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Entrance Hall and Stairway
JABEZ WILDER COTTAGE—1690—HINGHAM, MASSACHUSETTS

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Entrance Hall and Staircase

Sarah Orne Jewett House—South Berwick, Maine

Built by John Haggins in 1774

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ENTRANCE HALLS and STAIRWAYS
ILLUSTRATED by EXAMPLES from MASSACHUSETTS
and CENTRAL NEW ENGLAND

Photographs by Arthur C. Haskell

The entrance hall was a refinement in living to which most of
the early emigrants to the New
World had been unaccustomed in
their own homeland. Those leaving
the south of England had previously
been living in survivals from medieval culture, principally
in the farmsteads and village cottages, of which
many picturesque examples have survived to the present
day. Their picturesqueness, however, did not
provide even the elemental comforts and conveniences
to which every individual believes himself entitled
today. Even the smaller Manor House plan did not
always provide any Hall, and when it did it took then
the form rather of a general living space than any area
intended only for circulation and privacy in connecting
the various residential elements of the family
menage. In Louis XIV's palace at Versailles, the further bedrooms could only be reached by passing through all those between.

In 1600 the mass of English architecture was of
Tudor or earlier date. It was to be a dozen or more
years before Inigo Jones returned from Italy, with his
1601 edition of Palladio crowded with his own marginal annotations; and a good many more years were
to elapse before the newer style of open plan was to
become familiar, even to the wealthier and more
sycophantic courtiers of Henry VIII and Elizabeth;
and more years still before it began to affect in the
slightest the types of common dwellings with which those who first settled the Massachusetts Bay Colony
were familiar. Along our southern coast, to be sure,
the plans and appearance of the larger houses began
much earlier to disclose that they were in some small
part expressive of the new fashions in the amenities of
living that were permeating the newer and better
dwellings of England, especially those of early Georgian date.

Neither did the English climate require much shelter
for these cottage dwellers, save from the rain; conse-
quently, the outer entrance door usually opened
directly into one end of the general living, eating, and
cooking room of the small cottage. It was this one
general room that the earliest homes in New England
first reproduced, with a large fireplace for cooking and
heating. A large scullery opening off this room and
another space to provide warm sleeping quarters for
the family were the first additions. The space under
the roof long remained an undivided attic for the
sleeping quarters of children or servants, almost to the
present century, and many examples are still to be
found in outer New England.

But the rigorous climate of the northern colonies
soon forced the settlers to adopt different details of
arrangement than they had found livable in the Tudor
dwellings of old England. So, to protect the occupants of the "Hall" or "Fire Room" from drafts when the entrance door was opened, this was removed behind the corner of the large fireplace (A, page 20), with an inner partition and door to make a "vesti-
bule," out of the other side of which a ladder or steep
winding stair—which otherwise might be placed in one
corner of the "Fire Room"—might rise to the low
attic story above. When the house was enlarged by
adding another room beyond the fireplace, as at B,
page 20 (or in the Haskell House, Volume XXV,
Number 1), we have the typical early "two-room"
house plan. A more fully developed Entry-Hall may
be seen at C (and on Page 68, Volume XIX, Number 5). The very restricted floor area of this Entry-
Hall was often later enlarged, generally in the early
years of the Nineteenth Century, by moving the front
door and Hall wall forward, outside the main wall of
the dwelling, as in the Judge Holten House, page 21
(and Volume XXIV, Number 5).

As the houses became more definitely two-story-and
attic structures, the Hall and stairway increased in
size and importance; a development that became even
more definite when the plan increased to four rooms
upon each floor. Then such arrangements as at D and
upon the second story level and so connect only with the principal front second story rooms. A fine example of this arrangement was in the Benjamin Hall, Jr., House, at Medford; one of the three Hall family houses existing since 1785, side by side, until the summer of 1938, when this particular building succumbed to commercial pressure and was unfortunately demolished! (Page 20)

That varied decorative treatments of this landing doorway connecting the front and rear halls were frequently found in Massachusetts, is indicated by the two other examples, both from Salem, that appear side by side on page 25. Of course, this is merely another expression of the graceful and impressive arched window motive, that often appears in the rear house wall, to open on the main staircase hall landing, as in the Jeremiah Lee Mansion, 1768, in Marblehead (pages 64 and 72, Volume XIX, Number 5), and elsewhere.

With the fully-developed two-room-deep long Entrance Hallway, G, page 20, a large archway

E, page 20 (and page 78, Volume XIX, Number 5) came into general use, but were soon superseded by the more spacious types F and G, page 20, and the decorative forms that they assume in the photographs on other pages in this issue. Among the earlier examples of plan D, is the Joseph Peaslee Hall at Rock Village, 1675 (page 78, Volume XIX, Number 5); from which simplicity an advance was shortly made to some of the more spacious and pretentious treatments shown in this issue.

