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NEW JERSEY OFFICE OF CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION SECTION  
INDIVIDUAL STRUCTURE SURVEY FORM

HISTORIC SITES INVENTORY NO. 0713 3 7 2

HISTORIC NAME: The Cedars  
LOCATION: 208 North Mountain Ave.

COMMON NAME: Poost house  
BLOCK/LOT 1602/08: 20-C/34

MUNICIPALITY: Montclair  
USGS QUAD: Orange  
OWNER/ADDRESS: Poost, Maximillian H.  
See above

COUNTY: Essex  
UTM REFERENCES:  
Zone/Northing/Easting

DESCRIPTION

Construction Date: 1884 Source of Date: Tax Assessor  
Architect: H. Edwards Ficken, N. Y. C. Builder:  
Style: Vernacular/Queen Anne elements Form/Plan Type: Extended Rectangle  
Number of Stories: 2½ + B  
Foundation: Brick  
Exterior Wall Fabric: Asbestos shingle  
Fenestration: 4 bays, 6/1 D.H. sash  
Roof/Chimneys: Gable/hipped/shingle finish/exterior end chimney east elevation.

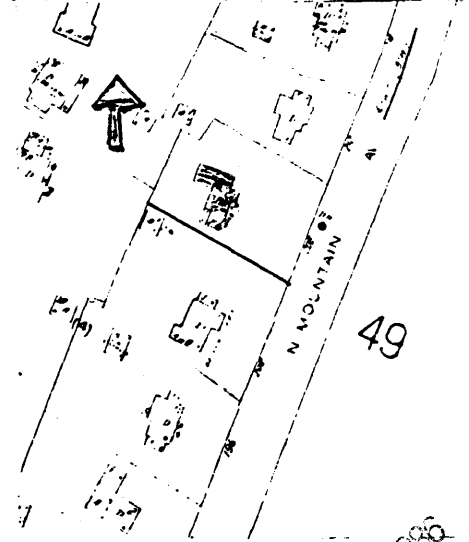
Additional Architectural Description:

A 2-story porch w/ polygonal roof defines the second bay of the home.  
Entrance to the left up steep risers.  
The 2nd floor shows a solid balustrade & glazed door on the wall behind.  
Bracketed columns on the first floor below a skirt roof extending across porch.  
Corner windows below cut-away corners bays 1&3 w/ paired gable dormers in roof above bay 3.  
Bay 4 recessed back w/ single sash windows on 1st & 2nd floors.  
Elaborate porch w/ turned columns at rear (west) of structure.  
Alterations/modifications: The home was moved from Upper Mountain Avenue after beginning of the century. Many of its original details are lost & the changes detract from the character of its architecture.

PHOTO Negative File No. R19, 20



Map (Indicate North)



OCT 1 1986

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, OFFICE OF CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION SECTION, 109 WEST STATE STREET, TRENTON, NEW JERSEY 08625 (609) 292 - 2023

SITING, BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION, AND RELATED STRUCTURES:

Home sited at center of 125' x 152' lot up gentle slope w/garage built in below structure (south east corner).  
Less than one acre.

SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT: Urban  Suburban  Scattered Buildings   
Open Space  Woodland  Residential  Agricultural  Village   
Industrial  Downtown Commerical  Highway Commercial  Other

SIGNIFICANCE:

Home of Harry Fenn, a water color artist of English birth who lived in Montclair before the turn of the century. Fenn made an extended tour of the U. S. in 1870 to gather material for a book, "Picturesque America", which was followed up with a tour of Europe for "Picturesque Europe." He was a popular member of the Montclair Artists Colony and for further information see #284 Park Street.

The house has received considerable attention from architectural historians and writers alike. George W. Sheldon, the author of Artistic Country Seats, published in 1886, wrote that above the porch the following words were written in Old English lettering, "This house was built in 1884".

Professor Arnold Lewis, from the College of Wooster in Ohio, presently preparing a revised edition of Sheldon's book for Dover Press, was pleased to know from "Preservation Montclair" that the house is still extant. The "Building News" of London published an article on the house in its edition of Dec. 8, 1885.

ORIGINAL USE: Residence  
PHYSICAL CONDITION: Excellent  Good  Fair  Poor   
REGISTER ELIGIBILITY: Yes  Possible  No  Part of District   
THREATS TO SITE: Roads  Development  Zoning  Deterioration   
No Threat  Other

COMMENTS:

REFERENCES:

Robinson, E. Atlas of Essex County, New York: E. Robinson, 1890. (#177 Upper Mountain Ave., original location).

