

123
GEORGE READ (II)
AND HIS HOUSE

by
Eliza Wolcott

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University
of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts in Early American Culture.

June, 1971

Approved: John A. H. Sweeney
Professor in charge of thesis
on behalf of the Advisory Committee

Approved: George F. Frick
Chairman of the Department of
Early American Culture

Approved: J. P. Stewart
Dean of the School of Graduate Studies

INTRODUCTION

Today in the small and quiet town of New Castle, Delaware, a large and handsome house overlooks the Delaware River at the north end of The Strand. It is now and always has been greatly admired. Architectural historians, when writing about the Delaware scene, have rarely bypassed this house. From the publishing of John Marshall Hammond's Colonial Mansions of Maryland and Delaware in 1914 and George Fletcher Bennett's early work Early Delaware Architecture to Eberlein and Hubbard's Historic Houses and Buildings in Delaware, there has been nothing but praise for the house as an elaborate example of early Federal architecture. This mansion was built between 1797 and 1803 by my great-great-great-great-grandfather, George Read (II).

The construction of the Read House is well documented in the letters, bills and account books of George Read (II) now part of The Richard S. Rodney Collection of Read Manuscripts, housed in The Historical Society of Delaware. Other manuscripts of interest are in The Read Family Papers at the Library of Congress in Washington, D. C.; these holdings include letters written during the building years by George Read (II) to his brothers, John and William, then residents of Philadelphia, who were instrumental in obtaining materials and workmen for the house. These two collections, as well as a few bills and letters owned by Mrs. Philip D. Laird, the present owner of the house, contain a

wealth of material on the construction. Among the papers, for example, are four sets of plans which were considered as possible layouts by George Read (II), and a bill, unique among documents of its kind, from Robert Wellford, composition ornament maker in Philadelphia, for the plaster decorations on the mantels.

The goal of this thesis is to ascertain all the facts possible about the house and its construction. The desire of George Read (II) to incorporate the finest characteristics of familiar architecture in the construction of this house is evident in both the documents and the buildings. The result, the finest and most sophisticated building of early nineteenth-century New Castle, stands today a tribute to the taste of the man and his Philadelphia advisers.

I am indebted to many people for their assistance in the preparation of this study. I wish to express my gratitude to the staffs of the American Philosophical Society; the Hall of Records, Dover, Delaware; the Library of Congress; and other institutions where I consulted their holdings. To the staff of The Historical Society of Delaware I am particularly appreciative for their unfailing patience with my many requests for material. I am especially grateful to Mrs. Philip D. Laird for her kindness in allowing me to study the house and use the manuscripts in her possession. Finally, I am greatly indebted to my adviser, John A. H. Sweeney, for his patience, advice, and encouragement.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

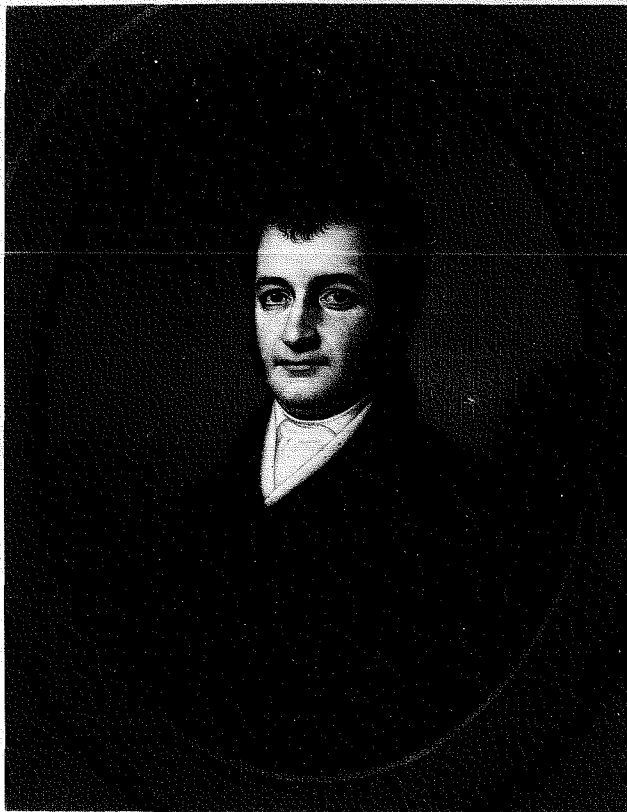
INTRODUCTION		
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS		
CHAPTER I	THE MAN	1
CHAPTER II	THE HOUSE	22
CHAPTER III	THE PLANS	36
CHAPTER IV	THE CONSTRUCTION	47
CHAPTER V	CONCLUSION	77
BIBLIOGRAPHY		81
APPENDIX A	CASH ACCOUNTS FOR THE HOUSE CONSTRUCTION, 1797-1799	85
APPENDIX B	BILL FOR EXTERIOR STONEMWORK	92
APPENDIX C	AGREEMENT WITH BRICKLAYER	93
APPENDIX D	BILL FOR COMPOSITION ORNAMENTS ON MANTELS	96
APPENDIX E	INVENTORY OF GEORGE READ (II)'S ESTATE	98

