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Rockwood:
Joseph Shipley's English Estate in Brandywine Hundred, Delaware

Delaware enjoys an abundance of handsome gardens both old and new, public and private. Beginning with E. I. du Pont's garden at *Eleutherian Mills* in 1802, the du Pont family's gardening tradition alone provides multiple examples few other states can boast.¹ In her 1851 *Reminiscences of Wilmington*, Elizabeth Montgomery recalls a number of early gardens around the city including the Town Hall "graced by noble elms." A. J. Downing, in his seminal *Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*, mentions John Latimer's gardens at his estate, *Latimeria*, as "the finest in Delaware."² Well-known mid-nineteenth-century architect and landscape gardener John Notman worked Delaware's soil at *Boothhurst* near New Castle, while famous nurseryman Robert Buist installed the garden at the *Read House*.³ In the early twentieth century, Marian Coffin gained national recognition for her important work designing the campus of the University of Delaware and gardens for several du Pont family members.⁴ Perhaps Delaware's most important garden, because of its early date, its style, and its state of preservation, is Joseph Shipley's *Rockwood* in Brandywine Hundred. When completed in the 1850s, *Rockwood* won praise for its unique adherence to English landscape

¹ Norman Wilkinson, *E. I. du Pont, Botaniste: The Beginning of a Tradition* (Charlottesville, 1972) passim.

² Elizabeth Montgomery, *Reminiscences of Wilmington* (Philadelphia, 1851), p. 287; Andrew Jackson Downing, *Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*, 5th ed. (New York, 1854), p. 59.

³ Constance M. Greiff, *John Notman, Architect* (Philadelphia, 1979), p. 231; William Couper Collection, Firestone Library, Princeton University. Box 1, Folder 6; Thomas Meehan, "Editorial Notes," *Gardener's Monthly*, Dec. 1880, p. 372; Joseph Shipley (hereafter Shipley), horticultural receipts, New Castle County, *Rockwood Archives*, held at Historical Society of Delaware, Wilmington, Delaware (hereafter *Rockwood Archives*). John Notman transformed *Boothhurst*, the Booth-Rogers' eighteenth century brick farmhouse into a Gothic Revival dream in the 1840s. Notman often designed landscapes for his clients, and *Boothhurst* included "a romantic landscape with curved driveways, undulating terraces, and a pond..." Several of Notman's designs were included in Andrew Jackson Downing's immensely popular *Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* in 1841.

William Couper (1809-1874), owner of the *Read House* hired Buist to install his garden in 1848. Family tradition hints, and design elements suggest, that Buist was also responsible for the design. The central "pleasure-ground" follows Loudon's gardenesque planting style. Scottish born Robert Buist (1805-1880) settled in Philadelphia in 1828, purchased Bernard McMahan's nursery business, and discovered the mysteries of propagating the exotic new poinsettia making it the flower of Christmas. Buist wrote several important books on landscape. Buist installed the *Read House* garden and sold many plants to Shipley.

⁴ Candice A. Shoemaker, *Encyclopedia of Gardens*, 3 vols. (Chicago, 2001), 1: 303-5. Marian Coffin (1876-1951) studied landscape at MIT, graduating in 1904. As a woman, Coffin could not find work in male dominated firms so opened her own landscape business. Her family friendship with the du Ponts brought her to Delaware in the 1910s. She worked at *Mount Cuba*, *Gibraltar*, *Winterthur*, *St. Amour*, and other important projects in Delaware and New York.

principles, and its state of preservation allows the public to see a bit of Victorian England transplanted to American soil.

Figure 1. *Rockwood's* entrance lawn, ca. 1860. Joseph Shipley, his English pointer, and a friend can be seen in this earliest known image of the house. (Courtesy of New Castle County, Rockwood Archives.)

Joseph Shipley and the Creation of Rockwood

Joseph Shipley (1795-1867) was the youngest son of Joseph and Mary Levis Shipley, and claimed William Shipley, one of Wilmington's early boosters, as his great-grandfather. He was born in the family home, *Brandywine*, located at French and Sixteenth streets in Wilmington, within sight of the family's flour mills on the Brandywine River. Joseph received a good education at Westtown School, near West Chester, Pennsylvania. Instead of joining his father's milling business, at twenty-one, Shipley went to work in the Philadelphia counting house of Samuel Canby, whose family also owned mills on the Brandywine.

In 1819, Shipley joined the firm of James Welsh, who dealt in the import/export business with England. Four years later he sailed to that country to run the firm's Liverpool office under the name Shipley, Welsh, and Co. He diversified his interests in 1825 by also joining the merchant-banking firm of William and James Brown and Co. Shipley's business acumen shone brightly when he skillfully saved the Brown Company from failure during the Panic of 1837. He then became a partner in Brown, Shipley & Co.⁵

Figure 2. Joseph Shipley, merchant banker, ca. 1845. (Courtesy of New Castle County, Rockwood Archives.)

In 1846, at the height of his career, Shipley rented *Wyncote*, a stylish, "suburban villa" on the outskirts of Liverpool.⁶ This comfortable home sat on a village lot of a few acres which included stylish lawns, flower gardens, artfully arranged trees and shrubs, and walks, commonly referred to as "pleasure-grounds." His villa included a typical kitchen garden, stables, and outbuildings, establishing a country seat for the tycoon bachelor. *Wyncote* would greatly influence Shipley's plans for *Rockwood*.

In 1851, Edward Bringhurst Sr., Shipley's nephew-in-law who owned a drug store in Wilmington, visited his uncle in England. Upon seeing *Wyncote* for the first time Bringhurst wrote to his wife, "Wyncote is in beautiful order; elegantly & neatly furnished, and the grounds and lawns are such as I never saw in America. The painting of it at Brandywine [the family home in Wilmington] gives a good idea of the house, but...the softness of the verdure cannot be painted."⁷

⁵ Gilbert T. Vincent, *Romantic Rockwood*, (Wilmington, 1998). Pp. 2-6. This is a publication of a 1972 Master's thesis from the University of Delaware.

⁶ J. C. Loudon, *Encyclopedia of Gardening*, (London, 1822), p. 1186. Loudon defines the suburban villa as being of limited extent (compared to a large estate) and having a small kitchen garden and stables (which would not be found at a suburban house), "occupied...by professional men."

⁷ Edward Bringhurst, Sr. (hereafter Bringhurst), to Sarah Shipley Bringhurst (hereafter S. S. Bringhurst), Feb. 20, 1851, Rockwood Archives. Edward Bringhurst, Sr. (1809-1884) married Shipley's niece, Sarah Shipley, in 1832. Shipley, Edward, and Sarah were constant

Figure 3. Wyncote, 1844, James McGahan. Shipley sent this painting of the garden façade of his English home to his family in Wilmington. The clumps of mixed shrubs on the lawn and the flower garden to the right of the conservatory were *au courant* for England in the 1840s. Note that the garden walks connect to the house through the conservatory. (Courtesy of New Castle County, Rockwood Park.).

Shipley lived comfortably, and ate and drank well, as might be expected of a member of the wealthy merchant class in early Victorian England. This led to often debilitating gout. By the time he reached his early fifties, Shipley's condition worsened, and he realized that retirement was inevitable. He planned to return to America to be close to his relatives and envisioned a country estate for his autumn years. He visited Wilmington in 1847 and toured through Brandywine Hundred with Bringhurst, seeking possible building sites. For Shipley, nothing else compared to Levi Weldin's farm with its picturesque cliffs, streams, stands of chestnuts, and view of the Delaware River.⁸ The property made such an impression on him that he remembered the layout in sharp detail three years later.

After he returned to England, Shipley enlisted his nephew to negotiate the purchase of a series of farms in Delaware's Brandywine Hundred. With an eye on the Weldin parcel, he instructed Bringhurst to make offers, but Weldin saw an anxious buyer with a fat pocketbook and held out for more money. Sarah Shipley Bringhurst, Shipley's niece, hinted that Weldin was expecting an outlandish "\$100 per acre," and Edward Bringhurst told him that the local gossip was that Shipley would build "a large manufactory for china ware" if he were to buy the land.⁹

Another Shipley nephew examined the farm and told Weldin to his face "it's not worth \$40 an acre."¹⁰ After her own visit to the property, Sarah wrote to her uncle, using the familiar Quaker expressions common to this generation of the family, "I think there is the most beautiful view of the river that can be found in these parts...a most desirable spot for thee to locate, and if the old Simpleton won't come to thy terms, I hope thee will to his."¹¹

Finally, Shipley wrote to Bringhurst, "I don't like to be done by the obstinacy of that chap and tho [sic] we have already offered him more than its worth I would go as far

correspondents and enjoyed a close relationship. Shipley took Bringhurst as a traveling companion on a tour through France and Italy in 1851.

