



5.16 Anonymous, *The Little Admiral*, c. 1750. Wood, height 3ft 6in (1.07m). Courtesy Bostonian Society, Old State House, Boston.

that the carver was neither heir to the classical tradition, nor trained in the execution of the graceful forms of sculptors such as Jean-Baptiste Pigalle (1714–85) or Etienne Falconet (1716–91). Belonging to a folkcraft tradition, the *Little Admiral* marks the beginning of figurative woodcarving, which reached its fruition in the workshop of John and Simeon Skillin (Figs. 12.2 and 12.3) in the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

ARCHITECTURAL DECORATION

Carvers were increasingly called upon to make decorations for architecture. More and more colonial homes were based on eighteenth-century classical designs, which called for pilaster capitals, ornamented fireplaces, and the like. New fashions in furniture also required their skills—for example, the ornate, Baroque carvings for a William and Mary armchair, or the delicate shell-and-foot designs carved upon the legs of a Queen Anne settee (Figs. 4.15 and 4.19). The carver was, of course, following English styles, which were transmitted to the colonies through design books, imported furniture, and the immigration of carvers. Nevertheless, sculpture lagged well behind painting, and did not really become a fully developed, independent artform until after the Revolutionary War.

CHAPTER SIX

ARCHITECTURE AND DECORATIVE ARTS:

1750–76

This was the golden age: Colonial America reached economic maturity, political independence, and its own intellectual and cultural identity. As the period opened, there was an ebullient feeling of prosperity among the towns and plantations of the seaboard colonies. The wealth created in the cities by merchants, shipowners, and land speculators was evident in the fashionable Georgian-style mansions they built, their handsome silver tea services, and the portraits they commissioned. Their ships, laden with the raw materials of the colonies, sailed to the West Indies and England, returning to port bearing exotic and useful goods from around the world. The southern planters bartered their tobacco, rice, indigo, wheat, and other grains for the goods they needed for their beautiful plantation houses. The merchants, farmers, planters, and craftsmen wanted nothing more than to concentrate on the very things that were providing their prosperity.

For all this prosperity, however, the period was a troubled one, beginning and ending with wars. As Englishmen crossed the Allegheny Mountains into Ohio, they inevitably confronted the French, who had formed an alliance with the Native Americans. The result was the Seven Years' War of 1757–63, which centered around Upstate New York and the Ohio-Pennsylvania frontier. The war ended with France ceding Canada and all of the land east of the Mississippi River to Britain. Westward expansion was now possible: In 1769 Daniel Boone began exploring Kentucky, and six years later he began cutting the Wilderness Road, which became the conduit for the settlement of Kentucky.

Many merchants and farmers prospered from wartime demand for their goods. But to pay for the war—defense of the frontiers and the presence of a standing British army—the king's ministers and Parliament, who admitted no colonial members, began to impose taxes on the colonies. The colonists decried this as taxation without representation.

The Seven Years' War had brought the colonies together and had planted the idea of the strength of unity. Also, victory over France, a great world power, had given them a new self-confidence. Together, these emboldened the colonists in their resistance to the crown and Parliament. In turn, their newfound confidence in political, military, and

economic arenas gave them a cultural identity, which was increasingly asserted through the arts.

English aristocrats and proprietors thought of the colonies as their personal property, to be exploited for their own gain. Americans, however, thought of their own interests. While they saw themselves as English, they also knew they were different from the homeland English. The concept of "the American" began to take form—they had gained experience in governing themselves, and they had learned to like it.

British interference and taxes brought a flood of pamphlets heatedly attacking the infringements of freedom, with Virginia and Massachusetts leading the way in civil disobedience. On 5 March 1770, English troops fired on a group of Bostonians, killing three and wounding others. Word spread among the colonies, and Committees of Correspondence were organized in an early step toward unity. On 13 December 1773, citizens disguised as "Indians" dumped a consignment of tea into Boston harbor to enforce an agreement of nonimportation of goods taxed by Parliament. When British soldiers marched on Lexington and Concord on 19 April 1775 to seize stores of ammunition, the "shots heard around the world" were fired. The end of the colonial phase in America had begun. In cultural matters such as architecture, however, colonial Americans were quite content to accept England as their guide and mentor.

