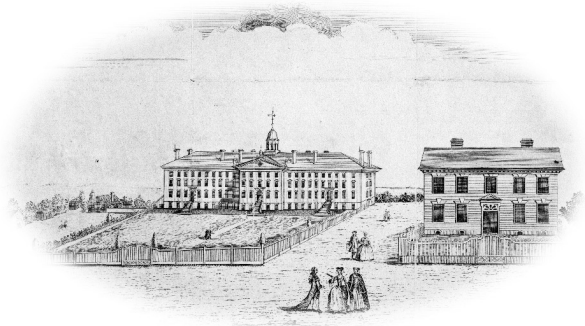


MACLEAN HOUSE *of* *Princeton University*

🍷 A NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK 🍷



WILLIAM K. SELDEN



Front cover: Henry Dawkins created the first rendering of Nassau Hall for the *New American Magazine* in 1760. In the foreground is the President's House, now Maclean House. (Courtesy of the Princeton University Archives.)

Above: Names etched in one of the glass window panes of Maclean House.

FOREWORD

*A*s *this beautiful booklet* by famed Princeton historian William K. Selden illustrates, John Maclean House has been the home of 10 Princeton presidents, seven deans of the faculty, and countless numbers of Princeton alumni who have learned, since 1968, to call Maclean House their “home away from home” when they return to the Princeton University campus. Treasured for its historic, timeless interior and beautiful gardens, Maclean House occupies an important place in Princeton’s history. It has weathered occupation by both British and American troops during the Revolution, and has entertained multitudes of students, faculty members, alumni, dignitaries, and even U. S. presidents, over the

years. From its perch on the front lawn of the campus it has been on hand to witness the graduation of generations of Princetonians, both from the undergraduate classes and the Graduate School.

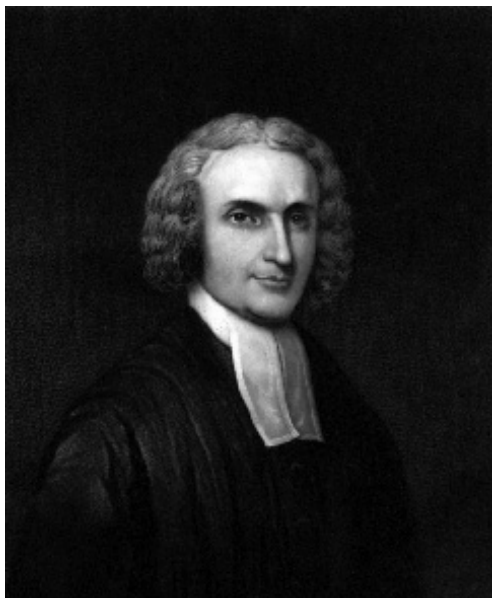
Today, Maclean House functions as the home of the Alumni Association of Princeton University, first established by President John Maclean in 1826 to “promote the interests of the College and the friendly intercourse of its graduates.” As we celebrate the 250th anniversary of the construction of Maclean House, I would like to thank Bill for capturing its essence in his words and pictures. And I would like to invite all Princeton alumni to visit, see the staff, enjoy a cup of coffee, relax in the parlor, or settle in the library to read

the many books chronicling the history of Princeton and its students. We hope that you will come back often and that you will remember that Maclean House is your home on the Princeton campus.

— MARGARET MOORE MILLER '80
DIRECTOR

OFFICE OF THE
ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

AUGUST 1, 2006



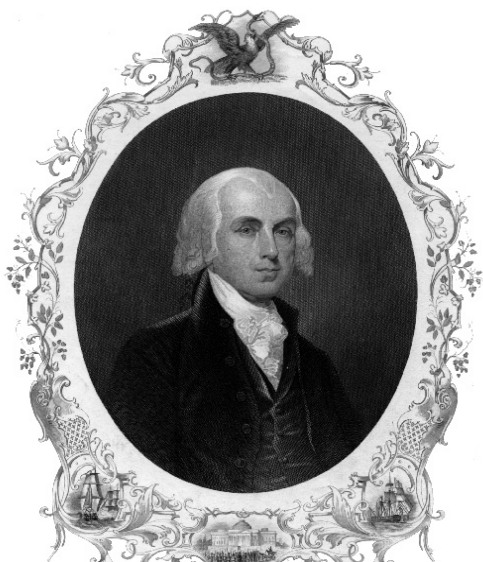
Aaron Burr Sr.
Princeton President, 1748–57

