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**The Johnsons of New York:
The Evolution of a Vernacular Style, Ireland, New York, Ontario, & Quebec**

Howard Smith

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Art History

Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts at
Concordia University
Montréal, Québec, Canada

April 1996

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ABSTRACT

The Johnsons of New York:

The Evolution of a Vernacular Style, Ireland, New York, Ontario, and Quebec

Howard Smith

The Johnsons of New York, produced a significant body of architecture over a period of 118 years, spread over a considerable geographic area. Of some 21 dwellings constructed eight are still standing in 1996, and the rest are fairly well documented.

We present an historic overview of the principal members of the family engaged in the construction of the houses. The biographical segment of the report explains the prominence of the family and emphasizes the impact of their actions on the society of their day.

The second part of the paper is a point by point report on the structure and history of each of the fourteen structures to be treated in depth. Each of the structures is applied to a template, making it possible to compare them at a glance.

The third section examines in detail the similarities between the structures and traces these similarities to their respective roots, concluding that each generation of Johnson was influenced by the constructions of the preceding generation. This influence was tempered to some degree by the fashionable styles of the day, but the family style always prevailed.

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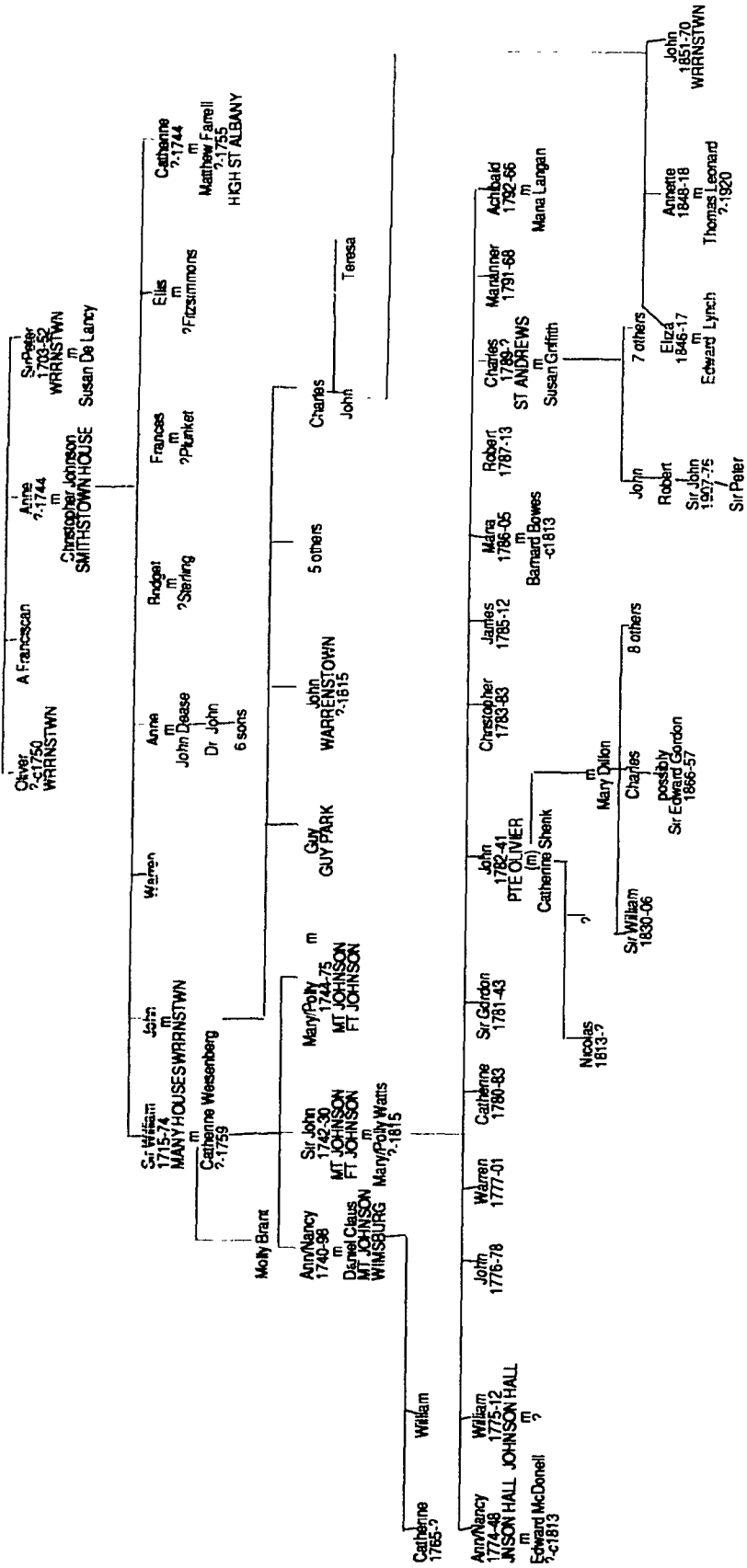
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NOTE: Because the original documents relating to the houses are measured in feet and inches, for purposes of simplicity and clarity measurements herein remain in their original form. However, scales of measured drawings are metric.

De Varannes

Warrings

Michael Warner m Catherine Aymer
?-1715
WARRENSTOWN



Oliver
?-c1750
WARRENSTOWN

A Francisco
m
Anne
?-1744
m
Christopher Johnson
SMITHSTOWN HOUSE
m
Susan De Lancy

Catherine
?-1744
m
Matthew Fanell
?-1755
HIGH ST ALBANY

Francis
m
?Punkert

Rudolph
m
?Sterling

John
m
Anna
Dr John
6 sons

John
m
Anne
John Dease

John
m
Warren

John
m
Catherine Wessenberg

Sir William
1715-74
m
MANYHOUSES
WARRENSTOWN

Sir John
1742-30
m
MT JOHNSON
FT JOHNSON

Sir John
1744-75
m
Mary Polly
FT JOHNSON

Sir John
1781-43
m
Sir Gordon

Francisco
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Anna
John Dease

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PART ONE: THE FAMILY

CHAPTER ONE

THE WARRENS & THE IRISH JOHNSONS

The Warrens of **Warrenstown** were originally a Norman family named de Varenne, after La Varenne their home in France. "The earliest documentary reference to them in Meath is in 1299, when a John Waryng of Trim district is mentioned in the Calendar of Justiciary Rolls. Twenty-five years later Warynestown is given as the property of Philip Waryne (the spelling of the name varies from document to document)."¹ After the Reformation the Warrens remained Catholic as did most of the Anglo-Norman gentry, yet they were little bothered during the subsequent century. "In the reign of Elizabeth I, Peter Waring was assigned 'a tower and hall with 180 acres arable land with sufficient pasture in Waringstown and Corballis'"². We can assume that they took no part in the Rising of 1641, as Cromwell did not confiscate their lands. And at the Restoration they were judged innocent and "confirmed in their title to 320 acres in fee."³

The Jacobean Warrens were not so lucky. Under James II the Anglo-Irish Catholic gentry felt that their estates were secure forever and, not unnaturally, saw James and his male descendants as vital to that security. Four of the five Warren brothers served in the Jacobean Army at the Boyne. They went down in disaster with James and were attainted, but even so, did not lose any of their property. "...[T]he eldest Warren, Captain Michael, came to terms with the new situation. He had his eldest son brought up a Protestant and when the Penal Laws were at their most rigorous."⁴ Captain Michael Warren had married Catherine Aylmer, by whom he had six children: Oliver the eldest who inherited **Warrenstown**; Christopher who became a Franciscan; Catherine; most importantly for our purposes, Anne, who married Christopher Johnson; Mary; and Peter, who was born 1703. The Jacobite Rebellion of 1715 was a failure and, Michael Warren having died, his son Oliver had younger brother Peter placed in the charge of a Protestant uncle, Rear Admiral Lord Aylmer of Balrath.

Peter joined the Royal Navy in 1717 and prospered, rising in less than ten years to the rank of Captain. By 1730 his career in the West Indies, capturing Spanish and French prizes had enriched both Peter and his future father-in-law Stephen De Lancey of New York. He married Susan De Lancey

In 1731, purchased a 300-acre farm on Manhattan Island and built **Greenwich House** to live in. In 1736 an opportunity arose to purchase, from the widow of former Governor William Cosby, 13,000 acres of land in the Mohawk Valley for the astonishingly small sum of £110. With the intent of settling this land with tenants Peter Warren returned to Warrenstown House to seek out his nephew William Johnson, whose story is told in another chapter.

In 1745, after the capture of Louisbourg, Peter was knighted and promoted to Rear Admiral of the Blue. "In 1747 as second in command he was a hero of the victory over the French squadron off Cape Finisterre, and was further honored and promoted, by the Cross of the Bath, and the ranks of Commander in Chief of the Western Squadron, and Vice Admiral."⁶ He forsook the New World when it became evident that his former allies were opposed to his plans for a career as Governor of New York, and he settled in Cavendish Square London. Sir Peter Warren was elected to Parliament for Westminster on July 1, 1747 and sat until his death. He was elected alderman of the City of London for Billingsgate Ward in June 1752. Sir Peter was generally recognized as one of the richest commoners in the United Kingdom.

Sir Peter still found time to look after **Warrenstown**, which he had inherited on the death of his brother Oliver. In January 1750 he purchased land for some £6,000, expanding the estate and turning residency of it over to his nephew John Johnson. A letter in the Johnson Papers from Sir William's brother, Peter Warren Johnson, in 1750 tells us that: "My bro: Jack is Removing to Warrenstown with his little Family to Settle by Sir Peter's desire...he's return'd from London but two Months where he has been about Sir Peter's Affairs...Jack is to hold all Warrenstown at £280 a year in Lieu of my Father's part of it he gives a £100 yearly which is better for him."⁶

In 1752 Sir Peter sailed to Dublin to receive an honorary LL.D from Dublin University, where he contracted a fever and died suddenly. His will caused a great deal of trouble for his nephew Sir William, and will be dealt with in the chapter on Sir William.

We are told by the anonymous author of **Historical Note on Warrenstown**, that Sir Peter's sister Anne Warren Johnson occupied the property from Sir Peter's inheritance of it until her own death in April of 1744. Her son John continued to farm **Warrenstown**-building up considerable property of

his own at the same time. Her grandson John took over "and in 1808 bought out the interest of Sir Peter's heirs: 401 acres and a dwellinghouse in Warrenstown and 30 acres in Mooretown."⁷ By 1836 the then owner of Warrenstown House, John Johnson, great grandson of Anne, had caused the quarterly fairs--previously held on the estate--to be moved to the nearby village of Cross Keys. His two daughters, Eliza Matilda (1846-1917) and Annette Mary (1848-1918) succeeded jointly to the estate on the death of their brother John William in 1870. They were Catholics, married Catholics and both died without issue.

After the death of Annette Mary's husband, Thomas Leonard in 1920, Warrenstown House was handed over to the Salesian Fathers, the present owners. The Agricultural College was established in accordance with the will of Eliza Matilda Johnson Lynch. Thus in 1923 both the Johnson and Warren families had ceased to have any connection to either **Warrenstown House** or **Smithstown House**.

CHAPTER TWO

SIR WILLIAM JOHNSON

(1715-1774)

Sir William Johnson was born in 1715 at **Warrenstown House** in County Meath, Ireland, the eldest son of Christopher and Anne Warren Johnson. William was the eldest of eight children (brothers Warren and John and sisters Anne (later Dease), Bridget (later Sterling), Frances (later Plunket), Ellis (later Fitzsimmons) and Catherine (later Farrell).

Christopher and Anne Johnson and their eight children rented **Smithstown House** near the village of Dunshaughlin, about twenty miles from Dublin and only a couple of miles from Anne's home **Warrenstown House**. The 1728 deed of lease on **Smithstown House** from the Earl of Fingall, was for about two hundred acres for £208/19s and a yearly rent of £63/13/6 for a period of thirty-one years. This was a required lease for Catholics, which suggests that "Smithstown may have been in the possession of the Johnsons before they became Protestants. The text of the deed refers to 'Christopher Johnson of Warrenstown,' so he may have been resident with the Warrens before the deed was drawn."⁸ The size of the estate makes it quite clear that the Johnsons were members of the landed gentry and not peasants, as has been suggested by such biographers as Pound and Flexner. A two-hundred-acre estate would probably have been sublet in small plots of a few acres to farmers. Hence it might have "from eight to twenty-five houses, and up to forty laborers."⁹ The Johnsons of Smithstown were not, however, "people of considerable fortune"¹⁰ and with a large family to provide for, naturally looked to their wealthier connections for preferment for their sons. A logical candidate was Anne's brother Captain Peter Warren RN, recently enriched by capturing French and Spanish prize ships in the West Indies, and the new owner of a vast tract of land in New York. (See chapter: The Warrens and the Irish Johnsons)

In 1737, at the age of 22, William Johnson began to recruit Irish settlers to populate his uncle's 13,000 acres in the Mohawk Valley of New York. His reward was to be that Uncle Peter "would give me a certain tract of Land in Warrensborough, and Supply me with all things necessary to carry on my Work."¹¹

In the summer of 1738 William Johnson and a party of twelve families arrived in Albany to face a sixteen-mile trip overland to Schenectady, before tackling the last fifteen miles by water to Warrensborough. Nearly thirty years later Lord Adam Gordon, a friend of William's son John, would describe the lower Mohawk valley as "a narrow vale or Strath of excellent Soil, hemm'd in on both sides with high grounds, uncultivated, and covered with a variety of Timber, but exceedingly pleasant to the Eye, and cut by a thousand little Brooks, descending rapidly from above. It much resembles Westmoreland, or the Banks of Tay, above Perth."¹²

Warrensborough, (or more commonly, Warrensburgh) was situated on the south bank of the Mohawk River at the mouth of Schoharie Creek. It extended three and a half miles along the Mohawk and five miles along the Schoharie. "It was hilly or rolling country, with little of the flat bottomlands so much desired. Heavily forested, it did have good loam over clay, if the land could first be cleared."¹³ Nevertheless by 1742, William had leased 26 lots to settlers and by 1743 the land was producing building material for Uncle Peter's house in Greenwich.

Under Peter Warren's instructions, and armed with the supplies provided by him, William set up a store to trade with the Indians and other local settlers. He quickly learned several facts which were unknown to Warren: First, trade on the frontier was barter or credit with no fixed price for goods; secondly, goods that were in demand in New York or Boston were of little value in the Mohawk Valley; lastly, one had to be where the commerce was--and that meant on the north bank of the Mohawk. As early as 1739 William had been explaining to his uncle that the land he had bought in his own name on the north shore of the river was to enable him to take advantage of the passing trade. It was on this piece of flat bottomland at the base of a steep hill that William built the one-and-a-half-storey stone house that he called **Mount Johnson**.

William lived in this **Mount Johnson** with Catherine Weisenberg (sometimes spelled Weissenberg) and fathered Anne (called Nancy), John and Mary (called Polly). There is no evidence that he ever married Catherine, but he recognized her children as his legitimate offspring, and designated John his heir.

Throughout this period, William was entertaining his Indian clients (whose language and customs he was learning) and his Irish tenants and relatives. Indeed many of the latter began to see William as a potential patron. In 1745 Johnson was appointed a Justice of the Peace and in 1746 was called to the Albany Conference as an Indian negotiator. Not surprisingly, William Johnson's increasing importance began to make **Mount Johnson** inadequate. In 1748 Johnson announced plans to build a larger house about a mile upstream from **Mount Johnson**.

The new house, also called **Mount Johnson**, was also of stone but bigger and two storeys high, set in approximately thirty acres of cultivatable land. During the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) it became necessary to fortify the house and Johnson added two blockhouses and two wings, "fortified with barracks".¹⁴ By 1759 the house had been renamed **Fort Johnson**.

In 1749, Johnson purchased a two-storey brick house on High Street in Albany. The following year Matthew Farrell, husband of his sister Catherine, was forced by business losses to emigrate to New York. With William's help Farrell soon prospered and moved into the High Street house. He was joined in 1754 by his wife. Unfortunately, Matthew was killed during the Lake George campaign in 1755 and Catherine died soon after.

In 1752 when Sir Peter Warren died his will embroiled William in a family battle. Instead of leaving a bequest to William as he had promised, Sir Peter provided for his own widow, his children and even for a possible unborn heir; then he divided his remaining property among his nephew Richard Tyrell, Tyrell's two sisters and "My Nephews and Neices the children of Christopher Johnson Excepting my Nephew William Johnson for whom I have a great esteem but consider him as not wanting a share."¹⁵ Worse yet, the will continued "...whatever sum shall appear to be due to me from my said Nephew Mr. William Johnson one third part thereof he shall retain to his own Use, the two Thirds shall be Equally divided between his Brothers and Sisters."¹⁶ This was a blow, as the executors claimed Johnson owed £4,000 and wanted him to pay his siblings some £2600. Johnson was able to satisfy the executors that he had not only already repaid over £1,000 but, in addition, he had debts due to him from Sir Peter that left a balance in Johnson's favour of approximately £900. This balance he was willing to waive. After some discussion both Lady Warren and the Irish Johnsons agreed to accept the executors' decision in Johnson's favour. In exchange William remembered his siblings generously in his own will.

In 1751 a young German, Daniel Claus arrived in the Mohawk Valley accompanying an envoy from Pennsylvania, Conrad Weiser. On learning that Johnson was dealing with the Indians, Weiser decided to leave Claus with Johnson to learn the Mohawk language. Claus rapidly proved to be an able assistant to Johnson.

By 1755 Johnson had been commissioned a General by the colonial government and placed in charge of the combined New York-New England expedition against the French on Lake Champlain. Instead Johnson met and vanquished the main French army near Fort Edward on the shore of Lake St. Sacrement (which Johnson renamed Lake George) capturing the French commander Baron Dieskau. The way to Crown Point and Ticonderoga was now open and would be used to advantage some four years later to back up the conquest of Quebec. Johnson was the hero of the Empire and was rewarded on November 18, 1755 by the King with the hereditary title of Baronet and the promise of a Knighthood for his son John upon the latter's attaining his majority.¹⁷

In 1756 Sir William received Royal appointment as "Our Sole Agent and Superintendent of the said [...Six united Nations of Indians and their Confederates...] Indians and their Affairs, with the Annual Salary of Six Hundred Pounds Sterling, payable Quarterly."¹⁸ At the same time Parliament voted Sir William £5,000, probably as recompense for his expenditures and losses sustained during the campaign and in Indian Affairs. Johnson was kept busy during 1757 and '58 keeping up the morale of his Indian Allies as the French and the British forces engaged in the death struggle for the continent, that was to culminate in the fall of Louisbourg and Fort Frontenac in 1758.

The following year Sir William's wife Catherine died and he took Molly Brant, a Mohawk, as his second wife. On July 25, 1759 Sir William commanded the English forces that took Fort Niagara from the French. Combined with the capture of Louisbourg and Fort Frontenac this gave Britain the control of the Great Lakes and the approaches to Quebec; the stage was now set for the fall of Quebec and the end of French power in North America. Though he was at Niagara when Quebec fell, Johnson was part of Amherst's army in 1760 which cleared the St. Lawrence of hostile French posts and captured Montréal on the September 8--the fifth anniversary of the Battle of Lake George.

In 1761 Sir William was appointed by General Amherst to meet with the western tribes of Indians at Detroit. Johnson's brother John's son Lieutenant Guy Johnson had been serving in America for some time. Because his other assistants were otherwise occupied he requested permission to take Guy and his own nineteen-year-old son "Johnny". This marked the beginning of Guy's training as a potential successor. During the Detroit Conference Sir William promised the Indians that their land would be protected. This laid the foundations of the Proclamation of 1763 which confined colonial expansion to a line east of the Alleghenies, one of the root causes of the American Revolution.

The granting of Indian Lands had been a major concern of the Mohawks since 1736. Sir William had fought to have such fraudulent grants as the Kayaderosseras Patent of 1704 overturned. The Kayaderosseras claimed some 800,000 acres in exchange for £60; the Indians insisted that a smaller grant had been intended. Johnson was never able to strike down either the Kayaderosseras or the equally galling Livingstone Patent, which was based on a secret night survey which incorporated Indian lands into the legal holdings of the Livingstones. This secret survey then became the basis for sales of land on which tenants of the Indians were already settled and living. Other lands were "purchased" from Indians made drunk by the purchasers.

