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TWO ANOMALOUS ANNAPOLIS ARCHITECTS:

JOSEPH HORATIO ANDERSON AND ROBERT KEY

By ROSAMOND RANDALL BEIRNE

THE ten years preceding the outbreak of the Revolution produced a building boom in the little capital of Maryland. Fortunes had been made in the colony that warranted dwellings comparable to those of the wealthy in England. The men who owned fleets of ships, thousands of rich acres in timber or under cultivation to the great tobacco crop, or an iron mine, felt that two "seats" were needed. Their country estate might be considered home but a city house in the gay metropolis was desirable. Building substantial town houses could be in itself a profitable business, for there were always transients coming and going on his Lordship's or Crown affairs. Carpenters, joiners, stone-masons,

with an occasional "plaisterer" were plentiful on the lists of procurable indentured servants but most who professed their trade had not had the strict training required by the London Guilds. An advertisement in the *Maryland Journal* for July 2, 1774, is typical of the accomplishments of a slightly better trained man.

There is arrived in this Town [Baltimore], a person well recommended as a house carpenter and joiner and in drawing plans and elevations of houses, and in mensuration. Any gentlemen or others wanting such a person may hear of him by enquiring of the printer.

The term architect was only just beginning to be a word of common usage, and there were few men, even in the old country, who could call themselves members of that profession.

There were, however, four men in late Eighteenth century, among the known designers of Annapolis buildings who were designated in public records as "architect": William Buckland, William Noke, Joseph Horatio Anderson and Robert Key. Buckland's work has been recorded;¹ Noke is better known as Sheriff of Anne Arundel County, 1771-1776, but is associated with Anderson. Recent research on Anderson and Key has brought them partially out of the shadows.

Joseph Horatio Anderson seems to have sprung full armed into the whirl of activity in the little city on the Severn River. He is working by his own testimony in 1770 but disappears mysteriously after 1774. It is his own statement of 1770 that makes him a character worth investigating. In 1958 a letter of his was found in the "Brown Papers" of the John Carter Brown Library of Brown University which reads as follows:²

Gentlemen

From the Accts. in our papers of 22d Feby—find you are come to a resolution of Building at Providence presumes therefore to tender you my services, as Architect & Superintendant for that purpose—(if not ingaged). I must confess, my mode of application deviates from ye formalities customary on such occasions, such as letters of recommendations etc.—for my part think it needless—after informing you of my Appointment as an Architect & Superintendant to the new State House at Annapolis—as well several private edifices particularly one of a grand &

¹ Rosamond R. Beirne and John H. Scarff, *William Buckland, Architect of Maryland and Virginia* (1958, Baltimore).

² John Carter Brown Library, Providence, R. I., P-BU 74-414.

Eligant Construction for Jos Gallaway Esq. speaker of House of Assembly & Being regularly bread to those Sciences—& ye only one upon ye Continent Prosumes may be of eaquel advantage. For nothing being more desirable & satisfactory to a Society of Gentlemen than the appropriating an Accumilated Sum to ye best advantage—(Particularly in Building that may reflect Honour to ye founders & hand down their names to posterity) rather than ye erecting an unnecessary Ildigested Plan which not only disgusts the Eyes of every beholder—but raiseth Contempt for the pretended abilities of the Artist,—Alas I am sorry to find so many Publick Buildings already erected upon ye Continent without Taste or Genious, wch. has buried many Thousands of pounds subscribed with that freedom of Generosity only eaquel to this Americans. I prosume from my Practical knowledge of the Science as well as my knowledge of several Courts of Europe)—shall not be found wanting in ye Art of pleasing my Employers & to serve them as well to Establish my name upon ye Continent—as these were my Motives that Brot. me to this Country added to my Natural desire of raising the Obnubilated Science to ye highest pitch of Glory on this Continent—If my Offers meet your Approbation—shall in Consequence of a line directed to me attend your appointment till then remains

Gentlemen Your Hum Servt.

Joseph Horatio Anderson

Architect at Philadelphia

Philadelphia 14 Mar 1770

The desire to please and to be remembered on “ this Continent ” is only equalled by his confidence. It leads one to guess that this aspiring gentleman might be one of the kissers of the Blarney Stone!

Studies of the London record of The Worshipful Company of Joiners and also of the Carpenters' Guild for the years 1700 to 1770 do not reveal the name of Joseph Horatio Anderson among the apprentices. Nor is he listed among any contemporaries in the building trades of all Great Britain.³ Neither can his name be found in Philadelphia. However, in Annapolis it is quite evident that he was in and out of town for four years and that he chose always to be addressed as “ Esq. and Architect.” The coat of arms imprinted on the sealing wax of his one existing letter adds distinction to the handwriting with its exaggerated curves and curlicues. The arms appear to be a bend with scallops on a field of ermine, with a munching squirrel for a crest. It can not be found in any of the standard books on British heraldry as the coat of an

³ Research in London, May 1959, on records of the Carpenters' and Joiners' Guilds and at Library of Royal Institute of British Architects. H. M. Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of English Architects 1660-1840* (London, 1954).

