

Garrett-Jacobs House  
7-9-11-13 West Mount Vernon Place  
Baltimore  
Baltimore City County  
Maryland

HABS No. MD-188

HABS

MD

4-BALT

115-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction  
143 South Third Street  
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

## GARRETT-JACOBS HOUSE

HABS  
MD  
4-BALT  
115-

Street Address: 7-9-11-13 West Mount Vernon Place, Baltimore,  
Baltimore City County, Maryland

Present Owner: The City of Baltimore

Present Use: None

Brief Statement of Significance: This building, Baltimore's largest and most costly mansion, was built in two stages. Robert Garrett, prominent financier and businessman, built the first part in 1884, designed by McKim, Mead and White. His widow, who married Dr. Henry Barton Jacobs, added the second part c. 1905, designed by John Russell Pope, and c. 1916 acquired an adjoining property, demolishing a portion of the building thereon.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The Garrett-Jacobs House is Baltimore's most ambitious example of a great mansion of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Other comparable buildings, such as the Ross Winans House, may be superior for integrated design or architectural detail, but none existing is on an equally ample, imposing, and costly scale. It stands in what once was the most fashionable part of Baltimore, on a lot stretching 92 feet along West Mount Vernon Place (Nos. 7-11) and 160 feet deep. The adjoining house, No. 13, is also part of the property and this lot has a 27 foot frontage and a depth of 160 feet.

A. The Owners: Creation of the present house was begun by Robert Garrett in 1884. He had resided on the site, at No. 11 West Mount Vernon Place (No. 71 old style), for about ten years before he ordered its demolition to begin the new structure. This noted capitalist was born April 9, 1847, the eldest son of Robert Work Garrett and Rachel Harrison Garrett, and succeeded his father as President of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad in 1884. He was also head of the banking house of Robert Garrett & Sons and had other extensive business interests of national prominence.

This was a man of artistic, if grandiose, tastes. He took part in the beautification of Baltimore, presenting fountains for East and West Mount Vernon Place and commissioning the bronze reproduction of the London statue of George Peabody which stands outside the Peabody Institute. He also commenced the acquisition of a large art collection which was later given to the Baltimore Museum of Art.

Robert Garrett suffered a mental collapse in 1887 and thereafter lived in retirement under the care of his personal physician, Dr. Henry Barton Jacobs. His Baltimore residence was accordingly very

largely the creation of his wife, who shared his tastes and for many years carried on the decoration, extension, and aggrandizement of the house and its collections.

Mrs. Garrett was a daughter of William F. Frick, a successful Baltimore lawyer. She became an arbiter of society, playing a leading role with Edwardian grandeur and in accordance with a code of rigorously exclusive and formal requirements. The nation's press referred to her in such terms as "the Mrs. Astor of Baltimore"; her entertainments were on a lavish scale and when she traveled it was in the utmost luxury.

In addition to the town house, Mrs. Garrett had other properties, notably "Uplands" in Baltimore County--the Frick family estate--and "Whiteholme" at Ochre Point, Newport, Rhode Island. John Russell Pope became in time a kind of "court architect" to Mrs. Garrett and her circle: He designed part of the Mount Vernon Place house, built "Whiteholme," and provided her brother, J. Swan Frick, with one of Baltimore's finest houses.

Social doings, however, did not entirely occupy Mrs. Garrett's attention. She was well-known for her charities, particularly her interest in children (the Garretts were childless), the provision of children's hospitals, care for the aged, and contributions to the Episcopal Church. Among the many elaborate entertainments of her Baltimore home, some of the most celebrated and well-remembered were her annual Christmas parties for the city's messenger boys.

Robert Garrett died in 1896 and in 1902 his widow married Dr. Jacobs. Her death took place October 20, 1936, and Dr. Jacobs, the last private resident, died in the smoking room of the house three years later.

Following this, the house and most of its contents were sold at auction. 1940 was a bad year for dispositions of this kind. The building went to William Cook, undertaker, for \$36,000, and its furnishings, which were reported to have cost upwards of a million and a half, netted only \$77,675. This figure, however, is exclusive of the value of the art collection already given to the city.

Zoning ordinances prevented the use of the house as a funeral parlor, and the next occupant was the British Merchant Navy Club, which from early in 1941 made use of the basement, where it installed a gymnasium and showers. Later the same year Cook sold the building to the Bountiful Temple Shriners for \$55,000. It was operated as a headquarters for the Shriners until its sale to the City of Baltimore for \$155,000 in 1958.

A partial idea of the cost of running this establishment is given by the fact that in 1941 City taxes amounted to \$4,577.96 and State taxes took another \$369.45. In 1940 the annual cost of heating

was estimated at \$1,680, based on the consumption of 280 tons of coal per year.

A great deal of money was expended on this house, not only in the original construction, the purchase of adjoining properties, and the constant acquisition of furnishings, but also in the continual desire for alterations and additions, which apparently possessed both Robert Garrett and his widow.

