FORT JOHNSON
AMSTERDAM, NEW YORK

A HISTORIC STRUCTURE REPORT
1974-1975

BY
MENDEL • MESICK • COHEN • ARCHITECTS

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HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON, D.C.
1978
As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.
The blue used in the printing of the cover matches the eighteenth century blue paint that originally covered much of the paneling in Fort Johnson.

The drawings on the front and back cover of this report represent Fort Johnson as it may have appeared during the third quarter of the eighteenth century and are based on details shown in Guy Johnson's sketch of the property circa 1759.

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Fort Johnson's classical portico dates from the eighteenth century.
Foreword

Fort Johnson survives intact! No other home of a prominent New York Citizen of the colonial period has survived unto the present day so little altered and untouched by restoration. Unlike Sir William Johnson's other home, Johnson Hall at Johnstown, or Guy Park, the house he built for his nephew just down river, the Fort did not undergo Victorian renovation or suffer twentieth century restoration. Indeed, after extensive investigation of the building fabric, it appears that the house was last altered in 1770 to receive Poly Watts, the New York City bride of Sir William's son, John. Despite the loss of almost every feature of the eighteenth century setting, except for one building and the geological fact of creek, river and hills, Fort Johnson remains an authentic architectural document from the pre-revolutionary period. It is almost as if change and growth cease for the house with its confiscation by the patriots two hundred years ago last fall.

For the past seven decades the Montgomery County Historical Society has maintained Fort Johnson. In recent years concern for the immediate repair and long range preservation of the dwelling has confronted the Society. Three years ago architects were engaged to study the condition of the building and to recommend procedures for its long term preservation.

Today, when confronted with the task of preserving a historic building, a restoration architect follows a disciplined approach in which investigative techniques are applied to the process of building restoration. Too often in the past, preservation and renovation projects have been shaped by romantic notions of history or expedient compromises in repair work. Such unfortunate practices have destroyed the historic integrity of countless structures. Before projecting a preservation scheme, the architect should assemble all known documentary materials relating to the site and conduct a comprehensive survey of the existing fabric. These procedures, by setting forth the historical development of a building, establish the cultural significance and evaluate the condition of the historic structure. Once this has been accomplished, plans for preservation can be formulated without whim or uncertainty in a logical, sequential manner. This approach insures that the historic integrity of the preserved structure will survive extensive renewal.

In devising a preservation plan for Fort Johnson the architects have been mindful of its unique qualities, and have been guided by a respect for the extensive survival of eighteenth century features and craftsmanship that distinguished this dwelling. The work on the house proposed herein aims only to repair and stabilize the existing fabric and to limit modern intrusions to new minimal heating, electric and security systems. Aside from reinstating eighteenth century paint colors on the interior and exterior, no effort at restoration on the building is necessary or desirable. However, the preservation plan does recommend major changes in two areas of the property: in the treatment of the grounds, and in the disposition of the collections. Extensive development of the grounds is proposed in a manner that will render the eighteenth century appearance of the setting more readily comprehensible to the contemporary visitor without literal reconstruction of the numerous buildings that once existed on the site. Inside the Fort the extensive collections material acquired by the Society has grown so extensively as to preclude satisfactory presentation of the artifacts themselves or of the fine interiors of the house. To rectify this situation the preservation plan proposes construction of an exhibit/storage building across the Kayaderosseras Creek which also can serve as a modest visitors center.

Once these improvements are accomplished, Fort Johnson should become recognized widely as one of New York's finest historic resources. With increased popular appreciation of its cultural importance the prospects for long term preservation of the house will be greatly enhanced.
The Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service Historic Preservation Grant-in-aid Program is a cooperative partnership between the 50 States of the Union, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, the Virgin Islands, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianna Islands, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation for survey and planning activities and for the acquisition, protection, stabilization, preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction of historic properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 provides matching grants of up to 50-percent for the preparation of comprehensive statewide surveys and for the acquisition and development of registered properties. States and Territories may transfer funds to local governments, private organizations, and individuals. When funds are transferred to private organizations and individuals, the public interest must be protected for a prescribed period of time. This is accomplished by deed covenants which guarantee continued maintenance, limited public access, and, should sale of the property occur, first right of refusal on behalf of the State. The administration of individual grant projects and the supervision of project work is the responsibility of the State Historic Preservation Officer who is appointed by the Governor.

The Technical Preservation Services Division, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, has the review responsibility for all grant-assisted acquisition and development projects funded under the Historic Preservation Grant-in-aid program. The Division assures that each project submitted by the States is in conformance with "The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Acquisition and Development Projects."

In accordance with the 1966 Act, Title I, Section 102 (1) and (4), the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service requires the submission of an Acquisition or Development Project Completion Report 90 days after final expenditure of grant funds. Project Completion Reports present a full account of work performed with Federal funds. Acquisition Project Completion Reports describe the type of acquisition and any unusual procedures and circumstances relative to the project. Development Project Completion Reports describe project work in detail, citing and evaluating significant historical, architectural, and archeological findings or accomplishments. To illustrate specific points in the text, photographs, sketches, and copies of the architect's final working drawings are included. The historical and technical information in Acquisition or Development Project Completion Reports is published and disseminated as case studies nationwide.

A historic structure report is an important component of Development Project Completion Reports. The purpose of a historic structure report is to (1) document and analyze the building's initial construction and subsequent alterations through historical, physical and pictorial evidence; (2) document the current state of the building's architectural materials and overall structural stability; (3) select an appropriate historic preservation treatment (protection, stabilization, preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, or reconstruction); (4) establish priorities for project work items; and (5) make an estimate of project costs. When completed, the report becomes the planning document which is the basis for developing the working drawings and specifications reviewed by Technical Preservation Services Division prior to the commencement of project work. Grant funds may be used to prepare the historic structure report.

Fort Johnson is an excellent example of a historic structure report which could well serve as a model research study. We are pleased to be able to reprint the report and distribute it to State Historic Preservation Officers and their staffs in the 57 States and Territories, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. We wish to thank the authors, Mendel • Mesick • Cohen • Architects; the Montgomery County Historical Society; and the Division for Historic Preservation of the New York State Office of Parks and Recreation for their cooperation in this effort.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The preparation of a historic structure report calls forth the cooperative endeavors of many individuals and agencies. The initiative to develop this report was taken by the Montgomery County Historical Society—most especially the Society’s President, Mrs. Richard Evans II. Her continued encouragement and support has sustained the work at Fort Johnson from the inception of this study throughout the course of exterior restoration undertaken in the past two years. Funds for the preparation of the historic structure report and subsequent restoration work at the site were granted under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. The grant-in-aid provided by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, was administered by the Division for Historic Preservation of the New York State Office of Parks and Recreation. State Historic Preservation Officers Alexander Aldrich and Orin Lehman and their staff, directed by Frederick L. Rath, Jr., have cooperated with the Society and the consultants over the past five years. The historic preservation grant funds have been matched by the Montgomery County Historical Society and its members and friends in the Mohawk Valley area. Initial publication of this report was funded in part by a grant from the New York State Council on the Arts. Finally, the following members of the consulting architects firm carried out the work of this study—

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HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

BIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION TO
SIR WILLIAM JOHNSON

At the age of twenty-three, the young Irishman William Johnson arrived in America in 1738 to oversee his uncle Peter Warren's land holdings along the south bank of the Mohawk River near present day Amsterdam. In the pioneer settlement at Warrensbush, Johnson's conscientiously honest dealings with the Indians, as well as his willingness to tolerate and understand their culture, established the foundation of his important future role in Indian diplomacy. Although he assured his uncle in New York that he did not intend to begin a settlement of his own, Johnson purchased a tract of land north of the Mohawk in 1739 and moved there to the house he built for himself, Mount Johnson, in 1743. Here he developed the great fur trade which became the basis of his fortune, one of the largest of the colonial period. As a wholesaler with direct trade between Mount Johnson, his agents in New York City, and the market in London and the West Indies, Johnson had a vital financial stake in maintaining good relations with the Indians and keeping them as British subjects.

The years between 1743 and 1746 were ones of frontier strife connected with King George's War, the first of the French and Indian conflicts. Johnson took the responsibility of provisioning Fort Oswego on Lake Ontario, England's porthole on the French controlled west, and assumed the command of a New York militia. Johnson's reputation at the Albany Indian Conference of 1746 as a valuable liaison who could tactfully settle disputes and keep the Indians as British allies led to his appointment as Commissary for Indian Affairs and subsequently colonel of the forces to be raised out of the Six Nations Iroquois.

In 1751, in disillusionment over financial misappropriations which deprived him of recompense for his considerable expendi­tures, Johnson resigned all offices concerning Indian affairs and was briefly involved in New York's Crown Council, the upper house of the colonial legislature. He was a delegate to the important Albany Conference of July, 1754, and in April of the following year, was again commissioned as Superintendent of Indian Affairs. One of Johnson's best known achievements was his leadership as major general when the French forces under Baron Dieskau were defeated at the battle of Lake George in September of 1755. Largely as a result of this victory, he was made a baronet and given the title of Sir. In 1756, he was made the sole Superintendent of Northern Indians, a position of immense responsibility and consequence which he was to hold until his death in 1774. In 1759, Johnson, in command of the largest Indian column ever mustered in America, led the drive which captured Fort Niagara, and in 1760, joined Sir Jeffrey Amherst's successful attack on Montreal.

On Sir William's return from the wars which had involved him for so many years, he built Johnson Hall in 1763, a more refined dwelling in a manorial setting in keeping with his dignity as baronet. He became very interested in planning the new settlement of Johnstown, and took a paternal role in establishing settlers, promoting agriculture and industry, and providing the new community with amenities such as a free school, church and courthouse. Meanwhile, he was attaining the peak of his success through the diplomatic finesse involved in negotiating the terms of the boundary settlement after the 1763-64 Indian uprising (commonly called Pontiac's Rebellion). The important Fort Stanwix treaty of 1768 established the western boundary between British settlement and Indian hunting lands.

Sir William Johnson's forte was Indian relations, rather than leadership in battle, and his achievement of keeping the Six Nations Iroquois friendly, or at least neutral, to the British side cannot be denied its significance in American history. In accordance with the English emphasis on colonization (while the French were content to thrive on furs), Johnson must also be remembered as an outstanding pioneer who encouraged the settlement of the Mohawk Valley frontier.

ACQUISITION OF THE PROPERTY

The manuscript of the Loyalist Claim for the lost property of John Johnson is the best available documentary source regarding the acquisition of the land upon which Fort Johnson was built. The original deeds were buried along with other valuable papers before John made his escape to Canada in 1775, and when he later returned to retrieve them, he found all the parchments in the iron chest entirely dissolved. Although he believed that the title was recorded in New York, the correspondent he employed to enquire about them was unable to attain any relative information to support his claim to ownership as devised in his father's will. The testimony therefore relies on memory and would thus account for the inconsistencies which follow.

According to the sworn statements of both son John and son-in-law Daniel Claus, the land was originally part of the patent granted to Wilson and Abeel in 1708. John described it as lying "on the bank of the Mohawk River situated 17 miles above the..."
PREVIOUS USES OF THE SITE

In August, 1929, the destructive storm which uprooted the legendary black walnut tree revealed evidence of a prehistoric village site in the immediate area of the house. Indian pottery relics found three feet below the surface, directly under the stump, indicated the occupancy to have been Algonquins, not Iroquois-Mohawk. The small amount of cleared land at the time of purchase referred to in John’s claim perhaps relates to the former Indian settlement. Seeing that in the descriptions of the tract as it was in 1775, John thought that not more than 50 acres total was cleared and improved (“this was chiefly meadow, the remainder was in woodland”) while Guy Johnson put the figure at only thirty acres, we would assume that the land was largely wilderness at the time of purchase. The earliest map available, which shows Albany County in 1756, shows the sparse settlement of the area and the absence of neighboring homes.

It is evident that Johnson deliberately located his 1749 house in close proximity to mills already on the site. In the aforementioned letter Johnson writes about the “litigious Neighbor”, he informs his uncle: “I am busy to build me a good Strong Dwelling House in the Mohawks by my Mills, all of Stone.” Perhaps this can be identified in the sketch Sir William’s son-in-law Guy Johnson made in October, 1759 as G, a structure which appears to be a gristmill with its grainary dormer.

CONSTRUCTION HISTORY OF FORT JOHNSON

The earliest mention of the construction of Sir William’s new house comes in a letter he wrote to John Catherwood dated December 30, 1748. Johnson gave his apologies for not being able to visit Catherwood in New York as planned, but explained that:

Now I am busy preparing all Materials to build me a good House next Spring, which must deprive me of that Happiness, as I am obliged to be present to forward the work.

This conclusively fixes the construction date at 1749 (and not 1742, as erroneously published in the 1921 Architectural Forum article, nor 1744, as often cited in county histories), and it establishes Johnson’s role in the building of the house. He clearly put himself in charge of the preparation involved before breaking ground and planned on the necessity of being on the site to direct the construction. Documentary evidence on the progress of the actual building is very sparse, with no information whatsoever on the craftsmen involved or the master builder/architect (if indeed one existed), so that much must be inferred from the few existing sources.

Gathering materials for a project of this nature in a wilderness environment was no small accomplishment. Contracting merchant suppliers through colonial agents and then waiting for delivery could sometimes involve a year’s planning. The day following Johnson’s polite excuses to Catherwood, he was indeed busy collecting materials in a letter to the London merchant Samuel and William Baker.

This description of the land (running back one mile from the river to the boundary of the Kayaderosseras patent and containing approximately 1000 acres) is the best conception which we can derive from primary sources of the tract Sir William bought to build his new home. With 640 square acres to a square mile, we would assume that the tract stretched about a mile and a half down the Mohawk.

town of Schenectady, one mile in depth from the said river and containing approximately 1000 acres. The Kayaderosseras patent “was adjacent to the former, this tract joins the above in the rear.” He said that his father purchased this estate in 1747 from Joseph Clement, though he could not say at what price, “and there was then some land cleared upon it”. Colonel Guy Johnson testified that he believed the land contained 900 to 1000 acres and was purchased by Sir William in the year 1742. His statement “He went to law for part of it and recovered” perhaps refers to Sir William’s words in a letter to his Uncle Peter Warren in New York in July of 1749.

I have a litigious Neighbor whose land joins that of mine, wh[1] you have the deed of, he and I are now beginning a law Suit about the bounds of S’d lands, wherefore Shall have occasion for Said deeds, wh[1] should be glad Sir, You would please to send, me (?I) first opportunity to prevent his having any advantage of me. The fact that Uncle Warren held the deeds explains John’s belief that they were recorded in New York. A letter of congratulations two months later to Sir William from James Ross of New York undoubtedly refers to the successful resolution of the law suit and tends to support the later 1747 purchase date rather than Guy Johnson’s 1742 recollection.

I wish you a Great deal of joy of your purchase from Jos Clement & am Glad you’ve Got Rid on so bad a Neighbor.

This description of the land (running back one mile from the river to the boundary of the Kayaderosseras patent and containing approximately 1000 acres) is the best conception which we can derive from primary sources of the tract Sir William bought to build his new home. With 640 square acres to a square mile, we would assume that the tract stretched about a mile and a half down the Mohawk.

Figure 3. Although undated, this map is undoubtedly of eighteenth century origin. The small elevation of Fort Johnson is correct in its propositions and fenestration. Note that the fortified forecourt is shown as well as the two flanking dependencies. From the Karpinski Map Collections, Ministere De Guerre, Paris.
Figure 4. Colonel Guy Johnson, Sir William’s nephew and deputy agent, sketched this view of the Fort Johnson estate from the eminence to the north of the house. It was printed as a fold-out engraving in the first volume of the Royal Magazine in 1759, at a time when Johnson had gained national recognition as a hero. This sketch is the best representation of the estate and is remarkable for the degree of detail it presents. The key printed with the engraving read as follows; (A) The House, or Fort Johnson; (B) the wall and ramparts; (C) the blockhouse in the corner, on the front, and barracks that flank the gate; the same on the other side; (D) Cooper’s house (E) the bake-house; (F) a pigeon-house; (G) the mill; (H) an aqueduct from the mill-dams to the mill; (I) the Indian council-house; (K) Indian encampments; (L) a sheep-house; but now there is a blockhouse built there; (M) a very large barn and stables; (N) Mount Johnson, very high and steep; (O) the house where Sir William Johnson lived before he moved (January 1749-50) into (A); (P) the barn for ditto; (Q) the Mohock river; (R) part of an island opposite to the fort, 100 acres; (S) thirteen smaller islands belonging to Sir William Johnson; (T) another blockhouse, to defend the back of the house; (V) a fine creek that runs by the fort into the river; (W) a garden; (X) fine pastures; (Y) cornfields; (Z) the road to Schenectady.

Unfortunately, the only “trifles mentioned In the Inclosed” we have record of are a beam scale, a packing screw and a microscope, hardly the building supplies to which he alluded. Apparently Johnson already had a conception of the house which conforms to the structure as actually built in terms of the dimensions, height and major building material. Whether he drew up the design himself, relied upon builders’ guides for inspiration or consulted with a master builder remains unknown. Judging solely from the above quotation, Johnson had a definite idea of the home he was to build and asked advice only on the technical question of the lead or slate roofing. Obviously, he had no available local expertise on this matter, whether in the form of a book or a builder.

It is curious that Johnson assumed that his merchants would be able to estimate the amount of lead or slate required by only giving the dimensions of the rectangle to be covered, with no mention as to what type or pitch of roof he proposed. The correct angle to hang lead or slate on a hip roof was probably assumed, or perhaps a crude sketch was included, although no mention is made of it. (The pitch of the buildings’ roof is actually steeper than what the builders’ guides would recommend for either covering.) The very consideration of such costly building materials for roofing, with the great expense involved in transportation from England, is indicative of the investment and importance of this building. The following quote from a chapter on “Roofs and their Coverings,” in a 1738 edition of one of the most popular English building guides, demonstrates the contemporary opinions of these roofing materials.

