



In This Issue

- *Carlyle House Architecture, Part 3*
- Calendar of Events
- Happy Hour

CARLYLE HOUSE

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Carlyle House Architecture, Part 3

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Parlor:

Like the dining room, the parlor retains its original embellishment. Although it is finely embellished, it is much simpler and more restrained than the more elaborate dining room. The walls are not paneled, the fireplace has a simple carved backband, the chair rail is simple, and the cornice is embellished with only a dentiled element. This hierarchy of design between the two most original rooms played an important role in the restoration of the house. The



Parlor during restoration
architects knew to restore the rest of the house based on a hierarchy of embellishment. Architectural evidence indicates that the center passage was superior in embellishment to the parlor, meaning that the passage was a

more important space than the parlor. Primary source documentation indicates that John Carlyle ordered the exact wallpaper and border that we now have in the parlor. We do not know exactly where he put it, but the amount of paper works for this room. The shine would have also helped brighten the room in the evening, when the Carlyles would have been entertaining guests.

Master Chamber/Study:

Room use studies are unclear as to which room was the chamber and which was the study. Architecturally, it is apparent that the rooms are switched. We are not even sure that Carlyle had a study in the house; he may have had an outside office. During Carlyle's time, a door leading from the chamber into the center passage was

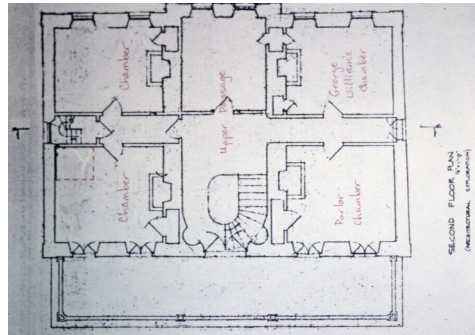


closed up, as it kept collapsing. This indicates that this room had a more public use than a chamber. As discussed previously, the Fairfax Street entrance would have been the primary entrance

Closed-up door from passage to master chamber

**CARLYLE HOUSE
HISTORIC PARK**

to the house. The location of the primary stair also tells us that the Fairfax Street entrance was the main entrance. The chamber would not normally be situated at the very public front of the house. This room probably served as a family sitting room, not a



Plan of second floor pre-restoration

bed chamber. Notice that the servant stair protrudes into the study, which probably served as the bed chamber. Would the Carlyles have sacrificed that space in their chamber? This is highly likely, as that little stair at Gunston Hall does the same thing. During the Carlyle period, the back stair was slightly larger than it is today. A post-Carlyle owner removed the stair entirely, but evidence found during the restoration revealed its location. However, the stair was restored to the Herbert period, which ran from 1780-1827. Later architectural investigation (2001) revealed that the Carlyle period stair was a bit larger than the Herbert stair.

Please keep in mind that we have no firm evidence as to how the Carlyles used each room in the house. For all we know, they bucked tradition and standard practice, and slept in the dining room. We can't be 100% sure which room was which, as no primary source evidence exists.