B. Phases of Development:

1. Phase 1 - McKim, Mead & White - 1884:

a. History: Local tradition has always associated the name of Stanford White with the original design of the Garrett-Jacobs house, but only recently was this personal association substantiated. The list of works by McKim, Mead & White in which he took a leading part (given by his son, L. G. White, in Sketches and Designs by Stanford White) begins with the year 1883 and makes no reference to this building. A letter from the current offices of McKim, Mead & White to the Peale Museum, dated April 15, 1960, reads: "We are unable to state which member of the firm was responsible for the work."

Research by the Peale Museum in the Garrett Papers has, however, uncovered numerous communications to and from Stanford White, which clearly indicate his responsibility for the designs and various contracts. In addition, a good many of the hundreds of bills and estimates for construction and decoration bear the initials "S.W." It appears that he made trips to Baltimore and entered into frequent, and sometimes sharp correspondence with the Garretts over questions of expense, percentages for commission and slow payment of some of the bills. A Mr. Hoffman appears to have assisted him in such matters and also visited Baltimore as the firm's representative, remaining at one time for eleven weeks. A Mr. Martin also approved many bids and contracts.

Work on Robert Garrett's new house was begun in September, 1884. Prior to this, two of the older houses on the site were largely, if not entirely, demolished. The extent of this demolition is open to question, for the appearance and line of the rear brick walls of this part of the present building suggests that they survive from the previous structures. It may even be that parts of other walls were similarly incorporated in the new construction.

Be that as it may, the building designed by Stanford White took shape rapidly and almost immediately became the subject of controversy in Baltimore. Sides were taken as to whether this then modern style was appropriate to the character of Mount Vernon Place, and a next-door neighbor, Mr. Henry Janes, spurred on by his friend Enoch Pratt and other partisan critics of the new building, brought a bill of complaint to prevent its completion.

Besides objecting to the general style and scale of the new residence, Mr. Janes' principal contention was that the "monstrous vestibule" of the house--about 24 feet high, nearly 20 feet long, and projecting about 8 feet from the building line--violated city ordinances and would interfere with the flow of air and sunlight to his house, and also deprive him of his first floor view of the Washington Monument.

This case was acrimoniously debated, both in Court and throughout the city. The complaint was filed November 24, 1884, and the Circuit Court ruled in favor of Mr. Janes. It is somewhat difficult at this distance of time to understand the verdict, for the offending vestibule began 8 feet 7 inches from the Janes House, and except for some possible interruption of the view towards the monument, it could hardly be said to interfere with that building. An appeal was filed and the brilliant and satirical summing up by E. J. D. Cross, for Mr. Garrett, still makes interesting and entertaining reading. The Court of Appeals reversed the earlier verdict in 1885, ruling in favor of the Garretts and permitting continuation of the work.

During these proceedings a number of architects and art experts had been called for the Garretts. Great emphasis was laid on the contention that the house exemplified the best styles then prevailing in New York and parallels were drawn to the Astor residence and similar mansions. The plaintiff's witnesses, on the contrary, contended that New York fashions were out of place in conservative Baltimore. J. Rudolph Niernsee, then in some sense the dean of Baltimore architects and within a few weeks of his death, confounded these critics by testifying for Mr. Garrett. Niernsee stated that he had designed "most of the houses" on Mount Vernon Place and continued, "I think it would be the handsomest house on the square--the most ornamented--and I don't think it is any too massive according to the design." Janes vs. Garrett, defense summing up by E. J. D. Cross, 1885, p. 60, typescript in Garrett Papers, Maryland Historical Society.7

Further study of the arguments in this case would also throw light on some details of construction of the house if time permitted such research. For example, a Mr. Peat had the contract to prepare the stonework and build the front, including the portico. The estimated cost of this facade alone was over \$30,000 Janes vs. Garrett, defense summing up by E. J. D. Cross, 1885, pp. 60 and 100, typescript in Garrett Papers, Maryland Historical Society.7 Similarly, information is given on the original lay-out and function of some of the rooms which might otherwise be unknown, as when it is stated that part of Mr. Garrett's office extended under the porch or vestibule Janes vs. Garrett, defense summing up by E. J. D. Cross, 1885, p. 66, typescript in Garrett Papers, Maryland Historical Society.7 In another place mention is made of plans for "a sub-cellar and a sub-subcellar." Janes vs. Garrett, defense summing up by E. J. D. Cross, 1885, p. 55, typescript in Garrett Papers, Maryland Historical Society.7

Bad blood engendered by this controversy remained to mark the history of the house. Neighborly relations were never re-established between the Garretts and Janes and this bitterness led to later alterations in the house which will be discussed in the proper place. Also it may not be too fanciful to suppose that the disapproving attitude of many Baltimoreans towards the house, which persists today and may influence its ultimate fate, stems in part from this initial dislike of its style and later reaction against the exclusive and lavish manner of living adopted by its occupants. There has certainly been a tradition of disparaging this building in certain circles.