Anderson. It could, of course, be Irish for the Irish have their own ideas about heraldry, or Anderson could have adopted the American fallacy of using a seal inherited from some maternal ancestor.

Having been thoroughly unsuccessful in providing a background for Joseph Horatio Anderson, the investigator turns quite naturally to the man's own statements, the most important of which is that he designed and supervised the Maryland State House. For years attempts have been made to discover the architect of this building. Dr. Morris L. Radoff, the State Archivist, as recently as 1954 made a careful search of records and came to the conclusion in his book, *Buildings of the State of Maryland at Annapolis*, that Charles Wallace, the undertaker, had gone ahead on his own and built it with the help of various subcontractors. The Treasurer of the Western Shore made all payments direct to Wallace as Superintendent. Since this book was published there has turned up in the State Archives the "Humble Petition of Charles Wallace to the General Assembly, December 20, 1779." which reads,

Soon after the passing the Act of Assembly in 1769 for building a State House, the Superintendants—gave repeated public invitations to Architects and Workmen to lay before them Plans Estimates and Proposals for building and finishing the said house but nothing conclusive or satisfactory was done or offered by any person nor was likely to be proposed—the common opinion being that the £7,000 granted was hardly sufficient for the purpose and your petitioner—tho fully satisfied that no great profit could be made by any undertaker proposed to the then acting Superintendants to undertake the Building and finish the said State House for the said £7,000 Sterling which proposals were agreed to.

He concludes that after "seven years application and fatigue on a public work," he is well out of pocket and hopes for redress.⁴

It is known that the copper roofing was bought in England by Wallace's business partner; that Joseph Clarke later added the present dome and that William Buckland was paid for work "on the Public Building" in its early stages. The last named is considered to have designed the interior woodwork which a reluctant Assembly thought "more elegant than was necessary" in view of their budget. There are in existence floor plans and front

⁴ Hall of Records, Annapolis; also *Md. Hist. Mag.*, XLI (1951), 214.

elevation for the State House, undated and unsigned.⁵ These differ considerably from the plans that were used: the dome is smaller, the portico has two columns instead of four with curving steps at each side, the windows are set in arches, there are quoins of stone, the interior stairway divides at the rear. They have been preserved through the years with the contracts of 1792 for repairing the building. The plans are professionally drawn with considerable skill, but if they are from the drawing board of Anderson, it is quite evident that they were discarded in favor of others. Thomas W. Griffith, one of the earliest historians of the state (1821), wrote that the architect of the State House was William Anderson. Since the only William Anderson living at that time was a man in the mercantile business, with no architectural ambitions, it may be presumed that Griffith, having some first-hand knowledge of the facts, had confused the first name. In summing up, Joseph Horatio Anderson asserted that he designed and supervised the Maryland State House. The weight of evidence is that he may have drawn plans which were never used, but he definitely had no further connection with this building, now the oldest State House in continuous use.

It is easy to prove that Anderson was living in Annapolis during the years when the State House was under way. There was an unclaimed letter for him in the Post Office in April 1771, and it was about this time that he was trying his hand at a design for a new house and store for Charles Wallace himself; Joshua Johnson, the London partner in the large mercantile firm of Wallace, Davidson & Johnson, writes home for news and asks if the new building "is agreeable to Anderson's plan or Noakes?"⁶ In March 1772 a lease (ground-rent) was made "between Charles Carroll, senior, of City of Annapolis, and J. H. Anderson of the same city for Lot 100 for 60 years at £6 per annum in dollars at £6 each, payable at the two most usual Feasts *vitz.* Annunciation of our Blessed Virgin Mary and the Feast of St. Michael the Archangel and agree to erect on said lot within 6 years such house or houses the Rent of which shall amount at least to £20 in dollars."⁷ This lot was on King George Street, next but one to the harbor.

⁵ Johns Hopkins University, John Work Garrett Library.

⁶ Wallace, Davidson & Johnson Letter Book, Vol. I, p. 46, Dec. 28, 1771; Hall of Records, Annapolis, Md.

⁷ Anne Arundel County Deeds, IB #3, 1771-1773, Lease p. 245, Hall of Rec.

That Mr. Anderson was building houses in 1772 is attested by suits brought against him in the Anne Arundel County courts by two men who sold him building material, Michael Kripps, a brickmaker, and James Maccubbin, merchant.⁸ In each of these cases he is called "Architect, late of Anne Arundel County." A workman named O'Neal also sued him about this time.⁹ Anderson employed Thomas Johnson, Jr., an eminent lawyer, later to become the first elected governor of Maryland, to defend him. Since the cases were postponed for over a year and George Gordon was to pay up as his proxy if the cases went against Anderson, it can be assumed that the defendant was out of town. It can be assumed, also, that Mr. Anderson like many builders and contractors of his time, was slow in being paid and slower still in settling his debts.

