The Willard portrait of John Howard Payne, which after many years has found its logical and — to be hoped — final resting place at Home Sweet Home. The old Carver chair (at left) is said to be the oldest chair in this country. At the right is a Windsor chair made in East Hampton in 1750

THE JOHN HOWARD PAYNE HOMESTEAD

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Photographs by ARTHUR G. ELDREDGE

THE possibilities of making an old house habitable at small expense is charmingly illustrated in the restoration and refitting of the old John Howard Payne house at East Hampton, Long Island, now owned by Mr. G. H. Buek of Brooklyn, and occupied by him and Mrs. Buek as their summer home. Like another old landmark to the north, which had its birth more than 200 years ago, as did the Payne home, it remains practically unchanged in appearance, but has been adapted to modern conditions.

When the house passed into Mr. Buek's hands, its rehabilitation presented a number of knotty problems. The difficulties were, to be sure, the same which confront any person who seeks to restore an American house of the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century, but so happily has it worked out, that, apart from the preservation of a valuable architectural relic, a narration of the tale is worth while, if for no other reason than the encouragement of those beset with similar perplexities.

That no modern touch has been allowed to mar the aspect of the dwelling is a matter for rejoicing. In making the old house habitable, it was the paramount idea of the owner to erase none of the hallmarks of age, yet to include all modern conveniences. In this endeavor he has been signally successful, and from the wide chimney of rich-hued sun dried bricks to the weather stained shingles that clothe the new service extension, the appearance is as primitive as the heart of the antiquary could wish.

Only those who have attempted it know the trials besetting one who seeks to modernize an old house, particularly an early Colonial dwelling. To restore it without impairing its quaintness or losing its individuality is a task to the accomplishment of which must be brought, above all else, the loving heart and the sympathetic touch. A modern note and the commercial spirit work disaster at the start, and only one who truly reverences the spirit of the past can hope to remodel successfully and yet retain the "old timey" atmosphere.

Old residents of East Hampton, now living, and who have the story from their parents and grandparents, claim that the John Howard Payne house was built prior to 1700. The late Judge Henry D. Hedges, the historian of East Hampton, who died in 1912, aged 92 years, was of that belief, and since the house represents the earliest type of Colonial architecture, this is presumably the case. It is the style that was popular before the gambrel roof type came into vogue, with a picturesque roof that slopes gently down over the facade and slants more sharply at the back, terminating in a lean-to one story in height.

No effort has been made to change the design, but only to repair the ravages of time and make the house livable once more. Thus it stands to-day in its comely simplicity as it did two centuries ago, with its innumerable tiny window panes, the old English bricks in chimney and fireplace, the broad floor plankings, and most precious of all, the identical hand wrought hardware — the keyhole escutcheons, cock's head hinges, and latches, with the marks of the forge plainly visible. It is such touches as these, as well as the beauty of wainscot and wall paneling, that make this ancient house interesting architecturally as well as historically.

Certainly nothing could have been less encouraging than the appearance of the old house when Mr. Buek first looked at it with a view to purchasing. Overgrown with weeds from long neglect, it was necessary to brush aside the tangled mass to get even a glimpse in at the windows, while the door sills, completely rotted and fallen away, made entrance a more or less perilous feat. Inside, the situation was even worse. The floors had sagged and here and there had dropped to the level of the ground, while the woodwork, such a conspicuous feature of the old house, had spread in spots a hand's breadth and was generally warped out of all semblance to its former beauty and symmetry.

Speaking of the woodwork, it is a matter of curious interest how the early settlers brought with them from the fatherland, fashions with which they were familiar at home. In the paneled walls of the early Colonial houses we see resemblance to the fine old manor houses of England, and in the craftsmanship, the hand of the master English cabinet maker, since all trades were represented in those who came over, and the ship's carpenter was frequently a man of fine taste and broad experience.

It was from Maidstone, England, that most of the early settlers from this locality came. The village was first named for their birthplace and was later changed to East Hampton, so that it was the most natural thing in the world that not only the designs of the houses but the trim should favor the English fashions of this particular shire.

