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Doctor James Huntington and the Porter-Phelps-Huntington House: A Work of Memory and Love

> This great house is something more than the Huntington family of today. It is a monument to the history of the Connecticut Valley in all its three centuries of effort to establish and hold firm the great truths that made their country different from all other countries in the world.[1]
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> -- from newspaper article, "As The Huntington House Ghosts Invite the World," ca. 1955

The above passage refers to the Porter-Phelps-Huntington House of Hadley, Massachusetts. It has also been referred to as "The Bishop Huntington House" or simply "Forty Acres," describing the property it rests upon bordering the Connecticut River. Having stood for nearly 250 years, the house tells a significant history as it was owned by several generations of a single family. Perhaps the most moving and inspiring story in its history is about the efforts of one descendant to save his family home from neglect and decay. Dr. James Lincoln Huntington was not a historian or preservationist by training. His professional background shows that history was just one of his interests, albeit a very strong interest. Nevertheless, he had a vision of the house's future, a vision that would make the house available for all the public to study and admire.

The fate of historic property in recent years is hardly encouraging to anyone who cherishes the past. It is an unfortunate fact that when historic interest and economic progress clash in the realm of architecture and land development, economic interests usually gain the upper hand. I cannot say I am proud to be a consumer when a historic meeting hall or library is bulldozed to make way for a strip mall. It was the threat of commercial uprooting that prompted the historic preservation movement to prosper at the beginning of this century. The Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA), founded by William Sumner Appleton, saved a number of historic buildings in

[1]"As The Huntington House Ghosts Invite the World," author unknown, from the Porter-Phelps-Huntington Collection (Box 82, Folder 55), Amherst College Archives and Special Collections.

New England from destruction, and set standards and methods for future preservationists would follow. The restoration of the Dr. Huntington's house is not the just story of one man, although his vision and desire were crucial to the house's survival. Ultimately, the restored house was the product of the efforts and ingenuity of many people with professional interest and expertise in history and preservation.

Restoring the family home was not an easy task for Huntington by any means; he fought with his siblings, traveled great distances in the beginning, grappled with physical decay and destructive floods, and faced heavy financial burdens. At one point in 1955, he faced the grim reality of having to sell the house due to a shortage of funds. What made him decide to put his fortune and reputation on the line to save a centuries-old house that almost no one outside of his family would have cared less about? Huntington developed a growing interest in his family's history as he set about his work; it was through historic organizations he became acquainted with such individuals as Appleton and Samuel Eliot Morison, the renown historian of Harvard University. Dr. Huntington did more than just save the structure and its belongings; he hoped to have it serve as an educational facility for local schools and colleges, and ultimately restored it to the point where regular tours and cultural programs could be held regularly on its premises. Huntington was undoubtedly influenced by standards of historic preservation, and he naturally understood the importance of turning a profit through his efforts. The house in its current state must be seen as a product of his historic memory. Each of these themes -- historic preservation early in this century, financing preservation, and Dr. Huntington's historic memory -- will be addressed.

Dr. Huntington was a unique character in the historic preservation scene. He was born in 1880, having two older brothers and two younger brothers and a younger sister. They were but a part of an expansive generation of Huntingtons scattered across New England who originated from the Huntington family of Hadley, Massachusetts. He and his siblings engaged in professions that took them away from Hadley, which did not

necessitate remaining near their home town for long. James Lincoln Huntington, for example, studied to become a gynecologist and initially practiced in Boston. One of his older brothers, Henry Barrett, became an English professor at Brown University, while another brother, Michael Paul, became a minister. Dr. Huntington and his parents were among generations of Huntingtons to stray far from home; previous to James Lincoln, it was under the care of his grandfather, Frederic Dan Huntington, the son of Dan Huntington.

It was the patriarch Dan Huntington, a minister from Connecticut, who gave birth to the line of Huntingtons of New England known through today. To family's roots and the origins of the house can be traced back even further. Dan Huntington married Elizabeth Porter Phelps, the daughter of Charles and Elizabeth Phelps. The elder Elizabeth was a Porter, the daughter of Moses Porter, who had constructed the first house on the family's forty acres of land bordering the Connecticut River in 1752. The Porters were the first generation descended from the Porters and the Cookes, who were among the first settlers of Hadley in the 1630s. Dr. Huntington traces his family history extensively in the first five chapters of *Forty Acres*, his book on the family history and the history of the house.

It is impossible to minimize the importance of James Huntington's ancestors in his description of home and history. The very fact that his ancestors have inhabited the land for three centuries and that the house has stood for nearly two hundred years, by his time, makes his ancestor worship quite understandable. I suspect the reason Dr. Huntington goes to great lengths about his ancestors relates to his personal memories of the house, when it belonged to his grandfather. He recalled childhood visits with his family to his grandfather's home in the summers, and every ten years when the entire family would gather at the house to celebrate the grandparents' wedding anniversary. He admired the house's decor and praised his grandfather's personality and demeanor. It was through his grandfather's stories he learned of the house's lore and history of the family. When Dr.

Huntington's father moved his family to Ashfield and then finally in the vicinity of Hadley in the 1890s, visits to "Forty Acres" became more frequent.[2]

In the summer of 1904, Dr. Huntington's grandfather and father died on the same day. The question suddenly arose of what was to become of the family home, now legally in the possession of Dr. Huntington and his siblings. His grandmother continued to use it as a summer home until her death in 1910. Most of the siblings, except for the oldest Henry Barrett, lacked the resources and lived too far from the house to care for it regularly, and even then it was falling too much into disrepair to be truly inhabitable. On a visit in 1919, Dr. Huntington discovered that the house was surprisingly easy to break into by climbing through a rear window, and being uninhabited as it was, its valuable were at risk of being stolen. The house itself was in danger of falling into disrepair and being lost in obscurity. It was at this time that Dr. Huntington had a major revelation:

> It did not seem possible that Moses Porter's house could have outlived its purpose and usefulness on the land where he had courageously chosen to build, nor the loving pride of his son-in-law, Charles Phelps, carrying on his plans and making the house beautiful, find no successor after so many years to continue to cherish it.[3]

Dr. Huntington had taken it upon himself to try and convince his brothers to help restore the house and initially make it a suitable place for their mother to live in during the summer, just as their grandparents did. This is a pivotal period in Dr. Huntington's professional life. In the years that would follow, he would grow increasingly involved in studying the history of the house and his family. He would become well acquainted with individuals in historic preservation and interpretation, as well as with materials and techniques needed for restoration. Dr. Huntington was about to take his first look at the world of historic preservation.