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Engraving of George Read (II) from original portrait by Adolph Ulrich Wertmuller.	Frontispiece
2. Photograph of front view of the George Read (II) House, New Castle, Delaware.	22
3. Section of Front Street, 1804, Detail of Survey of New Castle, Delaware by Benjamin Henry Latrobe, Delaware State Archives, Dover, Delaware.	23
4. Photograph of front window, The George Read (II) House.	25
5. Photograph of entrance, The George Read (II) House.	25
6. Photograph of doorway detail, The George Read (II) House.	26
7. Photograph of Palladian window and iron railing, second floor front, The George Read (II) House.	27
8. Photograph of interior archway carving, first floor, The George Read (II) House.	28
9. Photograph of ceiling detail, first floor hallway, The George Read (II) House.	28
10. Photograph of interior archway, first floor, The George Read (II) House.	30
11. Photograph of ceiling detail, first floor, back parlor, The George Read (II) House.	30
12. Photograph of French window, first floor, back room, south side, The George Read (II) House.	31
13. Detail of Palladian window woodwork, Second floor hallway, The George Read (II) House.	32

14. Detail of doorway, second floor hallway, The George Read (II) House. 33
15. Detail of paneling on stair landing between second and third floors, The George Read (II) House. 33
16. Preliminary Plan A, The George Read (II) House, drawn by George Read (I), circa July, 1797. 37
17. Preliminary Plan B, The George Read (II) House, drawn by George Read (I), circa July, 1797. 39
18. Preliminary Plan C, The George Read (II) House, drawn by Matthew Pearce, early August, 1797. 41
19. Elevation, The George Read (II) House, drawn by Matthew Pearce, early August, 1797. 42
20. Preliminary Plan D, The George Read (II) House, undated. 43
21. Pattern for window head, drawn by Peter Crouding, December 1, 1797. 54
22. Advertisement, Robert Wellford, April 6, 1801. 61
23. Advertisement, "Robert Wellford's American Manufactory of Composition Ornaments & 'c.'" 63
24. Photograph of tablet, "The Triumph of Mars returning from Battle," central ornament on mantel, front room, south side, first floor, The George Read (II) House. 65
25. Photograph of frieze ornament on mantel, front room, south side, first floor, The George Read (II) House. 66
26. Photograph of truss ornament on mantel, front room, south side, first floor, The George Read (II) House. 66
27. Photograph of tablet, "Diana giving Command to her Hounds," central ornament on mantel, back room, south side, first floor, The George Read (II) House. 67

28. Photograph of truss ornament, on mantel 68
back room, south side, first floor, The
George Read (II) House.



Engraved by Wertmüller.

Portrait by Samuel Serrano.

THE HONOURABLE GEORGE READ 2ND.

OF DELAWARE.

AN EMINENT JURIST; FOR NEARLY THIRTY YEARS
UNITED STATES DISTRICT ATTORNEY.

Grandson of Col. John Read 1658-1760 of Maryland & Delaware, by his wife Mary Howell and son of Hon. George Read of Delaware the Signer of the Declaration of Independence and Framers of the Constitution of the United States by his wife Gertrude Ross, dau. of the Hon. George Ross, and sister of Hon. George Ross also a Signer. He was born August 20th 1764 in the Read Mansion New Castle, Del. died there in 1835. Married at 19, Mary, dau. of J. M. Thompson, distinguished Revolutionary officer, at the latter sea; near Carlisle Pa. Mrs. Read's mother, Catherine Ross was the sister of Mr. Read's mother. Mr. Read was remarkable for his oratorical and literary powers, and his artistic taste was highly developed. He owned large cotton plantations in Maryland. He was the brother of Hon. Read 1st, 1767-1820, Gov. General of the Kingdom of Naples, who was killed at the battle of St. Elia; and also brother of Hon. John Read 1768-1844 of Philadelphia an eminent lawyer and one of the leaders of the Federal party. Mr. Geo. Read 2nd was the father of Hon. Geo. Read 3rd of Delaware's born New Castle, June 22 1793 and April 18th 1818, Louise Hakeley; Hon. John Nathan Read 3rd a surgeon in the New York Navy afterwards an eminent physician of Philadelphia; and Hon. Geo. Read 4th his father's family name, born Nov. 1st 1807, on the eve of his nomination to the United States Senate, elected to the 18th Congress, from New York. He was successively Governor of New York, 1817-1820, and 1821-1824, and a distinguished participant in the 8th and 9th Congresses.

