



The

HAMMOND HOUSE

I. THE STORY OF THE HOUSE

The Hammond House is of interest because it was the home of early American patriots through almost a hundred years and because it has been restored and furnished to show something of the way of life of a typical colonial farm family in Westchester County, New York. It is obvious from a glance at the exterior that the structure has three sections today but the visitor should bear in mind that only the large central section housed the Hammonds. The western, or left-hand, section was originally a little cottage built some distance away, almost as old as the Hammond home, and was moved up and joined to the older house sometime after 1835. The eastern, or right-hand, section was probably built in the 1860s and is now the home of the caretaker. The entire structure was acquired by the Westchester County Historical Society in 1926, together with the use of about an acre of grounds, but the New York Board of Water Supply retains title to the land.

As it stands today, the large central section, the original Hammond home, has been restored to its former shape and appearance. The unusual continuation of the roof over the front "porch" and the paving in front with large stone slabs are two features that had been "improved" away and were brought back. Upstairs dormers had to be removed. The porch columns are duplicates of the originals, one of which may still be seen in a rear room inside where it had been put to an unaccustomed use in supporting a second-floor joist. It was recorded in 1894 that "the house used to have tall pine trees and very old box borders in front." The grounds, as restored, represent good design of the pre-Revolutionary period and are briefly described on a later page.

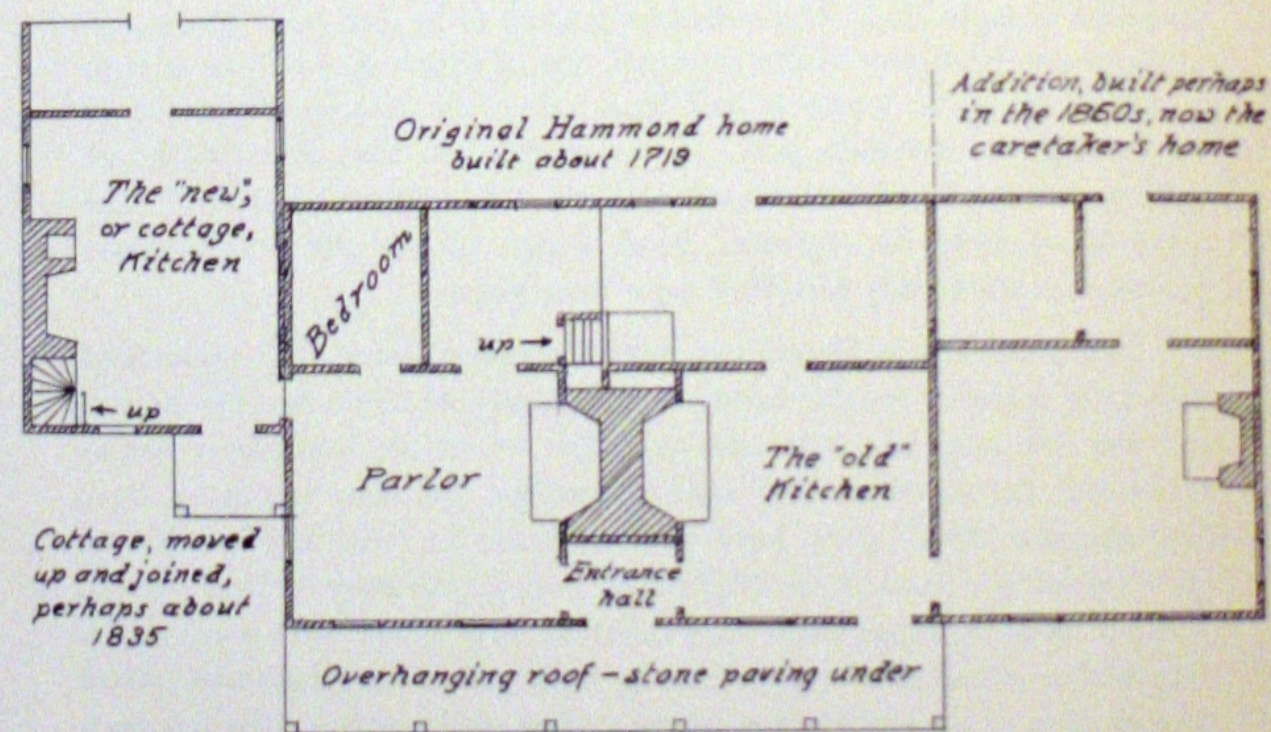
Captain William Hammond built the house about 1719 upon land which he leased from the Lord of Philipsburg Manor. Because he did not own the land, no cellar was provided under the house and special effort was expended in dove-tailing together the floor beams at their intersections. This would have made it easier to move the building if the lease of the land from the Manor were terminated for any reason. Some of these mortised floor beams may be seen in the little room at the rear of the old kitchen. The framing with oaken wall studs and plates may be seen in the old kitchen where a piece of the wainscoting has been removed for this purpose. The hand-cut laths and mud-like plaster are

