

CHAPTER IV
THE CONSTRUCTION

In late December of the year 1802, George Read (II) wrote to his brother, John, in Philadelphia,

I have very nearly finished my new building which considering the magnitude of the undertaking is a very gratifying circumstance. 1

He was a little premature in his anticipation for the house was not actually completed until late the next year. Seven years of planning, coupled with stops and starts in the actual construction, resulted in a Georgian style town house, with Federal details made of the best materials available and finer than those of any other house in the vicinity.

As has been seen in Chapter I, the first indication of Read's intention to build was in an agreement between himself, William Armstrong, and William Aull.² Three months were to elapse between the purchase of the land and the beginning of any actual work.

One of the first problems confronting Read was the need of a place for unloading and storing the shipments of materials. Because most of the materials were to be imported in large quantities from outside areas, a wharf would be a good solution, since most deliveries would be made by water. It was a fairly common practice for private wharves meant for such purposes to be built along the New Castle waterfront. The survey of the town of New Castle, taken by Latrobe in 1804, shows several such structures, in addition to larger ones owned by some of the town merchants.³

Accordingly, Read built a wharf. Standing today opposite the house out in the River is a wharf which may or may not have been the one constructed for him. Whether it was Read's or not, it must be similar to the one he would have had built, for it is made almost entirely of stone, with timber supports and iron fittings. The foreman on the job was John Sturgis, who was paid for most of his work between July and September of 1797, although the remainder was not paid until 1799.⁴ John Vining, a blacksmith, was paid \$36.19 for the ironwork.⁵

The wharf was evidently an immediate necessity since stone for the house foundation had already been subscribed from a Chester, Pennsylvania stone cutter named William Lane. On June 13, Read noted in his accounts that he had spent \$7.00 on a trip to Chester to arrange for the purchase of stone to be used in the foundation.⁶ On the same day he had signed an agreement with Lane for one hundred perch of stone to be delivered to New Castle.⁷ About the same time he must have contracted "for white building stone" with Kepple Odenheimer, who also probably did business in the vicinity of Chester.⁸ Odenheimer was prompt with his delivery and he received a partial payment on July 19, while Lane did not receive his first payment until August 2.⁹

Neither Lane nor Odenheimer were to receive full payment in 1797. Throughout these years of construction, it was common for Read to pay his bills in bits and pieces, probably only as cash came to hand. His account books, kept for cash payments only, nearly always note whether an outlay was "on acco.^t," "in further part," "Per rec.^t," or "in full."¹⁰ Evidently his tradesmen did not mind, unless the bill was long overdue or unless

the money was needed badly, in which case they usually asked only for part payment.

The stone was not inexpensive. Odenheimer received full payment of \$190.67 in April, 1799, while Lane got a total of \$140.00, although his account is never marked paid in full.¹¹ Read's correspondence indicates that he at least considered buying some stone from James Traquair, a Philadelphia stonecutter, from whom he was later to get his window heads.¹² Traquair's estimate of sixty pounds, quoted to Read in a letter from his brother-in-law, was perhaps too high, for none of the foundation stone seems to have come from him.

Before he went to Chester, Read had hired a mason, Richard Grubb, to do the necessary work on the foundation. Grubb went to Chester with him, for the agreement with Lane was made in "the presence of Richard Grubb."¹³ Wherever Grubb lived, it was not in New Castle, for he, his son Richard Grubb, jr., and his other masons boarded at the house of William Dunn, to whom Read paid small fees.¹⁴ How long it took to construct the foundations is not known. The only information available from manuscript sources shows that it took nine days for the cellar to be dug. Read paid varying amounts of money, 4/- to 4/3 per day, to twelve laborers from September 4, when rum was first purchased for the workmen, through September 13.¹⁵ Proof of the completion of the cellar on September 14 is Richard Grubb's purchase of "1 Gallon of rum ... on laying corner Stone of G. Read's build."¹⁶

Aside from purchasing the foundation stone and hiring the masons, the first two months were spent in designing plans for the house, and looking for a master carpenter, who would make arrangements for and oversee

a large amount of the construction. The plans indicate that Read wanted to build a house of considerable size, necessitating the importation of a workman from a larger town like Philadelphia, where skilled carpenters were more apt to reside. Matthew Pearce, who had already been of considerable help in planning the floor plan, and who lived in Philadelphia, was more than willing to lend all the assistance he could. By mid-August he wrote that he had been able to locate

... a man that I think would undertake this building for George and probably he cannot get one more worthy of the trust from what I hear of him. ¹⁷

Presumably that carpenter, unnamed in the letter, was Peter Crouding who, by the middle of September had already completed some carpentry work.¹⁸

Peter Crouding is a man of mystery in the carpentry circles of Philadelphia.¹⁹ He was not a member of the Carpenters Company, yet he was listed as a house carpenter in various City Directories of the period. The first listing of him was 1798, when he lived at 159 Arch Street, where he resided until his death in 1809.²⁰ From about 1800, he owned and operated a dry goods shop on Cherry Alley, the contents of which were listed in his inventory taken in 1810, along with numerous wood-working tools.²¹ Presumably this shop supplemented an insufficient income.²²

Crouding was not occupied with any other carpentry work when Read hired him, and he was evidently anxious to please. By mid-September, he had made the cellar window sills, talked to people about the bricks for the front of the house, and had been visiting the sawmills in the vicinity to try to find out the costs of lumber.²³

It was desirable to purchase the lumber at the best possible price, and Crouding was forced to make several trips to saw mills. He reported that in spite of the large amount wanted, the millers around Philadelphia would not lower their price to anything less than twenty dollars per thousand.²⁴ In spite of the expense, around the first of November, Crouding purchased boards to be used for the window sashes and frames.²⁵ In December, he needed money to pay for the materials he had gathered, and \$164.00 was forwarded to him through William Read.²⁶