Illustration 1. Engraving of George Read (II) from original portrait by Adolph Ulrich Wertmuller. Collection of Mrs. Daniel F. Wolcott.

CHAPTER I

THE MAN

On August 29, 1765, George and Gertrude Read of New Castle, Delaware, recorded the birth of their second son, George, Jr.¹ Within five years they produced three other children, William, John, and Mary, with whom George enjoyed lifelong companionship.²

Although information about his childhood is scarce, it could not have been uneventful, if only because of the excitement in pre-Revolutionary America over the events protesting Great Britain's coercive government of the Colonies. Many of the boy's early memories, especially those which centered around his father, must have recalled political discussions, events, and public displays of patriotism. Certainly by the time he was ten, his life was inevitably interwoven, as was the life of his whole family, with the patriotic fervor prevalent in the Colonies. In 1775, George Read (I) was a member of the Continental Congress, as he had been for the four preceding ones, and in 1776, he was a signer of the Declaration of Independence.³ Whatever reactions the young boy had experienced during the years 1775 and 1776, he must certainly have sensed the excitement of the persons around him, and he must have been proud that his father, who was serving in Philadelphia, was one of the men chosen to lead the country. It is a matter of record that George Read (I) was indecisive, as were

many Americans, between the desire for independence and reconciliation with Great Britain. In the first vote of the Continental Congress, completed on July 2, 1776, Read voted against independence while his fellow delegates voted affirmatively, but after the full roll call, he changed his vote to yes, so that the Delaware delegation could present a unanimous decision.

Whatever his first thoughts on rebellion might have been, the elder Read threw himself into the projected war plans. His correspondence with other patriots shows his concern with the American cause. He spent much of his time dealing with the affairs of the Delaware government and, in late 1777, procuring supplies for the armies at Valley Forge.⁴ Read's influence and the confidence placed in him is evident in all these letters.

The occupation of the Delaware River by the British during the early years of the war caused many problems for Delawareans. Fortunately, the Reads were connected with relatives who lived in more secluded areas of the surrounding countryside, the Howells in southern New Jersey and the Thomsons in Cecil County, Maryland. One of George Read (II)'s sons repeats a tale of the family in the early fall of 1777, when the British had control of the River. Late in September, while returning from a long visit with Richard Howell, they were stopped by British sailors. In the short amount of time allowed, they removed all marks of identification from the baggage and thus avoided the capture of George Read, one of Delaware's most important patriotic leaders.⁵ Almost immediately after their return, the family went to Cecil County to visit the family of William Thomson, the rector of Saint

Stephen's Parish, and to avoid capture.⁶ The experience on the river must have made Read realize that neither he nor his family could stay in New Castle.

In Cecil County, young George became a favorite of his aunt and uncle. After paying them another visit at the end of 1780, Thomson was to write to the father that they had

detained George longer than you ordered, He truly gave us so much Pleasure that we could not part with him. Wing'd Time flew so quick that a week elapsed before we could look around us or Afford him any Amusement, We hope the Liberty we have taken with him will meet with your and Mrs Reads approbation as he returns safe & Sound. 7

As soon as the British left the River, the Reads returned to their normal lives. By 1779, the children were continuing their education under the tutelage of Samuel Armor, who was introduced later to the Honorable Christopher Gadsden of Charleston, South Carolina, as a Pennsylvanian of "good morals and exemplary conduct," who had been ordained in the Episcopal Church, and taught at Washington College in Chestertown, Maryland. Those are stated as excellent credentials for any teacher.⁸ In January of 1780, Armor presented his bill of twenty-one pounds for the schooling of George, William, John, and Mary Read, as well as that of Nicholas VanDyke, the son of another prominent New Castle lawyer.⁹ What Mary studied we do not know, but, from a letter Armor wrote to their father, it is evident that George, at least, received a classical education, and apparently had done well, although his achievements in logic, "moral philosophy," and mathematics needed improvement.¹⁰

In 1780, George was fifteen and old enough to enter college. There was evidently some thought

in his father's mind that George would do well to enter the College of Philadelphia, for a letter from Armor to Read speaks of that institution. Armor, however, felt that he could still teach George many things,

with equal honor and advantage in the solitudes of New Castle as in the pompous and dignified University of Phila. 11

Armor seems to have satisfied whatever misgivings there might have been about George's remaining in New Castle, and it appears that he must have stayed in that school until 1782.¹² Whatever the rest of his education consisted of, evidence of its depth and erudition is seen in his large library which contained volumes covering subjects from history to agriculture. (See Appendix E).