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clearly visible. And upstairs in the attic one obtains a good view of the rafters and roof framing. The materials and workmanship in these members help to explain how the old house withstood the forces of destruction for two centuries and a half.

The original house had a parlor, a kitchen, two small bedrooms downstairs and an attic. The large fireplace in the parlor was backed up by a similar one in the kitchen and both have been restored to their original condition. These two fireplaces provided all the heat for the house — truly a central heating system but without some of the efficiency and comfort associated with the term today. The west window in the parlor still has the original sash. Original floorboards remain throughout the house except in the old kitchen where the flooring has been replaced with boards of comparable age from another old house. Upon the front door is the hand-forged latch, re-installed after finding it in the yard in 1926.

As was customary, especial attention was given to the design and construction of the parlor and the family must have been proud of the results. The entire eastern side of the room and a part of the northern side are covered with pine paneling ornamented with pilasters, cornices



Floor plan of the restored Hammond House as it is today.

and mouldings. One of the doorways had a semi-circular head that was filled in with boards to square it off and the mouldings that framed the door have been stripped off. The whole of this paneling must have been used elsewhere and taken down and brought here, for it did not quite fit its present position and was sawed off short to suit the space. But it is noticeable that the design of the panels conform to the width of the old stone fireplace, suggesting that the fireplace was built to fit the paneling. It is also obvious that the doorways have been placed to suit the openings in the panels. This paneling has been described as "early American," and may have been brought from Massachusetts where the Hammond family first settled.

The little cottage which forms the unit at the west end of Hammond House is a fitting companion for the larger structure. Its age is attested by, among other evidence, the hand-split laths under the plaster, as can be seen in the kitchen ceiling. When the little cottage was moved over and joined with its big neighbor, a small cellar was dug, since a deed to the land was now held by the householders. This move not only provided a cellar which the Hammonds never had, and more room on the ground floor and in the attic, but it is likely that greatly improved kitchen facilities were an important item.

Captain William Hammond designed his kitchen fireplace in the style of many old kitchens on Cape Cod. There was no swinging crane upon which to hang pots and kettles. Instead these were hung from an iron bar with its ends embedded in the masonry across the throat of the flue. The baking oven was built inside the fireplace at the left. To use the oven, one had to reach across the top of the fire, and heaven help the clumsy maid who dropped a pan of bread or cake into the coals.

In contrast, the kitchen fireplace in the little cottage at the west end has a swinging crane built in, a large baking oven at the side and a smaller warming oven above. No wonder that this became the kitchen for the enlarged house and that the former Hammond kitchen was used for other purposes, perhaps as a dining room for the farm hands who had access to it through a back door.

When the Westchester County Historical Society undertook the preservation of the old farmhouse in 1926, an architect was retained and a staff of antiquarians, historians and recorders was set up. Every step in the work of restoration was preceded by thorough study of all related evidence

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concerning just what the original structure had been like. Naturally, the years had brought many changes and what we see in the Hammond House today was in large part concealed by efforts over the years to "modernize" the old building. Careful procedure and expert craftsmanship brought back the features of the original home. One of those responsible for the step-by-step studies and discoveries was Mr. Reginald Pelham Bolton, the noted historian and archeologist. He afterward wrote an absorbing account of the work of restoration which was published by the Society in 1927. Further important restoration was done during the tenure of Mr. Frank MacGregor Smith as Curator, 1952-1962, including (1) complete "re-restoration" of the old Hammond kitchen which did not faithfully represent the period of its construction; (2) determination of the original paint in the west kitchen, parlor, bedroom, entrance hall and east kitchen and re-painting, closely approximating the original — going back through 13 coats of paint in the parlor, for instance, to find traces of the first coat still visible; (3) installation of proper period hardware on most doors and windows; (4) addition of a proper period door in the little room off the west kitchen (probably a "buttery" originally) and the conversion of this room into an "inside wood shed."