In any event work on the house continued swiftly despite the Janes suit. During 1884 and 1885 an immense number of bids for construction and decoration came under review, were approved and put in operation. A detailed consideration is outside the scope of this report, but even a brief summary of the salient items in the Garrett Papers will provide names of contractors and give some idea of the elaborate construction of the house. As much of the work was done by New York firms and craftsmen, these papers also afford a good example of the leading builders and interior decorators of a mansion of the period. William Ortwine appears to have been the principal contractor.

b. Materials and Subcontractors:

(1) Iron: A great deal of iron went into the construction of the building, all of it apparently supplied by the Bartlett, Hayward Co. of Baltimore. Many bills and estimates from that firm speak of girders, trusses, tie rods, beams, channels, lintels, gratings, ornamental iron work and plumbing, as well as the framework for the great central roofed conservatory. They also built the heating plant, including a system for heating the conservatory. (Subsequent changes in the heating plant indicate that for some time this was a principal problem in running the house.) A Bartlett, Hayward elevator is mentioned as early as 1885-86. In 1886, after some water pipes had burst, a letter from McKim, Mead and White, dated December 31st, states, "All the piping used in the house was of the best quality, whether of brass, lead, or iron, that could be purchased."

(2) Stone: Reference has already been made to the facade and portico which were built by William Peat of Baltimore. He was also probably responsible for other wall construction. Interior stone work was supplied by more than one firm.

A. L. Fouchère & Co., of New York, submitted a bill in December, 1886, for Sienna Marble Caps and Bases for the vestibule, and one Victorian and two Brown Wakefield panels for the floor of the vestibule. It also sent two whole and two half columns of yellow Numidia marble for the vestibule. An earlier bill, November 1885, listed an onyx bathroom, an onyx column in the conservatory, and a "dado of red Numidia" for the conservatory.

W. H. Jackson & Co., of New York, was concerned, among other things, with the hearths and fireplaces. Itemized are "carved Eschailon and California onyx marble facings" for the ball-room; Sienna marble facings in the parlor; yellow Numidia marble for the boudoir; and Acajon marble facings and a speckled brick hearth for the hall.

George Crawford supplied the "stone for shelves in wine cellar."

(3) Bricks and Paving: E. W. Hale was responsible for at least some of the brickwork. Burns, Russell & Co., submitted a bill for bricks in 1887. O. D. Person supplied enameled bricks. Filbert did the yard paving.

(4) Mosaics: J. Pasquali and C. Aeschliman, of New York, provided most of the extensive mosaic work "throughout the house." This included the conservatory, vestibule, bathrooms, and pantry. In 1887 reference is made by this company to "lifting and relaying the pavement at south end of conservatory." Also Herter Brothers, of New York, laid mosaics in Mrs. Garrett's bathroom, in addition to furnishing many other items.

(5) Woodwork: In 1885 P. Hanson Hiss & Co. submitted estimates for woodwork as follows; all were approved by a Mr. Martin of McKim, Mead & White.

- (a) Parlor--White mahogany (carved panels etc.)
  - (b) Reception Room--Pacific Island wood
  - (c) Mrs. Garrett's bedroom--Pine
  - (d) Mr. Garrett's bedroom--Oregon cedar
  - (e) Small room--Pine
  - (f) Second-story back bedroom--Oregon cedar
  - (g) Breakfast Room--Finished Spanish cedar with cherry floor
  - (h) Bathroom next to boudoir--Maple (changed by architects to "white mahogany")
- Some English oak was also to be used.

This firm also supplied the shutters and other items.

Joseph Cabus, of New York, made the doors, the "private stairs" and so forth.

H. J. Duveen, of New York, provided "old wood work."

Herter Brothers, of New York, laid the parquet flooring and supplied "a staircase, etc., in oak."

The Garrett Papers also contain a letter from James S. Ingle (the surname is not quite clear), 144 Fifth Avenue, New York, dated September 14, 1887, regarding decoration of the dining room, to consist of woodwork, tapestry and a "decorative fire place." As far as can be determined, this is the same scheme still in place and if so appears to have undergone fewer subsequent alterations than the rest of the building. This firm also undertook to make doors, a cabinet, stairs and newel posts.

(6) Glass: A number of companies provided glass for the house. H. C. Tiffany & Co. was one which figured prominently. We know, for instance, that Tiffany glass was used in the "vestibule, large hall windows and Dome skylight" (the last probably refers to the skylight over the main stairwell). Glass for the boudoir was made by Otto F. Falck Stained Glass Works, of New York. Also leaded glass was put in by P. F. McMahon of New York and S. Slack and Co. The latter's estimate, November 27, 1885, which is marked "Approved by Mr. White," specifies in part: "To designs for third story front...glass to be double thick French for inside and Venetian and antique in the borders to cost \$2.20 per square foot." Some stained glass for the house was also among the items supplied by Herter Brothers.

An account rendered by McKim, Mead & White, March 1, 1887, also includes an item of \$500 for "old glass."

(7) Roofs and Sheds: Built by John G. Hetzell & Son, Baltimore.

