

"HAMPTON," BALTIMORE COUNTY, MARYLAND

By JOHN H. SCARFF

"Hampton," for more than a century and a half the home of the Ridgely Family, this year passes to the Nation. The Avalon Trust, founded by Mrs. Ailsa Mellon Bruce, has purchased the house and some forty acres of land around it. With funds for its rehabilitation and for the acquisition of a part of the original furniture, it has been given to the Federal Government. Mr. and Mrs. John Ridgely, the former owners, have generously presented the pictures now hanging there and almost all the remaining family portraits. "Hampton" in the future will be administered as a Museum Building by the Department of the Interior through the National Park Service, with The Society for the Preservation of Maryland Antiquities acting as Custodian. It is expected that during the spring of 1949 it will be opened to the public.

The first Ridgely of the Hampton line to immigrate to Maryland (it is thought from Lincolnshire)¹ was Robert. He was an attorney-at-law and lived on St. Inigo's Creek in St. Mary's County where he died in 1681. Among his sons was the first of the many Ridgelys named Charles. He is known as the "Planter" and it is recorded that he died in Anne Arundel County in 1705. It was during the time of *his* son, Charles,² that the family moved to Baltimore County, first to a location on a cove of the Middle Branch of the Patapsco River above Whetstone Point, known as "Ridgely's Hollow";³ thence eventually to what is now "Hampton."

¹ The name which he gave to one of the several extensive tracts of land, which he took up, seems to indicate a Lincolnshire origin, but the family arms are said to imply some other county as the English home of the family.

² Colonel Charles Ridgely (d. 1772).

³ Through his marriage with Rachel Howard, daughter of John Howard, Jr.,



CHARLES RIDGELY, THE BUILDER, 1733-1790
By John Hesselius

Courtesy of Frick Art Reference Library



MRS. CHARLES RIDGELY (REBECCA DORSEY) 1739-1812
By John Hesselius

Courtesy of Frick Art Reference Library



DRAWING ROOM, "HAMPTON"
Photo 1948 by National Park Service



HALL, "HAMPTON," LOOKING SOUTH
Photo 1948 by National Park Service

On the 28th of September, 1695, a tract of land consisting of 1500 acres in Baltimore County was taken up by Col. Henry Darnall, a member of Lord Baltimore's Council.⁴ This land was considerably north of tidewater, above the edge of the settlements, in what was then the wilderness. He called it "Northampton." In 1695 Col Darnall's daughter Anne married Clement Hill, who the following year was appointed surveyor-general of the Western Shore. Upon the death of Henry Darnall in 1711 "Northampton" descended to the Hills, and on the 2nd of April, 1745, Anne Hill of Prince George's County, widow, together with her sons Clement and Henry, conveyed the entire tract of 1500 acres to Charles Ridgely of Baltimore County, "Merchant," for a consideration of six hundred pounds sterling.⁵ That was the beginning of "Hampton," the patrimonial estate of the Ridgely family.

The Hampton Mansion stands near the center of the four sided piece of land that was "Northampton." Two adjoining pieces also came into possession of the Ridgelys, namely: "Hampton Court"⁶ and "Oakhampton," and by 1750 Charles Ridgely had taken up or purchased altogether 26 parcels in Baltimore County, aggregating over 7,000 acres. These parcels were not all contiguous, and they included areas as distant as the present Roland Park, Guilford and Blythewood⁷ and a tract "Huntington" that extended from University Parkway as far south as Lafayette Avenue at Charles Street and gave its name to Huntington Avenue.

Charles Ridgely acquired "Howard's Timber Neck," which was taken up by her grandfather Howard in 1667. Charles Ridgely resurveyed it and called it "Ridgely's Delight." This plantation lay on Ridgely's Cove or Hollow, between "Mount Clare" and "Lunn's Lot," extending, irregularly, north to Mulberry Street, east to Hanover, and including Columbia Avenue (now known as Washington Boulevard).

⁴ Rent Roll, Baltimore County, Calvert Paper 883 f. 205.

⁵ Land Records of Baltimore County, Liber T. B. No. D., f. 94.