Rear of the little cottage which, almost as old as the Hammond home, was moved up and added at the west end.



II. THE PEOPLE WHO LIVED HERE

The Hammond (Hammen or Hemmon) family is of English stock and of great antiquity. Records exist in England which relate to persons of that name as far back as the fifteenth century. Those who emigrated to America seem to have been descendants of Thomas Hammond of Lavenham, Suffolk, who was born in 1587, and of a probable relative named William Hammond of London.

With other hardy pioneers some of the Hammonds reached the Massachusetts Colony and settled about the year 1636 at Newton, whence one of the family made his way to Eliot, Maine. Somewhat later we find their descendants at New Bedford and it is probably to this branch of the family, perhaps to some sea-faring member, that William Hammond of Tarrytown owed his parentage. He was born in Bermuda but by some combination of circumstances made his way to New York. It is recorded that he was a shipwright. He married, first, Mary Walgraft, but she died, leaving an infant son, John. His second marriage, November 4, 1714, to Esther, daughter of David and Esther Storm, is entered in the records of the Old Dutch Church at Tarrytown.

The parlor, with early American paneling and original flooring.



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He became a tenant of Philipsburg Manor, taking up leased farm lands, and was an active member of the community and an Elder of the Old Dutch Church. In the tax list of 1732 he was assessed £18. He was appointed to the office of Fence Viewer in 1742 and was Captain of Militia in the upper part of the Manor in 1755. From his will, probated in 1762, we learn of the "improvements" he had made on his leased farm, doubtless including the dwelling which his son James inherited and which is the subject of this booklet.

Captain Hammond's son John by his first wife grew up and married Catrina Van Tassel. He became the tenant of a tract of land on the west side of the Sawmill River, separated from his father's farm by the lands of Joseph Paulding, father of John Paulding, leader of the three captors of Major John Andre in 1780.

By his second marriage Captain William Hammond had eight children:

David, born 1716; enlisted in colonial militia 1759 and died in service that year.

Susanna, born 1718.

Isaac, baptized Nov. 1, 1720.

The parlor, with homespun window curtains, early Windsor chairs, and box on wall at left for precious spare candles. Hood clock on wall, extreme right.



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Mary, baptized April 23, 1723.

Abraham, baptized April 10, 1725; referred to in his father's will as not having his "naturall Sences."

James, born in 1727; inherited the property and became conspicuous by his services in the Revolution.

Jacob, baptized June 20, 1730.

William, of whom no record exists except the reference to him in his father's will as feeble-minded.

James Hammond, the fourth son, came into possession of the old dwelling built by his father when the latter died in 1762. He had married, in 1755, Nancy Ann Wildey, born in "Manark" (Mamaroneck) in 1739, who was thus only sixteen years old at the time of her wedding. She was a daughter of Thomas and Sarah (Griffen) Wildey.

James Hammond was commissioned Lieutenant Colonel of the First Regiment of Westchester Militia October 14, 1775, under Colonel Joseph Drake. When Colonel Drake resigned in August, 1776, seven weeks before the Battle of White Plains, Hammond was given command and promoted. He continued to command the Regiment, except during the time he was held captive by the enemy, until the end of the war. The Regiment comprised four to six companies, varying greatly in strength because of losses in the field and by capture. At morning parade on July 17, 1776, 46 men were mustered. A return for June 22, 1778, shows four companies with a total of 180 officers and men. Written across the bottom of the return in an unknown hand is the note: "N.B. 9 others sworn allegiance to King George, and 3 who live below the lines. Not a bad showing for the Manor after three years of war." On the wall of the entrance hall of the Hammond House today is a photostatic copy of a letter written by Colonel Hammond October 22, 1779, to Governor George Clinton, explaining why he could not send forty men for detached service as the Governor had ordered. "Which is out of my power to do," explains the Colonel, "as there is a number of men belonging to my Regt. prisoners in New York." A commander of militia in the Revolution had manpower problems in addition to fighting the enemy.