In order to prevent the loss of any more land, the Mohawks asked Sir William to have their remaining land surveyed. This Johnson did. At the same time he prevailed upon the Lieutenant-Governor to put a freeze on further granting of patents. The loss of land continued until the Indians decided that the only way to control things would be to themselves grant the land to men in whom they had confidence. For this reason they presented Sir William with "a Gift of 100,000 Acres of Land or thereabouts, that is 16 by 10 Miles...36 Miles from Fort Johnson."¹⁹ This gift was to enmesh Sir William in a legal struggle that would not be resolved until 1769.

In the meantime Sir William decided to open a tract of 50,000 acres behind **Fort Johnson** for development. This area, called Kingsborough, was covered by two of his patents. He felt it was large enough to house a new manor and settlers. In 1760 he named it **Castle Cumberland** in honour of the King's brother. By the following June some fifty families were settled on the land, and by 1763, when he began to build the manor house, there were 100 families settled around it.

Sir William was unpleasantly surprised in 1761, when Daniel Claus asked for the hand of Nancy Johnson. Although he initially refused, his objections were allayed and Daniel and Nancy were married on April 13, 1762. Claus was forced by his army commitments to spend the rest of 1762 in Montréal and only returned in time for the birth of his daughter Catherine on January 22, 1763. Sir William's younger daughter Polly also had her share of suitors and in January of 1763, she married her cousin Guy Johnson.

On February 24, 1763 Sir William Johnson signed an agreement with Samuel Fuller to build a new mansion on his land at **Castle Cumberland**, now renamed **Johnson Hall**. Work commenced on April 17.

From March 15 to April 17 Fuller was renovating old **Mount Johnson**, Sir William's first home, one mile east of **Fort Johnson** to be Sir William's wedding gift to Nancy and Daniel Claus. The latter renamed the estate **Williamsburg**. Both of these houses will be dealt with in more detail in later chapters.

The years 1763-65 saw Sir William involved as Superintendent of Indian Affairs in the Pontiac Conspiracy. The actual uprising was quelled by the arrival of news of the signing of the Treaty of Paris (February 10, 1763) ending the Seven Years' War. Realising that the loss of French support made his cause hopeless, Pontiac lifted the siege of Detroit and withdrew. Meanwhile English forces under Col. Henry Bouquet defeated the Indians in Pennsylvania. On October 17, 1765 Pontiac negotiated a peace treaty, which was confirmed by Sir William at Oswego, N.Y. on July 25, 1766. Combined with his readjustment of the Proclamation Line of 1763, this treaty guaranteed the Indians protection in the lands between the Ohio River and the Great Lakes. This opened all the land east of the Mississippi and south of the Ohio to English settlement. Unfortunately this settlement did not please many of the settlers who wanted to expand into the protected lands and saw the treaty as part of Britain's tyranny over her colonies.

In 1766 Sir William gave his daughter Polly and her husband Guy Johnson a square mile of land adjoining the property of Daniel Claus. On this estate, which they called **Guy Park**, they built a stone mansion. The house was destroyed by lightning in 1773 and rebuilt in 1774.

Sir William spent the last eight years of his life trying to mediate between the settlers and the Indians. It was his wish to preserve as much of the Indian culture as possible, without threatening the world he was creating on his lands on the Mohawk. In 1768-9 he renegotiated the dividing line between Indian Lands and the colonies, giving the colonies the Wyoming Valley of Pennsylvania, all of Kentucky, much of West Virginia, most of Tennessee and the northeastern corner of Alabama. He tried to stay aloof from the growing quarrels between Britain and her colonies but when forced to act always chose the side of the King.

In 1765 Sir William had laid out the town of Johnstown, "within a small mile of my house", to encourage the development of his lands into a new county. By 1766 there were ten houses lining the town's eight intersecting streets, by 1771 this number had doubled. In 1765 he built an Anglican church for the town and by 1772 had to replace it with the much larger one still standing today. In 1769 he opened a free school for the town's 45 students. By 1772 he no longer had to advertise for settlers and, indeed, began to complain of the burden of finding room for 40 Scottish families. On March 12, 1772 Johnstown became the seat of the new Tryon County and Sir William personally expended the funds appropriated for a new courthouse and jail.

In 1773 his son John married Mary (Polly) Watts of New York and began to raise a family. Their eldest daughter Ann was born July 5, 1774 and her grandfather Sir William died six days later, July 11 1774.

CHAPTER THREE

SIR JOHN JOHNSON

(1742-1830)

Sir John Johnson, Knight and Baronet, was the second Baronet of the Baronetcy of New York and the last to live on the ancestral lands in the Mohawk Valley.

Sir John was born November 5, 1742 at the family home **Mount Johnson**, eldest son to Sir William Johnson and Catherine Weisenberg. **Mount Johnson**, on the Mohawk River, was about a mile from the present **Fort Johnson**. Although his parents may not have been legally married, John and his sisters Ann (called Nancy) baptized June 8 1740, and Mary (called Polly) baptized October 14 1744, were recognized as Sir William's legal offspring and John was his heir.

In 1748, when John was six, and by eighteenth century standards a man, his father began construction of an impressive new **Mount Johnson**. In addition to Sir William, Catherine, Nancy, John, and Polly, the household also included "Granny" (possibly Catherine's mother or a servant), numerous servants, slaves, Indian visitors, neighbours, and visiting relatives from both New York and Ireland. Within a year the family was settled in the new **Mount Johnson**. Within ten years, following the addition of two blockhouses, it was renamed **Fort Johnson**.

Little is known of John's childhood and still less about his education. "Granny" joined the family in 1748, and Earle Thomas suggests that she was Catherine's mother²⁰, Arthur Pound calls her a "Scots governess"²¹, Sir William called her "the old woman" but John always called her "Granny" or "my dear Grandmother". It does seem possible that she taught the children the rudiments of grammar, spelling, writing, and arithmetic, although there is no firm evidence to support this view. Pound suggests also that John was sent, with two of his half-Indian half-brothers and Joseph Brant, to study with Reverend Eleazor Wheelock, Founder of Dartmouth College.²² Although Brant and the half-Indian Johnsons did study in Lebanon, there is no evidence that John ever did. Likewise, the same historians describe John as a bully and ascribe it to his spoiled youth, yet " his contemporaries described him as shy and diffident during his youth".²³

It has been suggested that John was perfectly suited for a career in the military. Certainly he was given opportunity early to taste army life. In 1755 John's father was promoted to Major-General and put in charge of the British assault on the French fort at Crown Point on Lake Champlain. Thirteen-year-old John was allowed to accompany his father on the campaign and was "blooded". On their way to Crown Point the British forces met the French at Lake George and defeated them.

Any plans John may have had for an army ended when his father enrolled him in the Academy at Philadelphia in 1757. This school, which later became the University of Pennsylvania, was to teach him "to acquit himself with dignity and decorum among the colonial aristocracy of which he would be a member."²⁴ He remained at the Academy from October of 1757 to July 17, 1760. While no A student, John did adequately at school and was commended for his "sobriety". In 1759 he missed one quarter, returning to the Mohawk in the spring early. His mother died in April of that year and his return was probably motivated by her illness. John had also heard that his father was embarking on an expedition against the French at Fort Niagara, and wanted to join him.

On May 16, John, his cousin Guy Johnson, and Daniel Claus joined his father and Brigadier-General Prideaux at Schenectady to march against Niagara. Prideaux was killed on July 20, and Sir William assumed command. Fort Niagara capitulated July 25, 1759. John was kept busy with a continuous round of chores and duties until August 4, and then accompanied him to Oswego. At Oswego General Gage was trying to decide if he should attack La Galette on the St. Lawrence. By the time Gage decided that it was too late to attack La Galette, the season was so far advanced that the Johnsons did not get home until October.

After finishing school at 17, John was made a Captain in the militia. His commission occupied little of his time and John pursued the life of a country gentleman or, as Thomas says, "that of the son of a country gentleman, for he was almost devoid of responsibility."²⁵

He attended his first Indian Conference in March 1761, by which time Molly Brant had replaced his late mother as Sir William's consort. John had two half-Indian half-brothers by 1761, and two other half-breed sons of Sir William by Mohawk women were also living at **Fort Johnson**. John acted as

his father's aide on the expedition to Detroit. This conference, which laid the foundations for the Proclamation of 1763, was intended to be the beginning of John's training for the assumption of his father's position of Superintendent. However John soon made clear his lack of interest in the job and Sir William turned to his nephew Guy. In spite of his lack of interest in Indian Affairs, John could not help picking up a great deal of information and contacts that were to be important to him in later life.

In 1762 John declined the offer of a commission in the regular army, his grounds being the war was about to end so it would look like he was only seeking a sinecure. He stayed home at **Fort Johnson** and assisted his father at an Iroquois council in January 1762.

Sir William involved his son in the Livingstone Patent dispute as an introduction to the peacetime concerns of the Indian Department. At the same time that John and his father were dealing with the Patent dispute, Samuel Fuller was beginning work on Sir William's old house **Mount Johnson**. The house, with a surrounding square mile of land, was to be a present for Daniel and Nancy. They moved in late in 1765, just after the birth of their son. In their son's honour they renamed the house **Williamsburg**.

Sir William also presented Polly and Guy with a square mile of land on the Mohawk east of **Williamsburg**, and by 1766 they had constructed a stone mansion, called **Guy Park**, on the bank of the river. **Fort Johnson** became John's when his father moved to **Johnson Hall**. Thus by 1766 there were four Johnson mansions in the Mohawk Valley.

John's father decided that his son needed exposure to the fashionable world of Britain to "wear off the rusticity of a country education."²⁸ On October 14, 1765 John sailed from New York for Falmouth, arriving in London on November 18. Four days later he was presented to HM George III. On this occasion the King remembered his father's promise to Sir William and knighted young John. Sir John was understandably impressed by this act, and remained a devoted monarchist for the rest of his life.

Sir John also discovered that he preferred his home in America to Britain. In the spring of 1766, he visited his Warren and Johnson cousins in Ireland. He also visited his friend Lord Adam Gordon in

Scotland before returning for the winter of 1766-67 to London. In London he made many purchases of furniture, horses, music and seeds for his home. He carried out his father's business and returned as soon as he could to New York. He arrived back in America on September 27, 1767. During his absence his grandmother had died and both his sisters had moved into their own houses.

Although Sir John was willing to accompany his father to Indian conferences, he refused any permanent position in the department. In 1768 he accepted an appointment as the Commander of a Regiment of Horse, and he and his brothers-in-law became Justices of the Peace for Albany County.

Sir John fell in love with Clarissa Putnam, took her into his home as his mistress and fathered a son and a daughter. His father refused to allow Sir John to marry Clarissa, and in 1772 Sir John became engaged to Mary Watts of New York. Mary came from a family of great wealth and her mother was a De Lancey, thus she was related to Uncle Peter Warren. Sir John returned to **Fort Johnson** in March of 1773, and arranged for Clarissa's future as well as that of her children.

At the same time he began "certain changes and improvements he felt were required at **Fort Johnson**, drawing plans and engaging tradesmen to make the proposed alterations."²⁷ 1773 was an exciting spring for the Johnsons: Sir John attended another Indian conference at **Johnson Hall** in April; **Guy Park** was struck by lightning and burned to the ground; Sir William fell sick again; and Sir John married Polly Watts on June 29.

In 1774 Sir William died. Sir John now moved his family into **Johnson Hall** and assumed his father's title and responsibilities, with the exception of the Superintendency of Indian Affairs. This went to Guy Johnson, although Sir William had made it clear that it could be Sir John's if he wanted it.

With the rebuilding of **Guy Park**, **Johnson Hall** ceased to be the focus of Indian Affairs and became simply the home of the wealthiest man in the Mohawk Valley. As owner of an estate of more than 170,000 acres with 1,000 tenants, and more still arriving from Scotland, Sir John had enough to do just to manage the estate efficiently. Yet in the troubled times preceding the Revolution, he was also expected to repress the rebellious tendencies of his neighbours. Later, after his brothers-in-law had found it "wise to leave the valley with their families and scores of loyal friends in the early summer

of 1775..."²⁶, John found himself responsible for their estates as well.

From the birth of his eldest son William on August 21, 1775 it became increasingly clear that Sir John was also going to have to leave the Mohawk to fight the enemies of his King. On May 19, 1776 Sir John Johnson and 170 of his loyal tenants and friends left **Johnson Hall** for Canada. They were never to live in the Mohawk Valley again.

Sir John was commissioned a lieutenant-colonel and given permission to raise a regiment of loyalists to be called the King's Royal Regiment of New York, in June of 1776. This regiment fought alongside the regular troops in the Lake Champlain campaign of 1776 then spent the winter at Montréal. During this winter Sir John went to New York to rescue his wife and three children (John had been born October 7, at Albany where his mother was imprisoned) from the revolutionaries. They arrived in Montréal in the spring of 1777. The regiment raised by Sir John was never treated by the British as a regular force and although they fought loyally for the Crown, it was always their lot to be viewed somewhat askance. Nevertheless, Sir John made some steadfast friends during the Revolution and by 1782 had been appointed Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs. On September 15, he took possession from the Frobisher brothers of the two-storey stone house on St. Paul Street at St. Denis, although the deeds were not signed until March 20, 1783.

With the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1783, Sir John found himself in the almost impossible position of trying to make the Indians believe something he did not himself believe--that the King had not betrayed them in giving their lands to the Americans. That he succeeded is a testament to his powers of oratory and the affection of the Indians for his family. Next he set to work with Governor Haldimand finding land on which to settle the Loyalists, both red and white. The Indians were the easiest; a minority of the Mohawks chose to settle on land around the Bay of Quinte and the remainder chose the Grand River.

Sir John's greater concern for the next few years was the settling of the Loyalist claims for compensation--both his own and that of others. Governor Haldimand liked his suggestion that the Loyalists be settled on the north bank of the St. Lawrence River from the Seigniorial lands to the Bay of Quinte. His own men were to be settled in the first four townships west of the last seigneurie.

On March 1, 1784 he sent a surveyor to Pointe Maligne to select a town site and begin surveying the township. Sir John toyed with the idea of selecting a tract for himself and building a house on it, "pour encourager les autres", the less enthusiastic loyalists in Montréal. Since Sir John chose two sites one of which became New Johnstown he is one of the founders of the city of Cornwall.

In 1784 Haldimand asked Johnson if he would object to the governor's proposing Sir John as Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada. Sir John asked for more detailed information before Haldimand presented the proposal to the Crown. In the meantime, Sir John was put in charge of distributing the land grants to the Loyalists. This he did efficiently in spite of differences of opinion with the Governor over method of land allotment. In October of 1784 Sir John and Lady Johnson sailed to England. Where Sir John presented his claim for compensation for losses. He led a group of Loyalists petitioning the Crown for release from Seigniorial Tenure. Although the latter petition was denied, it probably influenced the Constitutional Act of 1789.

Sir John returned from England in 1785. He was appointed to the Legislative Council by the Governor Lord Dorchester on his arrival in 1786. Sir John continued to be the champion of the Loyalists and made his opinions known to the Governor, who shared them.

The growth of Sir John's family inspired him to buy the Longueuil house on St. Paul Street from the Lemoynes in 1785. The house which had served as the Intendant's palace before its occupancy by the Lemoynes was in a state of disrepair. It appears that "Sir John undertook extensive alterations as well as repairs."²⁹ Regardless, the Johnsons did not move into their grand new house until the autumn of 1798 or the winter of 1799.

Sir John continued to carry out his duties as Superintendent-General and it was assumed that, as he had Dorchester's support, he would soon be appointed Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada. It was a shock to both Johnson and Dorchester when Sir John Graves Simcoe received that post.

"A Loyalist, father of fourteen children and a reduced brigadier-general, Sir John was entitled to a considerable acreage. In addition, he was promised land, instead of money, in payment of a portion of his losses as a Loyalist."³⁰ In 1783 Johnson was granted Amherst Island (14,000 acres). He

requested Wolfe Island, but it had been granted already, so he asked for Howe Island and probably would have received it but for the confusion over the transfer of jurisdiction when Quebec was split into Upper and Lower Canada. He did obtain 20 acres in Kingston and built a house on it in 1788. He was granted town lots in Cornwall and a tract at Pointe Maligne that stretched four miles back along the Raisin River. He built a manor house at what became Williamstown sometime between 1785 and 1792. He also acquired 1,000 acres at Gananoque.

When Simcoe was appointed Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada, he assumed that Johnson would be his inferior; however, Sir John's commission made him responsible only to the Governor-General. In 1791 this commission was reinforced by a new one that clearly made Johnson answerable only to Dorchester. Foreseeing an uncomfortable situation, Johnson asked for leave of absence to return to England and the Johnsons sailed for England July 12, 1792.

With the birth of her last child in 1792 and the outbreak of war with revolutionary France, Lady Johnson began to work on Sir John to stay permanently in England. In 1793 Sir John bought a large house in Twickenham. Lady Johnson influenced her sons to drop out of university and enter the army and Sir John had trouble finding the £4,000 to buy commissions as officers for them. Sir John's claim for compensation totalled £103,162 /13/ Sterling. The Crown paid him only £47,000 Sterling and a promise of large tracts of land. Sir John needed the salary paid him as Superintendent-General. In late 1794 he purchased the Seigneurie of Monnoir in Lower Canada and began to plan improvements to it. Lady Mary delayed their return to Montréal until 1796.

In 1797 the Crown put him under the control of the Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada on issues related to that province. As Simcoe had already left Canada, Johnson was able to continue as before. For the next two years Sir John was forced to live partly in his house on St. Paul Street at St. Denis and partly in his sister's house on Notre Dame Street.

During this period he married off his eldest daughter Nancy to Major Edward McDonnell and saw her off to Ireland in 1798. In 1799 his son John went off for three years as a Midshipman on HMS Topaze, and in 1801 Lady Johnson and her children Maria, Marianne, Robert, Charles, and Archy sailed for England. Sir John and his son James were alone in the big house for a year. In 1802 the

oldest son William married. His sister Maria married Major-General Barnard Foord Bowes in 1805. In 1806 his son John was back from the Navy and living in Pointe Olivier on the Seigneurie of Monnoir.

Lady Johnson, still discontented with Canada, returned to England in 1807. Sir John was lonely; for of all his family, only Gordon and John were in Canada, and John was in Pointe Olivier, while Gordon never left the farm at Lachine. Lady Johnson was forced to return in the spring of 1809 because the house at Twickenham was finally sold in the autumn of 1808.

That year Sir John also bought the Seigneurie of Argenteuil on the Ottawa River. To pay for it he had to sell his two rental houses in Montréal as well as other property. Possibly as early as 1805 he had built a small manor house on a conical mountain, in Monnoir, which he renamed Mount Johnson. Now he built a family mausoleum there and expressed a desire to move the remains of his parents and sister Mary into it. That he did not may be attributable to the state of his finances.

In 1808 he was forced to mortgage all his property "meubles et Immeubles, presents et a venir..."³¹ for £7,000 "pour vaguer a ses affaires..."³². The following year as if to make matters worse a house he owned in the Quebec Suburb was destroyed by fire.

He continued to work for the advancement of his sons, and succeeded in getting Gordon the post of Secretary to the Indian Affairs Office. When war broke out in 1812, he offered his services to the effort. He was given a colonelcy, but he never saw action. During the war, his son William died. James was killed in Spain, as was Maria's husband. Nancy's husband also died. Robert drowned in the Richelieu River. To round things out Lady Johnson died in 1815.

Sir John sold the St. Paul Street house to John Molson who turned it into the Mansion House Hotel. He also sold the farm in Lachine, keeping the use of a small wooden house and plot of land for four years. He used the £9,000 from these sales to build a new house on his property in the Quebec Suburb in 1817-18. He had resigned his commission as commandant of the Eastern Townships militia in 1816, but he remained active in all his other affairs. Later the same year he paid £3,000 for the Irish estate of his late cousin John Dease, son of his father's sister Anne. He wanted it as a home

for Nancy and her children.

In the winter of 1818, while he was still waiting for his house in the Quebec suburb to be finished, his son Charles Christopher married in England. Eight months later Archy married Maria Johnson Langan--twice! first, on September 13 in Plattsburgh, N.Y., and again on October 12 in the manor house at St. Andrew's. Why remains a mystery.

Sir John's financial problems continued for the rest of his life. Many of his land titles were contested, and he often had to sue to collect the rent from his tenants. He sold off most of his land at Gananoque and Rideau, and all of Amherst Island, to pay his family's debts.