⁶ "Hampton Court" was acquired in 1746. (Land Records of Baltimore County, Liber T. D. No. E, f. 166).

⁷ In one contiguous estate of twelve hundred acres were: "Ridgely's Whim," which included all of the present "Blythewood" and all of Roland Park east of Roland Avenue, and "Job's Addition," which embraced the whole of "Homeland." Parcels of this property remained in the hands of descendants of Charles Ridgely until well within the second half of the past century. Descendants, the Fenwicks, were buried in the family burying ground at "Woodlawn," now a part of Roland Park. Other descendants, the McCormicks, lived at "Hebron" until the 1860's. This property, part of "Ridgely's Whim," is now the site of Saint Mary's Catholic Orphan Asylum.

"Northampton," when it was laid out was a part of the wilderness, although several tracts had been taken up on the Great Falls of the Gunpowder River in the neighborhood as early as 1683.⁸ There is every reason to believe that settlements did not begin to advance into the back country or forests above the heads of the tidal estuaries in Baltimore County before 1699.⁹ Before that time it was inhabited by a few squatters or hunters, and it would seem that one of these was a man named Andrew Peterson.¹⁰ Among the land papers of Barrister Carroll of "Mt. Clare" is a book of copies of old land certificates, including that of "Northampton," in which is mentioned a stream emptying into the Great Falls of Gunpowder River called "Andrew Peterson's Run."¹¹ Later, it was known simply as Peterson's Run, and, still later, as Long Quarter Branch. Its lower reaches are today covered by the waters of Loch Raven. Its principal source is on the present Goucher College property, formerly known as "Epsom," which is largely a part of "Northampton." In 1746, when Charles Ridgely had a land commission determine the bounds of "Northampton," which he had purchased the year before, several deponents testified that it was otherwise known as "Peterson's."¹²

It is probable that when this estate was in the possession of Henry Darnall and later of the Hills, many of its acres were cleared and put under cultivation and already useful buildings and other appurtenances of what was then called a "quarter" existed. The price paid would indicate this. The old "Farm House" occupied by Charles Ridgely during the building of the Mansion

⁸ "Saint Denis" and "Sergents Hall," each 500 acres, which were later (1732) resurveyed into one tract for Daniel Dulany, and called "Dulany's Park."

⁹ This statement is made on the authority of Mr. William B. Marye, who has made a special study of the subject.

¹⁰ He died about 1692, in which year an inventory of his small estate is entered in the court proceedings of Baltimore County, March Court. Among his few belongings were several which might properly have belonged to a hunter and backwoodsman, namely, seven raw deer skins; one gun; a pair of bullet moulds, and a horse "in the woods dubious to be got."

¹¹ This manuscript is endorsed "1766" and is described as a "Collection of Land Certificates chiefly in Baltimore & Anne Arundel Counties To which is added a List of Postponed certificates from the year 1733 to 1734." Also entered therein is Captain Richard Smith's certificate for "The Valley of Jehosopah," dated September 2, 1695 (and therefore earlier than "Northampton") which calls for "Andrew Peterson's branch." This land includes the southern part of Dulany's Valley.

¹² Baltimore County Court Proceedings, Land Commissions, Liber H. W. S. No. 4, f. 140 *et seq.*

was, in all likelihood, the overseer's house on the "quarter." As tobacco was raised on it in these days, it is more correct to speak of it as a "plantation" and not a "farm."¹³

The next important date in the long history of "Hampton" is November 1st, 1760, for on that day "Charles Ridgely of Baltimore County, Merchant," conveyed to his son Charles, the Younger, styled "Mariner," some 2000 acres of land, consisting of part of "Northampton," "Hampton Court," "Oakhampton" and "Stone's Adventure," lying together in one tract.¹⁴ This Charles, the "Mariner," was the builder of the Hampton Mansion.