When the trustees of the College of New Jersey decided in the middle of the 18th century to move their fledgling institution from Newark to Princeton, a rural community in the middle of the colony, they engaged the experienced carpenter-architect, Robert Smith, to build one of the largest stone buildings of its time in colonial America to house all the functions of the institution. Nassau Hall, as it became known, contained classrooms, a library, a meeting hall and chapel, bedrooms for both students and tutors, as well as a refectory and kitchen. They also authorized the construction of a house to serve as the residence of the president and his family, including an office for his official responsibilities. For the construction of this building they also engaged Robert Smith.

As a resident of Philadelphia, Smith was familiar with the Georgian style of architecture that became popular and was incorporated in various houses constructed in Princeton at that time. Bainbridge House at 158 Nassau Street, currently the site of the Historical Society of Princeton, was built in the Georgian style, as was the more stately Morven,

the home of Richard Stockton, Class of 1748. In more recent times, the latter has served as the residence of the governor of the state and is now maintained as a public museum.

In the case of the President's House, as it became known for over a century, its Philadelphia Georgian style of architecture may be noted "with its regularly spaced windows capped by flat arches, the pedimental doorway, the beaded cornice," [Wertenbaker] while the interior finely executed woodwork, especially in the library and hallway, is embellished by "its eloquent simplicity and quiet refinement" [Greiff]. Originally the house had a red brick exterior and consisted of two structures: the main house and a kitchen, the former fronted by a wooden fence. The main house had four rooms on each floor. On the first floor there were a library, living room, dining room, and a study that served as an office for the president's official duties. Here also the faculty held its meetings. On the second floor there were bedrooms. There were also bedrooms on the third floor after the roof was raised some years later. This permitted easier access, at which time a dormer was constructed to provide better illumination.



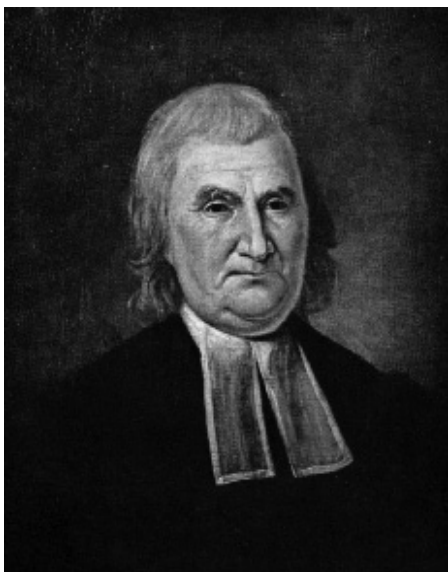
James Madison

Class of 1771; GS 1771 under Witherspoon; doctor of laws honoris 1787



John Maclean Jr.

Class of 1816; Princeton President, 1854–68



John Witherspoon
Princeton President, 1768–94

*I*n the latter part of 1756 when both Nassau Hall and the President's House were still undergoing construction, the president, Aaron Burr Sr., and his family were the first occupants of the house. In addition to the president, their family included his wife, Esther Edwards Burr, daughter Sarah, and a baby son Aaron Burr Jr., who later became a member of the Class of 1772, and even later vice president of the United States (1801–05). Within a year of their moving into the home, the father was dead and his wife died the following year.