⁸These were American chestnuts, *Castanea dentata*, destroyed by the chestnut blight starting in 1904. Shipley refers to European chestnuts, *Castanea sativa* (the roasting kind), given to him by the du Ponts. He may also have received the red flowering horse chestnuts, *Aesculus x dupontii*, hybridized by the du Ponts

⁹ S. S. Bringhurst to Shipley, March 28, 1850, and E. Bringhurst to Shipley, Feb. 18, 1850, Rockwood Archives. Sarah Shipley Bringhurst (1812-1896) was the daughter of Samuel (Joseph's eldest brother) and Elizabeth Jefferis Shipley. Sarah and her husband Edward Bringhurst bought *The Cliffs* in 1850, next door to the property that would become *Rockwood*. Sarah also purchased much of *Rockwood* at the 1892 auction, which settled Hannah Shipley's estate.

¹⁰ E. Bringhurst to Shipley, June 3, 1850, Rockwood Archives.

¹¹ S. S. Bringhurst to Shipley, March 3, 1850, Rockwood Archives.

as \$80 per acre to secure it.”¹² Bringhurst acquired an eighty-acre parcel for Shipley in 1850, and finally negotiated the purchase of the sixty-two-acre Weldin property in 1851. Bringhurst reported to his uncle in early September that he had drawn up an agreement with Weldin and sent the signed deed in late October. After returning to America, Shipley continued to acquire adjoining parcels for an estate of 382 acres.¹³

While still in England, Shipley spent his free time planning his estate with great enthusiasm. Having seen the Weldin parcel three years earlier Shipley wrote to Bringhurst, "in my idle leisure time ...it has been a source of amusement to think about this projected house – and the garden, the stable etc. and upon what plan it should be, but without arriving at any conclusion... the plan for the land will greatly assist in forming a plan for the house." Shipley asked Bringhurst for a survey of the Weldin farm, to be done by a competent person,

a complete plan... drawn to a scale ...giving correctly the two streams and very particularly, the ground which we thought would be the proper situation for a house. – Standing on that spot with your face to the River, or south, you have on your right hand, west, a wood of some extent extending down to the little stream, and on your left, east, some small clumps of forest trees including one or two good sized chestnuts...- Behind, north, is the young peach orchard which the plan should shew[sic]... I suppose the entrance front would be north and the road from it would wind north- east... to the gate by the creek/ the present entrance to Levi's house, near the bridge/ ...a complete plan will be necessary ...to enable one to see and suggest what planting of ornamental trees might be made immediately.¹⁴

Several drawings, both large and small versions, professional and amateur, were sent to England. Shipley could hardly wait to get started and began ordering fruit trees, hoping to get a head start on the landscape work. His interest infected Sarah, for she wrote to say “have planted ivy beside many of the rocks...[on her uncle's new land],” and later, “I have been trying an experiment with Magnolias [likely *Magnolia virginiana*], taking from the swamp and planting amongst the rocks, one on the ... hill above Levi's house...[again on her uncle's new land]”¹⁵

¹² Shipley to E. Bringhurst, July 12, 1850, Rockwood Archives. Shipley commonly emphasizes words and phrases with underlining.

¹³ E. Bringhurst to Shipley, Oct. 27, 1850, Rockwood Archives; Lawrence E. Lee, “Rockwood: a Victorian Gardenesque Landscape” (M.A. thesis, University of Delaware, 1987), figure two, pg. 13, and table one, pg. 15. Shipley purchased several contiguous farms to create the *Rockwood* estate. The Weldin tract became the home farm on which Shipley built his mansion. The Harker and Elliott properties became the two main tenant farms, with smaller tracts occupied by other tenants. For parcels and land totals, see Lee "Rockwood."

¹⁴ Shipley to E. Bringhurst, Sept. 21, 1850, Rockwood Archives. The “young peach orchard” Shipley mentioned may have been sacrificed to make way for the entrance lawn and kitchen garden, or possibly formed the basis for Shipley's design.

¹⁵ S. S. Bringhurst to Shipley, Sept. 26, 1850, and Nov. 17, 1850, and receipt, Edward Tatnall to E. Bringhurst for J. Shipley, March and April 1850, Rockwood Archives. Twenty-eight pear

Shiple's nephew had not yet visited England and did not grasp the naturalistic style of landscape so popular there. For Shiple, the large rocks were an important landscape feature, but Bringhurst saw them as bothersome and suggested, more than once, that "the rocks ... can be removed in short order" and again, "a considerable number of rocks... should be blown out before any planting is done."¹⁶ Shiple wrote back, "I should of course be glad it should be done except near the site of the proposed house for until the plans of the Garden Lawn and Shrubbery are fixed and determined it will be best not to disturb the ground within 150 yards of the Site." Shiple continued, "about planting the fruit trees – all valuable ones should be in the Kitchen Garden and its[sic] impossible at present to decide exactly where that shall be – nor where the Stable & Coach house shall be situated... The fruit trees etc. must stand over till I can get out of doors and endeavor to decide on a plan for the House and Garden."¹⁷

Unfortunately, among the thousands of letters, receipts, drawings, and photographs in the Rockwood Archives, on deposit at the Historical Society of Delaware, there is no plan for the grounds. The documents strongly suggest that Shiple designed his own estate. In all of his correspondence to family, friends, and even his architect, Shiple never mentions anyone else in connection with landscape decisions. Shiple read extensively on landscape gardening, and possibly looked out his windows at the stylish pleasure-grounds of *Wyncote* for inspiration.¹⁸ Shiple may have asked for critical review from any number of acquaintances, but it would seem he was creating his own distinctly English design, following all the English landscape "rules."

English landscape gardeners had been publishing books about naturalistic landscape design since the 1790s, and improving ones' property became a mark of sophistication and taste. Most Americans, on the other hand, spent little time worrying about beautifying the grounds around their homes, commonly planting a few shade trees at either corner of the house. The first American books dealing with landscape design were not published until the 1840s, stimulating many Americans to take a greater interest in the pleasure-grounds around their homes.

One point in which Shiple reveals his adherence to the English landscape rules is the placement of the entrance door. Bringhurst sent his uncle the requested survey on which he drew a proposed drive to the south front of the house, typical of American design. Shiple responded,

trees are ordered, twenty of which are dwarfs typically used in a kitchen garden. Given the date, these may have been ordered for one of the tenant farms.

¹⁶ E. Bringhurst to Shiple, July 2, 1850, and Oct. 15, 1850, Rockwood Archives.

¹⁷ Shiple to E. Bringhurst, Dec. 6, 1850. Rockwood Archives.

¹⁸ *Executor's Sale of Real Estate and Personal Property, Estate of Hannah Shiple, Deceased...* (booklet 1892), Rockwood Archives. The sale of the contents of Rockwood in 1892 includes Shiple's library, little altered after his death. The gardening books include Downing's *Landscape Gardening*, 2 copies (presumably an early edition and the sixth printing in 1859 when editors include a line about Rockwood), Downing's *Fruit Trees*, bound magazines- *The Horticulturist*, and *The Agriculturist*, *Trees of America*, *North American Sylva*, Kemp's *How to Lay Out a Garden*, Loudon's "Flower Garden," (likely *Encyclopedia of Gardening*), Paxton's *Flower Garden*, *Hedge's and Evergreens*.

with regard to the road to the House I see by thy first plan thee would make the approach up to the south or SE front – but my idea is to have the main entrance on the other front – the North or NW side On the south or SE front will be the lawn and chief pleasure grounds-flower garden etc. which I would not have seen from the road- much less pass the road through them. – A small clump of forest trees should be planted on the south side of this intended road, so as in time to hide the barn from it... [Weldin's barn] ¹⁹

When Shipley referred to the “road” he meant the approach drive, not the public road. An American house at the time would have their choice plants and improved grounds in front, between the public road and the house. The driveway would head straight from the gate to the front door through whatever shade trees and plantings one had on the front lawn. English landscape rules required that the decorative, showy gardens be private and seen only by invited guests, rather than being visible to anyone who might drive up to the house. Designing a house with both an entrance façade and a garden façade allowed for this separation of functions and met the English rules for good taste.²⁰

Shipley spent only five years at *Wyncote* before retiring to America, but he liked his English house so much he felt “it would not be easy to fix upon a better arranged plan than *Wyncote*.”²¹ Shipley therefore hired *Wyncote*'s architect, George Williams, to design a very similar house for his Delaware estate. Williams also supplied designs for the stables, the lodge, and eventually for an addition to the mansion, providing a summer kitchen and more servants' rooms.²² Not surprisingly, *Wyncote* and *Rockwood*, bear a striking resemblance.