The eminent Thomas Johnson, Jr. was once again to defend his client in a suit brought against Anderson by his servant, William Hardy, a baker. Hardy engaged Samuel Chase, a future Supreme Court Justice, and contended that Anderson "by force of arms did beat, wound and villy treat so that his Life was greatly despaired of and other Harms to him."¹⁰ After a jury-trial each man was fined 15 shillings and costs. Life at home must have been constantly controversial, for again in March 1774 Anderson was sued for assault by the same servant, William Hardy. This time the case was abated.¹¹

There is only one house in Annapolis that can be proved by documentary evidence to have been built by Joseph Horatio Anderson and that house was long ago swallowed up in the expansion of the Naval Academy grounds. In 1773 an Act of Assembly authorized the sale of property belonging to John Morton Jordan, Esq., deceased. Jordan was personal agent and Receiver General for Lord Baltimore, owning large estates in both Virginia and Maryland. He died in Annapolis but left a widow and infant son in England. The Act stipulated that the brick dwelling on the two acre lot "was not to be sold for less than £1500 sterling over and above such sums as Jordan in his Life time had or his Executors should Pay and advance Joseph Horatio Anderson"

⁸ Anne Arundel County Judgments, 1773, p. 30, H. of R.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 1772-1773, DG #1, p. 230, H. of R.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1772-1773, DG #1, p. 47, H. of R.

¹¹ Anne Arundel County Criminal Court, March 1774, H. of R.

who had built it for Jordan.¹² *The Maryland Gazette* had advertised this place for sale in January 1772, describing the house and lots as a square, one side on the Severn River and "with a large stone wharf begun." Jordan's estate was not settled until after the Revolution and then largely by confiscation. John Nesbit Jordan, the heir, being just of age came to America in 1783 to look after his interests. He was so completely unsuccessful that his only redress was to file a claim against the British Government for his losses. In the Loyalist Records he claims that his two lots in Annapolis with handsome offices, dwelling house, coach house and large warehouses were not legally confiscated but that the executors of the estate had converted it to their own use.¹³ This house we can be certain Anderson both designed and built.

Two years after old Charles Carroll leased a city lot on which Anderson was to build a house the two men were again in contact over house building. Writing from his estate, presumably Doughoregan Manor, on May 11, 1774 to his son in Annapolis, the elder Carroll says,

Mr. Anderson called here on his way to Frederick . . . and told me Mrs. People would be Here next day with a cart would call and leave the Plan of my House. I have not since seen Him or Mrs. People and He does not want ye Plan to make out a Bill of Scantling or for any other Purpose. Pray send it in the Chariot with the Child.

In another letter he repeats impatiently, "Mr. Anderson would send House plan but it has not come."¹⁴ With all the various properties owned by Charles Carroll of Annapolis, from tidewater to the Blue Ridge, the house could be anywhere, but the one most likely to have commanded the attention of a trained architect was "Doughoregan." The unknown designer of this great mansion might someday be proved to have been J. H. Anderson.

It was about this time that Anderson felt that as "Gentleman and Architect" he should have an estate. He purchased from John Hammond, the patentee, for 50 guineas, eighty-eight acres on the north side of the Severn River called "Gaither's Intent."¹⁵ This place was near Governor Sharpe's "Whitehall" for in the "Whitehall" accounts for 1773 is the item "Pork for Horatio

¹² *Arch. Md.* LXIII, 403, 404, June-July, 1773.

¹³ Loyalist Claims, Maryland. British Records film at Md. Hist. Soc.

¹⁴ Carroll Papers, A. L. S. 2 pp.; Vol. III, p. 64, Md. Hist. Soc.

¹⁵ A. A. Co. Deeds IB #4, 1773-1774, f. 122.

Anderson's People at the Glebe house £12/0/0." ¹⁶ Anderson did not long enjoy his plantation. Perhaps it was only a business transaction. The following year he sold it to William Noke, Sheriff of Anne Arundel County. The plantation carried a lien to Jonathan Wilkinson, a bricklayer of Annapolis who had a suit against Anderson and the sale was subject to a "Condition that Joseph Horatio Anderson pay Jonathan Wilkinson for his suit brought into the County Court August 1774 by May 1, 1775, then this deed to be of none effect and if not paid then to remain in full force." The consideration was £87:10. In 1777 Wilkinson got possession of "Gaither's Intent" from Noke who said he had received the £87:10 from Anderson and that Mrs. Anne Noke renounced any dower claim.¹⁷