That same year Col. Charles Ridgely (otherwise styled "Senior" or "Merchant") got possession of 100 acres lying north of "Northampton" on Peterson's Run for the purpose of erecting thereon an iron works to be called "Northampton Works."¹⁵ The company was organized October 8, 1761, and it consisted of Charles Ridgely, his sons John and Charles.¹⁶ John died in 1771 surviving by one year his infant son John. These iron works were to become a most important possession of the Ridgelys, for in 1797, when General Ridgely was visited at "Hampton" by Francis Parkinson, the historian, he recorded that General Ridgely "has very extensive iron works."¹⁷ . . . He is a very genteel man and is said to keep the best table in America." Parkinson further said that the General bred race horses and had a well cultivated farm (the cultivation of tobacco had given place by that time to

¹³ Late in the 1760's or early in the 1770's the landowners of Baltimore County gave up the planting of tobacco and began the cultivation of wheat and corn.

¹⁴ Land Records of Baltimore County, Liber B., No. H, f. 420.

¹⁵ A copy of his writ of *ad quod damnum* will be found in the above mentioned "Collection of Land Certificates," which belonged to Barrister Carroll. It is dated February 28, 1760. The 100 acres so condemned was part of "Refuge" and lay on Pot Spring Run (a branch of Peterson's Run or Long Quarter Branch).

¹⁶ The contract is mentioned in a deed from Colonel Charles Ridgely's executors to Charles Ridgely, Jr., executed in the year 1772, shortly after the death of the former, and conveying to the grantee a one-third interest in the Northampton works and lands. (Land Records of Baltimore County, Liber A. L. No. D, f. 495 *et seq.*)

¹⁷ In addition to his interest in the Northampton furnace, Charles Carnan Ridgely owned the forges long known as Ridgely's Forges, which stood on the west side of the Great Falls of Gunpowder River, near the (old) Philadelphia Road, and had formerly been known as the Nottingham Iron Works. These works, together with more than five thousand acres of land, were purchased by General Ridgely, in 1796, from Alexander Hanson, Trustee for the Sale of Confiscated British Property. (Land Records of Baltimore County, Liber W. G. No. H. W., f. 642 *et seq.*) Out of this relatively vast tract of land, which was mostly in woods and devoted to charcoal burning, was carved the White Marsh Estate, 1700 acres, which Governor Ridgely left to his son, David Latimer Ridgely, and which remained intact and in the possession of the latter's descendants until a little more than a decade ago.

corn and wheat) "better than most others in the country, the expense of which was largely paid for by the iron works," for "the cultivation of one's own land would make any man poor." Another item of interest he recorded at this time was that the roads from "Hampton" to Baltimore were so bad "that it is a day's work in winter for a team."¹⁸

Col. Charles Ridgely died in 1772, and his will ratified the deed of gift of the year 1760 of 2000 acres to his son, and to his grandson John Robert Holliday he left that portion of "Northhampton" not already deeded to his son Charles.¹⁹ This bequest was the beginning of the estate "Epsom"²⁰ lying adjoining and very close, south of the Hampton Mansion. The line between was first established by this deed of gift of 1760.

Charles Ridgely, the Builder, died in 1790, but six months after the completion of the house. In his will dated 7 April, 1787,²¹ he makes the following bequest to his wife who was Rebecca, daughter of Caleb Dorsey of "Belmont": "I give and bequeath unto my beloved wife, Rebecca Ridgely, during her natural Life, the Dwelling wherein I now reside together with eight acres of Land thereto adjoining for a garden with as many outhouses as she may think necessary for her convenience or if she should prefer the new house I am now building, I leave it at her option to Choose the same." He directs his nephew (for he had no children), Charles Ridgely Carnan, to provide a stable for his said wife, large enough for six horses and cows. To his wife he left his silver plate for life. To his nephew, Charles Ridgely Carnan, he left divers lands, including all the land which his father gave him by indenture dated 1 November 1760, "whereon I now reside" except the use of the dwelling house and eight acres reserved for his wife, the whole consisting of "Northhampton" and divers adjacent tracts and his interest in the Northampton Furnance which he had originally inherited from his father. A tax list of Back and Middle River Upper Hundreds, Baltimore County, of 1798 credits Charles Ridgely "of Hampton"

¹⁸ *A Tour in America*, by Richard Parkinson (London, 1805), I, 73 *et seq.*

¹⁹ Wills, Baltimore County, Liber 3, f. 201. The will is dated April 1, 1772.