This is what is known about Moses Porter and Charles Phelps, the ancestors Dr. Huntington mentioned in the passage above, and their role in building the house into its

[2]James Lincoln Huntington, *Forty Acres: The Story of the Bishop Huntington House* (New York: Hastings House, 1949), 39-40.
[3]Ibid., 48.

current state. Dr. Huntington describes their importance in the earlier chapters of *Forty Acres*. Moses Porter, born in 1722, was the grandson of some of Hadley's first settlers. Active in military affairs, he had inherited ownership of his family's land bordering the Connecticut Rive, and in 1752, decided to build a house on his property, near a transportation route and outside of Hadley's main stockade. Dr. Huntington describes the house as it first appeared: "The main house consisted of two stories with the usual peaked roof, facing down toward the village, and the ell. The outside boards were unpainted and grooved to suggest blocks of stone -- a device called rustication...Two doors, with glass panes above the paneled front and the witches' cross in the lower panel, together formed the original front door above which the boards were rusticated to resemble an arch."[4] This description suggests that Moses Porter aspired to build a house comparable to other fine mansions of the Connecticut River Valley at the time. Some of the features Dr. Huntington described -- the high pitched roof, an elaborate main doorway, and especially rustication -- parallel the architecture of houses owned by wealthy and influential families of the same general region, who were collectively known as the "River Gods."[5]

Unfortunately, Moses Porter did not live long to enjoy his abode. In 1755, under the command of Colonel Ephriam Williams, Porter lost his life fighting the French and Indians at Lake George, New York. His sword, which he took into battle, was returned to his widow by an Indian servant, and prominently remains on display in their bedroom today. The house continued to be inhabited by Captain Porter's widow and daughter. In 1770, Captain Porter's daughter Elizabeth married Charles Phelps, a bricklayer from a prominent Northampton family. Just one year after they were married, Phelps started to add on to the house and improve the existing decor. Through the years until 1799, when Phelps made the final known renovations of the house, Elizabeth Phelps took notes in her journal of the renovations as they were made. By 1775, a "kitching chamber" (probably

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[4]Ibid., 4-5.

[5]An excellent article by Kevin Sweeney, "Mansion People: Kinship, Class, and Architecture in Western Massachusetts in the Mid Eighteenth Century," from *The Winterthur Portfolio* (Vol. 19, No. 4), describes the River Gods and their architecture in extensive detail.

the new kitchen added on to the rear wing of the house) was completed; at this time, a "Mr. Gaylord" worked in the house as a joiner. In 1782, a large barn was erected to the south of the house; today a sunken garden stands in its place, while the barn itself houses the present-day Hadley Farm Museum. A chaise house was built in 1795, which Dr. Huntington later rebuilt as his own house and doctor's office when he moved to Hadley in 1942. At some point during these renovations, Phelps converted two rooms of the house's southeastern corner into the "Long Room," which would house a fine collection of Porter, Phelps, and Huntington belongings and furniture. Finally, in 1799, a new, large gambrel roof was raised atop the house. Dr. Huntington believed this was also when new clapboards were fastened over the house's former exterior, and the current Greek porch and pillars replaced the scroll-pediment doorway Moses Porter had presumably built. Dr. Huntington discovered this feature while repairing the house after a flood in 1938.[6]

Dr. Huntington also credits Phelps with bringing to the house a great amount of furniture and valuables which would later go on display. The Phelpses had a son, Charles Porter Phelps, who studied law in Harvard. It is believed that the purpose of adding the gambrel roof was that the elder Charles Phelps expected his son to return home and take residence there after completing his studies. Charles Porter Phelps, however, remained in Boston for a number of years to conduct a business, and he took other jobs in Boston before he finally did move back to Hadley in 1817. He had built his own farm and residence across the road from the family home. The home was inherited by the Phelpses' daughter, Elizabeth Porter Phelps, that same year. This is the same Elizabeth Phelps who married Dan Huntington, the patriarch of the Huntington line of Hadley.

Eleven children were born to Dan and Elizabeth Huntington, though Dr. Huntington attributes little credit to them for house's current possessions, only a few belongings they had brought from Dan Huntington's home in Connecticut. Dan Huntington's children moved out and away from Hadley, towards Boston, Cambridge,

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[6]Huntington, 12, 14-15.

and elsewhere through New England and the Northeast, so that reduced the impetus to hold a strong physical attachment to the house. A strong emotional bond remained, though. Speaking of the children of his grandfather, Dr. Huntington quoted, "To the five Huntington children moving from Boston to Cambridge and then back again, and at last out of New England altogether, Hadley seemed their real home."[7] The love of their home was carried through to Dr. Huntington's grandfather and father, and finally touched Dr. Huntington himself.

When Dr. Huntington decided to begin restoration of the house as a home for his mother, Lilly Barrett Huntington, he turned to his family first to seek immediate support. The response he got from his siblings was mixed; they were reluctant to commit, because of the time and expense involved. Huntington described how his brother, Frederic Dane Huntington, became convinced to help Dr. Huntington and another brother, Constant, after staying at the house for a weekend: "He fell completely in love with the place and on his return to New York, wrote me that he was most anxious to join Constant and myself in making Forty Acres a safe and comfortable summer home for my mother and all the members of the family."[8] Dr. Huntington and his brothers would soon learn exactly how much expertise was required to properly restore the Huntington house.

While Dr. Huntington and his siblings had romanticized ideas of restoring the house as an ideal summer home, as well as a living tribute to their ancestors, the task would have been impossible without two components: funding and professional advice. Securing funds remained an especially difficult issue for Dr. Huntington for all the time he worked on restoring the house. Seeking professional historic assistance was an entirely different issue, though. While Dr. Huntington was still based in Boston, he had at his disposal a most impressive and unique tool -- the historic preservation movement. Specifically, Huntington had obtained the help of no one less than William Sumner Appleton and SPNEA. As a member of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, Huntington

[7] Ibid., 28.
[8] Ibid., 48.

had become acquainted with Samuel Eliot Morison of Harvard University. With these individuals and other professionals in history assisting him, Huntington had a wide array of ideas at his disposal.