There were other ties than adjoining property between Colonel Sharpe, the ex-Governor, and J. H. Anderson. Sharpe had built himself in 1764 "a pretty box of a house" across the Severn from Annapolis with a view down the Bay which he designed as a hunting lodge and an escape from his official duties. When he retired in 1768, from his position as chief executive to this seat, "Whitehall," he wished to enlarge the house and make it his permanent residence. Drawings were made which are still in existence for wings and extension of wings, for a handsome octagonal stable for the Colonel's racehorses and for a court-yard. Directions on these plans are in the handwriting of Joseph Horatio Anderson.¹⁸ It is clear that it was the intention of the owner and the architect to make what had been a bachelor's retreat into a noble, elongated mansion, with grounds landscaped after the best English plans, fit for a queen. However, the Colonel was past marrying and the rumble of trouble in the colonies was in his ears. Bedroom wings were built before he left for a visit to England, unconscious of the fact that he would never again see his beloved place.

The elaborate plans for flush toilets, a rarity even on the continent in those days, for the stable and for a courtyard at the land approach resembling a fortress, are the work of a trained architect. They are undated and unsigned but unique in design and scope. Undoubtedly the writing is similar to that of the 1770 letter to the

¹⁶ Charles Scarlett, Jr., "Governor Horatio Sharpe's Whitehall," *Md. Hist. Mag.*, XLVI (Mar., 1951), 18.

¹⁷ Anne Arundel Deeds, IB #4, f. 534; Anne Arundel County Mortgage, IB #5, 1774-1778, f. 380, H. of R.

¹⁸ In the collection of the owner of "Whitehall."

College at Providence from J. H. Anderson. Whether the extreme extension of the wings with their adjoining passageways, the stable, and the other improvements were ever actually completed has not yet been fully determined by the research of the present owner, Charles Scarlett.¹⁸ He has restored what on the blueprint appears to be a fortress to the north of the front entrance. The terminology, bastions, petard gate, ramparts, etc. seem to prove that the good Governor was unduly alarmed by fear of Indian attacks. Perhaps, it was only memories of his part in the French and Indian War for from 1764 on the only trouble was far to the West of the Blue Ridge mountains. Those in authority bent over backwards to placate the Redman and to keep peace for the belligerent colonists in the "wild lands."¹⁹

There is one other puzzling fact in connection with Anderson's plans for "Whitehall." He did not design the handsome interiors because the surviving plan is in another hand. Most students of this house have attributed the wood work to William Buckland. If Anderson's plans had been accepted and carried out would he not have boasted of it in his letter to Providence? The mansion of the ex-governor of Maryland would have been more of a feather in his cap than the house of Joseph Galloway, Speaker of the Assembly of Pennsylvania. When the complete history of "Whitehall" comes to be written more evidence will be forthcoming and perhaps this enigma may be solved.

Anderson was still in Annapolis in 1774, trying to make a living by one means or another. His patronage was extended to lesser men as witnessed by an advertisement in the *Gazette* for January 20:

Samuel Rusbatch, late pupil of Robert Maberly, Esq. coach and herald painter and varnisher to their majesties and the royal family; proposeth (under the direction of Joseph Horatio Anderson, architect in Annapolis) to carry on all the various branches of coach and herald painting, varnishing, gilding; as well plain as in the most decorated taste. Also painting in fresco, cire-obscure, decorated ceiling for halls, vestibules and saloons, either in festoons of fruit, flowers, figures or trophies. Carved ornament in deception, gilding and burnishing in the neatest manner, in common colours etc. Those ladies and gentlemen who please to favour him with their commands, may depend on his speedy execution; which he flatters himself will soon recommend him to the favour of the public. N. B. All letters and orders, sent or directed to Mr. Anderson (as above) will be particularly attended to.

¹⁸Shelburne to Sharpe, Sept. 1766; Dulany Papers III, Md. Hist. Soc.; Hamersley to Sharpe, July 18, 1768, *Md. Hist. Mag.*, XLVI (Mar., 1951), 8-26.

This bears the earmarks of having been written by the effusive architect himself.

In the meantime Anderson had signed with most of the Crown officials and the monied interests of Annapolis the protest against citizens who did not want to pay their just debts to the merchants. The protest of May 30, 1774, carried the signatures of many who had the most to lose, as well as of those with Tory leanings. J. H. Anderson was one of them. In July of that year another letter waited at the post office to be claimed by "Joseph Horatio Anderson, Architect at Annapolis."²⁰

After this there are but a few traces of Anderson's meteoric career. A runaway servant of his was brought into court in 1775; he is mentioned as a participant in a rather shady deal when stolen goods changed hands in Alexandria, Virginia. Anderson may have been only an innocent friend when he passes "the papers" on to his old acquaintance William Noke.²¹ But in this case, brought into the Anne Arundel Court in 1781, he is mentioned as deceased.