(8) Painting and Gilding of the Ballroom, main hall, parlor, etc. was done by Sarre, Le Pelley & Co., of New York.

(9) Papier Maché was used for the ceiling of the vestibule, made by Herter Brothers, of New York.

(10) Plaster Work was done by Sinclair Sons, of Baltimore.

(11) Hardware throughout the house was supplied by the Hopkins and Dickinson Manufacturing Co. Their estimate, "at special prices for each fixture," was about \$2,500, but the account rendered March 1, 1887, amounted to \$3,738.05.

(12) Wires and Bells (and "clocks") were installed by the Hahl Manufacturing Co., of Baltimore.

(13) Fibrine was supplied by C. R. Yandell & Co.

(14) Decorative Metal Work: John Williams, of New York, made bronze turtles, fishes, water snakes, etc., for the conservatory. There is also a mention of bronze gates for the vestibule and other bronze ornaments, but if made their maker is unknown. W. H. Jackson & Co. provided copper work and bronze frames for the conservatory.



(15) Art Work: The largest commission for art seems to have gone to Thomas W. Dewing. A letter from him to McKim, Mead & White, dated February 20, 1885, states: "I propose to paint the frieze of the Ball room...for the sum of \$3,400. The painting to be done in oils, on canvasses of the dimensions given, three sides to contain not less than six figures of children on each side, and the fireplace side not less than eight figures of children. I am to deliver the painted canvasses, ready to be attached to the permanent frames fitted for the spaces..in Baltimore."

We must assume this scheme was carried out as \$3,400 for Dewing was included in the account rendered by McKim, Mead & White, March 1, 1887. The ultimate fate of the frieze is unknown.

G. W. Maynard, another artist, painted murals for Mrs. Garrett's bathroom and decorated its ceiling, the estimated price being about \$1,000. In the account just mentioned, however, \$2,100 is listed as due to Maynard, so he may have executed other projects about the house. A letter from McKim, Mead & White to Mrs. Garrett, in 1886, remonstrated with the Garretts' slowness in paying bills and spoke in particularly urgent terms of this poor artist's need for quick remuneration.

The Endolithic Co. did "painted marble work" in Mrs. Garrett's bathroom.

(16) Fountains: Sisson and Sons supplied fountains, presumably the one in the vestibule and others in the conservatory.

(17) Lighting: Gas fixtures were installed by the Archer & Pancoast Manufacturing Co. and C. Y. Davidson, but right from the beginning electric light was under consideration. A letter from the Edison Company for isolated lighting, dated October 24, 1885, proposed alternative systems, one the erection of a power line from Mount Clare and the other an independent boiler for the house. A blue print of the proposed boiler accompanied the letter. Apparently the latter plan was adopted, for some years later an electrician was killed in an accident which seems to have involved such a system.

(18) Furnishings: Most of the furnishings were ordered through McKim, Mead & White, who were evidently in charge of this interior decorating. The Garrett Papers preserve bills for a vast amount of furniture, largely of French origin. Jules Allard Fils, of Paris, shipped much of this and their long itemized statements include a small number of items entered as "smuggled goods"--fabrics sent concealed in the seats of certain benches.

The American firm, A. H. Davenport, also supplied furniture, particularly for the bedrooms. E. Greey (sic) & Co.

and the Japanese Manufacturing and Trading Co. contributed oriental objects; Hiss & Co. supplied some furniture and silks; W. & J. Sloane provided carpets; and Muller furnished "tapestry hangings." Some items were also ordered from Cottier & Co.

In addition to all the firms mentioned in the foregoing summary, many other names appear in the account rendered by McKim, Mead & White, March 1, 1887. These also took part in building the mansion and further research would no doubt reveal the function of each.

## 2. Phase 2 - McKim, Mead and White - 1892:

In 1892 substantial alterations were decided upon, as evidenced by a large but confusing correspondence in the Garrett Papers. Many letters from Mrs. Garrett show the personal role she took in proposing architectural changes and embellishments which Stanford White was supposed to implement. The entrance hall (not the vestibule) bulked large in these new plans and this and the main staircase probably took on their present appearance at that time. Alteration of the hall windows seems also to have affected the facade of the house and there were alterations to the extent of \$15,000 in the ballroom and library.

Apparently part of the staircase arcade and the gallery surrounding the entrance hall date from 1892-93. The correspondence advances so many alternative plans for these matters that it is difficult to make out how much had been there originally and just what was changed or added. It is specific on some questions, such as a "new carved wainscot of English oak around the staircase wall" (to be made by Herter Brothers).

Mrs. Garrett had had trouble with smoke from the fireplace in the hall and her complaints seem to have resulted in a rebuilt chimney and possibly a new fireplace surround. Also considerable changes were made in the siting, size, and appearance of the entrance hall windows. Gemhardt did some work on these and the Tiffany windows were reworked in new dimensions.

Other minor alterations to the house included new "plastering on expanded wire," and Dennis & Co. were brought in as paper hangers.

Time has not permitted a fuller examination and account of this phase for the present report.