The kinds of covering in England, are four, viz. Lead, Pantylys, Plain Tyles and Slates. First, coverings of lead, are of all others, the most beautiful; but the Expense being the greatest, it is therefore never used, but for to cover magnificent Buildings. The Heights of Roofs, covered with Lead, is at pleasure, but now ‘tis generally used for Roofs that are very low and which is commonly 2 ninths of the Building’s Breadth, which is called Pediment Pitch. 10

The fact that Johnson undertook the construction of his new home at a time when he was in a poor financial situation is significant. The year 1749 was an uneasy one in which the settlement of the exchange of Indian and Canadian prisoners took much time and money. 11 The entertainment of the French officials, as well as the cost of keeping the Indians supplied with presents to encourage their remaining loyal, was a large financial burden. Johnson found himself gaining respect as he lost
money, and his disillusionment over the government's failure to recompense him eventually led him to resign all offices in 1751. Profits from the fur trade remained in London accounts, thus causing a shortage of cash at hand. No significant loan from Peter Warren around the time of the house construction is noted in the records. Although faced with immediate money difficulties, Johnson's desire of materials "of a good Sort" does not represent an effort to economize on his future home. A study of a later invoice of merchandise from the Bakers of London consigned to the colonial agent John Watts, dated April 26, 1749, also bears out the quality of material ordered. A comparison with the prices given in William Salmon's Palladio Londonensis for hardware such as hinges, latches and bolts indicates that items selected from a wide price range were always of a better sort, though not the most costly available. Johnson's comment "I am busy to build me a good Strong Dwelling House ... all of Stone" illustrates his interest in a substantially constructed building.

In 1749, the danger of attack by the French and their hostile Indian allies, with the inherent fear of destruction by fire, was probably the strongest reason for building in stone. The house's role as a defensive structure had to be considered, seeing that Johnson was by this time a marked man in the eyes of his enemy. Because of the proximity to great ledges of gray limestone in the bluffs along the Mohawk River, stone was a logical choice of material for this house. The advantage of heavy snows for transporting stone is mentioned at a later date by Sir William's brother Warren, who writes in his diary: "my Brother gets Lime Stones carried, 10 miles, upon Sleas, at 9s. currency per load." Although no record remains as to where Johnson obtained the stone to build his house, it is reasonable to assume that it was from the source his brother noted. Correspondence between Sir William and Jelles Fonda of Caughnawaga (roughly ten miles from the source his brother noted. Correspondence between Sir William and Jelles Fonda of Caughnawaga roughly ten miles west of the fort on the main highway), concerning stone from Fonda's quarries for the construction of the Johnstown jail, might be a clue as to the possible source of Fort Johnson's stone. Besides the accessibility of this building material, stone, rather than brick or wood, was the vernacular expression of the Mohawk Valley Palatine settlements of Stone Arabia and German Flatts, west of the quarries at Caughnawaga. The similarity in character of the undressed, irregular stones laid in courses might indicate that Johnson's workmen came from the Palatine communities and were experienced in the stone tradition. The present condition of the structure after over two hundred years is testimony to the skill of these colonial masons.

Besides the nearby availability of the main construction material, timbers for framing could be squared on the site from trees felled in the surrounding woods, and the pre-existing mill could have provided the lumber for flooring, doors, etc. However, detailed requisitions for numerous other necessities had to be sent to England. The above mentioned invoice of April, 1749 shows that, because hardware was not produced in the colonies at that time, Johnson had to plan ahead to special order every hardware detail, including the various sizes and types of nails and brads; all latches, locks, knobs and bolts; various types of hinges with their accompanying screws; and even certain workmen's tools, such as the double-hand screws listed (figure 9). Besides the blacksmith's work orders, the list includes squares of Crown glass, sash lines and pulleys for the windows, glue for joinery and dry white lead and brushes for painting. It seems that the marble facings that surround certain fireplace openings were probably also requested from Europe, judging from Fiske Kimball's findings that domestic marble was not used until sometime after the Revolution. As to the statements that the paneling came from France, no documentary evidence can be shown to support this statement. Materials for the interior finish may not have been imported as alleged, but rather made on the job. The wall paneling is made of locally available black walnut and cherry, and was most likely executed on the site. As paneling was usually restricted to the dado after 1750, with a tendency towards fewer and larger panels, floor-to-ceiling paneling was probably contemporary with the construction year.

Most residences of colonial times were designed by owners assisted by carpenter-builders. Together the team would lay out the basic elements of structure and design through a mutual exchange of the future resident's desires and the builder's experience. We have no record of a master-builder for Fort Johnson and must therefore rely on conjecture as to the part Sir William played. Samuel Fuller, the master builder of Sir William's later home of 1763, has been suggested as having played a major role in the 1749 house also, supposedly having come to Johnson's attention through mutual interest in military structures during the first French and Indian War. However, the first record of Fuller's arrival in the area (he was from the Boston environs) dates to May, 1758, when he came with a detachment of the King's artificers to repair the Schenectady fort. Finding a qualified architect on the Mohawk frontier to assist him with his new house no doubt proved even more difficult than obtaining the needed materials.

Much can be learned from the relationship between Johnson and Fuller in the construction of the later Johnson Hall. In an unpublished Master's thesis, Lewis Rubenstein addressed himself to the problem of the exchange between the two men in the design of the building. The existence of a detailed set of plans was unusual in the colonies at this time; examples of designs brought specifically from England were very rare, and those done here were of a rather crude nature. Apparently Fuller's practical experience in framing contributed a significant share towards the building in terms of modifications. The "plans" sent to Fuller by Johnson to determine dimensions of lumber framing were obviously more detailed than simple floor plans. Rubenstein concluded that they also probably included an elevation of some sort, so that the builder's competence was added to an already existing design. To what degree Johnson's role...
in this exchange between the two can be applied to the earlier home is hypothetical, but with the absence of any references to a builder, we must assume that Johnson contributed the greatest share towards planning his own house.

William Johnson's conduct as the cultured gentleman of the eighteenth century, with his experimentation in science and agriculture as well as his interest in music, literature, and art, would lead to the question of whether or not he shared a similar interest in architecture. Considerable research on the library of Sir William Johnson by the historian Milton Hamilton has turned up no clues as to the books he owned before the construction of Fort Johnson. Perhaps the first decade of the rigors of life in the wilderness did not foster an indulgence in books. A detailed book order list to James Rivington in 1760 does not contain any architectural books, but it does point out his varied interests in his subscriptions to such periodicals as the Gentleman's Magazine. Without conclusive evidence as to what volumes Johnson may have possessed at the time he was building Fort Johnson, the role of builder's guides also remains conjectural.

The pattern book phenomenon in England during the eighteenth century created an extremely high standard of formal knowledge among all builders. Two general categories of these books existed. First were the large, expensive volumes with primary emphasis upon Renaissance architectural theory, composition of acknowledged leaders in architecture, and comprehensive instruction on the five orders. James Gibbs' Book of Architecture or his Rules for Drawing exemplify this type which focused upon sophisticated designs. Second were the less expensive handbooks which emphasized techniques and details of practical building for carpenter/builders, or in the case of the colonies, remote country gentlemen who had to rely upon their own initiative in the absence of a local body of experienced builders. These books contained designs for ordinary dwellings less ambitious than the wealthy country seats, and were more accessible and relevant for colonial builders and owners who needed assistance. Some books emphasized craft techniques and offered instruction on all aspects of building technology, while others, such as the aforementioned Palladio Londinensis by William Salmon, offered practical guides to the trades with price estimates of materials and cost of labor to be done by bricklayers, masons, joiners and painters. Most handbooks, however, were used as reference primarily for advice on details, especially doorways, mantelpieces, cornices, staircases and windows. A number of builders' guides were reviewed in an attempt to determine whether or not any might have been consulted in the construction of Fort Johnson. In conclusion, it does not appear that any one specific book was extensively referred to by Sir William, as there are no examples of what might be considered directly copied details incorporated in the structure. Some elements show similarities to illustrations in the guides, such as the West Room mantelpiece's likeness to the lower right chimneypiece design of plate LV in Abraham Swan's The British Architect. Using a shred of evidence we do have, if he had had a guide book such as Palladio Londinensis to instruct him on how to take the dimensions of a roof (by also measuring the length of the rafters, the ridge, and the angle of the pitch), he could have estimated the cost, using the material prices given without writing to London.

Builders' guides probably did not influence the design of the house; instead, Sir William most likely relied upon his own experience to form a conception of what he wanted. He no doubt had gained building experience from the earlier Mount Johnson and frontier structures at Warrensbugh so that he could better formulate improvements upon previous residences. Although he was only thirty-four the year the house was built and had spent over a decade on the frontier, Johnson was not oblivious to what was currently stylish because of the exposure of his frequent trips to New York City, either for business purposes or to visit his uncle. A look at the fine country home (1731) in Greenwich Village which Sir Peter Warren purchased in 1744 does show a strong similarity in the general proportions, especially when the later addition of the piazza is stripped away. It shares the same general Georgian design of the two-storied, five bay facade with hipped roof and endwall chimney stacks. Sir William was no doubt very familiar with this house and may have retained its image as a model when he built his own house. Johnson's childhood home in Smithtown, County Meath (approximately twenty miles from Dublin near the village of Dunshaglin) does not show any significance as a prototype either, other than it being a hipped roof structure of Georgian proportions. Because Fort Johnson conforms to the model of its time, its elements being standard rather than exceptional, it is not by any means an unusual or innovative architectural expression which demands an in-depth study as to its "inspiration."
The chronology of the construction of the new house confines itself to a one year period, from the first request for materials in the last two days of 1748 to the assumption that the house was complete when Johnson moved in in January, 1750. In a letter to George Clinton on the twenty-second of that month, apologies were given for not having obtained requested affidavits: “I really had not time to get them, being much hurryed since I came home with moving into my New House & ca.”

In the time that intervened between these two points, there are only three other references to the house in the extant manuscripts. One is the April, 1749 invoice from Samuel and William Baker which has already been discussed in reference to orders for materials. The wide-range of items on the list implies various stages of construction progress, from the flooring, batten and lath nails of the initial stages, to the closet locks and brass knocker of the finishing touches; therefore, no inference as to the progress of the house in April can be made from this manuscript. Next in the time sequence is Johnson’s statement in late July, “I am busy to build me a good Strong Dwelling House,” suggesting that he was immediately involved in the midst of the operation. The other reference, dated September 25, 1749, was from a letter sent by James Ross of New York, who had just sent Johnson the “9 gallons of Linseed oil at 11s & 6d per Gallon” in response to what seems to have been a special order. Apparently work had progressed far enough along by early fall to be at the painting stage. This chronology of construction conforms with the normal length of completion in one building season.

**ALTERATIONS TO ORIGINAL CONSTRUCTION**

Dates and descriptions of major alterations made to the building based on documentary evidence are sketchy indeed. The first view of the house, which was done in 1759 by Guy Johnson, shows the north side minus the present back door and third window (figure 10). There is no reason to believe that this view is not accurate, although the statements in Phyllis Parson’s *Life in Old Fort Johnson* are rather weak arguments in defense of the engraving. To support the fact that there was no rear door at the time of construction, she naively stated that “this is the direction from which attacks from Canada would come.” As for the number of windows, she cited the April 26, 1749 order for fifteen shutter locks, ignoring the fact that this is for fifteen extra shutter locks (plus eighteen short ones), as well as the fact that this does not match up with the number of sash and pulley lines. Apparently there were no shutters used on the second storey, as Sir William’s brother Warren stated in his journal of 1760/61: “The houses having noe window shuts above stairs in the country are much colder than in Europe.” Obviously, the two openings not present in the 1759 view were added at a later time, although their date remains conjectural. The earliest evidence of the back door comes from an 1853 daguerrotype by Sidney Mead (figure 11): from the open front door, the light of an opening can be seen at the end of the hallway.

When Sir William moved to Johnson Hall in 1763, Fort Johnson became the residence of his son, John. The year 1773 marks the date of John’s marriage to the fashionable Polly Watts of New York City, who was the daughter of a member of the Governor’s Council. Prior to the time of the bride’s reception at the new home, certain alterations were undertaken. Apparently certain improvements were desired to modify the frontier aspects of the home, and perhaps it is at this time that many of the more refined elements of a later Georgian style were added. In the one existing memo written between 1772 and 1773 from Daniel Claus, instructions are given in regard to repainting the rooms certain colors and mention is made of “when the Carpenters want to go abt the blue Room the Things are to be moved.” Perhaps this carpentry refers to finishing the shutters mentioned; however, this would hardly necessitate moving the furniture around. Perhaps at this time the chimneypieces noted in a letter...
Figure 10. This view of the rear of the fort is a detail taken from Colonel Guy
Johnson’s sketch (figure 4). Note that the existing door and third window of the
central hall running from front to back was stan-
dard, the very narrow widths of the rear rooms is rather unusual
in Georgian homes. This plan, however, is encountered repeat-
elly in colonial houses of the Hudson Valley, and its adoption
at Fort Johnson may be evidence of Dutch or Palatine influence.
In any case, it would be wrong to assume that partitions were
added at the time of the 1772/73 improvements. Although it is
rather confusing to disentangle the specific rooms Daniel Claus
was referring to in his memo, there were obviously more than
two rooms flanking the central hallway on each floor. In a
house which was often crowded with visitors, the upper floor
north rooms were undoubtedly used for sleeping quarters. Ref-
ence to “the opposite Room, and the large Room” is especially
convincing in refuting any idea that room partitions were added
at this time.

To get and ( ) the painter (boy) to the fort in
abt 9 or 10 days to paint the Room above that
painted the same colour with the paper and to
finish the shutters. he’ll want prussian blue and
yellow to take with him the white lead, there
ask his price To put the clock when finished in
the blue room wch is to (be) painted stone
Color also. The opposite Room, and the large
Room White. The other Bed and ( ) to be put
up in the Cherry Room and when the Carpenters
want to go abt the blue Room the Things are to
be moved in the above Room.\)

Another possible explanation of what work was being done
when the carpenters were called in could be the removal of the
closets or cupboards which flanked the fireplaces in the two
large downstairs rooms. This feature was common to mid-eigh-
teenth century houses, but was undoubtedly considered old
fashioned in the later “Georgianization” of the house. Undoubt-
edly Sir John’s visit to England from 1765 to 1767 played a sig-
nificant role in familiarizing him with the styles, as well as the
conveniences, of Georgian country homes of the time.

Figure 11. This 1853 daguerrototype of the house was taken by Sidney B. Mead
and was included as an inset in a wall map of Montgomery County published
by R.P. Smith of Philadelphia. From the open front door, one can see the light
entering from the rear door at the end of the hallway.

dated May 19, 1773, to Sir William from Hugh Wallace of New
York, were installed.

Any thing you order shall be done with care and
dispach, I shall charge Sir John’s Account to
yours as you desire, some Chimney Pieces go up
from hence for him this day.\)

The detail of the fretwork below the West Room mantel
matches that of the triangular open pediment of the front porch
projection, and the soffit paneling under the porch roof is simi-
lar in character to that of the hallway. These similarities rein-
force the belief that the porch is a 1770’s addition. Early eight-

teenth century doorway frontispieces first consisted of a simple
enframement in which flanking pilasters were surmounted by a
frieze and cornice or a pedimented hood. Projecting porticos or
pavillons supported by free-standing columns did not become
common until after 1750. Fort Johnson, where the necessities
of frontier defense were of greater concern than the latest styl-
istic facade treatments, would certainly not have had the pres-
cent porch in 1749. The fluted triglyphs, metopes and guttae of
the entabliature demonstrate a more academic source then the
simple type of pediment most common in the eighteenth cen-
tury. The open pediment porch roof is characteristic of a type
which was prevalent in southern Connecticut but rare else-
where in New England and New York during this period.\)

Another traditional opinion concerning alterations at the
time of Sir John’s marriage concerns the central hall stairway.
The proportions and details of the stair rail are probably too
refined or delicate to have been built initially into the house,
and the mahogany wood would have had to be imported. The
slender balusters are the characteristic three to a step, but they
are not turned; perfectly plain balusters were rare in colonial
days, though examples may be found.\ There are indications
on the stairway paneling that a steeper stairway, with a higher
landing between floors, preceded the present one. This change
may also have been made in the 1770’s.