Two weeks elapsed between the time when Crouding requested some form of payment and December 11 when he received the money. This evidently did not satisfy his needs, and more money was required. On December 21, Matthew Pearce wrote

Your carpenter has been with us frequently, and wishes us to let him have some money, he says he has advanced upwards of \$100 for you ...²⁷

Crouding's voice was added to Pearce's as he pleaded with Read to give him

what money he [Pearce] thinks sufficient to carry on your work as him or Mrs. Pearce can see how the work goes on. 28

At the end of December, Crouding wrote again, giving a fuller explanation of the situation:

the moneys I wrote for his for myself [not for the lumber] I have four hands employed these eight weeks that I allow five dollars per week Each hand - that sum will be necessary and to continue till your sash frames & shutters is finished ... 29

Crouding's largest expenses were his trips to New Castle to see Read and to the sawmills.³⁰ The final solution to the problem of finding cheaper lumber of

good quality, was solved when a Sussex County mill owner agreed to furnish the boards at a price of fifteen pounds per each thousand feet of one and one-quarter inch boards and ten pounds for each thousand feet of one-inch boards.³¹ After much searching, Crouding had located John Tunnell, the Captain of a shallop, a shallow draft boat commonly used on the Delaware River for freight transportation, who was to purchase the boards and deliver them at New Castle.³² His supplier was James Clayton, a saw mill owner near Dagsborough, who assured Read sometime during November of 1797,

I will furnish you with such [lumber] as never before came to New Castle nor will ever come in One Vessel after it. 33

Read and Crouding were satisfied with the descriptions of the lumber to be furnished. Read wrote Clayton to that effect, stipulating that the order had to be delivered to his wharf as soon as shipping began on the River in the following Spring, since it was necessary that his building be completed by the fall of 1798.³⁴

These dealings between Clayton and Read represent an amiable contract. During the winter or early Spring, however, both parties wrote disagreeable letters expressing each one's dissatisfaction with the other. On May 13, Clayton finally wrote to Read

Have your Warf ready to receive the Boards and likewise your Money to pay for them at the delivery least they should seak another Market at your expense. I donte feal my self at all disposed to trouble you with a securyty for the delivery of Boards which to accomodate you I have kept in my yard three months longer than agreements. 35

Knowledge of the events leading up to this outburst have been left in the past. By early Spring of 1798, Read purchased a house at the other end of the Strand and

began to realize what a large and costly project he had undertaken. Apparently he wanted to stop the construction for Crouding, after informing his employer of his progress, added, in a tantilizing sentence,

but to relinquish going on with your building will be against you and som others as there is so great, part of the worke prepared for your House 36

No letters from Read are extant to explain the cause or effect of that sentence. Whether or not Read had actually written Clayton about cancelling their agreement as he probably wrote to Crouding, Clayton considered that Read had maligned him, for he wrote,

I cannot help expressing my regret that I have had anything to do with you in this business as for your fathers sake I shall be sorry to find that instead of a Gentleman you are a trifling insignificant Puppy. 37

Read's reply to Clayton was snubbing. He stated that Clayton had been dishonest in his dealings, and added that no matter what action might be taken, he was prepared for his own defense.³⁸

Whatever differences there were between the two men, they were apparently forgotten after Read paid Clayton's bill of \$411.67 on June 4.³⁹ On the same day John Aull received \$3.87 for inspecting the boards to assure that they were of the length, width and quality ordered.⁴⁰

Other purchases of lumber, scantling, to be specific, were made that Spring from Philadelphia suppliers, Robert and Dell Pennell, who were not paid for this delivery until December of 1799.⁴¹ The Pennell's lumber was found imperfect, with much of it being other than white oak, and wrong lengths. Read noted that

he cou^d not say he wo^d take y^e scantling not
being cut accord^g to his directions. 42

Since payment is recorded, the wood must have been re-
turned to the lumber yard and a new and more satisfactory
order supplied.

While negotiations for the lumber were going
on, some of the decorative items were being ordered.
As early as November of 1797, the design for the window
heads on the front of the house was being discussed.
Crouding recommended stone (marble) for the material,
but some objections, probably concerning the expense,
were raised for Crouding sent Read "2 patrens of window
heads the one with stone kee and brick arch the other
all Stone ... ⁴³ Illustration 21 shows a drawing for
a "Brick arch and stone Kee Ether plane or ornamented."⁴⁴
This pattern was rejected by Read.

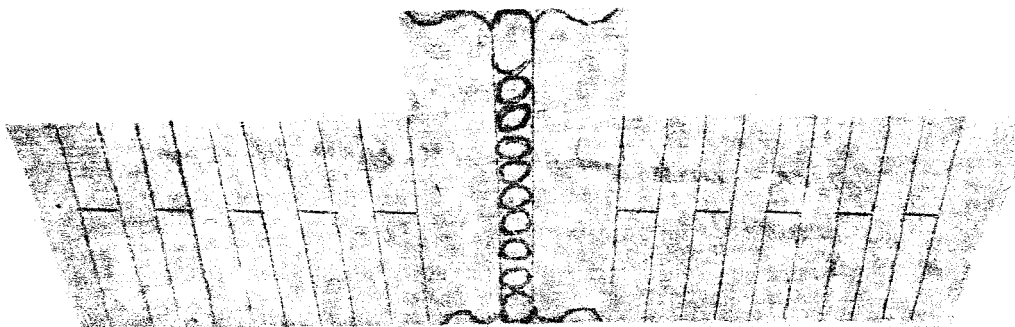


Illustration 21. Pattern for window head, drawn by
Peter Crouding, December 1, 1797,
The Richard S. Rodney Collection,
Historical Society of Delaware.

