

SUMMER JOURNEY TO OLD NEW BRUNSWICK

Here One of New Jersey's Historic Mansions Is Being Preserved --Rooms Cornwallis Occupied

By Sarah Comstock.

It may have taken men to make history—at least, the sort of history that is recorded in books—but it certainly does take women to preserve it. They were men, to be sure, who held a council of war in the great old mansion of Buccleuch, and they were men who stamped its attic floor with the ring-shaped mark of their muskets, and they were men who fought a duel in one of the chambers. But if a little group of fifty busy women in the town of New Brunswick, N. J., hadn't gone to work to ferret out all these facts and then to restore and preserve the noble old roof under which all these events took place, most of us wouldn't know they had ever occurred. Women have a sort of wily way of picking up the poor old history that men have worn out and discarded, like a suit of clothes, and taking a stitch here and there, hunting up a lost button and putting it in place, patching a bit where there is a gap—and, presto! you have it restored as good as new.

It's worth a pilgrimage this June day just to see Buccleuch itself, to say nothing of the other historic points in and around the town of New Brunswick. In fact, it would be enough if you went only to see the Jersey country. It is fairly a riot with its new Summer bloom and foliage. Our slow, cold Spring, which we bore so impatiently, has suddenly burst into a tardy but doubly wonderful green, catching and reflecting the gold of the Summer light in every cleanly washed leaf. Old-fashioned roses, the flat, lemon-colored ones such as we knew in our grandmothers' gardens, and the small crimson ones, fat and round, that grew beside them, are racing to put out their petals. The fragrant, drool little brown blossoms of the Carolina allspice, or sweet shrub, that we used to pick and put in our handkerchief drawers are pouring forth aromatic whiffs on the June air. New Jersey is at its height, and a day of it will give you another worth-while packet to stow away in your memory budget.

Somewhere back in the sixteen hundreds, when narrow trails wound where roads are now broad, and when, instead of the whirl of the automobile, they knew only the tread of moccasined feet, or occasionally the hoofs of some lonely white traveler's horse, two of these snaking trails through the New Jersey forests met at a spot near the Raritan River which, according to some historians, was known as "Prigmore's Swamp." Not very much more is known about it than that it belonged to one Prigmore and that the land was damp. Later on, a certain Daniel Cooper, seeing that travelers were growing more frequent, and being of a thrifty mind, set up a ferry and turned an honest penny now and then by carrying one across. John Inlans now settled here, and the spot came to be called Inlans's Ferry, and it is said that not until 1724 is there a record of the settlement being called New Brunswick.

It is New Brunswick history, however, that we are going to visit, for the earlier memories are practically blotted out. This town, you will remember, was for six months a stronghold of the British, and it is with that hostile occupation that most of its tradition deals. Its history during the Revolution was full of distress, for it lay in the path of both armies as they repeatedly crossed back and forth through the State. It passed from the hands of the Americans into the hands of the enemy, and during the Winter of 1776-7 it was occupied by the British under Cornwallis.

For six months the British owned the town, and the citizens were subjected to all the misery of such a situation. All their schools, churches, and businesses had to be closed; many had to surrender their homes; barns in the surrounding country were torn down to furnish timber for a temporary bridge across the river, and the farmers were compelled to hand over their stores to the greedy enemy. It was at this point that the history of the town, including that of the great mansion Buccleuch, began to stir to a lively tune.

Take the Pennsylvania Railroad, or, if you start early and be a thorough-going trolley tripper, you may travel there all the way by trolley via Bound Brook. Upon reaching New Brunswick take an Eastern Avenue car out to Buccleuch Park, and there you will walk only a short distance to the old mansion, which stands on a high point overlooking the Raritan. As yet it is hominally open to the public only on Sunday afternoons and holidays, but the caretaker is willing to admit the pilgrim at almost any time he may arrive.