In 1818 Sir John made a donation to his son John. This donation may have the **St. Mathias Manor House**. In any case John Jr. in 1819 signed an agreement to support his mistress Catherine Schenk and her children, allowing them to share his manor at St. Mathias as long as she remained unmarried,³³ which indicates that the manor house had been built by this time. Although the deed is missing it is possible that this donation may have been similar to that by which he conveyed Argenteuil to Charles in 1821. He turned over Argenteuil to Charles in exchange for £800 per annum for life. On May 29 of the same year he gave John Jr. the Jenison fief in St Mathias. In October of 1824 Sir John bought off Catherine Schenk, promising her £300 over six years, if she would renounce her previous agreement and all other claims. John Jr. then married the wealthy Mary Diana Dillon on February 10, 1825.

Sir John sold the seigneurie of Monnoir and the mill situated on the south bank of the Rivière des Hurons, but not the manor house on Mount Johnson, to Marguerite d'Estimenville wife of Jean-Roch Rolland for £13,000, on September 9 1826.

Sir John died at home in Montréal January 4, 1830. Among his outstanding debts was one of £50 to Dame Catherine Schenk. Apparently Sir John had missed the September instalment. He was greatly mourned by his family and the Indians of Canada. Three of his surviving heirs John, Maria, and Archy petitioned the King for financial relief.

Sir John was buried in his vault at **Mount Johnson**. Today the vault and house have vanished, the manor at St. Andrews burned down in 1888. The houses in Montréal have been demolished, as has the Kingston house. The Johnson architectural legacy in Canada today is limited to the St. Mathias and Williamstown "manors".

CHAPTER FOUR

THE LATER JOHNSONS

(1774-1868)

Of Sir John Johnson's fourteen children by Mary Watts, eleven survived infancy, and of these only six married. **Nancy**, the eldest, was born on July 5, 1774 at **Fort Johnson**. She escaped with her mother and younger brothers **William** (born August 21, 1775) and **John** (born October 7, 1776 in Albany-died September 18, 1778 at Montréal) from the Revolutionary Congress at Fishkill N.Y. and joined her father in New York, whence they travelled to Montreal. In Montreal, **Warren** was born on December 24, 1777. So **Nancy** and **William** were the only members of the younger generation to live at **Johnson Hall**. Only **Nancy**, **William**, **John** (a second John born August 8, 1782) and **Charles Christopher** (born October 29, 1789) produced children.

William married Susan De Lancey in 1802, fathered only daughters, and died before his father (in 1812). **Warren** joined the Royal Navy during the Napoleonic Wars and was killed in the Caribbean at the age of 23 in 1801. **Catherine** was born in 1780 and died three years later.

Adam Gordon was born at Montréal in 1781. He was appointed Secretary of Indian Affairs in 1806-- a post which he held for nine years--and in 1814 received command of an Indian corps to fight the Americans. He succeeded to the title on his father's death in 1830, and died childless in Montréal in 1843, two weeks after his sixty-second birthday.

Christopher was born at Montréal in 1783 and died before his first birthday. **James Stephen** was born in London on January 30, 1785, joined the British Army during the Peninsular War, and was killed in Spain on April 8 1812.

Catherine Maria was born in Montréal on May 12, 1786. She married Major-General Barnard Foord Bowes in 1805, who was killed in Spain in 1812, leaving her his fortune, which appears to have been considerable. She died in 1850.

Robert Thomas was born at Montréal in 1787 and was killed crossing the ice at Ile-aux-Noix in 1813. **Marianne** was born in Montréal in 1791, and acted as her father's housekeeper after her mother's death. She died in England in 1868.

Archibald Kennedy was born in London in 1792. He succeeded to his brother **Gordon's** position as Secretary of Indian Affairs which he held for about ten years. In 1818 he married Maria Johnson Langan, the daughter of his father's old friend Patrick Langan, in 1818. He was probably given **Mount Johnson** 1827 and shortly after his father's death sold it to Jean-Roch Rolland, Seigneur of Monnoir, reserving for the family the vault. He had no children and died in 1866.

Nancy married Major Edward McDonell of the 46th Regiment of Foot on December 12, 1797 when she was 23. Although he was then the Quartermaster for Canada, neither of her parents seems to have regarded it as a good match. "It was by no means, a Match I wished or approved; he is Vain and I fear bad-tempered."³⁴ In January of 1798, Lady Johnson set off for New York, accompanied by her daughter Maria and the McDonells, the latter sailing for Ireland towards the end of February. Lady Johnson and Maria returned on May 1, 1798, lamenting **Nancy's** departure.

In 1807 **Nancy** and her husband were still in Ireland. Her father wrote to William Claus that he feared she was "doomed to be a fixture. [in Ireland: of her husband he said]. . . I fear he is extravagant and will not likely get on."³⁵ In 1809 he and **Nancy** were reported to be in Dublin with a family of eight children. In spite of Sir John's doubts, in 1811 McDonell and **Nancy** were in Canada, where he had been listed as Quartermaster General during the early part of the War of 1812. He died on October 30, 1812 in Montréal and was buried in the family mausoleum at **Mount Johnson**. In 1815 Sir John wrote to William Claus, "**Nancy** with her children are going to live in Limerick."³⁶

A year later **Nancy** and her children were still a problem for her father. He was trying to buy the Irish estate of his aunt, Anne Dease. He offered £3,000 to her six grandsons, the sons of his old friend and cousin Dr. John Dease, with the intention of settling **Nancy** and her family on it. Nothing in the lives of Sir John or his children ever seemed to run smoothly, there was a problem getting the signatures of all six Dease sons on the deed. **Nancy** died at the age of 73 on January 31, 1848.

The second **John** was born August 8, 1782 on board the "Hero" as his parents were returning to Canada. He was sent to school in England in 1792. We don't hear of him again until 1799, when at the age of 17 he signed on for three years as a midshipman on HMS Topaze. Lady Johnson complained in 1800, that **John** never wrote to her. In 1799 Sir John wrote to his nephew that "Poor John goes as a midshipman in consequence of Lady Johnson's application. . . "so perhaps **John** resented his mother's interference and was disinclined to correspond with her.

As soon as his three years were over, in 1802, **John** returned to Canada and by 1806 was comfortably settled at Pointe Olivier on the Seigneurie of Monnoir. Whether this was the present St. Mathias house is still unknown. **John** took a mistress in Pointe Olivier, Catherine Shenk, and fathered at least four children including a son Nicholas, baptized at Christ Church on August 12, 1813. Under pressure from his sister Maria and his father, **John** finally married Mary Diana Dillon of St Jean Baptiste, on February 10, 1825. **John** and Mary produced six sons and four daughters. He lived in the present St Mathias manor until his death on June 23, 1841.

Two years later his eldest son, **William George** (1830-1906), became the Fourth Baronet on the death of **John's** elder brother **Sir Adam Gordon**. **Sir William George** died at Nice, France and the title passed to his nephew **Edward Gordon** (1866-1957), son of his brother Charles, grandson of Colonel **John** and great-grandson of **Sir John**.

Charles Christopher (the great-grandfather of the present baronet) was born at Montréal on October 29, 1789. In 1806 his father wrote to William Claus that Charles was a lieutenant in England. In 1807 he was in the 17th Light Dragoons serving in Buenos Aires and Montevideo. **Charles** served as a lieutenant in India in 1814 but by 1817 was back in Montréal.

Perhaps he was looking for his father's blessing; for on January 8, 1818 he was back in England marrying Susan Griffith, daughter of Vice-Admiral Edward Griffith. **Charles** and Susan had five sons and three daughters. In 1820 he was in Montréal, but must have soon returned to England for in April and May of 1821 **Sir John** wrote to William Claus that he hoped **Charles** would come out from England and take over the manor house and Seigneurie of Argenteuil. On October 14, 1821 **Sir John** got his wish and conveyed the estate to **Charles** in return for a fixed income of £800 for life. **Charles**

looked after more than the seigneurie, as he often had to act for his father, who was showing signs of increasing frailty. When his brother **Archy** resigned as Secretary to Indian Affairs in 1826, **Charles** stepped in until his father could find a replacement. **Charles** visited his sister **Maria** in England in 1834, but was in St. Andrew's in 1843 as his signature is on the deeds of sale (as Seigneur) conveying the property at 11 de la Seigneurie to Charles McDonell.

Charles Christopher Johnson was the last Seigneur of Argenteuil. He died in 1854 in Southsea, England, and his branch of the family never returned to Canada. His son Vice Admiral **John Ormsby Johnson's** son, **Robert Warren Johnson**, sired the 6th Baronet, **Sir John Paley Johnson** (1907-1976), father of the present 7th Baronet **Sir Peter Colpoys Paley Johnson**.

Other scions of the Johnsons flourish in many parts of the globe but, for our purposes, the family ceased to be of importance with the death of **Charles Christopher**. Indeed, as Thomas asserts, it could be said that the Johnson family ceased to have any prominence in North America with the death of **Sir John** in 1830.

PART TWO: THE HOUSESWARRENSTOWN HOUSE

Warrenstown, Drumree, Co. Meath, Ireland

LAND: unknown**BUILT:** 18C; Warren family**OWNERS & RESIDENTS:** The Johnson family bought it 1808; 1923 donated to Salesian FathersEXTERIOR:

Cut stone; ashlar; 5 openings on facade on ground floor, 3 openings on second floor; projecting central pavilion with rusticated ground floor; quoined corners

DIMENSIONS: 60' x 30' x 30' to cornice; 36' 9" to roofline**WINDOWS:** Second storey 6-over-6 sash; central second-storey window tri-partite; front ground floor windows are rectangular plate-glass sash windows set in rusticated blind segmental arches; hall windows flanking front door are plate-glass sashes with upper sashes semi-circular arches as is the front door transom; the windows on the rear blocks are 6-over-6 sash on both storeys; the staircase is lit by a 9-over-6 sash window flanked by 3-over-2 sashes with semi-circular fanlight**ROOF:** hipped; front block no chimneys; rear blocks have endwall chimneys**EXTENSIONS:** Parallel to the main block & connected to it by a staircase hyphen is another 2-storey rectangular block, both narrower & lower; another narrower & lower rectangular extension is perpendicular to rear block, containing a chapelINTERIOR:**DIMENSIONS:** Ground floor ceilings in main block approx 14'; centre hall approx 16' x 26'; 2 remaining groundfloor rooms 20' x 26'; second floor front room approx 56' x 13'; remaining 2 rooms approx 16' x 13'**STOREYS & ROOMS:** 2 storeys; main block 6 rooms; probably rear block 10 rooms**LAYOUT:** Centre hall with 1 large room on each side on ground floor; second storey 1 long room across front with 2 smaller rooms on either side of a hall at rear; staircase enclosed in separate ell at rear of hall**ALTERATIONS & EVENTS:**

It appears that the original floorplan was a centre hall with 2 almost-square rooms on either side; probably the same on each floor; originally chimneys at the break of the hip presented narrow ends to front, serving as many as 6 fireplaces each.

SMITHSTOWN HOUSE Drumrel, Co. Meath, Ireland**LAND:** 1770; Sir John Johnson; 204 acres**BUILT:** c1725; possibly by Christopher Johnson**OWNERS & RESIDENTS:** Christopher; John; Sir John; several owners; currently Patrick Beggan**EXTERIOR:**

Probably cutstone; covered in pebble dashing, 3 openings in facade; semi-circular fanlight in central doorway

DIMENSIONS: 50' x 25' x 25' to cornice; 33' to roofline**WINDOWS:** 6-over-6; sash**ROOF:** Hipped; slate; 2 chimneys centered**EXTENSIONS:** Small rectangular extension with hipped roof at rear; octagonal oriel window on second storey corner; chimney on right rear corner**INTERIOR:**

Reception rooms plaster with chairrail

DIMENSIONS: Ceilings 10' ground floor**STOREYS & ROOMS:** 2 storeys; approx 20 rooms**LAYOUT:** Centre hall plan; 2 large rooms running depth of main block either side; extension has kitchen & family room on ground floor; spiral staircase; 2 square bedrooms on second storey**ALTERATIONS & EVENTS:**

Possibly remodeled in Adams style during Sir John's ownership; projecting entry porch may be later addition.

MOUNT JOHNSON I / WILLIAMSBURG

Between Amsterdam, NY & Fort Johnson, NY, US
Route 5 on the bank of the Mohawk River

LAND: 1739; approx 1 sq mile; Sir William Johnson

BUILT: 1739; First home in North America of Sir Wm Johnson

OWNERS & RESIDENTS: Gift to Daniel and Nancy Claus (née Johnson) 1763

EXTERIOR:

Stone

DIMENSIONS: 45' by 36'

WINDOWS: unknown

ROOF: probably gabled

EXTENSIONS: unknown

INTERIOR:

DIMENSIONS: unknown

STOREYS & ROOMS: 1½ storeys, 8-10 rooms

LAYOUT: centre-hall two rooms on each side, four rooms upstairs, plus cellars and servants room

ALTERATIONS & EVENTS:

Renovated & rechristened 1763, burned between 1775 and 1790, foundations destroyed ca 1900.

FORT JOHNSON US Route 5, Fort Johnson, NY 12070**LAND:** 1747; Sir William Johnson**BUILT:** 1749; Sir Wm Johnson's second home in North America**OWNERS & RESIDENTS:** Sir John Johnson 1764; several others; currently US Dept. of the Interior**EXTERIOR:**

Rough stone; shutters on lower floor; 5 openings on facade; 2 on rear

DIMENSIONS: 60' x 32' x 42'9" to ridgepole**WINDOWS:** Originally 15 windows & 7 dormers; 12-over-12 sash & 12 pane casement**ROOF:** hipped; slate over cedar shingle which replaced lead; 4 brick chimneys - 2 on rear & 2 end chimneys**EXTENSIONS:** no**INTERIOR:**

Paneling in some rooms; paneling applied directly on exterior walls; some wainscoating to chairrail with wallpaper or paint above; some painted

DIMENSIONS: First floor height 10'11"; second 10'4"**STOREYS & ROOMS:** 2½ storeys with basement; 14 rooms**LAYOUT:** Centre hall plan; 2 rooms each side of hall; 2 rooms in basement; attic partitioned into 5 spaces including enclosed stairhall**ALTERATIONS & EVENTS:**

Renovated in later Georgian style 1772-3 by Sir John Johnson; lead roof replaced with wooden shingles during Revolution; third window added to rear; rear door installed; 2 dormers removed all during 19C

JOHNSON HALL Hall Ave. Johnstown, NY 12095**LAND:** Pre-1760; 50,000 acres; Sir William Johnson**BUILT:** 1763; Third home in North America of Sir Wim Johnson (Samuel Fuller Contractor)**OWNERS & RESIDENTS:** After Revolution several owners; Montgomery Co. Historical Society currently run it as museum**EXTERIOR:**

Wood; frame building; wooden siding chamfered to simulate stone blocks; paneled shutters on all windows; 2 chimneys at break of hip; 5 openings in garden facade & 7 in entrance facade

DIMENSIONS: 55' x 38'**WINDOWS:** Palladian window on staircase (without shutters); some endwall windows are blind; sash; 12 over 12**ROOF:** Wooden shingles; hip on hip; 2 chimneys; 1 dormer**EXTENSIONS:** 2 stone 2-storey block houses flanking main building, connected to it by subterranean passageways**INTERIOR:**

Some paneling; some wallpaper

DIMENSIONS: Ground floor 12'6" high; 2nd storey 11'3"**STOREYS & ROOMS:** 2½ storeys; probably 14 rooms**LAYOUT:** Centre hall plan; 2 nearly-square rooms each side; 18' x 38' halls; 4 rooms 18' x 18' per floor**ALTERATIONS & EVENTS:**

Grotesquely altered during 19C; square cupola added to roof; 4 segmented bay windows inserted into facades at least 2 of them 2 storeys high; restored in 1920s to original appearance

GUY PARK West Main Street, Amterdam, NY**LAND:** c1766; Sir William Johnson; 1 sq mile**BUILT:** 1766; Sir Wm Johnson; 1774; Col. Guy Johnson**OWNERS & RESIDENTS:** Wedding present to Guy & Mary Johnson (née Johnson); several owners; current owner State of NY Parks Division**EXTERIOR:**

Rough stone; 5 openings in facade; shutters; rectangular transom over front door but no sidelights; covered piazza on south facing river

DIMENSIONS: unknown**WINDOWS:** sash; 12 over 12**ROOF:** hipped; 4 endwall chimneys**EXTENSIONS:** Roof & cornice reconstructed in Greek Revival 1848; 2 rectangular wings added 1858 to create U-shaped courtyard in rear; wings lower than main block; rear piazza extended around courtyard**INTERIOR:**

Reconstructed Greek Revival style 1848; previous layout unknown

DIMENSIONS: unknown**STOREYS & ROOMS:** 2 storeys**LAYOUT:** currently centre hall plan**ALTERATIONS & EVENTS:**

After 1784 renovated as tavern; reconverted to private home 1848; see above

THE JOHNSON HOUSE

Brock Street at Montreal Street, Kingston, Ont.

LAND: c1784, 18-acre park lot 1 grant**BUILT:** 1788 by Sir John Johnson; contractors Macaulay & Markland; carpenter Archibald Thomson**OWNERS & RESIDENTS:** Sir John put it up for rent; 1809 sold to Alexander Allison; 1811 sold to Bishop Alexander Macdonell put it up for rent**EXTERIOR:**

Made of squared logs; 6-panel doors; shutters on lower windows; pediment over hall door; window in pediment; stone foundation

DIMENSIONS: 30' x 36'**WINDOWS:** 296 lights; configuration unknown**ROOF:** wood shingle; probably gabled; probably 1 stone chimney**EXTENSIONS:** none known**INTERIOR:**

4-panel doors; chair rails, baseboard and surbase around each room, floors tongue-and-grooved

DIMENSIONS: unknown**STOREYS & ROOMS:** 1 storey plus attic**LAYOUT:** probably centre hall plan with 2 rooms each side; possibly staircase to attic from hall**ALTERATIONS & EVENTS:**

House was allowed to deteriorate badly in late 1820's, demolished in 1827 to extend Brock Street to encourage development of land



View of Kingston from the western outskirts, 1829, by James Pattison Cockburn
 Note chimney of Johnson house on right

JOHNSON "MANOR HOUSE" Williamstown, Ont.**LAND:** 1798 grant for "improved" lands at Williamstown to Sir John Johnson, 2,400 acres.**BUILT:** 1785-92; Sir John Johnson**OWNERS & RESIDENTS:** Sir John Johnson to 1819, McGillis family to 1872, others thereafter, currently Parks Canada.**EXTERIOR:**

Frame construction with timber fill; 5 opening entrance facade & 2 on rear, originally unclad logs

DIMENSIONS: 38' approx. x 25' originally, today 60',6" by 25'
with 40' by 24' wing perpendicular to east end**WINDOWS:** 1 or 3 dormer windows; sash**ROOF:** gabled; probably wood shingle; probably 2 chimneys**EXTENSIONS:** Under Sir John house was extended westward, a small rectangular block may have been kitchen; after 1819 extension replaced with present extension; in 1850s neo-Gothic eastern wing added**INTERIOR:**

unknown

DIMENSIONS: unknown**STOREYS & ROOMS:** 1½; probably 5 rooms**LAYOUT:** Centre hall with stairs to second-floor loft; probably originally 2 rooms either side of hall, currently one large room to west of hall two small rooms to east**ALTERATIONS & EVENTS:**

ST. PAUL STREET Victor Street across from Bonsecours Church extending from St. Paul Street to the line of the Fortification Walls, i.e., the present Commissioners Street, Montréal, Que.

LAND: Sir John Johnson

BUILT: purchased by Sir John Johnson 1785 & renovated from 1785-98

OWNERS & RESIDENTS: Originally owned by Lemoyne family; after sold to Hon. John Molson Dec. 16, 1815; destroyed by fire Mar. 14, 1821

EXTERIOR:

Cutstone; in the shape of elongated E

DIMENSIONS: Central pavilion at least 75'sq and wings 75' x 30' over-all 150'

WINDOWS: Probably casement, may have been replaced with 12-over-12 sashes in Johnson renovations

ROOF: Hipped; steep pitch, dormers

EXTENSIONS: none; 1815 renovations to turn into hotel

INTERIOR:

DIMENSIONS: unknown

STOREYS & ROOMS: 2½ storeys

LAYOUT: Central pavilion contained huge salon in shape of half-octagon

ALTERATIONS & EVENTS:

Burned down 1821 & another hotel built on the site.

