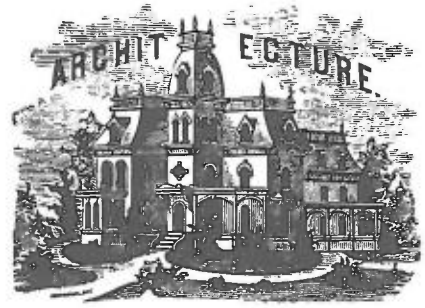


# A Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Maine



## Chapman and Frazer

Among the rich array of turn-of-the-century summer cottages along the Maine coast, surely none is more well known to the American public than that of President George Bush in Kennebunkport. Built just after 1900, the summer White House is one of a number of large cottages designed for sites in Maine by the Boston architectural firm of Chapman and Frazer.

John H. Chapman, senior partner in Chapman and Frazer, died in 1895 and was therefore not responsible for any of the firm's Maine commissions. A native of Brooklyn, New York, Chapman received his architectural education at Yale and at the University of Heidelberg, Germany. He commenced his professional career as a draftsman for the firm of Ware and Van Brunt in Boston, and according to one biographer, he was a practicing architect by 1881. Chapman's partnership with Horace S. Frazer began in 1892. During the three years that Chapman was senior partner in the firm, he designed public buildings in Massachusetts and New Hampshire and was responsible for numerous residential commissions in the Boston area.<sup>1</sup> The Chapman name was perpetuated in the firm after the death of its senior partner, and a William Chapman, possibly John Chapman's son, was an associate.<sup>2</sup>

In 1895, the year of John H. Chapman's death, the firm was located at 89 State Street in Boston. During the period of 1897 to 1898 the name of the firm was changed to Chapman, Frazer and Blinn to reflect a partnership with Alfred M. Blinn. This association was evidently short-lived, for between 1899 and 1934, the period during which the Maine commissions were undertaken, the firm was known again as Chapman and Frazer. The offices were located at 8 Exchange Place in Boston according to the city directory of 1905, but during the nineteen-teens and twenties the firm was found at 112 Water Street.<sup>3</sup>

The consistent member of the firm was Horace Southworth Frazer, who was probably mainly responsible for building the reputation of Chapman and Frazer as architects of large suburban and vacation houses. Frazer was born in Crosswicks, New Jersey in 1862 to Mary John and Nathan W. Frazer, a paper manufacturer. Horace Frazer received his secondary education at Philips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts and graduated from the Sheffield Scientific School

at Yale in 1883, where he specialized in the study of chemistry. He went on to receive a Bachelor of Science degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1885, the same year in which he became a draftsman in the office of Cabot and Chandler in Boston. Before 1890 he was an associate of the Boston architectural firms of Peabody and Stearns and Longfellow, Alden and Harlow. Between 1890 and 1891 Frazer practiced independently, just prior to forming the partnership with Chapman. By 1895 it could be stated of the firm that "they make a leading specialty of high class dwellings..."<sup>4</sup> Besides designing houses in New England, Chapman and Frazer had domestic commissions in Jamaica.

Frazer himself was professionally active, serving as a delegate of the Boston Society of Architects at national conventions held in Cleveland in 1903 and Chicago in 1908.<sup>5</sup> Frazer was a member of both the Boston Society of Architects and the American Institute of Architects and also belonged to a number of non-professional clubs that undoubtedly helped him to establish social connections with potential clients. He was an honorary life member of the Yale Club in New York, and in Boston he served on the executive committee of the Old University Club and belonged to the Exchange Club as well as the Brookline Country Club. Frazer owned a summer residence, "Inglenook", at Wianno on Cape Cod and was a member of country clubs there



Figure 1. Fred D. Hill House, Bath, circa 1935 view (Courtesy of Barbara Paine Mason).

and in Osterville. His initial familiarity with Maine may well have come through his 1890 marriage in Bangor to Mabel Bridges, the daughter of Humphrey Bridges. The Frazers had three children, Eleanor, Marion Bridges, and Horace Southworth Frazer, Jr. Of the three siblings, it was Eleanor who most closely followed in her father's footsteps. At the time of his death in 1931, she had studied art and decoration and was employed by Flora McDonald, Inc., interior decorators, at 39 Newbury Street in Boston. Her father was evidently the firm's president.<sup>6</sup> Soon after forming the partnership with Chapman, Frazer was purchasing carpets and furniture for his clients; decorating was thus a part of his architectural practice from an early date.