²⁰ John Robert Holliday, the son of Robert Holliday, for whom Holliday Street in Baltimore was named, died in 1801. In his will he left "Epsom" and other lands to his son, Harry G. Holliday. In the last century "Epsom" was the property of a branch of the Chew family. The will of J. R. Holliday is recorded in Liber 6, at folio 270.

²¹ Baltimore County Wills, Liber 6, f. 450.

(sic) with 92 slaves and scattered tracts of land.²² It is impossible to say how many acres were then a part of "Hampton" proper. The mansion is therein described: "One stone dwelling house, 2 stories, 56 by 80 feet, two wings to do. 23 by 25 feet each." On Griffith's Map of Maryland, 1794, we see the words "Hampton Hall" on the site of the mansion, and, a short distance north of it on Peterson's Run, a sign indicating an iron furnace, noted as "Northampton." The site of the old furnace is now under the waters of Loch Raven.

Charles Ridgely Carnan, who had so handsomely benefited by the will of his uncle, by act of the State Legislature in 1790, to conform to a condition therein imposed, changed his name to Charles Carnan Ridgely, and assumed the Ridgely arms. He was usually known as General Ridgely and from 1816 to 1819 he was Governor of Maryland. Strangely enough he married the youngest sister, Priscilla, of his uncle's wife and all the later Ridgelys of Hampton are descended from them. Their eldest son Charles, born August 26, 1783, who died before his father, had one son who died less than three months after he was born. The second son of Charles and Priscilla, John, inherited. He was the first child born at "Hampton" January 9, 1790. The line of inheritance of "Hampton" from the Builder is:

Charles Ridgely	(1733-1790)	Married	1760	Rebecca Dorsey	(1739-1812)
Charles Ridgely					
Carnan	(1772-1828)	"	1782	Priscilla Dorsey	(1762-1814)
(Charles)	(1783-1819)	"	1809	Maria Campbell	(178 -1853)
(John)	(1819-1820)				
John Ridgely					
Carnan	(1790-1867)	"	1812	Prudence Gough Carroll	(1795-1822)
		"	1828	Eliza Ridgely	(1803-1867)
Charles Ridgely	(1830-1872)	"	1851	Margaretta Sophia Howard	(1824-1904)
John Ridgely	(1851-1938)	"	1873	Helen Stewart	(1854-1929)
John Ridgely	(1882-)	"	1907	Louise Humrichouse	(1883-1934)
		"	1940	Jane Rodney	