GENTLEMAN-AMATEUR ARCHITECTS AND ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN BOOKS

Throughout the period 1750 to 1776, most Americans continued to see themselves as English. In England earlier in the century, Lord Burlington and his circle had led a revolution against the Wren-Baroque style, turning to the architectural designs of Inigo Jones (1573–1652) and Andrea Palladio (1508–80). This new spirit, which emerged

during the reign of King George I (reigned 1714–27), filtered through to the American colonies around 1740, leading to a golden age of Georgian splendor in the 1760s.

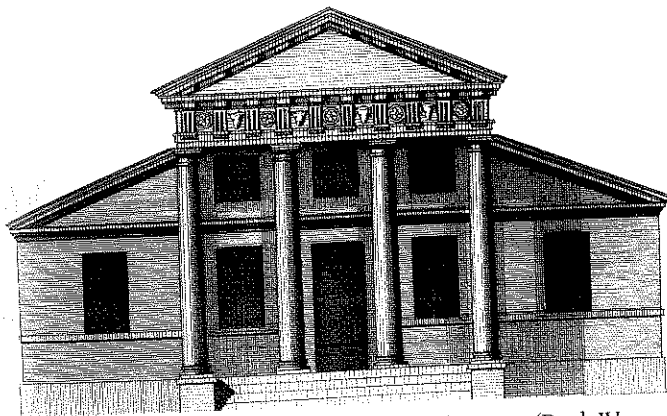
While retaining many of the traditions established before 1750, wealthy patrons sought even greater elegance in their homes, and exhibited a taste for elaborate, fashionable designs in their furniture. The craftsmen who created the houses and furnishings were often American-born, but the styles and motifs they used came straight from England, usually from a design book with engraved plates. Once the designs had crossed the Atlantic, they were modified to suit American tastes.

The rise of the gentleman-amateur architect and the increased availability and use of design books are two of the most important features in colonial American architecture of this era.

James Gibbs's *Book of Architecture* (1728), while retaining some English Baroque features, introduced the fashionable new Palladianism, providing details of classical capitals, pediments, the Orders, and so on. Colonial carpenters and their patrons could select, for example, a façade from Palladio, a pedimented doorway or window by William Kent (1684–1748), or the decorative details of a fireplace by Colin Campbell (d. 1729). The result was a montage of architectural "parts," tastefully, and often inventively, assembled. Thus the new American style was generally classical, with strong influences from Palladianism.

PETER HARRISON

Increasingly, taste in and knowledge of architectural design became a respected attribute in the eighteenth-century gentleman. This led to the rise of the gentleman-amateur architect, who was capable of designing public buildings—usually not for pay, but rather out of a sense of civic duty—or a house for a friend. Peter Harrison (1716–75) is an excellent example. Born in England, Harrison became a sea



6.2 Edward Hoppus *Andrea Palladio's Architecture* (Book IV, 1735), engraved plate, p. 185. Courtesy Winterthur Library: Printed Book and Periodical Collection, Winterthur, Delaware.

captain and merchant, settling near Newport, Rhode Island, in about 1740. At the time of his death, his library contained twenty-seven architectural pattern books, which he put to use in designing several of the finest public buildings erected in New England between 1748 and 1770. His design for Newport's Redwood Library (Fig. 6.1), for example, is derived from a plate in Edward Hoppus's *Andrea Palladio's Architecture* (Fig. 6.2). It is one of the earliest Palladian temple porticos in America.

Harrison used the Doric Order, which he set upon a podium, in front of side wings that appear to form a low, second pediment behind it. Although the material is wood, in order to imitate the fine stone buildings being erected in England, the pine boards of the exterior walls were cut to look like rusticated masonry. The whole structure was painted light brown, the paint having sand mixed into it to further simulate stone. We can see a classical reserve and correctness of proportion, which Harrison derived from careful scrutiny of design books.