It is a wonderful new-old treasure house—older than the Revolution, but new in being set apart for restoration and as a museum. Not a museum, however, in the dreadful sense of the word, a word calling up appalling rows of glass cases and careful labels. But a dwelling refurbished with precious heirlooms, a collection brought from near and far, and promising to rival, in time, those of the best-known similar houses. The mansion was built about 1745, was associated with many an event in history, and it is now being restored under the charge of the Jersey Blue Chapter of the D. A. R., with Mrs. M. B. Vail at its head. They have rummaged every grandmotherly attic they could find, every chest and old secretary, and have brought to light treasures which range all the way from a pair of sugar nippers used to break lump sugar to an autograph letter of Aaron Burr.

The house was built by Anthony White, father of Brig. Gen. Anthony White of Washington's staff, and was known as "The White House." From his hands it passed into those of William Burton, who, since he "offended against the form

of his allegiance," had his property confiscated when trouble arose between the United States and her mother country. It was advertised for sale, and described as "the Famous House and Land, Late the Property of William Burton." It was now in the hands of the Commissioners of Forfeited Estates, and so it came to shelter a vigorous rebel of distinguished family, namely, Captain George Janeway of New York.

So assertive a rebel had he been that he had caused a red letter "R" to be painted upon his front door in that city, and the upshot was that it was made so unpleasant for him by British and Tories there that he came to New Brunswick, rented this mansion from the Commissioners, and took up his residence in it.

So a Tory had abandoned it, a rebel took possession of it, and it was soon to see its tables turned again. When the British descended upon New Brunswick and seized houses right and left in order to make themselves pleasantly at home in a foreign country, the Inniskillings, a crack cavalry regiment, caught a glimpse of the splendid Colonial mansion upon the hill, and found it an attractive headquarters. They therefore advanced, and out went the patriot Janeway, his family following after. The scars on the floor of the upper story hall are supposed to have been made by their swords and bayonets, and the stumps with the stamp of their regiment have been dug up on the grounds.

The first thing that catches your eye as you enter the broad Colonial hall is the gorgeously colored wallpaper of olden times. It is one of those pictorial papers which resemble the stage setting of a melodrama, a long vista of French buildings, and boats plying on a very blue river, and elegant persons of leisure strolling up and down. Thanks to the proprietors of former years, this paper has been preserved, and its colors have now been restored for permanent delight. You may recognize the Porte St. Denis, Notre Dame, the Arc du Carrousel, the Tuilleries, and many another familiar outline.

The east parlor, now furnished with old mahogany, has its romantic lore. Here, says tradition, a marriage took place between a patriotic lieutenant (an dame) and a British officer, it being ever the way of love to quarrel with loyalty. The west parlor was the scene of a council of war, Lord Cornwallis and Earl Grey being present. Both war and romance look very far from the quiet shattering of the room today, stately in their array of fine old furniture and portraits. A cabinet in one corner displays a delightful collection of coquettish poke bonnets, an exquisitely carved tortoise-shell comb and other hair ornaments, a fragrant sandalwood fan, and a pair of tiny satin slippers that may have stepped many a measure to midnight.