Frazer came to Maine in 1894 to design two Shingle Style houses in Bath. The first of these was commissioned by Fred D. Hill, a cashier at the Bath National Bank, prior to his marriage in November, 1894, to Louise Morse Bridges Ballou (Figure 1). Hill also recommended Frazer to his associate at the bank, Mark Sewall, who hired the architect to design his new home as well. In thanking Hill for the introduction to Sewall, Frazer pointed out that the simultaneous construction of the two Bath residences would result in savings for both clients.<sup>7</sup>

The two houses are very similar. Both are one-and-a-half stories in height, possess rectangular plans, and are covered by gambrel roofs punctuated by dormers that have single large windows flanked by smaller openings. Other window treatments typical of the Queen Anne style are featured in the two designs, including oriels and bays, and both houses have porches recessed into the main blocks. Apparently this elaborate detailing added up, because Llewellyn James Morse, grandfather of Louise Ballou and head of a Bangor lumber and woodworking mill, commented to Fred Hill after looking over Frazer's plans, "It will I think be a pretty House. But a little expensive for a Young Couple just starting, but if you are able to carry it through [I] think the House will generally be satisfactory to you."<sup>8</sup>

With the Hill and Sewall houses, Frazer adapted the simple massing, shingled surfaces, and Queen Anne details that often co-existed in Shingle Style architecture to the requirements of a year-round, in-town residence. In many of the firm's subsequent Maine projects, these same features were multiplied to create more expansive cottages for summer use. In 1899 E. C. Stanwood, a Boston banker, hired the firm to design his summer residence at Cape Arundel, Kennebunkport. The contract to build the cottage was awarded to the W. H. Glover Company of Rockland by October.<sup>9</sup> The house, sometimes known as "Keewaydin", was an early demonstration of the firm's use of historical forms and its ability to integrate new construction with the natural characteristics of the landscape. At the first story, the Stanwood Cottage possessed a Queen Anne style entrance hall which at one side merged into a stair hall. The beamed ceiling

and wainscotting of the hall set the tone for the rest of the interior, which displayed a variety of woods and warm-colored wall coverings, as in the first story den which was finished in "green weathered oak" and "crimson burlap". The exterior of the house similarly conveyed an impression of age and comfort through its long mass, wide porches, and chimneys constructed from local stone. The wood shingles used as sheathing on the outside of the building were left to weather to a brown color, while those on the roof were painted green, and the trim done in olive green. Such a color scheme must have helped to blend the building with the grounds that were left largely wild. Henry Hawley, writing in *American Homes and Gardens* in 1911, praised the Stanwood Cottage for its relation to the site, noting "...that while this house is very modern in its building, the estate has been a semi-wilderness for many years. Yet thoroughly new as this house is, it fits into the landscape, and forms part of the estate in a thoroughly natural way."<sup>10</sup>

At nearly the same time that "Keewaydin" was under construction, the plans by Chapman and Frazer for the Delta Kappa Epsilon House at Bowdoin College in Brunswick were being prepared and discussed in the local press. On April 26, 1900, the *Orient* spoke approvingly of the Georgian Revival design, commenting that "The old Colonial type of building with its simple lines seems to fit into the surroundings admirably."<sup>11</sup> While the fraternity house design made reference to a more formal historical style than did the seemingly vernacular Stanwood Cottage, the two buildings shared certain features. Commentators on both houses stressed their connections with their sites and the use made on the interiors of a variety of woods.

