

Pleasure to Restore

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An Architectural Approach

Pleasure to Restore

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Architectural restoration usually is a process of returning a building to its original style or condition. A structure of, say 200 years of age, has probably had a number of unrelated owners and if any changes have been made, they probably reflected the taste of the times.

Rebuilding a decaying chimney might be a matter of simple maintenance. On the other hand, changing its styling in the doing may very well be a job of restoration rather than just preservation.

A home in Prince George's County nicely illustrates this. Beall's Pleasure, on Old Landover Road a few miles east of Bladensburg, is pleasantly endowed with both age

and history. In 1940, "Maryland — A Guide To The Old Line State" described it as a brick house of Georgian colonial design built about 1795 by Benjamin Stoddert, first secretary of the Navy.

This was Stoddert's country home. His "town house" was Bostwick, in Bladensburg, built in 1746 by his father-in-law, Christopher Lowndes. Bostwick still stands a bit grandly on its terraced lawns at 3901 48th Street, near Kenilworth Avenue.

In 1936 when the Historic American Buildings Survey was sweeping through Maryland and the 47 other states, Beall's Pleasure was one of about 60 18th century structures recorded in Prince George's County. There were actually more than 100 and

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Beall's Pleasure restored today

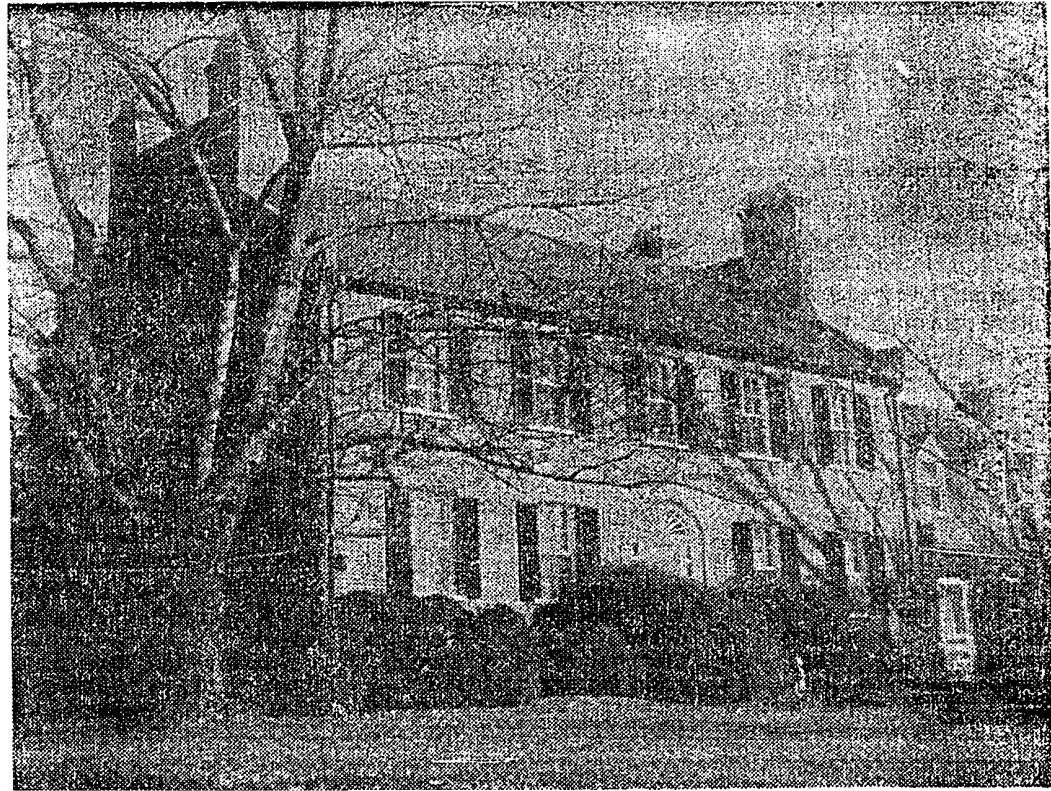
Pleasure Preserved

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sadly, a third of the total no longer stand. Fortunately, Beall's Pleasure was not one of these. Photographs show the home then as impressive and obviously old. The four curtained chimneys of the main section towered far above the roof ridge and the gable ends also rose as parrets above the roof. The north end was heavily covered with dense ivy, as it is today. Beall's Pleasure was a picturesque mansion, but it possessed a feature not in keeping with the grandeur of its Georgian design. A mundane porch spanned much of its length and one thought of Beall's Pleasure as more brick farmhouse than Georgian mansion. The absense of shutters was a contributing factor.

By the 1950's the porch had been removed and its outline on the ancient brick had been sandblasted. A well proportioned stoop, supported by columns, now crowned the elliptical leaded fanlight over the broad entrance and the transition was striking to one who had known the earlier porch. Shutters framed all windows.

Today no hood greets the eye and the impressive formality of the Georgian is inescapable. In their wisdom, the owners here knew that superb brickwork and perfect proportions of entrance way emphasized by original brasses simply needed no porch as a deduction. In short, here is perfect restoration through subtraction, rather than addition.



Beall's Pleasure in 1936