In July, 1776, two British frigates, the PHENIX and the ROSE, with three tenders, came up the Hudson River and anchored off Tarrytown. In dashing about the countryside to alert others and to assemble his regiment for possible action, Hammond, still second in command, found that his absence from the waterfront was misinterpreted. Apparently

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there were individuals ready to criticize and condemn. He was also criticized for some of his decisions in relation to the purchase of salt pork for his men which, with bread, was a principal part of the ration. In response to his demand, a court of inquiry was ordered and witnesses were heard. The record of the hearing is a curious mixture of the serious and the amusing, in which patriotism and pork seem to be combined in nearly equal proportions. The official record says: "It appears to this Committee that the charges exhibited against Colonel Hammond, both in regard to the affair of the Pork and neglect of duty as an officer are entirely groundless and that therefore the said Colonel ought to be acquitted from all further trouble on these accounts and returned to his regiment immediately. (Indorsed:) Report of a committee that Colonel Hammond is an honest man & a fighting Colonel. Confirmed."

The Colonel was a fluent writer and never hesitated to address letters directly to the highest authorities. These included General Washington, Governor George Clinton, and the President of the Provincial Congress. Military channels apparently had not yet been invented.

Each side in the Revolution raided the other at times, across the Neutral Ground of central Westchester County. In late September, 1778,

The west kitchen, showing fireplace, swinging crane and utensils, bake oven and, above, warming oven; tavern table, wood plates, burl bowl and Betty lamp on rachel at extreme right.



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British raiders started out to attack the "Rebell Post at Colonel Hammond's" but on the way they met an advance guard of an American force. There was some noisy but harmless firing and the raiders fled. This episode is reported from the British side in a letter from Major General James Grant to Sir Henry Clinton in New York, a copy of which hangs on the wall in the old Hammond kitchen. A particularly disastrous raid by the British was made in February, 1780, at Young's Corners, a half-mile east of the Hammond House.

In May, 1780, Colonel Hammond was taken prisoner by the British. There is documentary evidence of this and no one doubts it. What is not certain, however, and remains unsupported by any direct evidence, is the manner of his capture and the relation of the event to the movements of General Washington. Here is the story as it has been transmitted down the years: General Washington came one afternoon to confer with Colonel Hammond at the latter's home, apparently stopping on his way on other business. The two officers talked a while and Washington departed. The County was permeated with Tory sympathizers. A woman with tendencies in that direction had seen Washington enter the Ham-

Tavern table, made in 1760, rush bottom chairs, trestle table at right with large wooden bowl, and mahogany linen press of Heppelwhite design (about 1780) at left.



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mond home and hastened to report it to the British authorities whose lines at that time extended across the middle of Yonkers. Early the next morning Colonel Hammond and his wife were awakened by loud rumbling, shouting, banging upon their door, and calls to open up. When the door was opened they were confronted by British soldiers and two field guns in position opposite the front of the house, ready to blow the place apart. The British were disappointed in not finding Washington, but they took the Colonel away as a prisoner. He was held for a year and a half.

There is a letter extant written by Colonel Hammond from the British prison on Long Island December 13, 1780, to Governor Clinton, asking that efforts be made to arrange the exchange of a fellow-prisoner, Lieutenant Jacob Van Tassel, whose house had been burned, his wife and children "reduced, to my knowledge, to beggary, and himself in poor state of health for a long time." This was the same Lieutenant Van Tassel whose activities with his "goose-gun" in annoying the British shipping from his farm home overlooking the Hudson is described so entertainingly by Washington Irving in "A Chronicle of Wolfert's Roost."

Attic, showing roof framing and special equipment, including saddler's bench, flax break, cheese press, baby carriage and rocking horse.



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In retaliation the British finally burned Van Tassel's house but Irving later bought the property and ensured immortal fame for its original builder, Wolfert Acker, and for the doughty Jacob Van Tassel by erecting upon the site his own lovely "Sunnyside" and recording its history.

After the war Colonel Hammond purchased the land which his father and he, in turn, had previously leased from the Manor. The purchase from the Commissioners of Forfeiture covered 242 acres, including the land the house stood on. In 1786 he was chosen a Trustee of the Old Dutch Church. He died July 26, 1810, 83 years old, and was buried in the Old Dutch Churchyard at Tarrytown. Upon his tombstone is carved the verse:

*'Tis finished, 'tis done,
The spirit is fled,
The prisoner is gone,
The WARRIOR is dead.*

His wife died four years later and was buried beside him. Their children, all born in the old homestead, were:

- Lovina, married Soloman Hawes.
- Sarah, baptized 1757; married Lieut. William Vail.
- William, born 1766; married Esther Miller.
- Elizabeth, born 1773; married Isaac Doty.
- Ann, born 1774; married John Davids.
- Nancy, married Abraham Brown.
- Joseph, born 1783; married Jenny Brewer.