MOUNT JOHNSON II 75 Sous-Bois, St-Grégoire-Le-Grand, Que., on a terrace facing south on the lower slopes of Mont-St-Grégoire

LAND: c1795

BUILT: 1796-1805; Sir John Johnson; Archibald-Kennedy Johnson; Jean-Roch Rolland various others currently

OWNERS & RESIDENTS: unknown

EXTERIOR:

Probably squared log

DIMENSIONS: 28' x 19'

WINDOWS: unknown

ROOF: unknown

EXTENSIONS: unknown

INTERIOR:

DIMENSIONS: unknown

STOREYS & ROOMS: unknown

LAYOUT: unknown

ALTERATIONS & EVENTS:

Destroyed by fire c1830.

ARGENTEUIL MANOR HOUSE Rue de la Seigneurie, St-André Est, Que. J0V 1X0**LAND:** Seigneurie of Argenteuil 1808; Sir John Johnson; 58,000 sq. arpents**BUILT:** between 1808 & 1814; Sir John Johnson**OWNERS & RESIDENTS:** Chas. Christopher Johnson 1821-54; Johnson family until 1890s**EXTERIOR:**

Wood; heavily timbered; 5 openings in facade; front entrance surmounted by fanlight & possibly framed by sidelights

DIMENSIONS: unknown**WINDOWS:** 2 dormers on one side & possibly 2 on the other; probably 12-over-12 sash**ROOF:** hipped; probably shingle**EXTENSIONS:** Guardhouse attached, possibly other matching dependency (coach house?)**INTERIOR:****DIMENSIONS:** unknown**STOREYS & ROOMS:** 2½ storeys, 14 rooms**LAYOUT:** Centre hall; probably 2 rooms either side**ALTERATIONS & EVENTS:**

Burned down 1885.

ST. MARY'S SUBURB Corner Colborne & Craig Streets, Montréal, Que.

LAND: Sir John Johnson

BUILT: 1817-8; Sir John Johnson; Jacques Perrault Master Carpenter

OWNERS & RESIDENTS: The Molsons demolished it in 1896

EXTERIOR:

Brick, 7 opening in facade; central doorway each floor with arched fanlight & sidelights; double galleries around 4 sides 6' wide with Chinese railings; stone foundation; shutters

DIMENSIONS: 60' x 35' X 33' 6"

WINDOWS: sash; 12 over 12; 7 dormers

ROOF: Hipped; tin; overhung gallery; possibly 4 chimneys

EXTENSIONS: none

INTERIOR:

Kitchen was in basement; several rooms in attic; pine staircase with mahogany handrail

DIMENSIONS: Hall probably 10' 6" X 29'6", reception rooms probably 21'8" X 13' 6", second floor probably duplicate of first.

STOREYS & ROOMS: 2½ storeys set on raised basement

LAYOUT: Centre hall plan

ALTERATIONS & EVENTS:

Sold to & demolished by Molsons.

JOHNSON MANOR HOUSE 125 chemin des Patriotes, St-Mathias, Que. J0L 2G0**LAND:** Part of Chambly East Seigneurie; Sir John Johnson; before 1805**BUILT:** 1812-9; Sir John Johnson**OWNERS & RESIDENTS:** Col. John Jr.; Sir Wm Geo Johnson to 1889; Comte de Bouthillier Chavigny; Ste-Marie-de-Monnoir College 1899; Laurence Stephens 1911; Stephens family currently**EXTERIOR:**

Rough stone; cut stone quoins & door & window frames; shutters on all windows; sidelights & semi-elliptical fanlight; 5 openings in facade

DIMENSIONS: 47' by 40' by 33' 6"**WINDOWS:** casement; probably 6 dormers**ROOF:** hipped; very steep pitch; 4 end chimneys; slate**EXTENSIONS:** Rectangular single-storey stone extension on east side**INTERIOR:**

Ground floor renovated by Laurence Stephens, second floor and attic intact

DIMENSIONS: Ceilings 9½'**STOREYS & ROOMS:** 2½ storeys; originally probably 14; now 20**LAYOUT:** Centre hall plan; originally 2 rooms each side on ground floor, second floor two rooms each side plus sewing room over front door;**ALTERATIONS & EVENTS:**

Large wooden extension has been demolished; as have barn and wooden house. Rear door moved from hall to rear parlor, bathroom inserted under stair landing.

MCDONELL HOUSE 11 de la Seigneurie, St-André Est, Que. J0V 1X0**LAND:** 1843**BUILT:** ca. 1843, probably Charles McDonell**OWNERS & RESIDENTS:** McDonell family; Jones family; currently Rejall family;**EXTERIOR:**

Red Brick, five-bay facade, semi-elliptical fanlight over front door.

DIMENSIONS: 50' by 35' by 30' high**WINDOWS:** Ground floor 4-over-4 sash, second floor 12-pane casements**ROOF:** hipped, slate, original chimneys within break of hip, removed in late 19th century, present chimneys on end walls serving kitchen and furnace, former dormer windows removed in 1870's**EXTENSIONS:** Kitchen wing on rear constructed with brick from demolished chimneys**INTERIOR:**

running graph of style, decoration, materials

DIMENSIONS:**STOREYS & ROOMS:** 2 storeys; 12 rooms**LAYOUT:** centre hall, four reception rooms plus kitchen on ground floor; four bedrooms, bathroom and centre hall on second floor; staircase rises through both halls to attic.**ALTERATIONS & EVENTS:**

sidelights and front door replaced by pair of glazed doors; undistinguished portico added; kitchen wing added creating stem of a "T"



PART THREE: ANALYSIS AND COMPARISON OF THE HOUSES

CHAPTER ONE

SEVEN INSIGNIFICANT JOHNSON HOUSES

Between 1725 (the estimated date of construction of **Smithstown House**) and 1843 (the estimated date of construction of the **McDonell House** at St. Andrew's) the Johnsons bought and renovated or constructed 21 houses in Ireland, England, New York State, Ontario, and Quebec.

Seven houses will not be dealt with as they have left little trace: The two that Sir William bought in Albany, one in Schenectady, a farm Lachine, a house in the St. Mary's Suburb that burned in 1809, one in Twickenham, and the one that Sir John bought from the Frobisher brothers in 1782.

Little is known about the houses that Sir William bought in Albany, beyond their locations, on High Street and a "water lot". It is clear from a letter to Sir Peter Warren in 1749 that the "High Street house was a two-story brick house, with good yard and stables...[also, the water lot house was] a frame house"³⁶ Less is known about the Schenectady house, except that it was used by the family as a stopover between Albany and **Fort Johnson**.

Sir John purchased a farm in Lachine possibly as early as 1776, certainly it was in his possession in 1780. He sold it in 1817 when he needed money for the construction of his new house in **St. Mary's Suburb**. The following description from the **Montreal Gazette** is the only one existing today .

Feb 1, 1817

TO BE SOLD

THE valuable property at La Chine, belonging to Sir John Johnson, Baronet, viz. The HOUSE at present occupied by James Finlay, Esqr. with the FARM, containing upwards of 124 acres. Farm House and other Buildings, Possession given on the 1st of May.

THE HOUSE

formerly occupied by Sir John Johnson, with the extensive Stores adjoining, together with the FARM, containing upwards of 130 acres, Farm House, and other Buildings. The latter will be either sold or leased, and possession given on the 25th March.³⁷

The farm was sold for £2,000 Sterling, and Sir John kept the use of a small wooden house and a four-acre plot of land for four years, however, it was still listed in the inventory of real estate attached to his will when he died in 1830. As it was bought when Sir John was in need of shelter near his troop

encampment and used by him mainly as a summer retreat from the city, it is safe to assume that it was a typical farmhouse, and of little relevance to this study.

In 1782, Sir John bought a house on the corner of St. Paul and St. Denis Streets in Montréal. He purchased it from the Frobisher brothers, intending to use it as a temporary home for his family during their (hopefully) brief exile from **Johnson Hall**. When it became clear in 1785, that the exile was to be permanent, Sir John began to look for a larger house for his growing family. He purchased the **Longueuil House** and spent the next thirteen years renovating it. During this period the Frobisher house remained his residence, as well as being a revenue property when the Johnsons were abroad. It was of stone and two storeys high, presumably just another typical house within the walls of Montréal. Certainly it was not as large as Nancy Claus's house on Nôtre Dame Street, which was advertised for sale in 1797 and again in December 1798 as "To be sold or let, and entered upon immediately, that large and commodious stone house, Outhouses, Garden, in Notre Dame Street, now in the occupation of Sir John Johnson, Baronet."⁴⁰

Of the house at Twickenham, Surrey, England, little is known beyond the bare facts. Sir John bought it in 1793, because Lady Johnson insisted on remaining in England. It was a large house, and possessed "...a Pleasure Ground... Billiards in the Hall...[and] a Harpsichord..."⁴¹ As early as the fall of 1794, Sir John was aware that life in England was beyond his means. Accordingly he put Twickenham up for sale in 1795 and returned to Montréal in 1796. Perhaps not surprisingly, considering the outbreak of the Napoleonic Wars, Twickenham did not sell until 1808.

The last house in this group is the house in the St. Mary's Suburb which burned May 25, 1809. When this house was purchased is a mystery, although it can be assumed it was prior to 1782, for in that year Thomas Loid built the brewery (soon to become Molson's) on land neighbouring Sir John's. Merrill Denison described the site as:

"...pleasant villas with orchards and gardens stretching down to the river, built by some of the English gentry to escape the heat & restriction of the town. Opposite the end of St. Helen's Island and no more than 200 yards from the foot of St. Mary's Current, Sir John Johnson, Overlord & Protector of the Indians & hater of the rum traffic, had built himself a 2-storey villa."⁴²

Little more is known of this house and it may have been used as a rental property. The property seems to have remained vacant until 1817, when Sir John began the construction of his last great house.

CHAPTER TWO

THE TWO IRISH HOUSES AND SIR WILLIAM'S FOUR HOUSES

Six of the Johnson houses in North America are still extant, as are the two in Ireland. Three others are very well documented and will be easy to describe, and the last three are well enough described that we can try to reconstruct their facades and locate their sites but little more. In this chapter, we're looking at the two Irish houses, three existing North American houses, and one sparsely-documented site.

The fact that the lease on **Smithstown House** is dated 1728 combined with the fact that Sir William emigrated to New York in 1738, suggests that Sir William can't have lived in **Smithstown House** for more than thirteen years and possibly it was as few as ten. On the deed his father was listed as "of **Warrenstown**"⁴³, suggesting that the family was living at **Warrenstown House** (even though Milton Hamilton said that Christopher Johnson may have possessed **Smithstown** before the lease was granted).

If Sir William did spend the first thirteen years of his life at **Warrenstown House** and only ten at **Smithstown**, it would explain the negligible effect of the latter on his North American dwellings. Because we might reasonably expect to see some influence of **Warrenstown House** on the later Johnson houses, we first must examine both **Smithstown House** and **Warrenstown House**.

Both **Warrenstown** and **Smithstown** are early 18th century Georgian houses, are both of stone construction and they are both very symmetrical. **Warrenstown House**, as befits a more illustrious family, is the larger of the two, but it also appears that it was modified much more.

As can be seen in Figure 1, **Warrenstown House** is an austere rectangle of smooth ashlar pierced on the ground floor by two rectangular plate-glass sash windows set in rusticated blind segmental arches and having a slightly projecting central pavilion pierced by an arcade of three semi-circular rusticated arches containing the front door and two flanking windows. The upper sashes of both

windows and the transom over the door are also semi-circular. The whole front is raised on an elevated basement with six steps approaching the front door. The corners of the main block as well as those of the projecting central bay are quoined, and the second floor rests on a slightly projecting string course. The smooth ashlar of the second-storey bays is pierced by three six-over-six sash windows. The window of the central bay is tripartite. All three elements are rectangular--the central one being six-over-six sashes and the flanks being narrow two-over-two sashes.

The narrow ends of the main block are perfectly symmetrical, having two openings per storey. Like the entrance facade, the lower are plate-glass sashes while the upper are six-over-six sashes. The main block is connected to the rear block by a small hyphen containing the main stair, a back stair and the side entrance. (This latter is currently used as the main entrance.) Lighting for the main stair is provided by a nine-over-six sash window flanked by three-over-two sashes with a semi-circular fanlight uniting the whole. The rear block is ten to fifteen feet shorter than the main block and the second storey is six to eight feet lower than the main block. Thus the rear block measures approximately 45' long by 25' wide by 24' to the eaves.

The main block has been extensively altered, but appears to have originally had a centre hall 16' wide by 26' long flanked by four rooms 20' long by approximately 13' wide. An undated photograph called only "The Old Warrenstown", (Figure 2) clearly shows two chimneys rising above the break of the hipped roof with perhaps five chimney-pots each. This would place the fireplaces on the interior partition walls between the hall and the flanking rooms. Thus all four reception rooms and the hall may have had fireplaces. Likewise this placement of chimneys suggests that the upper storey plan may have duplicated the lower. This combination of floor plan and a facade of three 18-foot wide bays strongly recalls (or perhaps, more correctly, foreshadows) the design of **Johnson Hall**.

Smithstown House, on the other hand is a fairly common Irish Georgian farmhouse. It is a rectangular block 50' long by 25' wide by 25' high. The entrance facade (Figure 3), like that of **Warrenstown House**, is tripartite. The front door projects from the facade in a small porch decorated with Tuscan pilasters supporting an open pediment. The door itself is flanked by engaged Ionic columns which support an architrave surmounted by a semi-circular transom. This porch is more like an enclosed portico, as it has six-over-six sash windows on its sides which give directly onto the hall.

A small rectangular wing, at right angles to the rear of the main block is assumed to be a nineteenth-century addition to the house. The interior ground floor plan is a centre hall with one large reception room on each side. The stairs rise in a tight spiral at the end of the hall and the former back door now communicates with the rear wing. The ground floor ceiling is ten feet high, that of the second floor is only seven feet high. The present owner says the house contains about 20 rooms. The number of chimney pots (see Figure 4) on the original house suggests ten fireplaces, which in turn suggests at least twelve rooms. Presently there are fireplaces in each of the two main floor reception rooms and none in the hall. Presumably there are four rooms with fireplaces and a centre hall on the second floor and two hearths in the basement, one of which served the kitchen. This leaves two flues unaccounted for. The present reception rooms are 15' wide by 20' long, if each conceals a second fireplace, they could have been originally divided in half giving two rooms 15' by 9'8".

Local legend in Ireland has it that Sir John made alterations to **Smithstown House** after he bought it in 1770. The similarity of the porch to the one added to **Fort Johnson** in 1772-3 suggests that this could be true. Little else of **Smithstown House**, however, can be detected in any of the North American houses built by Sir William and his descendants.

In 1739 William Johnson purchased land on the north bank of the Mohawk River and constructed his first permanent home in New York. Little is known about this first **Mount Johnson** which in 1763 was remodeled and renamed **Williamsburg**. From Daniel Claus's claim for compensation of losses we know that the house was "45 by 36 feet of wrought stone...4 rooms below and 4 above...[and included] cellars, and servants room."⁴⁴ In 1769 Richard Smith, a journalist and surveyor, visited the Johnson houses in the Mohawk Valley and reported "Daniel Claus's House is of stone and one story high."⁴⁵ This house was destroyed during the Revolution, sometime between August 21, 1775 and 1790, as on the former date Sir John wrote to his sister Nancy Claus "...everything has gone pretty well at yr [sic] house, some of the furniture has been removed to Mr. Stuart's, but if anything should happen against us, it will not be safe, as the people know it is there, and they are much enraged & stop at no abuse."⁴⁶ On November 7, 1790 Dr. Alexander Coventry made the following note in his diary:

"...Stopped and baited at one De Groot's: passed by Guy 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 one Closs: and some ways on about West, came to Sir Wm Johnson's old house called 'The Hall'..."⁴⁷

In 1749 Sir William built **Fort Johnson** a mile west of **Williamsburg**. Here for the first time we begin to see the influence of Georgian Ireland on the Johnson houses. **Fort Johnson** is a rectangular block of rough-cut stone 60' long x 32' wide, (Figure 5) with a hipped slate roof 42' 9" high at the ridgepole. Mendel, Cohen & Mesick suggest that the roof may have been originally covered in lead which was removed and melted for bullets during the Revolution and replaced with wood shingles.⁴⁸ To support this theory they cite popular history, evidence of a wooden shingle roof beneath today's slate one, and 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."⁴⁹

Fort Johnson represented, for Sir William, his first step up to the level of gentry embodied by his Uncle Peter. Because he was still not as rich as Sir Peter Warren, the house is not as grand as **Warrenstown House**, but it does echo the symmetry and the floor plan of that mansion. The ground floor plan of **Fort Johnson** is reminiscent of that of **Smithstown House** in that the centre hall was once divided into two between the front door and the staircase.⁵⁰ Figure 6 shows the hall of **Smithstown House** which is clearly divided between the entrance and the stair hall.

The peculiarity of the floor plan of **Fort Johnson** (Figure 7) lies in the unequal size of the front and rear rooms. There could be many reasons for this. Sir William may simply have had insufficient funds to build a larger house. At this time in his life he was in a poor financial situation. Mendel, Mesick & Cohen observe that:

"[The]...year 1749 was an uneasy one in which the exchange of Indian and Canadian prisoners took much time and money. 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...Profits from the fur trade remained in London accounts, thus causing a shortage of cash at hand."⁵¹

Yet lack of money did not make Sir William seek ways to economize on his house, he ordered only the best materials. "A study of [an]...invoice of merchandise from the Bakers of London...dated April 26, 1749...bears out the quality of material ordered. A comparison with the prices given in ...**Palladio Londonensis** for hardware...indicates that items selected from a wide price range were always of a better sort, though not the most costly available."⁵²

Perhaps Sir William was remembering the layout of **Smithstown House** where the rear rooms may have been smaller than the front ones. This explanation is particularly tempting in light of the

original layout of the hall. The most plausible explanation for the layout of rooms, however, is that this is a plan found "repeatedly in colonial houses of the Hudson Valley, and its adoption at **Fort Johnson** may be evidence of Dutch or Palatine influence."⁶³

By 1759 **Fort Johnson** had acquired two single-storey stone dependencies. These were placed at right angles to the entrance facade and created a small semi-enclosed courtyard in front of the building. (Figure 8) These buildings have been described as blockhouses and it has been claimed that they were added to defend the house against attack. There is some plausibility to this claim as it was after the building of the wings that the name was changed from **Mount Johnson** to **Fort Johnson**. Sir John Johnson in his claim for compensation describes these wings as "2 stone wings 1 storey high about 30 feet long and 18 deep" and a French spy in 1757 described them in his scouting journal as:

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."⁶⁴

This is a more likely use for these vanished buildings as it accords with common Palladian design for large estates. The wings may have been fortified for a brief time during the Seven Years' War, but undoubtedly reverted to domestic use with peace. Certainly Sir John's claim makes no mention of military function. There is also the argument that the kitchen was located in the west dependency. This is based on the common use of dependencies in Britain and the southern colonies. "**Palladio Londonensis** advised that a 'kitchen should be as remote from the parlour as possible, ...'.⁶⁵ In Britain and the southern colonies this usually was accomplished by putting the kitchen in a detached building, while in the colder climates of Ireland and the northern colonies the dependency was usually attached to the main block as a service wing. The evidence of a flue attached to the side of the chimney in Room 105 suggests that a kitchen was installed in the basement below sometime in the nineteenth century, lending further support to the existence of a kitchen in the western dependency.

In 1763 with peace concluded between the English and the French, Sir William turned to the management of his estates and began the construction of a new manor house, **Johnson Hall** (Figure 9). The Hall is located about nine miles inland from **Fort Johnson**, and is Sir William's masterpiece. If **Fort Johnson** is entirely Sir William's own design, incorporating his memories of Ireland and possibly influenced by local craftsmen and traditions, **Johnson Hall** represents the influence of education on native talent. Lewis Rubenstein found evidence of the influence of Abraham Swan's The

British Architect of 1745 in the mouldings of the entrance hall cornice, and Milton Hamilton proved that Sir William could have owned a copy of Swan.⁶⁴

Nevertheless, **Johnson Hall** is clearly Sir William's design. Constructed of wood on a stone foundation, and framed on the north by a pair of contemporary stone "blockhouses", it is larger than both **Williamsburg** and **Fort Johnson**: 55' long by 38' wide by 43'8" high from grade to roofline. It was intended to be easily divided into thirds, and the interior rooms were to be eighteen feet wide with a three-inch allowance for each of the partitions and inside walls. Rubenstein attributes this preoccupation with eighteen feet to a desire to be proportional above all else. If proportion were that important to Sir William, it is probable that the rooms today would be eighteen feet wide rather than wider. Perhaps the desire for an 18-foot-wide third is a remembrance of **Warrenstown House** where the facade does divide into equal thirds.

