



*Massena, Barrytown.*

The Elegant Homes of America  
100 Years Ago:  
Vol. I

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THE HOMES OF AMERICA.

III.

MASSENA, the residence of Mrs. John Aspinwall, is situated on the Hudson at Barrytown, about a hundred miles north of New York City. The road from the station passes through Barrytown along the banks of the river; huge ice-houses on one side, disfiguring the landscape with uncouth, whitewashed buildings, while on the other side labourers' houses form the street, making an *ensemble* anything but picturesque or attractive. Such, however, is the ordinary village, or rather hamlet, which surrounds many of the small stations and landings on the banks of the most beautiful of all our American rivers.

The railroad passes under a bridge, and only a few yards beyond

this bridge are the entrance-gate and lodge of Massena, on the left-hand side of the road. The lodge is a pretty, Gothic stone cottage, very convenient and complete in its appointments, of itself being a handsome residence. The gate is of iron, with grey-stone pillars, and from here the well-gravelled carriage-road is seen distinctly as it lies before the lodge, and enters into the depths of a beautiful wood beyond, filled with the varied growth of the native forest. Large masses of rocks are to be seen, here and there, adorned with mosses and ferns. But the road soon diverges, leaving the shade of this delightful wood, and crosses the lawn which lies in front of the house. A glimpse is now obtained of the stately edifice, which is



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about a hundred and sixty feet in length. It is to be regretted that it should be built of wood, and not of more imperishable material. The wooden walls, however, are said to be filled in with stone, and very solid. In our third engraving we have an outline of the glass-room or projection, which we shall describe later. It stands out like a temple, with its arched windows, and forms a charming feature of the establishment. It is the garden-parlor in winter, and a delightful resort at all times. The house was originally built for Mr. John R. Livingston. The plan was by Brunel, and is an exact copy of the château of Beaumarchais, in France. It is considered remarkable for its architectural symmetry and beauty. The airy colonnade, formerly around the piazza, has given way to a costly but heavy succession of arcades, and the general effect has been somewhat injured by this change. Nevertheless, as it stands at present, the house is very handsome and striking. The main entrance and

portico are on the east side, which is represented in our first illustration. There is an approach from this side far more beautiful than the other. This is the old road. It passes over an exceedingly handsome and extensive lawn, grouped with clumps of fine old trees, affording a charming example of landscape-gardening. Sheep are seen grazing here and there, animating the scene. The trees are protected from injury by hurdles, and order and neatness prevail on every side. The grass at Massena is remarkably good, and the grounds are kept with scrupulous care. The grounds and lawns on the east side, with the approach to the house, and the house itself, give the impression of an estate and residence almost manorial. The interior is of a noble character. On the first floor the apartments are very spacious and well-proportioned. The large hall opens into the library, which is an octagon, in the centre of the building. It was once a billiard-room, with a dome, still defined

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from without by a tower and cupola. Unfortunately, the dome was sacrificed by Mr. Livingston to multiply upper bedrooms, and the effect somewhat injured. The room is, however, very handsome as it is, and far more comfortable. As a library, no room could be more

enjoyable. It is furnished with carved black-walnut bookcases, and a large, carved black-walnut mantel-piece and chimney-place, in the ample space of which a wood-fire blazes on winter nights. The library opens to the west into the glass-projection or room to



*Lodge and Gate at Massena.*

which we have before referred. Here flowers form the principal ornament. Hanging baskets filled with smilax and lycopodium are suspended between the arches, and *étagères* of plants stand all around. A miniature fountain cools the air in summer, and gold-fishes swim about contentedly in a pretty marble basin. The view through the arches is superb—looking down over the terrace and front lawn to the river, which at this point is very wide and beautiful—the Catskill Mountains showing in the distance. Cruger's Island and Magdalen's Island here put out into the river, producing the effect of a succession of lakes. The picture is really

enchanted. The library, on one side, leads into the dining-room, on the other into the drawing-room, both of which are large and of tasteful and elegant proportions. The dining-room is wainscoted heavily with black walnut, and has a sea-green and gold frescoed ceiling. Many works of Art, collected by the late Mr. Aspinwall in Europe, adorn the walls, among them being a genuine Greuze. Richly-carved furniture and buhl cabinets give to this room an appearance of great luxury. Vases filled with rare exotics are scattered over the house at all seasons of the year in due succession, each season contributing its peculiar treasures.



*Glass-Room, Massena.*

Mrs. Aspinwall has recently erected a memorial chapel on her land for the use of the poor, and also a parish school. The spire of the little chapel is seen through the trees from the house, and is not unlike the picturesque spires that abound throughout the Aus-

trian Tyrol. The name given to this estate by Mr. John R. Livingston has remained unchanged by his successors. It tells the age of the place, which was named in honour of Marshal Masséna during the French consulate.