"Born into the Brahmin caste and reared in the traditions of Beacon Hill, Harvard University, and Boston's elite institutions, Appleton made preservation his life's work and benefaction."[9] That statement by itself shows what Dr. Huntington and Appleton may have shared in common, and what they did not. Appleton was reared among the Brahmins, Boston's upper class, when the city, state, and nation were in the midst of major social and demographic upheaval. His ideal image of society included only that which was Anglo-Saxon, orderly, cultured, and conservative; he and other Brahmins deplored the materialism, immigration, and rude democracy of the masses that was supposedly corrupting the society of New England. Some, like Appleton in particular, saw an even more immediate threat -- the growth of tenements and shops coinciding with massive immigration led to the degradation or even outright destruction of the city's classical architecture. His background included a conservative Harvard education in history, experience in selling real estate, and feelings of insecurity and anomie brought on by physical illness and social upheaval. He was therefore prepared to take great strides and found SPNEA.

Appleton's education and the founding of SPNEA coincided with the early twentieth century reform impulse, known as the "Progressive Era." It should come as no surprise that many of the leaders of Progressive Era social reform movements shared Appleton's background -- they were not necessarily Boston Brahmins, but social elites from large East coast cities. The main goal of Progressive reformers, regardless of their particular interest, was to establish order and efficiency in society, to combat chaos and degeneracy brought by industrialism and materialism -- to allow society to "progress" and improve. Appleton's vision of structure preservation through SPNEA was Progressive in

[9]James Lindgren, *Preserving Historic New England: Preservation, Progressivism, and the Remaking of Memory* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1995), 15.

the truest sense. While the impulse to become immersed historic studies and antiquities sounds more "reactionary conservative" than anything else, Appleton developed a rational method to restoration that did not just reflect a plaintive desire to live in the past with no recognition of the present.

Initially, SPNEA focused only on restoring and protecting houses and other historic structures. Appleton showed preference to preserving structures that were colonial in the truest sense -- houses that were built in the seventeenth century, in what Appleton called New England's "medieval" period. These structures reflected the distinct wholesomeness of the Anglo-Saxon Puritan colonists who lived by a strict work ethic, clung strongly to tradition, and built their houses solidly; at least this was the way Appleton saw things. Appleton wanted to preserve these structures as monuments, which stood as rustic and dignified symbols in stark contrast to the hollow, prefabricated materials that came with industrialization. Later he would be more flexible with his standards by including structures that were aesthetically pleasant and confirmed traditional "Yankee values" in modern society -- the Harrison Gary Otis house, built in 1796 and currently serving as SPNEA's headquarters, is a perfect example, for it "symbolized upper-class traditionalism in Boston."[10] Appleton's main preoccupation was to create symbols to remind the public that traditional values were still valid in modern society, and employed a number of preservation methods to reaffirm that message.

By the 1920s, as public attitudes and interest in antiquities increased, SPNEA adjusted its philosophy to show better interpretation of historic artifacts and material culture. It considered not just the structure but also arts and decor that helped to convey a thorough historical context. Certain houses in effect became thematic museums, or others would contain period rooms -- the replica of the New England kitchen from around the mid-eighteenth century was a popular and heavily emulated theme in particular.[11] Altogether, SPNEA acquired forty structures throughout New England for preservation,

[10]Ibid., 85.
[11]Ibid., 154.

from its inception through Appleton's death in 1947. The organization also provided valuable advice and assistance for the restoration of other buildings; this was a service Dr. Huntington took full advantage of.

Dr. Huntington had invited William Sumner Appleton to take a look at the house in November of 1922. It makes sense that it was possible for Dr. Huntington to do this; his practice was based in Boston at the time, and perhaps he convinced Appleton to examine the house when he told him about his restoration plans and the support he was getting from his brothers. Appleton made typed notes of what he saw, describing some of the same features as Dr. Huntington, and also took note of the restorations Dr. Huntington had already made. It would appear the purpose of Appleton's visit was to give professional advice on any future work Huntington would do with the house and its belongings. He noted that Huntington had restored the Long Room "most mistakenly," pointing out that the ceiling was sloping downward unevenly, and that one window had become larger than another. Appleton had also helped Huntington piece together a split-level chest of drawers, and dating a similar chest of drawers from the same period.[12] Dr. Huntington took note of Appleton's visit in a large journal, writing that Appleton had also advised him painting the floor trim green and the walls and ceilings white for the best overall interior appearance.[13]

Since Appleton's visit to the house, sporadic evidence appears of his commentary and advice on the house's restoration. This appears in the form of a handful of known letters exchanged between Dr. Huntington and Appleton. Following Appleton's visit, Dr. Huntington wrote to him that he was taking extensive photographic evidence of his restoration of the furniture.[14] Appleton had written a letter in return advising Huntington on the proper light and dark shades of paint to use when repainting the walls. Since then, Appleton continued to express his interest in Dr. Huntington's restoration and other

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[12] William Sumner Appleton's documentation of the Porter-Phelps-Huntington house, from the archives of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities.

[13] Dr. Huntington's scrapbook, the Porter-Phelps-Huntington Collection (Box 80a), Amherst College Archives and Special Collections.

[14] SPNEA papers, Letter dated December 4, 1922.

architecture of Hadley, writing to the Hadley town clerk in 1930 that he was seeking a "Porter House." It is not certain whether anything came of this, because the evidence is lacking. More letters do reveal, however, that Appleton had continued his correspondence with Dr. Huntington until just before his death in 1947. In one letter from this period, he expressed interest in Dr. Huntington's plans to make the house into an institution for the study of colonial history, and he also wished he could accept the old barn and Hadley Farm Museum as gift, which apparently Clifton Johnson had offered![15]

Even though Dr. Huntington sought and graciously received advice from Appleton, one should be careful to note where his influence ends and Huntington's ideas begin. For instance, Dr. Huntington was very much free to apply his own, since he was not subjected to SPNEA's rules and regulations. While his decision to eventually incorporate the house as an educational resource for local schools and then later as a house museum drew positive attention from Appleton, one must remember just how much the two men differed. Dr. Huntington was an outsider to the world of the Brahmins; he was neither raised nor immersed in their exclusive social environment. It did not appear he shared Appleton's broad agenda of resurrecting colonial culture as a means of reforming modern society. He did not want the house's colonial past to be entirely neglected, either. At this point, he and his brothers were responding primarily to the will of the family. The house was still very much theirs to do with as they pleased.