Upon the death of Colonel Hammond, the farm was divided between his two sons, William and Joseph, Joseph receiving the western portion upon which the old home stood. Here Joseph continued to reside, with his wife and five children, until his death in 1829.

William, elder son of Colonel James Hammond, married Esther Miller April 22, 1788. When he received the eastern portion of the old homestead farm in accordance with his father's will, he built a home upon it and he and his wife lived there until their deaths, four months apart, in 1831 and 1832. They left no children. They are buried in the churchyard of the Dutch Reformed Church at Elmsford.

William Hammond followed his father's example and was an officer in the War of 1812. He was afterward appointed Brigadier General in command of New York State Militia. The three successive generations of Hammonds in the military service thus were:

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1. Captain William Hammond who built the house about 1770 and died there in 1789.
2. Colonel James Hammond who was born in the old house in 1757, lived there throughout his life, and died there in 1810.
3. General William Hammond who was born in 1786 and grew up in the old house, but built his own home later on the adjacent property where he died 1859.

Through marriage the Hammonds have become related to many other old families of Westchester County. Among them may be noted Hawes, Stephens, Havens, Vail, Lewis, Van Fland, Van Wart, Winder, Doty, Miller, Brown, and Brown.

III. AN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY FURNITURE

Very few items from the old Hammond homestead have survived the years. There is a beautiful Westchester dinner plate in a blue and white pattern that remained in Colonel Hammond's family until presented to the Society. Two lovely plates in a blue floral design which

like over the pattern with centers, with the interesting top brackets, slight flutes, and the spiral design.



would be called dessert or salad plates today were recently presented by descendants of David Hammond, eldest son of Captain William Hammond. Here is a Revolutionary wooden canteen with the Colonel's initials carved in the side — J.A.H. A silver-plated spoon found on the premises bearing the initials "J.H." may have been what one naturally thinks. And that is all that remains today having a direct connection with the Hammond household or family.

So it was decided in 1927 to furnish the main rooms of the restored Hammond House with furniture and equipment of kinds that were known to have been used in the time of the Revolution, say 1750-1800, from any source, and this has been done. Many of the items, especially the more valuable ones, were given by friends and well wishers; others, particularly the more common kinds, were purchased by the Society. Today the parlor, the bedroom and the cottage kitchen at the west end have all been furnished. It is believed that if Colonel Hammond and his wife Ann could return today to the old house, they would recognize the place and readily adapt themselves in their accustomed way of life.

The window curtains throughout the house are of appropriate material, all hand-woven; those in the old kitchen are of linsey-woolsey, hand-woven at Sturbridge Village, Massachusetts. All are hand-hemmed. The chairs are sometimes moved about to accommodate large groups of visitors, but other furniture usually remains where described and pictured herein.

The Parlor

As in all old houses, the fireplace dominates this room. The little flax spinning wheel would be operated at times through the day and perhaps for a while in the evening by the light of the fire. Among the objects upon the mantle is a mortar and pestle which was used for grinding spices and herbs. The three Windsor chairs in this room are of a distinctly American type originating in Philadelphia. Over the table against the south wall hangs a wooden box used for keeping precious spare candles. The old clock upon the west wall is of Dutch manufacture and has chimes. It is called a hood clock from the design of the housing and dates from the seventeenth century. It is in operable condition.

The Bedroom

The maple four-poster bed is roped to support the mattress. The white spread is a masterpiece of what is known as "stuffed" quilting or Trapunto work, made by three sisters on Long Island two hundred years

be seen in the top surface. Upon the table is a burl bowl in excellent condition and several wooden plates.

Against the wall is a small trestle table upon which reposes a large wooden "pan" or platter which could be used for several purposes in a kitchen. It could even be used for carving large pieces of meat. A Betty lamp hangs upon its adjustable ratchet at one end of the tavern table.

The utensils and tools beside the fireplace are of obvious purpose and require little description. The swinging crane, the bake oven and the warming closet should be noted. In the corner closet at the far end of the room are numerous pieces of kitchen crockery and upon the floor stand two large glass bottles, hand blown. Beside the rear door is a mahogany linen press of Heppelwhite design, dating from about 1780.