Franklin Survey Company, Atlas of Montclair, Glen Ridge, Cedar Grove & Verona, 1933 (present location).

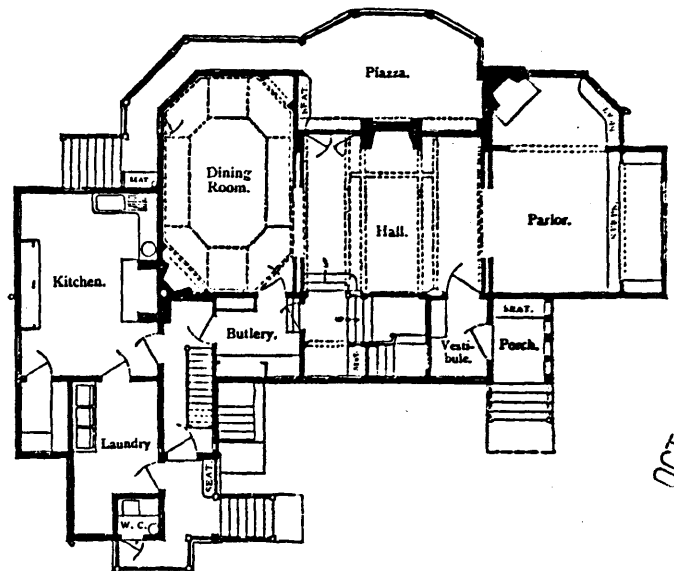
RECORDED BY: Eleanor Price  
ORGANIZATION: Preservation Montclair

DATE: 5/12/81



1. Harry Fenn residence, Montclair, N.J.; H. Edwards Ficken, architect, 1884. In 1885 the *Magazine of Art* (London) published an article about this house, recently completed for the watercolorist and illustrator Harry Fenn. There were two reasons for this article. For one thing, Fenn was well known in England. Born in Richmond, Surrey, in 1838, he settled in the United States in 1857 but retained close ties with his native country, where his sketches were seen frequently in the popular magazines of the day and also in several books, among them *Picturesque America* and *Picturesque Europe*. Secondly, the journal used the opportunity to acknowledge the rising quality of American architecture. "Now, although the younger architects of America, as might be expected of men who have broken with tradition, have quite generally fallen into an unchastened, mongrel style, full of affectations and overladen with bad ornament, still this much may be said for them, that they have almost as generally sought to secure comfort and convenience as well as a picturesque outline, and a warm and harmonious scheme of colour as well as an abundance of rather cheap decoration." Fenn's house, standing today at 208 North Mountain Avenue, probably appealed to British readers because of its half-timbered work and its colors—dark clapboards and stained cypress shingles. The British usually reacted negatively to the "chilly" white so popular for framed houses. According to the contract, the cost of the residence, exclusive of interior decoration, was only \$8,250. This view shows the approach to the house with the servants' stairway to the left and the principal entrance to the right. Rarely were these two entrances placed so close to one another or the servants' stairway so visible from the public side of a house. The far side contained a piazza and several balconies from which one could see Coney Island as well as the highlands of the Hudson River. Under the gambrel roof of the attic floor was Fenn's studio. The sleeping floor consisted of six bedrooms, a bathroom, sewing room and linen closet. The dining room, hall and parlor were spacious rooms with wide openings between them, enabling visitors to appreciate the delicate or-

chestration of room colors—light salmon, cream and warm gray, respectively. Fenn decorated these rooms with objects collected during his frequent travels—white Delft and Moorish platters, Nankin blue-and-white porcelain, drawings by Burne-Jones, gilt leather from Japan, a chest dated 1639 found in a barn in England. Ficken's career is not well documented. A native of London who was educated at Greenock Academy in Scotland, he practiced in New York City for about 50 years and died there in January, 1927. In 1883 he designed a new store for Van Tine & Co., Japanese importers, which may account for the Japanese-influenced woodwork of the Fenn house.



OCT 1 1906

Thematic listing: Buildings Associated  
With the Montclair Artists Colony  
Montclair Multiple Resource listing

(0713 - 372)  
208 North Mountain Av

7-159

JANUARY, 1886

THE  
MAGAZINE  
OF ART

ILLUSTRATED

CASSELL & COMPANY, LIMITED  
73 & 74, BROADWAY, NEW YORK  
LONDON PARIS

35 CENTS

ENTERED AT THE POST OFFICE AT NEW YORK, N.Y. AS SECOND CLASS MATTER

## ARTISTS' HOMES.

MR. HARRY FENN'S, AT MONTCLAIR, NEW JERSEY.