Long after his death another important suit in Chancery Court involved Anderson. It was in 1794 that Robert Key, another local architect, sued the committee responsible for building the second edifice for the Anglican parish.²² The committee had not paid Key what he felt was his due and there is much recrimination in the evidence presented. St. Anne's had been completed in 1792 at a cost of £6000. The brick building was 110 feet by 90, surmounted by a tower. Pilasters between the long windows gave it character. The interior walls were frescoed and besides the many pews for the subscribing gentry, there were galleries for servants and a gallery for slaves.²³ The Hon. John Ridout's answer to the suit contains the following statement: "The elegant Plans provided by Mr. Anderson left nothing for Mr. Key to do in the line of drawing excepting what arose from an alteration in the framing of the Roof." Dr. Upton Scott filed his answer saying: "The Plans of the intended Church were drawn by Mr. Anderson, an eminent Architect who died soon afterwards." Eighteen years after the new church was begun it was still very clear in the minds of the committee what part Anderson had taken and what they

²⁰ *Maryland Gazette*, July 14, 1774.

²¹ Anne Arundel County Chancery Court, 1781, Vol. 13, p. 424.

²² *Ibid.*, #2942, *Hyde vs. Key*.

²³ Elihu S. Riley, *The Ancient City* (Annapolis, 1887), p. 75.

owed Key. Here Joseph Horatio Anderson's design for a building which yielded to fire in 1858 is well documented.

Having covered as completely as possible Anderson's life in Annapolis, we return to his letter to the College at Providence and find that in 1770 he was at work upon "a grand and Eligant Construction for Joseph Galloway, Esq." Here real detective work is required. Joseph Galloway, that eminent Philadelphian who originated in Anne Arundel County, Maryland, who though Speaker of the Pennsylvania Assembly and delegate to the first Continental Congress, could not break with the Mother Country and was marked as a traitor, owned three houses. The most famous of these was "Trevoze" in Bucks County, a seat on the Neshaminy River, back a little from the old mail route from Philadelphia to New York. It belonged in reality to his wife, Grace Growden, who had inherited it. The dwelling begun in 1685, finished two years later, was two and a half stories of stone and stucco with two detached two-story wings. Though much altered through the years, its history is well known and Anderson could not be considered the designer.²⁴

A second estate of 45 acres nearer the city, on the banks of the Schuylkill, was bought by Galloway and used as a rural retreat. There must have been a simple house of some sort on the place but "Ormiston" as we know it now was built after the Revolution. Bought in as confiscated property by Edward Burd, the third of successive owners, it is dated by his letter of October 10, 1798, saying: "I have built a good house at Schuyekill and call it Omiston."²⁵ Anderson was dead long before this event.

Galloway's only other house was his town address of 6th and Market Streets, Philadelphia. This he bought in 1770 from Asrael Pemberton on the very day, June 9, that Pemberton had bought it from Alexander Stedman. The purchase price was £2700, representing a fairly handsome structure and from a detailed description in an insurance survey, this was the case.²⁶ Stedman bought the property in 1761 or 2, erected the three-story brick dwelling

²⁴ H. D. Eberlein and C. V. D. Hubbard, *Portrait of a Colonial City* (Phila., 1939), pp. 68-75.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 493-495; also Thompson Westcott, *Historic Mansions & Buildings of Philadelphia* (Phila., 1877).

²⁶ The Philadelphia Contributionship #1133, 1134, 1135, 1766; Philadelphia Deed Book 1-16/162; Work No. 610 for the Philadelphia City Planning Commission, Preliminary Report, Historical Sites. Through the kindness of Penelope Hartshorne, architect, National Parks Service.

and trimmed the interior with wainscoting to the ceiling, "dentile cornish round the rooms, Freese, Architrave and Pediments over Each Room door," and all other ornamentation in keeping with his position as a Justice of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania and a member of the Philadelphia Common Council. Because of the dramatic treatment accorded Joseph Galloway as a traitor to his country; the removal by force of poor deserted Mrs. Galloway by an exasperated Commissioner, the usual urbane Charles Willson Peale; and the taking over of the house by the Robert Morris when General Washington moved into their house; history has left many records of the south-east corner of 6th and High (Market) Streets.²⁷ The evidence is clear, however, that Galloway did not build this house, nor did he own it until several months after Anderson wrote his letter to Providence. If we are to believe Anderson, then the only solution is that Joseph Galloway intended to build a handsome residence on his estate on the Schuylkill in 1770, bought the town house instead or felt that the time was not auspicious for building.