Things changed in 1926 when Dr. Huntington's mother died, and no one member of the family could remain on site for long to watch over the house. The house in the meantime had been damaged by the weather and flooding, and fire was a lingering threat. Letters from his brother Frederic revealed that he was not interested in spending any more money on the house's upkeep than necessary. With encouragement from the two brothers with whom he shared expenses, Dr. Huntington bought out shares from the rest of his family in 1929, thus claiming full ownership of the house, and started making plans to

[15]SPNEA papers, Letter dated April 14, 1947.

move to Hadley to take care of the house full time. Changes Dr. Huntington made in the way he tended to the house and property indicate he wanted something more than a stale monument of the family. He indicated he did not look forward to having to "store the furniture and valuables and shut up the house."[16]

The first significant change Huntington made to the property was to put an end to its operation as an active farm. Ever since Moses Porter and his family inhabited "Forty Acres," the property had been used in some capacity as an active cattle farm. This function had been continued through when Constant, Frederic, and Dr. Huntington's ownership of the farm, and financial records show that sale of produce helped to defray expenses related to the house's upkeep. When Dr. Huntington assumed full ownership of the house, he decided he did not want to operate a farm. A friend of Dr. Huntington's in Hadley, Clifton Johnson, and his brother Henry had plans to open a museum of farm implements they had collected, and hoped to make a copy the barn Charles Phelps erected to house their collection. This determined what was to become of the large barn Charles Phelps had erected in 1782. Citing it as a fire hazard and its state of disrepair, he found it to be too much of a burden for him to maintain. To solve both their problems, Dr. Huntington let them take the barn itself. The Johnsons did not disassemble and then reassemble the barn, in order to preserve its authenticity. The result was that the Hadley Farm Museum came into existence and still stands today.[17] This was the same museum that William Sumner Appleton hoped to acquire as SPNEA property just before his death.

The other major change Huntington had done on the property was to convert the Chaise House into a cottage for the regular caretakers of the property, which he expected eventually to be himself and his family. The old Chaise House had to be entirely rebuilt, under the recommendations of the architect. Huntington did at least follow one important guideline of restoration, in that he salvaged what good framework remained of the Chaise House, reused them in the new structure, and had the new cottage built entirely along the

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[16]Huntington, 52.
[17]Ibid., 52, 61.

lines of the previous structure.[18] There is no question that the removal of these buildings had a significant impact on modern interpretation of the property. Before rushing to judgment, one should consider Dr. Huntington's reasons for his decisions; namely, he was acting out of the best interest for the rest of the property by reducing the fire hazard and providing reliable quarters for a caretaker. It was remarkably good fortune that the barn did not have to be thrown out altogether, and instead it found new use for historic interpretation, no less. After converting the barn's lower level and surrounding landscape into a sunken garden, Huntington claimed to make no further major changes to the property's exterior. In the 1930s, his attention went fully to restoring and cataloging the house's furniture and artifacts, and delving into his genealogy.

One individual Huntington consulted for cataloging the house's inventory was Homer Eaton Keyes, the editor of *Antiques* magazine and Huntington's former college classmate. Huntington may have wanted Keyes' help mainly because he knew him personally, and also for his knowledge of Colonial furniture and decor. He happened to meet Keyes when the Johnson brothers dedicated the Farm Museum in 1931. Shortly after the dedication, Keyes went about assisting Huntington with the cataloging using what old records they could find, including a 1756 inventory. The room Keyes and Huntington were interested in refurbishing most was the Long Room. "The Long Room to-day is just as it was arranged by Homer Keyes," wrote Huntington, obviously referring to when he refurbished the room in the 1930s.[19] Upon Keyes' suggestion, Huntington obtained an India carpet rug from his sister-in-law to fully complement the Long Room. Huntington consulted at least one other acquaintance and historic professional to augment knowledge of his family's history.

It is uncertain exactly when Dr. Huntington became acquainted with Samuel Eliot Morison; the evidence that does exist is their membership in the Colonial Society of

[18]Ibid., 52.
[19]Ibid., 61.

Massachusetts, and letters exchanged between the two when Huntington was making plans to incorporate the house. While he was a member of the Colonial Society in the 1930s and 1940s, Huntington hosted a number of group meetings at the house. He became more closely acquainted with professional historians in the organization; one meeting roster shows that Early American historian Perry Miller was a member. Huntington's membership in the Colonial Society presents a question of his motives: He may have joined to supplement his interest in colonial history, but did he also join to make connections with professional historians? One of Huntington's achievements in the Colonial Society was presenting a lecture on the background of his great-great-grandfather, Charles Phelps. This was helpful to Dr. Huntington in enlightening visitors on the house's rich historical background. Dr. Huntington's dedication and thoughtfulness may have left a strong impression on Morison himself.

Samuel Eliot Morison was as much a part of the Boston Brahmin caste as William Sumner Appleton was. He knew the social status of the Brahmins well, comparing their cultural influence to that of one great vintage wine, "from which a certain amount is drawn off every year, and replaced by an equal volume of the new."[20] Morison was confident that Brahmin would eternally be able regenerate itself and hold itself above all else. Morison did occasionally lend his talents to SPNEA, though he did not always agree with their acquisition tactics. When SPNEA was concentrating its efforts on "little wooden houses," he believed architecturally elaborate structures were just as deserving of protection, if not more. His aversion to Appleton's policies led him decline becoming a regular advisor at SPNEA, but his interest in historic preservation remained as strong as ever. As a descendant of Harrison Gary Otis, he was very happy to cooperate when SPNEA decided to acquire and restore the building in the early 1910s.[21]

It must have been a tremendous boost for Dr. Huntington when thirty years later, Morison was one of the first main advisors for incorporating the Porter-Phelps-Huntington

[20]Lindgren, 9.
[21]Ibid., 85-87.

house.[22] While the correspondence between Huntington and Morison was unfortunately scarce and sporadic, the letters they do exchange indicate that Morison was strongly supportive of Huntington's idea to gradually convert the house into an Institute of Colonial Study. Morison helped Huntington by recommending he go to see Carl Bridenbaugh of Colonial Williamsburg, when Huntington planned a visit to the region in December of 1947.[23] Other correspondence indicates that Morison helped Huntington add and interpret some of the acquisitions for the house. Huntington was particularly interested in learning more about his great uncle, Charles Porter Phelps, and Epes Sargent, his great-grandfather, the father of his grandmother on his father's side. Charles Porter Phelps was an alumnus of Harvard University in 1792, and Epes Sargent was a famous sea captain of the early nineteenth century. Huntington had found small curios of interest belonging to his ancestors, and he wrote to Morison perhaps hoping that he could add more background information.[24] As a member of the board, Huntington also kept Morison informed of expenses and funds.