6.1 Peter Harrison, Redwood Library, Newport, Rhode Island, 1748–50.

6.3 Peter Harrison, King's Chapel, Boston, Massachusetts, 1749–54. Interior. Courtesy Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, Boston.



6.4 Peter Harrison, Touro Synagogue, Newport, Rhode Island, 1759–63. Interior.



King's Chapel and Christ Church Harrison's reputation spread through his designs for two Anglican churches—King's Chapel (1749) in Boston and Christ Church (1760) in Cambridge. At King's Chapel, the largescale Ionic portico surrounding the tower followed Harrison's original scheme. In this way his design made the earliest use of the classical Order in the colonies. The spire was never built, but for its design Harrison turned to Gibbs's *Book of Architecture*, specifically to the spire of St. Martin-in-the-Fields. For the interior of King's Chapel, he again imitated St. Martin's, following another plate in Gibbs's book (Fig. 6.3).

Touro Synagogue Harrison's masterpiece of interior design is found in the Touro Synagogue (Fig. 6.4). In 1636, Roger Williams had founded the colony of Rhode Island on the principle of spiritual freedom. Twenty-two years later, escaping persecution in Europe, a group of Jews arrived in Newport. A century passed before they erected their own house of worship.

The first Jewish temple in America, Touro Synagogue has a plain exterior which masks the elegance within. Reportedly, the Jewish community did not want to flaunt their wealth or incur envy, so the exterior was left undecorated.

Since there was no prescribed form for a synagogue, Harrison needed only to provide for certain Jewish ceremonies and practices. Otherwise, he was free to organize the components of Georgian architecture as he wished. In the

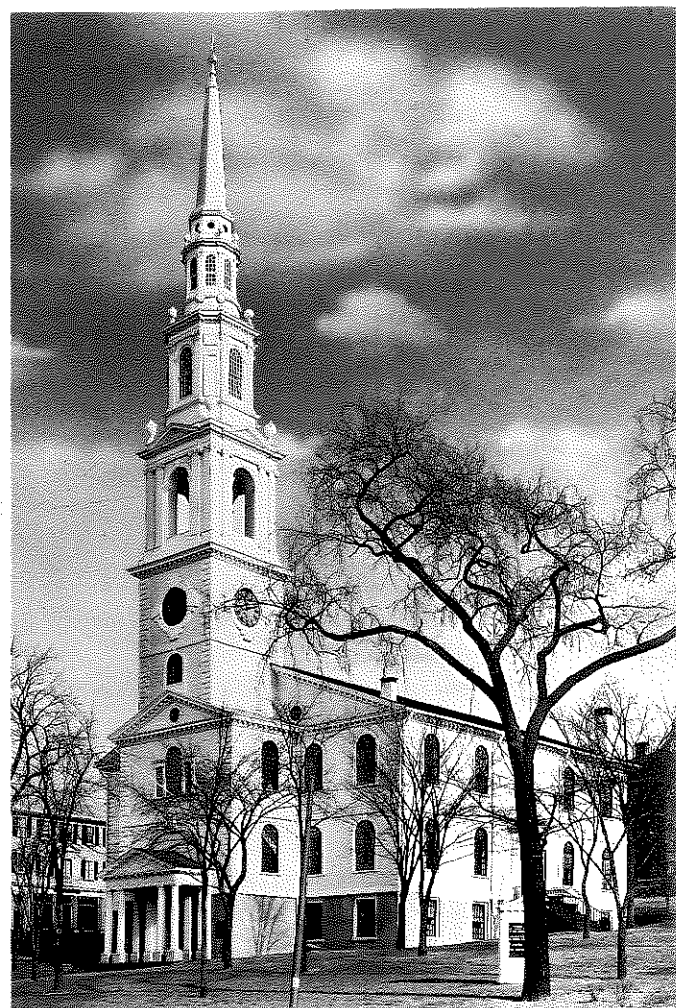
center, surrounded by a balustrade, is a raised platform from which the cantor sang and the Law was read. At the eastern wall is a two-story tabernacle within which the Torah was kept. The twelve columns, with their beautifully carved capitals—Ionic below, Corinthian above—are symbolic of the twelve tribes of ancient Israel. While nearly every detail can be traced to the engraved plates of Harrison's several architectural pattern books, the sensitivity with which they were assembled is testimony to the refined skill of this gentleman-amateur.