Summing up the American career of Mr. Anderson, Architect, is to a large extent a negative statement. It is not known where or in what way he "had knowledge of several Courts of Europe." He had no wife or she would have signed the deeds for "Gaither's Intent" and no estate records or death notice can be found though he probably died in the colonies. He took no oath of allegiance in Maryland, required after 1777, nor does he apply to the British government to make good losses received during the war. He worked in Annapolis, Philadelphia, Frederick and Alexandria. The drawing of plans, the designing of buildings, rather than superintending any of the actual construction, was his profession. He regarded himself highly and others took him at his own valuation. The church wardens thought him "Eminent" and his plans for the enlargement of "Whitehall" show skill and training. There is good probability that his statement is correct in claiming that he drew plans (though they were not used), for the Annapolis State House and for Joseph Galloway in Philadelphia. He did not fulfill his desire to design buildings for the College at Providence.²⁸ In spite of the braggadocio, it can be

²⁷ Raymond C. Werner, ed., "Diary of Grace Growden Galloway," *Pa. Mag. of Hist. & Biog.* LV, LVIII (1931, 1934), 32-94; 152-189.

²⁸ Lawrence C. Wroth to R. R. B. May 23, 1958.

stated with assurance that Joseph Horatio Anderson was a man of parts who had had training somewhere and that he drew plans for buildings in a manner which entitled him to be known in the colonies as "Architect."

* * *

ROBERT KEY

Whereas Joseph Horatio Anderson did his own advertising, Robert Key had a devoted wife who made known his talent. Rebecca Campbell Key was a very old lady when she dictated what she could remember of her youth in Annapolis and these recollections were eventually published.²⁹ Where her memory has been checked, it has been proved remarkably accurate but there is some testimony resting solely on her word.

Mrs. Key said that her husband, an architect, was an Englishman, meaning that he was born in the old country. She came of a family that had been in Maryland since the Jacobite troubles forced them from Scotland in 1715. Her father, John Campbell II, and his wife, Frances Hammond, were members of St. Anne's Parish and her great grandmother had been the wife of that early architect, Simon Duff, who came from Scotland, she says to build Governor Bladen's official residence. This was the building long known as "Bladen's Folly," too grand a structure for the Assembly's taste. It has since been proved, however, that Patrick Creagh, not Duff, should be given credit for this initial building for St. John's College which stood a deplorable ruin for over thirty years.³⁰

The name Key was sometimes pronounced and spelled Kay and, as often as not, had a final "s" added. The only contemporary one in the London Apprentice Book of the Carpenters and Joiners' Guild is Robert Keys who was apprenticed in 1754 to one "Richard Priest of Clerkenwell, joiner, £5."³¹ This could well have been our man who might then have come to America at age twenty-one in the 1760's. He appears to have been no relation to the well-

²⁹ Annie Leakin Sioussat (ed.) Rebecca Campbell Key's "A notice of Some of the First Buildings with Notes of Some of the Early Residents." *Md. Hist. Mag.*, XIV (1919), 269.

³⁰ Joy Gary, "Patrick Creagh of Annapolis." *Md. Hist. Mag.*, XLVIII (Dec., 1953), 310-326.

³¹ Apprentice Books, Vol. 17, 3517-20/36, 1754, London.

known Key family, at this time extending their holdings from St. Mary's County to more northern parts of the colony.

Mrs. Key comments on the friendship between her husband and Governor Eden and bears it out with several anecdotes. Robert Eden arrived in Annapolis in 1768, bought Edmond Jenings' fine house which had been rented by his predecessor, Horatio Sharpe, and employed Robert Key to enlarge it.³² William Eddis, that faithful chronicler, writes home in October 1769:³³

The governor's house is most beautifully situated and when the necessary alterations are completed, it will be a regular, convenient, and elegant building. The garden is not extensive, but it is disposed to the utmost advantage; the centre walk is terminated by a small green mount, close to which the Severn approaches; this elevation commands an extensive view of the bay, and the adjacent country. The same objects appear to equal advantage from the saloon, and many apartments of the house; and perhaps I may be justified in asserting, that there are but few mansions in the most rich and cultivated parts of England, which are adorned with such splendid and romantic scenery.

Key added a rounded bay to the ballroom of the square brick house, extended wings for offices and kitchen and enlarged coach-house and stables. For some of this work, he was not paid until the Governor left the colony in 1776, when he was told to take the crystal chandeliers, valued at £1200. To the Keys' indignation the Committee of Safety for Maryland got there first and condemned all the Edens' personal property as enemy assets. Mrs. Key credits Governor Eden with further patronage to his architect friend by giving him the new Ball Room to design and build. This is the building still on Duke of Gloucester Street, Annapolis, but now with little to identify it with the Eighteenth Century. Eddis describes it as of elegant construction, illuminated to great advantage. Those who did not want to dance fortnightly could retire to the card rooms at either end for an evening of gaming.³⁴

Robert Key is called "long a worthy and respectable citizen of Annapolis" but there are few records to prove it.³⁵ Fairly regularly during 1772 and 1773 he took his "todey" at 1/6 with the other patrons of William Faris' tavern. Occasionally he is down in Faris' books for "supper and club"; once he hired a horse for

³² R. C. Key, *op. cit.*

³³ William Eddis, *Letters from America* (London, 1792), p. 17.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 32.

