

PRESIDENT'S HOUSE ON CARR'S HILL

notes that “birch costs 50% more than pine with white coat,” and suggests leaving the fireplace trimmings and mantels out of the contract (the note does not indicate clearly that it is in reference to the President's House, but if it is, the tentative treatment of the design data in correspondence between Lambeth and President Alderman helps in explaining why the mantelpieces were not executed to follow extant drawings).²⁵ In September 1908, Dr. Alderman inquired about some of the mantelpiece details and in the same letter asked if the library (current sitting room) could be trimmed in oak; he also expressed that he was eager to get details from McKim, Mead & White about the library bookcases.

One of the last letters from McKim, Mead & White, dated 20 November 1908, is a list of items still needing attention at the house, prepared by W. M. Kendall. In it, Kendall expresses dismay at the shape of the arch at the doorway from the south vestibule to the main hall: “The arch of the door from the hall to the vestibule was to have followed the curve of the arch from the vestibule to the portico. The curve is at present faulty, and should be made like the full size drawing...” In the same letter, Kendall recommends changing the main-hall radiators because the first ones installed were too tall. He also recommends making a minor alteration to the servants' stair, using a duller color of paint on the shutters, and so forth. The letter expresses a quandary about whether to proceed on constructing a gilded mirror for the mantelpiece, and he indicates that the library (present living room) bookcases are being drawn up with paneled pilasters (as seen on the one remaining original bookcase in the study, the room now known as the library).

Perhaps one of the final decisions made in the house's finishes was the insertion of large areas of decorative glass into the pocket doors that connected the main rooms of the first story. The glass replaced wood panels that McKim, Mead & White's drawings had shown in the lower three-quarter of each of the unusually tall and wide door leaves. The addition of the glass does not appear to have been guided by McKim, Mead & White (except in the inner doors of the front vestibule, where they had called for large, single panes of plate glass). Instead, it was apparently inserted as the result of a last-minute decision made as the doors were being fabricated. The glazed portion of each pocket door was actually a full-door height, the top of the glass being at a rail that occurs approximately seven feet above the floor. However, the doors were eight-foot six-inches in total height and the remaining solid wood panel occurred well above eye level. On one hand, one could think of the resultant design, visually speaking, as full-height glazed doors, extended upward another eighteen inches with the aid of a wood panel. However, the design is also quite unorthodox. The solid panel may have made the design seem top-heavy. The original McKim, Mead & White design, by contrast, has the advantage of a dual reading: the doors could be seen as extended upward or as being a very large version of the normal pattern of small panels above larger ones. McKim, Mead & White's drawing entitled “3/4 Inch Scale Details of Interior Doors...” emphasizes the