Brick Market For Newport's Brick Market, Harrison found his model in Campbell's *Vitruvius Britannicus* (c. 1717), which illustrates the riverfront façade of London's Somerset House (Fig. 6.5). The lower floor consists of an arcade, which was originally open in the tradition of a public market. In the second and third stories, large windows with alternating triangular and segmental pediments have smaller square windows above them, in good Palladian manner. Pilasters flank each row of windows and are doubled at the corners.

In Harrison's use of the Ionic Order, instead of the Corinthian as at Somerset House, we find the colonial American penchant for simplifying architectural form, even when copying a specific building.

JOSEPH BROWN

Joseph Brown (1733–85), a merchant and, like Sir Christopher Wren, a mathematician and astronomer, designed the First Baptist Meetinghouse in Providence, Rhode Island (Fig. 6.6). Another gentleman-amateur architect, Brown also owned Gibbs's *Book of Architecture*, as well as Abraham Swan's *A Collection of Designs in Architecture* (London, 1757). The main body of the meetinghouse is a dignified but rather plain clapboard block, with round-headed windows in



6.6 Joseph Brown, First Baptist Meetinghouse, Providence, Rhode Island, 1774–5.

the two upper levels. The chief glories of the building are the tower base and spire, which Brown designed from several plates in Gibbs. The little Doric portico was taken from the façade of St. Mary-le-Bone, London, and the spire is a replica of a rejected design for St. Martin-in-the-Fields. Brown was less successful in matters of scale and unity, for the portico and the Palladian window above seem much too small for the size of the building.

DESIGN BOOK GEORGIAN

Domestic architecture also consisted of parts from architectural source books. The Vassall-Longfellow House shows how the basic form of the American house has not changed much from that of the early eighteenth century—a horizontal, rectangular block with a hipped roof, constructed of wood with clapboard siding (Fig. 6.7). What is now a central pavilion, which projects slightly from the plane of the façade, is framed by two colossal Ionic pilasters and a pediment that reaches into the roofline. The great pilasters



6.7 Vassall-Longfellow House, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1759. Wayne Andrews/Esto.

are repeated at the corners, and a balustrade caps the roof. Architectural details gleaned from the design books have thus been applied to the surface of an old and familiar house form, ensuring that the edifice conforms to the new Georgian taste as defined by Gibbs, Kent, Swan, and other architect-authors.

ARCHITECTURE IN NEW YORK AND PHILADELPHIA

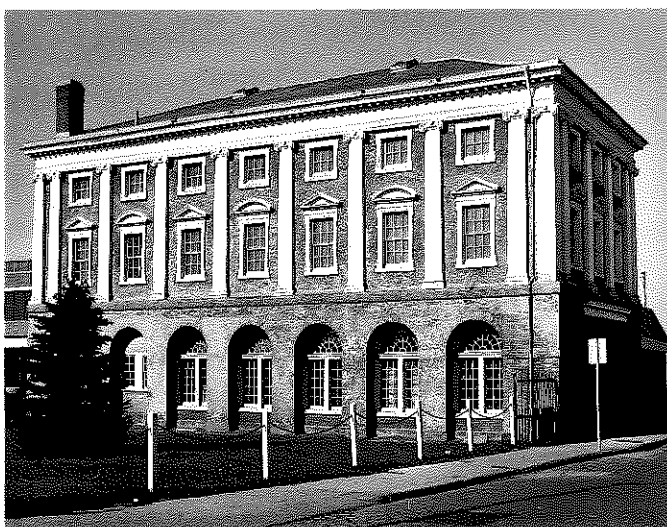
The survival of longstanding cultural and architectural traditions in the colony of New York can be seen in Van Cortlandt Manor, which shows the continuation of an older, Dutch farmhouse type long after the Georgian style had arrived in America (Fig. 6.8). Originally built as a modest, one-story stone house around 1700, the manor was remodeled in 1749, but it retained features found in the Hendrickson-Winant House (Fig. 2.18)—specifically, the prominent, steeply pitched roof, the sweeping extension of that roof at a flatter pitch, and the fullwidth verandah which the roof extension covers.