## 3. Phase 3 - John Russell Pope - 1905:

On April 2nd, 1902, the widowed Mrs. Garrett married Dr. Henry Barton Jacobs. Ten days later the Baltimore Sun for April 12th announced: "Mrs. Henry Barton Jacobs...has purchased from Mr. Robert A. Taylor his fine residence, 7 West Mount Vernon Place, adjoining her own... mansion. The price...secret...but about \$75,000." This was the

beginning of the last great extension of the house, designed by John Russell Pope in 1905.

The Taylor house, like its earlier neighbors, was largely, or entirely, demolished. The facade of the new extension was carefully matched to that of the older part. Reading from front to back the addition had on the basement floor a Smoking Room, toilets and a wide stairhall, a Supper Room (large as a ballroom) and the basement of the stage which was on the level above. The main floor had a Library, stairhall, and a Gallery with a stage and pipe organ. The second floor had "Dr. Jacob's Bed Room," a Trunk Room and Wardrobe Room, with the remaining space being the upper part of the great Gallery. On the third floor were several servants' rooms. The main floor entrance to this addition was through a door where the present fireplace is located in the Drawing Room. At that time the Drawing Room was a double parlor, with a dividing wall and two fireplaces located where the present two doors are.

The following drawings show the alterations for this addition. They are in the files of Eggers & Higgins, New York, successors to John Russell Pope.

- Sheet 101 "Alterations and Additions to House in Baltimore for Mrs. Henry Barton Jacobs," John Russell Pope, Architect, June 30, 1905, drawn by "D. McL."-- Basement and Cellar Plans.
- Sheet 102 same, Main and Second Floor Plans.
- Sheet 103 same, Alley Elevation, New Picture Gallery.
- Sheet 104 same, Cross Section.
- Sheet 106 same, Sections, New Picture Gallery.
- Sheet 107 same, West and South Elevations.
- Sheet 108(?) same, Longitudinal sections.
- Sheet unnumbered, with variant title, same date-- North Elevation of entire facade.

Records for this phase were not found in the Garrett Papers at the Maryland Historical Society, but some may exist, obscured by the great volume of these unsorted papers.

4. Phase 4 - John Russell Pope - 1909-13:

The Baltimore Sun, June 21, 1909, carried the following item: "Architect John Russell Pope, of New York, who designed the mansion on Mount Vernon Place of Mrs. Henry Barton Jacobs, has finished new plans for an addition to the present structure to be used as part of Mrs. Jacobs' magnificent art gallery. The new building will be a fire proof structure, 60 feet by 31 feet, and will be created on the spot now occupied by a stable building, which will be razed. The material used in the construction will be mostly concrete and marble... The basement floor of the addition will be used as servants' quarters and a storage room."

Although announced thus early, plans were not perfected until 1912-1913. The new picture gallery was erected across the rear of numbers 9 and 11 West Mount Vernon Place, connecting on the east with the "old" Gallery (or Ballroom-Theatre) and on the west with the rear of number 11. This had two floors conforming roughly to the newspaper summary. The basement floor contained three servants' or coachmans' rooms and some storage, a "covered court yard," and a "work room." The upper, or main floor, had an elaborate "New Picture Gallery," 60'9" long and 28'10" wide. Steel eye beams were used as joists, with brick bearing walls.

Two drawings for this addition are in the files of Eggers & Higgins, as follows:

Sheet 102 "New Picture Gallery for the House in Baltimore of Mrs. Henry Barton Jacobs," John Russell Pope, architect, April 26, 1912, revisions June 10, 1913, Basement Floor Plans.  
Sheet 103 same, First Floor Plan, with details.

5. Phase 5 - About 1916:

About 1915-1916 Mrs. Jacobs purchased number 13 West Mount Vernon Place, the Henry P. Janes house, and demolished most of the rear part of the building. The Baltimore Sun, June 28, 1941, stated, "No. 13 is only four rooms, the rear having been razed by previous owners for light and air."

Whether or not the desire for "light and air" was the sole motive is open to question. Reference has already been made to the suit instituted by Mr. Henry Janes in 1884 against Robert Garrett. The local legend, as recounted by Mr. Robert E. Lewis, partner in Wrenn, Lewis and Jencks, architects, is that the Janes family lost their money about 1915 and Mrs. Jacobs, the former Mrs. Garrett, exacted a kind of revenge by buying the house and demolishing most of it to light her staircase.

Be that as it may, this development allowed the installation of exterior windows for the main staircase and the erection of a kind of gallery-passageway which runs along this lot outside of the dining room and possibly served as a scullery or pantry. There are no drawings, and no direct information is available on this alteration.

About this time, perhaps, the old double parlor was converted into the present drawing room by removing the partition and two fireplaces and installing the present fireplace and the two large flanking doors into number 7. It is also probable that the room was redecorated as it now exists. Presumably John Russell Pope was the architect for these changes, which certainly seem typical of his designs.

Other lesser alterations were made from time to time. Mr. Lewis and others say that it is their impression that frequent redecoration was the rule.