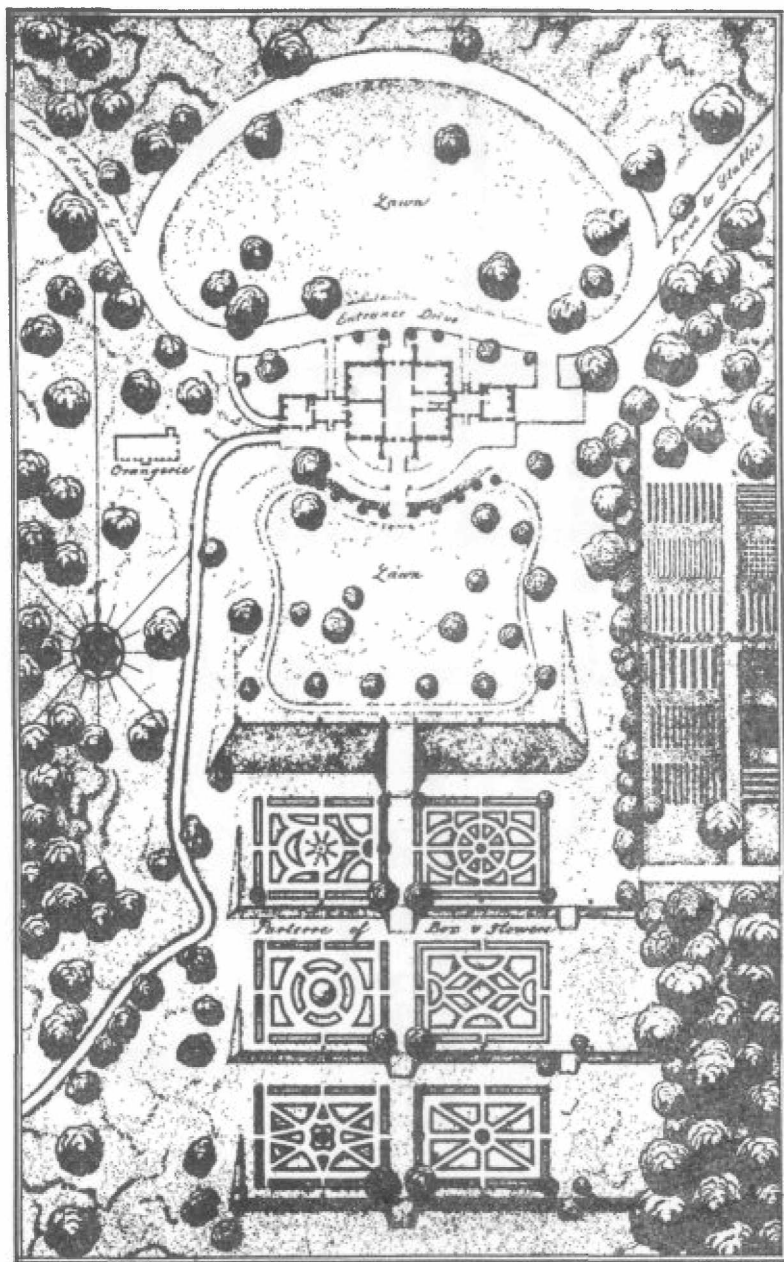
The building of the mansion was commenced by Charles in 1783 while he and Rebecca still dwelt in the "Farm House." The diary of Rebecca contains under date of December 8, 1788:

²² This tax list may be seen at the Maryland Historical Society. According to it, Charles Ridgely's land holdings in that hundred amounted to something over 3500 acres, exclusive of his interest in the furnace lands. Of these 3500 acres not less than two thousand acres were included in "Hampton." At the same time he owned more than five thousand acres at the Nottingham Forges (Ridgely's Forges). His executors divided more than 2500 acres in and about Dulany's Valley among his heirs. It is safe to say that he died possessed of more than ten thousand acres in Baltimore County alone.

"Came to the Large New Building, found a desire in my heart to be more Devoted to the Lord, than I had ever Shown myself to the world to be. Went to prayers with the family." The house was not completely furnished when, on January 9th, 1790, the son of Charles Ridgely Carnan was born there, and "the child was born in the nursery." Six months later Charles the Builder died. Rebecca did not wish to live in the "Farm House" surrounded by its eight acres bequeathed her in the will of her husband and neither did she live in the Large New Building in which her husband had died. She accepted "Auburn" near by from her nephew and brother-in-law and lived there till she died in 1812. The nephew very soon after the death of his uncle began the construction of the gardens at "Hampton."

It is to be regretted that we have no inventory of the library of Charles, the Builder. Architects were rare in those days and the designs of fine houses were usually taken from books in the libraries of the owners, and carried out by master builders. Family papers only record the name of the carpenter, one Jehu Howell, who received the sum of £3482, s 13, d 6½, no inconsiderable sum, for the carpentry and woodwork of the house. It is strange that accounts are meticulously kept for this amount but there is no record that would complete the costs. It is recorded that Jehu Howell resided in one of the wings as early as 1784.

One is tempted to speculate on what kind of a man this Charles the Builder was. His portrait by John Hesselius that hangs in the Dining Room shows a low forehead, a long acquisitive nose, and the lower part of a face and a figure of a man accustomed to good living. It would seem likely that he was not much in sympathy with his wife's conversion to Methodism, nor her preoccupation, as evidenced by her diary, with the state of her soul. The building period coincided with that which produced the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States, but family tradition has it that he was neither pleased with the change to a Republican Government nor, it may be supposed, with those laboring to form it. His success with his iron works, the size of his house and the extent of his land holdings, all would place him as a prototype of the successful business man who from the circumstances of his epoch wins great personal advantage and helps to create the great economic fabric of the nation.