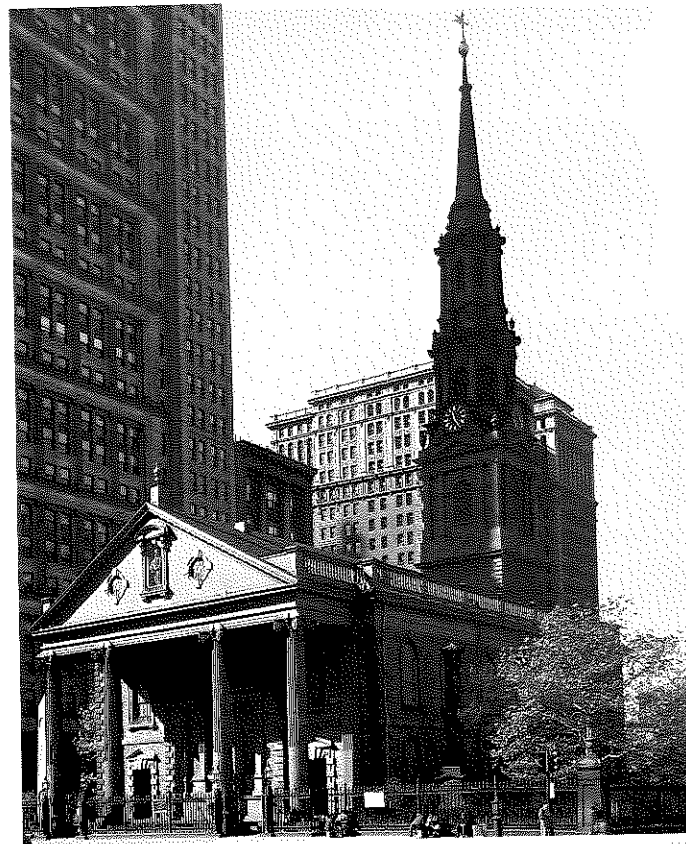


6.8 Van Cortlandt Manor, Croton-on-Hudson, New York, 1749. Courtesy Historic Hudson Valley, Tarrytown, New York.

Van Cortlandt Manor is a lovely house, but it is not design-book Georgian. It reminds us that such anachronisms do happen, usually as a result of enduring cultural forces—in this case, the continuing strength of Dutch traditions in the Hudson Valley.