The staircase now had usually two instead of the earlier three runs, and the first was made much the longer, in order to obtain headroom, usually for passage purposes to other parts of the house plan, under the cross landing or last run at the rear end of the open Hall. Among the most dignified of these presentations was the Entrance Hall with underarch, and main cross landing with its Palladian window-door opening at that level onto the rear staircase, which was the one that then continued to the third story, leaving the main staircase to end

Entrance Hall, Archway, and Staircase
COL. ISAAC ROYALL HOUSE—C.1733—MEDFORD

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SIDE VIEW OF ENTRANCE VESTIBULE
JUDGE SAMUEL HOLTEN HOUSE—1670—DANVERS, MASSACHUSETTS

ENTRANCE HALL—SHOWING CROSSBEAM AND STAIRCASE
TOBIAS LEAR HOUSE—c.1740—PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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crossing the Hall near the center of its length, and recessing the staircase within a further Hallway, makes its appearance. In its earliest form, it may be seen as a simple exposed structural girder, crossing the ceiling of the hall at this location, in the Tobias Lear House, c.1740, at Portsmouth, N. H. This is its simplest manifestation. In the region round about Portsmouth there are at least a dozen varied examples of the large Hall cross-archway, with a few others in Vassall, in 1746, to the earlier house, built before 1686, by John Vassall in Cambridge (page 68, Volume XXIII, Number 3), with its individual use of an outlined bracket form, in place of a capital, over a very flat wall pilaster from above which the elliptical arch springs; and the somewhat similar arrangement in the Entrance Hallway of the Col. Isaac Royall House, c.1733, at Medford, where the bracket is more elaborate and the pilaster is given a bolder projection.

Maine, in Massachusetts, and also in Rhode Island. Accompanying examples are the Jewett House, 1774, in South Berwick, Me.; the Bowers House, 1770, in Somerset; the Captain Gregory Purcell ("John Paul Jones") House, 1757-59, in Portsmouth, N. H.; and the Nickels-Sortwell House, 1807-8, in Wiscasset, Maine. Two other examples near Boston are the cross-Hall arch in the portion added by Maj. Henry A radically different and unusual plan is shown at H, page 20, from the Jabez Wilder Cottage, at Hingham, 1690. Here the staircase starts upward from just inside the entrance door and in the middle of the Hallway, with a flight which divides and rises at right and left against the receding face of the chimney, to end at the very doorways of the two rooms under its "rainbow" roof. Finally, at I, page 20, is the plan
Doorway to Rear Hall—First Landing

Assembly House—1783—Salem, Massachusetts

Joshua Ward House—c.1765—Salem, Massachusetts
This Staircase Dado - Arch & Finish shown was all torn out in May of 1934, in altering the House for Tenements. Staircase posts and pilasters opposite in Stair. Dado & Rail were Mahogany. Balusters also balance of finish and Dado painted white. Plaster walls Blue.
Entrance Hall and Staircase
Moffatt-Ladd House—1763—Portsmouth, New Hampshire

Hallway Looking Toward Front Entrance
Coleman-Hollister House—1796—Greenfield, Massachusetts

256 • Pencil Points for April, 1939
Semi-Circular Staircase in Recess off Entrance Hall
Coleman-Hollister House—1796—Greenfield, Massachusetts
Asher Benjamin, Architect

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View Along Entrance Hall Toward Rear Door
SQUIRE WILLIAM SEVER HOUSE—1760—KINGSTON, MASS.

Hall and Archway, Looking Toward Garden Door
MERRIMAN HOUSE—C.1820—BRISTOL, RHODE ISLAND
of a quite unusual corner Entrance Hall, as it appears in the Moffatt-Ladd House, 1763, at Portsmouth, N. H. The same plan is repeated, upon a somewhat smaller scale, in at least two other Portsmouth houses.

Despite the apparently elaborate layout of several of these Hall plans, all (with the possible exception of the one last named) nevertheless conform within a reasonably economical floor area, in relation to the space covered by the whole house. In the case of the

toward each other, to meet on a short landing near the center of the Hall's length, with a final short run of two or three steps at right angle, to the floor above.

Although this Monograph is given to the Entrance Hall, rather than the staircase; yet the two are so closely associated in early New England house plans, that it is not possible to picture one without the other. That much more might be made of the Hallway is proven by the Azor Orne and Nickels-Sortwell en-

Entrance Hall, Archway, and Staircase
CAPTAIN GREGORY PURCELL HOUSE—1757-59—PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Nickels-Sortwell Hall, the effect of Entrance Hallway, cross arch, and staircase are all secured within the one-room house depth, as appears more plainly, perhaps, by referring to other illustrations of this hall, in Volume XII, Number 6.

Finally, mention should be made of another arrangement of staircases, each starting from near the doors at front and back house walls, and running

tances; while in the Coleman-Hollister Hallway, no staircase appears until the center of the Hall is passed, when this charmingly delicate stairway comes into full view. With the exception of this example, and the stairway of the Nickels-Sortwell House, the elliptical or semi-circular stair plan—usually a later and more sophisticated development—is not presented in this issue.

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