After receiving the patterns, Read wrote to Matthew Pearce, asking him to inform Crouding that he wanted the same pattern as Pearce had on his house located at 260 Arch Street.⁴⁵ Read then returned Crouding's drawing of the chosen pattern, and the order was placed with James Traquair, a Philadelphia stonecutter.⁴⁶ (The pattern chosen is shown in Illustration 4.) Crouding reported that Traquair had made excellent progress by the middle of March, and the work was apparently finished early in June, for Traquair's bill was sent to New Castle on June 19, 1798.⁴⁷ Surprisingly, however, the finished stonework remained in Philadelphia until June of 1799, when Crouding wrote to Read that he had sent it down on a packet ship.⁴⁸ Traquair had been storing it for a year and by this time was so anxious to get rid of the pieces that he was willing to make no charge either for their storage or for moving them.⁴⁹ By this time Traquair's patience evidently had been put to the test for he had not received payment for his work, although Read reminded him that his brother William was authorized to pay any outstanding sums for the stonework.⁵⁰

The bill for the stonework (Appendix B) is itemized. Six pounds apiece were the prices for the first floor window frames, and forty-five shillings for each lintel. The plain heads for the cellar windows cost 4/9 per foot of marble. Remaining charges were for window sills and key stones for the two Palladian or "Venetian" windows, one on the front and one on the side, a mantelshelf for the kitchen fireplace, moldings for the cellar door on the north side, and other materials needed for the windows and cellar doors.

At the same time that the stone was being cut

for the cellar windows, a blacksmith was employed to forge the bars which protect the sash from traffic on the street, and also give some measure of protection from petty thieves. Matthew Pearce commissioned that ironwork, for, as he wrote to Read,

I have agreed with a Man here for your iron work which will be much better in its execution and cheaper than you can get it made in New Castle.⁵¹

During the winter of 1798, Read was completing details for the exterior of the house. Any work to be incorporated outside had to be finished before the brick work was begun. The facade of the house was to be ornamented by an iron railing over the front door. (See Illustration 7). Matthew Pearce wrote on February 10,

I wish you here [in Philadelphia] to determine the Pattern of your Railing over the front door, in this, Taste differs so much that I wish you to execute your own; the Smith is waiting for directions respecting it - it must be done before the brickwork commences as it must be worked in with it. 52

In the same letter, Pearce urges Read to visit Philadelphia so the arrangements could be made with brick-makers. He did not need to hurry, however, for he was assured later that "bricks can be had and in time."⁵³ In April, Crouding wrote that the price for bricks was \$6.50 per thousand, and that he did not foresee any chance of it being reduced.⁵⁴ That letter contains the last mention of bricks or masonry until the Spring of 1800.

Indeed during the latter part of 1798 and 1799, Read apparently did nothing further about building his house. He had bought another large house at the other end of the Strand. This may explain, at least in part, his inability to pay for or his lack of desire to con-

tinue any construction. Whatever happened, it is certain that Read was little concerned with his house during those eighteen months. The materials in Philadelphia, the sash and frames already glazed and primed, the stone which Traquair had cut, and undoubtedly the iron fittings for the windows, as well as the balcony, were stored in that large upriver city in expectation of their being transported to New Castle.⁵⁵ By May, 1799, Traquair felt that he could no longer be responsible for the stone, and, in July 1799, the glazier needed the space that Read's sashes were taking up.⁵⁶ Crouding was to arrange for their transportation.⁵⁷ In addition to the neglect of those things, Read's accounts for 1799 show payments only for materials already received and labor already supplied. (See Appendix A).

Read's indecision seems to have carried over into 1800, for, on March 20, Crouding wrote to him,

I expected you would have known upon a certainty whether you would go on with your building this incuing Season or not Before this date.⁵⁸

Read continued a half-hearted interest in the construction, and made inquiries about the prices of bricks. Crouding's pursuit of this question convinced him that bricks were less expensive than stone, and he advised Read to that effect.⁵⁹ He had already assured Read that even though "money was scarce and wood plenty", a brick house would still be cheaper.⁶⁰

All of Crouding's persuasions were to no avail for Read did nothing until 1801, when he contracted with Francis Hopkins to transport from Philadelphia to New Castle 250,000 bricks, already ordered from Jeremiah Hornketh.⁶¹ By this time Read was becoming anxious about his house and importuned Hopkins

not [to] disappoint me in [picking up the bricks] as it is all important to me and I rely on your exertion. 62

Another contract also for transporting bricks was signed between John Byrnes and Read on May 16, 1801.⁶³

In the same year, a bricklayer from Wilmington agreed to build the "Brick dwelling house back buildings & Outhouses" on the partly finished foundations of George Read (II)'s lot in New Castle. (See Appendix C) for five hundred dollars, plus \$2.50 for each thousand bricks laid. The bricks were to be laid "in the best manners according to the mode fashion and Stile of ... the best buildings in the City of Philadelphia." Once this contract was arranged, work on the house began again in earnest.

Decisions had to be made before work could be begun inside the house. Very little is known about the interior carpentry work, except for the visual results. Whether Crouding actually had men carve the cornices, chair rails, and other woodwork, or whether he bought ready-carved strips and cut them to size, is not documented. Since no correspondence exists between Read and Crouding during this period, it seems plausible that the majority of the work was done in New Castle, and not in Philadelphia. Peter Crouding is known to have been at the house site in May of 1801, for he advertised at that time for stolen tools taken from "the new Building of George Read."⁶⁴

By late summer, Crouding must have made progress on the construction for on August 20, John Johnston, a plasterer, advertised himself to Read

in respect of the plaistering ur enny Stucco work that you maye Choose to have Don. 65

No further mention of plastering occurs in the correspondence until 1802, when William Read wrote to his brother that one Meredith had been persuaded to undertake it.⁶⁶ The architect Latrobe acquainted with the New Castle Reads was one of Meredith's references; Latrobe stated that the plasterer understood "plain work well."⁶⁷ Meredith's name does not reappear in any of the house records, although a man named William Thackera, jr., called a "plaisterer", requested payment from Read in 1803.⁶⁸ An interesting sidelight of the plasterwork is that Latrobe offered to furnish patterns for the Cornices.⁶⁹ Unfortunately, except for that brief mention, there are no records of his ever having done so.