The design of the D.K.E. Chapter House apparently so impressed one of its members—Hartley Cone Baxter, an 1878 Bowdoin graduate—that he commissioned a nearly identical residence from Chapman and Frazer in 1901. Moreover, Baxter hired the same contractors who had built the fraternity house, Smith and Rumery of Portland, to construct his home. Hartley Baxter was the son of long-time Portland mayor James Phinney Baxter as well as a participant in his father's food processing business, part of which had been located in Brunswick since 1888.<sup>12</sup> The Baxter House is nearly identical to the D.K.E. House, except for the semi-circular two-story entrance portico which was substituted for the porch with triangular pediment found on the fraternity house. Together with some changes to window configurations, this reworking of the porch gave the Baxter House a more Palladian feeling, as opposed to the Georgian character of its prototype.

At approximately the same date that these in-town commissions came to Chapman and Frazer, the firm was also hired to design a summer house at Bar Harbor for Alexander J. Cassatt of Philadelphia (Figure 2). Cassatt was prominent in the railroad industry and was an early collector of French Impressionist paintings. His sister Mary Cassatt was an expatriate artist and part of the Impressionist circle in Paris. Like the Stanwood



Figure 2. A. J. Cassatt Cottage, Bar Harbor, *American Homes and Gardens*, July, 1910 (Courtesy of Portland Public Library).



Figure 3. Cassatt Cottage, view of Den, *American Homes and Gardens*, July, 1910 (Courtesy of Portland Public Library).



Figure 4. George H. Walker Cottage, Kennebunkport, *American Homes and Gardens*, July, 1905 (Courtesy of Portland Public Library).

Cottage in Kennebunkport, the Cassatt residence was a "great rambling summer home" designed in a style that made reference to medieval vernacular architecture. The exterior walls were sheathed with a combination of stuccoed brick and wood shingles and were punctuated by casement windows with diamond-paned muntins. The broad shingled roof swelled over dormers in the service wing in imitation of medieval thatching. On the interior, the Cassatt Cottage featured a treatment similar to that of the Stanwood Cottage. A variety of woods were used as finish, and the walls were covered in highly textured materials like burlap and grass cloth. The draperies in several of the rooms were made of madras. More than did the Kennebunkport summer residence, the Bar Harbor cottage incorporated elements of the Mission Style and Arts and Crafts movement in its decoration and furnishing. Mission Style furniture was found particularly in the den, while several of the rooms contained ceramic tiles used decoratively, which together with handcrafted woodwork, reflected the contemporary revival of building and craft traditions thought to date from the medieval period (Figure 3). Writing in *American Homes and Gardens*, Barr Ferree concluded of the Cassatt residence that "It is neither a palace nor a mansion, but a really fine type of the seaside 'cottage'."<sup>13</sup>

In the fall of 1902, Chapman and Frazer received commissions for two more cottages at Kennebunkport, these to be built for George H. and D. D. Walker of St. Louis. Late in the summer of that year the Walker family had purchased a parcel of land that had been known locally as "Damon's Park" and previously as

"Point Vesuvius" from the Sea Shore Company, the group of investors who developed Cape Arundel as an area of large seaside cottages. In his summer newspaper, *The Wave*, John Collins Emmons commented upon the construction of the Walker Cottages on what had previously been virgin territory, used for recreational purposes by the local population:

The growth of Kennebunkport has ever been conservative and from year to year few changes are apparent. The building of cottages on Point Vesuvius is the most noticeable change in many seasons. For years untold Point Vesuvius has been picturesque in its solitude, kissed by the sun and washed by the waves of centuries, the grey rocks surrounding seamed and worn, the quiet undisturbed save by an occasional gunner or fisherman.