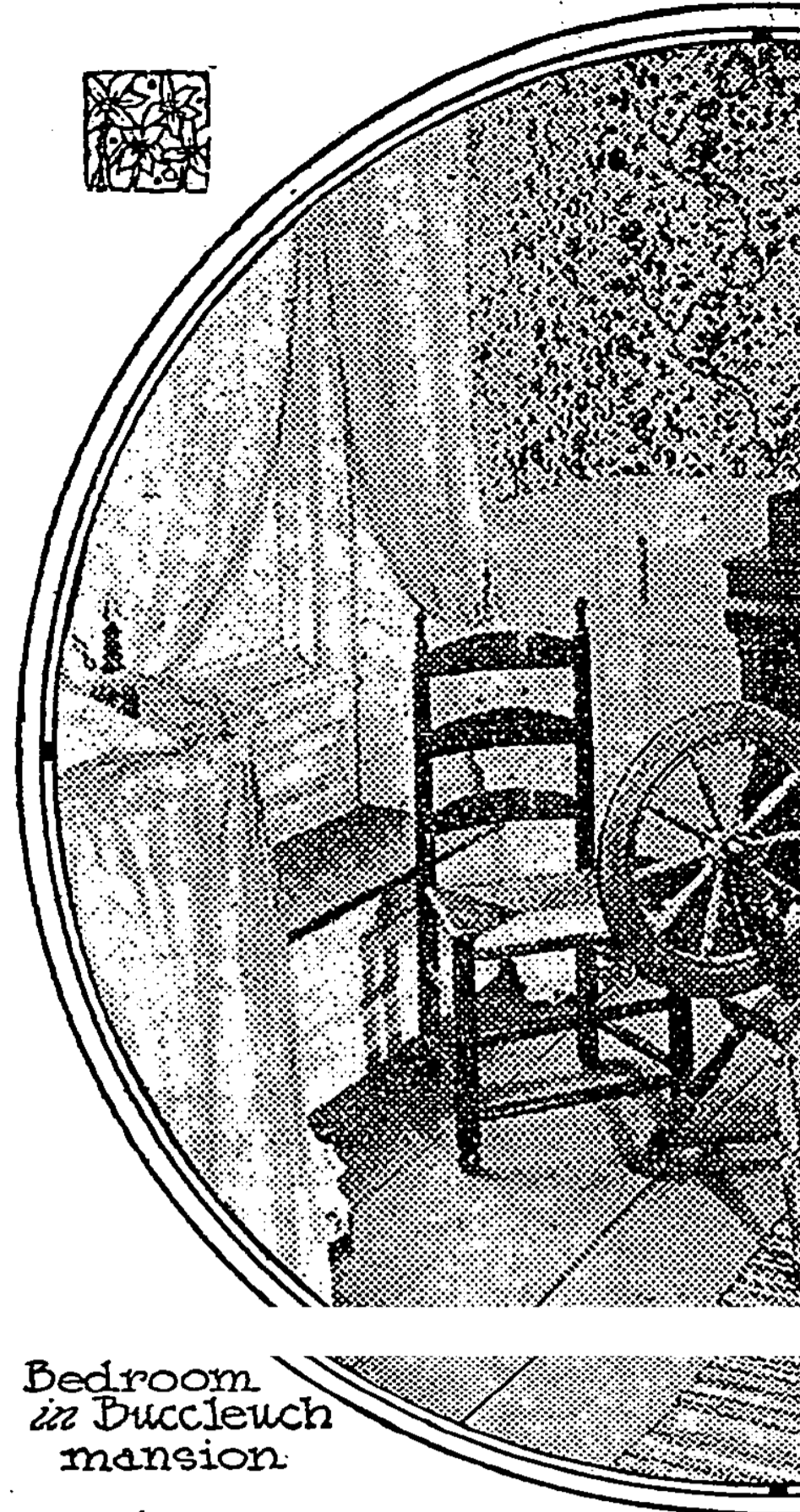
The dining room, at the rear, is said to be the room where the British officers, at dinner, received news that General Washington was marching upon Princeton and that New Brunswick was threatened. If any exiles ever broke loose at that moment their echoes have long since died from the quiet walls. Upstairs one may see the room—above the dining room—where it is supposed a duel was fought, the outcome being the killing of an English soldier by the tale of Colonel Joseph Warren Scott, who bought this mansion in 1821 and gave it the name it is now known by, his ancestors belonging to the family of the Scotch Dukes of Buccleuch. It was his grandson, Anthony Dey, by the way, who inherited the place and deeded it to the City of New Brunswick in 1911, so that the public owes Mr. Dey an enormous debt. Colonel Scott served in the War of 1812, and since he was born and brought up in the days when gentlemen wore wigs, he saw no reason for departing from the custom of that day.

So the old New Brunswickites of today remember well when he used to stroll forth upon the street, a picture of dignity and stately leisure, with his snow-white queue either hanging, or tucked up at the back of his head with a tiny tortoise-shell comb. Colonel Tunis Craven, a contemporary and friend, kept to the same custom, and his granddaughters now living remember when it was their duty to climb on a chair behind him to comb and dress the queue.

