

# A Sketch of the Old Houses of New England and the Middle States (1630-1700) and Early Canadian Examples

*By Grattan D. Thompson.*

AT the beginning of the seventeenth century that part of America now known as New England and the Middle States was made up of the colonies of New England, New Netherlands, New Sweden and Maryland. To-day New England includes the states of Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Connecticut; New Netherlands, the states of New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. Pennsylvania and Maryland both took a part of New Sweden; the rest of Maryland is practically the same as the old state. Changes occurred continually up to the War of Independence, when the states were very much the same as they are now except that their western boundaries were not defined.

The period 1630-1770 includes all the work known as "colonial" and the early part of the "Georgian Style." The later "Georgian" work was merely a repetition on a smaller scale of the English Georgian. But these terms are confusing. Why use two names to describe one period? What is meant by the term "Colonial"?

Fletcher says: "During the eighteenth century buildings were erected which have been termed 'colonial' in style corresponding to what is known in England as Queen Anne or Georgian." He is fairly right as far as he goes, but that is not far enough. Another writer said: "The best buildings were erected after 1760." But what about the work of the seventeenth century? Surely those charming little cottages built in the seventeenth century are even more worthy of a name than the later examples which are so tinged with copyism. Strictly speaking, "colonial" means anything pertaining to a colony. The United States was

a colony between the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers in 1620 and the War of Independence in 1770. Therefore the style developed between those dates is Colonial. The adoption of this interpretation allows us to include the early phase of Georgian influence on Colonial architecture and excludes the later buildings which were pure Georgian. Of course the student

must understand that architectural periods cannot be cut and dried to coincide with any set date. Colonial architecture continued after the war till other styles gradually superseded it.

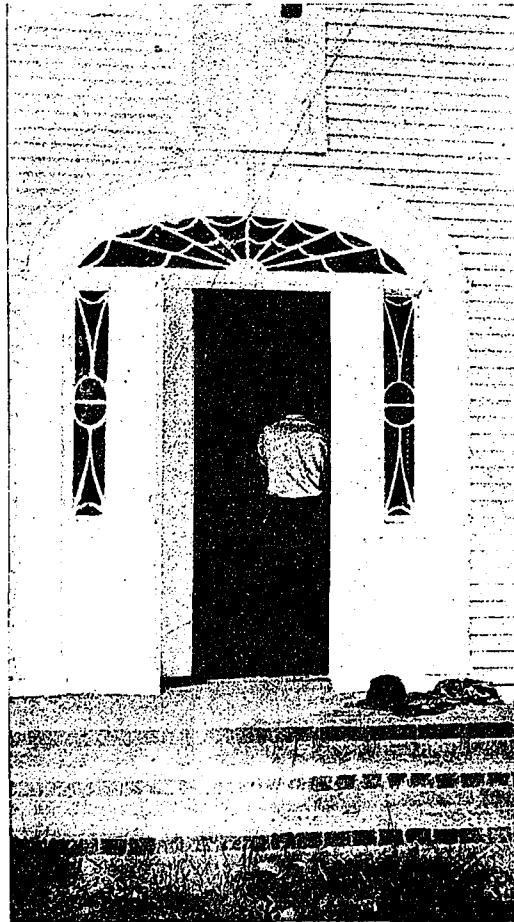
"Colonial" includes the architecture of all the colonies under one heading. But there are natural subdivisions owing to the different nationalities of the settlers. The two main divisions are the so-called "Dutch type" and the New England type. Others such as the plantation houses of Maryland and Virginia are merely variations of the two already mentioned.

## NEW ENGLAND.

Though this colony was settled later than New Netherlands, the traditional dwelling seems to have been developed earlier than the Dutch type. The Capen House, Topfield, Mass., was built in

1683. There seems to be no Dutch example earlier than the eighteenth century. The Capen House has been completely restored, but it gives us a general idea of how these early English settlers built.

The traditional plan is rectangular, and in the early buildings is only one room deep. The distinguishing feature is the grouping of the fireplaces around one chimney stack. This was evidently a fire precaution, as the house was constructed of timber. The large stack is in the



DOORWAY: OLD COLONIAL HOUSE, GEORGEVILLE, QUEBEC.