Sometime during the year 1782, when he was seventeen, George told his father that he wished to take up the study of law.¹³ At this time, it was common for an aspiring lawyer to read law and learn basic legal techniques in the office of a practising attorney. Accordingly, George Read (I) wrote to James Wilson, a leading attorney of Philadelphia, with whom he had become acquainted in the early years of the Revolution, asking him to accept the young man as his law student.¹⁴ If Wilson were to accept this offer, the plan of education would work in much the same manner as the time-honored apprenticeship system. Wilson replied that he was unable to lodge young Read in his house, since he had already refused a similar request, but that he would be happy to have him in his office, should he come to Philadelphia.¹⁵ Whoever the preceptor was, for there is no further record of George's study, he proved a good teacher. Less than three years later, in May, 1785, George Read, Jr. (II) was admitted to the bar of the State of Delaware.¹⁶

May 16 must have been an exciting, happy, but expensive day for him. George passed a rigorous oral examination on the fine points of the law, which may have been as difficult as the one Caesar A. Rodney complained of in 1793.¹⁷ Then the new lawyer was required by tradition to present the bar mess with a basket of champagne, to be drunk in celebration of his admission.¹⁸ His father must have been proud of him, for it would be hoped that George would follow in his footsteps as a much esteemed and sought-after lawyer. At some point in George's education, he must have said to him the thoughts that he expressed to William, the second son:

... be constantly on your guard and ever watchful of yourself, avoid every temptation to Err, and thereby you will give a stamp to your character that will be of great use to you through life and afford much satisfaction to your parents ... 19

After his admittance to the bar, George Read (II) began his practice, probably working in close association with his father. How much business he received is a matter of question, since no records are left concerning his first year as an attorney. He may have helped his father educate the law students who came to read in that office, and undoubtedly he occupied his time drawing up wills, deeds, and contracts. The reputation of his father may have helped him in gathering some cases, and it is not improbable that many minor cases of the father would be turned over to the son. There is a record of one case referred to him by Moses Levy, a Pennsylvania attorney, who wrote in 1786 recommending a man for Read's "cause and protection."²⁰

His law office was operating by September, ✓

✓ 1786, for during that month, he purchased some articles for use in it.²¹ Included are an inkstand, quills, paper, and a few sheets of parchment. A further purchase is noted on November 29, a yard of "Green Bays" for his desk.²² In spite of these preparations, however, the money he made from his practice was not even enough to clothe him.²³

Whatever his financial resources were, they were not sufficiently meager to prevent him from contemplating marriage. On October 30, 1786, he was married to his first cousin, Mary Thompson, in the First Presbyterian Church of Carlisle, Pennsylvania.²⁴ George had spent the summer before on a prolonged visit to Carlisle; at the time, rumors of the romance were spreading among the family.²⁵ George, however, ridiculed his family's ideas, declaiming

the dethroning of Reason, the Usurpation of
Passion & the Intoxication of the senses. 26

After the marriage, the newlyweds returned to New Castle, and apparently set up housekeeping at the elder Reads' house on the north end of the Strand. Expenses were few, although George's accounts contain a few entries such as that for November 28, 8/4 for "cloathing for self et Ux."²⁷ Four months later, on March 25, 1787, the younger Reads paid their first rent on a small brick house, "Rosemont Mansion," owned by Zachariah VanLeuvenigh, and located at the northwest corner of what is now Dalby's Alley and Delaware Street.²⁸ This lease cost twenty-five pounds yearly, payable in two installments.²⁹ During their two years of residence, numerous repairs were made to the kitchen and cellar. Read also purchased a lock for a first floor room and thirty-two "Cloak Pins" for the upstairs rooms.³⁰

Residence at "Rosemont Mansion" continued until 1789 when George, Mary, and their infant son, George (III), returned to his parents.³¹ No reason is offered for this move, but the lower rent of twenty pounds per year may have seemed a great benefit. Additional expenses were required for repairs to the house:

to the Office viz. Sealing & lining the room above Stairs with Cedar Boards & laying a New Floor - repairing the pump - papering the common sitting room of [the] House.

These repairs, with an additional one of fixing the garden fence, cost a total of fourteen pounds, fourteen shillings and four and one-half pence.³² During this period, George Read (I) spent several months in New York City, where he was serving a term as United States Senator; this commitment may have been one of the reasons for his son and daughter-in-law living in his house.