Mahogany doors were one of the things Read most desired. As early as 1797, Crouding had been looking for a cheap supply of that wood.⁷⁰ By 1802, the price of mahogany was quite low, and it was even possible to buy preframed doors in varying dimensions.⁷¹ The locks on the doors were to be plated, and they posed a considerable problem. Imported mortise locks, which had been furnished for the doors, were to have their handles plated by a Philadelphia workman. The man to whom the locks were taken had difficulty and, as John Read wrote,

The locks occasion much trouble ... I had an attempt made to plate the knobs to the imported locks, but being hollow the force required to fix the plating dented them. 72

Three months later, all attempts to plate the locks had continued to fail, and the plater said he could not do that task.⁷³ Finally the decision was made to order imported locks from England, since the other locks were no longer presentable.⁷⁴ English locks, however, would not be ordered for several months. Read wanted hardware for the first floor doors, and asked John to look around

Philadelphia for sufficient locks of the right type and size.⁷⁵ While the hardware on the first floor is silver, that used on the second floor is brass. It is probable that, needing locks only for the five interior doors downstairs, that he was able to purchase the ones from Miss Clifford's, which his brother was to inspect.⁷⁶

Around the same time arrangements were made for the mantel decoration. The prevailing fashion in mantels of houses of the early Federal period in Philadelphia was use of delicate figures and floral designs, either carved in wood, or made of plaster and applied to a wood mantel. In 1799, Robert Wellford began manufacturing these plaster ornaments.⁷⁷ One of his early advertisements, dated April 6, 1801 (Illustration 22), which Read possessed, presented a short history of "Composition Ornament" making:

A cheap substitute for wood carving has long been desirable ... and various were the attempts to answer the purpose, the last and most successful is usually termed Composition Ornaments. ... This discovery was rudely conducted for some time, owing to Carvers declining every connection with it, till, from its low price, it encroached so much upon their employment, that several embarked in this work - and by their superior talents greatly improved it.

Wellford may have been one of those talented workmen, for he said in the same advertisement that he had been

brought up in the art of Carving and Composition Ornament making in all its branches, and practiced in designing and cutting off reversed Moulds, etc.

This advertisement gives some of the reasons why "liberal minds of refined taste" would want to embellish their buildings with his work. He wrote that

[the] cement of solid and tenacious materials, receives a fine relieve ... and becomes hard

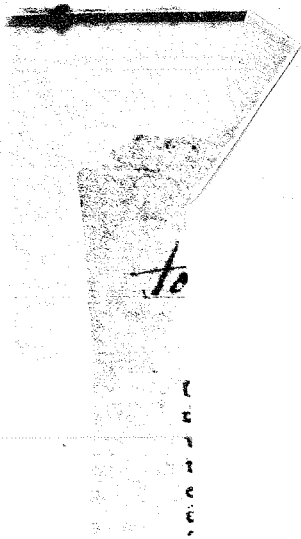


Illustration 22. Advertisement, Robert Wellford, April 6, 1801, Richard S. Rodney Collection, Historical Society of Delaware.

1801

17-99

14-99

TO THE PUBLIC. *Publca*

FROM the remotest ages of antiquity, Carving hath been esteemed an essential decoration to the works of magnificence; with civilization and knowledge, dawned this liberal art; As they gradually reached perfection it arose to meridian splendor, which the beautiful vestiges of Temples and Statues, do evince, and will long perpetuate the just celebrity of Greek and Roman artists.

In the modern buildings of this country are specimens of admirable skill which prove the rising merit of American artists.

A cheap substitute for wood carving has long been desirable for some situations, particularly enriched mouldings, &c. and various were the attempts to answer the purpose, the last and most successful is usually termed Composition Ornaments. It is a cement of solid and tenacious materials, which, when properly incorporated and pressed into moulds, receives a fine relieve; in the drying it becomes hard as stone, strong, and durable, so as to answer most effectually the general purpose of Wood Carving, and not so liable to chip.—This discovery was rudely conducted for some time, owing to Carvers declining every connection with it, till, from its low price, it encroached so much upon their employment, that several embarked in this work, and by their superior talents greatly improved it.

THE Subscriber being brought up in the art of Carving and Composition Ornament making in all its branches, and practiced in designing and cutting off reversed Moulds, &c. he has been induced to tender his services to the public in this line. His hope of success is founded on the execution of the origin of his Patterns: The great encouragement with which he has already been favoured with, will call forth the utmost of his exertions to improve the art to greater perfection.

AND he trusts there will be found little difference in expence, and his only

contention will be for superiority of workmanship.

THE invention of Composition Ornaments offers a good embellishment at a moderate price, it resembles in some degree the art of printing and engraving; its utility must therefore be obvious to many, and it is hoped will long receive due patronage from such liberal minds of refined taste as can best discern any efforts of improvement, to merit which shall be the assiduous endeavour of,

Their obedient servant,
ROBERT WELLFORD.

APRIL 6th, 1801.

N. B. THE aforesaid factory is now carried on in an extensive line, at No. 42, *South 3^d St* ~~Chestnut near Second Street~~, Philadelphia, where his friends may be amply supplied with ornaments to suit almost any fancy, which he presumes will encourage them to call at the said factory.

ORDERS from any part of the Continent punctually attended to, executed with elegance and dispatch, and a generous allowance made to wholesale purchasers, with printed directions for fixing the composition, gratis.

CERTIFICATE.

WE, the Subscribers, house carpenters, hereby certify. That we have, divers times, made use of Composition Ornaments manufactured at this manufactory, and are of opinion they are equal in quality to any imported.