Symmetry was clearly of importance to Sir William, for he carefully balanced the openings on the second-floor entrance facade with those of the ground floor. Even the chimneys are aligned with the division between the first two bays, or about one-quarter of the width of the facade. It may even have been for the sake of symmetry that he placed four blind windows on the southwest elevation of the house. Recent research has proven that these were originally blind and date to the first construction of the house. But they have no opposite numbers on the northeast elevation.

It has been suggested that the Palladian window on the northwest facade of the mansion (Figure 10) is proof that this facade was meant to be the entrance. In fact, in the nineteenth-century, this facade did become the entrance. Eighteenth-century writers such as Isaac Ware are often quoted to prove that Palladian windows were "calculated for show, and very pompous in their nature; and, when executed with judgement, of extreme elegance."⁶⁷and thus too showy to be hidden on the garden facade. One has only to look at the plan of the hallway of **Johnson Hall** and compare it to all the other surviving Johnson houses, (or, better to the plans of both **Warrenstown House** and **Smithstown House**) to see that the window was placed to light the stair and the stair is intended to be seen from the front door. Mary Ellen Dumblewski attributes this desire to make the Palladian window an entrance facade element to the fact that such a window "is frequently interpreted as a characteristic of the later federal style in American architecture. The appearance of this window in 1763 at Johnson Hall is thus a

progressive design feature in relation to contemporary fashion."⁵⁸

Another aspect of **Johnson Hall** which has caused comment, is the use of simulated rustication of its wooden siding (Figure 11) . Mary Ellen Doblewski explains the predominance of wood construction as follows:

The preference for masonry was considerably less in the North due to the problems of moisture condensation in the cold climate. This very factor may have been one of the most important reasons why Sir William had decided to make Johnson Hall a frame building. Fort Johnson's damp river site had undoubtedly accentuated the uncomfortable qualities of living in a stone house, and this condition would have been considered by its middle-aged owner, who was increasingly bothered with health problems.⁵⁹

It has also been suggested that, with the end of the Seven Years' War, it was unnecessary to defend the Hall, so frame was used instead of stone. There may be some truth to this, but it is more likely that Sir William saw **Johnson Hall** as an English manor and feared that a stone house would be too reminiscent of the Mohawk Valley Dutch and Palatine vernacular tradition.

But, if he wanted to avoid the local vernacular tradition, why did he try to disguise the siding as rusticated stone? To twentieth-century eyes simulated rustication looks like snobbery. It is the "imitation in one material of another and more expensive material..."⁶⁰ Hugh Morrison attributes the prevalence of such siding to the New England architect Peter Harrison, designer of the Redwood Library in Newport R.I., and suggests that such siding was sanded and painted to imitate stone. Thus it is also suggested that Sir William may have been inspired by buildings he had seen in New England, or that his carpenters, some of whom had worked as housewrights in the Boston area, may have introduced him to the design and convinced him of its merits. Either way there is little reason to believe that the siding was ever intended to actually resemble stone.

Rubenstein suggested that the house and blockhouses must have blended together better originally.

Citing the eighteenth century's seeking the symmetry and harmony of the ancients, he says:

It is likely either that the walls of the stone outbuildings were treated to blend with the main house, or that the mansion was treated so as to resemble the material from which the blockhouses themselves were constructed. Considering the simulation of stone blocks cut into the wood siding, the later [sic] alternative is more probable, and the house had a mottled grey hue from the sand which was mixed in with the paint.⁶¹

Doblewski, however, states that the "conjecture that Johnson Hall's siding blocks were painted stone color and sanded has never been documented."⁶² She also points out that references to Harrison's

buildings having been treated this way are equally unproven. Then she tells us:

Because white lead quickly lost its gloss and became a dusty powder, sand was used in the eighteenth century over a final coat of white lead and oil. The method was as much of a preservation technique as a method to imitate stone.⁶³

It has also been suggested that the scored lines of simulated rustication may have been no more than a way of articulating the surface, or perhaps "...[t]he translation of the plans presented in English architectural books into designs executed in wood may very well have been initially responsible for the motif. The line drawings of facades of rusticated masonry were simply carried out in the material of the wood."⁶⁴ This seems to presuppose an extraordinary naiveté on the part of both builders and client.

It seems more likely that the rustication was meant to recall the rusticated ground floor facade of **Warrenstown House**. Certainly if the division of the mansion, and the floor plan recall the Warren's Irish house, why shouldn't as noticeable a design aspect as the rustication also do so? Lastly the arrangement of the front entrance (Figure 12), is also reminiscent of **Warrenstown** (Figure 13). Both entrances consist of a large door flanked by narrower windows that are not traditional sidelights, and neither tries to unite door and windows under a pediment, fanlight or portico.

In 1766 Sir William gave a wedding present to his daughter Mary and her husband Guy Johnson--a stone mansion set in a square mile of land. That house, which Guy and Mary named **Guy Park**, was struck by lightning in 1773 and destroyed. The present **Guy Park** (Figure 14) was built in 1774 on the original foundations.

Guy Park, as Guy Johnson rebuilt it, was a rectangular rough-stone block. It was two storeys high with four rooms on each floor and a central hall having a mahogany staircase. The entrance facade today faces north and consists of five bays containing four twelve-over-twelve sash windows with a central door. The south facade in Guy Johnson's time was equally symmetrical. It featured a central door with two twelve-over-twelve sash windows on either side, and both facades gave onto a wide piazza running the length of the house.

After barely a year in his new house, Guy Johnson fled his estate for Canada, to join the cause of the King. His wife Mary died on the way to Montréal, and Guy and his children never recovered **Guy Park**. The property was sold several times between 1782 and 1846 when James Stuart of Amsterdam

bought it. In 1848 Stuart added a wing to the house and remodelled the building in Greek revival style. The roof was raised, a heavy cornice added, the original chimneys were removed, as was the front piazza, and new interior woodwork was installed. Some time later--but before 1858--a second wing was added to accommodate Stuart's elderly parents. At this time the rear piazza was probably changed to its present U-shape (Figure 15).

From the front the present **Guy Park** presents a very balanced appearance, but the east and west wings are quite different. "The disposition of the spaces and room divisions are distinctly different, the west wing being attached further south along the main block."⁶⁶ It was also, doubtless, at this time that the frontispiece seen in the HABS photographs of 1936-40 (Figures 16-17) was added.

So little of Guy Johnson's **Guy Park** remains that it is difficult to draw any conclusions about influences upon its design. If it was built by Samuel Fuller as Sarah Caldes claims then it was probably influenced by Valley traditions. However, Guy was the son of the John Johnson who took over the management of **Warrenstown** in 1750. And the Historical Note on Warrenstown tells us that John's mother Ann had occupied **Warrenstown House** for years before her younger brother inherited it. So, Guy may have wanted **Guy Park** to echo **Warrenstown House**.

Sir William Johnson died July 11, 1774. Less than a year later both of his daughters and their families had left the Valley never to return. Within another year Sir John Johnson was also an exile in Canada and the Johnson connection with the Mohawk ended.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PERIPATETIC SIR JOHN

In 1767 Sir John Johnson returned from a two-year stay in Great Britain and Ireland to take up residence in his father's former home **Fort Johnson**. Although he seemed content to take up the life of a country gentleman where he had left off in 1765, it is clear from the alterations that John made to **Fort Johnson** five-and-a-half years later that he had been impressed by high-style houses in Britain and Ireland.

Thanks to a journal kept by Sir William's brother Warren in 1760-61, we know that the second floor windows of **Fort Johnson** were not originally equipped with interior shutters.⁶⁶ Perhaps the present shutters were added at the time he remodelled the house to receive his new bride. The chimneypiece in the **West Room** (Room 105 Figure 7) resembles one in Swan's British Architect, but there is no evidence that Sir William possessed a copy of this book before 1763. Therefore, we can conclude that the chimneypiece was probably added by Sir John in 1773. The detail of the fretwork below this mantel matches that of the open pediment of the front porch, suggesting that Sir John was responsible for the porch as well. Mendel, Mesick & Cohen have stated that this type of open pediment porch is common in southern Connecticut but rare elsewhere in New England and New York at this time. It is, as noted in Chapter Two, very similar to the **Smithstown House** porch (Figures 4 & 18). Possibly Sir John, with his new awareness of the latest fashion in Europe, was responsible for both porches.

Another alteration attributed to Sir John is the staircase.

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.⁶⁷

If this stair is the creation of Sir John it may explain the design of the staircase in the house in **St. Mathias**.

Between 1776 and 1784 Sir John was too preoccupied combatting the Revolution to give much thought

to building a home in Canada. Of course until 1783 he believed that he would be returning to **Johnson Hall**. The Peace of Paris destroyed this dream.

In 1784 he was given his choice of lots in Cataraqui and, sometime thereafter, obtained Park Lot 1 consisting of eighteen acres described as "the best spot in Kingston."⁶⁸ It was described by Patrick Campbell in 1792 as on the top of a hill "situated above the town and harbour of Kingston, and command(ed) a beautiful prospect."⁶⁹ In 1788 Sir John ordered a house from Macaulay & Markland and in April they signed a contract with Archibald Thomson to build a house of squared logs 30' by 36', one storey high, with a wooden shingled roof. The contract specifies 296 panes of glass in addition to the "Sash in the Pediment over the Hall Door."⁷⁰ Thus we can assume a rectangle topped by a gable roof with a pediment/gable pierced by a window over the centre door. The contract also specifies "Shutters to the Lower Windows" which suggests that there were dormers in the roof. Margaret Angus suggests that the windows may have been casements but the contract clearly says "Sash", therefore we must agree with Jennifer McKendry that the upper windows must have been dormers.

If we assume at least five dormers and a six-light transom over the front door, we are left with twelve ten-over-ten windows. The contract also says "outside doors 6 pannels" which suggests more than one outside door. Keeping in mind Sir John's predilection for symmetry, we can postulate a five-bay facade on both of the long sides of the house, each having a central six-panel door with two ten-over-ten sash windows on each side. The front door could have either a six-light transom, or two three-light sidelights, the whole surmounted by a gable/pediment pierced by a window (Figure 19). The image of the front door of **Guy Park** leads us to support a transom rather than sidelights. The remaining four windows would be placed equally on the end walls. This arrangement of windows and doors again produces the familiar five room centre hall plan. McKendry says that early 19th-century correspondence establishes that the house had a stone foundation.

A slightly smaller version of this house, minus the gable /pediment exists today at Williamstown. The **Manor** at Williamstown (Figure 20), like the Kingston house, was clearly never intended as a permanent home for Sir John and his family. Indeed it is noticeable that all of Sir John's land holdings in Ontario were accepted (a) as his due, and (b) as a means of recouping some of his wartime losses, but none was ever expected to replace the total of what he had lost. He always expected the

Crown to either give him cash or grants of land to a value of £100,000 or more.

Sir John had thought of building a manor house on the shore of Lake St. Francis, some distance from Williamstown, but for unknown reasons decided against it. Sometime between 1788 and 1792, he constructed the central portion of the present house. There is some discussion about the actual date of construction: A. J. H. Richardson says that a 1792 account of an unnamed traveller establishes that there was "a small country lodge, neat." on the site at that date. Peter Stokes suggests that the house was built circa 1786--two years after Sir John wrote to Haldimand of his intention to build a grist and saw mill on the Raisin River--citing the presence of both hand-hewn and machine-sawn timber in the central portion of the house. We prefer 1788 as a date for the house as it seems unlikely that Sir John would begin construction before having received title to the land.

David Spector says that,

The Sir John Johnson House was initially a modest cabin constructed partly with traditional French-Canadian methods. The presence of vertical posts and horizontal fillers suggests a construction type defined by John I. Rempel as 'frame construction with timber fill.'⁵ The timbers were both hand and machine cut. According to Stokes, horizontal fillers, vertical posts, and ground floor beams were 'hewn on one side and pit sawn on the other.'⁶ Parks Canada As Found drawings confirm Stokes' observations. In the original portion of the house, extant recorders uncovered 'hand hewn beams with visible rot extending inward approx. 1½" along length of each joist.'⁷ In other locations, mill-sawn timbers were used. Stokes noted that mechanically straight-sawn timbers appear in roof-framing, boarding, and flooring.⁸ Early 1960s photographs of roof-framing confirm Stokes' observations.⁹ The original Johnson house consists of hand and mill-cut timbers arranged in a timber-fill configuration.¹¹

According to the Parks Canada As Found drawings, the original house was 38' wide by 25' deep. The front elevation boasted four ground floor windows divided by the central front door, while the rear made do with two windows. In 1971 Stokes noted weather-beaten logs behind the north-side cladding and concluded that the house had originally been unclad. On the basis of an old nail in one of the dormers, he also postulated a shed roof broken by one dormer. The five-bay facade described by Parks Canada accords well with other Johnson houses and suggests a gable roof pierced by three dormers to be more likely, particularly in view of the almost contemporaneous house in Kingston.

Stokes also asserts that the floor plan was the traditional centre hall plan: Central hallway; two rooms to each side; and staircase to second-storey loft. Again the evidence of his other construction strongly supports this conclusion. As does an examination of the As Found drawing of the ground floor (Figure 21).

The house has been extensively added to and modified since 1788. As early as 1813, there is evidence of a small western extension, which Stokes believes to be the original kitchen, its size and shape seem to support this theory. Sir John sold the property to Hugh McGillis in 1819, a time when he greatly needed money and when the Williamstown area had recently become accessible from the Kings Highway and thus valuable.

Later additions to the house have effectively disguised Sir John's original structure, but the evidence of a Georgian five-bay facade and centre hall floor plan can still be found. Even though he may never have intended this house as a true Manor House, Sir John could not resist building yet another model of **Johnson Hall**.

In the 1790's Sir John realised that his future prosperity was tied to Canada and chose to settle in Lower Canada, to have a more civilized and leisurely lifestyle than he thought he'd get in Upper Canada. In 1785 he had purchased the Lemoyne House on St. Paul Street as a home for his growing family. This house had been allowed to fall into considerable disrepair by its former owners the Barons of Longueuil. It is quite likely that Sir John was unable to resist making additions as well as the repairs to the house, for the construction went on from 1785 to 1798 and must have consumed a great deal of his income.

From all descriptions that have survived the expense was worth it. The house was probably the most magnificent in Montréal in its day. An 1801 map of the Fortifications of the City of Montréal clearly shows the Johnson house occupying roughly half of the land now occupied by Bonsecours Market. The only descriptions of the house relate to its conversion into an hotel after its sale Dec. 16, 1815 to the Hon. John Molson, for £7,000.

The structure occupied a plot of ground on Victor Street across from Bonsecours Church extending from St. Paul Street to the line of the Fortification Walls, which is to say the present Commissioners Street. Surrounded by gardens and service buildings, the Mansion House consisted of a central pavilion from which extended two wings, each terminating in smaller pavilions that faced the river. The central pavilion was at least 75 feet square and the wings 75 by 30, making the over-all exterior length about 150 feet."⁷

Earle Thomas differs slightly:

"The new Johnson residence was the largest and grandest house in Montréal, a two-storey building with a steep roof set with dormer windows and a frontage of 140 feet on the street. The ground level was in the shape of an elongated 'E' with the three projections pointing towards the river. In the centre was a huge salon, 65 to 75 feet square, in the shape of a

half-octagon, which looked out on the gardens and across the St. Lawrence once the city wall was demolished."⁷³

The one illustration we have of the Johnson house on St. Paul Street is a painting by Henry Richard Sharland Bunnett painted about 1885 (Figure 22), by which time the building had been demolished for 64 years. However his view of the rear of the house accords with the descriptions we have of it. As all illustrations and descriptions suggest that Sir John's alterations tended to be interior ones, it is difficult to attribute influences. Perhaps this is one house where Lady Mary's tastes prevailed.

In 1796 Sir John abandoned all plans of moving to England and returned to Canada permanently. In late 1794 or early 1795 he had purchased the Seigneury of Monnoir in the upper Richelieu Valley, adjoining the properties of General Gabriel Christie. He was much attracted to a conical hill, named Mt. Ste-Thérèse, which rose in the middle of the seigneurie. It reminded him of the terrain around **Fort Johnson**. He renamed it **Mount Johnson** and resolved to construct his Manor House on its southern slopes.

When exactly he built **Mount Johnson II** is unknown, but in 1805 he purchased land (lots 76 & 95, as well as small wedges of Lots 95 & 97) from John Donaldson, presumably to provide easier access to his mountainside estate, and had it surveyed by William Saxe. Saxe produced a plan (Figure 23) showing a house standing where recent excavation has located the remains of **Mount Johnson II**. Thus it appears that Sir John had already built a house in 1805, yet he wrote to his nephew William Claus on July 5, 1807, "I Have made a beginning by building a small Neat Log House of 28 by 19 to encourage the settlement of the Seigniorie."⁷⁴ Perhaps he was so busy that he hadn't had time to write to his nephew for two years. More likely he saw little reason to mention the Manor House before this.

After the transfer of his estate at St. Andrew's to his son Charles, Sir John found more and more reason to spend time at **Mount Johnson**, writing to William Claus on April 12 1821, "I have been absent about two months putting my mountain house in a little better situation as it was going to ruin."⁷⁵ In 1824 Sir John was still writing to his sons from **Mount Johnson** but by 1827 he was no longer spending time there. On Sir John's death in 1830, his son Archie sold the property at **Mount Johnson** to J-R Rolland. Whether the house was still standing is unknown. The only traces of it are

an avenue of Lombardy poplars approaching the site from the southwest, a few feral fruit trees marking the garden, tumbled stones tracing the foundations of the outbuildings, and raised ridges of earth marking the location of the stables (Figure 24). Test pits uncovered (at a depth of 26 cm (10.23")) a layer of burnt soil and such small artifacts as pieces of window glass, clay pipes, and fragments of porcelain. Traces of an old road down the mountain to the southeast, coupled with the discovery of pieces of dressed limestone and a quarry located in the area marked Lot 96 on the Saxe map, suggest that the land was bought for easier access to the estate and to provide stone for the house (A more intensive exploration might prove extremely fruitful.)

While he was still building **Mount Johnson** Sir John purchased the Seignery of Argenteuil from Major Patrick Murray. Sir John did not apparently buy Major Murray's Manor House; for he soon built a new Manor on a point of land between the mouth of the North River and the Ottawa River. This site today is marked by a hydroelectricity pylon, part of a line which carries the wires over the Ottawa River. The site is at the end of a dirt road marking the former route of rue de la Seignerie, now a part of the St. Andrew's Golf Club. The house was destroyed by fire in 1885.