¹⁹ Shipley to E. Bringham, Dec. 6, 1850, Rockwood Archives. When Shipley refers to the “barn” in his letter, he is talking about an existing barn that was part of the Weldin farm. Several researchers have mistaken this passage to suggest that some portion of the stable and carriage house was preexisting. That would be impossible. Shipley, talking about planting trees to hide the barn, says the clump “should be planted on the south side” of the drive. That means the barn sat to the south of the driveway, in proximity to the current ruins of the Weldon home. Earlier in the same letter, Shipley speaks about his proposed construction (always referring to it as “the stable and carriage house”), saying he does not know where it is to be located, so specifying a location for the clump of trees would be prescient. When built, Shipley's stable and carriage house are on the north-west side of the drive. The earlier barn he refers to here fell into disuse by 1858.

²⁰ Edward Kemp, *How to Lay Out a Garden*, 2nd ed. (London, 1858), p. 17.

²¹ Shipley to E. Bringham, Sept. 21, 1850, Rockwood Archives.

²² George Williams (1819 -1898), learned his art in London but did most of his work in the Liverpool area. Williams passed away while visiting in Virginia. His designs for the mansion, stables/carriage house, lodge, and additions to the mansion are in the Rockwood Archives. Williams' fanciful designs for the lodge were not used; Shipley hired the Baltimore firm of Thomas and James Dixon to design the plain little lodge. The Dixon firm also likely designed the gardener's cottage.

Figure 4. *Wyncote*, entrance façade, no date. The mature shrubs flanking the entrance porch are an uncommon touch repeated at *Rockwood*. (Courtesy of Special Collections and Archives, University of Liverpool.)

Figure 5. *Rockwood*, entrance façade, ca.1980. This image shows a good view of the picturesque boulders and the conservatory. The Norway spruce (*Picea abies*), seen projecting above the conservatory roof and paralleling the chimney, is an original Shipley planting and was a Delaware Champion Tree until taken down by a storm a few years later. (Courtesy of New Castle County, Rockwood Archives.)

Construction of the *Rockwood* mansion, stables, coach house and kitchen garden began late in 1851 when Shipley returned to Wilmington. Under his direct supervision, the architect's plans were subject to change. Williams' drawing of the coach house and stables, for instance, shows one combined structure.²³ Shipley built two separate buildings, setting them at right angles and, using the kitchen garden wall for the third side, created a stable yard that was more traditionally English than Williams' design (see Figure 15). Shipley asked Bringham for advice on many construction features, including weather he should use brick or local stone covered in stucco as the main building material.²⁴ Those questions, which seem best addressed by one's architect, show that Shipley was determined to guide every step of the construction.

Shipley did not put the landscape aside while the house was under construction; he worked on house and grounds together. Besides the plants purchased in advance, Shipley placed large orders for trees and shrubs in 1852.²⁵ Presumably those plants were located a safe distance from the construction site. In May of 1852, Shipley wrote to Williams, "the building of the house is progressing favorably.... the walls are up nearly to the top of the lower Windows & the Stable, Coach House etc. roofed in & the garden walls & Hot house nearly completed."²⁶ Additional plant purchases in 1857-1859, after the house was completed, likely filled the space closer to the house, creating the decorative terraces on the garden facade and the thicket of trees around the north entrance. Shipley's bills and receipts detail over 1,200 trees and shrubs purchased from nurseries far and near.²⁷

Shipley's new twenty-room mansion contained sumptuous English Victorian interiors, with rich fabrics, carpets, and every manner of decorative accessory. Rather than the cacophony of patterns and colors typical of American interiors (often criticized by later generations), Shipley's rooms displayed refined English taste. For instance, the drawing room had plain walls painted in dusty sage-green rather than patterned wallpaper. Shipley used matching blue silk damask for curtains and upholstery on his

²³ See William's plans in Rockwood Archives

²⁴ Shipley to E. Bringham, Dec. 6, 1850, Rockwood Archives. The mansion was finally built of semi-dressed, semi-coursed native Brandywine blue rock with light granite quoins.

²⁵ Horticultural Receipts, Rockwood Archives. These include receipts from Mount Hope Nurseries, Rochester New York, 1852; Ashton Nurseries, Burlington, NJ, 1852; George Skinner, unknown location, 1852; and Robert Buist, Philadelphia, 1853.

²⁶ Shipley to George Williams, May 22, 1852 Rockwood Archives.

²⁷ This number may be a bit misleading. Shipley purchased 305 yards of edging box to outline his kitchen garden beds; 300 Osage oranges to create a 'living fence' most likely around his orchard; 100 hemlocks and 200 arborvitae to use as screening and belting plants. By this tally, half the trees purchased went to improving the estate and were not intended for the pleasure grounds.

fine rosewood and marquetry furniture, and many surfaces were gilt, including two huge mirrors at either end of the room. Those mirrors reflected Shipley's gas fixture and wall-to-wall carpet. This décor was very restrained compared to that of other wealthy American homes of the same period.²⁸

Everything about the property followed established English taste. Shipley brought his English furniture to America. He also brought his English servants and even his English pets and plants. If the estate had been created in England and shipped complete to Wilmington, its design could not be more English. Only the addition of the piazza to the southern façade of the house stood out as an American touch, necessary to accommodate hot American summers.²⁹

Figure 6. *Branker and Toby* [in the Stables at *Wyncote*], by John Dalby, ca. 1850. Shipley sent this oil painting of his favorite horse and a roguish little dog to his family in Wilmington. *Branker* had his own loose box stall designed into the *Rockwood* stables by architect George Williams. (Courtesy of Gordon Hargraves.)

Visitors raved about the garden, and books and periodicals began to carry glowing reports about this unique landscape. In 1857 the *Delaware Weekly Republican* wrote: "The Residence of Joseph Shipley, Esq. in Brandywine Hundred is not surpassed by any in the State, and by few in our country....the young and imaginative would doubtless style it a paradise."³⁰ A. J. Downing, the reigning arbiter of garden design in America, had passed away in 1852, but the editors of his popular book on landscape gardening added a line about *Rockwood* in the sixth edition, published in 1859, "Near Wilmington, Del., is the fine place of Mr. Shiply[sic]." ³¹ *The Gardener's Monthly*, in its issue of August 1861, reported,

The magnificent place constructed and occupied by Joseph Shipley, Esq. ...whose name is well known in the commercial world... commenced... ten years ago after plans made in England, and under the direction of Mr. Salisbury, a gardener whom he brought out for that purpose. The entire place is improved upon the plan of *natural* landscape gardening so much

²⁸ Receipts, LaJambre of Philadelphia, 1854 and 1856;; and handwritten inventory of Joseph Shipley, n.d., Rockwood Archives; author's personal observation during restoration.

²⁹ Receipts, Gillows & Co., Lancaster, England, to Joseph Shipley, July 11, 1846 and Oct. 27, 1847, Rockwood Archives; Rockwood Archives, passim. Along with his fine furniture, Shipley brought his housekeeper Mrs. Audrey Douglas, and her daughter, Elizabeth; gardener, Robert Salisbury, his wife and son; *Branker*, a thoroughbred English saddle horse; *Toby*, a mixed breed dog; and an English pointer whose name is not recorded (possibly Hamlet, an English pointer Shipley sent to the Bringhamsts, so ill behaved they spoke of having him put down). Shipley sent grape vines from *Wyncote* in advance, and by 1858 imported Dorking fowl, a succulent breed of chicken favored by Queen Victoria, for his new poultry house. Shipley's one concession to the warmer American climate was the addition of a verandah or piazza across the garden front of the house. Shipley discusses this feature in letters to Bringhamst, Sept. 21 1850, and Dec. 6, 1850, and to Williams, May 22, 1852 (Rockwood Archives).