While his father was in New York, George, Jr. (II) received an appointment as United States Attorney for the District of Delaware.³³ Whether he obtained this position through his own reputation as a lawyer or his father's influence is unclear. Certainly the recommendations of possible appointees by members of Congress were given careful consideration by President Washington; numerous letters were written to men in high government positions requesting their aid in obtaining coveted posts. Several such letters, written to George Read (I) during the first half of 1789, are preserved.³⁴ Intercession of the father on his son's behalf was probably the reason for the nomination on September 17, 1789.³⁵ An assumption that the position was lucrative is upheld by Read's retention of the job until 1815, when he resigned it in favor of his eldest son.³⁶

In addition to his appointment by Washington, Read was soon elected to two other positions of public

merit. In 1789, he became a member of the Trustees of the New Castle Common,³⁷ a group of New Castle men organized by the Penns to govern a one thousand and sixty-eight acre tract of land granted to the town of New Castle under the government of the Dutch.³⁸ First organized in 1764, this group was to be composed of "persons able and capable" of appearing and testifying in any court of justice,³⁹ a clause, which, while not overly-restrictive, would indicate that men of intelligence and good standing in the community would be chosen for the committee. This conclusion is strengthened when one considers the list of the thirteen "surviving" Trustees made in 1791. Of this group, George Read (I), Chancellor Kensey Johns, and Gunning Bedford were three of the six lawyers; two others were doctors, David Finney and Archibald Alexander; and one was a prominent merchant, James Riddle.⁴⁰ All were men of wealth, and all owned substantial amounts of real estate in the town. It was indeed a mark of distinction to be included among these men.

In 1790, George Read (II) is listed as a member of the Vestry, the governing body of Immanuel Church, New Castle, a small group of men who were responsible for such things as the hiring of rectors and the handling of the parish finances.⁴¹ Becoming involved in the life of the church was natural for him, for he had been brought up in its shadow. His maternal grandfather, George Ross, had been the first Rector of the Church, sent over by The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in 1703, and his mother may have helped her brother, Aeneas, the Rector, keep the church open for services during the Revolution.⁴² His father also felt strong religious sentiment. He wrote

it is dangerous to indulge ourselves in small breaches of that duty we owe to the Divinity. 43

Read was to continue his interest in the Church throughout his life. In 1818 he was elected to the Board of Trustees, another name for the Vestry, a position he had relinquished in 1809.⁴⁴ In 1820, he was named Chairman of the board.⁴⁵ In addition to his involvement in the church government, Read's contributions included financial assistance. In 1822, for instance, when the spire on the Church was being built, Read pledged four hundred dollars, the largest sum in the parish.⁴⁶

By 1791, Read's income had improved sufficiently to allow him to move his family to a more expensive house. In March, rent money of forty pounds was paid for a house owned by John Wethered on the "Upper [or north] part of Front Street."⁴⁷ He considered the appearance of his residence important, spending four pounds, nineteen shillings for paint and the services of a painter.⁴⁸

Other indications of a growing income are found in letters, accounts, and other documents. It seems certain that he must have had at least one servant, although the incomplete census records of 1790 do not confirm this.⁴⁹ During 1790, two Negroes, London, the property of Kensey Johns, and Hannah, "belonging to Geo. Read, Jr. [II], "received a wedding license "with consent of their masters."⁵⁰

Read's account books, kept between 1786 and 1791 show increases in his cash expenses. In 1787 he purchased a desk in Philadelphia, costing eleven pounds.⁵¹ Large amounts of furniture were acquired in 1791, a carpet, a pair of andirons and a "lot of furniture" made by Samuel Claphamson for a total price of a little more than thirty-eight pounds.⁵² Sparse

cash accounts and no documentary evidence make it impossible to speculate on what his total income might have been. By the end of 1787, however, he had spent nearly two hundred and thirty-nine pounds, including frivolities like "Lost at cards," Spent on a party," and "gave Negro Sam for Fiddling one night in ye Winter."⁵³

During the summer of 1792, the Read family moved to a house owned by David Finney, located in the center of New Castle, near Market Square.⁵⁴ A growing family could have caused the move, although the proximity of the Finney house to the Courthouse may have been a deciding factor. The Reads lived there until 1798, when the lot and house of Gunning Bedford on the corner of Delaware Street and the Strand was sold to them.⁵⁵ It is odd that Read chose to purchase a large house while steady progress was being made at the site of the house he was building farther up the Strand. The lot under construction had been owned by William Aull, an Irish immigrant and innkeeper, who had been forced to sell his property in 1797 because he was an alien.⁵⁶ George Read (II) bought it for three hundred pounds, or eight hundred dollars.⁵⁷ Aull received only one-quarter of that sum in 1797.⁵⁸ Aull's plot was small, but there is evidence that Read possessed an adjoining lot, and was planning to build on the two combined.⁵⁹ Although no recorded deeds mention the transfer of the other property, George Read (I), who owned it, probably conveyed to his son by private transaction.