The curiousity of the floor plan of Fort Johnson with its very
narrow rear rooms has led to the suspicion that partitions divid-
ing the large rooms must have been added at a later date (Fig-
ure 42). The proximity of the hearths to their opposite dividing
walls is especially puzzling. Although the double file of rooms
separated by a central hall running from front to back was stan-
he asked advice on is not conclusively known. In a newspaper account of a visit to the fort in 1897, W. Max Reid gave the following opinion:

The roof was formerly covered with sheet lead which will account for the heavy timber used in its construction. This lead, together with the window weights, were used for bullets during the Revolution. The lead covering of the roof was replaced with shingles but the window weights were never replaced. Subsequently the shingles were replaced by the substantial slate roof of the present day.\(^{36}\)

The Revolutionary War's recycling of the roof is a legend that certainly has a great deal of popular appeal; however, there is documentation to support the idea that cooking facilities were originally located in the basement is sparse, yet there is equally little to support any other plausible explanation that an outbuilding served the kitchen functions. Architectural books such as *Palladio Londinensis* advised that a "kitchen should be as remote from the parlor as possible, and to be under ground."\(^{40}\) Various writers on the history of the house, including Mrs. Parsons and W. Max Reid, insist that the first kitchen

Although this only refers to window weights, the large amount of lead to be gained from a roof would not have been overlooked, judging from the militia's great need for lead. The following October, the records of the Tryon County Committee of Safety reveal that "Col. Fishers Regmt [Mohawk District] has recd 470 lbs. Lead which was taken from the Houses below."\(^{38}\)

This substantiates the idea that lead was indeed collected from Mohawk Valley houses, and it is possible that the figure for 470 pounds, although far less than the amount for a roof, represents one of many such collections that might have taken Fort Johnson's roof. The recent discovery of lead flashings around a chimney, of which portions had been crudely cut at the roofline, is the most substantial physical evidence of a former lead roof. The above reference from Reid to the "replaced...substantial slate roof of the present day "coincides with the 1916 *Knickerbocker Press* reporter's account of "a slate roof which was built recently."\(^{39}\)

The location of the kitchen in the original Fort Johnson is one of the most debated questions concerning the history of the house. Documentary evidence to support the idea that cooking facilities were originally located in the basement is sparse, yet there is equally little to support any other plausible explanation that an outbuilding served the kitchen functions. Architectural books such as *Palladio Londinensis* advised that a "kitchen should be as remote from the parlor as possible, and to be under ground."\(^{40}\)

Various writers on the history of the house, including Mrs. Parsons and W. Max Reid, insist that the first kitchen

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1. Figure 12. Glazed panels are evident in the double doors in this 1902 photograph. Note also that the shutters appear to be painted in two contrasting colors.
2. Figure 13. Sir William Johnson and the Indian Joseph Brant stand at the front door of Fort Johnson as the subjects of this historical painting done in 1881. Edward Lamson Henry (1841-1919) was an American artist who gained fame from his depictions of historic events, and most of his works were preceded by historic research and detailed study. A photograph of his painting was discovered in Henry's album, now in the collection of the Office of State History, New York State Museum. Permission was kindly granted to reproduce it in this report.
was located in the eastern part of the basement directly under the dining room. A winding stairs for service was supposedly located between the fireplace and the southeast corner of the room, although there is no physical evidence whatsoever of such a stairway. The chimney support along the north wall of the room, which was constructed in the form of an arch as a means of conserving masonry, was never used as a fireplace. The one along the east wall, however, probably accommodated cooking facilities from the time the house was constructed. It is possible that one of the two flanking storehouses in front (such as the one which housed servants) could also have housed a kitchen. Since this was the single most common use of eighteenth century offices (see page 13), it would not be illogical to conclude that Fort Johnson’s kitchen was located in an outbuilding.

The idea that a nineteenth century family used the cellar for cooking purposes is supported by the inventory of the estate of George Smith, who purchased Fort Johnson in 1826. A room-by-room survey of Smith’s possessions, which was done in 1835 after his death, procedes finally to the cellar and lists “4 bushels of dried apples in the kitchen” as well as implements needed to tend a fire such as one shovel, tongs, and andirons. After a description of items from the dining room, those enumerated in the back room (such as 14 tin pans, 3 pewter dishes and plates, knives, spoons and forks) suggest that the first floor northeast room was used as a serving pantry.

The history of the ownership of the property, which is outlined in Appendix E, indicates that many prominent families resided at Fort Johnson between Sir John’s departure and the historical society’s acquisition. Considering the successive occupancies during a period of over one hundred years, there appear to be remarkably few changes to the original construction. However, because the well-to-do owners would have been likely to adapt the house to their own ideas of comfort and taste, many subtle (although minor) changes must have been effected. For example, some documentation survives to prove that George Smith, a prominent merchant from the nearby township of Florida, altered the house after he purchased the property in 1826. Before moving to Fort Johnson, he had built a residence which, at the time of its erection, one contemporary historian regarded as “the finest in the country — a dwelling whose carving and enrichments constitute it a good evidence of his fine taste and generous views.”

Unfortunately, no specific information was given on how the residence was “improved.” Almarin Young, the postmaster of Amsterdam for a number of years, owned the house for a short period. His large family, shown in front of the residence in the 1853 daguerrotype, may have necessitated certain changes. By 1892, Fort Johnson was only being used as a summer residence by its last occupants, Ethan Akin, a lawyer, and his wife, Sarah. The Akins sold the house in the fall of 1905 to John Watts de Peyster of Tivoli, New York, who in turn a few days later conveyed the property to The Montgomery County Historical Society.

HISTORY OF OUTBUILDINGS OF THE FORT JOHNSON ESTATE

The present two-acre site of Fort Johnson denies an appreciation of the initial thousand acre estate and the complex of surrounding buildings which complemented the residence of Sir William Johnson. To more comprehensively understand the environmental context of the building and its relationship to other functions of the estate, an attempt was made to document the other structures on the Fort Johnson land.

In the letter of April, 1739 in which William Johnson informed his uncle of his first purchase of land north of the Mohawk River, he noted the good location for a trade store along the
main road leading west and also mentioned the possibilities for mills along the swift running creeks. As has already been stated in the section concerning previous uses of the land, Johnson deliberately chose to build his new house in close proximity to already existing mills, but the exact dates of their construction is unknown and further complicated by the confusion over which year the Fort Johnson parcel was purchased, 1742 or 1747. Secondary sources fix dates for the erection of one mill, but neglect to cite a documentary source as proof. County historian Charles F. McClumpha stated that a gristmill was erected in 1742, while late nineteenth century historians Beers and Simms cite 1744 as the year a flouring mill was built upon the Kayaderosseras Creek.47

The north view sketch of Fort Johnson by Sir William’s nephew Guy Johnson, which was engraved for the feature fold-out of the month in an October, 1759 issue of the Royal Magazine, is a unique and valuable document which gives us the most detailed and complete view of what the estate looked like (Figure 4). The building labeled G has already been identified as the gristmill, with H being the raised aqueduct which supplied the water power from the source of the mill dam which channelled the flow of the Kayaderosseras. A description given in a scouting journal of a French spy in 1757 coincides with Guy Johnson’s sketch.

A small rivulet coming from the north empties itself into the Mohawk River, about 200 paces below the enclosure of the yard. On this stream there is a mill about 50 paces distance from the house; below the mill is the Miller’s house where grain and flour are stored.44 The building labeled M, which appears Dutch in style with its steep gabled end, is identified in the key as a very large barn and stables, and this again checks with the French scouting journal description which continues on to say; “and on the other side of the creek, 100 paces from the mill; is a barn in which cattle and fodder are kept." Further back from this barn, on the same east side of the creek, was the site of the Indian enclave. A rather large, barn-like structure with attached shed lean-tos (I) served as the Indian council house and was surrounded by the housing provision of tents. Curiously, this encampment is not noted by the spy.

Figure 16. In another drawing of Fort Johnson by Rufus Grider, the artist imaginatively filled the front yard with supposed Indian visitors during Johnson’s time. Apparently Grider lacked historical information concerning the two stone offices which flanked the main house. From: Grider, A Collection of Illustrations of Historic Matter of the Mohawk Valley, 1:16. NYSL, Division of Manuscripts and History.

With the mill and barn in close proximity to the house stood other service buildings such as the cooper’s house (D) and the previously mentioned bake house (E), which appears to be surmounted by an interesting cupola which housed pigeons (F). Although approximately fifty paces behind the house and rather removed from the sole entrance at the front, perhaps the bakehouse served as the general cooking facility and answers the question of the location of the original kitchen. Not shown in the sketch is the “sawmill with 14 saws” which is known to have existed from its mention in the Loyalist Claim.45 John Johnson also described “well framed barns and sundry smaller buildings for cattle — a well-built stone stable with 8 stalls — Room for carriages and a large hay loft” in the lines which followed. The Dutch gabled M cannot be assumed to be this well-built eight-stall stable since it is not rendered in stone construction as are the house and its ramparts.

John Johnson described the land around Fort Johnson in an effort to estimate the value of his real estate as it was worth in 1775. He cited: “the extra value of 30 acres of upw’ds round Ft. Johnson under good improvement and well inclosed with Garden, orchard etc at 10 per acre.”46 This thirty acres undoubtedly refers to cleared land, in contrast to the surrounding woods, and the fenced-in area marked W to the west of the residence, with its lines of trees and orderly plantings, marks the site of the garden and orchard mentioned. The French spy stated that “from this gate to the river there is about 200 paces below the enclosure of the yard” while Sir William’s brother Warren wrote in his journal that “the Mohawk is within 40 yards of the Door.”47 A diary account from 1760 noted “quite a large front yard, with a wall around it, and two turrets of some height on each side of the entrance gate on the side of the lawn.”48 Between the house and the river were fine pastures for grazing (X) while the islands of the river provided rich farmland. Uncleared adjacent land was worth approximately forty shillings per acre. In contrast, John Johnson’s claim put the value of the sixty five acre island (R), which was wholly cultivated, at twenty pounds per acre.

The French spy related that the high road passed between the gate of the estate and the river, while the map of the route between Albany and Oswego of the very same year, 1757, shows the line of the road definitely jogging behind the fort crossing the creek at a point between the barn, mill and house. Guy Johnson’s depiction of the road to Schenectady (Z) coincides
with this up to the point where the road would cross the creek, but then ambiguously disappears and does not show a continuation behind (or in front of) the fort. The 1756 Albany County map as well as the 1775 map by Captain Montressor (both less detailed in that they do not show the individual buildings) show the road passing through the four-cornered symbol for the Fort Johnson complex and therefore do not add evidence of the exact location (figure 2). In 1754, Daniel Claus was ordered to oversee "the clearing of the Side of the Road at the End of the Stone Wall...to the next Bridge." This would imply that the road did not pass within the compound and that there was more than one bridge across the creek.

Immediately following a brief description of the house, John Johnson’s claim reports the existence of “2 stone wings 1 storey high about 30 feet long and 18 deep.” The French spy recounted:

In the same yard, on both sides of the Mansion, there are two small houses, that on the right of the entrance is a Store, and that on the left is designed for workmen, negroes and other domestics. In Guy Johnson’s 1759 sketch, the building labeled “C” is identified in the key as “the blockhouse in the corner, on the front, and barracks that flank the gate; the same on the other side.” Because of the viewpoint chosen for the drawing, the opposite stone wing cannot be seen. The French spy’s reference to the servants’ building on the left (as he approached from the river) is most likely the structure labeled “C.” Mrs. Grant’s diary entry, “he must have 50 or 60 people in his employ besides negroes,” reveals the necessity of a separate building to accommodate all the servants. (Flexner has suggested that boards were placed upon the attic collar beams to provide a tier for servant sleeping quarters; however, there is no documentation to substantiate this.) The hidden building “contained the store in which all goods meant for the Indian traffic were laid up, and the peltry received in exchange.” It no doubt also provided local settlers with needed goods from New York. As the historian Pound related in discussing the importance of the trade store, “scarcely could one travel the Mohawk trail without stopping at the Johnsons.” Apparently the “two small houses” described as a store and servants’ quarters were later modified for defensive purposes when frontier strife intensified. Since no mention is made of the stone houses’ military function in John Johnson’s claim and later descriptions, the buildings were probably used only temporarily for defense.

As a pattern of eighteenth century English country house design, services were often removed from the residence and were incorporated in a unified design rather than scattered as informal outbuildings. The desire for organization led to the symmetrical disposition of “offices” in relation to the main house. A popular Palladian scheme consisted of two dependencies placed to the front or rear of the main building in a triangular composition, thus creating a semi-enclosed space which served as a courtyard. A similar arrangement seems to have existed at Fort Johnson, judging from the repeated references in traveler’s descriptions.

Throughout eighteenth century Mohawk Valley history, the term “fort” has been applied to individual residences which, although lacking fortification constructions, served as defensive outposts. Johnson’s desire to build himself a “good Strong Dwelling House” concerned with its ability to withstand attack has already been discussed. However, it was not until the frontier situation again became dangerous with such events as the fall of Oswego that fortifications were built to provide additional protection for the house. It is at this time that the owner’s conception of the home changed from the letterhead of Mount Johnson to Fort Johnson, and indeed the defense works constructed merit the term “fort” in its usual connotation to a greater degree than other valley homes which served as militia headquarters.

A report on the state of the fortifications at Fort Johnson on June 8, 1756 enumerates the artillery supplies on hand and comments on the poor condition of the defenses.

The Fort in very Bad Order not capable of being Defended. the platform in several places Rotten, the walls all Shattered and Tumbling down. The Gates, Drawbridges & c. all Rotten Intirely open on the Land side for Want of Gates and Drawbridges. The Glacis has been Repaired about a Year since. butt not above half Finished. The Magazine is soe bad & Damp. that noe Powder cane with Safety be Lodged in it, & the Barracks Is not Sufficient to Shelter Men in them The Strength of the Garrison at present is 6 Private Men.

The repeated use of the description “rotten” implies some wood fortifications such as wooden walkways or perhaps a surrounding palisade wall. An earthwork bastion must have been another defense provision. The mention of the glacis and drawbridges suggests the existence of a moat, which could also lead to the fort’s frequent appellation of castle or chateau.

Just a few weeks before the above report, Johnson wrote instructions to Claas deGraaf, a carpenter going to Seneca County to build a fort. His detailed orders on the proper way to construct defenses were undoubtedly gained from his experience at home, and they are included here for their possible relevance to a conception of the earlier Fort Johnson.

This Fort is to be one hundred & fifty feet Square—the Logs to be either Pine or Oak, Sixteen feet long, four feet of which to be set in the Ground well rammed & pounded; two sides of each Log to be squared so as they may stand close to each other, proper loop Holes to be cut at four feet Distance; two Strong Gates of Oak Plank of 3 Inches thick to be set up in the proper

Figure 18. When Aaron Burr was considering purchasing Fort Johnson in 1788, he visited the site and romantically described it to his wife Theodosius. "... there is the most delightful grove—so darkened with weeping willows [which] exclude even the prying eye of curiosity." An idea of this landscape can be gained from this engraving by Hall which was published in Jeopha Simm’s book, The History of Schoharie County and Border Wars of New York. (1645).
One hundred and fifty paces from Colonel Johnson's Mansion at the North side, on the left bank of the little creek, is a little hill on which is a small house with port holes where is ordinarily kept a guard of honor of some twenty men, which serves also as an advanced post.46

This location coincides with the letter T of Guy Johnson's map: "another blockhouse, to defend the back of the house," which is hidden by the angle of the hill. Further orders in this letter were addressed to those who would remain "to Man the Dwelling House & Fight from thence, making Use of the four Wall Pieces & Musquetoons out of the Window fitted for them."43 Apparently some of the windows, most likely the dormers which served as lookouts, underwent alterations to accommodate the guns mentioned.

Further improvements to the compound were made in December, 1758, as Johnson writes in a letter to Brigadier General Stanwix that he has "just erected two Blockhouses upon the most convenient ground to serve as Outworks, & cover my house," and he requests "a subaltern with 40 men here, which I can more easily dispose of in those Blockhouses." The increase in the garrison from six to forty is indicative of the expansion of the defense works. One of these two new blockhouses would explain the key to the sheet house (L) which notes that "now there is a blockhouse built there." Guy Johnson's sketch would therefore have been done prior to December, 1758, although an annotation was made before it was sent to be published in the October, 1759 magazine.

Figure 19. The June 1, 1842 deed which conveyed Fort Johnson to Dr. Oliver Davidson of Saratoga Springs mentioned that the parcel was "known and distinguished on a map of said farm made by James Frost and dated the 6th day of October, 1836, filed in the Montgomery County Clerk's Office as lot number one." While the map was no longer among the county records, it was later discovered in the collection of the New York State Library, Division of Manuscripts and History. After George Smith's death in 1828, the five hundred acre Fort Johnson estate was subdivided into a number of different parcels. This map lends an idea of the size of Sir William's original estate.

Figure 20. This detail from James Frost's 1836 map (figure 19) provides a great deal of information concerning the outbuildings that then remained from the original Johnson estate. The "Mansion House" itself is identified as "a," while "b" is the "Carriage House," the one story stone barn that was converted into the present caretaker's residence during the early twentieth century. Located on a mill race near the divided creek is the grist mill, "c." The barn labeled "e" might be the one that was present in Guy Johnson's 1759 drawing. On the east side of the creek, at the junction of the Mohawk Turnpike and the road to Johnstown, is the store that was supposedly built after the Revolution, "d." Unidentified dwelling houses are noted with an "f." The four parallel lines that cross the Creek identify the Utica and Schenectady Railroad.

loop Holes to be cut at four feet Distance... two Strong Gates of Oak Plank of 3 Inches thick to be set up in the properest places with Strong Iron hinges.53

The opinion of the neglected state of the fort as reported by the officer is further supported by Daniel Claus' August 3, 1756, letter to Sir William which states "that it would be nothing at all to scale the Walls and kill every Body in it without firing a Gun."54 The deplorable conditions seem to have been remedied by the time of Guy Johnson's sketch, as there is no evidence of "shattered and tumbling" walls or "rotten" gates and platforms. The stone wall and ramparts which flank the western side of the house (B) probably provided the major firing line, while the blockhouse at the corner (C) should have relieved the cramped quarters of the barracks.

A letter dated August, 1756, from William Johnson to Lieutenant Alexander Trumbull, whose detachment was evidently to be stationed at Fort Johnson, includes these instructions to be heeded in the event of attack.

You will in the Day time keep one Sentry on the Eminence to the Northward of the House, who upon Seeing the Enemy advance, is to fire his piece and retreat to the Fort.55

The observant French spy gives us our best description of the eminence mentioned.
Figure 21. Fort Johnson as it appeared in 1902. Note the roof leader pipes running along the east elevation. They probably carried water to the large barrel in the basement.

By the year 1769 when the series of French and Indian Wars which threatened the valley had ended, a traveler reported that "Sir John possesses an elegant Seat and gardens called Fort Johnson tho there is no other Fortress than a wooden Block House and a Powder Magazine." The wall and ramparts, as well as the other blockhouses, had ceased to serve a function by this time and were taken down. The next available first-hand account does not come until the year 1788 when the famous Aaron Burr went to view the property which was for sale and sent back a description in a letter to his wife. He was the first to mention the dark grove of willows in front which "exclude even the prying eye of curiosity." (The fact that the trees obscured a direct view of the house may account for the lack of descriptions of Fort Johnson by later travelers through the major transport route of the Mohawk Valley). Burr also remarks "the commodiousness and elegance of the buildings, the great value of the mills, and the very inconsiderable price which was asked for the whole." In the summer of 1796 when the clergymen Belknap was traveling from Boston to Oneida and passed by the Johnson estate, he wrote that it consisted of "one large stone house and two stone stores and a stone barn, a good garden and orchard." The wooden block house and powder magazine may have disappeared by this time, and this is the last documentary evidence of the two stone wings. In his History of Montgomery County, Frothingham claims that they were demolished after the Revolution, with a wooden structure (also intended for trade) built on the east side of the creek.