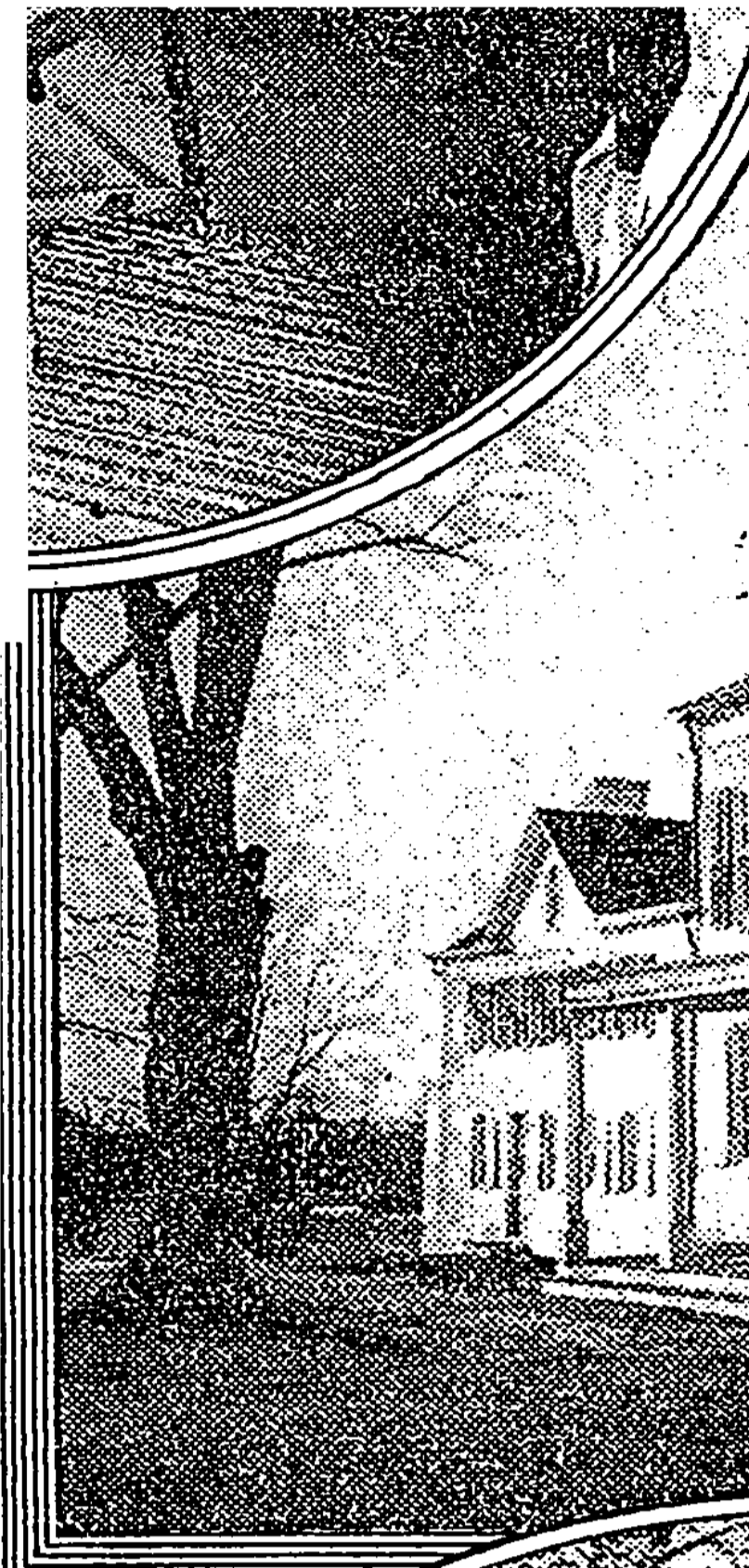
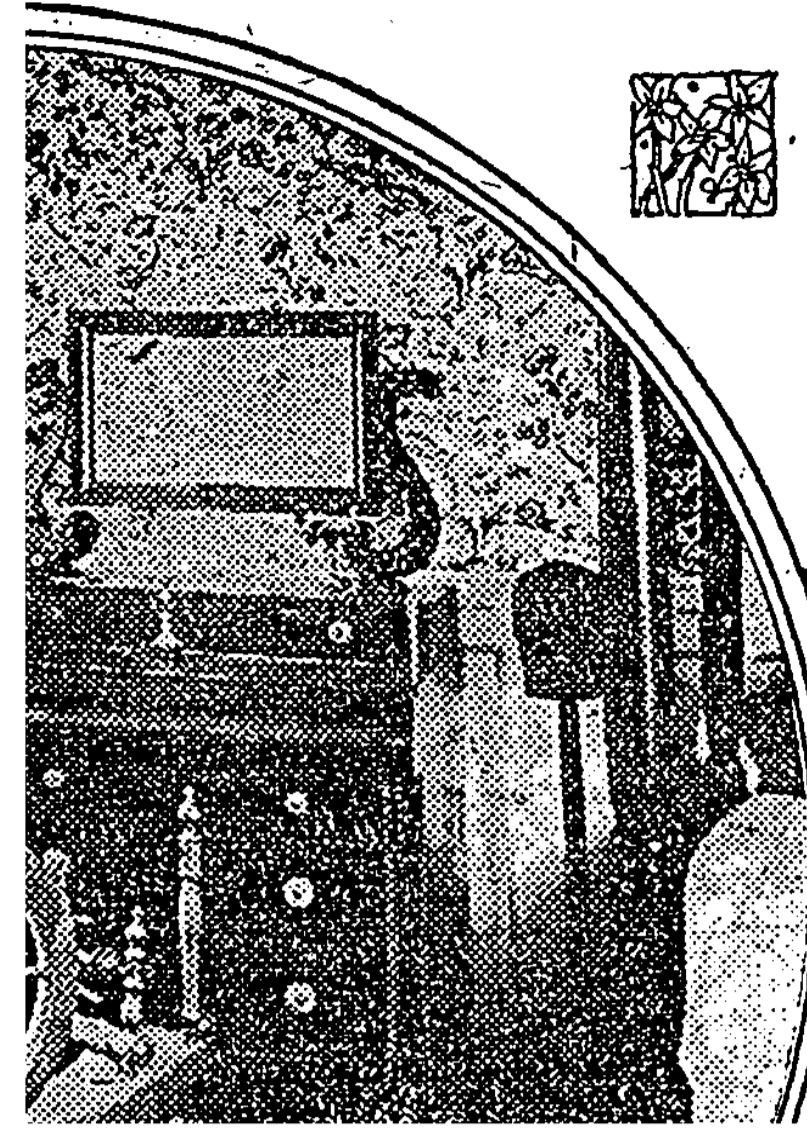
Near Buccleuch stands a rickety barn of Revolutionary period, showing the curious roof line of the barn of that day. It is soon to be removed, but at present it is intact, even to the bullet holes made in its side and roof by British guns. Across the river from Buccleuch stands Ross Hall, built by Edward Antill in 1739. William H. Benedict, who has made himself an authority on local history, relates how the two were built as homes for two sisters, Mrs. White and Mrs. Antill, daughters of Governor Lewis Morris, and the sisters used to descend from their homes to the river and row themselves across when either wanted to make a neighborly visit on the other. Ross Hall was used for a while as the country club. The old "Fox Hunt" wallpaper still survives in its hall.