6.5 Peter Harrison, Brick Market, Newport, Rhode Island, 1761–72.





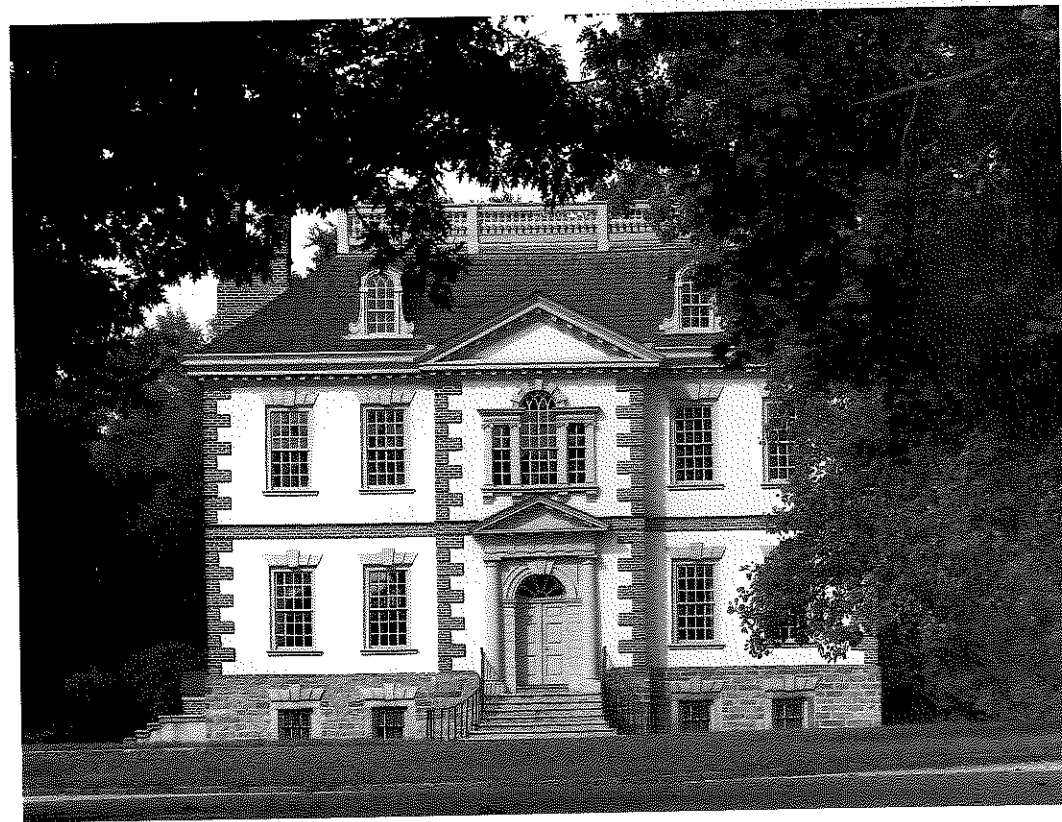
6.9 Thomas McBean, St. Paul's Chapel, New York City, 1764–6, spire c. 1795. Wayne Andrews/Esto.

Handsome edifices in the Georgian style arose in the Morris-Jumel Mansion (1765) and St. Paul's Chapel in New York (Fig. 6.9). St. Paul's was designed by Thomas McBean, reportedly a student of James Gibbs. Both in its exterior and interior, the building follows closely the great church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields. The truly monumental Ionic portico and beautifully articulated spire were not added until about 1795, but in accordance with McBean's design. St. Paul's is constructed of ashlar brownstone, which has a slight mauvish tint.

PHILADELPHIA COUNTRY HOUSES

In the middle colonies, the foremost center of Georgian splendor was Philadelphia, which by the 1760s had become the largest and richest city in North America. Although often referred to as the "Quaker City," it is obvious that Quaker restraint and simplicity did not dominate the spirit of the town. Nor was the Society of Friends the only religious sect there. There were also Anglican, Presbyterian, and Methodist congregations, among others. Quakers, too, participated in the fervor for elegance, which was supported by mercantile prosperity.

Mount Pleasant was built as the country house of a Scottish sea captain. It shows the extent to which the decorative features of the Gibbsian-Georgian style could be carried (Fig. 6.10). The block form has a central pedimented pavilion and a hipped roof that carries a balustrade. Above the entrance, which is adorned with an applied Doric portico



6.10 Mount Pleasant, Fairmount Park, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1761–2.

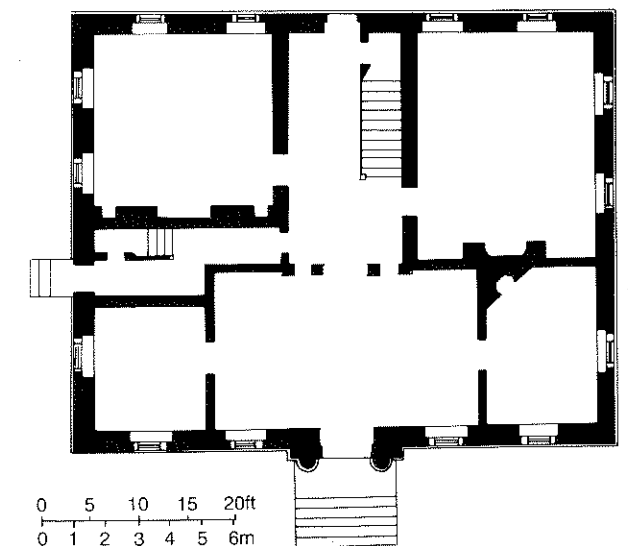


6.11 Cliveden, Germantown, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1763–4.

that encloses an arch, is a Palladian window. There is little space left for the façade walls—constructed of rubble masonry and given a stucco surface—for the large windows, stringcourse, and corner quoining occupy much of the plane. Mount Pleasant may have been designed by Robert Smith (1722–77), a carpenter-architect who erected the steeple on Christ Church (Fig. 4.24).