When the Burr family moved to the President's House they brought with them a slave, named Caesar, who lived over the kitchen that was joined to the main house by a second-story link. The kitchen contained a Dutch oven that was used during the early years of the house's occupancy and was subsequently sealed off and forgotten for many years. The last family to occupy the house, Dean and Mrs. J. Douglas Brown, fostered its restoration to its original condition. The result presents a kitchen that now contains a number of features reminiscent of its early colonial days.

A diverting anecdote pertains, as reported in the minutes of the trustees, to the earliest years when a wall of the house served as backstop for handball played by the college students, and when the college provided limited opportunities for physical exercise. The trustees “having been made sensible of the Damages done to the President’s House by the Students playing ball against it, do hereby strictly forbid all and every of the Students, the Officers and all other Persons belonging to the College, to play ball there under the Penalty of Five Shillings for every Offense to be levied on each Person who shall offend in the Premises.”

Of a more serious nature, during its first 40 years the college encountered a succession of devastating blows. As a result of a series of early deaths within 20 years of the founding of the college, the institution was governed by five presidents. The following is a list of the early presidents and their terms of office, all of whom, except for Jonathan Dickinson, were residents of the house:

Jonathan Dickinson, 1747

Aaron Burr Sr., 1748–57

Jonathan Edwards, 1758

Samuel Davies, 1759–61

Samuel Finley, 1761–66

John Witherspoon, 1768–94

Samuel Stanhope Smith, 1795–1812

Ashbel Green, 1812–22

James Carnahan, 1823–54

John Maclean Jr., 1854–68

James McCosh, 1868–88



Maclean House, circa 1878

*N*ot until 1768, when John Witherspoon of Scotland assumed the presidency, was there continuity, and that was interrupted by the American Revolution. Of much longer continuity, according to legend, were the two large sycamore trees still standing in front of the President's House that were planted in the 1770s to commemorate the repeal of the Stamp Act in 1776.

Some years after Witherspoon's arrival in Princeton with a wife and five children, he acquired his Tusculum estate a few miles from Princeton. There he moved when his son-in-law, Samuel Stanhope Smith, Class of 1769, was called in 1779 to be a member of the faculty. Smith and his family then moved into the President's House, which he continued to occupy when he was elected to serve as president in 1795 until his retirement in 1812. Witherspoon's occupancy of the President's House during the American Revolution was interrupted by the British when General Lord Leslie made it his military headquarters, only to be evicted by the American forces under the direction of General George Washington in

the Battle of Princeton on January 3, 1777. Consequently both Nassau Hall and the President's House suffered damage during their occupancy by both British and American forces.

It was during this era when individuals of great historic significance were guests in the President's House. James Madison had studied there when he was the college's first graduate student in 1771. Others had been visitors. John and Samuel Adams, and presumably John Hancock, were guests when they were en route to Philadelphia in 1774. One may also conjecture that quite possibly George Washington and some members of the Continental Congress were guests in the house when Congress held its sessions in Princeton during the early part of 1783.

Conjecture is not required to note that one of the window panes in the front room library still shows the names of individuals etched in the glass in 1804. Although the names are now barely decipherable, they have been identified as those of three young ladies, including Frances, one of John Witherspoon's daughters, and three men, Henry Kollock, Class of 1794, Thomas G. Percy, Class of 1806, and James Rush, Class of 1805, entwined with two hearts pierced by an arrow.



Maclean House, circa 1868



Maclean House, 20th century

Following Samuel Stanhope Smith's presidency, which ended in 1812, Ashbel Green, Class of 1783, was chosen as his successor, serving for a span of 10 years. Then in 1823 James Carnahan, Class of 1800, began his long term of 31 years during which time the college endured the nadir of its history. Enrollment shrank, support waned, and it struggled for continuing existence. It was John Mclean Jr., Class of 1816, who largely stimulated the efforts that reinvigorated the college. He first served as a tutor of mathematics, then of ancient languages and literature, as well as librarian before becoming professor of biblical studies, and eventually president, from 1854 to 1868. It was he who in 1826 instigated the formation of the original Alumni Association of Nassau Hall, whose purpose was "to promote the interests of the College and the friendly intercourse of its graduates." He also convinced James Madison to serve as the first president of the association until his death in 1836.