³⁰ *Delaware Weekly Republican* (Wilmington), July 16, 1857.

³¹ A. J. Downing, *Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*, 9th ed., 1875, with supplement to the 6th ed., 1859 (Reprint. Little Compton, R. I., 1977), p. 556.

employed in English country places...we will say that it is the most splendid specimen of the English park-like style of landscape work that we have ever seen... We feel quite sure that there is nothing of the kind equal to it, in its peculiar style...³²

Little is known about Shipley's gardener, Robert Salisbury, who may have had great influence on the landscape. Born in England in 1814 or 1815, Salisbury possibly worked at *Wyncote*, but that has not been documented. He brought his small family with him to *Rockwood*, and occupied the old Weldin home before the gardener's cottage was built for him in 1858. The article in *Gardener's Monthly* suggests that Salisbury was responsible for the installation of the garden, which is not unreasonable since Shipley's painful gout often confined him to his room or a chair. It is possible Salisbury's skills ran deeper than simply planting trees or managing a kitchen garden; it may be he who designed the landscape.

Shipley enjoyed his new home and garden until his death in 1867. He left the bulk of his estate to his maiden sisters, Sarah and Hannah.³³ They continued to live at *Brandywine*, the old family home in Wilmington, and used *Rockwood* only as a summer retreat. They made few, if any, changes. Salisbury and his family continued to work for the Misses Shipley, as did Shipley's coachman and housekeeper. The property continued much as before, but a visitor recorded in her 1871 diary that "the place has lost its Charm, and...its outside beauty no longer impressed you as it used to. It is not very well Kept up."³⁴

At the auction in 1892 that settled Hannah Shipley's estate, Sarah Shipley Bringham, the niece who encouraged Joseph Shipley to buy the property forty years earlier, purchased most of *Rockwood*. She then gave the house and its contents to her son, Edward Bringham, Jr. The property remained with the Bringham descendants until 1972 when Nancy Sellers Hargraves donated it to New Castle County.

English Landscape Design

Nowhere does one find the English park-like style achieved as purely, and as early in America, as at *Rockwood*. The English school of landscape design, also known as the Naturalistic Style, began in the 1730s as a reaction against the repetitive geometric gardens of unnatural symmetry, straight lines, and perfect angles found in French and Italian landscapes.³⁵ The English desired a natural looking landscape that would reflect the beauty of their countryside.

³² Graptolite, "Trip to Wilmington, Del.," *The Gardener's Monthly*, Aug. 1861, p. 228.

³³ Joseph Shipley, will, Rockwood Archives.

³⁴ Anna M. Ferris, diary, July 17, 1871, Ferris Family Papers, Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College.

³⁵ Terms for the English landscape movement are somewhat fluid. One writer may refer to the entire movement as "picturesque," or misuse the term "gardenesque." "Picturesque" and "gardenesque" are refinements to the larger Naturalistic movement, as is the "Mixed Style."

The best-known advocate of the Naturalistic Style, ‘Capability’ Brown (1716-1783), had little time to write and left no guides or manuals to instruct others.³⁶ Standard features of the English style, introduced by Brown, were sweeping lawns, a belt of trees directing attention to desirable views and blocking out unwanted ones, through which threaded circumnavigational walks or drives that threaded through those trees, round or oval clumps of single-species trees, and a lake as the prime focal point. Often called Serpentine in England because of its curving lines, this early version of the English style shunned flowerbeds, rows of trees, and anything hinting at straight lines, perfect angles, or topiaries. The desired look was a house seemingly dropped in the middle of a pasture. The ha-ha, a sunken fence or wall, came into being at this time. An unseen barrier to keep grazing animals from entering the pleasure-grounds, ha-has created the illusion of unbroken meadow from front step to the horizon. Critics called Brown’s landscapes flat - some said boring - since they lacked what many considered “picturesque” beauty.

Figure 7. Typical Brownian landscape design with a wide flat lawn, a serpentine walk, belt of trees, and round or oval clumps of single-species trees. The basic plan changed little during the popularity of the English naturalistic style from the 1730s to the 1860s. Later designers added different elements on the ground, but the basic layout remained the same. (Drawing by the author.)

Brown’s successor, Humphry Repton (1752-1818), made his reputation not only with the landscapes he designed, but also through the books he published.³⁷ Repton introduced two improvements on Brown’s designs. He added “picturesque” elements - rough landscape features found in paintings of the time such as rocky cliffs, wild streams, boulders, and craggy old trees, and a reliance on conifers. He also developed the "Mixed Style," in which old-fashioned symmetrical flowerbeds on formal terraces near the building formed a transitional space between the formal lines of the house and the naturalistic grounds.³⁸ Repton’s books gave helpful advice to his readers, and defined the elements of good taste in landscape design.

Figure 8. "A Rough and Rocky Picturesque Scene," figure 88 from Edward Kemp’s *How to Lay Out a Garden*. (Courtesy of the author.)

³⁶ Shoemaker, *Encyclopedia*, 1: 197-200. Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown (1716-1783), trained as a gardener and first worked at Stowe. In 1764, he became Master Gardener at Hampton Court Palace. He worked all over England removing old geometric-style gardens and replacing them with naturalistic parks.

³⁷ Shoemaker, *Encyclopedia*, 3: 1115-18. Humphry Repton (1752-1818) began gardening at thirty-six. He never met Brown, but copied his style until 1791 when he ventured to add a terrace with flowerbeds to a landscape. In his 1795 book *Sketches and Hints on Landscape Gardening*, Repton embraced the new "picturesque" themes, and introduced his Mixed Style.

³⁸ The term "picturesque" refers to a movement within, or improvements to the basic Naturalistic form. Advocates of the picturesque, which literally meant "like a picture," wanted to add rough, rustic features to make real landscapes to look like those in paintings. The Naturalistic Style was not discarded or displaced, but amended by adding picturesque elements.

The "Mixed Style," like "picturesque," represented an addendum to the basic Brownian Naturalistic style. In this case, formal terraces came back into favor near the house with flowerbeds, urns and symmetrical plantings. The Naturalistic Style, with rough picturesque elements, now had a bit of the old geometric style mixed back in.

Next on the scene was the prolific author, John Claudius Loudon (1783-1843).³⁹ Loudon held sway as the senior landscape gardener in the 1830s and '40s when a wealth of new exotic plants, primarily introduced from Asia and Africa, began to flood both the English and American markets. That influx linked directly to Dr. Nathaniel Ward's discovery of terrariums in 1829.⁴⁰ Those glass cases allowed China traders to transport delicate plants from the Orient over long ocean voyages. By the 1840s, nurseries competed to offer the newest, most exotic shrubs and trees like *Forsythia*, *Hydrangea*, *Spirea*, and *Paulownia*, or odd new vines like Japanese honeysuckle and *Clematis*. English homeowners were not sure how to use the new exotics in their natural landscapes, so Loudon coined the term "gardenesque," literally "in a garden-like manner," to describe the blending of exotic species into naturalistic gardens.⁴¹ Loudon also meant a different planting approach with his new term. He thought all plants should be set apart like specimens, rather than clumped, so each could attain its natural form. Loudon was a prolific writer, but installed few landscapes other than his own lawn and a few public parks, including Derby Arboretum.

Loudon's successor, Joseph Paxton (1801-1865), and Paxton's student and successor Edward Kemp (1817-1891), embraced the use of exotics, but ignored Loudon's planting approach.⁴² Paxton and Kemp continued using the Mixed Style, with exotics added, for the city parks and private landscapes they designed. They edited popular magazines and wrote books detailing the best manner in which to lay out gardens, rehashing earlier advice with updated information on the use of exotics. They were not in

³⁹Shoemaker, *Encyclopedia*, 2: 825-28. John Claudius Loudon (1783-1843), a university trained landscaper, wrote his first book, *Treatise on Country Residences*, in 1806, followed by *Encyclopedia of Gardening* in 1822 and *Encyclopedia of Plants* in 1829. He designed "Derby Arboretum," the first public park in England, in 1835.

