

FORT HUNTER MANSION  
FORT HUNTER, PA.

*Dauphin Co*

H.A.B.S. No. PA-38

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District No. PA-3

*Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings*

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

Julian Millard, District Officer  
2250 No. Third St., Harrisburg, Pa.

FORT HUNTER MANSION  
Fort Hunter, Pa.  
Five Miles North of Harrisburg, Pa.  
One the Susquehanna River.

OWNER: Mrs Edward B. Meigs, 1736 M Street, N.W., Washington, D.C.  
Now occupied as a Museum of Antiquities and Tea Room.

DATE OF ERECTION: 1814. The rear wing is much older.

ARCHITECT: Unknown.

BUILDER: Unknown.

PRESENT CONDITION: Has had many minor changes. New roof, cornices and porch about 1850. Also changes of interior trim.

NUMBER OF STORIES: Two and a half stories. Rear wing two stories.

MATERIALS OF CONSTRUCTION: Walls are of rough mountain stone from the farm, hauled to the site by John Carson McAllister, son of Archibald, and later first Captain of The Dauphin County Cavalry. Mantel facings are of Italian Marble and the Drawing Room mantel is entirely of the same marble and said to have been made in Italy.

OTHER EXISTING RECORDS: Notes on a photograph at the Dauphin County Historical Society, quoting Miss Mary C. McAllister as of 1900; "Frontier Forts of Pennsylvania"; Land Office and County records.; also a small booklet issued and sold at Fort Hunter Mansion.

ADDITIONAL DATA: The first settler at this place was Benjamin Chambers, a Scotch-Irish Presbyterian, in 1720. Three brothers joined him and in 1735-6 one or more went south to Cumberland County, where they founded Chambersburg. Joseph and Thomas Chambers seem to have remained and built buildings and two grist mills and a saw mill. At any rate the Land office records show that the whole property was resurveyed in 1763 to William Foulke and Samuel Hunter in trust for the heirs of Joseph and Thomas Chambers. In 1773 it was divided and resurveyed to William Foulke and John Garber and patented, the northern part to Foulke and the southern part to Garber. By the County records both tracts were sold in 1787 by John Garber to Archibald McAllister of Londonderry, Dauphin County, for "L 4000 in gold and silver coin", with the houses, grist mills, saw mills, edifices and buildings, barns, stables, orchards, etc. In 1814, Archibald, who was a Captain in the Revolution, built the Mansion, or at least he built the front part of it. The rear part appears to be much older.

Samuel Hunter was one of the heirs of the Chambers' and operated the mills. The place came to be known as "Hunter's Mill" and when the Indians became troublesome, about 1755, a frontier fort

was built at Hunter's Mill, whence the name Fort Hunter.

Fort Hunter not only guarded the pass through the Blue Ridge but was a forwarding point for supplies and reinforcements for other fortified places up the river and on the West and North Branches.

After the Indian Wars (1755 to 1763) the stockade had probably disappeared by the time that McAllister came in 1787. He started an Inn called The Practical Farmer. It is thought that this Inn was conducted in the farmhouse near by, on the Creek. The Duc de la Rochefoucauld Liancourt was a guest here in 1796. In his diary he states that McAllister lived in a house "Within the precincts of the old fort." This was probably the building now forming the rear wing of the Mansion.

The succession in ownership of the Mansion was as follows:- Archibald's son, John Carson McAllister fell heir to the property and his estate deeded it in 1870 to Daniel D. Boas, of Harrisburg. After Mr Boas' death the Mansion passed to his children, and his daughter, Helen Boas Reily, wife of John W. Reily, lived there for a number of years. It then passed to another member of the family, Margaret Wister Meigs, wife of Edward B. Meigs, Washington, D.C., by inheritance and purchase.

The following inscription on a bronze tablet was erected by the State Historical Commission at the place marked with an X in the plot plan :-

"A short distance West of this stone stood Fort Hunter; otherwise known as the Fort at Hunter's Mill. of This Fort, consisting of a block house surrounded by a stockade, was built during the winter of 1755-56. It was used as a base of supplies and as a rendezvous for troops during the period of the Indian Wars. And traces of this Fort were removed when the present building was erected in 1814. Erected by the Pennsylvania Historical Commission. 1916"

*Julian Millard*  
*District Officer*

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*Reviewed 1936. H.C.F.*