The history of the ownership of the Fort Johnson property is outlined in the accompanying appendix of deeds recorded at the Montgomery County Clerk's office. The records of the Loyalist's confiscation of Fort Johnson have not been found, and the first documented occupants of the early nineteenth century were John C. Cuyler, a merchant from Albany, and his wife. (A 1790 diary entry, however, states that the house was then owned by Cornelius Schuyler or Cuyler; see Appendix E). When John Cuyler conveyed the land to Jeremiah Schuyler of Watervliet in February of 1817, the estate comprised five hundred acres. The house was then transferred to three subsequent owners within a period of ten years; John J. Van Schaick of Albany, 1820; George Maxwell, mariner, of Kings County, 1824; and George Smith of the Montgomery County township of Florida, 1826. With each conveyance, the parcel of land remained the same. After George Smith's death in 1828, the estate was subdivided into a number of smaller parcels, as illustrated by the map done by James Frost in October of 1836 (figure 19). The next recorded sale of the house dates to June, 1842, when Morris Miller Davidson, a lawyer from New York City, sold the property to Dr. Oliver Davidson of Saratoga Springs. The parcel containing Fort Johnson, known as lot number one, was considerably contracted to approximately thirty-five acres. The March, 1853 deed between Matthias G. Davidson, an engineer from Cumberland, Maryland and Almarin Young of Amsterdam cited the same land conveyance. In May, 1856, Young sold ten acres of land on the western boundary of the Fort Johnson property to James Kline. This reduction is noted in the transfer of property between Matthias Van Brocklin and his wife and Ethan Akin in September, 1859. By the time the Akin heirs of Iowa sold the house to Major General John Watts de Peyster of Tivoli in October, 1905 (who then donated it to the present owner, The Montgomery County Historical Society), only two acres of the original Fort Johnson estate remained.

A careful comparison of Guy Johnson's 1759 engraving Figure 4) with the surveyed map done by James Frost in 1836 (figure 19) indicates that several structures still remained at that time from the original estate of Sir William Johnson. The grist mill, noted as "G" in the 1759 illustration, is labeled "C" by Frost. Guy Johnson's "M" "A very large barn and stables," might be...
the barn “e” in the 1836 map. John Johnson’s claim mentioned “a well-built stone stable with 8 stalls — Room for carriages and large hay loft.” This does not appear in Guy Johnson’s sketch, but is undoubtedly “b”, the carriage house, on the 1836 map. Historian Frothingham’s mention of the post-Revolutionary wooden trade structure on the east side of the creek is clearly indicated by “d”, the store, on the 1836 map. The question of the location of the sawmill listed in the Loyalist Claim may be answered by Frost’s “h,” a considerable distance upstream and therefore not present in the Guy Johnson sketch. Interestingly, a distillery is also indicated on the 1836 map, but there is no documentary references to its existence during Sir William’s time, its mid-eighteenth century date, although plausible, is a matter of conjecture. Note that the two stonehouses that flanked the residence as late as 1796 have disappeared by the time Frost made his map.

Further references from the second half of the nineteenth century note the continued existence of most of the structures noted in 1836. The “historian” Simms visited the fort in August, 1846 and twenty years later in October, 1866. He reported that there was still a gristmill upon the Johnson mill site which continued to do a good business, and the stone building a few rods back of the dwelling was then used as a barn.79 An 1853 wall map of Montgomery County, made during the time of Almarin Young’s residency, indicates “T. Delamater’s G.M.” with an x at the same location of William Johnson’s mill. Further upstream, at a point where the creek crosses the road, the x initialed “S.M.” undoubtedly refers to the sawmill. A combination gazetteer/business directory for Montgomery County published in 1870 listed “Hollenbeck and Coughnet’s Mills,” located about three miles northwest of Amsterdam on Fort Johnson Creek. The sawmill contained one upright saw. “Fort Johnson Grist Mill,” noted as being near the same place, contained three runs of stones. Rufus Grider’s historical sketch of 1886,71 which shows a front view of the residence, clearly shows the stone barn to the immediate northeast (figure 5). This one-storey structure was indicated as a stable in the 1905 map of Akin (figure 22) and was subsequently remodelled and raised to two storeys in order to accommodate a caretaker after the historical society took ownership of the property. In 1897, W. Max Reid claimed that a portion of the walls of the old Johnson gristmill had lately been incorporated in a part of the Morris Knitting Mills.73 Judging from a site comparison of the 1836 Frost map and the 1905 map of the village, it is very likely that remains of the colonial mill were used in the Morris complex. Today, the only outbuilding from Sir William Johnson’s time which remains on the two acre site (besides the converted barn) is the privy. This small structure was not indicated in Guy Johnson’s engraving (perhaps because to do so would be considered distasteful) nor on any maps. Its interior paneling matches that of the hall in the residence, which is of eighteenth century origin. In the early 1880’s, the well-known artist E.L. Henry sketched this building and clearly indicated its stone foundations built over the stream (Figure 23)74 Although its ogive roof form is typical of the small garden structures of the 1700’s, the privy interpretation of the structure is strengthened by its original situating.
APPENDIX A

SIR WILLIAM JOHNSON'S FAMILY

Susannah DeLancey

Sir Peter Warren

Anne Warren

Christopher Johnson

SIR WILLIAM JOHNSON
1715-1774

Catherine Weisenberg

Warren Johnson

John Johnson

Anne (Nancy) Johnson

Daniel Claus

Sir John Johnson
1742-1830

Mary (Polly) Watts

Mary (Polly) Johnson

Guy Johnson

The above genealogical chart was based on the information presented in Pound’s biography and the Johnson Papers. (See footnote 1). After Catherine Weisenberg’s death circa 1745, the Indian woman Caroline, traditionally known as the niece of Hendrick, head sachem of the Mohawks and trusted friend of Johnson, became his consort. William of Canajoharie was born of this union, as supposedly were two daughters, Caroline and Charlotte, although they were not mentioned in Johnson’s will. Later, Molly Brant, sister of the infamous Joseph Brant, leader of the Indians during the Revolutionary War, became Johnson’s wife and was known as Brown Lady Johnson. Eight children from this union received bequests in Johnson’s will: Peter, Elizabeth, Magdalene, Margaret, George, Mary, Susannah, and Anne.

APPENDIX B

CHRONOLOGY OF HISTORIC VIEWS OF FORT JOHNSON


French engraving labeled Fort Johnson, no date, published in Johnson Papers, 6: frontispiece. Because this view incorrectly shows seven bays and more strongly resembles Johnson Hall, especially in color, it was probably mis-identified.


Daguerrotype of Fort Johnson exterior by Sidney B. Mead.


number 5, p. 17: “Fort Johnson from the Garden.” west view of Sir William’s dwelling on the Mohawk.

number 6, p. 16: front view of residence with supposed visitors.

number 7, p. 18: view from the east.

Photo of Fort Johnson, undated.

Montgomery County Historical Society collection, accession number 1636.

Postcard of Fort Johnson at Akin, 1906.

Photos by John Arthur Maney, 1906.


Old Fort Johnson and the Kayaderosseros Creek frontispiece.

Ghost Room and a Ghostly Vision 16.


A Corner in Cellar under Old Fort Johnson 50.

Deep Casemented Window in Lady Johnson Room 60.

The East Room 136.

The Entrance Doorway 150.

A Door (Interior) 152.

The Hall 154.

The West Room 158.

An Attic Window 174.

Wine Vault Cellar 202.

Undated postcards in the collection at the Montgomery County Historical Society.

View of Fort Johnson through pillars, pre-1911 (Before construction of drive-way). Acc. no. 943.

View of attic, acc. no. 1451.

Good view of cellar, acc. no. 1456.


Front view from west including neighboring dwellings. Printed in Germany. No accession number, Gov. Clinton Desk.

Newspaper photos: One exterior view, one interior view of drawing room.


Fort Johnson from First-hand Accounts


"At sunset we were politely received at Colonel Johnson's gate, by himself in person. Here we lodged. His mansion was stately, and situate a little distance from the river, on rising ground and adjacent to a stream which turned his mill." (Hawley, p. 122)


"... the house of Colonel Johnson, who is charged with everything relating to Indian affairs, is in this gorge, at two leagues below the second Indian village. It is at the head of a little flat of land, which extends to the banks of the river. Upon the opposite side of the river is a little house, the only one coming from the hill and very shallow. This house is a kind of chateau, with a projection in front, and crowned by a curl. It has quite a large front yard, with a wall around it, and two windows on each side of the entrance gate. The house is a little below the yard. The rear of the house is set between two swells of mountains. Upon the one on the right is a blockhouse to somewhat cover the chateau, but it itself commanded by the hills at pistol shot. This house is isolated, and very open to an attack." (Hawley, p. 122)


"He purchased from the Indians (having the grant confirmed by his sovereign) a large and fertile tract of land upon the Mohawk river; where, having cleared and cultivated the ground, he built himself a convenient and commodious residence, known afterwards by the names of Johnson Castle and Johnson Hall. The first was on a fine eminence standed round, and slightly fortified; the last was built on the site of the river, on a most fertile and delightful plain surrounded with an ample and well-cultivated domain; and that again encircled by European settlers, who had first come there as architects, or workmen, and had been induced by Sir William's liberality, and the singular beauty of the district, to continue... The castle contained the store in which all goods meant for the Indian traffic were laid up, and all the peltry received in exchange. The hall was his summer residence, and the place round which his greatest improvements were made." (Grant, p. 172)

Travel journal account reporting Fort Johnson. Francis Grant, Journal of a Tour from the City of New York to Canada, by way of Albany and Niagara, 1767. New York State Library.

"... its situation near the foot of the hill, and is only proof against small arms. Round the sides we are limited by the river, new built up the same side on the stream, and until the present day. Account of an "explorer" interested in possibilities of land development. Richard Smith, A Tour of Four Great Rivers in 1769, Francis W. Halsey, ed. (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1961), p. 25.

"Daniel Claus's House is of stone and one story high. Sir John's is also of stone and contains Two Stories, all Three situate at the Foot of Hills very steep, barren and rocky having narrow Stairs of Bottom Ground. Sir John has most Meadow and their Farms are much inferior to those of many common People hereabouts... Sir John possesses an elegant Seat and Gardens called Fort Johnson Hall. There is now no other Fortress than a wooden Block House and a Powder Magazine. From Sir John to his father Sir Wms they count 9 miles." (Smith, p. 25)


"... the most delightful grove — so darkened with weeping willows (which, include all the prying eye of curiosity) ... the beauty of this same Fort Johnson, the fertility of the soil, the commodiousness and elegance of the buildings, the great value of the mills, and the very inconsiderable price which is asked for the whole of it." (Burr, p. 282)

Excerpt from November 7, 1790, from the 1782-1831 diary of Dr. Alexander Coventry, New York State Library, Division of Manuscripts and History, Mss. 12466, 5 boxes. This reference was provided by Kristin L. Gibbons.

"... Stone and Stained at one De Groote's, passd by G. Johnson's old house (called the Hall) which is a large, stone, elegant-house; also a stone barn: about a mile above passed the ruins of another stone house, formerly possessed by a Mr. Ross; and some on about a quarter to come to Sir Wm's old house called "The Hall." This is a very elegant stone house with a court before it, on each side of which is a stone building with oval roofs, and stone arched. This was possessed by Cornelius Schuyler or Cuyler." (Coventry, p. 41)

APPENDIX D

CHRONOLOGY OF MAPS AND PLANS SHOWING FORT JOHNSON SITE


“A Chronological Map of the Province of New York in North America” by Captain Montessor, 1775. New York State Library, Division of Manuscripts and History.

APPENDIX E

HISTORY OF OWNERSHIP OF FORT JOHNSON PROPERTY

Deeds Recorded at Montgomery County Clerk’s Office, Fonda.

February 22, 1817
Grantor: John C. Cuyler of Albany, merchant and his wife
Grantee: Jeremiah Schuyler of Watervliet

“tract of land situate lying and being on the north side of the Mohawk River in the town of Caughnawaga now Amsterdam in the County of Montgomery beginning at the division line on the river formerly made between Sir John Johnson and Col. Daniel Claus at the mouth of a small creek from thence running up along the bank of said river to a butternut tree marked on one side with a blaze and stands 63 chains from the mouth of the said creek on a course N 71° W thence north with a line parallel to the division line aforesaid to the north bounds of the patent of Wilson and Abeel about one mile from the river afresaid thence along the line last afresaid easterly to the division of the said Sir John Johnson and Daniel Claus thence along the said division line to the Mohawk River and place of beginning containing 500 acres.”

January 8, 1820
Grantor: Jeremiah Schuyler and his wife Jane
Grantee: John J. Van Schack of Albany

same citation of land conveyance on this deed as above

December 14, 1824
Grantor: John J. Van Schack of Amsterdam and wife Lydia
Grantee: George Maxwell of Kings County, mariner

same citation of land conveyance on this deed as above

January 26, 1826
Grantor: George Maxwell and his wife
Grantee: George Smith of Florida, merchant

same citation of land conveyance on this deed as above

June 1, 1842
Grantor: Morris Miller Davidson of New York City, lawyer
Grantee: Dr. Oliver Davidson of Saratoga Springs

“A parcel of the Fort Johnson farm and known and distinguished on a map of said farm made by James Frost and dated the 6th. day of October, 1836 filed in the Montgomery County Clerk’s Office as lot number one and is bounded as follows: beginning in the centre of the Mill Creek at the south end of the bridge across the same on the road leading to the grist mill and thence north 84° 30’ W 2 chains 15 links to the northeast corner of the carriage house then along the rear of the same south 82°15’ W 70 links to the northwest corner thereof thence N 30° W 6 chains 34 links thence N 82° W 25 chains 65 links to a stake and stones thence south 9 chains and 94 links to the Mohawk Turnpike thence along the same and the lands of the Utica and Schenectady Rail Road Company S 76°15’ E 7 chains 68 links thence S 12° W 1 chain 30 links to the Mohawk River then down to the said premises containing 34 acres and 99/100 of an acre of land be the same more or less reserving to the heirs of George Smith deceased their heirs and assigns the right of using the over road leading from the mill across the north easterly corner of the above premises for the purposes of passing to and from the mill.”

March 28, 1853
Grantor: Matthias O. Davidson of Cumberland, Md., engineer
Grantee: Almarin Young of Amsterdam

same citation of conveyance of land on this deed as above

September 19, 1859
Grantor: Matthias Van Brocklin and wife Charlotte
Grantee: Ethan Akin

“The above description is intended to embrace all the lands conveyed by Matthias O. Davidson (March 28, 1853) except so much thereof as has been conveyed by the above named Almarin Young to James W. Kline.* The lands hereby conveyed contains 24 acres and 89/100 of an acre.”

* This deed, recorded May 7, 1856, describes ten acres of land on the western boundary of the Fort Johnson property.

October 30, 1905
Grantor: Ethan and Charity Akin of Cleddden, Iowa
Grantee: Major-General John Watts de Peyster of Tivoli

“Bounded easterly by the center of the Old Fort creek and of the easterly branch thereof, southerly by the Mohawk Turnpike, westerly by a straight line located nine feet easterly of the easterly marquee of the garden walk running northerly and southerly along the house occupied by Theron Akin, which westerly boundary is the 26° and 5’ westerly from the northwest corner of the stone house known as Fort Johnson measured on a line extending along the northerly side of said house and is 29’ westerly from the southwest corner of said stone house measured on a line extending along the south side thereof the terminus of said boundary being marked by two iron pegs set in the ground. On the north by the southerly line of a roadway leading westerly from the Johnstown highway across said Old Fort creek to the northwest corner of a stone barn, thence southerly along the west side of said barn to a stone wall to the westerly boundary line above described. Together with a right of way over said roadway in common with the adjoining owners as heretofore used and enjoyed. The above described premises contain about two acres of land and contain the stone residence erected by Sir William Johnson and occupied by him and his descendants for many years. Subject however to any right which the adjoining owners may lawfully have in or to a covered tailrace running through the rear of said premises.

November 9, 1905
Grantor: Major-General John Watts de Peyster Of Tivoli
Grantee: Montgomery County Historical Society

same citation of land conveyance on this deed as above

APPENDIX F

Architectural Drawings of Fort Johnson prior to this report

1. Historic American Building Survey, Number NY391
2. Beery, Jr., 1940, Public Works Administration, United States Department of the Interior
   1. Basement Plan
   2. First Floor Plan
   3. Second Floor Plan
   4. Front Elevation
   5. West Elevation
   6. Detail of 1st Fl. S.W. Room Paneling
   7. Detail of Entrance, Section and Elevation

1. Front Elevation: details of main cornice and window jamb;
2. Main Entrance Porch, Elevation, and Section: details of moulding and triglyph;
3. Living Room Paneling: details of sills and cornice;
4. Living Room and Dining Room Mantels: elevations and sections;
5. Main staircases: details of handrail and ceiling cove, plan of lower stair treads.
Figure 25. The front elevation of Fort Johnson. This drawing, one of several, was published in the magazine *Architectural Forum* in February, 1921, volume 34.

Figure 26. Details of the eighteenth century front entrance porch as recorded in *Architectural Forum*.

Figure 27. The main staircase dates from the eighteenth century. From *Architectural Forum*.

Figure 28. The living room mantel (room 102) was installed in the 1770's while the mantel in the dining room dates from the early nineteenth century. From *Architectural Forum*.