There are only two descriptions of the Argenteuil Manor House today. The oldest comes from Cyrus Thomas' History of the Counties of Argenteuil Quebec, and Prescott Ontario, originally published in 1896 and probably written at least ten years earlier as it gives the impression that the Manor House was still standing at the time of writing. Thomas says:

"About the year 1814, Sir John Johnson purchased the Seignery of Argenteuil from Major Murray, and built the manor house on a beautiful spot on the left bank of the North River, near where it flows into the Ottawa. It was built on the same model (only of smaller dimensions) as "Johnson Hall", the residence of his father on the banks of the Mohawk...The "dinner bell" that hung in the belfry of his coachhouse, and which was used to summon the family and guests to the spacious dining room, he presented to the Rev. Archdeacon Henderson, who placed it on his church where it was used to summon his congregation to worship, but after a few years was taken down and placed in the care of the late Guy Richards....After the death of Sir John, the Seignery came into possession of his son, Col. Charles Christopher Johnson who held it for many years, and was succeeded by Capt. Johnson, the present proprietor."⁷⁴

(The Captain Johnson referred to was **John Ormsby Johnson** later Vice-Admiral, and great-grandfather of the current 7th Baronet.) Unfortunately Thomas tells us little of the design or orientation of the Manor House, but does give us a few interesting facts that when coupled with the description presented by Dr. B.A. Wales, will allow us to compare it with the other houses. Dr. Wales had this to say:

"Though large, it was a plain two-storey wood structure, heavily timbered, and without even

a cupola or pillared portico to adorn it. A pencil drawing of it, in the possession of Mrs. John Fair confirms the impression left on the boyhood memory. The main entrance, facing the south, was framed in a fan window and the south elevation displayed no less than eleven windows and two of them dormer. The hall and dining room were spacious. The house contained fourteen rooms. This is confirmed by the following passage from a letter received by the writer in 1927 from the late Mrs. Kenrick of Hillside Grange, great-granddaughter of Sir John:- "The Manor House was a large two storey heavily built wooden building, of twelve or fourteen rooms. I also remember there was a Guard House built on to the dwelling..."⁷⁷

It is obvious from the above descriptions that the house was the usual 2½-storey five-bay facade that Sir John had been copying from his father's houses in New York. The fanlight framing the front door is an interesting new addition. It may have been inspired by Sir John's memories of **Smithstown** and **Warrenstown Houses**, or the result of his exposure to the latest styles in England during his residence there in the 90's. In any case it quickly became a standard part of the Johnsonian house. Given that Argenteuil was an established and prosperous seigneurie, given the reference by Thomas to a coachhouse with belfry, given also the reference by Wales to an attached guardhouse, and given the Palladian triangular plan of both **Fort Johnson** and **Johnson Hall**, it seems likely that the Manor House, guardhouse, and carriage house would have been positioned to form a semi-enclosed courtyard. This probably would be on the north side of the house, just like **Johnson Hall**. (Figure 25)

Mrs. Konricks' assertion that there were "twelve or fourteen rooms" is consistent with the centre hall plan of other Johnson houses and allows for attic bedrooms and a basement kitchen. Thus Thomas' claim that the **Argenteuil Manor House** "was built on the same model (only of smaller dimensions) as 'Johnson Hall', the residence of his father on the banks of the Mohawk.", may be accurate. Certainly there is no evidence of the house having been constructed of brick. (See **McDonnell House** for a further discussion of this).

In 1815 Lady Johnson died and Sir John sold the **Longueuil House**, retiring to St. Andrew's. Two years later, perhaps feeling the need for a house nearer town, he contracted for a house on the site of his burned villa in St. Mary's Suburb. Johnson wrote to Clarissa Putnam in August of 1816 that he was planning to build a smaller house in the suburb. In fact it was only smaller than **Longueuil House** and was larger than any other of the Johnson houses including **Warrenstown House**. In the July 24, 1817, contract between Sir John and the Master Mason Jeremiah Perkins⁷⁸, a 60' by 35' 2-storey house is specified. (The previous May Sir John had contracted with Master Carpenter Jacques

Perrault⁷⁹ to build the house, but Perrault's contract did not cover the masonry.) Presumably the masons began work almost immediately; for in October Perrault subcontracted the floors and door and window frames and mouldings to carpenters George Ashley and his partner⁸⁰. This contract specified floors of 5" by 2" planking.

In January of 1818 Perrault subcontracted Edmond Hill ⁸¹ to build the stairs, railings and partitions, and to complete all joinery in the house and install partitions. Four days later, on Jan. 16, Perrault contracted Hill ⁸² to build the frames, mouldings and beading for two exterior doors--the upper to have an oval fanlight and side lights, the lower to have a semicircular fanlight and sidelights. If the dating of these contracts is any indication of the speed of construction it is likely that the house was entirely enclosed by the end of January 1818 and, with luck, Sir John may have taken possession in the early Summer of 1818.

The various contracts for this house make Sir John's wishes quite clear. As this was to be a country residence, he wanted galleries "one ...to each of the first and second storeys all around the said house of six feet in breadth each...with ballustrades(sic) of Chinese Railings".⁸³ The floors of these galleries were to be of tongue-and-grooved 2" thick plank, and the roof was to be tinned over tongue-and-grooved wood, of "similar descent to the roof of the Mansion House in Montreal and shall be conducted all round the said house beyond the eves[sic] thereof upon a descent to form a covering or Umbrella to the galleries..." ⁸⁴.

The only photograph existing of the house (Figure 26) was taken as the house was being demolished, the galleries have been removed but one can still imagine how they must have provided shade for the rooms in a humid Montréal summer and protection from the snow in winter.

The contract with Perrault specifies 14 sashes six panes high for the first floor windows, and 14 sashes five panes high for the second floor. It also specifies that the panes are to measure 12" x 9", thus we know that the first floor windows were at least 6½' high while those above were at least 5½' high. As the photo shows, the house was raised upon a stone basement well above ground level. The contract specifies the kitchen "to be on the ground flat"⁸⁵ with a tongue-and-grooved wooden floor. It can be seen that the first floor is thus about five feet above grade, the first floor ceiling is about 9½'

above the floor and the second floor ceiling is about 8½' above the second floor. If we add in the beams measuring 9" x 4" plus the allowance for flooring two inches thick, we must add eleven inches to the height of the walls for each of the second and attic floors. The house was then 24' 10" to the attic floor, and probably 33' 6" to the ridgepole. This places it in much the same style as **Fort Johnson, Johnson Hall** and the St. Mathias **Manor House** all of which have high hipped roofs, indeed that at St. Mathias is perhaps as high as **Johnson Hall** as it has a very steep pitch.

The exterior walls of the house were of brick, three bricks thick with lathing and plaster applied inside, giving a wall one foot thick. The interior partitions were made of timber four inches wide with lathing and plaster or wainscoting applied to them giving a wall about eight inches thick. Subtracting the thicknesses of the walls and partitions gives us a hall 10'6" wide by 29'6" deep with rooms 22' wide by 14' deep on either side. The hall contains a staircase four feet wide made of pine with a mahogany handrail which rises to the attic where it is contained within a partitioned stair hall (Figure 27). The attic is lighted by seven dormers with 8" by 8" panes.

The **St. Mary's Suburb** house with its wide galleries, high ceilings and large rooms must have been the closest Sir John came to the achievement of the grand style of **Warrenstown House**. It was willed to his daughter Marianne. When she died in 1868 the house was purchased by the Molsons to allow for expansion of the brewery, and demolished in 1896

The last house built by Sir John was the so-called **Johnson Manor** in St. Mathias (Figure 28). The house it served as the manor for the Seignury of Monnoir when Sir John was not at **Mount Johnson**, the true Manor House. In 1825 Sir John gave his son John, by deed of donation, the "Jenison Fief". This land formed part of the Seignury of East Chambly, which was owned by three different landowners. Sir John shared the seignury with General Christie and another man. Thus the transfer of the fief to John could be said to make the house a Manor. The exact date of construction is not clear but it appears to have been extant in 1819 and possibly as early as 1812.

The house was extensively remodelled in 1911-12 by then owner Laurence Stephens. Stephens added a Roman Doric portico to the entrance front, a service corridor and stairs between the front and rear east rooms on the ground floor. He also installed hardwood floors, and a powder room replacing the

rear door at the end of the hall; moved the rear door to the southwest room; and opened an arch between the northwest and southwest rooms on the ground floor. On the second floor he installed two bathrooms and a door onto the balcony over the portico. The attic also contains a bathroom dating from this period. Apart from these changes the house appears to remain much as John Johnson Jr. left it in 1841.

The house is a rough-stone rectangle 48' wide by 43' deep by 34' high (Figure 29). It has a hipped slate roof pierced by six dormers. The north or entrance facade was originally five bays pierced by four windows and a centre door with elliptical fanlight and sidelights contained in a semi-elliptical arch. The second floor contained five equal-sized windows. Today the second floor centre window has been replaced by French doors opening onto a balcony supported by the granite portico which has been added to the front door. The rear facade is similar to the original front, except that it lacks the arched central opening and the door has been moved to the west one bay.

Once again, the five bay centre hall plan has surfaced. Originally the four rooms off the entrance hall were of equal size, recalling **Warrenstown House**. As the walls are two feet thick, the interior space is a mere 43'4" by 39'5". If we assume eight-inch interior partitions, we find two 17'9" wide by 17'5" long rooms flanking a 7' wide by 39'5"-long hall. The hall is divided in two by an archway, reminiscent of both **Smithstown House** and **Fort Johnson**. As mentioned earlier the balusters on the stair rail are unturned, a further link to **Fort Johnson**. Also, like **Fort Johnson** is the placement of the chimneys on the end walls.

The kitchen today is located in a small one-storey stone wing added to the east end of the house some time before 1910. The original kitchen was in the basement. We know that the wing is not original because there is a blind window in the pantry of the wing looking into the dining room.

It is clear that the St. Mathias house was not built for Sir John to live in, because it is so much smaller than his other houses. Of his residences only **Mount Johnson** is smaller and it was clearly meant to be expanded and if only his finances had permitted. We can assume that the **Johnson Manor House**, as it is known, was always intended for Col. John, perhaps as one of the few ways Sir John could provide for the children of this wastrel son. Certainly he made sure to leave him only a

trust fund that John's creditors could not touch.²⁶

The last house in this survey is at 11 rue de la Seigneurie, in St. Andrew's East. This house is part of our survey because, even though it wasn't built by Sir John, it may have been built by his grandson. The property was sold in 1843 to Col. Charles McDonell, possibly the son of Nancy Johnson McDonell. When Col. McDonell bought the land there was a house on it but it probably was not as elaborate as this one, as it had been built by an illiterate French-Canadian soldier named Denis Neau. Neau sold the property in 1807 to Louisa Hall of Quebec City and she in turn sold the house to McDonell. The current house has undergone many alterations but is still recognizable as the house in an 1860's photograph (Figure 30) in the Public Archives of Canada currently identified as the **Johnson Manor House at St. Andrew's**.

The **McDonell House** at St Andrew's is a rectangular block of red brick 50' long by 35' deep. The entrance facade faces east, and is five bays wide. The central bay is pierced by a semi-elliptical arch containing a fanlighted and sidelighted door. This door leads into a central hallway which extends the depth of the house. The four rooms are equal in size and once boasted fireplaces on the north-south dividing walls. The second floor was identical to the ground floor and the staircase continued to the attic which was lit by four dormers, two in front and two in back. The ceilings are 9' 6" high and the whole house is 30' high.

Colonel McDonell surrounded the house with a stone wall five feet high and eight feet deep. (Legend claims he wanted to protect his daughters from the gaze of the soldiers on the parade ground.) After his death his wife installed iron palings in the section of wall directly in front of the house. (Legend claims that she wanted to marry off her daughters and no one could see them.) A later owner, Mrs. Jones, hated cleaning the fireplaces every day, so she had the chimneys removed and used the brick to construct a kitchen wing on the back of the house. This one-storey wing is accessed by the old rear door. During this period the original 12-over-12 sash windows were replaced, on the second floor by casements and on the ground floor by four-over-four sashes. Also during the Joneses' tenure a wide veranda was constructed across the front and the dormers were removed, as can be seen in an 1870's photograph (Figure 31). This veranda has been replaced by an undistinguished portico supported by slender columns of no particular order. The front door has also been replaced by a pair of glazed

doors which occupy the entire opening below the fanlight. The present appearance of the house could be much improved by the replacement of the sidelights and panelled front door and by the removal of the porch.

CONCLUSION

In this study of the fourteen houses built or remodelled over the period from 1725 to 1843 by four generations of Johnsons, several recurrent themes surface. Certain similarities could be attributed to Georgian tradition, or the times, or even to local tradition, but more personal design choices are evident. Even those similarities that can be ascribed to the influence of the period or of local tradition, become somewhat suspect when they recur as often as they do and over as long a period of time.

The Johnsons' houses provide a fertile field for study because of the unusual opportunity offered by so many houses built by one family over such a long period. This is directly attributable to the upheaval in their lives of the American Revolution. Most prominent families who endure long enough to pass down their traditions over four generations tend to live in one place, or in certain families where two or three estates clustered around the original home. To build fourteen homes, twelve of them palatial, on two continents and in three different countries is exceptional.

It was the expansion of Empire that brought the young William Johnson from County Meath to the Mohawk Valley, while defence of that Empire drove his children out of the Valley and into the wilderness of Canada. Two factors assured the survival of three of the Valley houses; the popularity of Sir William Johnson, and his untimely death before the start of the Revolution. Had Sir William lived, he likely would not have supported the rebels which, in itself would probably have changed the course of the Revolution. Flexner deals with the hypothesis of a revolution opposed by Sir William in some detail in his biography Lord of the Mohawks, and concludes that had Sir William lived five years longer the Revolution would probably have failed, Britain might have reduced her control of the colonies and America today might well have remained British from the Pole to the Gulf.

Had this happened the Johnsons would probably have remained in the Valley, and therefore, the Canadian houses would never have been built! Fortunately for the purposes of this study there was a Revolution. The Johnsons were forced to flee their estates, and they spent the next 67 years trying to replace their lost homes.

It is equally surprising that the houses in the Valley have changed so little in 247 years. In the case of **Fort Johnson** this is perhaps attributable to the memory of Sir William and to the fact that the

area declined in fashion soon after the War of 1812. Although the house remained the home of relatively wealthy men, apparently none had the money required to "modernize" the fort. **Johnson Hall** was less fortunate and was extensively modernized. Bay windows were added to the facades, a cupola to the roof, and large verandas replaced the front and rear frontispieces. Most of the **Johnson Hall** we see today is the result of careful restoration in the 1950's. **Guy Park** was extensively altered in the 1840's and 50's -as a result today we really have little knowledge of its eighteenth century interior. **Williamsburg** of course paid the heaviest price for its Tory connections, although its burning was probably not a result of anti-Tory action.

The survival of the Canadian houses can be attributed to the economic decline of the villages in which they are located. The two that were built in expanding cities, **Kingston** and **St. Mary's** were demolished when the land they occupied became too valuable for mere residential use. **St. Andrew's** and **Mount Johnson** lost their *raison d'être* in 1854 with the abolition of the Seignorial System, thus when they were destroyed there was little reason to rebuild them. **Williamstown** has undergone the greatest alteration and this can be attributed to the fact that subsequent owners made numerous modifications as their means allowed. **St. Mathias** and the **McDonell House** share the distinction of being in towns unaffected by redevelopment and were presumably in the possession of families who could not afford to "improve" them. In fact **St. Mathias** underwent extensive alteration only after the Stephens' bought it from the Church.

What threads tie all these houses together, beyond their shared Johnson origin?

Apart from **Longueuil House**, which was not a Johnson creation, most of them had five-bay facades. The three that didn't were still clearly Georgian designs; two have three-bay facades, and one had a seven-bay facade. Symmetry and grace of facade were important characteristics in all of the thirteen Johnson-built houses, and most of them show a distinctive reference to previous Johnson residences. All but **Longueuil House** had a centre hall plan that recalled **Warrenstown House** and many featured other details that referred to the others.

It is readily apparent that Sir William was influenced in his architectural tastes by his memories of **Warrenstown House** and **Smithstown House**. In **Fort Johnson** he copied the front hall plan of

Smithstown House, and in **Johnson Hall** the floor plan and entry division recall those of **Warrenstown House**. This influence was tempered by his exposure to local traditions and his knowledge of published material.

Sir John added his own experience of late Georgian style in the British Isles (the porches of **Smithstown House** and **Fort Johnson**) in the late 1760's, to a desire to reproduce in Canada what he had lost (the floor plans of all his Canadian houses and the stairway of **St. Mathias**). The sheer volume of construction initiated by Sir John and his descendants, and the widespread locations of their buildings, together with the period of time covered by their endeavours, naturally made local craftsmen more aware of a different building style than the traditional methods familiar to them. Whether or not they consciously adopted aspects of this new style is of little significance. The important factor is that they did adopt the Georgian style and with it many of those design details preferred by the Johnson family.

Thus Sir William's memories of Ireland were transposed in the New World by his son and great-grandson, where their influence on local architecture is still evident.

ENDNOTES

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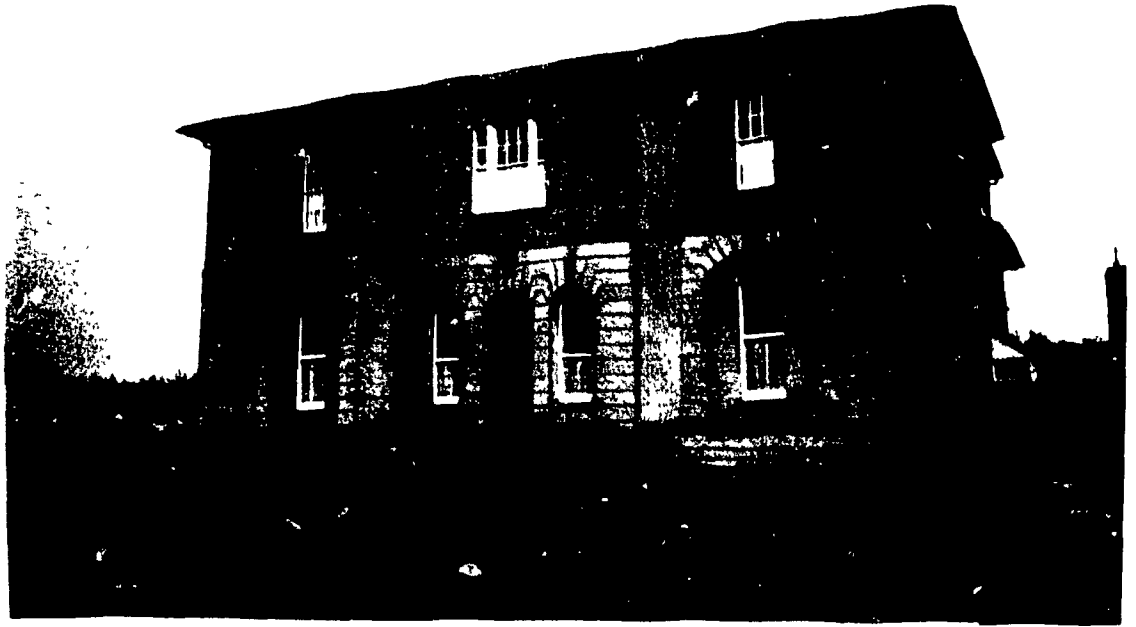