⁴⁰ Shoemaker, *Encyclopedia*, 3:1417-18. Dr. Nathaniel Bagshaw Ward (1791-1868), a surgeon, loved mosses and ferns, which would not grow in his London garden due to air pollution. In 1829, Ward accidentally found that by growing these plants in an enclosed glass environment the outside air quality had little effect. Early terrariums were called Wardian cases.

⁴¹ "Gardenesque" means mixing exotics with natives in the basic naturalistic form. In the 1830s, forsythia looked shocking in a garden of native plants. Loudon assured the public that exotics could mix freely with natives, and should simply be assimilated into the naturalistic garden.

⁴² Shoemaker, *Encyclopedia*, 3: 1014-16. Sir Joseph Paxton (1801-1865) began as a lowly under-gardener but met the Duke of Devonshire and became superintendent of the Duke's lavish estate, *Chatsworth*. Paxton worked in the Mixed Style. By building cascades, a pinetum, a massive green house, and by breeding rare plants like *Victoria amazonica*, the gargantuan water lily from the Amazon, Paxton gained a national reputation. He designed several public parks, but his crowning glory was the Crystal Palace at London's Great Exhibition in 1851.

Shoemaker, *Encyclopedia*, 2: 685. Edward Kemp (1817-1891) became Paxton's assistant while working on Birkenhead Park in Liverpool in the 1840s. Kemp wrote an extremely popular "how to" book on landscape in 1850. This book went through dozens of printings and was still in publication at his death. Kemp was one of the judges for New York's Central Park design competition.

favor of the fulsome carpet bedding style that was gaining popularity in many English and American gardens.⁴³

Figure 9. A typical Kempian clump, figure 112 from Edward Kemp's *How to Lay Out a Garden*, shows “variety” (one of Kemp’s rules) in outline, plan, form, and habit. (Courtesy of the author.)

The Naturalistic style had run its course by the third quarter of the nineteenth century. The new Arts and Crafts movement spawned simple cottage gardens without all the fuss and bother. The introduction of perennial borders, so popular today, dates from this simple cottage-garden approach. Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1932), the founder of modern landscape design, began her career during the Arts and Crafts movement.⁴⁴

A Note about American Landscape

Shipley’s English garden design at Rockwood made an impression on those who saw it because carefully planned landscapes, following the English Naturalistic style, were not common in America. Most of the early nurserymen in America were immigrants from the British Isles who followed the Naturalistic Style as they had learned it there. They influenced the gardens they touched, but books defining the English style for the general population were not in common circulation.

Bernard McMahon (1775-1816), from Ireland, produced one of the first American seed catalogs in 1803 and the first American “Calendar” book in 1806, copying earlier English works.⁴⁵ Calendar-type books gave month-by-month instructions for the work required in the pleasure-grounds, kitchen garden, orchard, and even the hot house. They included very little design philosophy, mostly offering practical hints on planting, pruning, and propagating.

Robert Buist (1801-1880), from Scotland, wrote a “Calendar” book in 1832, which, while copying earlier works, introduced new species. Buist broke new ground with his next books, the first American publication exclusively on roses (a plant greatly improved by hybridization with perpetual blooming Chinese species), and another book exclusively focused on kitchen gardens (a topic not previously the subject of an individual book).

⁴³ Carpet bedding was the result of all the new tropical flowers that were being introduced (we call them annuals today). The Victorian garden began to include large, elaborate flowerbeds using these new, fast growing flowers. The term refers to the intricate designs created solely with annuals, which looked like busy carpet patterns.

⁴⁴ Shoemaker, *Encyclopedia*, 2:664-67. Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1932) learned to paint and embroider as one did in the Victorian period. By her mid-forties, failing eyesight forced her to turn to gardening. Using her artist’s eye, Jekyll created the herbaceous borders and outdoor ‘rooms’ that still predominate in the landscape field today.

⁴⁵ J. J. Smith, “Brief Memoir of Bernard M’Mahon,” *McMahon’s American Gardener*, 11th ed., 1857, (Reprint, New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1976). Bernard McMahon immigrated to Philadelphia in 1796 and established a seed business. His friendship with Thomas Jefferson led to his nursery becoming the destination for all the plants brought back by the Lewis and Clark expedition. The discovery in 1818 of the Oregon grapeholly provided a naming opportunity, *Mahonia aquifolium* in honor of McMahon.

Andrew Jackson Downing (1818-1852), was the first American-born landscape gardener to take the works of earlier English authors and create a book on landscape philosophy for the American public. Downing defines landscape styles as either being “Beautiful” or “Picturesque.” His theories were all English, but he adapted certain elements to the American climate.⁴⁶

Each of these early American gardeners worked to bring the English landscape style to American homes, and, with Downing’s work in the 1840s, many Americans began to take a greater interest in landscape gardening. As in England, a century earlier, it became a mark of sophistication and taste to be concerned with one’s landscape.

Rockwood’s Landscape

Rockwood followed the English Naturalistic form, with outstanding Picturesque elements, in the Mixed style, which included a wide variety of exotics in Gardenesque fashion. In fact, Rockwood is a textbook example of the late English Naturalistic style as it had evolved by the mid nineteenth century.

Joseph Shipley’s architect, George Williams, worked with both Paxton and Kemp in the 1840s, building public parks in Liverpool. It would be nice to establish a connection between Shipley and Kemp, but that documentation has not yet been discovered. Even if they did not meet, Kemp had just published the most up-to-date landscape advice manual in 1850, *How to Lay Out a Garden*.

Shipley intended his estate to be modern and worked with Williams to include the latest technical devices in his home, including central heating, a bathroom, and boilers for the conservatory and hothouse.⁴⁷ He instructed Edward Brighthurst to purchase whatever equipment was necessary for the tenant farms “bearing in mind that we should have no old obsolete implements, but only the most improved ones used in Modern farming.”⁴⁸ Repton, Loudon, Downing, and Kemp all refer to the naturalistic style as “modern” landscape design, and it is reasonable to believe Shipley wanted his landscape to be up-to-date, and would have been referencing the most recent publication.

It is important to keep in mind that Shipley built a gentleman’s farm for himself, what Loudon defined as a “mansion and demesne.” Plowing, crops, pigs, and anything rough or dirty was hidden from view on the tenant farms. The demesne, or that part of the estate reserved for the land owner, might have a herd of deer or Park cattle grazing in a meadow, creating a perfect bucolic scene with unpleasant sights or smells banned.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Shoemaker, *Encyclopedia*, 1:384. American born, Andrew Jackson Downing (1818-1852) began a nursery business on the Hudson River in upstate New York. He designed both landscapes and houses, and in 1841 he published his immensely popular *Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*. This work offered a discourse on good taste to the American middle class. Downing promoted the English Naturalistic style, with his own personal stylistic nuances.

⁴⁷ Williams’ plans show the bathroom. The heating devices for the house remained in place until the recent renovations in 2000. The boilers are mentioned in letter, Charles Wilson to Joseph Shipley, Jan. 30, 1852 (Rockwood Archives).

⁴⁸ Shipley to E. Brighthurst, Dec. 6, 1850, Rockwood Archives.

⁴⁹ Loudon, *Encyclopedia of Gardening*, p. 1180. Loudon uses the ancient word often found in old deeds, “demesne” (pronounced domain). Park, or English Park cattle are an ancient breed of white animals

The demesne or “park,” those acres of meadow surrounding the house and seen from the drive, counted as part of the designed landscape just as much as the gate or the garden. The sixty-two acres that made up the Weldin farm basically were Rockwood’s “park.” Kemp advised his readers “to enliven a park...and give life...to a home scene, sheep and cows may be freely admitted.”⁵⁰ Shipley’s favorite thoroughbred horse, Branker, three carriage horses, and about ten cows grazed in his park.⁵¹

Park, gate, garden, mansion, and orchards were all part of the designed landscape, and each had to be treated according to rules. The seamless blending of an estate’s pieces and parts proved one’s good taste and ability. At the time, a reference to a “garden,” meant a vegetable or kitchen garden. An area devoted to symmetric flower beds, in the Mixed Style, would be called a “flower garden,” to differentiate it from the “pleasure-ground,” “lawn,” or “shrubbery” which meant the open lawn with clumps of shrubs and trees traversed by planned pathways.