Cliveden, built for Benjamin Chew according to his own designs, is of a similar form, but greater restraint was imposed in the decoration (Fig. 6.11). The central axis of its symmetrical stone façade is again marked by a pedimented pavilion, although the latter does not have a Palladian window, and the Doric doorway is not as elaborate; nor is there the bold quoining of Mount Pleasant. Cliveden, however, has its own special niceties, such as the scrolls applied to the sides of the dormers, and the urns—which were imported from England—that decorate the roof. Cliveden is double-pile, with a large, gracious entrance hall, beyond which is a stairhall (Fig. 6.12).

6.12 Cliveden, Germantown. Plan.



PHILADELPHIA TOWNHOUSES

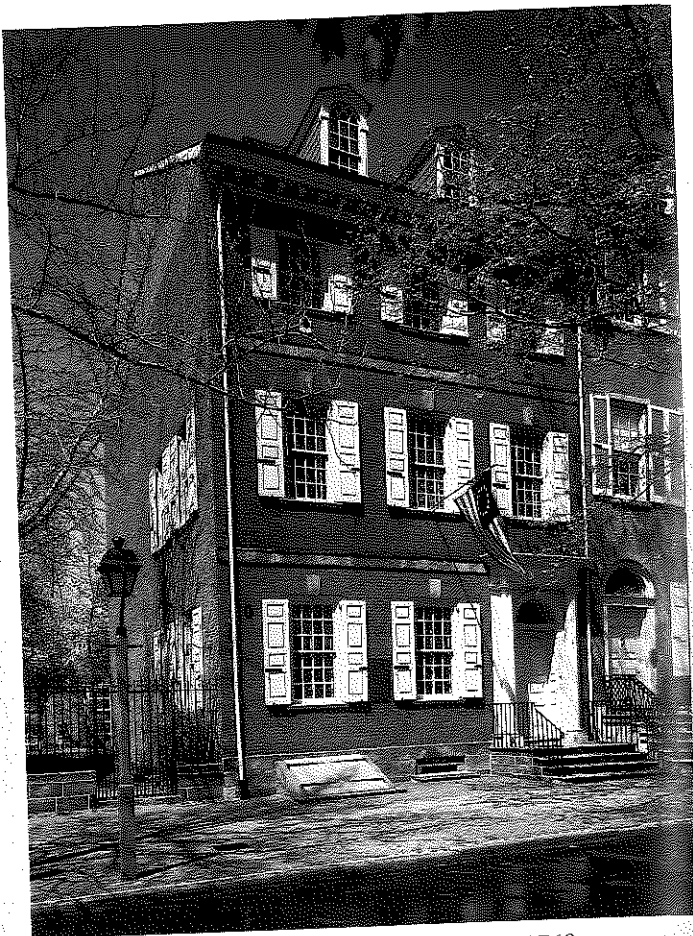
If Mount Pleasant and Cliveden represent the countryhouse type, the Powel House remains as a splendid example of the Philadelphia townhouse (Fig. 6.13). A typical townhouse was built of brick, was three or four stories high, had a narrow façade of three bays, or, less frequently, four, set immediately on the street, and ran on a long axis toward the rear of the lot. The red brick was smartly set off by the light-colored stone used for stringcourses and the keystones over the windows, while the wood of the shutters, doorway, and cornice was painted white. The sides of such houses often abutted neighboring houses, so only the façade was seen, except for houses on corner lots. The entrance of the Powel House is placed at one side, and leads to a hallway giving access to the rooms at the left. Some of the interior decorative architectural carving was done by Hercules Courtenay, an Irish-born, London-trained carver and gilder who arrived in Philadelphia in 1762. Courtenay was also employed by John Cadwalader and John Dickinson for similar work in their fine houses.