Other related correspondence shows that Huntington had a much wider web of influence than might have been thought before. Other names that appeared as members of the Board of Directors included Clifton Johnson's wife, Northampton lawyer William Dwyer, who worked hard to secure funding for the house to avert its closing in 1955, and architects Lewis Perry and Andrew Hepburn, who carefully documented the house's architectural history and renovation under Dr. Huntington. One individual who probably deserves additional study is Henry Russell Hitchcock, former professor of history and architecture at Smith College. Huntington dropped his name as a supporter of his decision to convert the house into a study center of colonial history and architecture. If Hitchcock gave Huntington similar advice about interpretation and restoration of the house's structure,

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[22]Letter from James Lincoln Huntington to Samuel Eliot Morison, November 27, 1946 (HUG-FP 33.15, Box VII), from the Harvard University Archives.
[23]Letters between Huntington and Morison, October 1947 (HUG-FP 33.15, Box VII), Harvard University Archives.
[24]Letters between Huntington and Morison, November 14, 1953, and January 30, 1960 (HUG-FP 33.15, Box VII), Harvard University Archives.

such information would be invaluable. Unfortunately, such specific information remains evasive for the time being.

Although his connections and correspondence with such influential figures is fascinating, the existing evidence only goes so far into telling us what was happening in Dr. Huntington's mind through his extensive work. The letters Dr. Huntington exchanged with Samuel Eliot Morison and the Colonial Society do not directly tell us how he reached the decision to convert the house from a private residence to a public house museum. I cite Morison and the Colonial Society because it seems Dr. Huntington's historical interest would have expanded in the 1930s, after he was the sole possessor of the family estate. He exchanges much correspondence with his siblings and other extended family members, but it appears the most relevance they carry is either asking for emergency financial support or reporting on restoration progress.

Learning about historic preservation and the Colonial Revival only goes so far, as well. The Colonial Revival plays an important role, because it appears Dr. Huntington was far more interested in interpreting history from the colonial and revolutionary eras than anything from the nineteenth century and beyond. Dr. Huntington does not directly declare at any time that he is consciously participating in the Colonial Revival as a social trend. He makes a slight reference in one passage from *Forty Acres*: "In 1921 the house had a generous admixture of Victorian furniture. Many of the early colonial pieces had been neglected or even relegated to the attic, the sheds or the barn; these were all gradually salvaged and the Victorian pieces disappeared."[25] It is also fitting that Huntington strongly diminishes the role of women and blacks in the family's history. The strongest presence he attributes to women are in the second-floor bedrooms and the occasional portraits and craft work that appear in places on the first floor. He does acknowledge that the Porters and Phelpses did once own black slaves, and perhaps later also hired black servants, yet this does not clearly appear in the articles that are represented. The spotlight is clearly given to

[25]Huntington, 50.

the white male heads of the household, especially Samuel and Moses Porter, Charles Phelps, and Dan and Frederic Dan Huntington. The Colonial Revival emphasized a resurrection of pre-industrial values, and this necessarily meant promoting the leadership of white men.

One room in particular that represents Dr. Huntington's selective memory is the northwestern bed chamber on the first floor. Nearly everything in this room is a tribute to his grandfather, Frederic Dan Huntington. Dr. Huntington remarked that the room was used extensively as a private study by his grandfather; thus various personal articles belonging to F. D. Huntington -- portraits, diplomas, personal papers -- are featured on display. Some pieces of furniture originally belonged to forefathers from previous generations, including Charles Phelps' gilt-framed mirror and Dan Huntington's spool bed. The context Dr. Huntington sets is clear, though. Everything in this particular room would have been exactly as his grandfather used it. Frederic Huntington occupied a special place in his grandson's memory; this was probably due to the recollection of his mannerisms and his love for the family property. For a time, Dr. Huntington referred to the property as "The Bishop Huntington House," as a tribute to his grandfather.[26]

The arrangements of other rooms represent similar themes. He wanted to create a tribute to his ancestors, though some rooms show less of an emphasis on any individual family members. Some reflect artistry, or simply how the room was meant to look at approximately the right time. The northeast bed chamber on the first floor is a focal point of interest for a number of reasons. It is here that Moses Porter's sword and scabbard are on display. Another piece of furniture Dr. Huntington emphasizes is the "field bed" belonging to Charles Phelps. Dr. Huntington names it as the birthplace of his grandfather, Frederic Dan Huntington. Both items remain on display today. This room originally contained a generous mixture of furniture; a washstand belonged to Dr. Huntington's

[26]Huntington, 27.

grandmother, and his wife contributed a Windsor chair and paintings and rugs. Most of the original articles belonged to Charles Phelps.[27]

To the south of this bed chamber is the "Long Room," the great family meeting parlor that Charles Phelps had renovated out of two rooms. This room has very striking aesthetic features; a large central fireplace, an arched partition to a window ell, and perhaps a greater collection of fine furniture and portraits than any other room in the house. Portraits of Dan Huntington and his wife, painted by their nephew Thomas Fitch. Dr. Huntington also had listed in this room a portrait of General Matthew Clarkson painted by Simon Fitch, supposedly another nephew of Dan Huntington. Given the time when these portraits were made, they could represent part of a collection of paintings the Huntingtons had received from their nephews. The fireplace mantle is also an ideal place for show pieces. Dr. Huntington's wife, Sarah Higginson Pierce, a purchased a pewter collection from an auction, and introduced collections of pewter and brass belonging to her family, the Pierces. It would seem Dr. Huntington had great interest in this room, as it could serve important and memorable functions. It was this room where Dan Huntington and Elizabeth Porter Phelps were married. The existing materials documented by Dr. Huntington, with the room's location near two doorways suggest that Phelps converted the room as a general meeting parlor, and then later was used as a family room. It seems reasonable that this was the room's function when Dr. Huntington was young.[28]

The dining room presents a curious mixture of variety and contradictions. An inventory by Dr. Huntington implies that not all the furniture in the dining room was originally owned by his ancestors. He claims a sideboard was a wedding gift to him from a friend, Dr. Edwin Locke, and even names the Sachs store where it was purchased from! He had also purchased a "mahogany table with deep drop leaves" from an auction, even though he already finds a fine dining table left by Dan Huntington. The inventory is a