6. Later Changes:

As already stated, the British Merchant Navy Club opened in the building in 1941 and installed a gymnasium, showers, etc. in the basement. The Boumi Templers made several alterations in the interior between 1941 and 1958. Dr. Jacobs' bedroom was paneled with mahogany plywood and "modernized" for the Chief Potentate's office. A counter was built across the entrance from the main hall to the small parlor leading to the dining room. To the rear of the dining room a bare, cell-like room was installed and the dumb waiter removed. The brocaded wall covering of the "new" picture gallery was removed and the wall painted. At some point the great central conservatory, which was surrounded by the house on all sides and according to old residents provided its most striking architectural feature, was dismantled and opened up as a court with terraces. A window with a Boumi design of camels etc. was placed in the vestibule.

Since its purchase by the city the house has been closed and is consequently deteriorating. In 1957 to 1960 it has again become a subject of controversy, proponents of expansion of the Walters Art Gallery arguing for its demolition and other elements defending it as a feature of Mount Vernon Place. Whatever its ultimate fate, its history affords an interesting example of the style, construction, and evolution of a mansion of the period.

C. Source Materials: Much light is thrown on the history of the Garretts, their way of life and the construction of the house, by a large collection of family papers now in the possession of the Maryland Historical Society. These papers, which fill 23 boxes, include numerous letters about the house (some from Stanford White), hundreds of bills from architects, merchants, furniture dealers, art dealers, etc., correspondence regarding servants, travel arrangements, repairs, entertainments, and a wide variety of other matters. Unfortunately these papers are not in order and their immense volume precluded a thorough study for the purposes of this account. Some gleanings, however, which concern certain aspects of the construction and alterations, have been quoted, and any references above to bills and letters will be found in the Garrett Papers unless otherwise stated. Further, but time-consuming, research would no doubt make possible a much more detailed narrative.

Apart from this collection of papers, little information is available on the original plans for the house. A letter from the current offices of McKim, Mead & White to the Peale Museum, dated April 15, 1960, states that "records and drawings of a Robert Garrett house in Baltimore listed in our files have all been discarded years ago." Some drawings and plans of later additions by John Russell Pope are preserved in New York in the files of Eggers & Higgins and have been listed above.

Prepared by Wilbur H. Hunter, Jr.  
Director, The Peale Museum  
Baltimore, Maryland  
August 1960

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement: This is the largest town house ever built, or ever likely to be built in Baltimore, and it is distinguished by expensive detail, Tiffany stained glass, and its baronial scale. The theatre and art gallery are unusual features, while the woodwork and staircase in the entrance hall are of striking quality.

The fabric is in fair condition, with some spalling of the exterior brownstone. Having gone through two years without heat, the interior paint and plaster is becoming shabby. It has been thoroughly examined by an architectural firm with a view to renovations for use by the Walters Art Gallery, and found in reasonably good condition.

B. Technical Description of Exterior: The house fully occupies the sites of numbers 7, 9, and 11 West Mount Vernon Place. A two-story passageway along the west wall partly occupies the back yard of number 13. The street facade faces north, and the building runs through to a mid-block alley.

The nature of the foundations is not known. All walls are brick, load bearing, except for the "new" Gallery, which is steel-and-concrete construction. The street facade is covered with brown freestone; floors and roof are reinforced with steel joists in some manner.

1. Facade: The street facade is the only one with architectural interest. It covers three building lots, or about 90 feet, and rises about 60 feet above grade. The main floor is elevated about four feet above grade. The first basement is partly above grade, and there is another basement below that. In front of numbers 9 and 7 is an areaway about eight feet wide, which gives light to basement windows. It has an iron grating about four feet below grade, and extends about eight feet further to give light to the sub-basement.

The front of number 7 is flat; that of number 9 swells outward in a shallow curved bay. A stairs of two short flights leads from in front of number 9 to the vestibule which occupies most of number 11. The vestibule is eight feet deep and about twenty feet wide and rises one story above the basement. Beyond the vestibule is a flight of stone steps down to a doorway in the basement level. This entrance is covered by a glass-and-iron canopy which extends out to the vestibule building line and as far as the party line westwards.

The areaway is guarded by a low stone wall topped with an ornamental iron fence. There is a simple stone railing for the steps leading up to the vestibule. Near the vestibule entrance on the street side is an ornamental bronze lantern, electrified. An ornamental cast-iron fence is along the party line at the basement entrance.

The facade is divided horizontally into a sub-basement story, a basement, partly above grade, and three stories above that. At the floor levels of the upper stories are molded string courses and the

wall is topped with a frieze and a dentiled and bracketed cornice. The roof of the vestibule is balustraded. Variegated marble pilasters are used in the first floor bay of number 7 and in the vestibule window. Above the vestibule are two large stone cartouches with marble panels and ornamental swags above them. On the west side of the vestibule is a large cartouche with the date "MDCCCLXXXIV" and much ornamentation around it.

Other walls, side and rear, are devoid of ornamentation, and show brick in common bond.

