

Garrett-Jacobs Mansion and Family History

Welcome to the historic Garrett-Jacobs Mansion. In order to appreciate this Mansion, you should try to imagine that you are back into the latter half of the 19th and early part of the 20th centuries when the merchant princes of the day lavished untold wealth on building homes which they considered suitable for living and entertaining.

For nearly 60 years, from the 1870s to the 1930s, this was the home of members of the most prominent family in Maryland--the Garretts. From the beginning of the 19th century, the family was influential in building commerce and industry in Baltimore and eventually, in directing the country's first railroad, the Baltimore & Ohio. They were all great philanthropists, who left their indelible mark in the arts, medicine, and education.

The mansion also represents a unique, unprecedented blending of styles of two of the greatest Americans architects, Stanford White and John Russell Pope.

The original part of the mansion--#11 West Mount Vernon Place --was built in 1853 by Samuel George on land that originally belonged to Revolutionary War hero John Eager Howard. In 1872, it was given as a wedding present--along with all the furnishings--by B&O president John Work Garrett to his son Robert and his bride Mary Frick. Over the next 32 years, the mansion was expanded to include adjoining townhouses and eventually encompassed 40,000 square feet. This was the largest, most opulent townhouse ever built in Baltimore and vied with the most luxurious New York brownstones of the Vanderbilts and Astors. The mansion boasted 40 rooms, 100 windows, 16 fireplaces, a theater, an art gallery of fine paintings, one of the handsomest conservatories in a private home in this country, a compartmentalized elevator and an elegant supper room with a musician's balcony.

This was one of only 10 mansions and estates the extended Garrett family owned around the country in the Gilded Age. Mr. and Mrs. Garrett usually spent the months between Christmas and Easter in residence here --this was the social season in Baltimore--and then moved on to their other estates in Newport, Rhode Island, Baltimore County, and Garrett County, Maryland.

Mary Frick Garrett, who later became Mrs. Henry Barton Jacobs after the death of Mr. Garrett in 1896, was the undisputed social arbiter of Baltimore. She entertained in a truly regal manner comparable with grande dames on the East Coast. She was a very philanthropic woman and

when she died in 1936 left the greater part of her \$5.5 million fortune to charity, particularly for the medical care of children. She, herself, was childless.

Following her death, the Mansion was willed to Dr. Jacobs for life. He was a renowned physician and researcher in tuberculosis. After his death in 1939, the Mansion and its contents were sold at public auction. William Cook bought the house for use as a funeral home but zoning laws prevented this use. The Boumi Temple bought the building from Mr. Cook in 1941 and made many alterations to the house. The Boumi Temple sold the Mansion to the City of Baltimore in 1958 and it remained vacant, unheated and deteriorating until 1961 when The Engineering Society of Baltimore leased the building from the city, which had planned to destroy the building as part of an urban renewal and expansion project for the Walters Art Gallery. In 1962, the club purchased it outright and began a dedicated effort to preserve and maintain the historic structure. In 1971, the Mansion's significance was officially recognized by the Maryland Historic Trust. The Garrett-Jacobs Mansion has also been listed in the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Mount Vernon Place Historic District.

Stanford White's Work

Robert and Mary Frick Garrett engaged Stanford White, the most famous and flamboyant Gilded Age architect in the country, to remodel #9 West Mt. Vernon Place when it was purchased to expand the house. White was a member of the nationally prominent New York architectural firm McKim, Mead and White. He designed some of the country's grandest "Shingle Style" mansions, and helped to build such historic Manhattan structures as the Washington Square Arch, the New York Herald building and Madison Square Garden, where he was shot to death in 1906 by the husband of his lover.

White had met his match with Mary Frick Garrett, who was a demanding taskmaster. She constantly summoned him to come to Baltimore from New York to check the slightest inconsistency in the remodeling. Growing weary of her complaints, White instructed his staff that the next time Mrs. Garret cabled him to tell her "he had gone fishing."