To these conscientious workmen we are indebted for the delightful individuality of early woodwork, for the Colonial molders loved their craft. They put their own personality into it, so that between the wall paneling of that period and the machine turned product of to-day, there is as much difference as between a Gobelin tapestry and a factory woven hanging. It was hand work in the strictest sense of the word, for men carved their moldings then as did the stone cutters, with chisel and gouge. Seldom did they follow a set pattern, but varied the design according to taste or by the limitations of time and space.

Hence, each piece of work possessed a beauty of its own. It was this originality of treatment that made the work of Sir Christopher Wren so noticeable in England, and it was the same stamp that made Colonial architecture in America so

The ancestral home of John Howard Payne at East Hampton, Long Island, which inspired the song whose appeal is as wide as humanity itself — "Home Sweet Home"

dignified and purposeful, and so well worthy the attention that is being bestowed upon it by institutions such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which is gathering specimens of the early woodwork of New England, Nieuw Amsterdam, and Virginia. One fine specimen of paneling now a part of the Museum Exhibit bears a close resemblance to that in the Payne house at East Hampton.

There were a variety of opinions as to the possibility of restoring the house and putting it in habitable shape. To replace the paneling, replaster the ceilings and walls, supply new door sills and flooring, and brace up the foundation was a task which most village carpenters pronounced a formidable one. A local builder, after some consideration, agreed to do the work for $2,500. Mr. Buek spent $4,500 on it, exclusive of the service wing which cost in the neighborhood of $500, so that to put the house in order cost something like $5,000.

First of all, it was necessary to strengthen the underpinning and replace the oak sills with Georgia pine. The wide floor boards must be matched as nearly as possible. There was the huge chimney to be gone over by an expert to detect any breaks or weak spots, and this necessitated extensive tours in the region roundabout in a search for old brick. The lovely dull red of old brick is quite as hopeless to acquire among modern building materials as is the luminous sheen of the old weathered shingles.

Happiest of all the inspirations which animated the owner in the work of restoration was the addition of the service wing and the manner in which he made it conform to the ancient appearance of the rest of the house. As it stood, the house contained but one guest room. There was no bathroom, and it lacked servants' quarters and culinary accommodations, since the old time kitchen was untenantable for modern purposes; so an "L" was added, stretching back from the end of the house some 25 feet. It led off from the old fire room by way of a narrow passage lighted by two rows of shallow Dutch windows, quite in keeping with the style of the house. Beneath them is room for service tables. At the end, the passage widens into a big, roomy kitchen and pantry on one side, and a double servant's room with bath on the other.

Naturally, the important problem which the erection of this addition presented was to make it conform in design and appearance to the house; the cedar shingles of the latter were in the neighborhood of 215 years old, and the difficulty lay in acquiring for the new shingles the weathered appearance of age. A brilliant thought, however, struck the owner, and he at once set off on another expedition, scouring the countryside for an abandoned structure of the same age. He found this in an old barn, tumble-down and generally disreputable, but with the much coveted wide cedar shingles. The barn was purchased and its age-worn covering removed and applied to the new house, with the result that there is nothing to indicate the disparity of years between the old structure and its modern extension.

Fortunately, no structural changes were necessary in the house, except the division of an unused attic over the old kitchen into a guest room and a spacious bathroom, with linen closet under the low-hanging eaves. Between the two rooms, and surrounding the crude and massive chimney, is a passage way into which the narrow back stairway opens, and out of which the primitive exit to the attic rises. A very tiny room in the lean-to off the old kitchen has been fixed up in mannish style, where a chance bachelor guest can be stowed away as occasion requires. Its having a separate entrance adds to rather than detracts from its interest from the masculine viewpoint.

Early Colonial homes were built on honor, and the huge logs used in their construction are next to imperishable. It was on this fact that Mr. Buek counted in determining to take the risk of remodeling the ancient landmark, despite the advice of friends. Nor was he mistaken in his assumption, for when a bevy of workmen began repairs it was found that while the oak used in sills and flooring had decayed, the cedar framework was as sound as on the day that the timber was hauled from the forest.