Figure 1. Entrance Front Warrenstown House

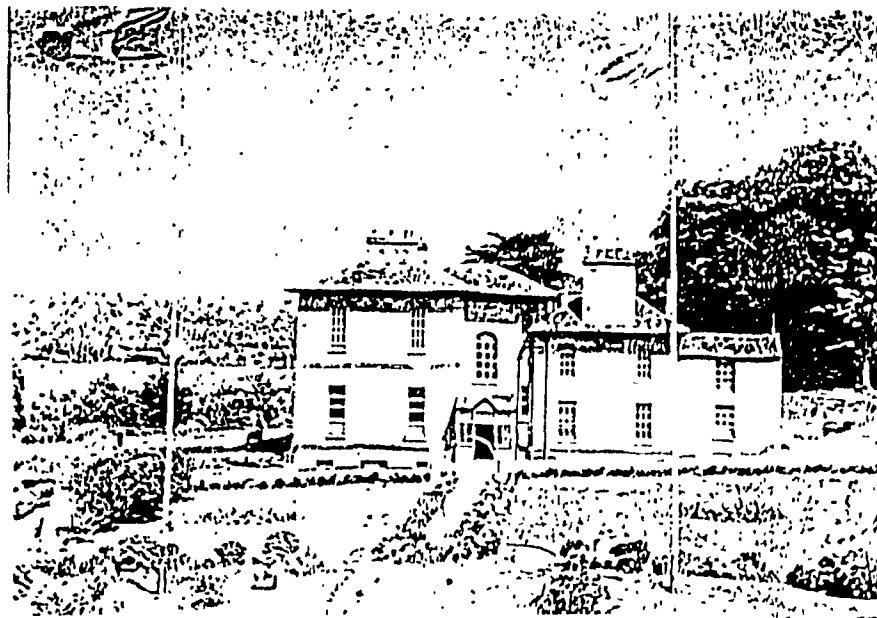


Figure 2. Old Warrenstown House note chimneys



Figure 3. Entrance Front Smithstown House



Figure 4. Smithstown House, note porch and chimney pots



Figure 5. Fort Johnson Entrance Front



Figure 6. Stair Hall, Smithstown House

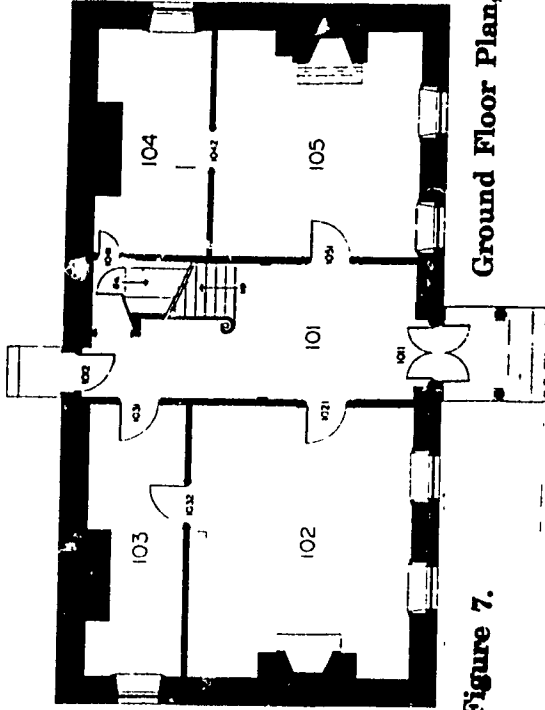


Figure 7. Ground Floor Plan, Fort Johnson

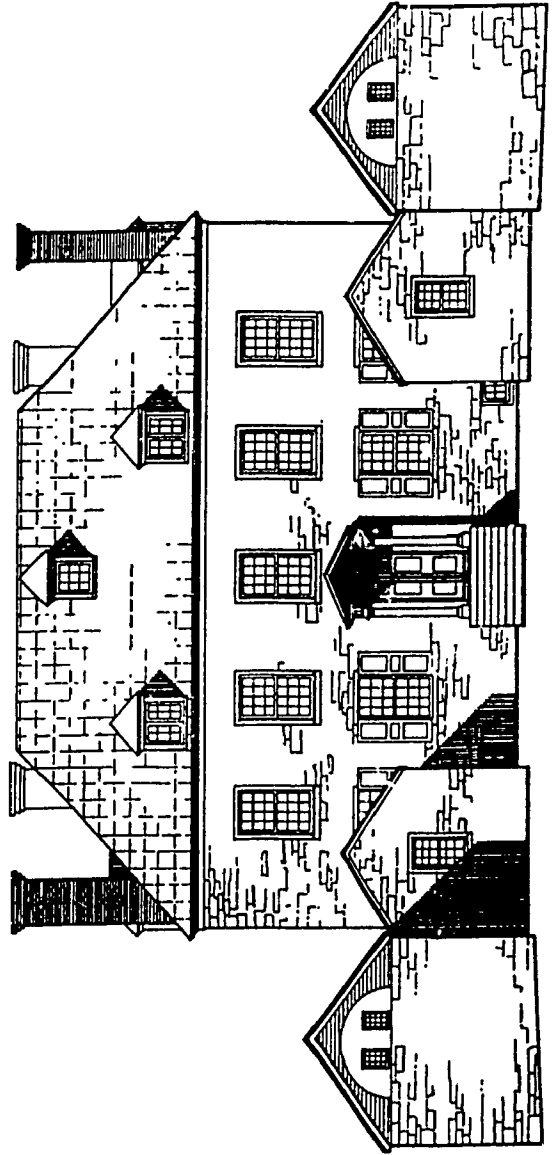


Figure 8. Reconstructed Elevation of Fort Johnson c1759



Figure 9. Johnson Hall Entrance Front



Figure 10. Johnson Hall Garden Front, Palladian Window

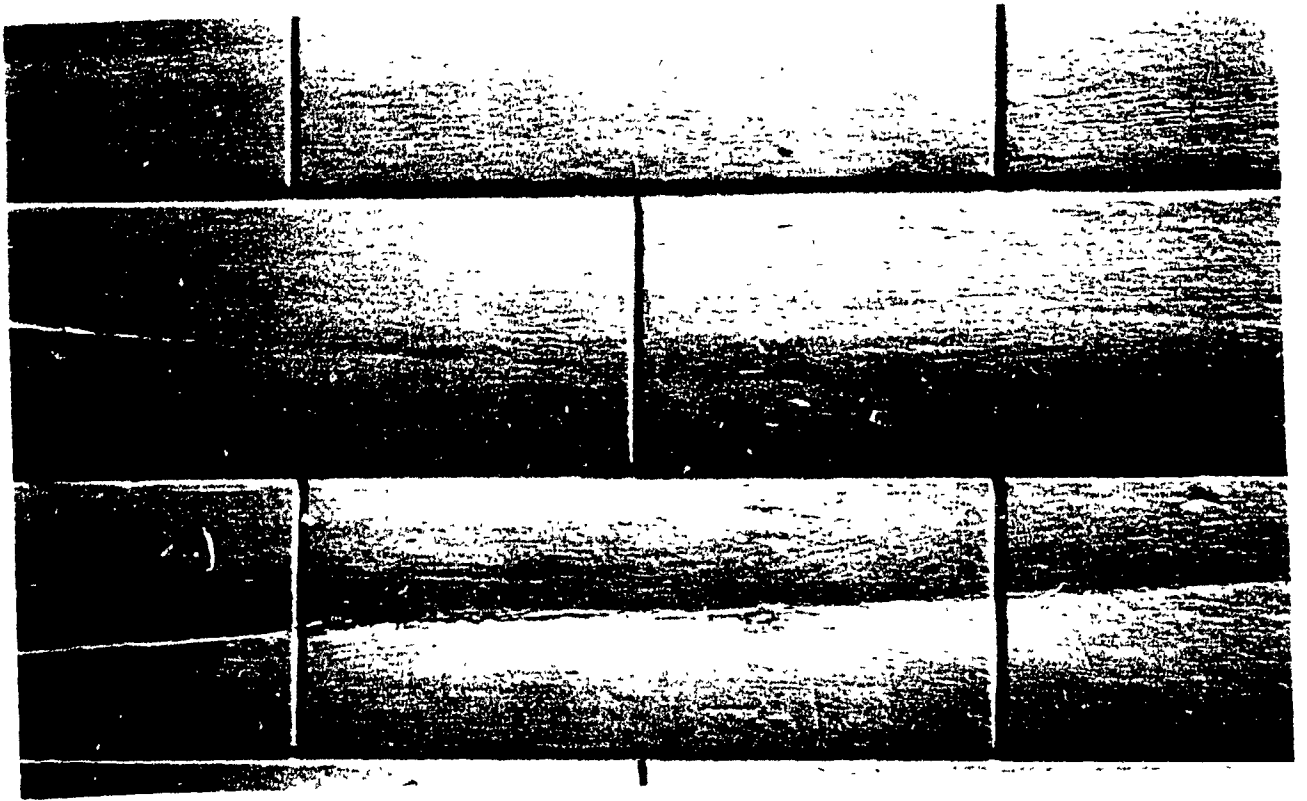


Figure 11. Johnson Hall rusticated wood siding



Figure 12. Johnson Hall Frontispiece



Figure 13. Frontispiece Warrenstown House



Figure 14. Guy Park Entrance Front



Figure 15. Guy Park River Front

Figure 16. Guy Park Frontispiece 1936

Figure 17. Guy Park Frontispiece 1940



Figure 20. The Manor House, Williamstown



Figure 18. Porch, Fort Johnson

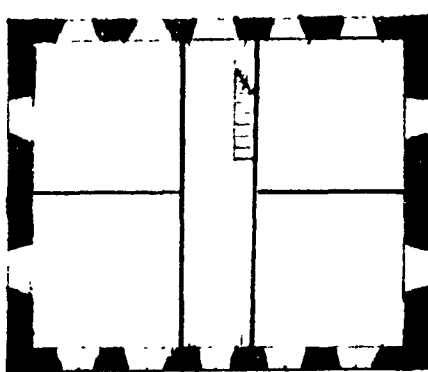


Figure 19. Reconstruction of Facade, Johnson House Kingston

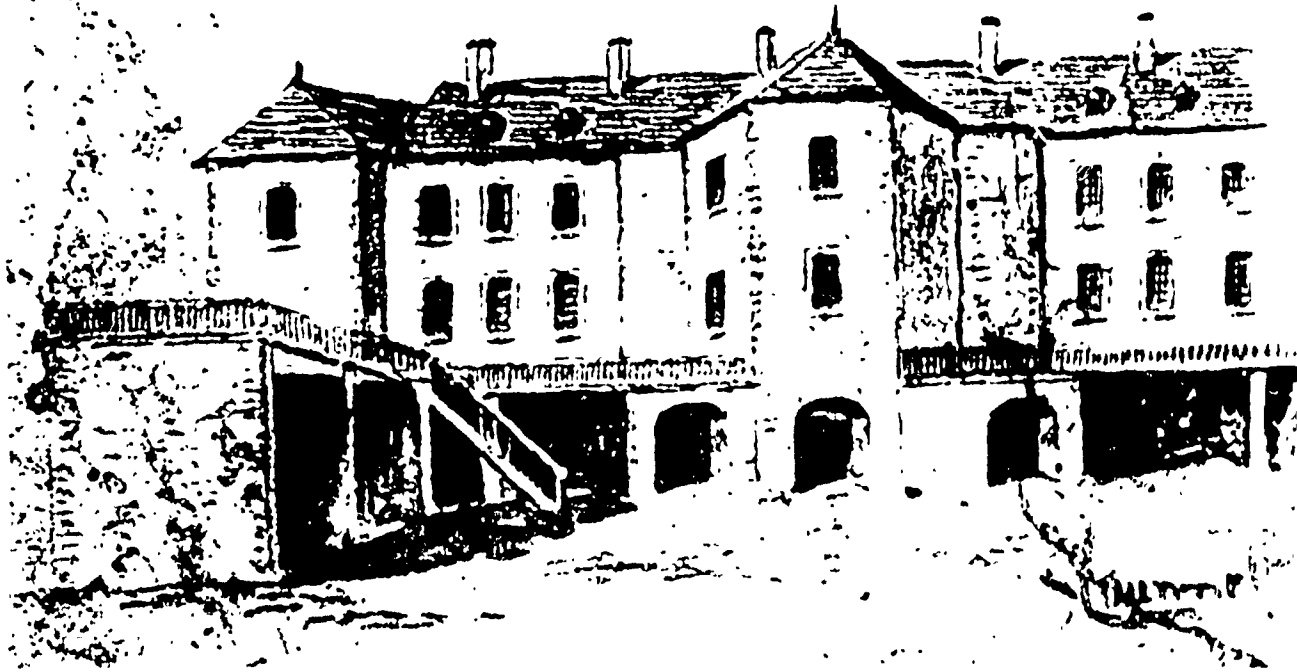


Figure 22.

Rear View of the Residence of the Late Sir W. Johnson, Montréal, PQ (Longueuil House) Watercolour by H. P. S. Bunnett c1885

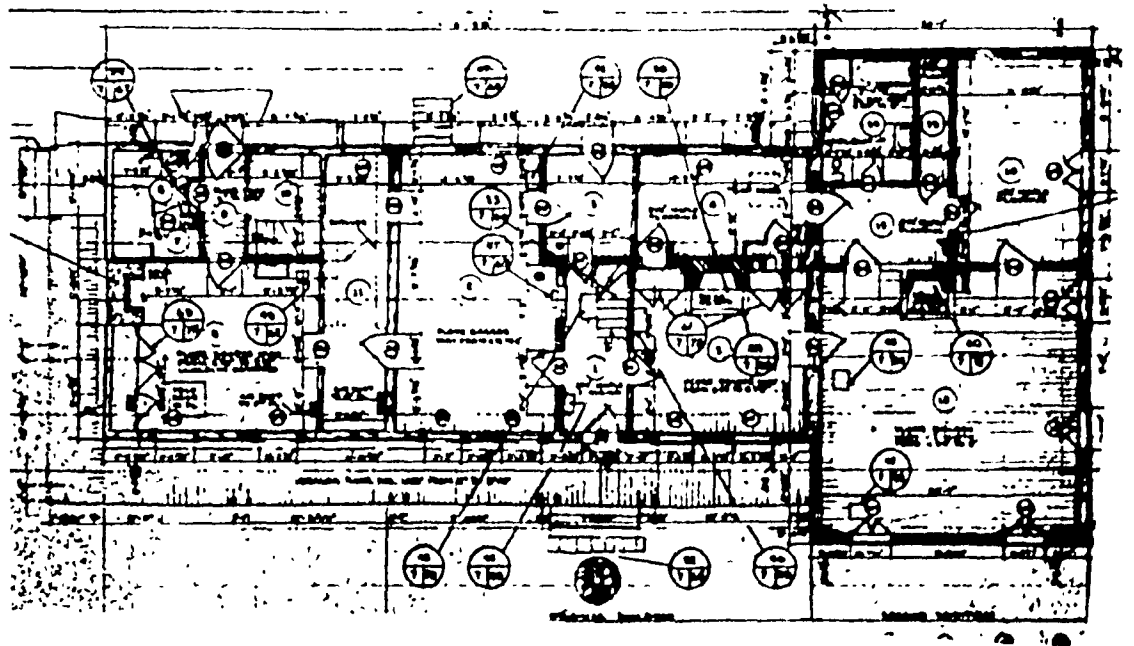


Figure 21. Ground Floor Plan, Manor House, Williamstown

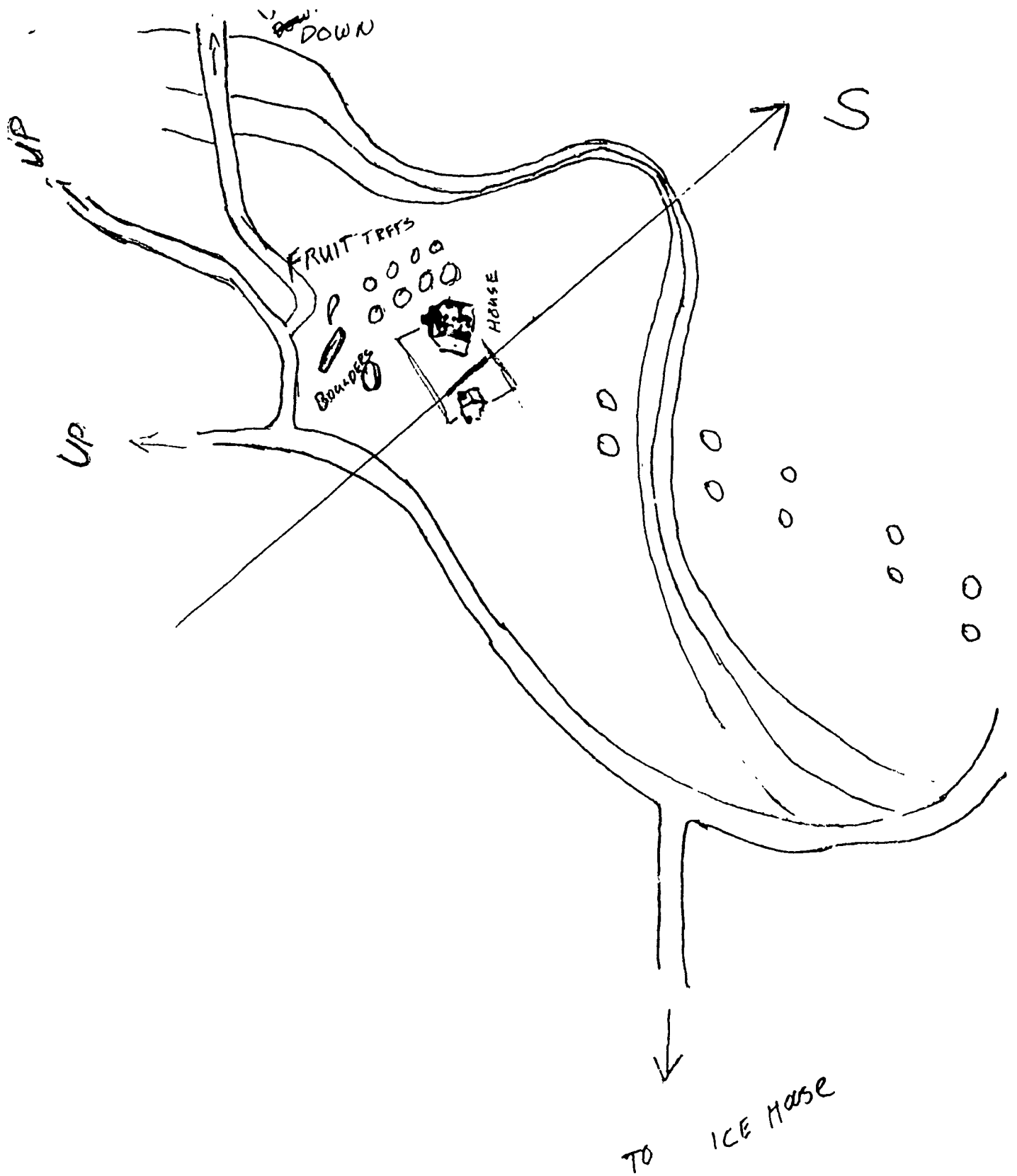


Figure 24. Site Plan of Mount Johnson November 1995 by Prof. Jean Bélisle

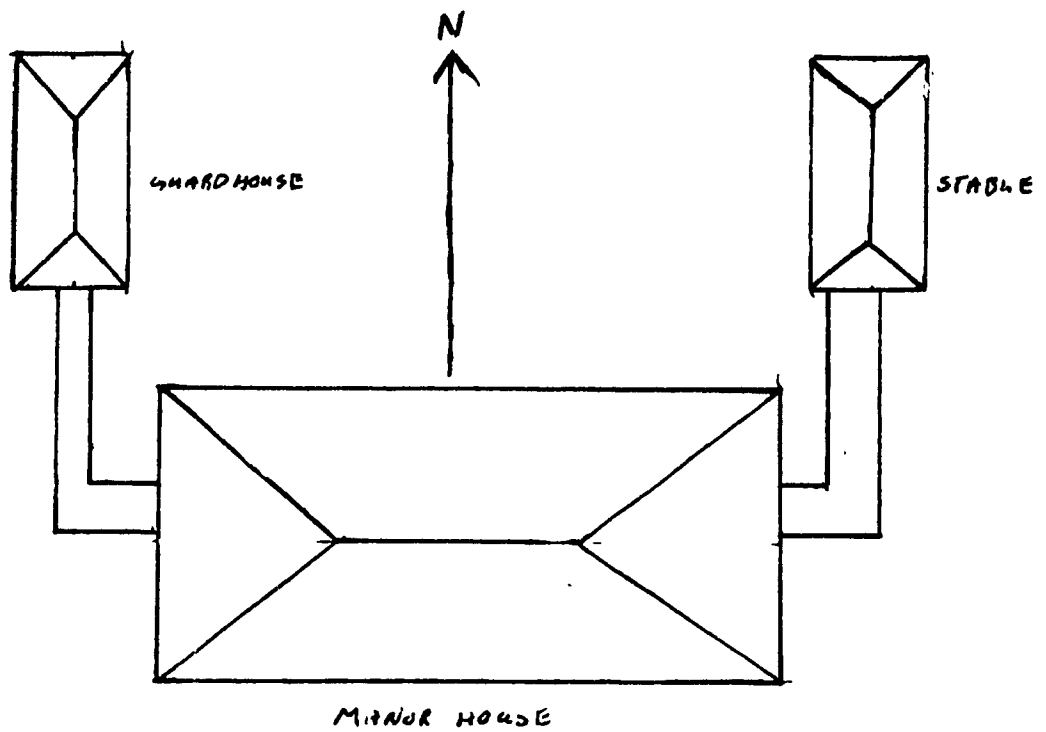


Figure 25. Reconstructed Site Plan of Argenteuil Manor House showing possible location of dependencies