Most of Read's time was concentrated on his law practice. When court was in session, he was unable to attend to even the most pressing of his busi-

ness affairs. At a time when the construction of his house needed his personal supervision, he was unable to spend the necessary time on it.⁶⁰ During 1801 and 1802, however, the house required more and more of his time. When he could see that the house was nearing completion, he wrote to his brother,

[I] flatter myself with the hope that during the insuing year ... to comprize my affairs with a small space, that will ... afford me leisure to pursue with an undeviating step professional objects ... 61

Feeling financial distress at that moment, he added that he was certain that hard work was " ... the road to wealth and rational enjoyment."⁶²

Money matters were a constant problem for Read. Although he spent considerable amounts of money -- between the sums of four and six thousand dollars yearly -- most of his creditors were given only partial payments on their accounts.⁶³ In 1802, his finances were hampered by the high costs of the house construction, and he complained late in that year,

I an now as penniless as when I began the practice of the law ... " 64

Whatever his economic situation was, Read seems to have felt that he was underachieving his possibilities. He was now in his late thirties, at an age when he should have been reaching the goals of his ambitions. His son described him as an ambitious man, and it is plausible to assume that he desired to emulate his father, who, in his thirties, had been directly concerned with diverse political activities. George Read (II) had been successful on a local scale. Whether or not this was due to the reputation he had built, he could have felt that he should have been involved more deeply.

Read may have attained his early success through his father's public esteem, but he remained an important citizen of New Castle on his own. In 1807, he was elected one of the first directors of the Farmers Bank in New Castle, a position he was to hold until his death.⁶⁵ He had been involved in some banking processes before; in 1796, in company with other prominent citizens of the State, he petitioned the Delaware Legislature to allow the incorporation of the Bank of Delaware.⁶⁶ In spite of his business activities, his large family, and his civic duties, however, Read, by 1807, was dissatisfied with his life, and showed signs of wishing to establish himself elsewhere.

His discouragement and discontent were expressed in a letter written to Caesar A. Rodney, a life-long friend and companionable rival, on October 19, 1807:

There are so few and trifling objects to attract attention here that I feel great indifference with respect to the passing scene and I should therefore scarcely feel indifferent in contemplating any project of removal ...⁶⁷

Not only was he unhappy in New Castle, but, as he said in the same letter, "I am ... completely tired with the drugery of the profession." So tired of it was he, that he inquired of Rodney whether there was any chance that he might be able to be appointed to the position of Postmaster-General, and if Rodney would not see what he could do about it.⁶⁸ Rodney could do nothing for him apparently, and Read continued his law practice.

In 1809, he wanted to relinquish the office of United States Attorney to his son, George Read (III), although he did not give it up until 1815.⁶⁹ For

the next several years, little is known about his life and activities. He continued a strenuous law practice, working for a short time for Stephen Girard, in company with Caesar A. Rodney and Nicholas Van Dyke.⁷⁰ At some time during this period, he became interested in a political career, and was active in the Democratic-Republican Party. The men who represented this political group were more liberal in their ideas than the Federalists, who were supported by wealthy landholders. George Read (I) had been a successful Federalist, and it seems strange that his son should have become a member of the opposite party. Caesar A. Rodney, however, had been a successful candidate for Congress on the Democratic-Republican ticket;⁷¹ with his good friend an influential member of the party, Read may have been persuaded to turn from the Federalists.

The Democratic stronghold was in New Castle County. When Read ran for Congress in 1818,⁷² this strength was shown in the tallies. Read, and his running mate, Willard Hall, led by five hundred votes in the northern county, but did poorly in Kent, where the results were about one hundred votes apart, and worse in Sussex, where they lost by about six hundred votes.⁷³ At the time of the election returns, Read wanted to escape, and wrote to his friend, Rodney, complaining.

I am so tired with the sameness of life I lead and should be glad of some appointment abroad which might gratify ambition and give employment. 74

When no response from that quarter was forthcoming, and did not seem to be forthcoming, Read determined to run again. In 1822, he placed his name on the ticket for Congress, but received only one vote

through the entire state, and that one was recorded in New Castle County.⁷⁵

After this resounding defeat, Read did little in the public eye. He was listed as the Senior member of the Delaware Bar in 1822, but no record has been kept of the number of cases he argued.⁷⁶ He may not have been very interested in his law practice, for, in spite of his predilection for appointments, Read refused an appointment as Judge on the Supreme Court of the State of Delaware, less than three weeks after he had been notified of it.⁷⁷

During the last years of his life, Read seemed to have been more interested in his sons' activities and life than in his own. He received, for instance, many letters from William T. Read, apprising him of the Washington scene.⁷⁸ By August of 1836, he was ill and "wasting away."⁷⁹ On September 3, he died.⁸⁰ The Delaware Gazette noted his passing:

DIED

At New-Castle on Saturday morning, September 3rd, GEORGE READ, aged 71 years, the eldest son of George Read, one of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence. Mr. Read was the eldest member of the New-Castle bar, and has long been one of the most prominent citizens of this county. 81

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER I

¹Read Family Bible, in possession of Mrs. Edward W. Cooch, jr. (The Reads' eldest son, John, had died during his first year of life, 1764.)