The great beams and joists were like iron, and it was with the greatest difficulty that they were sawn through when the modern heating and plumbing systems were installed. An examination of the old laths, when the ceilings were restored, proved them to be equally well preserved. The inaccuracies of primitive workmanship were most curiously and interestingly illustrated in the varying thicknesses of these rude strips of wood, for in some instances they were but a half-inch and in others two and a half inches through.

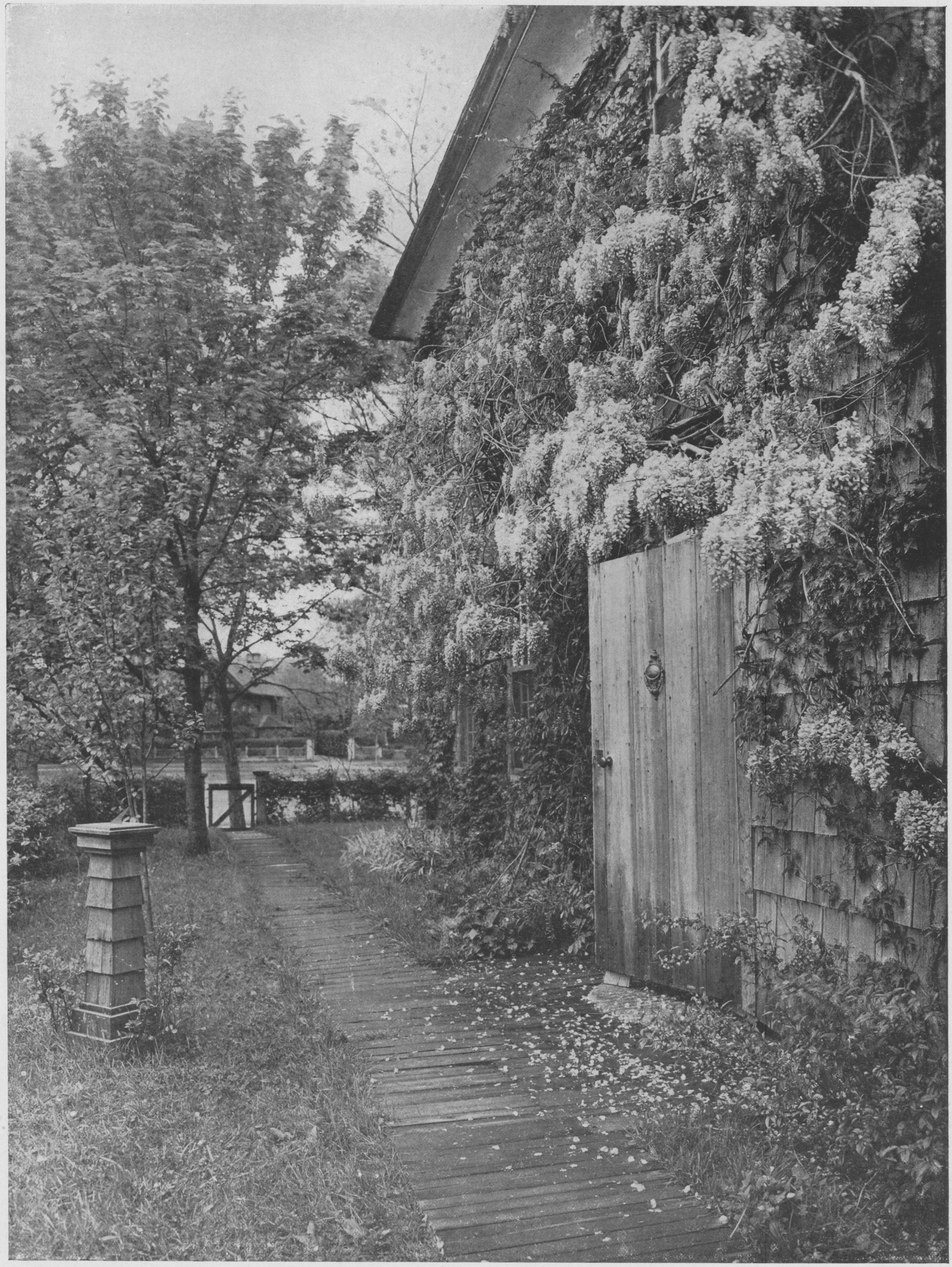
It is small wonder that the John Howard Payne home is the haunt of tourists, for it presents one of the most attractive pictures of Colonial life that is preserved to us. There is abundant inspiration to be found in the fine, simple lines of the old dwelling, and whole sermons in the work of such craftsmen as Hepplewhite, Sheraton, and Chippendale.