Exhibits in Rear Rooms

It would be impossible to describe all the various kinds of articles and materials arranged for display in the rear rooms. Most of them are marked. One that is especially appropriate is the old cobbler's bench, with tools, lasts and patterns. Many colonial homes included somewhere in the family a man or a growing son who was able to make simple repairs on footwear. The historian J. Thomas Scharf tells how more difficult work was accomplished: "Where calves were killed for family use, the skins were tanned and kept until the peripatetic shoemaker, who traveled through the country, made his annual visit when he halted long enough to make shoes for the elders, the children and the servants." So a well furnished country home would have a cobbler's bench available.

Here are listed only a few of the other items of especial interest:

A small bench with a reversible swage for producing hand-made nails.
Carpenter's tools.

Dishes in the corner closet, including a set of "grandmother's" or mulberry pattern of Chelsea ware — very old — without maker's marking.

A collection of bead work — reticules, purses, bands and belts — in a display case near the outer door. These are the products of the most delicate and ingenious workmanship.

Old playing cards, used before the Revolution. It could have been cards like these that the three captors of Major Andre were playing with that fateful morning in September, 1780.

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Dresses of the colonial and Revolutionary periods hanging against the rear wall.

In the glass case against the east wall are a number of items found on the property when the Historical Society took possession in 1926. Among them are several spoons and knives, and a small pewter cup. Here also are several items associated with William H. Hammond, a descendant of David, eldest son of Captain William Hammond. He married Mary Ann Rossell and her name appears in the exhibit. The mother of William H. Hammond was Sally Worden, closely related to Rear Admiral John Lorimer Worden who, as a Lieutenant, commanded the MONITOR in the famous battle with the MERRIMAC in 1862.

The Attic

Many items, some too large for exhibit downstairs, others normally kept in a shed or barn, and some not of eighteenth-century origin, are in the attic. No listing can be attempted here but it is desired to emphasize that these are in the attic only because that is a convenient place to dis-

Aromatic herb garden in front, with split-rail fence at right and 1717 sundial and bench seat at left.



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play them. It is not intended to imply that they would have been placed there when the house was occupied. Noteworthy items include the shoulder yoke for carrying buckets of water or milk, a two-man cross-cut saw, a saddler's bench, a flax break which was a commonly used implement wherever flax was raised and spun, cradles, spinning wheels, and a baby carriage.

The Grounds

The gardens in front of the house were first laid out and developed in 1929 by the Ninth District, Federated Garden Clubs of New York State, whose interest in this project was suspended only during World War II when restrictions on gasoline made volunteer work impossible. It was resumed after the War and has continued to date. In the first preparations for the flower beds many arrowheads and other artifacts were dug up. Individual garden clubs of the Federation have taken turns in the work and responsibility. Hammond House is a much more attractive place today and is far more representative of the eighteenth century because of the work done by these garden clubs under Ninth District auspices.