³⁵ David Ridgely, *Annals of Annapolis* (Baltimore, 1841), p. 244 n.

three days and once he borrowed a small sum.³⁶ In March 1773 he bills the Commissioner of the Loan Office for repairs, "Myself and man one day each @ 7/6." In 1774 he, like Joseph Horatio Anderson, signed the protest against the proclamation renouncing debts to British creditors.³⁷ Mrs. Key tells of his banishment from Annapolis because of his Loyalist leanings. She makes him something of a hero when he gives Eden warning that a deputation is on his heels, and helps speed the Governor from his garden seawall to H. M. S. *Fowey*, lying off the point to carry him back to England. Once when his wife was ill, he paid her a visit incognito but the word got around and the house was surrounded. With the prevailing civility the patriots allowed Mr. Key to finish his tea before escorting him across the river, headed for Baltimore. Key apparently decided later to renounce his unpopular attitude for he took the oath of fidelity in Anne Arundel County in 1779.³⁸ His only wartime service to his adopted State seems to have been in acting as courier and carrying a letter to Governor Lee from Baltimore Town in 1781.³⁹ To be sure there is a mysterious entry of £26:19 for services rendered the State in 1779 but whether for architectural or military work, we do not know.⁴⁰ Again in 1785, an account is rendered "For view of State House, etc. 12:16:8."⁴¹

If ever Key was in need of a meal or a little pocket money, he could count on the patronage and generosity of Edward Lloyd IV of "Wye" and Annapolis. For a period of twenty-eight years, 1774 to 1802, he served the Lloyds at both town house and plantation.⁴² Often the entries in the Lloyd business ledgers are for small repairs such as: "Repairing Stable with one new Slate, making a coach jack, etc." More pretentious was his "Building a Temple," presumably a garden house at "Wye." Once he is credited with 51½ days' work at Wye House and again "for 106 days' work about Green House, Mansion House and Sundry Repairs." What he did in Talbot County and what he did in Annapolis are generally carefully separated and, of course, in his years

³⁶ Faris Account Books, Md. Hist. Soc.

³⁷ Ridgely, 155, *op. cit.*

³⁸ Scharf Papers, Md. Hist. Soc.

³⁹ *Arch. Md.*, XLVII, March 1781, p. 142.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, XII, 543, Oct. 2, 1779.

⁴¹ Intendant's Day Book #2, 39 and Orders #2, 3; Revolutionary Records, Hall of Records, Annapolis.

⁴² Lloyd Papers, Md. Hist. Soc.

of exile he worked almost entirely at "Wye." The sum of £279, roughly the total of his collections from Edward Lloyd, does not seem sufficiently great to accept him as the designer and builder of "Wye House." He received at that time ten shillings a day, larger than the five and a half Lloyd paid to both William Buckland and William Noke for work on his town house. This would seem to indicate that the ten shillings were for Key and his workman and that they were serving as independent journeymen. Sometimes he is paid by Lloyd's factor in Annapolis and once, in 1774, David Stewart of Baltimore was ordered to pay him ten guineas. In an undated letter Arthur Bryan, the factor, writes the extravagant young owner of expensive houses:⁴³

After much plague and trouble I have Settled with Mr. Key the Balance Coming to him has left your Mama almost clear of Cash. I have Inclosed his Ansr against you I thought the charge of repairing the Stable too high and came under no agreement about it to support such a charge he has drawn or orders on you in favr of Mr. Lucas and Mr. Garnet.

Some of this protested work was for drawing the design for a tent with a suspended cot bed.

Mr. Key was not a very good risk for the universal credit system of business. In the Davidson Account Books where he is frankly called "Carpenter," he is charged for many items ranging from Bohea tea to whip-saw files and in pencilled notes interest is added for the ten years past.⁴⁴

The most important building done by Key was undoubtedly that on St. Anne's church in Annapolis. When the Assembly granted funds in 1774 to build a new church, it was Robert Key who took down the organ and repaired the fence around Church Circle.⁴⁵ The old edifice was torn down and usable material stacked for future use. But with the arrival of the war all building plans were postponed, the congregation worshipped as best it could in the theatre, and vandals or patriots made away with most of the accumulated timber and bricks. It was 1784 before work could begin on the new building. As has been stated in the article on Joseph Horatio Anderson, a law suit developed ten years later over Key's bill to the Assembly-appointed trustees.⁴⁶ The Trustees

⁴³ Arthur Bryan to Edward Lloyd III, n. d., *ibid.*

⁴⁴ Davidson Account Books, 75, Md. Hist. Soc.

