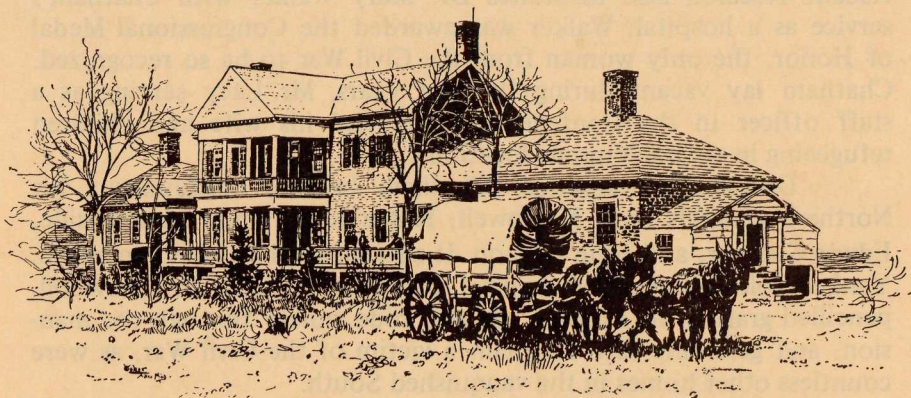


# CHATHAM



THE MANSION AS THE LACY HOUSE DURING THE CIVIL WAR.

## THE HISTORY OF CHATHAM

This magnificent Georgian mansion, its various outbuildings and dependencies, and the historic ground which surrounds it represent a small preserve in which the entire scope of Virginia heritage can be understood and appreciated.

In 1608, Captain John Smith first explored the Rappahannock River and gazed upon the wooded bluff on the left bank near the head of navigation. During the next 160 years, this land which would encompass the Chatham estate was in turn included in a grant to Colonel John Catlett made by the Royal Governor of Virginia, sold by the original owner, and developed by the Fitzhugh family into one of the most well-known plantations in the Old Dominion. William Fitzhugh, a fourth generation American, was responsible for the construction of the large brick home, begun in 1768, completed by 1771, and named after William Pitt, the Earl of Chatham. In the years before the outbreak of hostilities against England, Fitzhugh established a working agricultural enterprise based on slave labor.

The Revolution had only an indirect military effect on Chatham; however, the Colonial effort for independence received political, financial, and moral support from Chatham's master. Following the war, Fitzhugh continued to entertain numerous guests, including his old friend General George Washington, who stopped to partake of his noted generosity. The strain of playing host to a never-ending stream of visitors prompted Fitzhugh to sell Chatham and remove himself to the relative tranquility of Alexandria.

Referred to as the Lacy House after its wartime owner, Chatham variously served as a headquarters for Federal commanders (who were visited by President Lincoln), a communications center and an artillery position during the two battles, and a field hospital in which Clara Barton and Walt Whitman nursed the wounded. Recent research also associates Dr. Mary Walker with Chatham's service as a hospital. Walker was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, the only woman from the Civil War to be so recognized. Chatham lay vacant during the war years, Mr. Lacy serving as a staff officer in the Confederate army and his wife and children refugeeing in several Virginia locations.

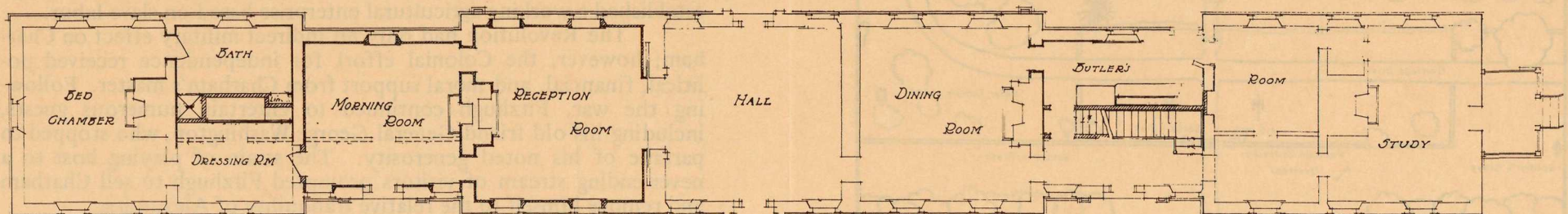
During their absence, Chatham became headquarters for Northern generals Irvin McDowell, Rufus King, Ambrose Burnside, Edwin Sumner, and John Gibbon. It also suffered wanton vandalism. Yankee soldiers removed original panelling to burn for firewood, pencilled graffiti on exposed plaster, rode horses through the mansion, and generally left Chatham a victim of the Civil War, as were countless other homes in the vanquished South.