Figure 10. Rockwood’s plan, adapted by the author from an aerial view in the Rockwood Archives. (Drawing by the author.)

Shipley made his estate’s presence subtly felt even before one entered at the gate. Heading toward *Rockwood* along Shipley Road from Philadelphia Pike, a visitor first encountered the dry-laid rock fences girdling the road, an indication one had crossed onto the estate. Shipley built stone fences along all of the public roads crossing his land, a common feature throughout the English countryside. As the visitor neared Shellpot Creek, the rock-fence-lined road led across a small bridge, directly to a Gothic cottage guarding a simple yet substantial gate. Humphry Repton held that the best estate entrance was one where a public road appears to head directly into one’s gate, curving off at the last possible moment.⁵² No longer used, Shipley’s historic entrance off Shipley Road maintains its original configuration.

Passing through the gate, opened by the residents of the lodge, which, Kemp advised “ought always to correspond with the style of the house, being rather plainer in its character than more ornamental,” the visitor gained access to *Rockwood*. One might find, “a few flowers and flowering–shrubs around [the] lodge,” but “there should not be any regular garden attached to it.”⁵³

with black points (ears, eyes, nose, feet) commonly allowed to roam in English estate parks simply for their beauty.

⁵⁰ Edward Kemp, *How to Lay Out a Garden*, 2nd ed. (London, 1858), p. 240.

⁵¹ The addition of the cow shed to the carriage house likely dates to 1858, the same date the gardener’s cottage was built, indicating when the Weldin house and barn were abandoned. In the 1890s the Bringhursts created the large barn that was adaptively rehabilitated to become the Rockwood Visitor Center in 2005. The Bringhursts’ barn spanned Shipley’s stable yard, tying the second floor of the stable to the attic of the carriage house and resting on the kitchen garden wall to create a barn large enough to service an operational farm.

⁵² Humphry Repton, *The Art of Landscape Gardening*, 1795 (Reprint, Cambridge, Mass, 1907), p. 50; Kemp, *How to*, p. 145.

⁵³ Thomas Beckman, “The Etchings of Robert Shaw”, *Delaware History* 24 (1990-91): 75-108; Kemp, *How to*, p. 335. Shipley hired David Shaw as coachman, but Shaw’s large family could not fit in the small rooms designated on the second floor of the stable. Shaw’s wife and six children squeezed into the tiny lodge. It was not uncommon for a woman or children to act as

The visitor entered the carefully designed approach to the estate. Here, stone and iron fences stood fifty feet or more away from the drive, often hidden by clumps of trees and shrubs, occasionally parting for a vista so the visitor could enjoy a sense of the estate's expanse. On the left, one saw the park with a few cows dotting the pasture, and ahead was the most outstanding natural feature on the property, the "cliff." The drive takes a wide gentle curve to the left passing directly in front of this picturesque rocky ridge, which provided a sublime impression for the visitor in a slow-moving open carriage. Here, one saw some of the rock outcroppings that Edward Bringham suggested should be removed. The drive, continuing its curve to the left, climbs up to the level of the garden. Only then does one see the house.

As the drive reached the garden, a branch headed off to the right just before the ha-ha. This was the back lane and would have had an iron gate and iron hurdle fencing to keep the decorative livestock from nibbling on the shrubs along the drive. Kemp advised that deliveries use a different entrance altogether, but not having a convenient secondary entrance from the road, Shipley placed a service lane to the kitchen garden and stables here, to separate tradesmen from visitors approaching the house.⁵⁴

According to Kemp, "an approach ought never to pass the house to which it leads, and then return to it...such an arrangement is most unnatural."⁵⁵ Shipley adhered to this advice for visitors; the rule did not apply to trades people. Visitors viewed the entrance lawn, with its boulders and wide variety of exotic and native trees and shrubs, from their carriages as they drove by. No walks crossed this area (at least none intended for guests); no windows of any principal rooms overlooked this spot. This lawn, to be seen from a carriage, served only as an introduction to the more ornate gardens to come.

The house sits according to Kemp's advice: "A gentle eminence, with the ground sloping a little away from all directions, especially towards the south...an approach by a rising road, and the *command* of the outlying scenery...the principle *aspect* ...as nearly as possible south-east. This will allow of the entrance being on the north-west side."⁵⁶ Seeing the house first from the northeastern corner, visitors took in two facades of the house at the same time, the eastern end with its decorative conservatory and the northern entrance façade. "A house should be approached laterally... so as to have the [entrance] door on the left [of the carriage]."⁵⁷ In America, a more typical approach would be from the opposite direction, with the right side of the carriage at the entrance, but Shipley follows Kemp's advice.

The only flowers seen from the drive were two circular, mounded beds of geraniums that marked the walk leading to the pleasure-grounds on the south front. Geraniums had been a rare favorite as house plants fifty years earlier, but their ease of propagation and the improvements in greenhouse culture made *Pelargonium* very popular in the Victorian garden. Buist listed no less than 129 varieties of geranium in 1839.

gatekeepers. One of Shaw's sons, Robert, began drawing to amuse himself while childhood illness confined him to bed in this house. Kemp's advice may have led to the rejection of William's fanciful lodge design. The plain structure Shipley did build came from the firm of Thomas and James Dixon, who also built the Lesley mansion in New Castle.

⁵⁴ Kemp, *How to*, p. 21.

⁵⁵ Kemp, *How to*, p. 144.

⁵⁶ Kemp, *How to*, p. 17.

⁵⁷ Kemp, *How to*, p. 150.

Repton, Loudon, Kemp, and Downing all advise that good taste restricts most flower beds to a single species and variety. In other words, an entire bed of all red geraniums, or perhaps an entire bed of all pink petunias met the canons of good taste.

Other than the splash of color, the garden at the front of the house contained only trees and shrubs - no flowerbeds, no pots of flowers, no benches, no urns. This arrangement reflected Kemp's principle of gradation: each successive part of the garden was to be more ornate than the one before it. Shipley did purchase a "rustic settee", a pair of Chinese garden stools, and three urns, but those garden ornaments graced the formal terraces, not the approach drive or entrance lawn.⁵⁸

The mansion's entrance included an unusual feature: Shipley planted a number of evergreens next to the house, to frame the vestibule. The use of foundation plantings did not become fashionable for another fifty years. Shipley's personal touch copied from *Wyncote*, provided a charming "cottage-in-the-woods" feel to this small, highly decorative part of his house, further suggests that Shipley, Salisbury, or both designed the gardens.

The entrance lawn did include flowering shrubs, especially *Rhododendron catawbiense*, an American native that enjoyed great popularity in English gardens. This use of American natives is oddly British. "The American tribe," as Kemp called the rhododendrons, azaleas, and other plants introduced into England from America, were a standard feature in every British garden. In the previous century a number of plant collectors, particularly Philadelphia botanist, John Bartram (1699-1777), sent American trees and shrubs to England, where they were considered rare. Americans, on the other hand, chose to plant European trees. Americans so shunned native plants that Downing felt compelled to expound on the virtues of using American natives in American gardens.⁵⁹

Several of Shipley's original trees still grace the entrance lawn, including the beautiful Weeping European Beech, *Fagus sylvatica pendula*, the majestic Chinese *Ginkgo biloba*, likely the clump of rhododendron by the ha-ha (not those in the center of the lawn), and a stunning native black gum, *Nyssa sylvatic*.

The walled kitchen garden provided a backdrop for the entrance lawn. Originally, this wall was just stone (with none of the stucco applied in 1999-2000), and included a smaller, less noticeable gate accessing the hothouses. Kemp noted that if a wall were necessary, it should serve a double function, like having lean-to sheds and perhaps

⁵⁸ Receipt for lawn ornaments, Murphey and Yarnall, Philadelphia, August 30, 1854. Rockwood Archives; Kemp, *How to*, p. 53. Kemp explains his principle of gradation by comparing a garden to a house, "As, in a house, the exterior is little decorated, the vestibule or porch plain, the hall only a trifle more ornate, and the various rooms more and more enriched, till the... drawing room, which is the most showy of all is arrived at; so, in the outdoor domain,....the approach private and not adorned with flowers, the pleasure garden a little more enriched, and the front of the house [the south front in *Rockwood's* case] with its.... flower beds or flower gardens, be in the very highest style of art and beauty"

⁵⁹ George Bishop Tatum, "Andrew Jackson Downing: Arbiter of American Taste, 1815-1852" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1949), pp. 135-46.

espaliered trees on the backside, just as we see at Rockwood.⁶⁰ This use of privacy walls is very typical of an English estate.