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[27]Dr. Huntington's inventory of Northeast Bedroom of the Porter-Phelps-Huntington House, Porter-Phelps-Huntington Collection (Box 83, Folder 60), Amherst College Archives and Special Collections.
[28]Ibid., inventory of Long Room.

confusing guide, since it indicates furniture from Charles Phelps, his wife's family, and perhaps even a sideboard belonging to Charles Porter Phelps. He does, however, carefully attribute the ownership of the silver, pewter, and ceramics in the display cabinets. Much of the ceramics belonged to the Pierces, but one particular set included a Cincinnati plate, cup and saucer that belonged to Major General Benjamin Lincoln. Dr. Huntington traces General Lincoln, a Revolutionary War hero, as another famous ancestor from his grandmother's side. The overall feel and layout of this room suggests it was meant to be arranged as a "period" dining room. There doesn't seem to be any greater explanation for why there is such a diverse mix of furniture and show pieces from different eras.[29]

Furniture in the second floor hallway and bedrooms shows another generous variety from different time periods, this time giving more credit to Samuel and Moses Porter. One piece of furniture, which probably belonged to Samuel Porter, is a four-poster bed with rococo claw-and-ball feet. Huntington enlisted the help of the Walpole Society to determine exactly when the bed dated from; the date has changed from the 1600s to 1750. Another piece of furniture from about the same time period, also belonging to the Porters, is a highboy cabinet that has had its legs cut down; it is not clear how and why this was done. Its companion piece is a Queen Ann lowboy placed in the same bed chamber. This is also where one finds the split-level chest of drawers Dr. Huntington and William Sumner Appleton pieced together. The drawers, along with a set of white-painted Sheraton chairs, belonged to Charles Phelps.

James Lincoln Huntington, the first curator of the Porter-Phelps-Huntington foundation, died in 1967. He never lived to see his efforts to have the house serve as an institute of colonial study bear fruit. By the time of his death, though, the landscape of the Huntington property had changed remarkably, and the history of a family that many might have never known was open to be shown to all. How does one ultimately evaluate Dr. Huntington's work? As a preservationist, he did a job well done. The structure he had to

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[29]Ibid., inventory of Dining Room.

work with was nearly 200 years old; time and weather were taking their toll on the old building. He appeared to have no formal training as a preservationist, but by establishing contacts with some of the top professionals in the field, he got the help he needed. Establishing contacts among friends and family was also crucial to secure funding for his efforts. One incredible aspect was how, for a time roughly between the 1920s and 1940s, Dr. Huntington seemed to take on all expenses for the house's upkeep single-handedly. The present structures and landscape can hardly be called an exact replica of the original property since Charles Phelps' alterations. Besides the relocated barn and the restructured Chaise House, Dr. Huntington may have also taken down other exterior buildings on the property for the purpose of fire safety and landscape aesthetics. In short, Dr. Huntington did what he felt was absolutely necessary. The results that he did manage to achieve were remarkable.

As an interpreter, the judgment is less simple, for the way he interpreted history was certainly influenced by his memory and values. His interpretation may have been influenced at least in part by the Colonial Revival. His efforts came in the wake of the Brahmin-led preservation movement, when praising the leadership of colonial and revolutionary era leaders, who happened to be mostly free white males, was definitely part of the story they told. It is ironic that Dr. Huntington should focus so much attention on the male heads of the household when for a good 15 years in the middle of this time period being revived, women were the only ancestors who regularly inhabited the house. Dr. Huntington does acknowledge their importance to an extent; one of his last projects was transcribing the diary of Elizabeth Porter Phelps. He also acknowledges that the Porters and Phelpses did own black slaves in *Forty Acres*. The veranda extending along the rear of the house to the West was thought to be a rendezvous point for a "large staff" of slaves, in the same article that extolled Dr. Huntington's preservation efforts![30] Dr. Huntington

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[30] "As The Huntington House..."

doesn't seem to give more than a passing glance to the existence of slaves; the appear almost nowhere among the house's antiquities.

I suspect a greater reason for Dr. Huntington telling history through a white male perspective had to do more with his personal memory and his appreciation of his ancestors through his restoration efforts. Why does he attribute so many pieces of furniture to Charles Phelps? Perhaps it derived from his recognition of Phelps' monumental task in renovating the house into its present state. Another figure he pays high tribute to is his grandfather, Frederic Dane Huntington. He was the last male Huntington after Dan Huntington to inherit and tend to the family property. On childhood summer visits, Dr. Huntington first learned of the house's rich historical background from his grandfather, and subsequently his family's history. It seems logical that Dr. Huntington would have wanted his finished product to show a great deal of respect to these two men, while also trying to show a fair amount of the entire family background. He accomplishes this to a certain degree in the Long Room, where portraits a keepsakes of male and female ancestors are put on display.

Motives can be very hard to pin down, and Dr. Huntington's are especially so. A good deal of this paper has required drawing inferences between Dr. Huntington's memoirs, the records of his preservation efforts, and that which is known of historic preservation and the revival of the Colonial culture. The best way to conclude the study of Dr. Huntington, for now, is that he genuinely wanted people to come see his house. The same article that opened this paper gave a nod to Dr. Huntington, claiming that "there are those who are eager to follow" his example, and to have the world come into their abodes and "look at the stern phases of a more primitive life that bred strong men and women." The judgment that is finally passed is that the house "has a right to have its own ghosts." Dr. Huntington may have revived and created historical ghosts of his very own, yet perhaps that is entirely appropriate:

These ghosts merit such perpetuation, for at least the immediate future, as Dr. James Huntington has dreamed, and which new forces are eager to promote for the immediate tomorrows.[31]

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[31] Ibid.

