Samuel B. Sexton will be found on page 2 of the same issue.

184. PSC, May 10, 1903, p.5, for the full details of Samuel B. Sexton's will.



On October 15, 1905 the newspaper announced: "The Sexton estate at Hyde Park, known as 'Torham,' for many years the country seat of the late Samuel B. Sexton, was sold at trustees' sale in New York on Wednesday to F. W. Vanderbilt. The price paid was \$31,000." "This handsome estate," the paper continued, "adjoins Mr. Vanderbilt's place on the north [see Map VII, p.63] and will make a handsome addition to his property. A few years ago the Sexton mansion was destroyed by fire and has never been rebuilt. There are, however, several buildings on the estate, including cottages for gardener and coachman, also conservatories, carriage house, boat house [which stood to 1953], farm barns and other buildings." <sup>185</sup>  
The deed was recorded on November 24, 1905. <sup>186</sup>

With this purchase of the Sexton property, Frederick W. Vanderbilt thus reunited the "Hyde Park" estate as it substantially stood in Dr. David Hosack's era (1828 - 1835), not only in boundary lines, splendor of buildings, gardens, and landscaping, but perhaps also in spirit.

185. FHC, October 15, 1905, p.3; p.5.

186. "Abstract of Title," p.71. For the subsequent history of this tract, 1905-1938, see Snell, Charles W., "A Preliminary Report on the Frederick W. Vanderbilts of Hyde Park, New York," dated April 1, 1954, pp.52-53.



Patent was granted in the reign of Queen Anne on April 18, 1705. This patent of 3,600 acres (see Map I, page 2) was apparently not developed in his lifetime, but left as wild and untouched as when it first came into his hands.<sup>127</sup>

Fauconnier's share and interest in the Hyde Park patent passed to his daughter Magdalene, wife of Peter Valleeu, at Fauconnier's death in 1746. Mrs. Valleeu sold her 2½ shares to her son-in-law, Dr. John Bard; and he later purchased the other outstanding shares, thereby becoming the sole owner of the patent (3,385 acres) by 1763.

In 1764, towards the close of the Seven Years War or French and Indian War as it was known in this country, Dr. John Bard erected the first house on his patent and developed a farm. The most probable location for this improvement appears to be on the present site of the Vanderbilt farm-barns, located on the east side of the Albany Post Road and north of St. James Church. Retiring in 1772, Dr. John Bard build a second house, the "Red House," also located east of the Albany Post Road and north of St. James Church, and probably on the site of the Vanderbilt barns, for himself, where he resided until his death in 1799. The first development of John Bard's Hyde Park estate thus appears to have been concentrated entirely on the farm section of the Vanderbilt estate, east of the Post Road and north of St. James Church. The present site of Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site thus appears to have been left untouched from 1705 to 1799, with the possible exception that Dr. John Bard may have erected a store at Bard's Rock.

<sup>127</sup>. This appears to be true except for one tract (see Map I, page 2) No. 5, of 215 acres, sold to George Rix or Fynch, November 10, 1710. Eckett in his essay on his map and in the "Abstract of Title," says this piece was sold off by Dr. John Bard. A glance at the biographical sketch of Dr. John Bard, (page 14) will show that Dr. John Bard was born 1716, so it seems highly unlikely that he was selling real estate at the tender age of two. This tract therefore have been sold by Fauconnier. - 70 -



From 1762 to 1795, Dr. John Bard sold off about 1,304 more acres of the original Hyde Park Patent, leaving his son, Dr. Samuel Bard, about 2,081 acres (See Map II, page 5).