It was the aim of the owner to make each article express the love and life and labor of him who produced it.

The corner cupboard in the sitting-room is illustrative of a popular architectural detail of early Colonial houses. It is a semi-circular recess, of which the half dome at the top is filled in by a scallop shell. Within the sacred enclosure, there was wont to repose the "best" china, a green and pink sprigged pattern on a cream ground, may be, or else a more impressive set of "old blue." In this instance it is filled from Mrs. Buek's unexampled collection of lustre.

To speak of lustre ware in bulk seems little short of sacreligious, but the fact remains that

Neighboring Colonial homes as well as some farther afield—in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, etc.—have been levied upon for furniture to rehabilitate Home, Sweet Home, but it all "belongs"



All the homely details that were once a part of the homestead have been restored as far as possible, so that it visualizes the simple domestic life of early Colonial days. The wistaria, however, was not there in Payne's time

there are no less than 85 pieces of the silver lustre, besides 70 pitchers of varying sizes and designs, with half as many other articles of domestic use in the gold and copper hues. One piece, a mammoth silver pitcher measuring a foot in height and 9 inches in its widest portion, has an interesting ecclesiastical record. It has assisted at innumerable christenings, having been used to fill the font for the baptismal service in an old church at Maspeth, L. I., for the past 100 years. Two quaint gold vases flank the fine Willard portrait of John Howard Payne which hangs on the chimney breast directly above the narrow Colonial mantel.

This portrait by the way, painted by the artist for Mr. Charles H. Brainard, who was Payne's biographer and friend, hung for years in the Old South Church, Boston. One time while scouring the town for autograph letters of the dead poet and dramatist, Mr. Buek visited a dingy basement shop in Boston. His mission proved fruitless, but when on the sidewalk after leaving the place, he was hailed by the shop keeper. Did he care for a portrait of John Howard Payne? Scarcely crediting his ears, he reëntered the basement and saw, to his great surprise, that the portrait was a veritable Willard, and found that it could be purchased for a reasonable sum.

Just such lucky "finds" have signalized Mr. Buek's efforts in refurnishing the old house. When the fire-board in the sitting-room, which for many years had stopped the chimney place, was removed, what was the owner's delight to find the original crane and pot hook reposing there. Clearing the opening of long accumulated layers of soot and dust was the work of a few moments. To-day, the fireplace constitutes one of the most delightful features of the room.

Most ancient of all pieces of American furniture is a turned slat-back rocker of about 1670, the oldest type of chair in the United States. Of this rocker, Luke Vincent Lockwood in his "Colonial Furniture in America" says:

> The earliest rocking-chair that the writer has found is shown in Fig. 422. It will be seen that the turnings are almost identical with those shown in Fig. 419, and, as in that chair, there are three slats. The rear legs at the back are widened out and a groove is cut in them to hold the rocker, showing that this chair must have originally been made for a rocking chair and not cut down as have been many of the stationary chairs. It seems strange that so few early rocking chairs should be known, because the principle of the rocker was well known and used on the cradles of the earlier period, but rocking chairs are scarce prior to the type which is shown in Fig. 425. This chair is the property of Mr. G. H. Buek and is in the Home Sweet Home cottage, East Hampton, L. I.