⁴⁵ St. Anne's Vestry Records quoted in *Md. Hist. Mag.*, X, 140.

⁴⁶ *Hyde vs. Key*, Chancery Court, Anne Arundel County, #2942, 1794.

made it plain that Anderson had drawn the plans and that all that Key had to do was to carry them out. Each Trustee wrote an answer that was filed with the Court. Samuel Chase and William Paca both begged off as they had by this time moved out of town and had had very little to do with the building. The burden had been laid upon the shoulders of Thomas Hyde, a prominent merchant, who by 1790 was anxious to be relieved of it. His feelings were hurt by an article in the *Gazette* complaining of the slowness of construction, and harassed by Key, he was ready to account to the General Assembly and "Chearfully resign his trust," which he did. This left the Hon. John Ridout and Dr. Upton Scott as remaining Trustees.⁴⁶

The Trustees find it impossible to ascertain with any Degree of Precision, the exact Sum that is justly due. Some of his charges are totally without Foundation, others extremely exaggerated,—the whole Account is either involved in a designed Obscurity—or fabricated at random as the different circumstances have struck his Imagination.

John Ridout maintained that in 1784 "Mr. Key inspected the Plans, Drawings and estimate made by a Master Architect [J. H. Anderson] and agreed to execute all the Carpentry of the Church on terms." As time went on, he became less diligent and asked the Treasurer for payment in advance. His work was unfinished; the cashier alleged he was sometimes in liquor when he applied to him for money. More specifically, he had charged for designs which were unnecessary and for trips to the Eastern Shore. Both sides employed professional men to value the work done; Joseph Clark was brought in by Key; John Jarvis and Cornelius West measured and valued for the Trustees. In 1790, the Trustees had offered to settle out of Court on terms judged fair by Jarvis and West, but the years went by until 1793 when William Pinkney, a national figure, was brought in to try to settle the case. Key was apparently living out of town, for he gave power of attorney to James Williams, Annapolis merchant, a trust which he "disannuls" in 1806. By that time the Court was ready for a decision. The verdict was that Key should be paid £1110:4:1 with interest, the exact amount left over from subscriptions, lottery, Assembly appropriations, etc., after all other bills had been paid. Key felt he was due £5000.

Key called himself "carpenter and joiner" all through the St. Anne's case but others referred to him as "architect." Most

records of him are in Annapolis but he moved continually back and forth to Baltimore and to the Eastern Shore. In 1783, he leased "Sundry Lots on Wilkes Street," Baltimore, from William Fell,⁴⁷ and, in June of that year he appeared as a witness in a Baltimore County case.⁴⁸ Mrs. Key remembered that her husband had traveled down from Baltimore to greet his old friend, then Sir Robert Eden, when he arrived in Annapolis on that fateful visit. But Robert Key eventually returned to his wife and his original residence for good. The notice in the *Gazette* for September 21, 1786 that Edward Vidler and Robert Key were "prepared to design and build houses of every kind" and had workmen, failed to bring in business. Key did not prosper in the building profession, for in 1792 he appears as a "languishing prisoner" in the Anne Arundel County jail for nonpayment of a small debt and is listed at the time of his release among the insolvent debtors.⁴⁹ Six years later, according to the county tax lists Robert Key and William Bishop were occupying a frame dwelling house, single story, 32 x 18 on a quarter of an acre rented from Richard Frazier.⁵⁰ This was obviously an office, and the occupancy was the last recorded event in Key's life.

Rebecca Campbell Key did not die until 1840, some time after the death of her husband, who seems to have left no estate. The last years of her life must have been difficult ones. With her sister, Frances Campbell, she was a pensioner of the county, receiving thirty dollars a year.⁵¹ Perhaps they lived together, and, if so, in the country below Annapolis, since Miss Campbell was buried in the churchyard of All Hallows. Mrs. Key, late in life became a convert to Roman Catholicism and it is not known where she was interred.⁵² Though Robert Key disappears as mysteriously as he came, he should take his rightful place in that band of gifted artisans who came to the colonies to seek a living and elevate the taste in building.

⁴⁷ Deeds, Baltimore, W. G. Q 293, 1783, H. of R.

⁴⁸ Chancery Court, Baltimore County, B 45-321, 1800, June 1783, H. of R.

⁴⁹ Liber Insolvent Debtors, Anne Arundel County Records, 91, Aug. 24, 1792. Estate of Richard Flemming, debts due from Robt. Keys 5:10:0. "Justices of Peace release him, a languishing prisoner in Anne Arundel County Gaol, July 2 to August 24, 1792."

⁵⁰ Tax List, Anne Arundel County, 1798, Md. Hist. Soc.

⁵¹ Liber Levy Book, pps. 306, 336, 370, 400, 431, 452, 1830-35, A. A. Co. Records.

⁵² R. C. Key, *op. cit.*