Emmons went on to rue the loss of paths that had been laid across the point by sportsmen. The building project at Point Vesuvius, or Walker's Point as it came to be known, employed nineteen carpenters during the winter of 1902-03. The George H. Walker Cottage was finished by July, 1903, and the second Walker residence completed by the end of that summer.<sup>14</sup>

Of the two Walker houses, the George H. Walker Cottage was closest in style to the nearby Stanwood Cottage by Chapman and Frazer (Figure 4). On the exterior, the Walker Cottage was similar to the Stanwood Cottage in the use of wood shingles as sheathing for the walls and roofs, steeply pitched gables and dormers, multi-paned windows, and fieldstone chimneys made from local rock. Moreover, the plan of the Walker Cottage followed what had become by then a formula used by Chapman and Frazer for many



Figure 5. D. D. Walker Cottage, Kennebunkport, *Scientific American Building Monthly*, March, 1905 (Courtesy of Greater Portland Landmarks, Inc.).

large summer residences: the living spaces for the owners were located in a rectangular block, while the attached service wing was angled away from the main section of the building. The Walker Cottage, like Chapman and Frazer's earlier summer house designs, also integrated well with its coastal site. Its very name, "Rock Ledge", suggested its rocky location, where some of the stone for the building was collected. On the interior, Chapman and Frazer again emphasized a variety of woods and wall textures, while also including some Colonial Revival touches, such as the wainscoting in the dining room and the extensive use of white paint in the second story bedrooms.<sup>15</sup> Despite some later alterations, the George H. Walker Cottage still retains much of its original appearance and presently serves as the summer residence of President George Bush.

The D. D. Walker Cottage, now demolished, stood just to the west of the George H. Walker Cottage, which was located on the tip of the point (Figure 5). David Davis Walker, a dry goods merchant from St. Louis, had already spent nearly twenty years as a seasonal resident of Kennebunkport when he constructed his large cottage, which was even more expensive than his father's.<sup>16</sup> The exterior of the D. D. Walker Cottage contrasted sharply with its neighbor. The walls were finished in gray concrete stucco and the roof stained a deep red. However, it did share with the George H. Walker Cottage the use of local stone for chimneys and some supporting elements, as well as steeply-pitched gables and diamond-paned windows. The plan of the D. D. Walker Cottage was similar to the neighboring cottage, although it did feature a sixty by twenty-three foot living room on the first story with a beamed ceiling. This room, like many of the living

rooms in the summer houses designed by Chapman and Frazer, was furnished with wicker, while the dining room and hall were given a more formal Colonial treatment through eighteenth century style architectural details and furniture. As with the A. J. Cassatt Cottage, the D. D. Walker Cottage had a den furnished in the Mission Style. Evidently Chapman and Frazer favored massive oak and leather furniture for outfitting a den. The D. D. Walker Cottage was published extensively after its completion, both as an example of a successful design for a summer residence and to illustrate the use of concrete stucco. The Atlas Portland Cement Company featured the D. D. Walker Cottage in advertisements and in its 1906 booklet *Concrete Country Residences*.<sup>17</sup>

In recent years national attention has been focused on Walker's Point as a result of George Bush's summer residence at "Rock Ledge". That the cottage seems particularly evocative of the Maine coast is at least in part due to the skill of Chapman and Frazer in creating a house that harmonizes so beautifully with the landscape through its materials, while conveying an impression of age through its masterful use of historical forms.