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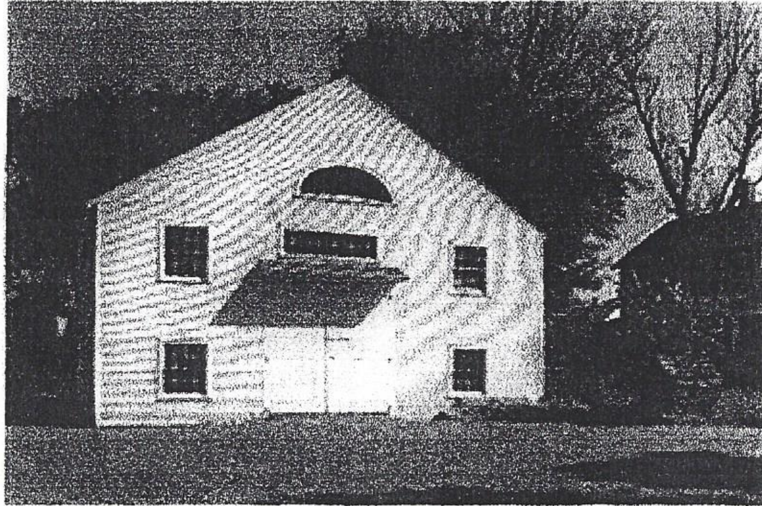
ILLUSTRATIONS

The following photographs of the Porter-Phelps-Huntington House are copyrighted to Samuel Chamberlain. All photographs come from Forty Acres: The Story of the Bishop Huntington House, by James Lincoln Huntington.

Exterior view of the Porter-Phelps-Huntington House.

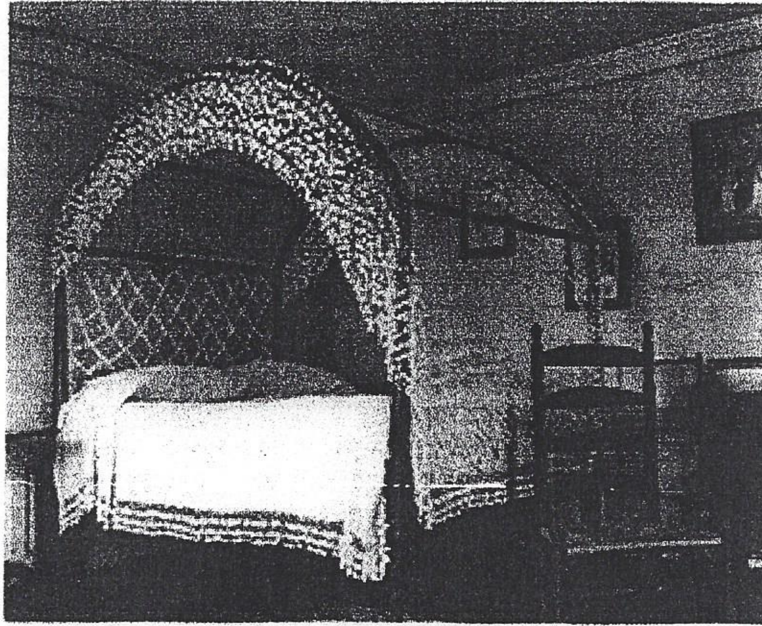
This view shows the house's classic double-pitched gambrel roof and neoclassical doorway.

Not pictured is the woodshed extension and cottage where the Chaise House formerly stood.



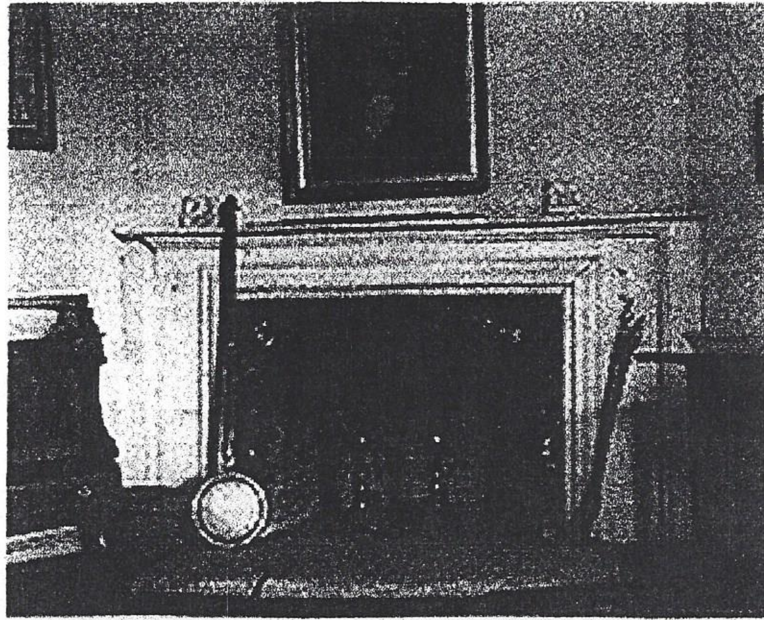
The barn built by Charles Phelps in 1782.

It now houses the Hadley Farm Museum, located about two miles south of the Porter-Phelps-Huntington property.



Bed in northeast bed chamber that was purchased by Charles Phelps.

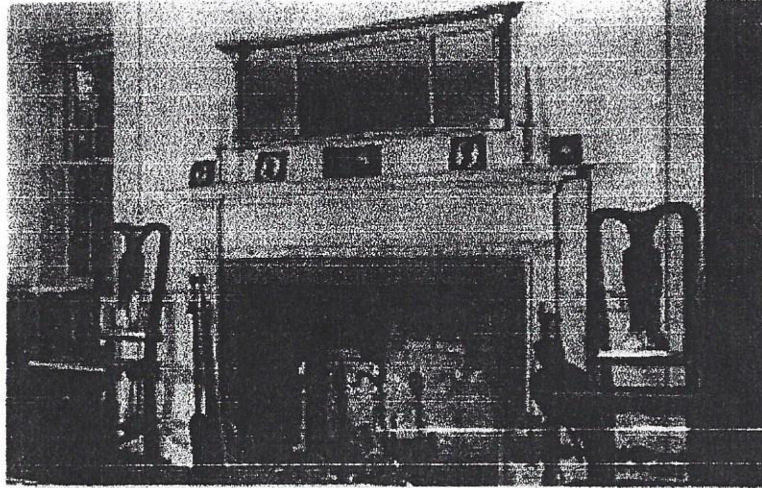
Dr. Huntington claims this is where his grandfather, Frederic Dan Huntington, was born.



View of the corner fireplace in northeast bed chamber.

The portrait above the fireplace is that of Frederic Dan Huntington.