On the way back to the heart of town you may stop for a call upon Rutgers College, which dates back to Revolutionary times. Fraternity boys now saunter in modern tweeds and checks under its venerable trees, and elevate their dapper tan feet to the porch rails, and collect sofa cushions embroidered by girls, and theatrical photographs—all under the dignified nose of history. Probably they don't stop very often to reflect that they are there today, cramming for Greek "exams" or rooting for their favorite heroes, all because this institution was chartered by George III. in 1770. It was then named Queen's College in honor of his consort, and was to be launched with éclat, but the want of funds delayed the opening till 1781. It was under tutors until 1786, after which a President was chosen. The site was presented to the college by the Hon. James Parker of Perth Amboy, and the first building, of dark red freestone, was completed in 1811.

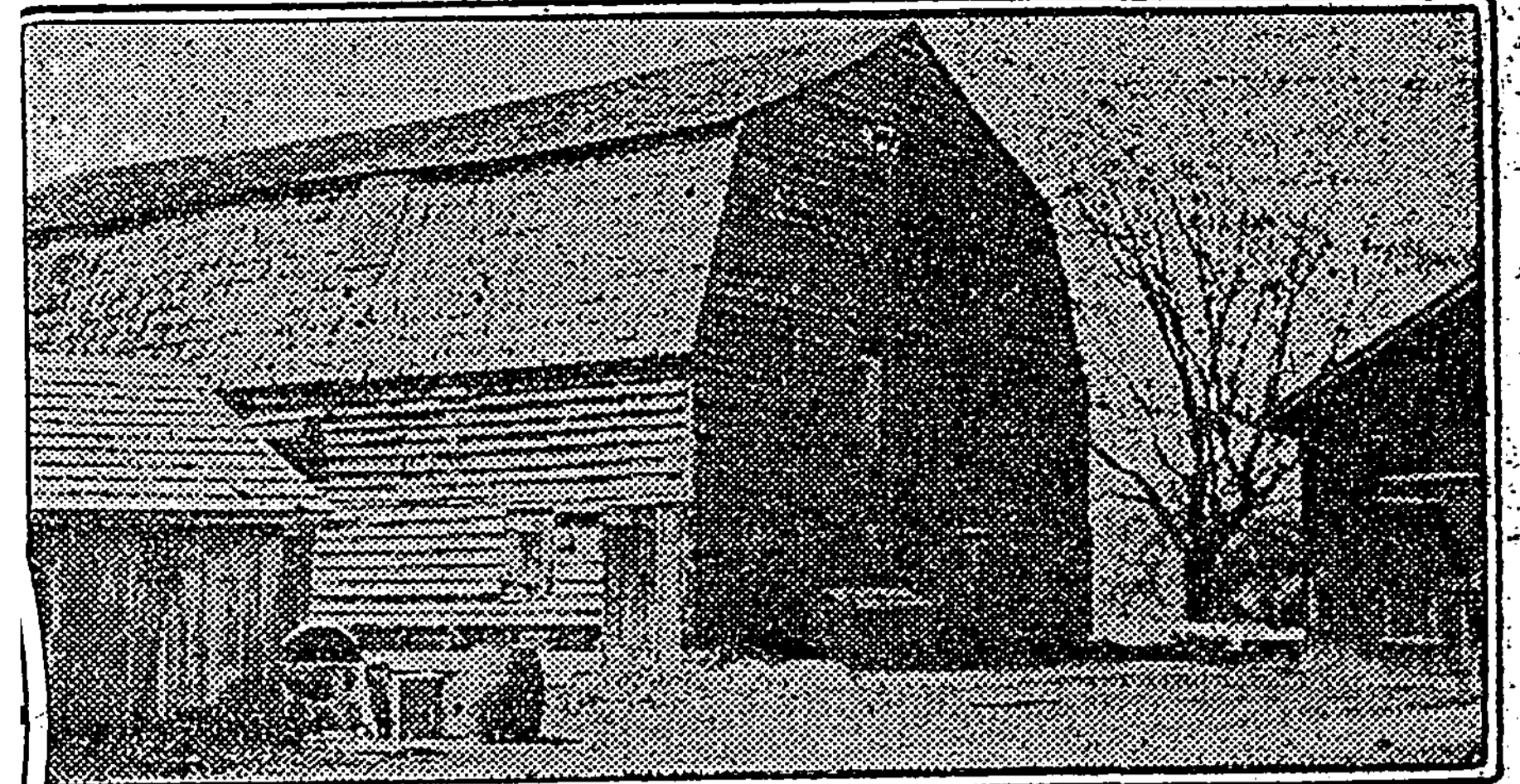
Through the heart of town runs Albany Street, supposed by some to have been the original post road, although there is much debate on this point. It is no doubt true that a main post road did run through the town, but its line is hard to define. Albany Street received its name from a group of Dutch families who came here from the town of Albany about 1730, brought their building materials along with them, and set up two rows of houses along the street. Kalm, the Swedish traveler, wrote about the



Bedroom in Buccleuch mansion.



Rear entrance to Buccleuch mansion.



Barn of Revolutionary period, bullet holes to be seen in wall near Buccleuch mansion.

middle of the eighteenth century:

"About noon we arrived at New Brunswick, a pretty little town. . . . Some of the houses are built of bricks and wood . . . have only the wall toward the street of bricks, all the other sides being merely of planks. This peculiar kind of ostentation would easily lead a traveler, who passes through the town in haste, to believe that most of the houses are built of bricks . . . small balconies, on which the people sat in the evening, in order to enjoy the fresh air, and to have the pleasure of viewing those who passed by."