WILLIAM HAMILTON, Kintzing Prichett, Alexander Steel, George Forebaugh, Edward Garrigue, Daniel Knight, Matthew Armour, John Owens, Robert Allison, John Smith, Benjamin Woolston, Philip Justice, William Krider, William Linnard, Thomas Castairs, Jacob Lybrand, Worrel & Summers, Thomas Smith, Jacob Wodges, Thomas Kingston, Theodorus Housholder, Clement Garrison, John Munday, John Alexander, Wm. R. Prichett, ship-joiner, &c.

Mac

R
South 3^d St
2 door below
Chestnut

as stone, strong, and durable, so as to answer most effectually the general purpose of Wood Carving, and not so liable to chip.

Furthermore, Wellford's patterns were original and offered "a good embellishment at a moderate price." Wellford certainly did not plan to limit his business to Philadelphia, but aimed at wholesalers in other areas of the country, to whom he would give a discount and free directions for the ornaments' application.

A second advertisement for "Robert Wellford's American Manufactory" (Illustration 23), dating from approximately 1801, shows a mantel, with applied ornaments on its jambs. On this handbill, Wellford elaborated, not on the composition and history of the ornaments, but on the "variety of modern and original Patterns for decorating" interior and exterior architectural woodwork. At the bottom of the sheet, like that of the first handbill, are names of house and ship carpenters, who attest to the excellence of Wellford's output, being of the opinion that they "are equal in quality to any imported."

Whoever sent these two advertisements to Read, he was apparently satisfied, for he had ordered sets of mantle ornaments from Wellford by August of 1803. On August 6, Read's brother wrote that Wellford could not complete the ornaments without exact sizes of the "tablets -- side friezes -- & Truss." Read had already been sent drawings of the ornaments, which his brother had chosen for him, although, if he did not like them, others could be obtained.⁷⁸

No time was lost in putting up the ornaments, for Wellford's bill was sent to Read on August 23. (See Appendix D). The bill listed seven tablets with

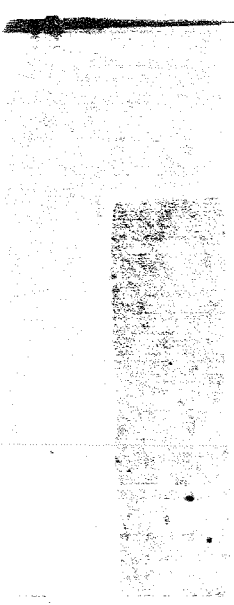


Illustration 23. Advertisement, "Robert Wellford's American Manufactory of Composition Ornaments & 'c.", Richard S. Rodney Collection, Historical Society of Delaware.

ROBERT WELLFORD'S
 AMERICAN MANUFACTORY
 OF
 Composition Ornament, &c.

NO. 42, South Third Street, 24th below Chesnut Street,
 PHILADELPHIA.

Containing a variety of modern and original Patterns for decorating <i>Room, Bed, and Window</i> <i>Cornices & Friezes,</i> <i>Architraves,</i> <i>Pilasters,</i> <i>Shutters,</i> <i>Panel Bases,</i> <i>Subbase & Cornice,</i> <i>Mouldings,</i> <i>Staircases,</i>	<i>Ionic, Corinthian, & Com- posite Columns,</i> <i>Pilaster Capitals,</i> <i>Keystones,</i> <i>Trusses,</i> <i>Oval & Round Pateras,</i> <i>Stove Patterns,</i> <i>Strap leaves, Beads, &c.</i> <i>suitable for Guilders.</i>
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And many other Ornaments suitable for inside or outside work of
 public or private buildings, answering effectually, the
 general intention of wood-carving.

ROBERT WELLFORD—*informs his friends, that he has made a large addition to his moulds and designs having been brought up in the art of Carving and Composition Ornament making, in all its branches, and practised in designing and cutting of reversed moulds, &c. He hopes he will have it in his power to supply any demands that may be made, in ornaments of real good quality and neatly finished, and which he is determined to dispose of at reduced prices. Ships Cabins, and old mantles elegantly decorated, and ornaments fixed on stove patterns to suit the fancy. Orders from any part of the continent punctually attended to, executed with elegance and dispatch, and a generous allowance made to wholesale purchasers, with printed directions for fixing the composition, gratis.*

CERTIFICATE.

WE the subscribers, house carpenters, hereby certify, That we have, divers times, made use of Composition Ornaments manufactured at this manufactory, and are of opinion that they are equal in quality to any imported.

Wm. Hamilton, Kinzing Pritchett, Alexander Steele, G. Foxebaugh, Edward Garrigue, Daniel Knight, Mathew Armour, John Owens, Robert Allison, John Smith, Ben. Woolston, Philip Justice, Wm. Krider, Wm. Linnard, Thos. Castairs, Jacob Lybrand, Worrel & Summers, T. Smith, Jacob Woodger, T. Kingston, Theodorus Householder, Clement Garrison, Jn. Munday, Jn. Alexander, W. R. Pritchett, ship-joiner, &c.

M. LAUGHLIN, PRINTER.

other ornaments for six mantels. One of the listed tablets was never supplied, and of the six that were installed, only two remain. 79

Using Wellford's terminology, the ornaments on the two remaining mantels can be identified. In the front room downstairs on the south side, the tablet (Illustration 24) represents "The triumph of Mars returning from Battle" and the other ornaments are "bold festoons of flowers with fruit baskets" (Illustration 25) on the friezes and a pair of "Music" (Illustration 26) and "Contemplation" figures on the trusses. The mantel in the adjoining room has a central scene of "Diana giving Command to her hounds" (Illustration 27), and classically draped figures on the trusses (Illustration 28); the "festoons of oak leaves with acorns, etc." which were probably on this mantel originally, no longer exist. It is difficult to determine the arrangement of the ornaments on other mantels, although the "Tablet of an offering of the temple of fame to Study" with the "heads of Milton and Shakespeare on pedestals" would have been a fitting subject in Read's office. The other three sets of ornaments were undoubtedly placed on the mantels in the large second floor rooms, although no trace of them remains.