As a bachelor, Maclean shared the President's House with members of his family and four cats. On occasion, since the college had as yet no infirmary, he provided beds for students suffering maladies of one kind or another. He was described as "a tall, singular, square-built man, with heavy head and brow; a lion's face when he was aroused, a lamb's

when he smiled . . . such was John Maclean, the best loved man in the world." [*Recollector*, December 1980]

In the early years of Maclean's time in the house, meals were cooked over an open fire in the Dutch oven to be found in the kitchen. In later years, a wood stove was installed, to be followed by a coal range, and subsequently in 1852, a gas range when gas lighting became available. Shortly thereafter, the kitchen was joined to the main house. In 1858 President Maclean introduced a bathtub for which water was heated in the kitchen and then conveyed up the narrow stairs to the second floor. After the bath was completed, the soapy water was drained through a lead pipe to the garden at the rear of the kitchen.

When James McCosh arrived from Scotland in 1868, several alterations were made to the President's House. The most noticeable were the bay windows installed on each side of the house and a cast-iron porch added to the front. In addition, a cast-iron fence, which no longer stands, was added to the front yard.



Maclean House hallway, 20th century



Maclean House kitchen, 20th-century reconstruction

Ten years later, in 1878, the impressive, large stone Florentine Villa, known as Prospect, with its surrounding property became available and was acquired and donated to the college. To this house McCosh and his family moved that year, and there his successor presidents resided until 1968 when Prospect was converted for use by the University Faculty Club.

McCosh's withdrawal from the President's House made it available as a residence for James Ormsbee Murray and his family. Murray, the Holmes Professor of Belles Letters, was appointed dean of the faculty in 1883, at which time the house then became known as the Dean's House, the name that it retained during the occupancy of Murray's successors, identified as follows:

James O. Murray ~ English
1883–99

Samuel R. Winans ~ Greek
1899–1903

Henry B. Fine ~ mathematics

1903–12

William F. Magie ~ physics

1912–25

Luther P. Eisenhart ~ mathematics

1925–33

Robert K. Root ~ English

1933–46

J. Douglas Brown ~ economics

1946–67

In 1968 the retiring dean of the faculty, Douglas Brown, and his wife, recognizing the approaching bicentennial of the founding of the country and deeply interested in the history of the house, encouraged its restoration. Responding to this appeal, Dean Mathey, Class of 1912, a trustee and generous benefactor, contributed the necessary funds for its restoration in preparation for the move of the Alumni Council to what then became known as Maclean House. The name was selected to give recognition to the president who had originally stimulated the founding of the Alumni Association.



Maclean House library, 20th century



Maclean House, 1946 Garden, early spring 2006



The office of the Alumni Council, the governing body of the association, had formerly been in Nassau Hall and then in a vacated building previously occupied by an undergraduate eating club on Prospect Avenue. From there it moved to Maclean House where its many activities are conducted today. The association comprises 80,617 alumni, including 20,149 women, and 22,226 Graduate School alumni, who reside in all 50 states and 117 countries. The council coordinates the activities of the 165 regional associations, in addition to those of the many classes. It also conducts Alumni Day each February and Reunions each spring, a mammoth undertaking that requires the full-time attention of a staff that fills Maclean House. Throughout the year it also conducts a series of lectures and educational trips for alumni and friends, as well as courses over the World Wide Web. For fear that its presence might be forgotten, the staff in 1977 etched their names on a pane of glass in the stairwell in an endeavor to emulate their forbears in 1804.

In recognition of the important historical significance of first the President's House, then the Dean's House, and

now Maclean House, the Class of 1936 made a contribution to develop an attractive garden in the rear of the building. There a plaque has been installed that states:

The English Box Plants
Were Grown From
George Washington's Hedge
Planted 1798
on His Mount Vernon Estate

In 1971 the National Park Service declared Maclean House a National Historic Monument, a status which is attested by this narrative.