Figure 29. The paneling in room 102 dates from the construction of the house in 1749. From *Architectural Forum*.
Figure 30. The south facade of Fort Johnson, 1974.
A DESCRIPTION OF EXISTING EXTERIOR AND INTERIOR BUILDING FABRIC

Over a period of several months, Fort Johnson was subjected to an investigation of its architectural and decorative fabric. This was undertaken both to determine where repairs were needed and to gain a better understanding of the changes and modifications that the house has undergone in the past two hundred and twenty-seven years. Several techniques were used in this survey, from visual investigation and measurement to the analysis of paint samples. All architectural features, both inside and out, were analyzed to determine their age, and the building was measured and recorded in a series of drawings and photographs.

Both the interior and exterior of the house were investigated to ascertain the various paint colors used during the building’s long life. Each room or exterior feature underwent a careful paint analysis in which samples were taken from woodwork, walls, floors and ceiling and then were keyed to measured drawings. The numbered samples were then examined using a Bausch and Lomb Stereozoom 7 microscope to determine the number of paint layers and the various colors. All colors were matched to those found in the Munsell Book of Color, Matte Finish Collection-1973, and the possibility of fading and color change was taken into account. The results of this investigation were summarized and included in the room-by-room description. When a color is named in the report, it is followed in parentheses by the Munsell number. It should be noted that this paint analysis served only to help in the determination of the age of various components of the woodwork and their relation in time to each other. A more extensive analysis involving paint removal from larger surface areas using a careful layer by layer method should be undertaken to determine the exact historic color schemes for each room and to reveal any decorative painting or stenciling before the interior restoration is undertaken.

EXTERIOR

Fort Johnson is situated on a level plain approximately seven hundred feet from the north bank of the Mohawk River. The two story house is rectangular in plan and is surmounted by a high, hipped roof from which four tall, brick chimneys rise. The massive exterior walls are laid up in coursed rubble of roughly squared limestone. The main facade, which faces south to the river, is divided into five bays, the central bay containing the main entry with its projecting portico. This is the finest feature of the exterior. The classical wood portico rests on a tooled limestone platform approached by three stone steps. A comparison of photographs of various periods indicates that the present grade around the steps is higher than in the past. The delicate woodwork of the porch, particularly the fretwork, is similar to that found on the mantels in the interior of the house and may date from renovations just prior to the Revolution. The raised and beveled panels found on the underside of the portico roof match those found in the interior hallway. As is evidenced by photographs and drawings (figure 13), the double, shutter-like doors with their iron, strap hinges were in place as early as the 1880’s. Similarly, a mid-nineteenth century photograph (figure 11) indicates that three panel shutters were used on the house at that time and probably in the eighteenth century. A close investigation revealed a variety of nail types in the various components of the portico, the majority being handwrought and dating from the eighteenth century. The two column shafts proved to be hollow, their various parts are joined with glue blocks rather than nails indicating that they are nineteenth
Figure 33. The large wooden barrel in the northeast corner of basement room B1 probably was a rainwater cistern. From an undated postcard circa 1900-25.

Figure 34. This view of the main hall in 1902 should be compared with figure 37. The stair risers are not painted or perhaps have a painted grain finish.

Figure 35. The plaster ceiling was still in place in basement room B1 circa 1906.

The rear elevation is very austere, and its features are asymmetrically placed. At grade level, there is a doorway located slightly off center, and a stone bulkhead gives access to the basement. Above the door and between the first and second floors is a small, square window which lights the interior stair (figure 32). This opening has tooled stone sill and lintel and appears to have been lengthened when the interior stair was modified in the 1770's. This opening is flanked on the second floor by two unshuttered windows, the one to the left having a tooled stone lintel and a sill. The roof line is broken by two tall, square chimneys laid up in twentieth century brick.

The east and west elevations have the same elements. The most important feature of the west elevation is the pair of shutters on the first floor window. They are simple in design, each leaf being composed of a frame sheathed in boards. When shut, these shutters present an unadorned surface. The wrought-iron hardware indicates that these may be original eighteenth century elements.

Figure 36. The configuration of the plaster and exposed lath behind this wood pilaster in the main hall indicates that there may have been a partition or arch at this location prior to the installation of the pilaster.

century replacements. Removal of paint from the entablature disclosed the location of missing guttae on the underside of the corona above each triglyph. There is no indication that these were attached to mutules. The E.L. Henry painting done in 1881 shows these elements still in place. The hipped roof is punctuated by five dormers, each with a hipped roof. There are three on the south slope and one each on the east and west slopes, and all date from the eighteenth century. Originally there were two dormers on the north slope flanking the inner face of each chimney.

The east and west elevations have the same elements. The most important feature of the west elevation is the pair of shutters on the first floor window. They are simple in design, each leaf being composed of a frame sheathed in boards. When shut, these shutters present an unadorned surface. The wrought-iron hardware indicates that these may be original eighteenth century elements.
A closer look at the roof reveals that, beneath the late nineteenth century red and gray slate, is an earlier wood shingle roof (figure 14). All four chimneys have been rebuilt at various times. The southeast one retains the largest percentage of old brick, while the two at the rear of the building have been rebuilt above the roof line in the twentieth century. The wood cornice, or portions of it, was rebuilt in the mid-twentieth century.

The following paint colors were found on the exterior woodwork. Most samples from the wood dormers indicated that they were painted a deep green-brown (7.5 Y 4/4). A gray (5 BG 5/1) was also found in some of the samples. The dormer sash had as its first color a typical eighteenth century oxblood red (7.5 R 5/10). The roof cornice, of recent origin, had only one layer of paint: white, which was on wood that appeared to have been exposed to weather. The oldest shutters, found on the west elevation, had ten layers of paint, the earliest being the same green-brown found on the dormers (7.5 Y 4/4), as well as the window frames. In general, the surface of the wood, under many layers of paint on the window frames, sills and shutters, appeared weathered, as though it has been exposed and unpainted for a lengthy period, probably during the nineteenth century. The Green-brown paint, a popular color in the late nineteenth century, was probably applied at that time. Possibly the earliest exterior paint color, a beige (12.5Y 8/4) applied over a white primer was found on a concealed portion of the front portico and probably dates from the eighteenth century.

When the slate was removed from the north slope of the roof in August, 1976, an earlier wood shingle roof, which probably dated from the mid-nineteenth century, was exposed. The subsequent removal of this layer exposed the eighteenth century roof boards, and the location of the two missing dormers shown in the Guy Johnson sketch were clearly evident. The removal of the slate from the cheek walls of the dormers revealed the eighteenth century horizontal board siding. During the dismantling of the brick chimneys, 1/8" thick lead flashing, which may date from the eighteenth century, was discovered (figure 14).

The discovery of charred roof boards and a rafter on the north slope of the roof near the northeast chimney indicate that a fire occurred sometime before the placement of the wood shingles in the mid nineteenth century and may have been the reason for the removal of the north dormers.
During the paint investigation, the most prevalent early interior color found (in most cases applied directly to the wood) was a deep blue (10B 3/6 — 10B 6/6) in which a coarse crystalline pigment was clearly visible. Also typical of the earliest layers was a red color (7.5 4/8) and an oxblood red (7.5 4/8) found mainly in less important rooms. All baseboards were typically of a darker color than the other woodwork in the rooms, usually a deep red-brown or black. The later colors, applied over the earlier, stronger colors, tended to be shades of white, gray and beige and a strong yellow. In some cases, the intermixing of two contrasting color layers may indicate some sort of decorative painting, such as marbling or graining.

The examination of the paint in a particular room made it evident that the various components of the woodwork, doorframes, mantels, paneling etc., were not installed at the same time. In all the rooms, samples that were taken from the plaster walls proved difficult to analyze due to the existing layers of wallpaper, as well as the possibility that the plaster had been cleaned, patched or even replaced at some point in the past. It is also possible that some of the rooms may have always been papered.

The following room descriptions enumerate and date some of the more important features found in the house.

The basement contains two rooms, separated by a stone masonry wall; both retain their original spaces and much of their historic fabric. The room (B-1) one enters upon descending the stair was probably used as a kitchen in the late eighteenth century. The stone chimney foundation on the east wall may have contained a cooking fireplace, while the masonry arch on the north wall serves only to support the chimney above. The finish fabric includes: a flagstone floor relaid in the last ten years over a concrete slab; stone walls covered with several layers of whitewash; and exposed ceiling joists and flooring, also whitewashed, but at some point finished in plaster on lath as shown in photographs dating from circa 1900 (figure 35). The bulkhead access to the outside dates from the nineteenth century, while the stair to the first floor retains elements from the eighteenth century.

Room B2 lacks some of the finish found in B1. This room was used for storage, and there are indications of missing, eighteenth century vertical board partitions in the southeast corner. During the nineteenth century, coalbins were located in the northwest corner. The coal-fired, sheet-metal furnace,
The mantel in room 103 retains its eighteenth century appearance while nineteenth century flooring covers the location of the hearth, which takes up a large amount of space in this room, has been converted to gas. The concrete slab floor was laid in the 1960's.

On the first floor, the main entry and stairhall, Room 101, retains almost all of its eighteenth century woodwork (figures 34 and 37). Investigations revealed that the paneled wainscot in the south half of the room was originally painted a grayish-white (5PB 7/1), while the stair and wainscot in the north end of the hall were a gray salmon color (10R 7/4). The fluted pilasters dividing the hall have fewer layers of paint, all of which are white (figure 36). This difference in paint color between the front and rear halves of the room, coupled with the condition of the wall behind the pilasters, indicates that the hall was originally divided by a partition into separate rooms. Indications on the wall paneling show that the present open string stairway originally had a higher landing and a steeper rise (figure 38). It was probably modified in the 1770's. Hand wrought eighteenth century brads found in the balusters indicate that this modification may have been one of the changes made by John Johnson prior to his marriage in 1773.

The plain, scroll string brackets, the square balusters (three per step), and the molded handrail that spirals at the newel are almost federal in character. The stair treads were finished in a black-brown varnish, and both the treads and risers later had a yellow paint applied (10YR 7/10). They were then covered with an oxblood red (7.5 R 4/6). A closer investigation may reveal graining on the risers. The earliest color common to all the woodwork in the hall, Room 101, was white.

Traditionally known as the West Room, Room 102 is of considerable architectural interest because all four walls are covered from floor to ceiling with walnut, beveled-edge paneling dating from the eighteenth century. The rough mortar finish applied to the stone behind the paneling may have been a form of damp-proofing. The paneling and the window bifolds were originally painted a deep blue (10B 3/6-6/6). At some date later in the eighteenth century, the present mantel (figure 39), with its plain frieze and delicate fret, was modified. The room was then painted white, the earliest color common to all elements in the room. Indications on the floor, walls and cornice to the right and left of the chimney breast suggest that there were originally closets flanking the fireplace, which possibly were removed during the remodeling prior to the Revolution. The door in the north wall, with its six beveled panels and early hardware, is representative of the earliest type to have survived in the house (figure 41).

The simplified finish found in this northwest room, 103, indicates that it was intended for a less formal use. It may have served as a living space for the family during the cold winter months. The majority of the woodwork, including the mantel (figure 42), dates from the eighteenth century and was painted in the same blue (10 B 3/6-6/6) as the parlor. A varnish-like finish
applied to the surface of the wood indicates that the mantel and shutters may have had a natural finish during the earliest period. A “cherry room” is mentioned in the Daniel Claus memo. Whether this referred to the actual cherry wood or just a type of finish is unknown. At present, the paneled shutters are permanently secured in their boxes. The projecting chimney breast was used to accommodate a later furnace flue, and the fireplace opening was then sealed. Nineteenth century flooring covers the location of the original hearth.

The small northeast room, 104, is finished similarly to the corresponding room across the hall. The mantel, originally located on the north wall, has been removed. The earliest paint color found on the window frame and shutters was a gray-rose (5R 6/10). The door frames are of a later date, having a white paint as their first finish. At some yet later date in the eighteenth century, all of the woodwork was painted a deep oxblood red (7.5 R 4/8). As in room 103, the paneled shutters are secured in their box.

The second floor stairhall, Room 201, retains all of its eighteenth century finish fabric. Later modifications were confined to the two nineteenth century doors and their frames at the north end of the room. The window trim and shutters were first painted with the same blue that appeared downstairs. The wainscot added later in the eighteenth century, was first painted a gray stone color (5Y 7/2). The present trim surrounding the doors to the small north rooms was installed much later; the original color, a gray-white, is found several layers over the range of colors on the older woodwork. The earliest color common to all the woodwork would be this gray-white.

As in the room directly below it, the southwest chamber, Room 202, is completely covered in beveled panels, originally painted in the same blue (10 3/6-6/6) that may have had a glazed finish. The west wall is composed of a fireplace flanked by two closets, each having a set of paneled doors dating from the mid-eighteenth century. The mantel, with its delicate fret below the shelf, is not of the same period as the wall paneling (figure 46). Its first paint layer is white. The window seats may not have been originally painted, but rather left in a natural finish. In the north closet, the hand-hewn ceiling beams are exposed. The split lath and plaster ceiling that was applied directly to the underside of the attic floor boards during the eighteenth century is also visible.

The small northwest room, 203, is different in character from the previous rooms discussed. All of the woodwork, including the mantel, is unpainted and has only a varnished finish indicating a probable late nineteenth century origin. The 9” to 12” wide floor boards, which are worn near the fireplace, and the brick hearth both survive from the eighteenth century. A photograph taken in 1906 shows the fireplace opening sealed as it is today (figure 47).

The northeast room, 204, was probably used as a bedroom. The finish is identical to that found in the room just described and dates from the same period. The unpainted woodwork includes a plain wainscot, two windows with paneled bifolds, and a mantel, all dating from the late nineteenth century. The fireplace, which remains open, has a painted plaster surround and brick hearth.

The paneled wall in the southeast chamber, Room 205, is composed of a central fireplace with a boldly paneled overmantel, flanked by closets with paneled, double doors (figure 48). The eighteenth century paneling was originally painted...
framing members were painted white indicating that they were exposed prior to the construction of the lath and plaster enclosure over the stairwell. This simpler finish probably dates from the period of the original stairway. The floor boards average 12 to 14" in width and 12'0" in length. The four dormers date from the original construction of the house. The casement sash are painted in an oxblood red (7.5 R 4/8). The sills contain 1" diameter holes that were used to pivot guns during the eighteenth century. A fifth, smaller dormer, containing a single glazed sash, is located near the ridge. The floor space is divided in the southwest corner by two vertical board partitions enclosing a small room. There are indications on the floor of similar missing partitions, all dating from the eighteenth century. An open riser stairway ascends to a plank platform which is supported by the collar beams. From this platform, two similar stairs rise to two nineteenth century roof hatches near the ridge. All the materials are eighteenth century in origin, although they may not be in their original locations (figure 50). On the North roof slope the locations of two missing dormers are indicated by patches filled with circular sawn boards. The removal of the roofing material surrounding the west roof hatch revealed fragments of what may have been two iron pintles secured to the roof board along the west edge of the opening with hand wrought eighteenth century nails.

Figure 47. In room 203, a turn of the century photographers trick has created a ghostly image. As early as 1906 the fireplace was sealed up.

Figure 48. The symmetrical arrangement of paneling and fireplace dates from the construction of the house circa 1749 while the mantel was installed in the later eighteenth century (room 205).

Figure 49. Undated photograph of the attic taken from a postcard.

blue (10 B 3/6-6/6). The mantel, modified and of a slightly later date, was first painted beige (2.5Y 8/4). The other walls have a beveled panel wainscot (to a height of 3'-9") of a later date than the wall paneling. The wainscot was first covered by a gray paint. At some point, probably in the nineteenth century, all the woodwork was painted yellow (5Y 9/6). The fireplace contains a cast-iron stove, labeled "Ross & Bird Hibernia Furnace 1782," which projects onto the brick hearth.

Continuing up the main stairway one reaches the attic. The top landing is enclosed by walls and a ceiling of plaster on split lath which form a small cubical that projects into the attic space. The predominate feature is the roof framing with its massive hand-hewn timbers. Hewn 7" to 8" roof rafters, spaced 45" on center, meet in a pegged joint at the ridge and are reinforced by hewn collar beams. The roof is clad with rough vertical sawn boards, shiplapped and pierced by a variety of hand-forged nails.

During the removal of the roofing material above the stairwell it was discovered that the underside of the roof boards and
SITE

Two outbuildings on the surrounding site remain from the eighteenth century. The caretaker's house, which was built during the early twentieth century, incorporates the outer stone walls of an eighteenth century barn (figure 51).

Near the creek, about 105 feet from the northeast corner of the main house, is the eighteenth century privy, or "convenience." It is remarkable that this somewhat fragile wood frame structure has survived in almost unaltered form. The exterior is sheathed in narrow, beaded clapboards originally painted an oxblood red. Two windows contain casement sash with six lights, while the six panel door is similar to the earliest type found in the main house. The ogive roof was recently covered in tin plate. A nineteenth century sketch shows a roof finial that is now missing. The interior paneled wainscot is similar to that found in the main halls of the house. Until recently, the building rested on a stone foundation that projected over the nearby creek (figure 24).