The total bill came to \$54.87 or £ 20/11/6. Three pounds, ten shillings and four pence were the charges for the labor, and one pound, seventeen shillings and ten pence was the cost of travel between New Castle and Philadelphia. The tablets each cost approximately one pound, while the charges for the friezes and truss ornaments varied. Read, writing to Wellford

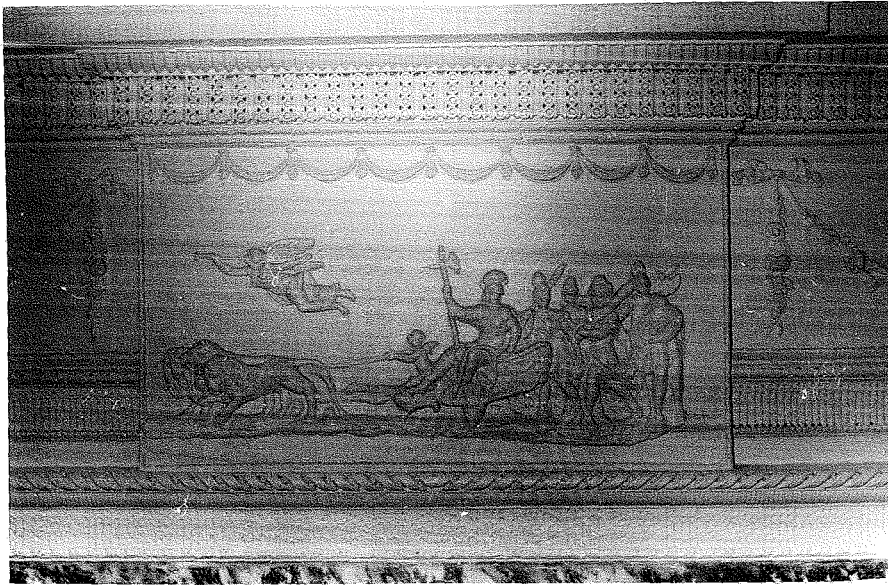


Illustration 24. Photograph of tablet, "The Triumph of Mars returning from Battle," central ornament on mantel, front room, south side, first floor, The George Read (II) House.

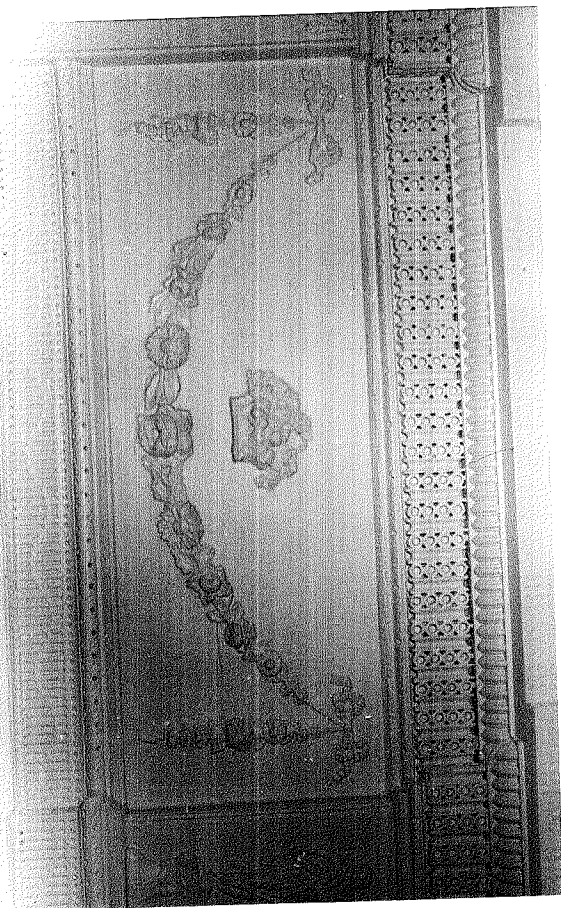


Illustration 25. Photograph of frieze ornament on mantel, front room, south side, first floor, The George Read (II) House.

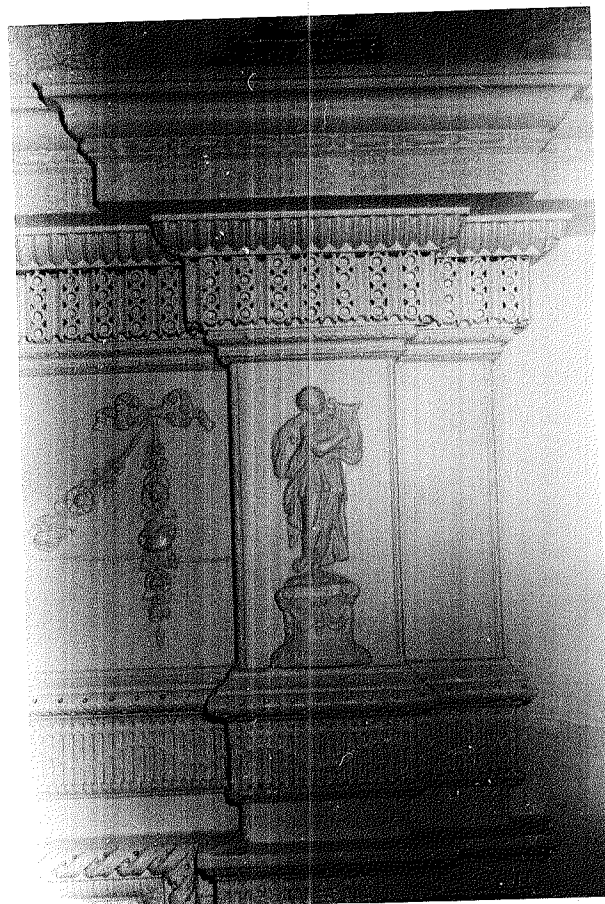


Illustration 26. Photograph of truss ornament on mantel, front room, south side, first floor, The George Read (II) House.