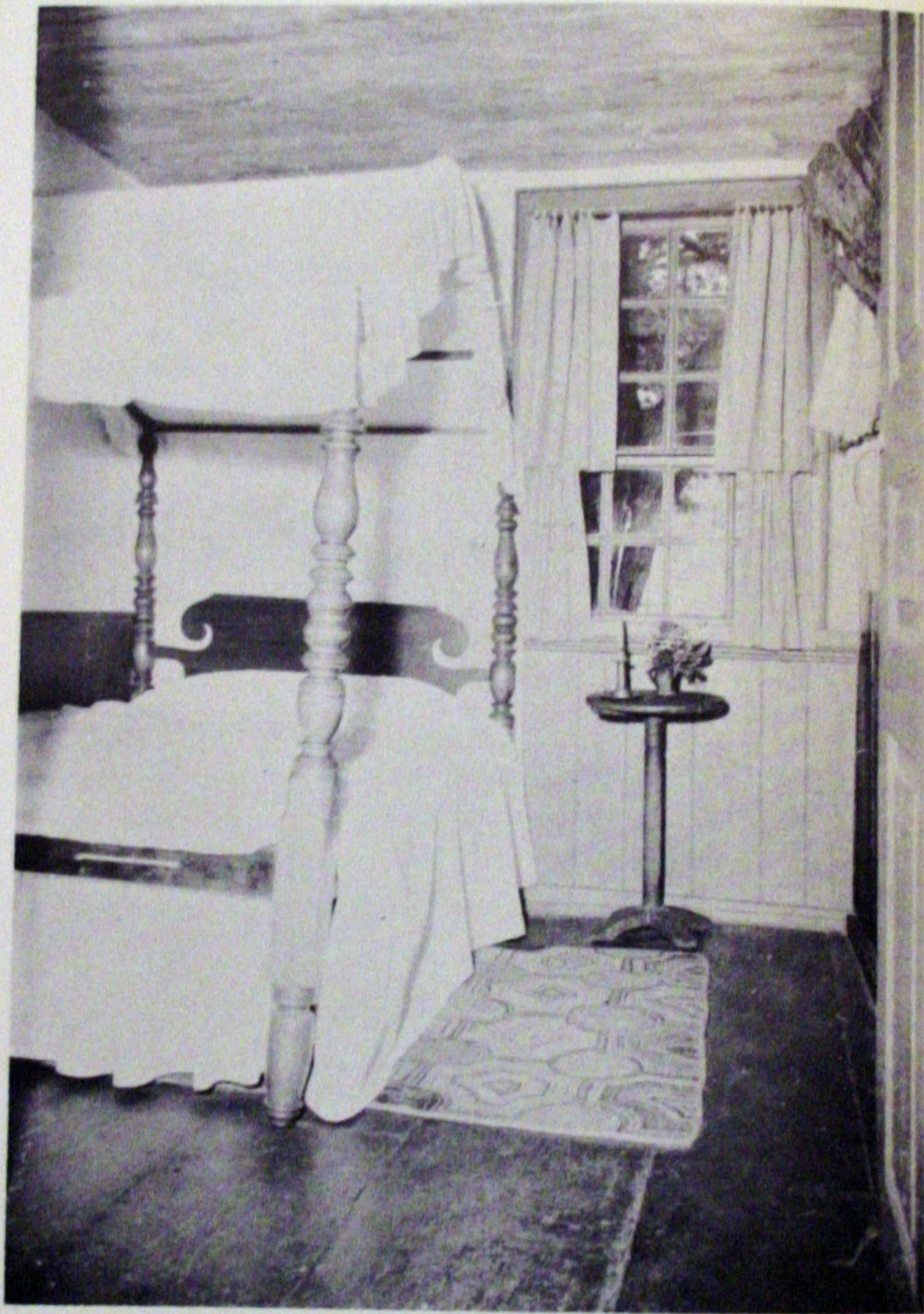
The aromatic herb garden was planned and planted in 1940, designed to represent a colonial herb garden such as the Hammonds might have had. The various herbs are marked. The roses were given by several donors, each in memory of some loved one whose name is permanently recorded.

In 1927 the flagpole was given in memory of Colonel James Hammond and of his direct descendant, Edgar B. Lowerre, who was killed in action before the Hindenburg Line in World War I and who was posthumously awarded the Conspicuous Service Cross for bravery in action.

The sundial bears a date — 1717 — so it is appropriately placed in the garden of an eighteenth-century home.

When the well was discovered it was decided to provide a housing for it in colonial style. This is located in the southeastern corner of the grounds.

The split-rail fence along the road in front of the house is of a type commonly found in Westchester County and elsewhere in the early part of the eighteenth century while timber was still available. Pioneers moving westward carried the design with them and rail fences marked prop-



The bedroom with roped four-poster and eighteenth-century bedspread of Trapunto work. Candle stand under window.

erty boundaries across the young nation until timber became scarce and valuable for other purposes. This rail fence was given and erected by the Ninth District, Federated Garden Clubs of New York State.

Textile Production in a Colonial Farm Home

As an example of the wealth of material assembled in the Hammond House which could be used in connection with studies of various aspects of colonial life, the means of making fabrics at home may be considered. In the eighteenth century this part of the new country was an important producer of flax, and the Hammonds must have included it among their crops. The finer fibers were used for domestic linens and the coarser for articles of outer clothing. Flax seed was shipped to the Old World, especially to Ireland. A bushel of flax seed sown in the Spring would produce eleven bushels at harvest, in addition to the fibers for spinning. Flax seed sold for about ten shillings per bushel in 1774.

The preliminary preparation of flax could be followed among the exhibits in the Hammond House — retting, breaking and combing. There are spinning wheels for flax yarn and a winder for putting it into measured skeins. There are also wheels for spinning cotton and wool. Here is a basket of yarns after coloring with homemade dyes — walnut for brown, golden rod for yellow, and cochineal for red. The finished product of the home loom is represented in the window curtains throughout the house and in many of the items of clothing displayed in the rear rooms.