Thus we see that two of our present foibles, namely ostentation and curiosity, were not unknown in the seventeenth century.

On this main street, just beyond George Street, you will come upon the Mansion House, once a fine old residence, built by the Bayard family. It has long since passed into other hands and is now a popular resort, altogether modern in its tone, but the old walls are well preserved. Next door to it is another old-time dwelling, which, too, has passed from the line of descent.

The various houses long noted as being the headquarters of British officers have for the most part vanished. They were down near the river in what was the original centre of town, and is now the turbulent and sordid section of warehouses and commerce. On Burnet Street was the Neilson house which Howe occupied, and on Queen Street the Van Nuy's house, headquarters of the Hessian commander—both gone. The old Vanderbilt Hotel is likewise a memory, but its sister hostelry, "the Widow Keyworth's," still stands at the foot of Sonman's Hill, on Burnet Street. For years Mrs. Vanderbilt and Mrs. Keyworth, two estimable ladies, took in lodgers when New Brunswick was young. In 1822 Cornelius Vanderbilt petitioned to keep a public house, and the Common Council granted the request.

The so-called "Washington Headquarters," whether true or false, has likewise become a memory. It was a quaint old building in the heart of the city, and its site is now marked by a tablet. A clever miniature of the house with its twelve-paned windows and its high doorstep is to be seen in Buccleuch, but the historians of New Brunswick differ in opinion as to whether Washington ever had a headquarters in this city, although it is well known that he visited it more than once. The building which was popularly alleged as his stopping-place was used as a restaurant for many years and gained much patronage for its tradition. It is said that the baked beans of one Pop Haggerty made themselves famous on the strength of their historic roof.

One British post was erected at Raritan Landing, another on Bennet's Island, two miles below the city; there were fortifications built on the hill beyond the theological seminary, which you have passed today; and the sol-



House where Kosciusko visited.

diers' encampment was made on William Van Deusen's property, below New Street.

But the fun was not all the enemy's. Several American officers with high-spirited patriots under them caused the British considerable disturbance. At one time, during the latter part of the Winter, the enemy became cut off from supplies, the base being at Amboy. They looked for relief from a fleet loaded with provisions which it was planned to send up the Raritan River. But the Americans planted a battery of six cannon on the shore, and just as the fleet was rounding the point in the morning the cannon opened fire—to the end that five boats were disabled and sunk, the remainder sent back, a sadder and a wiser fleet, to Amboy.

Captain Hyler, that famous, gallant old whaleboatman, commanded several large whaleboats and a gunboat, the

Defiance. He made a business of troubling the enemy's trading vessels and plundering parties, going forth to any spot where he knew them to be—off Sandy Hook, near Staten Island, down the Raritan, and so on. One of his excursions resulted in the capture of five vessels in a quarter hour's work.

Turning into Livingston Avenue you will pass a tall, old-fashioned building close to the street marked "Shore House." This was once the Janeway home, and so distinguished were its occupants that it was a sort of social headquarters for Revolutionary officers. Kosciusko was at one time a visitor there, and the second-story front room in which he stayed is still honored.

Still further along this street, at the corner of Carroll Place, you will come upon the home of M. B. Vail, its plate, "1760," shining in the front

wall. The date of this house has been verified by figures found carved in the original keystone. Not only is it a fine type of early New Jersey architecture—I am told that Mr. Lars de Lagerberg, who has made a study of this matter, calls its doorway one of the best now existing—but it is haunted by delightful tradition as well. It lays claim to being the oldest house in New Brunswick, (that is, within the town itself, Buccleuch and Ross Hall being in the outskirts,) was built by Henry Guest and occupied later by Captain Moses Guest, who captured Colonel Simcoe two miles from town. Simcoe was headed for Amboy when Guest, with about twenty-five soldiers, halted him and he was taken captive.

There is also a story that Tom Paine was hidden here for several days and that there was an attempt to tear down the house in order to get him, but Henry Guest's musket held off the intruders while Paine made off by way of a back window and, by means of a fast horse, to Trenton.