Illustration 27. Photograph of tablet,
"Diana giving Command to
her Hounds," central orn-
ament on mantel, back room,
south side, first floor,
The George Read (II) House.

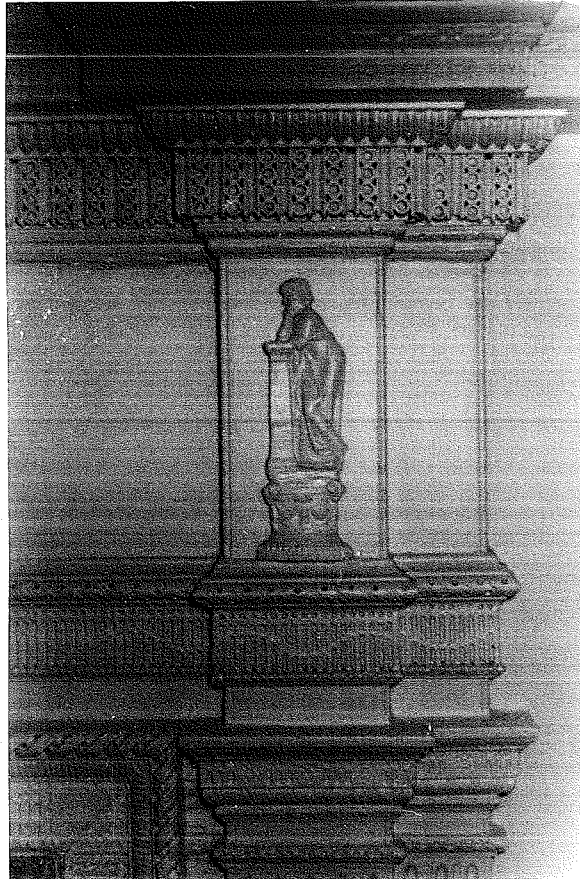


Illustration 28. Photograph of truss ornament, on mantel, back room, south side, first floor, The George Read (II) House.

in December of 1803, was irritated by the size of the bill. He complained,

of all the Bills I have had rendered to me in the course of my building, none have made so strong an impression on my mind of its extravagance ... 80

He asked his brother John if the charges were higher than usual.⁸¹ Apparently the bill was not overpriced, for, on February 15, 1804, Robert Wellford was paid \$50.00, the amount of the original bill, minus the tablet not supplied.⁸²

The last chapter of the construction concerns the payment of Peter Crouding. He had had difficulty earlier in obtaining payments from Read, and, at one point, had begun a law suit against him, which was apparently never tried.⁸³ In 1804, Crouding received at least one installment of five hundred dollars.⁸⁴ He had not been fully paid by 1805, when one of his workmen collected money due him for services rendered.⁸⁵ Peter Crouding received at least one hundred dollars during the same year. Whether he ever was paid more than that, or how much he received in total payment for his work in New Castle cannot be ascertained.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER IV

¹Letter, George Read (II) to John Read, jr., December 26, 1802, RFP, LC, Box 1, No. 162.

²Agreement, William Armstrong, William Aull, and George Read (II), March 27, 1797, New Castle County Deed Book, R-2, pp. 157-161, Delaware State Archives, Dover, Del.

³Benjamin Henry Latrobe, Survey of the Town of New Castle, 1804, Delaware State Archives, Dover, Del.

⁴Account Book 1797-1799, George Read (II), Entries for July 29, August 2, 5, 17, 18, 26, September 2, 1797, September 3, 1799, RSR, HSD.

⁵Ibid., Entries for August 17, November 14, 1797, April 30, 1798.

⁶Ibid., Entry for June 13, 1797.

⁷Agreement, William Lane and George Read (II), June 13, 1797, RSR, HSD.

⁸Account Book 1797-1799, George Read (II), Entry for June 16, 1798, RSR, HSD.

⁹Ibid., Entry for July 19, 1797; Ibid., Entry for August 2, 1797.

¹⁰Ibid., Entries for July 19, September 2, 1797, February 9, 1798, April 30, 1799.

¹¹Ibid., Entries for July 19, September 2, October 14, 1797, February 9, June 16, 1798, January 4, April 30, 1799; Ibid., Entries for August 8, 15, September 20, 1797, April 7, June 23, 1798.

¹²Letter, Matthew Pearce to George Read (II), July 1, 1797, RSR, HSD.

¹³ Agreement, William Lane and George Read (II), June 13, 1797, RSR, HSD.

¹⁴ Account Book 1797-1799, George Read (II), Entry for October 18, 1797, RSR, HSD.

¹⁵ Ibid., Entries for September 16, 22, 1797; Ibid., Entry for September 4, 1797; Ibid., Entry for September 14, 1797.

¹⁶ Ibid., Entry for September 14, 1797.

¹⁷ Letter, Matthew Pearce to George Read (I), August 10, 1797, RSR, HSD.

¹⁸ Letter, Peter Crouding to George Read (II), September 17, 1797, RSR, HSD.

¹⁹ In all published references to the house, and in all documents written by George Read (II), the carpenter's name has been spelled "Crowding." Crouding, however, always spelled his name with a "u" instead of a "w"; he is listed by that spelling in the Philadelphia Directories. All references to Crouding in this thesis use his spelling instead of that of George Read (II).

²⁰ Philadelphia Directory for 1798; Philadelphia Directory for 1809.

²¹ Philadelphia Directories, 1801-1809; Administration of the estate of Peter Crouding, January 23, 1810, Municipal Archives of the City of Philadelphia.

²² Crouding's letters to George Read (II) during the years of construction indicate constant financial distress, RSR, HSD.

²³ Letter, Peter Crouding to George Read (II), September 17, 1797, RSR, HSD.

²⁴ Letter, Peter Crouding to George Read (II), October 16, 1797, RSR, HSD.

²⁵Letter, Peter Crouding to George Read (II), November 2, 1797, RSR, HSD.