## 2. Openings:

a. Doors: Only the principal doorway into the vestibule is of architectural interest. Within a stone opening are double doors and a square fanlight. The doors are of wood, each with a large beveled plate glass light. The fanlight has a simple design of clear glass panes set in metal muntins. The hardware, concealed hinges, concealed lock, knob and escutcheon plates are of brass or bronze.

b. Windows: There are probably a hundred windows in the building, and they vary a great deal. The windows in the upper two stories at the front are fashioned in a decorative manner. The upper sash is filled with leaded Tiffany opalescent glass, the lower pane having a border of the same with a clear center. There were probably similar sash on the first floor. Frames are wooden throughout.

3. Roof: The front part of the roof is flat, metal covered. There is a skylight over the stairwell, a long skylight over the Theatre and over the Gallery. A number of chimneys rise from the roof.

C. Technical Description of Interiors: This house has three stories and two basements. The plan is very complex, and there are more than forty rooms plus closets and passageways. The house was constructed on the sites of three older houses and the lines of the old party walls (and perhaps even the walls themselves) were retained. This imposed a restriction on the plan, and it will be convenient to locate the various rooms with respect to the three original houses. It will not be possible to describe the interior in full detail, but only to point out the principal features.

The main entrance is through a vestibule into a large, square, two-story hall. A spiral staircase rises out of the hall. From the foot of the staircase a passageway runs back. Directly behind the staircase is the elevator, and behind that a servants' staircase. To the east of the hall is the small parlor, and at the end of this, the dining room. Behind the dining room is another small room, perhaps a serving pantry. Along the west side of the hallway, and running in the lot for number 13 is a three-story addition which serves on the first floor as a pantry, and below for stores, with perhaps a linen room on the third floor.

The vestibule has a marble and tessellated mosaic floor, with yellow marble walls. It is divided from the main hall beyond by two marble columns. Along most of the street side of the vestibule is a yellow marble bench. At the west end is a yellow marble pedestal fountain with a drip basin at floor level. The ceiling is compartmented and decorated in classical motifs. Two marble steps lead up into the main hall. Above the marble bench is a triple window.

The main hall is largely the creation of Stanford White. It rises a full two stories, with a balustrade gallery on the north, west and south sides. The balustrade is carried around the east wall as a decoration. Below the gallery the walls are wood paneled with delicate floral carving and fine detail. At the west side is a large fireplace, with a liner of red marble, and flanked by carved wooden settees. The overmantle is richly decorated.

The hall is divided from the stairway area by an arcade of wooden columns. Behind this the stairway rises in a remarkably handsome elliptical curve. The newel and balusters, richly carved, are rectangular in cross section, and the continuous soffit is paneled with wood. The outboard wall is also paneled.

The wooden gallery along the west and north walls is entered from a landing on the staircase which is several steps above the second floor level. Thus, one must go up several steps, then down several to the gallery floor. The gallery, or in this part, hall, along the south side is quite wide. The balusters of the gallery are screw-turned with a substantial wooden rail. The arcading is carried along this story at the south end, too.

Over the vestibule is a large square window, filled with leaded opalescent glass. In the center is a Renaissance cavalier figure in colored glass, and there are flanking similar figures. This was from the Tiffany workshop. On the first floor level, west of the vestibule is another leaded glass window. Identical windows are on the staircase. They are mainly of a light yellow opalescent glass with delicate floral motifs in color. The staircase is lighted from above by a skylight which shines through a dome-like window, which is decorated with colored glass and metal tracery. The center of this dome is open tracery to allow ventilation.

The ceiling of the main hall is coffered in wood, and suspended from it is a large wooden lantern fixture. The upper walls, above the gallery, are plastered.

The dining room is probably also an original design by Stanford White. It is remarkable for the quantity of carved decoration around the fireplace, and the side board, or serving table opposite. These pieces appear as Renaissance Baroque antiques, but a close examination shows anachronistic detail and they probably made especially for this room. Some of the carved heads may be portraits. There is a plainly carved



dado of wood, and the window and doors' trim matches. All woodwork is stained black. The ceiling is compartmented, and simulates Renaissance beam-work. Over the center of the room some of the compartments have metal grills and acted as ventilation ducts.

Each corner of this room is truncated. In the northwest corner is the silver vault, with an iron safe behind paneled wooden doors. The northeast corner is a matching doorway, with double sliding doors leading into the front small parlor. At the southwest corner is a large window frame closed by wooden lattice work. Part of the lattice is hinged as a door. Behind this is a pantry area, and the window was probably used as a pass-through in service. The southeast corner is identical except that this window does look out on the court. It has a lattice also. Along the east side are two very large windows reaching from the floor to nearly the ceiling, about eleven feet, and closed with one piece of glass. These look out on the conservatory area.