The first development of what is now Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site can be attributed to Dr. Samuel Bard and this took place in 1795, when he erected the first mansion to stand on what is now the site of the Vanderbilt Mansion. Dr. Samuel Bard's improvement of his estate does not appear to have been extensive or lavish. North of his house he erected one or two barns; along the river bluffs, from his house to the Hyde Park Landing, he probably built a road. The main entrance to his residence was directly opposite it, north of the present State Road bridge over Cinn Elbow Creek, and leading from the Albany Post Road to his mansion without crossing any streams or requiring any elaborate bridges. At Bard's Rock there was a store known as "Dr. Samuel Bard's Store." In addition, the Doctor had a garden and one greenhouse which may have been located south of his house and on the present site of the Vanderbilt gardens, but there is no evidence to substantiate the exact location of his gardens and greenhouse. Mr. Langstaff's claim, in his book, Dr. Bard of Hyde Park, that the Vanderbilt gardens as they appeared in 1942 can be credited to Dr. Samuel Bard, is pure phantasy. The gardens may have been on the same general location, but they have been so altered and enlarged as to bear no relation to Dr. Samuel Bard's undoubtedly simple garden.

From 1793 to 1821, Dr. Samuel Bard sold off about 1,505 more acres of the original Hyde Park patent( see Map IV, p.21), leaving an estate of about 540 acres.



At Dr. Samuel Bard's death in 1821, the remaining portion of the Hyde Park estate passed to his son William Bard. William Bard held on to the property until 1828, when he sold the remaining 540 acres to Dr. Samuel Bard's close friend and former partner, Dr. David Hosack, for the sum of \$40,000 (See Map V, page 30).

Under Dr. David Hosack's guidance "Hyde Park" entered upon its days of glory, becoming famed throughout the United States and Europe as one of the first great landscaped estates in the northeastern United States and the first of the great Hudson Valley estates. Dr. Hosack spent lavish sums in the development of his estate. He engaged Andre Leconte, a Belgian landscape architect, to lay out roads, walks, and scenic vistas. This work was done between 1828 and 1830. The road system of Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site as it appears today, can be definitely attributed to Dr. Hosack. The South and North Gates, at about their present locations, were established by Dr. Hosack; a bridge across Cross Elbow Creek at the site of the present "White Bridge", was erected by Dr. Hosack. He also constructed the carriage road that still runs from "White Bridge" along the north bank and parallel to Cross Elbow Creek, to the Hyde Park Landing. His large and elaborate garden and great green house was definitely erected on the present site of the Vanderbilt gardens. The many rare and exotic specimens of trees which today grace the lawn and park of Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site appear to date principally from Dr. Hosack's era (1828 - 1835).

In 1829 Dr. Hosack also hired the service of an eminent New York City architect, Martin E. Thompson, of the firm of Town and Thompson, to remodel and enlarge the mansion erected by Dr. Samuel Bard in 1755. A new north and south wing were added to the Bard house, and its exterior altered.



Thompson also designed and erected elaborate gate houses at the north and south entrances to the estate on the Albany Post Road. In addition he constructed north of the mansion an elaborate carriage house on the present site of the Vanderbilt pavilion, that appears to have stood until 1895.

East of the Post Road, and on the present site of the Vanderbilt barns, Dr. Hosack also erected great model farm barns in a rectangular form, that was preserved later by the Langdon farm barns and the present Vanderbilt barns. Dr. Hosack was also the first to push his boundaries south across Crum Elbow Creek, towards the present site of the Hyde Park Railroad Station and Hyde Park Village (Note: As these were relatively minor additions I have not treated of them in the text, for details however, see "Map No. 2-Hyde Park Estate of Dr. David Hosack, 1828 - 1840," by Charles W. Snell, dated April 10, 1954, revised January 29, 1955.)

In 1840, five years after the death of Dr. Hosack, his heirs sold the mansion tract (located west of the Albany Post Road, and extending southward from the present site of the Vanderbilt pavilion to Crum Elbow Creek, see Map VI, page 51), containing about 168 acres, to John Jacob Astor for the sum of \$42,000. Dr. Astor almost immediately made a gift of this purchase to his daughter, Dorothea Langdon, and her children. Walter Langdon, Jr., a son, eventually bought out the property interests of his mother, brothers, and sisters, and by 1852 had become the sole owner of the tract.