Many English estates in the mid nineteenth century had a rabbit warren of walled yards and alleys connecting the mansion with all their requisite outbuildings (see Figure 11). Such walled support services were generally referred to as “offices,” and their presence implied a complete, functioning estate. In *Rockwood’s* case, a low “wing”-wall extended out from the house to enclose the laundry and kitchen yard, which visually communicated across the drive to the stable yard and walled kitchen garden. For guests at the front door, artfully located clumps of trees and shrubs both hid and revealed bits of the “offices” beyond, suggesting this was a carefully designed and well run estate.⁶¹

Figure 11. “Outline Plan of a Place,” figure 4 in Edward Kemp’s *How to Lay Out a Garden*. All domestic “offices” are connected by walled yards and alleys. Number 35 is the walled kitchen garden, and number 3, the conservatory, provides the only access from the house to the garden. (Courtesy of the author.)

To the north, glimpsed while coming down the drive and not quite hidden from view, was the orchard surrounded by a clipped hedge of Osage oranges.⁶² Beyond the orchard stood a simple, plain, yet decidedly Gothic cottage occupied by Shipley’s gardener, Salisbury.

Guests either went through the house to enjoy the pleasure-ground from the south-facing piazza, or chose the same walkways used today to stroll around the eastern end of the mansion, passing the stunning conservatory on the way. Williams designed *Rockwood’s* conservatory, a fashionable accessory to any home where taste and style were important, as a slightly larger version of that at *Wyncote*.⁶³ Following along the path, visitors enjoyed views of the park and a picturesque cottage in ruins (the old Weldin home) to the left. To the right, at the corner of the ornate conservatory, one still finds an original Shipley shrub, a native black haw Viburnum, *Viburnum prunifolium*, which is slow growing and reached its mature height almost a century ago.

At the very end of the conservatory a large circular, mounded flowerbed, meant to be enjoyed from both inside and outside the house, likely displayed geraniums. This flower bed marks the beginning of formal terraces that wrap around the garden façade of the house. Two of Shipley’s urns, filled with flowers and surrounded by rare shrubs and

⁶⁰ Kemp, *How to*, p. 49.

⁶¹ Kemp, Loudon, Repton, and other authors refer to all the support services and out buildings generally as the ‘offices’ of an estate.

⁶² These native trees, *Maclura pomifera*, discovered by Lewis and Clark, were sold as ‘living fences’ by the mid-nineteenth century. Pruned osage creates a dense thorny hedge. One may still find Osage oranges in old fencerows where they began as living fences.

⁶³ Lee, “Rockwood,” p. 108; Constance Greiff, *John Notman*. *passim*. Lee’s broad statement, that *Rockwood* has “the earliest known surviving conservatory attached to a dwelling in America”, needs a little revision. John Notman, working only in the Philadelphia area designed and built a number of attached conservatories in the 1840s, one or two of which remain. There were many other architects working in other American cities building conservatories, and then there are the houses by unknown architects, Dr. S. D. Risley’s house on the 400 block of North Monroe Street in Media, Pennsylvania, or the Darlington Mansion on Darlington Road in Wawa, Pennsylvania, both from the same period, both of which include attached conservatories. It is possible that *Rockwood’s* is the earliest surviving attached conservatory in Delaware, since the Lesley Mansion was completed a year or two after Shipley’s home..

trees, stood on either side of the conservatory's polygonal bay. From this point on, everything near the house becomes very symmetrical.

The path Shipley's visitors took seemed level, yet it slowly descended following the grade of the south lawn, while the ground around the conservatory remained perfectly level. This subtly became the first of three formal terraces embracing the southern façade of the mansion. As visitors continued toward the pleasure-ground, the terrace on the right became obvious. The outside corner of this terrace originally had a clump of evergreens as suggested by Kemp.⁶⁴ Two majestic Shipley trees from that clump- a European larch, *Larix decidua*, and a Norway spruce, *Picea abies* - stood at this point within the last twenty years. Both are now gone.

The curving path from the drive led visitors to the upper walk, which opened to the south lawn or pleasure-ground. The upper walk ran perfectly straight along the base of the terraces in front of the mansion. This feature defined the Mixed Style, using formal, straight lines up near the house, to make a transition between the regularity of architecture and the irregularity of naturalistic gardens.

A small set of stone steps allowed visitors to ascend to the first terrace, and led directly to the doors of the conservatory. There likely was a gravel walk across this terrace from the conservatory doors to the steps, which could have been lined with additional flowerbeds. As at Wyncote and as shown in house plans by Kemp, the conservatory acted as the passage between inside and outside (see Figure 11). A gravel walk was needed to keep one's shoes from getting damp.

Figure 12. Edward Kemp's designs for flowerbeds along a walk as seen on page 111 in *How to Lay Out a Garden*. (Courtesy of the author.)

The principal terrace spanned the front of the main house, matching the length of the piazza. This terrace was set higher than the first terrace. The view of the Delaware River, a key selling point for Shipley, can no longer be seen, but Shipley's guests must have enjoyed it. Shipley planted symmetrically on the principal terrace, as was typical of the Mixed Style. There was a large circular, mounded flowerbed directly in the center, and smaller circular, mounded flowerbeds on each outside corner of the terrace. These flowerbeds displayed geraniums. Kemp and others thought that single species flowerbeds looked much nicer and avoided the horror of carpet bedding.⁶⁵

On the outside edge of the principal terrace, perfectly centered, stood the third urn, planted with an array of flowers. At the foot of the terrace, across the upper walk, stood a single shrub rose perfectly centered, flanked by two oval, mounded flowerbeds displaying geraniums (see Figure 13 and 14).

Figure 13. Plan of *Rockwood's* Formal Terraces. (Drawing by the author.)

Figure 14. *Rockwood*, garden façade, ca. 1880. Here is the principal terrace with its symmetrical plantings, urns, and flowerbeds. One of the mounded beds of geraniums is in the foreground, and the stone pine is on the right corner of the house. Note the rustic chairs and the screening of the "offices." (Courtesy of New Castle County, Rockwood Archives.)

⁶⁴ Kemp, *How to*, p. 185.

⁶⁵ Kemp, *How to*, p. 170.

A clump of evergreens and shrubs, planted on the inside corners of the principal terrace, framed the piazza and maintained the sense of symmetry. Each clump included roses and other showy shrubs as well as one of Shipley's favorite evergreens, the Swiss stone pine, *Pinus cembra*.⁶⁶ Shipley ordered nine of these very slow growing pines; later photographs show them on the principal terrace as mature trees. In the photographs the paired trees are not of equal height; presumably, one died and was replaced.

The center bay of the piazza was the fulcrum for all sight lines. From this point every principal view of the garden and river converged and could be enjoyed even in inclement weather. The piazza sported a deck on the second level for a more spectacular view, accessible from the main bedchambers and shaded by an awning. The western end of the piazza included a cast iron grille, to support climbing vines in the summer, and thus protected guests from observation by gossipy servants.

No steps led into the garden from the principal terrace. Visitors passed through the drawing room to the conservatory for access to the pleasure grounds. Originally, the incline on the sides of the terraces dissuaded visitors from traversing them on foot.

The last terrace acted as balance for the first, and probably included symmetric clumps of evergreens to correspond with those on the first terrace. Shipley planted a thicket of evergreens on the rest of this terrace to screen the "offices:" kitchens, laundry, and servants rooms, which had windows facing the garden. Because the screen for the "offices" took up most of the room on this terrace there were no additional flowerbeds or plantings.⁶⁷

The pleasure grounds, in typical Brownian fashion, consisted of a large open grass lawn sloping down to the ha-ha and meadows beyond, surrounded by thickets of flowering shrubs, evergreens, and deciduous trees through which circumnavigational walks progressed. Kemp suggested that evergreens be planted in a 2/1 ratio to minimize a visually dreary display of naked trunks and branches during the winter.⁶⁸ Shipley's nursery orders show purchases of about two-thirds more evergreens than deciduous trees.

