

## Mount Pleasant

A colorful Scottish sea captain and American patriot, John Macpherson (1726–1792) and his first wife Margaret built this grand country estate and productive farm in the mid 1760's to the delight of many from Philadelphia society, including statesman John Adams, prior to his Presidency. This home is built high atop cliffs overlooking the Schuylkill River and the Macphersons employed as their builder-architect Thomas Nevell, an apprentice of Edmund Woolley, the builder of Independence Hall. Both Macpherson and Nevell intended to make a bold statement with this house. Macpherson announced his ambition to join established Philadelphia society by commissioning a house which rivaled the greatest city homes, and Nevell hoped to demonstrate his considerable craft and architectural knowledge. Together, they built one of the grandest homes along the Schuylkill, one that John Adams on a visit to the residence in 1775, declared "the most elegant seat in Pennsylvania."

By the mid-1770s, Macpherson decided to give up farming and returned to Philadelphia city life, renting Mount Pleasant to a series of tenants. Benedict Arnold bought the estate in 1779, though he never lived in the house, then the home passed through a series of owners in the tumultuous 1780s. Finally, in 1792, Jonathan Williams, the first superintendent of West Point and grand-nephew of Ben Franklin, purchased Mount Pleasant and lived there intermittently for two decades. His children ultimately sold the estate to Fairmount Park. Prior to restoration in 1926, Mount Pleasant served various public purposes, functioning once a beer garden and later as a dairy farm providing milk and ice cream to local residents.

*Considered representative of the Georgian style reflecting English design books and the influence of the Italian Renaissance architect Andrea Palladio, Mount Pleasant presents a grand exterior. Macpherson also provided a traditional Scottish interpretation, based on his own heritage. This elegant and balanced home includes a pair of outbuildings flanking the main house, presenting an impressive stance when one approaches. The house includes three-part Venetian windows and rusticated entrances with a stucco exterior scored to resemble stone. Visitors will notice the unusual brick corner quoins, rarely seen, and a brick belt course.*

## Cedar Grove

Learn about informal country living and hear how each descendant of the family made this house a home during their time of continued occupancy. This farmhouse served as the summer residence for five generations of the Coates, Paschall and Morris families of Philadelphia. Built in 1748-50 by the wealthy widow Elizabeth Coates Paschall, the original small home of grey native stone received numerous additions over the years, with rooms which illustrate the evolving styles of the family as seen through their furnishings. They enjoyed this lovely summer home until 1888, when increased industrialization made it no longer a peaceful country retreat. They then built a large country home in Chestnut Hill and developed its gardens into what is today the Morris Arboretum. Originally located in the Frankford section of Philadelphia, Cedar Grove was moved to Fairmount Park, stone by stone, in 1926-28.

Celebrating country living, Cedar Grove has no central hall, and the downstairs rooms all have access to the piazza. The original building, in Wissahickon schist stone, consisted of only the present dining room and upper bedchambers. As succeeding generations of the family lived here, additions were made to the home, including the parlor, the kitchen and the third floor. This floor incorporated the original gable roof into what is now a gambrel or "broken pitch" roof. And later the porch was built, providing the house with its present appearance.

*The interior of Cedar Grove contains innovative features such as an indoor bake oven and hot water boiler in the kitchen, and an unusual two-sided wall of closets on the second floor. The house is furnished with exceptional examples of early Pennsylvania furniture, which have descended through the Morris family. The mixture of fine Baroque, Rococo, and Federal styles seen in its interior rooms reflects the evolution of the family's taste and their continued occupancy of the house through the mid-nineteenth century.*

*Through the generosity of Lydia Thompson Morris, the last of the family to possess Cedar Grove, the house and its surviving original furnishings were presented to the city of Philadelphia in 1928*