In summary, the investigation has shown that Fort Johnson has changed very little since its construction in the eighteenth century and is thus one of New York State's outstanding examples of domestic colonial architecture. Any significant changes made to the interior finish occurred in the eighteenth century prior to the Revolution, probably due to the desire of Sir John Johnson to modernize the house. Later modifications, made in the early nineteenth century and early twentieth century in Rooms 203 and 204, were in keeping with the character of the original woodwork found in other parts of the house.
ROOM-BY-ROOM DESCRIPTION

BASEMENT
Room B1
Floor
Flagstone (early 19th century) relaid over concrete slab (1960's).
Ceiling
Exposed, hand-hewn floor joists, 10" x 11"; floor boards vary 1'-1" to 1'-5" (18th century). All whitewashed. Boards have been taken up and relaid.
Walls
Whitewashed fieldstone masonry (18th century). Opening in the west wall for a heating duct, 1'-5" x 5'-0".
Cornice
Along the west wall is a wood fillet held with hand-wrought nails (18th century).
Doors
#B11. Vertical board, 5'-10" x 3'-3", three light window, cut bluestone sill (late 19th century). Hardware is 20th century.
#B12. Door missing, hand-hewn wood enframement and one iron pintle (18th century).
Windows
Heating
Masonry mass of rough-cut limestone blocks on the east wall may have contained a cooking fireplace. (Opening now filled in.) Two round, galvanized steel, heating ducts from Room B-2.
Lighting
Two surface-mounted procelain incandescent fixtures, surface-mounted BX and Romex cable (mid-20th century).
Plumbing
Galvanized steel gas pipe, 1 ¼ " diameter to supply furnace, (early 20th century).
Stairway
In northwest corner, open stringer winding wood stairway with 9 treads and 10 risers. Rebuilt in the 20th century, but incorporates materials from the 19th century as well as the original 18th century stringer with its beaded edge and hand-wrought nails.
Room B2
Floor
Concrete slab (1960's).
Ceiling
Same as Room B1, whitewashed except at the north end.
Walls
Whitewashed fieldstone masonry (18th century). Brick lining 5' 2" high in northwest corner for coal bin (19th century).
Windows
Heating
Lighting
Two surface-mounted porcelain incandescent fixtures, surface mounted BX and Romex cable (mid-20th century).
Plumbing
Galvanized steel gas pipe, 1 1/2" diameter to furnace, plastic pipe in southwest corner from sump pump (mid-20th century).

FIRST FLOOR
Room 101
Floor
South section: Random width (5" to 8") tongue-and-groove boards (probably 19th century). North section: Random width (9" to 11") tongue-and-groove boards (probably 18th century). Both sections run east-west.
Ceiling
Plaster on wood lath covered by paper and paint. Carrying beam encased in wood paneling, spanning space between pilasters (18th century). Below stair landing is tongue-and-groove beaded board 2 1/2" wide (late 19th century).
Walls
Interior partitions Wallpapered plaster on split lath with paneled wainscot to height of 45" (18th century). Exterior walls Plaster on stone with paneled wainscot (18th century). Fluted pilasters, 10" wide, on east and west walls covering what may have been location of missing partition (18th or early 19th century).
Corinice
6" wood cove with molded edge (18th century). 1 1/2" molded picture rail (late 19th century). A similar cove is found in the main hall at Cherry Hill, an 18th century house located in Albany, New York.
Baseboard
4" splashboard with molded top (18th century).
Doors
#1011. French door, each leaf with 10 lights (late 19th century). 6" wide molded wood trim with evidence of a 15" strap hinge, a latch, and the lock location of the original 18th century door.
Heating
Two cast-iron floor grates: 36" x 36" in southeast corner, and 21" x 25" near stairway (early 20th century).
Lighting
Fluorescent fixtures over doorways to Rooms 202 and 205 (mid-20th century).
Stairway
Open string, two-run stair. Treads are 11" wide, risers are 7 1/2" high. Plain scroll string brackets, 3 balusters per tread, square in section. Molded wood handrail spirals at the newel and ramps at each landing. Paneled wainscot follows profile of balustrade. Indications on wainscot that the stair was totally rebuilt in the late 18th century. Hand-wrought nails.
Other Features
Heat detectors above doorways to Rooms 102 and 105 (mid-20th century).

Room 102
Floor
Random width (5"-8") tongue-and-groove boards running east-west (probably 19th century) patched in the center of the north section (17" x 20").
Ceiling
Plaster on wood lath, paper and paint (18th and 19th century).
Walls
Four walls covered by free-standing paneling with pinned joints and beveled, rectangular panels that are divided into bays of varying width (18th century). Stone walls behind the paneling covered in mortar (18th century).
Corinice
4 1/2" molded wood cornice (18th century).
Baseboard
4" wood splashboard with quarter round top (18th century).
Doors
Room 101. 6 recessed panels, predominant lock rail (18th century), 3" molded wood trim. Pintle strap hinges, cast-iron Norfolk latch (19th century) hand-wrought hook.

#1041. 6 recessed panels, predominant lock rail (18th century), 3" molded wood trim. Pintle strap hinges, cast-iron Norfolk latch (19th century) hand-wrought hook.

#1042. Door missing, plain 5 1/2" wood trim, one butt hinge.

Windows
Room 101, with 17" deep seat at 28" from floor. Trim same as door (19th century).

Fireplace
Chimney breast projects 30°. Opening closed up, baseboard continuous across front.

Room 105
Floor
West side: Random width (6 5/8" to 8") tongue-and-groove boards, (19th century).


Both laid over an earlier floor.

Ceiling
Plaster on lath, covered by paper and paint (18th and 19th century).

Walls
All walls of plaster on lath, wallpapered. Paneled wainscot to height of 44 1/2" (18th century).

Cornice
1 3/4" wood picture molding secured by wire nails (20th century).

Baseboard
On stair landing, wood splashboard with molded top, 9 3/4" high (18th century).

Doors
#2020 and 2051. Molded wood trim (18th century).

#2031 and 2041. Narrow molded wood trim (19th century).

Windows
One window in south wall, same as Room 102. Bifolding interior shutters with hand-wrought H hinges (18th century). North wall stair landing, double casement 16 lights with decorative cast-iron butt hinges (late 19th century). Bifolding shutters are secured in the jamb.

Lighting
Fluorescent fixtures over doors #2051 and #2020 (mid-20th century).

Stairway
To attic, same as in Room 101. Plain splashboard with quarter round top follows stair (18th century).

Room 202
Floor
Random width (6" to 7") tongue-and-groove boards running east-west (18th century).

Ceiling
Plaster on lath.

Walls
All walls plaster on lath, patched in north-west corner.

Baseboard
Plain on lath, patched in north-west corner.

Doors
All doors are beveled, 6 rectangular, beveled panels, predominant lock rail, pinned joints (18th century) patched across top rail. 6" molded wood trim. Two iron pintle hinges (18th century).

Windows
Two, 12/12 double rope-hung sash, pane size 8 1/2" x 10 1/2", muntin size 1 1/2" (18th century).

16" deep reveal with bifolding interior shutters, each with three raised and beveled panels (18th century). Hardware (20th century).

Heating
Cast-iron, hot-air grate, 21" x 25", near north door (early 20th century).

Lighting
Fluorescent fixture over door #1021 (mid-20th century).

Fireplace
Chimney breast projects 28°. Opening closed up, baseboard continuous across front.

Room 104
Floor
Tongue-and-groove boards 4 1/2" wide running north-south (19th century) laid over original floor.

Ceiling
Plaster on lath, patched in north-west corner.

Walls
All walls plaster on lath.

Baseboard
Plain splashboard with bead top, 6 1/2" high (18th century) with quarter round at floor (20th century).

Doors
#1041. 6 recessed panels, predominant lock rail (18th century), 3" molded wood trim. Pintle strap hinges, cast-iron Norfolk latch (19th century) hand-wrought hook.

#1042. Door missing, plain 5 1/2" wood trim, one butt hinge.

Windows
Same as Room 102, with 17" deep seat at 28" from floor. Trim same as door (19th century).

Fireplace
Chimney breast projects 28°. Opening closed up, baseboard continuous across front.

SECOND FLOOR
Room 201
Floor
Random width 9 1/2" to 12") tongue-and-groove boards running east-west (18th century).

Ceiling
Plaster on lath, covered by paper and paint (18th and 19th century).

Walls
All walls of plaster on lath, wallpapered. Paneled wainscot to height of 44 1/2" (18th century).

Cornice
1 3/4" wood picture molding secured by wire nails (20th century).

Baseboard
On stair landing, wood splashboard with molded top, 9 3/4" high (18th century).

Doors
#2020 and 2051. Molded wood trim (18th century).

#2031 and 2041. Narrow molded wood trim (19th century).

Windows
One window in south wall, same as Room 102. Bifolding interior shutters with hand-wrought H hinges (18th century). North wall stair landing, double case­ment 16 lights with decorative cast-iron butt hinges (late 19th century). Bi­folding shutters are secured in the jamb.

Lighting
Fluorescent fixtures over doors #2051 and #2020 (mid-20th century).

Stairway
To attic, same as in Room 101. Plain splashboard with quarter round top follows stair (18th century).
Walls
Four walls covered by free-standing paneling with pinned joints and beveled rectangular panels that are divided into bays of varying width. West wall with paneled overmantle flanked by closets with paneled double doors (18th century).

Cornice
4½” molded wood cornice (18th century).

Baseboard
4” splashboard with molded top (18th century).

Doors
#2021. 6 rectangular raised and beveled panels, predominant lock rail, pinned joints (18th century). Mortise lock, brass knobs (19th century). Evidence of earlier lock, 4½” molded wood trim.

#2022 and 2023. Double closet doors, each with 3 beveled panels, iron “H” hinges secured with forged nails (18th century).

Windows
Two windows, same as Room 102 (18th century). Inside of shutter box finished with wood panel.

Heating
Iron, hot-air grate (15” x 17”) near door #2021 (early 20th century).

Lighting
Fluorescent fixture over door #2021 (mid-20th century).

Fireplace
West wall, original opening 38” x 50” filled with brick to form smaller openings, 28” x 33”. Stone lintel 5” wide, crossetted surround, plain frieze with center block, projecting shelf with fret. Raised and beveled paneled overmantel (18th century). Indications of patching in wood of overmantel.

Room 203
Floors
Random width (9” to 12”) tongue-and-groove boards running east-west, with deep, worn depressions near hearth (18th century).

Ceiling
Plaster on lath.

Walls
North and west: Plaster on stone.

South and east: Plaster on lath.

Wood wainscot to height of 33” (19th century). Evidence of earlier painted plaster behind wainscot.

Cornice
Wood picture molding (late 19th century).

Baseboard
7½” high wood splashboard with round molded top (late 19th century).

Doors
#2031. 6 raised, beveled and beaded panels, 2½” molded wood trim, iron “H” hinges, mortise lock with brass knobs (all early 20th century).

Windows
Two windows, 12/12 double rope-hung sash, pane size 8½” x 11”, bifolding interior shutters with raised, beveled, and beaded panels (late 19th century). Iron “H” type hinges of recent origin applied in an 18th century manner. Trim same as door. Graffiti written on plaster of reveal, north window: “Buchner Bros. MM Buchner May 1949.”

Lighting
Fluorescent fixture over door #2031 (mid-20th century).

Fireplace
Chimney breast projects 40” from north wall. 38½” x 55” fireplace opening closed with cement. Wood stiles and stone lintel with beaded edge are surrounded by wood architrave, plain frieze and tablet, molded projecting shelf with dentils (19th century). Brick hearth, 21” x 65”.

Room 204
Floors
Random width (8” to 10”) tongue-and-groove boards running east-west (18th century).

Ceiling
Plaster on lath.

Walls
Exterior walls of plaster on stone, partitions of plaster on lath. Wood wainscot to height of 33” (19th century).

Baseboard
Same as Room 203.

Doors
#2041. Same as 2031 with 3½” iron butt hinges (20th century).

Windows
Two windows, same as Room 302. Shutter reveal is paneled with wood boards.
Figure 5B. Attic Floor Plan.

Lighting
Fluorescent fixture over door #2041 (mid-20th century).

Heating
Cast-iron, hot-air grate near door, 15" x 17" (early 20th century).

Fireplace
Chimney breast, plaster on lath, projects 36" from north wall. Opening is 38" x 55" with plaster facing, molded surround, plain frieze with center tablet, projecting molded shelf (19th century). Brick hearth, 19½" x 68".

Room 205
Floors
Random width (average 6") boards running east-west, hand-wrought nails (18th century).

Ceilings
Plaster on lath with ceiling paper and paint.

Walls
Plaster on lath, wallpaper. Raised, beveled and paneled wainscot to height of 3'-9". East wall paneled, two cupboards flanking fireplace (18th century).

Cornice
Molded wood cornice (18th century).

Baseboard
Plain splashboard 3" high (18th century).

Doors
#2051. Same as 2021, mortise lock with brass knobs, iron butt hinges. #2052 and 2053. Double doors, each with three raised and beveled panels, hand-wrought iron "H" hinges secured with wrought nails (18th century).

Windows
Two windows, same as room 102.

Heating
Cast-iron, hot-air grate, 10" x 13¾" near closet (early 20th century). Cast-iron, hot-air grate, 12" x 14", to east of hall door (early 20th century).

Lighting
Fluorescent fixture over door 2051 (mid-20th century).

Fireplace
Paneled chimney breast projects 1½" beyond the paneled wall. Fireplace facing of painted stone, with stiles displaced 2½", crossset surround, above which is a plain frieze and projecting molded wood shelf with dentils (18th century). Firebox filled with masonry that surrounds a cast-iron Franklin stove labeled "Ross & Bird Hibernia Furnace 1762." Brick hearth, 8¼" x 36".

THIRD FLOOR
Room 301 (Attic)
Floors
Random width (12" to 14") tongue-and-groove boards, average 12'-0" in length (18th century) running east-west.

Ceiling
Roof framing system consisting of hand-hewn roof joists (7" x 8") pinned at ridge. Collar beams (7½" x 9½") set and pinned into joists. The third collar from east end is missing. Roof sheathing of horizontal, shiplapped boards, hand-wrought nails (18th century).

Walls
Perimeter walls of coursed rubble limestone, plastered and whitewashed. Interior partitions of plaster on split lath, or of rough vertical boards secured with hand-wrought nails (all 18th century).

Doors
#3011. Paneled door, flush and beaded on attic side (19th century).

Windows
Four dormers resting on the top of exterior stone walls. Pinned framing, shiplapped roof sheathing (18th century). Double casement sash, each with 6 lights (18th century). Original strap hinges secured with 20th century screws. 1½" diameter hole bored in each sill for mounting of musquetons (mid-18th century) one dormer near roof ridge. Framing and sheathing (18th century). Fixed 9 light sash, pinned corners, originally opened inward (possibly 18th century).

Lighting
Knob-and-tube wiring attached to various roof framing members (early 20th century). Fluorescent fixtures suspended by chain from roof framing (mid-20th century).

Other Features
Three open riser wood stairs with hand-wrought nails (18th century), not in original location. Several random width planks resting on collars to form a platform (possibly a remnant of an 18th century floor treatment). The four fireplace chimneys are visible in the attic on the north, east and west walls. Brick size averages 1 ¾" x 3½" x 7½".

Location of two missing dormers dating from the eighteenth century are patched with circular sawn boards.

Two roof hatch openings, wood framing secured with cut nails (19th century). Evidence of 18th century openings in same location.

Two hatch covers, wire nails (20th century).
Figure 59. Section Through East Wing Looking East, A-A.

Figure 60. Section through Stair Looking East, B-B.
ANALYSIS OF EXISTING CONDITIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRESERVATION

RESTORATION OBJECTIVES AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Fort Johnson has survived with much of its eighteenth century building fabric intact. Of the three remaining major houses associated with Sir William Johnson, Fort Johnson is the only one that remains in its unaltered eighteenth century state. Both Johnson Hall and Guy Park Manor were extensively remodeled during the nineteenth century and heavily restored during the twentieth century. Because of its architectural and historical significance, the continual preservation of Fort Johnson is of the highest importance. Future repair and maintenance work must be carefully programmed and delineated so that the eighteenth century appearance of the building is maintained. Changes to the building caused by minor, incongruous twentieth century modifications should be reversed as part of an ongoing maintenance program. A long range maintenance and repair program will help to insure that maximum results are achieved within the constraints of a limited budget.

Fort Johnson now contains some very significant furniture associated with the Johnson occupancy which should continue to be used in authentic period room settings. However, the temptation to fill the building with reproduction furniture and to make all of the space into period rooms should be resisted. The impact of the authentic furnishings would be diluted when mixed in with reproductions having no connection with Sir William Johnson or the house.

The collections material now in the house should remain there, at least for the present time. As the Society increases its collections of material related to the history of Montgomery County, it will be necessary to secure additional storage and exhibition space outside of the main house. Ultimately, a new, fire-proof building housing collection storage and exhibition areas should be constructed elsewhere on the property. The house could then be used as an architectural exhibit including a few period rooms. The house itself would then be treated as an artifact, and its intrinsic construction and architectural features would be revealed better.

Fort Johnson was originally the center of a complex of auxiliary buildings and a surrounding estate of one thousand acres. To fully comprehend the significance of the building, its relationship to the other buildings and the landscape must be reestablished. The existing remaining outbuildings should continue to be preserved, and the foundations of vanished build-

Figure 63. The south east chimney retains the greatest proportion of eighteenth century brick. The upper portion is very badly deteriorated.

Figure 64. The stonework of this portion of the rear elevation has been discolored by soot and tar from the interior of the chimney.
ings should be located and marked. As an interpretive program for visitors is developed, emphasis should be placed on Fort Johnson as the centerpiece of a large and varied complex of buildings, and not as an isolated old house filled with period rooms (figure 4). As resources permit, as much of the surroundings of the house as possible should be retrieved and preserved to protect the ambience of the house.

**CONDITION OF BUILDING FABRIC**

Generally the building is in good physical condition largely because of the long and careful guardianship of the Montgomery Historical Society. Despite the society's limited funds, the building has received conservative but adequate maintenance over the years. Fortunately, the building has never undergone an intensive restoration program, so that much of its historic fabric has survived intact. Most of the items requiring attention at the present time may be classified as routine maintenance.