Under Walter Langdon's guidance, while the actual beauty of the estate may not have greatly declined, so many other great Hudson Valley estates were so vastly improved and landscaped, that the fame of Hyde Park passed under a relative eclipse. In 1845 the mansion erected in 1795 by Dr. Samuel Bard and enlarged and remodelled in 1829 by Dr. David Hosack,



burned to the ground. In its place, in 1847, Mr. Langdon erected a new 40 room mansion, designed by the architect Platt, of New York City. This house, the ~~second~~ second completely new residence to stand on the site of the present Vanderbilt Mansion, was destined to stand until September 1896, when it was demolished to make way for the present Vanderbilt Mansion. Many of its exterior architectural features were incorporated into the present Vanderbilt Mansion by McKim (see Vanderbilt Historical Handbook, also contemporary photographs of Langdon Mansion for these details). Mr. Langdon maintained the general Hosack road system, but replaced the Hosack south gate-house with a less elaborate frame structure (see Map No. 3- Walter Langdon, "Iris Hyde Park Estate, 1840-1895," by Charles W. Snell, dated April 10, 1954, revised January 29, 1955, for these details). He also maintained a bridge across Crum Elbow Creek at the site of the present "White Bridge."

As the old Hosack north gate on the Post Road was cut off by that property passing to different owners, Mr. Langdon opened a new north gate on the Post Road, located slightly north of the site of the present Vanderbilt pavilion. The Hosack carriage house was apparently also kept up by Langdon as well as the green houses and gardens. In 1875 Mr. Langdon erected the gardener's house and tool house still standing on the Vanderbilt National Historic Site, the only structures still standing on the Site that antedate the Vanderbilt period. These two houses were designed by the architects John E. Sturgis and / Charles Brigham, of Boston, Massachusetts. The farmland east of the Albany Post Road, that once formed a part of Dr. Hosack's estate, was reunited by Mr. Langdon through purchase by 1872. Mr. Langdon also extended his boundaries further southward across Crum Elbow Creek (see Map No. 3).



In 1672 fire destroyed Mr. Langdon's barns, located east of the Post Road and on the site of the present Vanderbilt barns, thus eliminating any chance of the survival of Mr. Hosack's barns. Mr. Langdon rebuilt apparently along the same lines, in a rectangular form. His barns were again destroyed by fire in 1782 and he again rebuilt in the same form. These 1782 barns were to stand until 1901, when they were demolished by Mr. Vanderbilt to make way for the barns still standing. It is highly probable that the present Vanderbilt barns may still preserve the same general rectangular form established by Mr. David Hosack in 1829.

Walter Langdon's use of his Hyde Park estate as a spring-fall house and his general pattern of life may be cited as typical of the wealthy gentlemen residing in the Hudson Valley in the latter part of the nineteenth century. We find the same pattern repeated in the lives of the James Roosevelts, the John A. Roosevelts, the James Roosevelt Roosevelts, the Samuel B. Sextons, the Archibald Rogers, the Ogden Mills, the John Jacob Astors, and later, the Frederick W. Vanderbilts.

The present Vanderbilt Mansion, started in October 1896 and finished in April 1899, may thus be said to be the third mansion to stand on that site since 1795, or the fourth house if the remodelling done by Dr. David Hosack in 1829 is counted as a new house.

When Frederick W. Vanderbilt acquired the 64.22 acre Sexton property in 1905 (See Map VII, page 63), he restored the old North Gate and exit roads to their approximate state under Dr. Hosack. And with the addition of the Sexton piece, Mr. Vanderbilt also restored the Hyde Park estate boundary lines to the point where they stood in Dr. David Hosack's era. Thus not only in boundary lines, but perhaps in splendor of buildings, gardens and landscaping. Under Frederick W. Vanderbilt's guidance, the Hyde Park estate



entered upon a second era of glory, rivaled only by that of Dr. David  
Howe (1828-1835).