At 11 West Mount Vernon Place, Mr. White gutted the Garretts' house and installed the present vestibule, with its Italian mosaic floor, papier mache ceiling, columns of Egyptian Numidian

marble and Tiffany window overlooking Mt. Vernon Square. (The window was sold by a previous owner in the 1950s; it is now clear glass. The two carved front doors were replaced.)

White paneled the two-story entrance hall in stained English oak delicately carved with floral and shell patterns. The hall was graced with a Venetian lantern (which still hangs from the coffered ceiling), a Jacobean hall clock, a Louis XV sedan chair and two sets of armor. The hall's lantern, Louis XV sconces, Tiffany glass windows and Inglenooks flanking the fireplace are all typical of Stanford White, whose interpretations of the French Renaissance helped define 19th century Beaux Arts style.

White's signature feature in the Garrett-Jacobs Mansion is a dramatic spiral staircase, its newel posts and balustrade carved in a rich design, culminating under a magnificent Tiffany glass dome.

The family dining room walls are covered in 18th century Belgian tapestries, offset by paneling and lavishly carved oak fireplace and sideboard, all painted black to resemble ebony. Some of the room's more elaborate details - including solid silver hinges on the Oriental-style windows and fanciful nursery-rhyme carvings on the sideboard - remain to this day.

Mr. White constructed the "red room," a ladies' withdrawing room where Mrs. Garrett served tea every day promptly at 5 o'clock. The beautiful domed plaster ceiling was recently restored; Tiffany glass French doors led into the conservatory, and the windows were also of Tiffany glass. The room is distinctive for its four pocket doors, all curved to maintain the oval shape of the room.

The great drawing room -- just off the entrance hall and withdrawing room -- was decorated by Mrs. Garrett in a French style. This light, airy room was - and still is - dominated by a splendid fireplace of Breche French violette marble. The chandeliers are of German crystal, with a fruit motif of apples and pears that was typical of the 19th century.

John Russell Pope's Work

When Mary Frick Garrett married Dr. Henry Barton Jacobs in 1902, six years after her first husband's death, she bought Number 7 and engaged John Russell Pope, another "court architect" of the early 20th century, to design the addition.

Like White, Pope was one of the most influential architects of his era. He went on to become the leading proponent of neo-Classicism - most notably in Washington, D.C., where he designed the Constitution Hall, the National Archives Building, and the National Gallery of Art. In Baltimore, he designed the Baltimore Museum of Art, the Masonic Temple of Scottish Rite and the University Baptist Church, as well as plans for the campus of Johns Hopkins University.

Pope was responsible for the easternmost part of the Garrett-Jacobs Mansion, including the library, a hall paved in tiles of buff-colored Caen marble, a supper room and a great ballroom. The latter was particularly lavish, measuring 30 by 70 feet, with a large stage and pipe organ at one end, and a partially gilded ceiling inset with glass panels lighted from above. Dr. and Mrs. Jacobs' guests repaired to this room after supper downstairs to enjoy music and the tableaux vivants that were the fashion of the day. Seated on gilded benches upholstered in wine red velvet, guests were surrounded by the Jacobs' art collection - eventually valued at \$2 million and donated to the Baltimore Museum of Art - that included works by Hals, Rembrandt, Van Dyke, Fragonard, Sully, Canaletto and Chardin. The ceiling and corners of the room are still graced with paintings in elaborate Regency frames, and the walls are still covered in their original silk damask, although its rose color has faded.

Directly below the grand ballroom was the Supper Room, or 'Hall of Mirrors,' where between forty and sixty guests could dine from the Jacobs' gold service and Venetian goblets. Lit by delicate Meissen chandeliers and sconces, this room opened onto the Conservatory through an elevated Musicians' Gallery.

Guests entered the Supper Room by way of Pope's own signature architectural element: a grand, 9-foot-wide marble staircase that presented a sweeping counterpoint to White's tight, vertically-oriented helix in the entrance hall. Nowhere in the Garrett-Jacobs Mansion is the difference between White, the champion of highly pitched Victorian style, and Pope, the pre-eminent emissary of the classical revival, more pronounced. Such a serial "collaboration" represents a

unique architectural dialogue between two masters, one of Gilded Age extravagance, the other of a more severe neo-Classical artistic temperament.