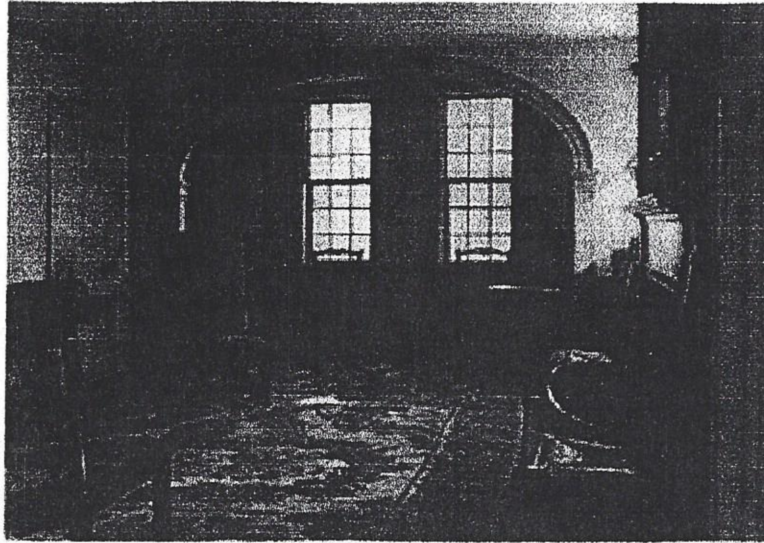
Just visible atop the mantle is Moses Porter's sword and scabbard.



The fireplace of the "Long Room."

Two fine Queen Anne chairs flank the hearth.

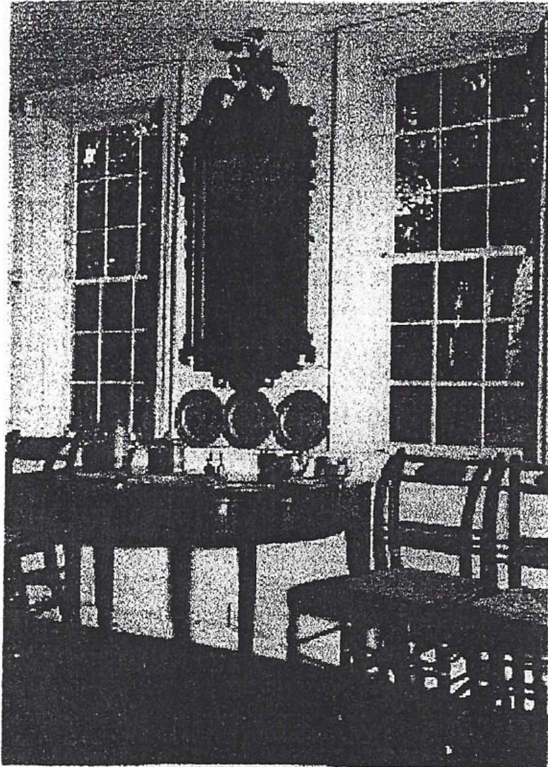
On the mantle are silhouettes of family members and candlesticks.



Facing the eastern windows of the "Long Room."

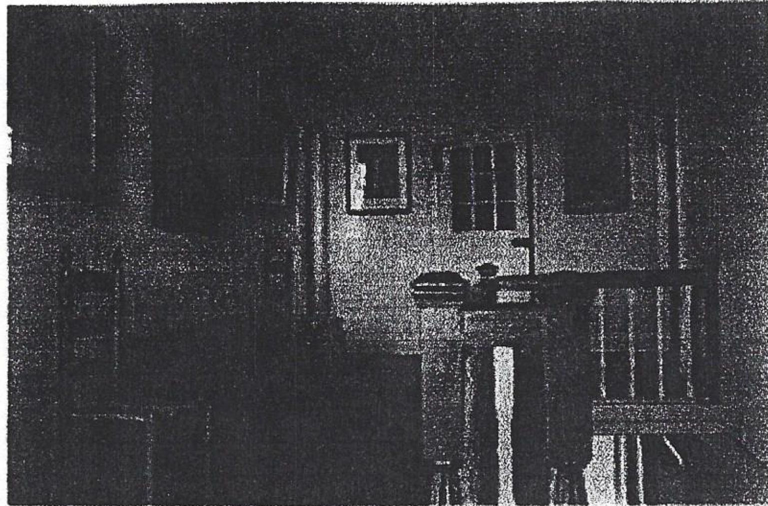
One can clearly see the India carpet rug Dr. Huntington procured on Homer Keyes' behest.

Matching chairs are barely visible beneath the windows.



A sample of the pewter ware on display in the dining room.

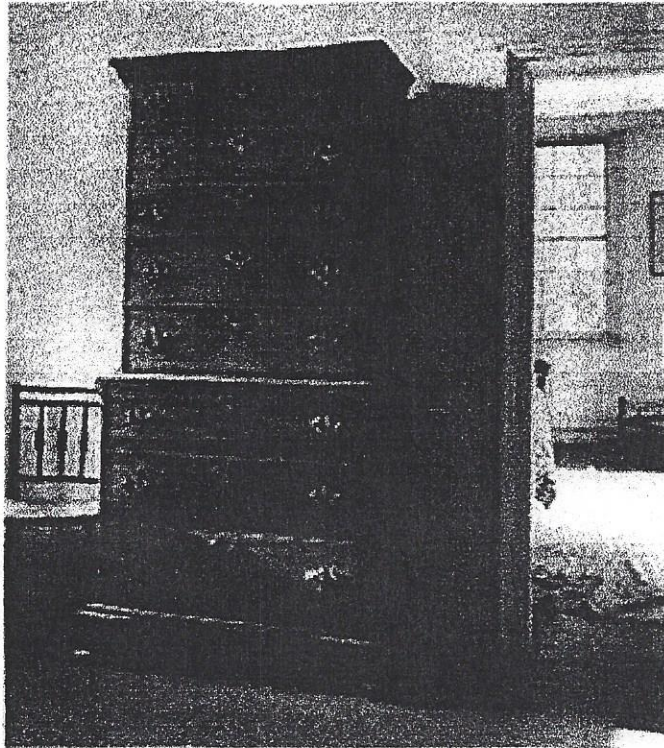
The mirror is Georgian; the table is actually an endpiece of a larger, segmented table.



A view of the second floor hallway.

The room at the end once served as Charles Phelps' personal office.

The pumpkin pine chest has an interesting story; it served as a makeshift casket for a Phelps slave, "Philliss," who had died of illness.



The split-level chest of drawers that William Sumner Appleton helped Dr. Huntington piece together.

It originally belonged to Charles Phelps.