Kevin D. Murphy

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Henry F. and Elsie R. Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)*, Los Angeles, 1970, p. 119. According to the firm biography contained in *Boston with its Points of Interest*, New York, 1895, p. 61, the Chapman and Frazer partnership was formed in 1890. Since other sources state that Frazer practiced independently between 1890 and 1891, it is possible that an informal association between the two architects existed during those years and became an official partnership in 1892.
- <sup>2</sup> Massachusetts Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Records, *Directory of Boston Architects, 1846-1970*, Cambridge, 1984.
- <sup>3</sup> Massachusetts COPAR Directory and Architects Card File, Fine Arts Reference Department, Boston Public Library.
- <sup>4</sup> *Boston with its Points of Interest*, p. 61. Chapman and Frazer were also identified as specialists in domestic building in *Fifty Years of Boston, A Memorial Volume*, Boston Tercentenary Committee, 1932, p. 346. The firm was responsible for a number of residences in Brookline, Newton, and Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts that were published in national architectural journals between 1894 and 1905.
- <sup>5</sup> Entry on Horace Southworth Frazer in *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, V. 27, Ann Arbor, 1967, p. 345; obituary for Frazer in *The New York Times*, June 9, 1931, p. 27.
- <sup>6</sup> Obituary for Horace S. Frazer, *Boston Evening Transcript*, June 8, 1931, p. 28.
- <sup>7</sup> Horace S. Frazer to Fred D. Hill, April 27, 1894. Barbara Paine Mason kindly provided copies of correspondence related to the Bath commissions as well as background on the Hill and Sewall families.
- <sup>8</sup> Llewellyn James Morse to Fred D. Hill, May 19, 1894, courtesy of Barbara Paine Mason.
- <sup>9</sup> *Industrial Journal*, Bangor, October 27, 1899, p. 8; November 24, 1899, p. 8.
- <sup>10</sup> Henry Hawley, "A Summer Home, Residence of E. C. Stanwood, Esq., Kennebunkport, Maine", *American Homes and Gardens*, June, 1911, p. 217. An earlier article on the same topic by Hawley was: "The Summer Home of E. C. Stanwood, Esq., Kennebunkport, Maine", *American Homes and Gardens*, April, 1910, pp. 134-135. Stanwood was apparently so satisfied with the design of his summer residence that in 1901 he commissioned Chapman and Frazer to design his winter home at 480 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston. See Architects Card File, Fine Arts Reference Department, Boston Public Library.
- <sup>11</sup> *Orient*, April 26, 1900, quoted in Patricia McGraw Anderson, *The Architecture of Bowdoin College*, Brunswick, 1988, p. 175. Other accounts of the new D.K.E. Chapter House were published in the *Industrial Journal*, April 13, 1900 and in the *Portland Sunday Telegram*, February 10, 1901.
- <sup>12</sup> Anderson, *The Architecture of Bowdoin College*, p. 173. Mention of the Baxter House as "almost an exact duplicate in exterior and interior of the Delta Kappa Epsilon Chapter house" appeared in the *Brunswick Telegraph*, May 15, 1901, p. 2.
- <sup>13</sup> Barr Ferree, "Fouracre, The Summer Home of the Late A. J. Cassatt", *American Homes and Gardens*, July, 1910, p. 284. The Cassatt house was also published in the *Catalogue of the Boston Architectural Club Exhibition of 1910*, page 48, and in *Architectural Achievements*, a volume of the firm's designs which Chapman and Frazer published in 1925.
- <sup>14</sup> Joyce Butler, "The Development of Walker's Point", *Chapters in Local History*, The Brick Store Museum, Kennebunk, 1989.
- <sup>15</sup> "'Rock Ledge', The Summer Home of George H. Walker, Esq., Kennebunkport, Maine", *American Homes and Gardens*, July, 1905, pp. 27-30. The George Walker House was published in advertisements for Cabot's Building Specialties, including that found on page 191 of T Square Club, *Catalogue of the Eleventh Annual Architectural Exhibition, 1904-1905*, Philadelphia, 1905, and in *The Architectural Review*, January, 1904, p. xxiv.
- <sup>16</sup> Butler, "The Development of Walker's Point", p. 2.
- <sup>17</sup> The D. D. Walker Cottage was also published in *Architectural Review*, 1904, p. 179, and in *Scientific American Building Monthly*, March, 1905, pp. 48-9, 60-1.

## LIST OF KNOWN COMMISSIONS IN MAINE BY CHAPMAN & FRAZER

Fred D. Hill House, 1006 High Street, Bath, 1894, Extant  
 Mark Sewall House, 1127 Washington Street, Bath, 1894, Extant  
 E. C. Stanwood Cottage, Kennebunkport, 1900, Extant  
 Delta Kappa Epsilon House, Brunswick, 1901, Extant  
 H. C. Baxter House, Brunswick, 1901, Extant  
 A. J. Cassatt Cottage, Bar Harbor, 1902-03, Destroyed  
 (Gardener's Cottage, Extant)  
 G. H. Walker Cottage, Kennebunkport, 1902-03, Extant  
 D. D. Walker Cottage, Kennebunkport, 1902-03, Destroyed

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