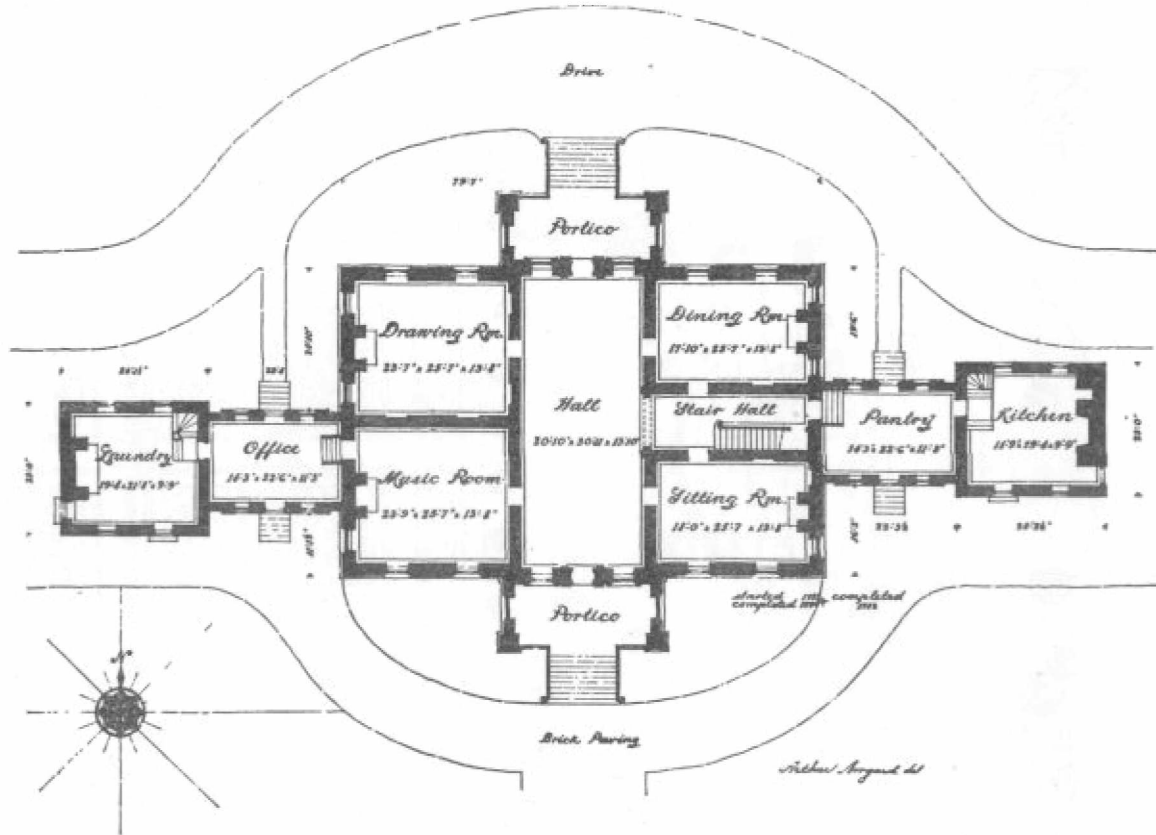


PLAN OF "HAMPTON"

Measured and Drawn for *House and Garden*, January, 1903

By Laurence Hall Fowler, F. A. I. A.

From Reproduction in *Great Georgian Houses of America*, Volume I (1933)



FIRST FLOOR PLAN OF HAMPTON MANSION (over all length 175 feet)

From *Great Georgian Houses of America*, Volume I (1933)

"Hampton" is one of the largest of the early houses of Maryland and one of the few stuccoed ones, but its design is not altogether successful. The spacing of the columns of the porticoes is unpleasantly wide and the entablature, in scale with the porticoes, is too large even when reduced, as it passes over the windows. This not uncommon difficulty can be met in two ways as nearby houses illustrate. At "Homewood" and at "Whitehall" both the architrave and frieze are omitted over the windows. This allows a pleasant domestic scale. At the "Executive Mansion" in Washington the order is repeated between the windows and at the corners of the building. Thus the windows occur in a panel formed by the order which carries across the entire facade. This treatment is the more monumental. At "Hampton" there is also too great a discrepancy of scale between the main house and the wings. However, the great size and spread of the house is magnificent, and the tall cupola²³ and chimneys, the large decorated dormers and the finials above the pediments and at the corners of the roof produce an extremely animated sky line.