**EXTERIOR**

When the existing slate roof was installed during the late nineteenth century, it was applied directly over the previous wood shingle roof. The slate roof and terneplate flashings are approaching the end of their effective life expectancy and require replacement because of leakage, especially around the chimneys (figure 64). The built-in gutter, now lined with sheet metal, must be repaired and relined. Several of the chimneys have deteriorated in sections where they have been repaired with soft brick during the twentieth century, and these must be rebuilt (figure 63). The east chimney has a serious vertical crack which requires immediate attention. Much of the exterior stonework has been repointed over the years with portland cement mortar, which is harder and more waterproof than the original lime mortar and therefore, is not compatible (figure 67). The portland cement mortar should be removed and replaced with lime mortar. In addition, a large section of the north wall, located below the west chimney, needs to be cleaned because leaks in the chimney flashings have discolored the stonework with soot and tar from the interior of the chimney (figure 64).

The front entrance porch has deteriorated over the years, and temporary stabilization, using a steel tie rod, has been undertaken (figure 65). However, the deterioration has continued, and the porch must be dismantled and rebuilt, salvaging as much of the original fabric as possible.

The window sash, including those of the dormers, are of wood and require minor repair work, including the replacement of broken panes, reputting and the treatment of rotted wood. The first floor exterior shutters require maintenance work such as the removal of a heavy build-up of paint and replacement of some rotted wood elements. All of the exterior wood trim, windows, dormers, cornice, and shutters require painting. The colors are to be based on scientific analysis of the historic paint colors used on the building.

**INTERIOR**

The interior building fabric is generally in good repair. The major exceptions to this are the first floor framing system in the northeast corner of the building and the roof rafters in the attic. The first floor joists have rotted near the masonry wall where a defective roof leader has emptied water directly into the wall. Deterioration of the first floor joists has also occurred, although to a lesser extent, at the northwest corner of the building.

Numerous roof rafters, subject to moisture penetration, have deteriorated along their upper surface. This condition is especially severe on the northern slope of the roof where the lower ends of several rafters have completely disintegrated.

In recent years attempts to stabilize the failing roof structure have inserted modern timber along side the most deteriorated rafters and bolted unsightly steel braces at the juncture of rafters and collar beams. These repairs have not corrected the sagging nor stabilized the roof structure in a permanent manner. This has caused a substantial sag in the roof surface and may
lead to the eventual failure of the roof structure. A new inconspicuous steel reinforcing system must be incorporated into the rafters when the roofing is replaced to prevent ultimate failure. At the same time the two dormers on the north side (shown in the 1759 engraving, but now missing) could be reconstructed.

On the upper floors, minor repairs are needed in the plaster ceilings and walls. Over the years, some of these plaster ceilings have been covered with wallpaper that should be removed. After the plaster has been patched and new mechanical systems have been installed, the interior finished should be restored using historically accurate wallpaper and paint colors. This interior restoration should be carried out in phases, as the rooms require redecorating. However, a master plan for the restoration of the finishes in all of the rooms should first be prepared based on historical research and scientific paint analysis.

INTERNAL SYSTEMS

The existing gravity hot-air heating system was installed around the turn of the twentieth century. The boiler located in the cellar was initially coal-fired and has since been converted to natural gas. At the present time, heat to the first floor is delivered via sheet metal ducts. The second floor receives only minimal heat, while the attic is unheated. A new heating system with humidity controls is needed to prolong the life of both the building fabric and the collection.

However, the humidity level within the building must be adjusted to a range that does not cause condensation within the walls or on the surface of windows and woodwork. Condensation can cause severe damage to the building fabric. The amount of humidity, that can be tolerated by old uninsulated masonry buildings, is lower than the optimum levels usually recommended for furniture and other collection items. Those artifacts, which would be adversely affected by environmental conditions within the house, should be removed to a separate fireproof exhibition/storage building erected on the site. The boiler should be relocated outside the house to remove the possibility of a potentially dangerous boiler malfunction within the original house. Hot water can be piped from the remote boiler to the basement of the house where air can be heated by hot water coils in an air handling unit and distributed throughout the building. Since the house will probably remain closed to visitors during the winter season, a system of air distribution may be designed which reduces the amount of heating ductwork threading through the building. From the basement air handling unit the air can be introduced to the first floor rooms through wood grilles fitted into the existing floor board pattern. This air can be extracted through registers concealed in the closets of the second floor rooms and returned to the basement via the attic and a duct installed in the northwest chimney in the flue space used by the existing boiler. Unlike the present gravity heating system, this would be a forced air system.

Figure 67. The stonework has been repointed with incompatible mortar.
The existing electrical system consists of a knob-and-tube wiring, BX cable, and Romex cable. In some locations, extension cords are used for wiring as well. The major source of artificial lighting in the building is from fluorescent fixtures mounted over the hall doorways of the first and second floors. The knob-and-tube wiring dates from the early decades of this century, and the other types of wiring were installed at various subsequent times. All of the wiring should be replaced so that the safety of the building is assured.

New wiring should be kept to a minimum. Outlets can be located behind doors, in closets or in other locations not generally visible to visitors. Illumination for special evening events, could be provided by candles augmented with modern electrical floor lamps as needed. During the day the floor lamps would be stored out of sight.

The house contains a rate-of rise fire detection system and intrusion detection system, which were installed during the 1960's. A new fire detection system consisting of ionization detectors should be installed to protect each space in the house. These detectors are very sensitive and can sense a fire while it is in a smouldering stage.

Fortunately, no toilets have ever been installed inside the house. And as no public toilets are available on the grounds, this condition not only presents considerable inconvenience at times, it is also in violation of the New York State construction code. Public toilet accommodations can most logically be provided in the visitors center planned in conjunction with the detached exhibition/storage building proposed below as part of the long range development of Fort Johnson.

**RECOMMENDED PRESERVATION PROGRAM**

The work required to adequately stabilize and preserve Fort Johnson can be divided into three phases. The first phase includes work necessary to make the building structurally sound and weathertight, such as the repair of deteriorated framing and the replacement of the roof. The second phase consists of major maintenance work, including the repair of the exterior woodwork and masonry and the installation of a new electrical system. Long-range development and maintenance of the house, outbuildings, and grounds would insure the future preservation of the property and its collections. This third phase encompasses new security and heating systems, as well as comfort facilities and the construction of a new structure to house the collections of the historical society. The highest priority should be given to those items in the first phase, since they directly affect the safety and welfare of the visiting public as well as the protection of the historic fabric of the building.

**DESCRIPTION OF WORK**

**PHASE 1 — HIGHEST PRIORITY**

**EXTERIOR**

1. Archeological survey around the perimeter of the house to locate possible evidence of historic roofing materials and original ground levels.
2. Removal of existing slate and wood shingle roof coverings and the installation of a new wood shingle roof treated to resist combustion.
3. Dismantling of deteriorated chimneys and rebuilding to historic profiles using new brick that matches the original.
4. Restoration of historic rainwater systems including built-in gutters, leaders, rainwater heads, and drywells.
5. Restoration of original dormers including window sash and cheeks.
6. Removal of portland cement mortar from exterior walls, cleaning of north wall below west chimney, and repointing of all exterior masonry surfaces with lime mortar.

**INTERIOR**

1. Stabilization and repair of deteriorated first floor framing in northeast corner and rafters on north side of roof.
2. Replacement of missing collar beam in attic framing.

**PHASE 2 — HIGH PRIORITY**

**EXTERIOR**

1. Dismantling of entrance porch, repair and/or replacement of its deteriorated elements, and restoration to its historic appearance.
2. Removal of exterior shutters, repair and/or replacement of deteriorated elements, and rehanging.
3. Restoration of windows including reglazing, reputting, and repair and/or replacement of deteriorated elements.
4. Scraping, treatment with wood preservative and repainting of all exterior woodwork using historically accurate paint colors based on scientific investigation.

**INTERIOR**

1. Stabilization and repair of deteriorated first floor framing in northwest corner.
2. Removal of existing electrical and replacement with new wiring.

**PHASE 3 — LONG RANGE**

**INTERIOR**

1. Installation of new forced hot-air heating system, incorporating humidity controls. Boiler to be located remote from house.
2. Upgrading of security systems, including utilization of ionization fire detectors.
3. Opening of historic fireplaces in cellar kitchen and rear room on first and second floor to restore original conditions.
4. Restoration and rebuilding of the exterior bulkhead doorway and the interior stairway to the first floor.
5. Restoration of exterior, first floor doors.
6. Patching of deteriorated plaster walls and ceilings, removal of wallpaper from ceilings, removal of picture molding cornices, and repainting and repapering of rooms using historically accurate wallpapers and paint colors based on scientific investigation.
7. Removal of later flooring installed over historic flooring on first and second floors.
8. Stabilization of deteriorated brick in west room of cellar.
9. Replacement of missing doors in first floor north rooms.
10. Restoration of historic hardware, installing reproduction hardware where necessary.
11. Removal of all built-in exhibit cases and glass from closets in southeast room of second floor.
SITE AND OUTBUILDINGS

1. Construction of a small parking lot on the northeast corner of the Society’s property across the creek with access from route #67. Removal of present circular driveway from area in front of house (leaving access on west for fire and emergency vehicles only.) Construction of a footbridge across the creek to connect parking lot with historic ground. Layout footpath from western end of footbridge so that approach is through restored gateway at southern edge of property on axis with front door (see figure 68).

2. Marking of original outbuilding foundations about house (particularly, flanking structures on the south side) and identification of historic landscape features as part of historic estate interpretation (see figure 68).

3. Installation of interpretive sign system for grounds illustrating the changes in historic appearance since 1749.

4. Construction of a fireproof building for exhibit and storage of Society’s extensive collections of historic artifacts. In addition to exhibit and storage spaces, an office, a workroom and a library/manuscript room should be provided. This structure can serve also as a modest visitors center with public toilets and a reception/sales desk. It should be located at the eastern end of the proposed footbridge adjacent to the new parking lot. The building should be of contemporary design and present an unobtrusive appearance.

5. Restoration of eighteenth century privy and relocation to original site over the creek. Preserve historic siding and install new siding to match old where replacement is necessary. Repaint with historic colors.

6. Installation of exterior security lighting system.

7. Repair of roofs on caretaker’s house.

8. Repainting of caretaker’s house and garage in neutral colors to minimize attention to these buildings.

9. Upgrading of mechanical systems in caretaker’s house.

COLLECTIONS

While not within the scope of this report, it should be noted that the furnishings and artifacts presently housed in Fort Johnson require not only the attention of a museum conservator, but also should be subjected to careful study and research by competent scholars. Such study should lead to an analysis and evaluation of all collections material from which recommendations can be made concerning proper treatment, interpretation and disposition of artifacts on the premises. Furthermore, if the archeological survey recommended herein is undertaken, a vast quantity of significant material related to Fort Johnson will be added to the collection. The present building undoubtedly will be inadequate to house the expanded collections. Ultimately the proposed exhibit storage building will have to be constructed. When this is accomplished it will be possible to reconsider the manner in which the interiors of the house are interpreted.
Figure 69. The north and south elevations of Fort Johnson as they may have appeared during the third quarter of the eighteenth century. The drawings are based on details shown in Guy Johnson's sketch of the property circa 1759.
EXPLORATORY ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS AT FORT JOHNSON, JUNE 1976 - REPORT BY WAYNE LENIG

This report contains an analysis of architectural and cultural data recovered from limited archaeological tests at Fort Johnson, New York, the mid-18th century fort in the Mohawk Valley. The tests were conducted June 3 and June 15, 1976 under contract to the Montgomery County Historical Society, and all artifacts mentioned or illustrated are the property of that organization.

First, extensive historical research has failed to provide conclusive evidence bearing upon the original roofing material used at Fort Johnson. An important letter written to William Johnson, the trader, suggests that the owner contemplated either a lead or slate roof (see page 8), but 18th and 19th century modifications have eradicated much of the architectural evidence needed to confirm which, if either of these materials was actually installed. The primary objective, therefore, was to locate any buried physical evidence which might provide clues to the original roofing material.

Second, a 1759 sketch of Fort Johnson and its environs indicates that the topography of the land surrounding Fort Johnson was considerably different in the 18th century than it is today, particularly on the east side of the house. This suggests that at some undetermined time in the 19th or 20th century, extensive grading or filling activity has probably taken place. Such landscaping could conceivably have been responsible for structural deterioration due to altered surface water drainage patterns. Consequently, a secondary objective of the archaeological work was to determine the location of any fill, which serves as well to more accurately interpret the original appearance of the site to the public.

Last, the exploratory archaeological excavations conducted by the New York State Division for Historic Preservation have revealed cobblestone paved courtyards at the 18th century Schuyler house north of Albany and at Sir William Johnson’s fort at Fort George (Lenig, 1976, 2). Since the tests at Fort Johnson were to include a search for 18th century surfaces, it was deemed prudent to test the area in front of the house for indications of these possible courtyards.

In addition to these primarily architectural objectives, cultural artifacts from the 18th century were to be used as yardsticks to measure and evaluate the lifestyle of Sir William Johnson. Was he the roughshod man who dressed in Indian clothing and ate with his hands, or the man of refined manners and style of Sir William Johnson: Was he the roughshod man who dressed in Indian clothing as he is portrayed in folklegend, or the man of refined manners and taste that his surviving letters would lead one to believe? And what of Johnson’s interests? What did he do with his leisure time? Did he purchase and keep livestock? Were any sources of domestic fuel used? Did he indulge in the pleasures of the table? Did he tolerate alcoholic beverages? What were his habits and perversions? And what of Johnson’s successors at Fort Johnson? Did the house continue to be owned by men of “means”?” It was hoped that 19th century artifacts would provide clues to the important socio-cultural questions.

Geography and Geology:
Fort Johnson is located in the Mohawk valley of eastern New York State, about thirty-five miles west of Albany. The house was built in 1749 at the confluence of Kanadagasa Creek and the Mohawk River. It is probably to all the apparent close watch upon the mill which he had previously purchased or erected at that location (see Historical Analysis). Like most Mohawk valley pioneers, William Johnson wisely elected to build his residence well back from the flood plain of the river (Lenig, 1976, 4). The acutal site that he chose was upon a low sand and gravel knoll 700 feet from the river, and about seventy-five feet from the west bank of Kanadaga Creek. The knoll rises 285 feet above mean sea level and is almost twenty feet higher than the river bank. That this location was carefully selected becomes obvious when one examines the suitability of a site for withstanding a flood. The soils of the alluvial terrace on the north side of the river is clayey. The highly permeable sands and gravels which underlie Fort Johnson are a notable exception.

Beneath the soil, and in some cases outcropping on the surface, are soft, calciferous dolomite and limestone of Mohawkian times. These dolomitic strata are easily cut and quarried, but are unsuitable for most building purposes due to their tendency to split into thin horizontal sheets after weathering or cal testing, it was decided that a larger number of geographically separated testholes be made for cal testing, it was decided that a larger number of geographically separated testholes be made. The stratigraphy at Fort Johnson is analogous to that at Fort George in that a single large shale layer appeared only in test trench #1, testhole#3 and testhole#4, all three located in an area where the probability of finding roofing material was high; the second stratum was probably a layer of fill which had never been disturbed after the house was built, for subsequent digging would have eroded the original stratigraphy; second, the trench should be located in an area where the terrace was high, and third, if possible, the trench was to be located on the east side of the house, so that testholes could be dug towards the house and any evidence of 18th century landscaping activity could be investigated. After consulting the available sketches and plans of the site, a test trench was selected for excavation. The test trenches were to be made larger than necessary in order to excavate a large sampling of stratigraphy.

The excavations were conducted by the author and Jan Swart, of Amsterdam, New York. The author is indebted to Mr. Swart for some of the ideas embodied in this report and his critical evaluation of the manuscript. Any errors or mistakes are, of course, attributable to the author.

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Figure 70. Profiles excavated 06/09/76 - 06/19/76 by W. Lenig and J. Swart.
structure is level with the original ground surface and the first "finished" course in the east wall of the house. (figures 71, 72, & 73).

Contiguous to the eastern aspect of the limestone structure in test trench #1 is a stratum of mottled black and yellow sand. At the north side of the trench this stratum dipped from the original surface five inches below present grade on the east end of the trench to a depth of fifty inches beyond the eastern extremity of the excavation. The soil in this layer is quite certainly a mixture of the original topsoil and sandy yellow subsoil. Artifacts recovered indicate a date of c. 1790-1810, but a high percentage of material from the third quarter of the 18th century suggests that this area was previously disturbed. Perhaps the early artifacts were deposited in the oversized cellar hole while the house was under construction, and later, about 1810, the ground was redug to provide a hole for the enigmatic limestone structure. This would have resulted in the observed homogeneous mix of 18th and early 19th century artifacts in the fill surrounding the stone enclosure. If this hypothesis is correct, the limestone structure was constructed c. 1790-1810, but the lack of stratigraphic information from beneath the structure and the incomplete profile on the south wall of the test trench leaves the possibility of an alternate explanation. The enclosure could have been constructed contemporaneously with the house, or soon after, and then about 1810 the area adjacent to the east side of the structure may have been excavated and refilled for some as yet unknown purpose.

Northeast corner of extant structure

Gap in top two courses which seems to line up with a bricked-up hole in east basement wall of Fort Johnson.

Unidentified structure 13'-19" below present surface. Larger limestone blocks, dressed only on interior face, four to five courses deep.

Small pile of limestone surface fragments or talus resting on original grade 18'-24" below present surface. Possibly a pier for some kind of upright pole, or the corner of a small framed structure.

Probable basement window well 12'-14" below present surface on old surface.

Large limestone boulders, footing for cellar wall of existing structure 13'-18" below present grade, approximately 1" below original grade.

Plan

Wall of extant structure

Unidentified structure 13'-19" below present surface. Larger limestone blocks, dressed only on interior face, four to five courses deep.

Small pile of limestone surface fragments or talus resting on original grade 18'-24" below present surface. Possibly a pier for some kind of upright pole, or the corner of a small framed structure.

Large limestone boulders, footing for cellar wall of existing structure 13'-18" below present grade, approximately 1" below original grade.