²Harmon Pumpelly Read, Rossiana (Albany, N.Y., 1908), pp. 269-270.

³Because three succeeding generations of the Read family bore the same name, George, roman numerals, enclosed in parentheses, have been used to designate the correct generation, and to avoid confusion.

⁴A full account of these activities is given in William T. Read, The Life and Correspondence of George Read, A Signer of the Declaration of Independence, With Sketches of Some of His Contemporaries (Philadelphia, 1870), Chapters III, IV, V.

⁵Ibid., p. 276.

⁶Ibid., p. 278.

⁷Letter, Rev. William Thomson to George Read (I), January 5, 1781, The Richard S. Rodney Collection of Read Manuscripts, Historical Society of Delaware. (Hereafter cited RSR, HSD; this collection of manuscripts is arranged in chronological order, so no box and folder numbers have been supplied.)

⁸Draft of a letter, George Read (I) to Hon. Christopher Gadsden, November 11, 1785, RSR, HSD.

⁹Bill, Samuel Armor to George Read (I), January 22, 1780, RSR, HSD.

¹⁰Letter, Samuel Armor to George Read (I), September 26, 1780, RSR, HSD.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²A search of class lists and tuition records at contemporary institutions in the Middle States has failed to reveal any attendance of George Read (II).

¹³Letter, George Read (I) to James Wilson, 1782, The Read Family Papers, The Library of Congress, Box 1, No. 30. (Hereafter cited RFP, LC).

¹⁴Ibid.; it was natural for George Read (I) to want to send his son to Philadelphia to read law, since he had done so between 1750 and 1753, W.T. Read, p. 11.

¹⁵W.T. Read, p. 366.

¹⁶J. Thomas Scharf, History of Delaware, 1609-1888 (Philadelphia, 1888). Vol. 1, p. 563.

¹⁷Dudley C. Lunt, Tales of the Delaware Bench and Bar (Newark, Del., 1963), p. 83.

¹⁸George Gray, "Recollections of Judge George Gray as Told to Ennalls Berl" (Typescript copy, 1907), Historical Society of Delaware, p. 3.

¹⁹Letter, George Read (I) to William Read, March 19, 1786, RFP, LC, Box 1, No. 47.

²⁰Letter, Moses Levy to George Read (II), May 16, 1786, RSR, HSD.

²¹Account Book 1786-1791, George Read (II), Entry for September 10, 1786, RSR, HSD.

²²Ibid., Entry for November 29, 1786.

²³W.T. Read, p. 424.

²⁴John B. Linn and William H. Egle, (eds.), "Marriage Record of the First Presbyterian Church at Carlisle, 1785-1812," Pennsylvania Archives, Second Series (Harrisburg, Pa., 1878), Vol. VIII, p. 588.

²⁵Letter, William Read to John Read, jr., June 30, 1786, RFP, LC, Box 1, no. 52.

²⁶Letter, George Read (II) to John Read, jr., July 14, 1786, RFP, LC, Box 1, No. 53.

²⁷Account Book 1786-1791, George Read (II), Entry for November 28, 1786, RSR, HSD.

²⁸Account of house rents and repairs 1787-1792, George Read (II), Entry for March 25, 1787, RSR, HSD. Because all rents and repairs were carefully noted, it is assumed that George (II) and Mary Read lived with his parents immediately after their marriage.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid., Entries for March 30, April 6, 27, 1787; September 13, October 23, November 3, 26, 1788.

³¹George (III) was born on June 4, 1788. H.P. Read, p. 271; Accounts of house rents and repairs 1787-1792, Entry for March 25, 1790.

³²Ibid., Entries for March 25, April 6, 30, May 15, 18, August 27, 1789.

³³Commission, George Washington and United States of America to George Read (II), September 26, 1789, Permanent Commissions, National Archives, Vol. D, p. 105.

³⁴W.T. Read, pp. 467, 468, 473, 476-477.

³⁵Message, George Washington to United States Senate, September 20, 1789, Records of the United States Senate, National Archives.

³⁶Letter, George Read (II) to James Madison, November 25, 1815, Papers of the Department of State, National Archives.

³⁷Richard S. Rodney, New Castle Common (Wilmington, Del., 1944), p. 20.

³⁸Richard S. Rodney, "The End of the Penns' Claim to Delaware, 1789-1819," The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, LXI (April, 1937), p. 185.

³⁹Rodney, New Castle Common, p. 16.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 50.