²⁶Letter, William Read to George Read (II), November 25, 1797, RSR, HSD; Account Book 1797-1799, George Read (II), Entry for December 11, 1797, RSR, HSD.

²⁷Letter, Matthew Pearce to George Read (II), December 21, 1797, RSR, HSD.

²⁸Letter, Peter Crouding to George Read (II), December 21, 1797, RSR, HSD.

²⁹Letter, Peter Crouding to George Read (II), December 28, 1797, RSR, HSD.

³⁰Bill for years 1797 and 1798, Peter Crouding to George Read (II), undated, RSR, HSD.

³¹Letter, George Read (II) to James Clayton, November 10, 1797, RSR, HSD.

³²Letter, Peter Crouding to George Read (II), November 2, 1797, RSR, HSD.

³³Letter, James Clayton to George Read (II), undated, RSR, HSD.

³⁴Letter, George Read (II) to James Clayton, November 10, 1797, RSR, HSD.

³⁵Letter, James Clayton to George Read (II), May 13, 1798, RSR, HSD.

³⁶Letter, Peter Crouding to George Read (II), March 19, 1798, RSR, HSD.

³⁷Letter, James Clayton to George Read (II), May 13, 1798, RSR, HSD.

³⁸Letter, George Read (II) to James Clayton, May 16, 1798, RSR, HSD.

³⁹Account Book 1797-1799, George Read (II), Entry for June 4, 1798, RSR, HSD.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid., Entry for December 3, 1799.

⁴²Note attached to letter, Peter Crouding to George Read (II), March 15, 1798, RSR, HSD.

⁴³Letter, Peter Crouding to George Read (II), November 2, 1797, RSR, HSD; Letter, Peter Crouding to George Read (II), December 1, 1797, RSR, HSD.

⁴⁴Drawing of window head, Peter Crouding, undated, RSR, HSD. The quotation appears on the reverse of the drawing.

⁴⁵Letter, Peter Crouding to George Read (II), December 21, 1797, RSR, HSD; Philadelphia Directory for 1801.

⁴⁶Letter, Peter Crouding to George Read (II), January 3, 1798, RSR, HSD.

⁴⁷Bill, James Traquair to George Read (II), June 19, 1798, RSR, HSD.

⁴⁸Letter, Peter Crouding to George Read (II), March 19, 1798, RSR, HSD.

⁴⁹Letter, James Traquair to George Read (II), May 15, 1799, RSR, HSD.

⁵⁰Letter, George Read (II) to James Traquair, May 25, 1799, RSR, HSD.

⁵¹Letter, Matthew Pearce to George Read (II), December 21, 1797, RSR, HSD.

⁵²Letter, Matthew Pearce to George Read (II), February 10, 1798, RSR, HSD.

⁵³ Letter, William Read to George Read (II), February 24, 1798, RSR, HSD.

⁵⁴ Letter, Peter Crouding to George Read (II), April 12, 1798, RSR, HSD.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Letter, James Traquair to George Read (II), May 15, 1799, RSR, HSD; Letter, Matthew Pearce to George Read (II), July 18, 1799, RSR, HSD.

⁵⁷ Letter, George Read (II) to James Traquair, May 25, 1799, RSR, HSD.

⁵⁸ Letter, Peter Crouding to George Read (II), March 20, 1800, RSR, HSD.

⁵⁹ Letter, Peter Crouding to George Read (II), [] ber 20, 1800, RSR, HSD.

⁶⁰ Letter, Peter Crouding to George Read (II), March 20, 1800, RSR, HSD.

⁶¹ Memorandum of an agreement, between Francis Hopkins and George Read (II), April 10, 1801, RSR, HSD.

⁶² Letter, George Read (II) to Francis Hopkins, May 11, 1801, RSR, HSD.

⁶³ Memorandum of an agreement, between John Byrnes and George Read (II), May 16, 1801, RSR, HSD.

⁶⁴ Advertisement, signed by Peter Crouding, May 8, 1801, RSR, HSD.

⁶⁵ Letter, John Johnston to George Read (II), August 20, 1801, RSR, HSD.

⁶⁶ Letter, William Read to George Read (II), May 13, 1802, Collection of Mrs. Philip D. Laird. (Hereafter cited PDL.)

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Letter, William Thackera, jr. to George Read (II), October 14, 1803, RSR, HSD.

⁶⁹Letter, William Read to George Read (II), May 13, 1802, PDL.

⁷⁰Letter, Peter Crouding to George Read (II), December 28, 1797, RSR, HSD.

⁷¹Letter, William Read to George Read (II), June 11, 1802, RSR, HSD.

⁷²Letter, John Read, jr. to George Read (II), August 15, 1803, RSR, HSD.

⁷³Letter, John Read, jr. to George Read (II), November 1, 1803, RSR, HSD.

⁷⁴Letter, John Read, jr. to George Read (II), November 25, 1803, RSR, HSD.

⁷⁵Letter, George Read (II) to John Read, jr., November 25, 1803, Miscellaneous Papers: George Read Jr., 1765-1836, Historical Society of Delaware, Folder IV, Box 37.

⁷⁶Letter, John Read jr. to George Read (II), November 25, 1803, RSR, HSD.

⁷⁷Philadelphia Directory for 1799.

⁷⁸Letter, John Read, jr. to George Read (II), August 6, 1803, PDL.

⁷⁹Copy of a letter, George Read (II) to Robert Wellford, January 11, 1804, PDL.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Bill, Robert Wellford to George Read (II),
August 23, 1803, PDL.

⁸³Letter, James M. Broom to George Read (II),
December 9, 1802, RSR, HSD.

⁸⁴Letter, George Read (II) to John Read, jr.,
February 2, 1804, RFP, LC, Box 1, No. 168.

⁸⁵Letter, George Read (II) to John Read, jr.,
March 9, 1805, Miscellaneous Papers, George Read, jr.
(1765-1836), Historical Society of Delaware, Box 37,
Folder 4.