No change has been made in the house since its completion except that colored glass has replaced the clear glass of the original sash in the halls, and in 1867 the north portico steps were replaced by the present marble ones designed by E. G. Lind, an architect of Baltimore.

The plan was surely conceived for large entertaining. The wide central hall is one of the distinguishing features of the house. Its openness is delightful both for summer living and for entertaining a number of people. A neighbor in the time of the General describes an occasion when fifty-one persons sat down to dinner in the great hall and "every one had plenty of room."²⁴ One suspects that the architectural screen that divided the hall from the stairway is a device for conserving heat in the rooms used for family living during winter months. It was thus possible to contract living to the two rooms flanking the stair hall. On the second floor the direction of the communicating central hall is reversed and the spaces over the two entrances are taken

²³ Annie Leakin Sioussat in her book *Old Baltimore* (New York, 1931), opposite p. 187, shows a water color of a "Ridgely House at North Point," which has an unusually tall cupola. The resemblance to the cupola at "Hampton" might be more than a coincidence.

²⁴ Diary of Henry Thompson of "Clifton," MS in possession of Maryland Historical Society.

by two bed rooms. The third floor, in the roof, is divided into ten small rooms and from the hall a circular stair rises to the cupola. No decorative plaster work such as we see in other houses of Maryland and Virginia exists. The more important rooms are decorated with simple dentilled cornices and the overmantels and doorways by regulation entablatures of excellent proportions.

The southern portico overlooks the extensive gardens laid out by the General about 1800. The lawn is decorated by fine trees and bordered by ancient cedars. Thence a grass ramp extends to the next lower level which is taken up by box gardens on each side of the main axis. The two lower levels are similarly laid out and the principal vista ends with a group of monumental spruce. To the west are the green houses and the gardener's cottage. The ruins of the old orangery are quite close to the main house. To the east behind an arbor-vitae hedge is the kitchen garden and farther off, enclosed by a brick wall, is the family burial ground. The gardens are conceived in excellent harmony with the house, and their specimen trees, especially in the spring, are as fine as any that can be seen in the State.

Today, two centuries and three years after the first Ridgely acquired the Hampton estate, the mansion still sits nobly in the center of its spreading grounds and the cupola rises proudly above the thickening trees. The centuries have left their mark, however, for some of the trees are bent and broken. Others have fallen and their substance already merges with the garden soil. The paths need attention and the box is partly missing and uncared for. Only dauntless jonquils are blooming. The family graves are at the end of a path hard to follow. Their monuments are overgrown with honeysuckle and ivy.

The house, like so many similar ones unable to adjust to changing times, now lacks the luster of the days of its prime. Fabrics and paints are faded and worn. The great hall no longer resounds to half a hundred lusty guests as it did when the General entertained his farmer neighbors. Much of the interior furnishing remains but some absences are notable. The portrait of the General's daughter Eliza,—the "Lady with the Harp"—together with the General's own, both by Sully, are in the National Gallery in Washington. Some of the old furniture has been replaced by changing tastes and some is scattered by inheritance and by gift.

The rooms echo no more to the laughter of children nor to the gaiety of young people. Their silences, for the solitary guest, are broken by the tinkle of the chandeliers to the tread of feet above. The sounds of cultivation never come in the open windows for the surrounding fields are gone, replaced by the tide of an advancing city. "Hampton," as a family estate, has succumbed to modern times. It will, fortunately for posterity, by reason of its purchase by the Avalon Trust, remain as an unique evidence of the taste of one family, that continuously since the nation was founded, maintained occupancy and there centered its hopes and affections. It now approaches the measureless uncertainties of the future, like some river that has fulfilled its function and hesitates at a new and slower phase, before it flows placidly to the open sea.²⁵

²⁵ The author acknowledges his indebtedness to Mr. W. B. Marye who supplied him with information from the land records which he would not otherwise have had.