Chatham recovered its former elegance, in time, and gained a reputation as one of the most beautiful 18th century homes in the state, known particularly for its luxurious gardens and extensive grounds. The estate, which had originally comprised some 1,288 acres, shrank to a mere 30 acres by 1900. Industrialist John Lee Pratt became Chatham's last private owner in 1931. Upon his death in 1975, Pratt's will provided that Chatham be preserved for the enjoyment of this and future generations under the stewardship of the National Park Service. Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park began stabilization and renovation of the buildings in 1976 and opened Chatham to the public on October 15, 1977.

Five of the ten rooms in the 12,000 square-foot mansion are open to the public. From the entry hall, visitors are encouraged to begin their house tour in the dining room. Here, exhibits describe the 15 Chatham owners and their occupation over more than two centuries. Across the hall, the displays in the parlor discuss the role of the Lacy House in the Civil War.

The first floor as designed in the early 1920's. The upstairs floor plan includes three bedrooms and two baths.

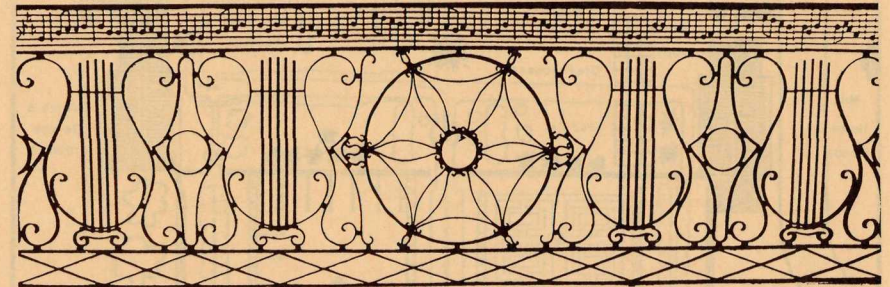
(Garden Entrance)



(Front)

Visitors are also free to wander on the grounds, in the gardens, and among the outbuildings at their leisure. The interiors of the outbuildings are not open to the public, so please view these structures from the outside only. Your safety is important to us; please exercise caution.

The National Park Service began the restoration of the 1920's colonial revival east garden in 1984. The walls, statues, and beam-topped pillars to support roses, represent this period. At the front of the building, the original formal entrance winds its way up the bluff from the river. The front terraces offer a panoramic view of Fredericksburg landmarks on the city skyline and point to the place where Northern engineers erected their pontoon bridges during the Battle of Fredericksburg.



Notice the metal musical score on the railing above the driveway stairs. Traditionally identified as the familiar melody "Home Sweet Home", it symbolizes the gracious living at Chatham during the 1920's. Also on the river-side of the house, the outline from the two-story Greek revival porch which graced the front entrance for nearly 100 years is still visible. The present limestone entrances were added in the 1920's.

Only four trees survive from the Civil War era. They are identified on the grounds layout on the next page. The approximate construction dates for the various outbuildings are also noted.

Several ornamental cast concrete pineapples adorn the grounds at Chatham. This colonial decoration served as a symbol of hospitality, a tradition which the National Park Service strives to continue.

# CHATHAM

(Not to Scale)