Opposite it stands a charming example of a Windsor chair made in East Hampton in 1750, and presented to Mr. Buek by Thomas Moran, the celebrated artist, who also has his home in East Hampton. Two fine old red walnut chairs of Queen Anne's day and a couple of old Quaker rockers are equally rare.

The spinet was discovered in an old loft in Boston, quite by chance, dismembered and battered, but, like a faded society belle, bearing perceptible marks of former beauty. The parts were reassembled by an expert, and the instrument, attuned to scale, now delights visitors at Home Sweet Home with its quaint harmonies. Recent guests had the pleasure of listening to Beethoven's sonatas played on it by a celebrated German musician, who declared the spinet to be a precise counterpart of one owned by the great mæstro himself.

Old furniture is like old people, and there must always be pathos in the fact that those who have lived together can not end their days together, and so one quietly rejoices in the companionship of the two Pembroke tables which have never been separated since Revolutionary times. The old grandfather's clock came from an old home in Morristown, N. J., and the mahogany centre table, like a number of the other articles of furniture in the house, came out of an old house that figured prominently in the history of the early days of East Hampton; the silver candlesticks on the mantel, two of a collection of thirty-six, were a part of the furnishing of an old home at Amagansett.

Across the tiny entry, with its closet under the stairs that one must bend low to enter, and its doll-house staircase, is the dining-room, the same size as the sitting-room and heated by the same generous central chimney stack. Here we note the recurrence of the wall paneling — such a delightful feature of the sitting-room — which, though it fails to inspire the same enthusiasm, is good in spacing and individual modeling.

As was the custom years ago, hand woven rag rugs are used on the floors in all the rooms.

Through a low doorway and down a step we come to the original kitchen, now used as a smoking room. The room is low ceiled and the walls simply paneled.

On the second floor, reached by the dizzy little spiral staircase, are the two main bed chambers, with their fascinating equipment of Colonial furnishings. It is necessary in passing to make mention of the ancient wood paneling in the hall and the hand wrought stair rail and spindles which, though crude, are still delightfully personal. Sumptuous indeed, is the carved four-poster in the bed chamber corresponding to the dining-room, with its white hangings, cool linen sheets, and coverlid, all hand spun and hand woven. Equally quaint are the twin mahogany beds in the room across the hall. Accompanying each are sturdy old mahogany bureaus, slender legged dressing tables, curious old mirrors, and squat-bodied chairs, not to mention the lighter appurtenances of room decoration in those days.

On one side of the high four-poster — which one must needs have a bed-step to climb into — is a drop-leaved stand, conveniently holding candlestick, snuffers, and tray; on the other side a wash stand holds a toilet set of rare old silver lustre in whose mirrored depths are reflected the lineaments of those who lave therein. The eastern sun filters in through simple white muslin curtains draped back over opalescent curtain hooks, and lights up the curious old samplers that cover the walls. Most of these have histories other than is told in the patent facts woven into the age-yellowed canvas.

The crude and simple lamps which constituted the illumination of early days, dispensed a dim, religious light when evening fell. The problem of lighting the Payne house has been delightfully solved, for though electric lighting is used, the fixtures very appropriately are Colonial in design. Side lights and centre lights utilize the candle motive, and in addition both candelabra and candlesticks are used on mantel and table, though the quaint old sperm oil lamps with glass wind shields are also in evidence.

No arbitrary demands have been made in remodeling the old house, but rather has the taste of the occupants been modified to meet its character and limitations. No excessive sum has been spent to add modern but unsuitable features; on the other hand, no expense has been spared to restore so far as possible, all the homely details that were once a part of it. As it stands to-day, the John Howard Payne house not only represents a very practical solution of a difficult problem, but it also visualizes in a most delightful sort of way the simple domestic life of early Colonial days, and so possesses a distinct educational value.

The admirably restored wall paneling is a conspicuous and delightful feature of the house

The corner cupboard in the sitting-room which is now filled with Mrs. Buek's fine old lustre

Two hundred years ago this room was probably furnished just as it is to-day, with its four poster and hand spun and hand woven bed and floor coverings