Section
Because it could be part of the original fabric of this site, the structure was not dismantled, and further excavation of deeper levels in the west half of the test trench became impossible. There may still be undisturbed portions of the original cellar hole below this level, but until more intensive excavations can be undertaken to clarify the function and date of the limestone enclosure it seemed advisable to stabilize the stonework with a heavy wooden frame and leave it in place.

Below the mottled black and yellow sand in the northeast corner of the trench there is sterile yellow sand. In this corner the original soil surface is nineteen inches below present grade. Resting on the old surface was a small pile of limestone which may have been a pier for the corner of a small frame building. (figure 71).

Five well defined cultural strata appear in the courtyard in front of the house. The top five or six inches is again a black sandy loam fill probably deposited between 1880 and 1897. The next layer is eight to twelve inches of brown or mottled black and brown sand, which apparently represents an even earlier 19th century filling operation. The exact date of this layer has not been ascertained due to the paucity of cultural remains. Below the sand is a six inch layer of scattered two to four inch thick limestone slabs and an abundance of lime mortar. This debris appears to be the remains of a paved limestone surface which begins at least forty feet south of the house and is at least forty feet wide. Further testing is necessary to delineate the exact bounds. Artifacts recovered from this stratum indicate that the pavement dates to the last quarter of the 18th century. A second layer of pavement underlies the limestone. Unlike the first, this layer is composed of water-worn cobbles varying from one-half to two inches in diameter, and quite closely spaced. The cultural finds at this level indicate a date contemporaneous with the construction of the house. Below these cobbles lies a four inch stratum of dark brown sandy Onondaga loam. This is river silt, and it undoubtedly marks the prehistoric surface. The Onondaga loam is underlain by at least two feet of sterile yellow water-laid sand, and at the contact there is visible rootmolding. This natural surface slopes demonstrably from the present grade. Ten feet south of the house it is about sixteen inches below the present surface, but fifty feet from the house it is two feet below.

In addition to this well defined stratigraphic sequence throughout the courtyard the testholes revealed three other areas of cultural disturbance. At testhole #1, the earliest historic surface is marked by a densely clustered layer of oyster shells. The fact that all of these shells were convex-side up may indicate that this was also a paved surface—perhaps a walkway. Further credence is added to this hypothesis by the discovery of 18th century artifacts such as straight pins and small sherd of combed yellow ware lying directly upon the shells. At testhole #2 excavation was halted sixteen inches below the present surface by the discovery of large limestone blocks, apparently laid-up in a pattern. Testholes #5 and #6 relocated a 19th century crushed stone, cinder and coal ash walkway which was filled over and seeded by Mr. Canavan, the caretaker, in recent years.
Artifacts:
The discussion of artifacts which follows makes no pretense for being a trait table or exhaustive list. It is an attempt to draw social, cultural and architectural information from the artifacts recovered, and only when a find is deemed significant to these ends is it discussed in detail.

Architectural elements:
Artifacts of this class were manufactured from a great variety of materials and are grouped together in this report because of functional similarities.

With respect to the objectives of these excavations, the most important discovery was probably a crumpled sheet of lead in stratum three of test trench #1. This irregular fragment measures about four and a half by five inches and is slightly under one thirty-second of an inch thick (figure 77a&b). It was found near the east end of the test trench at a depth of 49”, wrapped around an iron “H” hinge (figure 77). The hinge is identical to those still in place in the west dormer casement, and it probably came from the east dormer casement, since the existing hinges are replacements. This indicates that if the lead were part of the original roof, the fragment probably was deposited at the time when that roof was removed, not when it was installed. The lead may have been used for flashing rather than roofing. There is a very low probability that the original roof was made of copper, so that material would have produced a great deal of debris; yet only one tiny fragment of greyish slate was recovered from the lower levels of the test trench. If the original roof had been wooden shingles, one would expect to find substantial quantities of short, large headed shingle nails, yet of the hundreds of wrought nails recovered from strata two and three, none of this type were represented.

Of the nail types which were present, perhaps the most significant are the small headed finishing nails, (figure 77d). This kind of nail is seldom seen in existing 18th century Mohawk valley houses, and its presence may be an indication of the original economic status.

Numerous fragments of plaster in stratum three along with bent forged nails and brick fragments indicate that some major interior modifications took place at Fort Johnson in the late 18th or early 19th century. Of noteworthy interest is a plaster fragment decorated with a thin red painted line (figure 77j) and another fragment which clearly shows seven layers of whitewash on its surface.

Architectural modifications including drastic changes in at least one of the fireplace places is indicated by a delft tile fragment (figure 77i), a worn hearth brick (figure 77l) and a fragment of cut white marble, probably from a mantle or surrounding (figure 77n). Since the excavated area is under the window of the rear east room it seems reasonable to speculate that these modifications may have taken place there.

Ceramics
The earliest ceramic types uncovered at Fort Johnson include three sherds of combed and dotted yellow ware from the level of cobblestone paving in the courtyard, and two sherds of ovoid and light colored English delft from the same stratum. One additional sherd of English plain white delft was recovered from stratum #3 of the test trench.

Fine saltglazed stoneware fragments were most numerous in stratum three of the test trench and may indicate a mid-18th century economic status. A delft tile fragment (figure 77r) and one sherd of redware from stratum #3 which bears the characteristic dark hue of the early variety and may date to John Johnson’s tenancy at the house. It is difficult to tell what Sir William could have owned any clayware before he moved to Johnson Hall in 1763.

Figure 77. Architectural elements from test trench #1.

j. plaster fragment with thin red painted line from stratum #3
i. delft fireplace tile fragment from stratum #3
h. worn brick, possibly from hearth or paved walkway, stratum #3.

then, in all we recovered a plain-concave rimmed creamware plate; a blue shell-edged plate; a green pineapple-edged plate; two mocha decorated pearlware fruitcup; a pink transfer printed pearlware fruitcup; a pink transfer printed saucer and a black transfer printed saucer. In addition there was a “Jackfield” type porringer which by the size of its sherds and its completeness appears to have been deposited with the other items, although it must have been an “antique” at the time it was discarded. Additional sherds were present in the stratum, but the average size was smaller than the sherd size for the above mentioned items. Perhaps this list represents the contents of a cupboard which was accidently overturned, or the casualties of a similar household accident.

Porcelain was scarce in 19th century levels, although two large fragments of a polychrome decorated soft paste candy dish were found in stratum #2 of the test trench. Utilitarian wares were again a rarity, but somewhat better represented than in the earlier levels. A plain redware storage crock with a lead glazed interior and a redware “beerpot” with a speckled brown manganese and lead glaze on the interior were the only identifiable forms. Three sherds from a heavy saltglazed stoneware vessel were also discovered in this level. This normally common ceramic type was particularly rare in all levels of Fort Johnson.

Evidently the area near test trench #1 was used by more than one resident as a dump for table refuse, but not kitchen waste. This assertion is suggested by the ceramic forms recovered and further reinforced by faunal remains. There were no large articulated portions of animal bones found in this area. Refuse bone was limited to small fish bones, cut or cleavered sections of rib and shoulder bones of larger mammals and occasional chips and pieces of mammal long bones, invariably split for the marrow. This is the pattern one would expect from a refuse area which was utilized primarily for cleaning up the table after meals. Perhaps the rear east room was utilized as a serving and clean-up room.

It was adjacent to the room traditionally called the dining room and could explain the presence of this kind of refuse, for the scraps may have been thrown out the window.
Figure 79. Ceramics from Fort Johnson:

b. Chinese porcelain cup with blue underglaze decorated border and red, yellow and gilt floral design. Third quarter of the 18th century. Strata #2 & 3, Test Trench #1.
c. "Jackfield" type porringer. 18th century. Stratum #2, Test Trench #1.
d. Redware storage crock, leadglazed interior, unglazed exterior. Probably first quarter of the 19th century. Stratum #2, Test Trench #1.

Figure 80. Creamware


c. 1 inch

d. 49
Figure 83. Ceramic type frequency distribution
CERAMIC SERIATION

Courtyard
Strata 4&5
C. 1770

Test Trench
Stratum 3
c. 1810

Test Trench
Stratum 2
c. 1850

Test Trench
Topsoil 1976

utilitarian stoneware
19th century yellow ware
semi-porcelain
pearlware
creamware
annular wares
porcelain
fine saltglazed stoneware
delft
combed & dotted yellow ware
redware

Polygons were constructed by connecting type-frequency bar graphs, and are designed to draw immediate attention to the important temporal markers in each stratum. A vertical slash indicates a frequency of less than 2.5%.

* Dates given are approximate terminus post quern years of each stratum.

Figure 84. Ceramic seriation

TABULATION OF CERAMICS BY FORM AND FUNCTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Material</th>
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<th>stone</th>
<th>delft</th>
<th>porcelain</th>
<th>creamware</th>
<th>pearlware</th>
<th>semi-porcelain</th>
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<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creamers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sugar bowls</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slop bowls</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Fireplace tiles</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>149</td>
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</table>

Table includes only identifiable ceramic forms. Many excavated sherds were too small for positive identification of form.

Figure 85. Tabulation of ceramics by form and function
In an effort to compare the mean date with the terminus post quem date for each level in the test trench, the author computed Stanley South's mean date formula for the ceramics. Methods are identical to Feister (1973), except that the outcome is rounded off to the nearest year, as that is the last statistically significant digit when using the formula. It was hypothesized that a comparison of terminus post quem dates based on the date of manufacture of the most recent artifact in each stratum and the mean ceramic date for each stratum would yield an indication of how "new" and fashionable the ceramic garbage vessels relating to dining and the low frequency relating to the kitchen again function. This may be an indication that entertaining visitors remained an important activity at Fort Johnson, even in the 19th century. The high frequency of recent artifact in each stratum and the mean ceramic date for each stratum is discrete (i.e. that when each layer was deposited there was no mixing of materials with the previous layer.) This last assumption is particularly questionable, for there are a great many sherds which cross mend, and some indirect evidence that stratum three actually interrupted and mixed with an earlier cultural layer.

Analysis of identifiable vessels by form and function following the methods of Stone (1972) yields some additional cultural insights. Figure 85. For instance, even though most of the identifiable ceramic forms date later than the Johnson Family's tenancy, almost half of the forms can be classified as having a social function. This may be an indication that entertainers visited remains an important activity at Fort Johnson, even in the 19th century. The high frequency of vessels relating to dining and the low frequency relating to the kitchen again points to the selective nature of the sample that has been recovered.

*The date of deposition is used here because the ceramic artifacts were almost certainly deposited at that time, though the stratum is still theoretically "open."

**TEST TRENCH #1**

South's Mean Ceramic Dates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topsoil:</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>1986</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1985</td>
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<td>70390</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean date = 1818.93 = 1819</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 142</td>
<td>total 1258289</td>
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</table>

**Stratum #2:**

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<tr>
<td>n = 477</td>
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**Stratum #3:**

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<th>f X Mean Date</th>
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<td>1805</td>
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<td>5274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean date = 1801.46 = 1801</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Tobacco Pipes:**

The significance of the tobacco pipes from Fort Johnson seems to be mainly temporal. A fluted bowl in stratum #2 of the test trench coupled with a few sherd's of dark blue translucent pearlware serves as valid indicators that the stratum may have remained "open" as late as 1810, and the mid-nineteenth century bowl in stratum #2 (Figure 86) is a good indication that this stratum was closed as late as 1850.

Pipestem bore diameters of this sample show an interesting and consistent trend to increase from four to five sixty-fourths through the nineteenth century. If this is a function of the source of supply, and if the entire area was supplied from that same source, then the trend could become an important statistical tool for dating 19th century sites, at least on a regional basis. Such an obvious statistical progression as is exhibited here at least deserves future consideration and testing (Figure 87).

Of the 18th century bowls recovered, four were marked. All of the examples bear the initials "WM" in a roulette cartouch on the back of the bowl. This is thought to be the mark of William Manby, a London pipemaker and exporter from 1719 to 1763. Similar examples have been found at Williamsburg, Michilli-mackinac, Port Royal (Oswald, 80-81). Fort Stanwix and Louisbourg (Hanson and Hsu, 142). (Figure 86e, f, g, h).

**Glass**

Along with the ceramics, the glass from the test trench provides the strongest evidence that the excavated area adjacent to the house may have been disturbed previous to 1790-1810. Three wineglass fragments (Figure 88a, b, c) date from the third quarter of the 18th century. These glasses also suggest that Johnson's taste in glassware was, if anything, even more refined than his taste in ceramics. All three glasses appear to be of English or Irish origin (Hughes).

A puzzling situation exists with respect to the window glass from this site. Fragments from all three levels of the test trench are numerous, probably because of the proximity to the basement and first floor windows, but careful inspection reveals that without a single exception these fragments were manufactured by the cylinder method. While it is often assumed that cylinder glass was a 19th century introduction in the colonies, it seems improbable that all of the window glass in stratum #3 of the test trench could have come from such a late temporal context. Noel-Hume describes the production of English "broad glass" in the 17th and 18th centuries in a manner identical to the manufacturing process of cylinder glass (Noel Hume, 1969, 233-234). While crown glass seems to have been more popular in the 18th century, it may be that Johnson used "broad glass" at Fort Johnson.
Figure 87. Pipestem bore diameter frequency distribution.

Miscellaneous small finds

Literally, the smallest finds at Fort Johnson were dozens of tiny brass and tinned brass straight pins. They occurred in strata #2 and #3 of the test trench and stratum #3 of testhole #1. With the exception of one machine-headed specimen from the topsoil of the test trench, all of the pins were the twisted-head variety common in the 18th century (Huey, 1969, unpaged). A very small brass jews harp with the tongue removed and the tines bent straight may be evidence of Johnson's trading interest with the Indians. (Figure 89). Fragments of a small pewter buckle add to the high percentage of mid-18th century material from stratum #3 of the test trench, and a silver-plated, brass or later metal spoon dating c. 1815 from stratum #2 of the test trench adds more weight to the theory that the area was used primarily as a repository for table refuse. (Figure 89).

Indian manufactured articles were limited to two finds: a grit tempered undecorated body sherd of pottery which came from the very bottom of stratum #3 inside the limestone structure, and a broken projectile point of unknown chert. The sherd of pottery may well belong to the pre-Iroquoian, Owasco component which was discovered on this property when one of the trees was uprooted in a windstorm in the early 20th century, but the projectile point is somewhat enigmatic. Neither the style nor the material are typical in this area. Perhaps it was carried here by an Indian from one of the western tribes during a visit with Sir William Johnson.

Results and Conclusions:

These limited tests have added data relative to all of the original objectives. In the matter of original roofing material, there is good evidence to believe that it was probably lead. Eighteenth century surfaces were located on the east and south sides of Fort Johnson, and in both cases they are well buried and protected by more modern fill. In the courtyard area, testholes located not one, but two layers of pavement, probably both dating to the 18th century. Additionally, a large collection of artifacts was recovered which have added data relative to the lifestyle of Sir William Johnson and the subsequent tenants at this site. Analysis of these cultural artifacts suggest that the 18th century tenants were somewhat higher on the socio-economic "totepole" than their successors. Artifacts from the third quarter of the 18th century include utilitarian as well as prestige items and indicate that the Johnsons were refined and practical men.

Recommendations:

Locating, as they have, at least five unknown and unrecorded probable 18th century structures, the limited archaeological tests at Fort Johnson have pointed out the need for an intensive full-scale archaeological survey of the property. Until now, there has not been a great deal of deep subsurface alteration at this site. This is extremely fortunate, for buried 18th century features have apparently managed to escape destruction. For the future, a concerted effort should be made to preserve these important resources. Flowerbeds and gardens have probably not disturbed anything to date, but their spread should be prohibited, especially on the north and west sides of Fort Johnson where the depth of 18th century surfaces has not yet been established. No projects requiring subsurface alterations deeper than a few inches should be scheduled until a large-scale survey has been completed. Any unavoidable projects already scheduled should be excavated by hand, and should be accomplished with a qualified historical archaeologist present on the site.

Tempting as it may be, intensive archaeological excavations should not be undertaken at any of the known outbuildings. This kind of work imposes heavy financial responsibilities, for all of the artifacts have to be treated, cleaned, catalogued and properly stored, and the net gain in information is limited to the small area surrounding the structure which is being excavated. Far more desirable would be an archaeological survey of the property, including testholes on ten foot centers, and in some areas perhaps even closer. A proton Magnetometer, soil resistivity meter or underground sonar device could save a great deal of digging and time at Fort Johnson, especially since the soils are relatively free of large rocks and boulders which could produce misleading results with such instruments. The complexity of structural debris in the courtyard area may require a series of narrow oblique test trenches to locate all of the outbuildings and delineate the exact boundaries of the paved areas. In
order to help formulate plans for future land acquisition, the Society might consider trying to obtain permission to extend the archaeological survey to contiguous properties, for it must be remembered that the entire Johnson estate was viewed as an entity in the 18th century, and in order to correctly interpret the site to the public it must be viewed in that same light today.

While archaeology is expensive, it is important to realize that the benefits are often greater than supposed. To understand these benefits it is necessary to take a close look at our own lives and the nature of contemporary society. While we often assume that our culture records almost everything that could conceivably be important to the historian of the future, a close look at our personal records reveals that this is usually not true. For instance, even if we keep diaries, how many of us record our personal preferences for foods, clothing styles, art, architecture etc? Not many, yet it is precisely this kind of information that enables the historian to evaluate how an individual related to his culture and environment. Was William Johnson a typical man of his times, or did he exhibit behavior which transcended cultural norms? In other words was he an independent thinker—a leader? To answer this kind of question the historian of the future, as well as today, must rely on something more than written documents and letters. The best available evidence is the garbage and physical remains of an individual’s property that have survived beneath the earth. The artifacts from any archaeological site represent a relatively unedited picture of past behavior. The trivial as well as important artifacts of daily activities at a site. This is the kind of information that adds flesh to the bare bones of written historical sources. Through archaeology we can learn what really happened at Fort Johnson—not how things were planned, or how one person viewed a set of events, or even what someone believed was most important to record, but what actually transpired.