⁴¹Minutes of the Vestry, Immanuel Church, New Castle, Del., July 22, 1710-June 14, 1858, p. 50, Records of Immanuel Church, New Castle, Del.

⁴²Thomas Holcomb, Sketch of Early Ecclesiastical Affairs in New Castle, Delaware, and History of Immanuel Church (Wilmington, Del., 1890), p. 177; Ibid., p. 42; Richard S. Rodney, "Immanuel Church, New Castle," Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church, XII (December, 1943), p. 387.

⁴³W.T. Read, p. 36.

⁴⁴Minutes of the Vestry, Immanuel Church, p. 82; Ibid., p. 77.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 86.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 92.

⁴⁷Accounts of house rents and repairs, 1787-1792, George Read (II), p. 8, RSR, HSD.

⁴⁸Ibid., Entries for March 30 and March 31, 1792.

⁴⁹Leon deValinger, jr., "Reconstructed 1790 Census of Delaware," reprinted from National Genealogical Society Quarterly, X (January, 1954), p. 25. This study lists only heads of households.

⁵⁰Holcomb, p. 235.

⁵¹Account Book 1786-1791, George Read (II), Entry for May 16, 1787, RSR, HSD.

⁵²Ibid., Entries for April 27, July 22, 1791.

⁵³Ibid., Entries for February 24, January 30, March 7, 1787.

- ⁵⁴Accounts of house rents and repairs 1787-1792, George Read (II), p. 13, RSR, HSD.
- ⁵⁵Account Book 1797-1799, George Read (II), Entry for April 25, 1798, RSR, HSD.
- ⁵⁶Deed, William and Rachel Aull to George Read (II), March 27, 1797, New Castle County Deed Book, R - 2, pp. 152-157, Delaware State Archives, Dover, Del.
- ⁵⁷Ibid.
- ⁵⁸Account Book 1797-1799, George Read (II), Entry for March 27, 1797, RSR, HSD.
- ⁵⁹Agreement, William Aull, William Armstrong, and George Read (II), March 27, 1797, New Castle County Deed Book, R - 2, pp. 157-161, Delaware State Archives, Dover, Del.
- ⁶⁰Letter, George Read (II) to James Traquair, May 25, 1799, RSR, HSD.
- ⁶¹Letter, George Read (II) to John Read, jr., December 26, 1802, RFP, LC, Box 1, No. 162.
- ⁶²Ibid.
- ⁶³This information is based on a survey taken of Read's cash account books, 1797-1799, 1804-1836, RSR, HSD.
- ⁶⁴Letter, George Read (II) to a brother, October 25, 1802. Miscellaneous Papers, George Read Jr., 1765-1836, Historical Society of Delaware, Box 37, Folder IV.
- ⁶⁵Dudley C. Lunt, The Farmers Bank of the State of Delaware, 1807-1957 (Philadelphia, 1957), p. 24.
- ⁶⁶John A. Munroe, Federalist Delaware, 1775-1815 (New Brunswick, N.J., 1954), p. 146.

⁶⁷Letter, George Read (II) to Caesar A. Rodney, October 19, 1807, Rodney Collection, C.A. Rodney Papers, Historical Society of Delaware, Box 5, Folder 4. (Hereafter cited Rodney Coll., CAR, HSD.).

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Letter, George Read (III) to Caesar A. Rodney, October 6, 1809, Rodney Coll., CAR, HSD, Box 5, Folder 4.

⁷⁰A body of manuscripts, containing a few letters written between George Read (II) and Stephen Girard, are in the Letterbooks of Stephen Girard, 1812-1816, at The American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, Pa.

⁷¹Munroe, p. 268.

⁷²American Watchman (Wilmington, Delaware), September 26, 1818.

⁷³Public Archives Commission, Governor's Register, State of Delaware, Volume One: Appointments and Other Transactions by Executives of the State, From 1674 to 1851 (Wilmington, Del., 1926), pp. 157-158.

⁷⁴Letter, George Read (II) to Caesar A. Rodney, October 13, 1818, Rodney Coll., CAR, HSD, Box 5, Folder 15.

⁷⁵Public Archives Commission, p. 190.

⁷⁶Daniel J. Boorstein, Delaware Cases, 1792-1830 (St. Paul, Minn., 1943), Vol. III, p. 3.

⁷⁷Public Archives Commission, pp. 203, 206.

⁷⁸The letters between George Read (II) and his sons are housed in The Richard S. Rodney Collection of Read Manuscript, Historical Society of Delaware.

⁷⁹Letter, George Read (III) to William T. Read, August 21, 1836, RSR, HSD.

⁸⁰H.P. Read, p. 270.

⁸¹Delaware Gazette and American Watchman (Wilmington, Delaware), September 6, 1836.