During a Grand Tour of Europe, Samuel Powel had seen the antiquities of Rome, met Voltaire, and been presented to King George III. While traveling he had observed architecture, and developed what the English at the time called "taste." Back in Philadelphia, as the last colonial mayor of that city, Powel and his wife entertained lavishly. The interior of the splendidly furnished house had to reflect the couple's taste and social position (Fig. 6.14). The very best craftsmen were employed for the paneling, cornices, fine moldings, and the decorative Georgian fireplace with its rich carvings. The Chinese wallpaper (as seen in the Metropolitan Museum of Art), while not actually used in the Powel House, is typical of the fascination with chinoiserie in the 1760s. The ornamental plasterwork on the ceiling was also not originally part of this particular room, but its pattern was taken from an adjoining room in the Powel House. The furniture is in the fashionable new Chippendale style, and a portrait by John Wollaston hangs above the fireplace.

CHIPPENDALE AND ENGLISH ROCOCO

Chippendale was an outgrowth of the Queen Anne style, with the basic forms and proportions made slightly more elaborate. Although the Queen Anne style continued to be used, Chippendale dominated interior furnishings in the 1760s and 1770s.

Thomas Chippendale (1718–79) was a London craftsman, who in 1754 published *The Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker's Director*. This contained numerous plates of current high-style furniture designs. While the S-curve remained an essential line in the forms, it became more vigorous than in Queen Anne. New motifs were also incorporated. The most



6.13 Powel House, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1768.

important of these were Gothic, which was experiencing a revival at about this time, and French Rococo, which was restrained to suit English taste. Finegrained mahogany, imported from Central America or the West Indies, was the preferred wood. Its rich, reddish-brown tones were set off by polished brasses, elaborate carving, or elegant fabrics. In America, the craft of furnituremaking was developed to a high point—in Boston, Newport, New York, Charleston, and Savannah—but nowhere in the colonies was the glory of the Chippendale style more fully realized than in Philadelphia.

A comparison of a Chippendale chair (Fig. 6.15) with a Queen Anne (Fig. 4.18) illustrates the transformation that occurred. The earlier piece is characterized by a classic simplicity, gentle curves, and smooth surfaces. The later one, although following the same basic form, has more active lines, more intricate curves, and its surfaces are covered with elaborate carvings. The splat, or center support of the back, in the Queen Anne chair is an elegant but simple smooth plane, where its Chippendale counterpart is complex and perforated. The shape of the seat similarly varies from the simplicity of the one to the undulating curvatures of the other. The welldefined knees and front feet of the Queen Anne chair are replaced in the Chippendale chair by carved floral decorations and the claw-and-ball motif. Such elaborate carving, working so beautifully with the form it adorns, is one of the highest accomplishments of Philadelphia Chippendale furniture.



6.14 Powel House, Philadelphia. Interior, as installed in Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.

6.15 Thomas Affleck, Chippendale side chair, 1760–75. Mahogany, 36 $\frac{7}{8}$ × 23 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 23 $\frac{1}{2}$ in (93.7 × 60.3 × 59.7 cm). Courtesy Winterthur Museum, Winterthur, Delaware.

PHILADELPHIA CHIPPENDALE

One of the finest shops in Philadelphia was operated from about 1765 to the Revolution by the cabinetmaker and joiner Benjamin Randolph (1721–91). In addition to the excellence of his workmanship, there were two other reasons for Randolph's success: his conversion to the fashionable new Chippendale mode, and the presence of two carvers of extraordinary ability—John Pollard (1740–87) and Hercules Courtenay (1744?–84). Both Pollard and Courtenay had been trained in London and appear to have worked for Randolph as journeymen (employees), not apprentices, in the late 1760s to pay off the price of their Atlantic crossing. By 1770, both had left Randolph to establish their own shops, where they made elaborate frames for mirrors and paintings, specialized carvings for several of the city's cabinetmaking shops, and carved ornamentation for the interiors of many new houses.