Continuing the description of the first building section, number 11, the basement floor is entered from a street door at the front. There is a small lobby at this point, and to the east a billiard room. A cross hall starts from here which goes through all three buildings. The remainder of the floor plan is very much like that above. The main staircase, the servants' staircase, and elevator all come down to this floor. Under the small parlor of the first floor is a similar room, which may be the servants' dining room. Under the dining room is the kitchen, with large iron ranges and sinks. Under the outboard passageway is a scullery. A passageway leads further back from here which connects with the rear of the Gallery; there are servants' rooms along this.

The second and third floors of this building are much like the basement, except for the main hall area, which is open. The cross hall on the second floor begins as part of the hall gallery, but it is necessary to go up three steps to the second floor level in the second building. Parallel to the cross hall, and separated from it by a partition with doors, is a second hall way. This was probably intended as a servants' passageway. There is a large bedroom over the main hall area on the third floor.

In the building on the site of number 9 the main floor has one large room, the Ballroom, about thirty feet wide and sixty deep. Ingress is provided by a large sliding door from the Main Hall, and another from the small parlor. There is another large sliding door into the Library in number 7, and one into the Marble Foyer in number 7. Between the latter doors is a fine marble mantelpiece with a large mirror over it. This room was part of the original house, but completely redecorated by Pope at a later date in a Louis XV style. It has a handsome paneled dado, and the upper walls are treated with panel moldings and plaster ornament. The wall panels are covered with a metallic cloth, probably originally silver but now very much faded and tarnished. A great crystal chandelier once hung from the middle of the ceiling. At the south end

there is a large double French door leading into the conservatory area, and this is flanked by very large windows which go from near the floor to near the ceiling. The front window area is treated to match by means of a partition wall which runs across the original shallow bay. The openings in the partition wall do not fit the fenestration in the bay.

On the basement floor in number 9 there is a large front room, which is still in the fashion of Stanford White, the cross hall, a short lengthwise hall which leads to the ground floor of the conservatory, and two smaller rooms flanking it. The second floor has one large room to the front, also in the White style, the double cross hall and two rooms to the rear. The second cross hall ends halfway in the corridor, and the easterly room is a large bathroom. The bathroom contains a ceramic tub, white marble wash basin with gold plated fixtures, a toilet, and is tiled from floor to near the ceiling with painted ceramic tiles. The third floor has one room at the front, a cross hall, and two rooms to the rear.

The building on the lot of number 7 is quite different from the others, and was designed by Pope as shown in the historical section of this report. At the front is the Library, handsomely decorated with wood paneling, a green marble mantelpiece, and built-in exhibition cupboards with glass fronts. The expensive quality of the decoration is seen in the photograph. Directly behind this, and through a large sliding door is a stair foyer. This is one of the most impressive features of the house. The floor is marble, and the walls elegantly plastered in classical designs. A marble stairway descends along the east side in a graceful curve; its railing is of wrought metal in a classical fashion. Large double sliding doors at the south end of the Foyer lead into the Theatre, which is certainly remarkable. The photographs show all the major features of the room, which is thirty feet wide and about seventy deep, with a fully equipped raised stage at the south end. The Theatre is lighted from above by three large skylight windows, and from the west by a very large window area looking out on the conservatory court. The trim is of wood with a faded metallic brocade covering the walls within the large panels. There are oil paintings in the cartouches on the upper part of the walls, and the ceiling decoration is partly gilded.

In the southwest corner of the Theatre is a large doorway with double sliding doors leading into the Gallery, which stretches across the back of the building lot, and closing the Conservatory court. The Gallery is quite large, and designed for the purpose of displaying the "Jacobs Collection" of paintings, which are now in a special wing of the Baltimore Museum of Art. At the east end of the Gallery appear to be two doorways, the one leading into the Theatre, and another identical one in the other corner of the room. The second is false, however, and its only purpose is decorative. A very large doorway is in the north wall, with double metal doors with great panes of plate glass and metal grill tracery. This leads to the conservatory court. The dado is variegated marble, as are the door frames. The corniced and coved ceiling is decorated with plaster.

Returning to number 7, on the basement floor there is one large room towards the front which has built-in glass-fronted cases and other table cases for the display of objets d'art. Under the marble foyer and partly under the Library is a hall. The basement cross hall leads into this, and along its west side is a large lavatory. The area at the foot of the marble stairs is treated elegantly, with marble floor and trim like the Foyer above. From this area you descend three steps into the Supper Room, which is almost the same size as the Theatre. This room has a marble floor, and wooden panel trim in the classical mode. The floor above is supported by four Ionic columns spaced through the middle area of the room. At the west side is a double marble staircase, with wrought metal railing which leads up to a large door into the conservatory court. Under the theatre stage is a workroom. Under the Gallery wing are several rooms and a garage area.

The court formed by the several buildings begins at the basement level. In the center, about eight feet from the building walls, is a one-story brick structure which holds the heating plant. The top of this was once enclosed with glass and metal as a conservatory, and access to it was by means of bridges from the Ballroom south door, the Theatre side door, and the Gallery north door. The superstructure is now gone, but some iron railings exist which may have been part of it. The conservatory was one of the great features of the house, remembered by many older people as a thrilling sight.

The sub-basement, only under the front part of the house, was not examined.

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