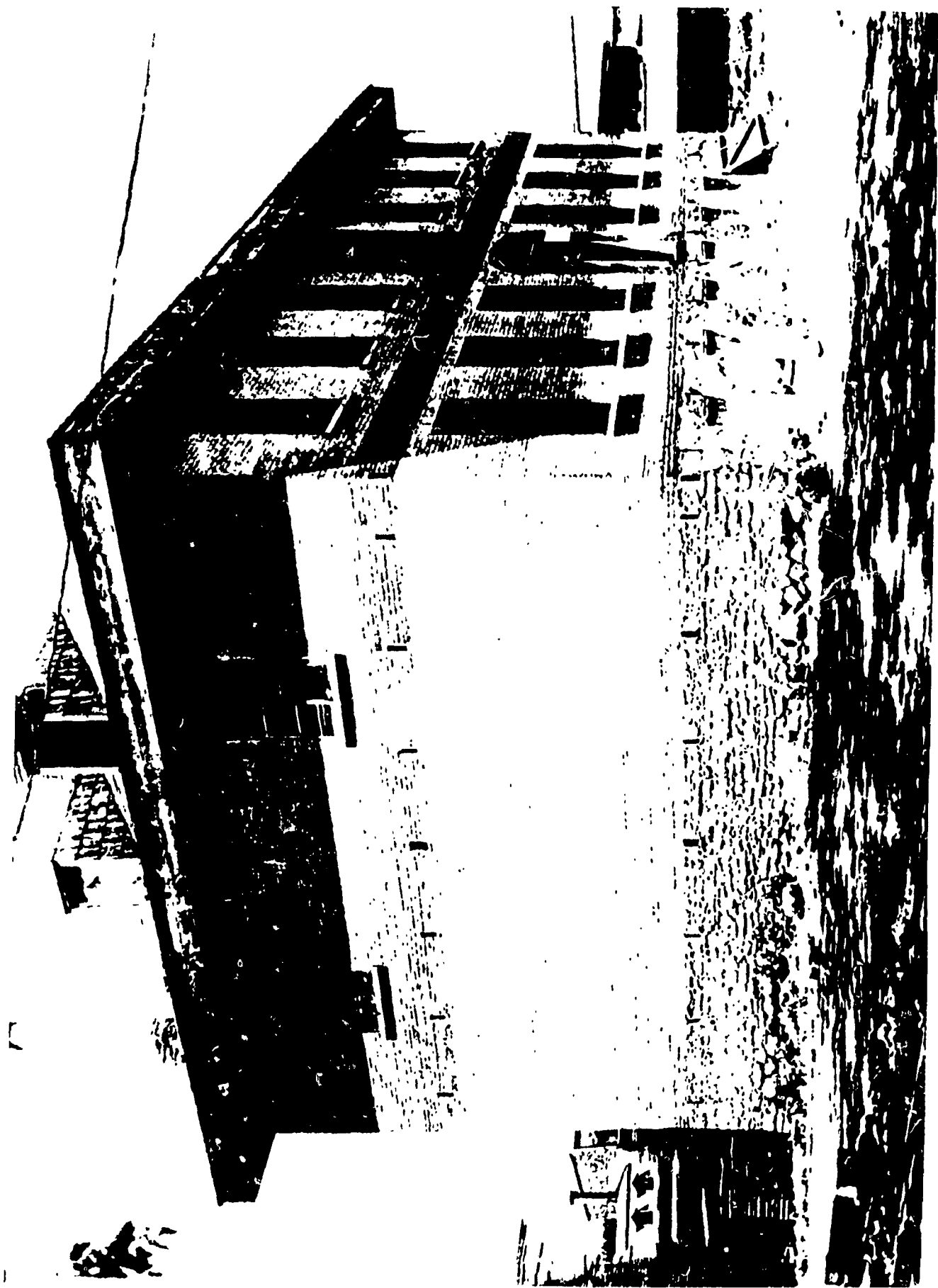
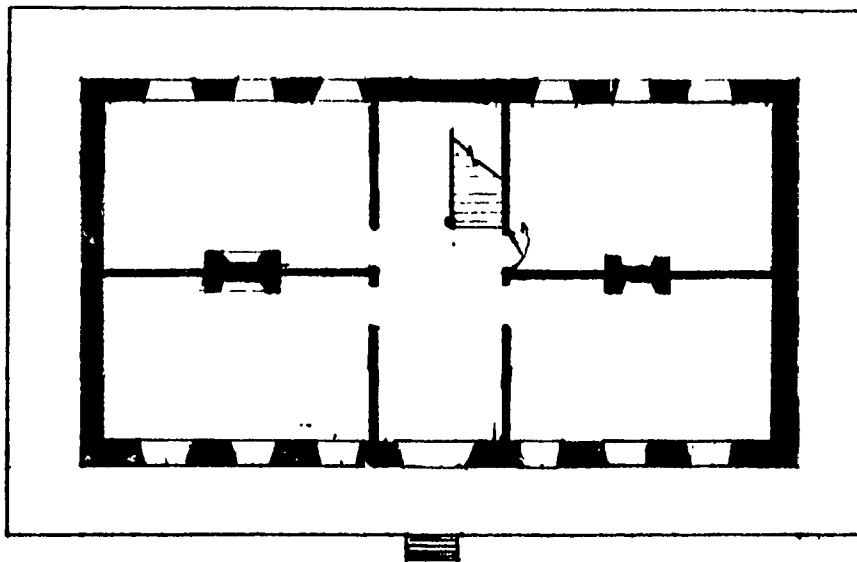


Figure 26. The Residence of Sir John Johnson in the St. Mary's Suburb c1896, Courtesy Notman Photographic Archive

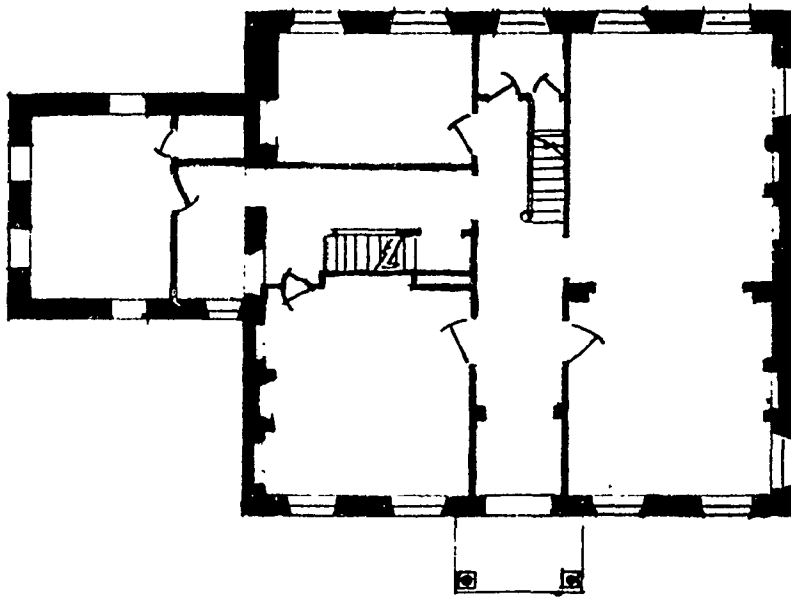
Figure 27. Reconstructed Floor Plan St. Mary's Suburb





ELEVATION DE FACADE

Figure 29. Ground Floor Plan & Elevation of Johnson Manor House St. Mathias



MAISON JOHNSON





Figure 28. The Johnson Manor House, St. Mathias, PQ, Entrance Facade



Figure 30. McDonell House St. Andrew's PQ c1860

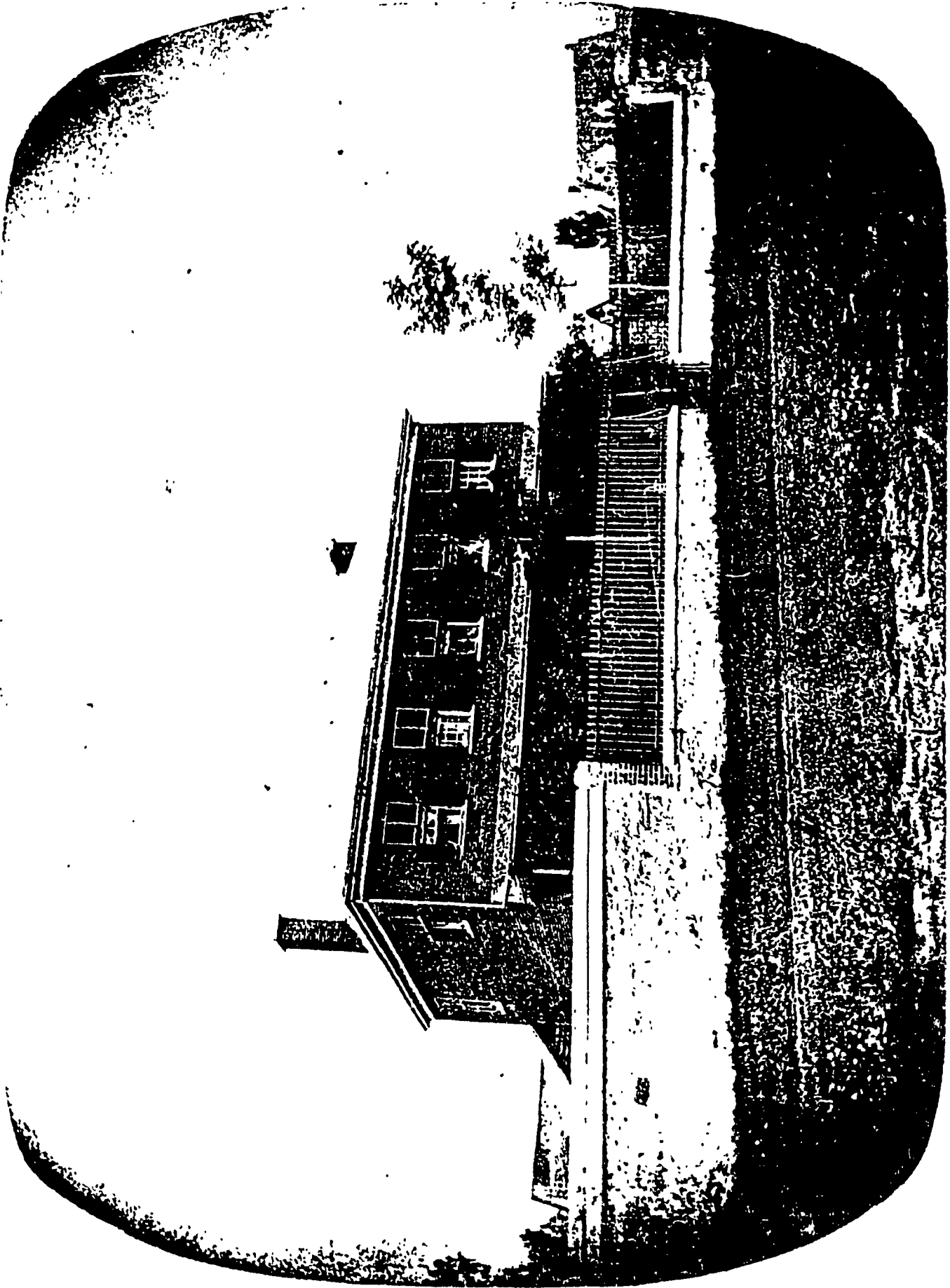
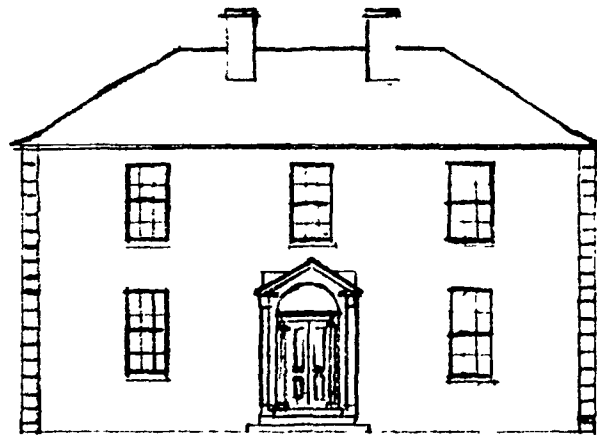
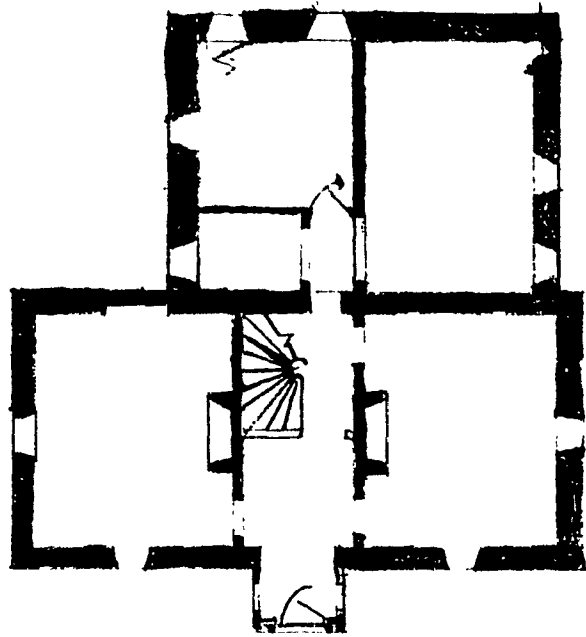


Figure 31. McDonnell House St. Andrew's PQ c1870

Figure 32. Ground Floor Plan & Elevation of Smithstown House



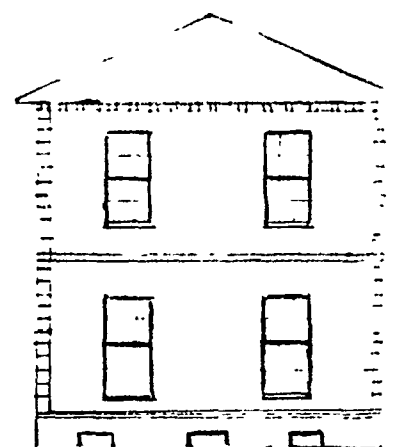
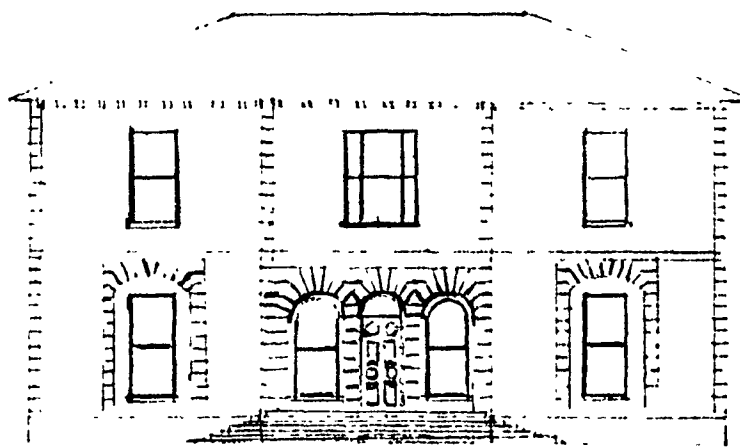
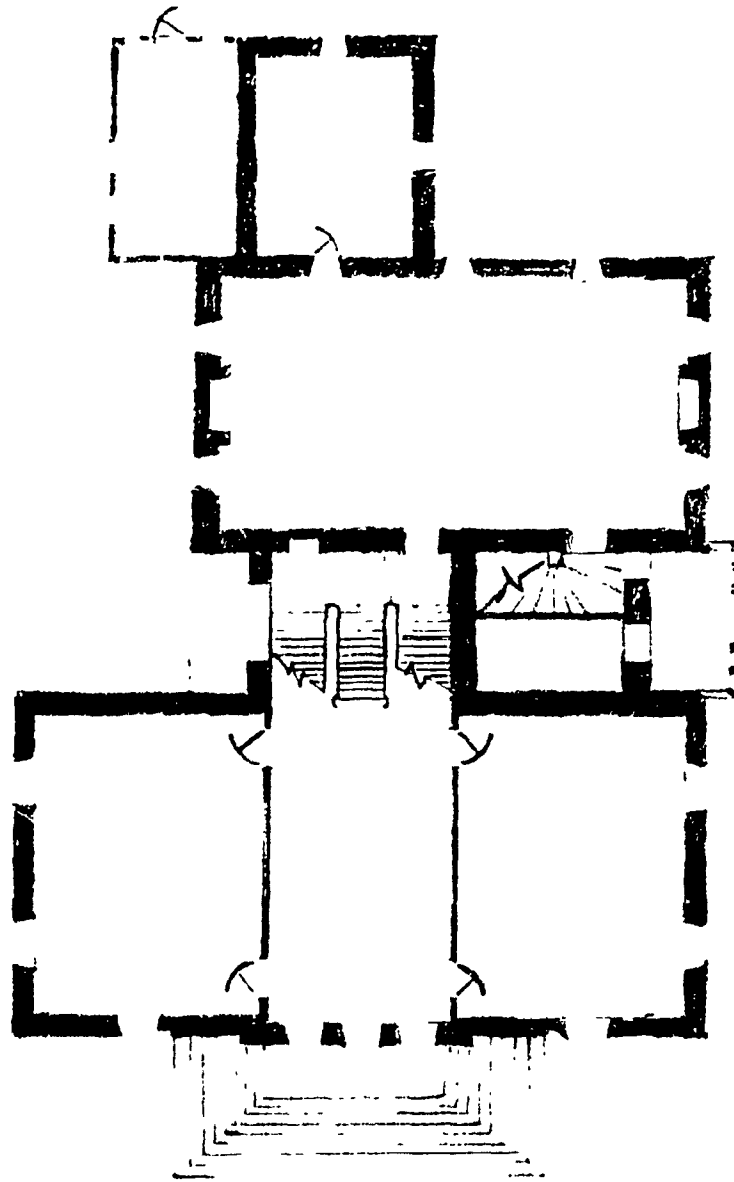


Figure 33. Ground Floor Plan & Elevation of Warrenstown House

Attribution:

Figure 34. Elevation of Johnson Hall

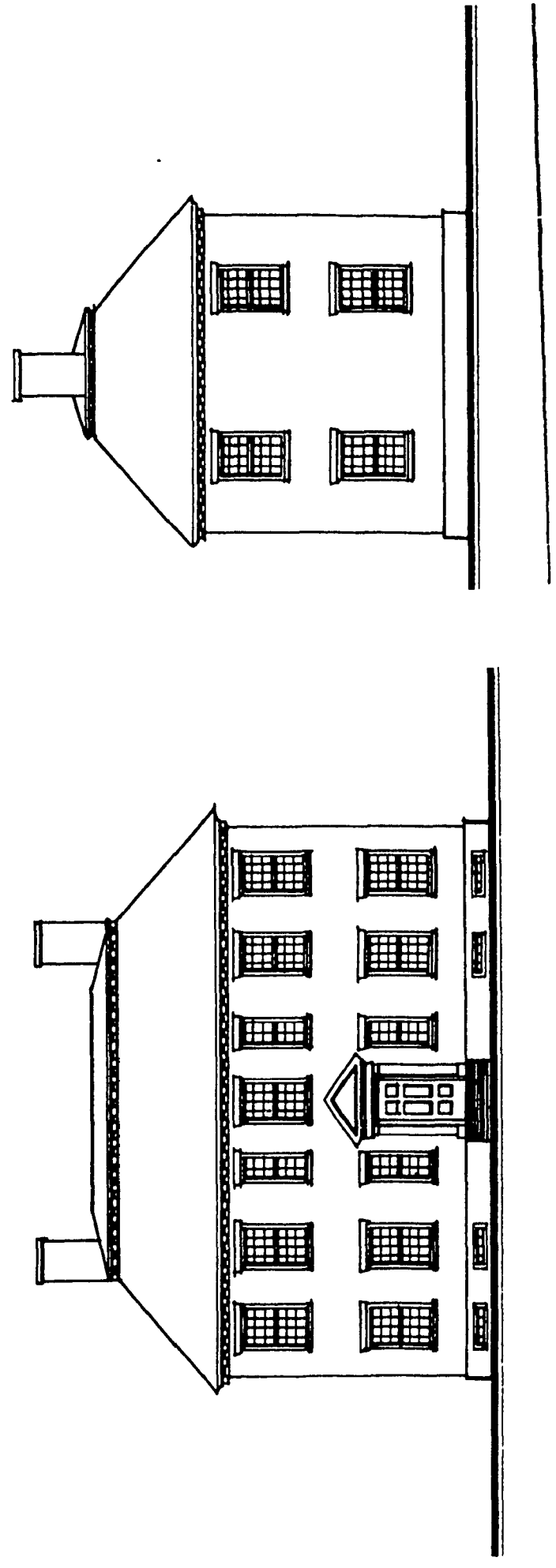




Figure 35. Hallway of Fort Johnson, Note pilaster & stair balusters



Figure 36. Stair St. Mathias, Note similarity of balusters of Fort Johnson stair.