On the east side of the lawn stood the Chestnut Mound, which Shipley recalled several years after he first visited the property. This rocky wilderness provided the picturesque qualities so desired in the Naturalistic form. The mound also served to hide the outside walk from view, making it a private retreat - a "snugness" suggested as desirable by Kemp.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Receipt, Ashton Nurseries, Burlington, N. J., Nov.22, 1852 (*Pinus cembra*), and receipts, Robert Buist, March 22, 1853 (1 *Pinus cembra*) and Feb. 27, 1857 (6 *Pinus cembra*), Rockwood Archives; Michael Dirr, *Manual of Woody Landscape Plants*, 5th ed. (Champaign, Ill., 1998), p. 731. Shipley's receipts clearly indicate the Latin name for this pine, and the photographs show Swiss Stone Pines. Dirr's *Woody Landscape Plants* often includes import dates and helpful information about the plants listed. His entry for *Pinus cembra* says they were first introduced to America in 1875. Shipley is ordering these stone pines from local nurseries two decades earlier.

⁶⁷ It has been suggested that the southern magnolia, *Magnolia grandiflora*, in this thicket is an original Shipley tree. It is not listed on his nursery receipts, and southern magnolias over 150 years old would be much larger than this tree.

⁶⁸ Kemp, *How to*, p. 174.

⁶⁹ Kemp, *How to*, p. 49.

The other two curving paths, flanking the central green, connected the upper and lower walks by gently flowing through groupings of exotic trees and shrubs. A large rock jutted out here, some exotic flowering shrub from China grew there - it was the typical English Naturalistic garden.

Until 2004, another original Shipley tree stood at the foot of the lawn, a massive hemlock, *Tsuga canadensis*. Three original Shipley trees still standing on the western side of the lawn are another huge hemlock, an elm, *Ulmus americana*, and a red oak, *Quercus rubra*.

A fellow horticultural aficionado, or perhaps a member of the Delaware Horticultural Society, for which Shipley served as vice-president, might have been invited to see the hothouse and kitchen garden. Crossing the front drive from the mansion, a walk led along the kitchen garden wall, heading for the gardener's cottage, and came upon a door in the wall, possibly hidden by shrubs. The door led into the neatly kept kitchen garden. Dating back to the earliest times, vegetable gardens had been laid out at right angles to give easy access. While the Naturalistic style did away with such perfect neatness in the pleasure-grounds, Kemp maintained that the principle of good vegetable gardening required square beds and neat, straight lines.⁷⁰

Shipley's kitchen garden beds, surrounded with well-clipped, low boxwood hedges like many in England, provided all manner of fruits and vegetables for the table.⁷¹ This garden space, about one-half an acre, if well managed, could provide all the vegetables and fruit needed for a family of six. Many of its features were designed to make plants produce early or late, extending the bounty for the table beyond normal seasons. Along the walls, espaliered fruit trees allowed early fruiting and easy care, while dwarf fruit trees commonly lined the walks in English kitchen gardens. Shipley's great interest in pears paralleled a national trend.

The hothouse, sometimes called a vinery, was quite large and possibly had more than one space within to provide a variety of environments. Shipley's friend Charles Wilson wrote from England that an acquaintance was building a "hot house on exactly the same plan as thine. . . . it is 120 feet long." The boilers and expansion tanks were also the same as Shipley's.⁷² In the vinery, Salisbury forced grapes to produce early and late and won awards at the Delaware Horticultural Society shows for the grapes, pears, and flowers he produced.⁷³ Some section of the vinery might have been set apart to propagate geraniums, since these seemed to be Shipley's flower of choice.

⁷⁰ Kemp, *How to*, p. 322.

⁷¹ Receipt, Ashton Nurseries, Nov. 22, 1852, "25 yards of dwarf box," and receipt, Robert Buist, March 22, 1853, "280 yrds Box Edging," Rockwood Archives. Shipley ordered 305 running yards of boxwood, intended to be used as edging. Such boxwood edging was typically used to outline kitchen garden beds or parterre-type formal flower beds. There is no visual evidence that this boxwood was used around flower beds, so most likely it was intended for the kitchen garden.

⁷² Charles Wilson to Shipley, Jan. 30, 1852., Rockwood Archives.

⁷³ *Delaware State Journal* (Wilmington), 21 Sept. 1855; *Delaware Republican* (Wilmington), 14 Sept. 1865. In 1855 Salisbury won awards for his display of four types of grapes: black Hamburg, white Muscat, black Frontignac, white Frontignac. These were likely the grape vines sent from Wyncote. In 1865, he displayed Delaware, Concord, Diana, Catawba, Maxatawney, Hartford-prolific, Hamburg, and Muscat grapes; Bartlett, Seckel, Beurre d'Anjou, and Langher's

Figure 15. Plan of Shipley's Carriage House, Stables, and Kitchen Garden, ca. 1860. (Drawn by the author.)

Along with the stable and carriage house-cow shed, the home farm also included a poultry house for the Dorking fowl and a fruit cellar, both built of stone to match the house. Dorking fowl, closely related to chickens, were fat, succulent birds, and a favorite of English royal family. Shipley's original purchase of three hens and a cock in 1858 multiplied to forty birds, nine years later when his inventory was taken.⁷⁴

The little structure across the drive from Shipley's stable is a fruit cellar. Often confused with a spring house or an ice house, a fruit cellar served a very similar purpose. Built into a dry hillside, a fruit room, or fruit cellar served as a storage area to preserve delicate pears and other fruit well beyond their season in its cool, even temperature. In warm climates like Delaware, the fruit cellar might also have a well for ice to maintain the cool environment but moisture from the ice could harm the fruit. Picked and packed in barrels and boxes, or placed on open shelves, fruit could be held for months. Shipley's interest in pears would have required a fruit cellar to preserve the choice types well into the winter. Most guests would probably not have been invited to see the poultry house or fruit cellar.

Shipley and the Bringhursts loved to ramble about in Brandywine Hundred - they walked all over it while seeking a building site. Their appreciation for the natural areas of this estate and their love of the picturesque, would have encouraged them to create paths that went beyond the carefully maintained lawns above the ha-ha. *Rockwood* included several wilderness paths, portions of which can still be enjoyed, along the highly picturesque boulders of Shipley's "little stream," Turkey Run, and the rocky ridge overlooking the entrance drive. A circumnavigational system of paths that reached the boundaries of a park were an important part of English estate design, and mollified the Victorian desire to communicate with the natural world.

In this particular part of Brandywine Hundred, chosen specifically for its picturesque qualities, Joseph Shipley, inspired by years of living in England, used English architects, English landscape principles, English servants, English furnishings, and even English chickens to create a mid-nineteenth-century Victorian estate that transplanted English taste to the Brandywine Valley. From the gateposts to the gables, from the mullions to the meadows, the estate embodies English designs and English principles. *Rockwood* is a textbook example of a mid-nineteenth-century English landscape design that Shipley's American friends and family could see without the fuss of traveling to England.

Hailed at the time for its English design, unique to Delaware, successive generations of the Shipley-Bringhurst-Hargraves family loved and nurtured *Rockwood*, residing there into the 1970s. Functions changed over time, as Shipley's kitchen garden became a formal flower garden in the taste of Gertrude Jekyll and his stable and carriage house became a large bran, but the original design of the gardens was preserved. Whether they understood Shipley's English influence or not, the Bringhursts appreciated

beurre pears, along with figs, onions, eggplants, potatoes, cut flowers, a hanging basket, and two hand bouquets, with an assortment of greenhouse plants.

⁷⁴ Inventory of Joseph Shipley, handwritten, n.d., Rockwood Archives.

Uncle Shipley's design, never altering walkways or terraces or intent as they added numerous trees and shrubs to the landscape. The Delaware Valley, the State of Delaware, and New Castle County are very lucky that this transplanted bit of England is being well preserved and maintained by the New Castle County government for the enjoyment of the public.