Behind Maclean House, 1936 Garden, early spring 2006,
view toward Stanhope Hall



Maclean House, 21st century

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*I*n preparing this historical account of Maclean House, I have appreciated the encouragement of several individuals, especially the following: Karen Woodbridge, director of community relations and special assistant to the vice president and secretary, initiated my involvement in this project to commemorate the 250th anniversary of Maclean House; Christine W. Kitto, a member of the staff of Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, assisted in the selection of the photographs; and Laurel Masten Cantor, director of publications in the Office of Communications, who has demonstrated her usual facility in creating an excellent design for this book. To each I am grateful for their assistance.

— WILLIAM K. SELDEN
JUNE 10, 2006

ADDENDUM

The Alumni Council can trace its roots to the Committee of Fifty, which was organized in 1904 to raise funds for the development of the University. The Committee of Fifty was the predecessor to the Graduate Council, which was formed in 1909. The Graduate Council altered its name in 1959 and became the Alumni Council.

Originally, the title of the person who led the Office of the Alumni Council was called the secretary. The position in the Alumni Council that carried the title of secretary was changed to director in 1972. The persons who have held the title secretary of the Alumni Council are listed below:

George W. Burleigh 1892, 1905–06
(Secretary of the Committee of Fifty)

Harold G. Murray 1893, 1906–16 (Secretary)

V. Lansing Collins 1892, 1917–27 (Secretary)

Alexander Leitch '24, 1927–29 (Secretary)

Thurston J. Davies '16, 1929–34 (Secretary)

Donald W. Griffin '23, 1935–61 (Secretary)

Joseph C. Bradshaw '40, 1961–65 (Secretary)

Charles L. Taggart '51, 1965–68 (Executive Director)

David G. Rahr '60, 1968–72 (Secretary) 1972–80 (Director)

Daniel N. White '65, 1981–98 (Director)

M. Kathryn Taylor '74, 1998–2001 (Director)

Margaret M. Miller '80, 2001–Present (Director)

Compiled by Lydia Osborne h74, assistant to the director, Alumni Council; and Tad Bennicoff, Special Collections assistant, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University.
Reference: *Princeton University Catalogue* and the *Princeton University Register*, respectively.

SELECTED TITLES BY WILLIAM K. SELDEN

*Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs:
Conception and Early Development, 1930–1943 (1984)*

The Princeton Summer Camp, 1908–1975 (1987)

*Princeton—The Best Old Place of All: Vignettes of Princeton University,
1884–1984 (1987)*

The Legacy of John Cleve Green (1988)

*The Heritage of Isabella McCosh: A History of the Health Service
at Princeton University (1991)*

*Club Life at Princeton: A Historical Account of the Eating Clubs
at Princeton University (1995)*

*Nassau Hall: Princeton University's National Historic Landmark
(1996 and 2006)*

Prospect House at Princeton University: A National Historic Landmark (1999)

Going Back: The Uniqueness of Reunions and P-rades at Princeton University (1999)

Women of Princeton, 1746–1969 (2000)

*Alexander Hall: Home of Richardson Auditorium—
A Chronicle of Alexander Hall's Significance in the Development
of the Princeton University Campus (2004)*

Chapels of Princeton University: Their Historical and Religious Significance (2006)

~ ~ ~

Copyright © 2006 by The Trustees of Princeton University.

Written by William K. Selden.

Historic photographs courtesy of Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library.

All other photographs by Denise Applewhite and John Jameson.

Designed by Laurel Masten Cantor.

Edited by Karin Dienst, Carolyn Geller, and Lauren Robinson-Brown.

Produced by the Office of Communications, Princeton University.

To obtain more copies, please contact the Office of Communications,
22 Chambers Street, Suite 201, Princeton, New Jersey 08542.
(609-258-3601)

In the Nation's Service and in the Service of All Nations



Above: Face of Maclean House's grandfather's clock.
Back cover: Halfway up the main staircase in Maclean House.



A PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PUBLICATION