1987

S-48
Clifton
Revells Neck
private

c. 1805-1810

Significant for many reasons, the site where Clifton stands is best remembered as the plantation of Randal Revell and the location of Somerset Town (Somerton), as an early port, "for the unlading and selling of goods and merchandise brought into the province." In 1668, Randall and Katherine Revell devised a twenty-acre tract for the town on the south side of the Manokin River at "Deep Point." The extent of building at this site has not been determined, but the town lasted long enough to be included on Augustine Herrman's map of 1670.

Randall Revell's extensive property, known as "Double Purchase," was devised in his will of 1686, to his wife, Katherine, his son, Randall, and his other children. In turn, Randall Revell, Jr. bequeathed unto his three sons, Charles, Randall, and William, "all his lands to be equally divided." During the mid eighteenth century the Revells sold large portions of their grandfather's "Double Purchase" tract. By 1783 Ballard Bozman had acquired 607 acres of the "Double Purchase" grant on which was standing, "One Dwelling house, cellar kitchen, good barn with sundry other improvements." Valued at L1823, the Manokin River plantation had thirty-four slaves, eleven horses, and forty-five head of black cattle. In the same year, Ballard Bozman willed his lands to his daughter, Nelly Bozman Elzey, wife of James Elzey.

In June of 1791, James and Nelly Elzey granted to Robert Elzey, "all lands adjoining the Manokin River." However, Robert evidently died without an heir, and the property was sold to James Elzey. The 1798 tax assessment lists James Elzey with part of the "Double Purchase" tract on which stood, "1 Dwelling house 30 by

24 feet wood, one story, out of repair" near the Manokin River. Although James Elzey was taxed for the property in 1798, the land was occupied by an apparent tenant, Gilliss McCommey. James Elzey continued to own the property after the turn of the century and evidently moved there. From the architectural details of the house, it is highly likely James Elzey financed the construction of the two-story Flemish bond brick house during the first ten years of the nineteenth century. In 1819 Elzey transferred ownership of, "...all that tract of land on the Manokin River whereon the said James Elzey now resides" to Edward H. C. Wilson for $10,000. The large transfer price would suggest improvements on the scale of the transverse hall brick house.

As one of the three heirs to John C. and Peggy Wilson's extensive estates of "Westover" and "Arlington," Edward assembled his own plantation at the end of Revells Neck by purchasing the Elzey house along with much of the land surrounded it. Built with Flemish bond walls and generously sized rooms, the relatively new brick house provided Edward with similarly sized domestic spaces that Edward knew as a child. He grew up as "Westover" and had relatives at "Workington."

Edward H. C. Wilson only lived a few years to enjoy his plantation, but before his death, he deeded to his brother, John C. Wilson, Jr., the property in trust for his wife, Sarah and their children in 1823. Sarah C. Wilson resided on the property until the late 1840s, when she conveyed "Clifton" to Isaac S. Atkinson for $7,500.

During the middle years of the nineteenth century the property was involved in number of Chancery Court cases resulting from defaulted mortgages. In 1871, William H. Gale and Levin L. Waters, trustees, transferred the property back to

Isaac Atkinson, who, in turn, deeded it to Morris Stroud, Jr. of the City of Philadelphia. After the Strouds sold the Manokin River property in 1884, "Clifton" was transferred five times until Mary Wooten Carpenter purchased 18.3 acres and the house in 1938. During Mrs. Carpenter's occupation of the house the interiors were extensively reworked, and the original center block was enlarged into a five-part dwelling with flanking hyphens and service wings. The two principal first floor rooms of the main house were refitted with Georgian and Federal style woodwork, but the original, decorated Federal style stair was preserved.

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Clifton Manor
Somerset

Photographed by
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