Mr. Pope redecorated the first-floor drawing room originally designed by Stanford White, furnishing it with furniture of the Louis XV, Louis XVI and Regency eras and brightening the environs with a Chinese rug in light and dark blue with touches of rose, gray and deep blue. The walls were covered in old gold brocade above the dado, and were hung with Louis XVI gilded mirrors and Gobelin tapestries. (One mirror still hangs behind the lavender mantle,)

Mr. Pope, eschewing the English oak favored by White, designed the library in proper Baronial manner, paneling the room with hand-carved mahogany motifs in the style of 17th century master woodcarver Grinling Gibbons, and lighting it with English Baroque-style sconces. The library housed a collection of many rare books, most in the field of music and medicine, which was later donated to the Peabody Library.

In 1913, the stables at the rear end of the house were razed and a "small gallery" was built to house the art collection, forming the fourth wall of what would become one of the most splendid private conservatories in the country. Vibrant orchids, banana plants, a 20-foot rubber tree and lemon and orange trees flourished in this three-story atrium. Here, too, a fountain bubbled and birds and monkeys roamed freely. Two years later Mrs. Garrett purchased Number 13, to the west of Number 11, and demolished portions in order to provide light and air for the magnificent Tiffany dome atop the Stanford White stairway. The conservatory was demolished for safety reasons prior to the Club's arrival in 1961.

The Mansion and Engineering Society of Baltimore

The Garrett Jacobs Mansion is a contributing structure to the Mount Vernon Place Historic District, a national historic landmark. Mount Vernon is the site of Baltimore's most significant 19th century architectural legacy and home to many small businesses and restaurants, and to many of the City's leading cultural assets.

The Engineering Society of Baltimore often called The Engineers Club, created the Garrett Jacobs Mansion Endowment Fund with a mission to preserve and restore the architectural and historical character of the Garrett-Jacobs Mansion, a legacy of Baltimore's 19th century architectural, cultural, business and social history. The two organizations collaborate to restore, maintain and improve the Mansion to make it functional and accessible for public use, and to generate funds for its future preservation and maintenance through fundraising and obtaining public and private grants and gifts.

The Mansion was nearly demolished in the 1950s to build a new addition to the Walters Art Museum. Baltimore Heritage, a historic preservation society, led the campaign to prevent the demolition. In 1962, the Garrett-Jacobs Mansion was sold to the Engineering Society of Baltimore (which had been founded in 1905, after local engineers had come to the city's aid after the Great Fire of 1904. The Engineering Society's purchase of the Mansion continued the Society's long tradition of service to Baltimore: By buying the building they, along with the volunteers of Baltimore Heritage, Inc., saved it from certain demolition.

The Club has served as a conscientious steward of the Garrett-Jacobs legacy, carefully maintaining and restoring the Mansion as a premier Baltimore historic and cultural landmark. We have not only preserved the Mansion as a cherished artifact of another age, but have returned the building to its rightful role as a gathering-place for social, business and civic functions. A very popular event site, every year more than 40,000 members and visitors assemble at the Mansion for professional, social, cultural, educational and civic meetings.

The Drawing Room was the first of the main floor historic rooms to be restored in 2007. Thomas Moore Studios and Johnson-Berman Architects and Design were hired to research and complete the project. The work was completed in June 2008 at a cost of \$448,000.

The Engineering Society has been an outstanding steward of the Mansion since 1961. The Endowment has joined them in that task since 1992, making more than \$6 million work of major improvements over those years. The Society and the Endowment entered into an easement with the Maryland Historical Trust in April 1999 to protect the entire exterior of the structure. Negotiations to modify the easement to include all interior historically significant were completed in fall of 2008 and became official in February 2009 thus guaranteeing the Mansion's

place among historic buildings in Baltimore forever. A commemorative brochure is available for purchase at the reception desk.