A SANGUINE New Yorker, speculating on the future of his city, will generally refer to the Orange Hills in New Jersey as its natural boundary towards the south-west. The slopes of this range, he thinks, and the rolling country just beyond them to the upper course of Passaic river, will yet be occupied by a rich and populous suburb. There

hours; when one considers, too, that the city itself is barely out of sight, its position being indicated by the towers of the Brooklyn Bridge, which are visible on a clear day from several of the Orange summits, it hardly seems improper to speak of the district as being, even now, a suburb of New York.

This nearness of the city on the one hand, and to



THE COTTAGE, NORTH AND SOUTH.

are already in this quarter so many pleasant villages and scattered residences, that the idea is not without a colour of probability. Looking from the crest of the hills towards New York, one sees the great plain, through which the Hackensack and the Passaic glide, already so thickly sprinkled with dwellings that the confines of the cities of New York and Elizabeth and Jersey City are hardly recognisable from this distance. When one considers that those cities themselves are but adjuncts of New York, and that a large part of the male population of the country as far as the eye can reach is composed of men who are New Yorkers during business

unspoiled nature on the other, has made the district a favourite sketching-ground with New York artists, and several of them have, at one time or another, resided there. There is no telling how often these dells and crags, these meadows and apple orchards, foregrounds rich with wild flowers and bits of faint blue distance, have been painted. Quite a long list it would be that should contain the names of all who have visited them, season after season, with crayon or brush. And a conspicuous place on it would be that which should belong to Mr. Harry Fenn. Through the medium of the illustrated magazines everybody has been made familiar with his drawings.

OCT 1 1906

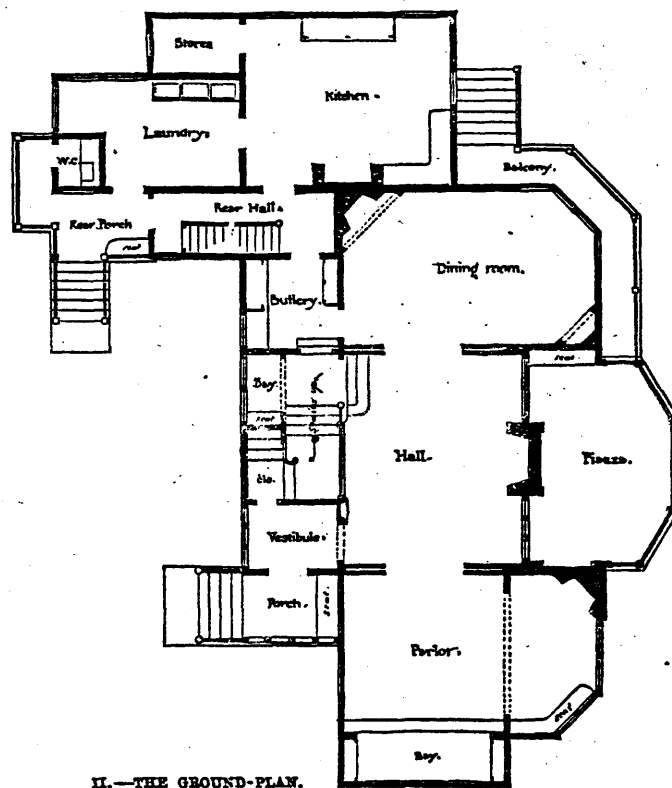
It is needless, therefore, to say anything more about them than, simply, that their subjects have been taken more often from the neighbourhood of the Orange Hills than from any other locality. The old mills, the streams fringed with willows, the spring bloom of the orchards, and the autumn fields full of golden-rod and purple asters and scarlet sumach, have laid hold on him more firmly than on Bolles or Drake or Moran, perhaps his foremost rivals. Hence, no doubt, it is that, after having travelled extensively, in America and out of it, he has returned to the Orange Hills to make there his home.

With this project in his mind, it is not strange that, of all the many changes which had taken place during his absence, none should have made such an impression on him as those connected with the progress of American domestic architecture. There are few who, like him, have recently spent some time abroad, who have not remarked this change. And, although improvement is less evident in private than in public buildings, though the drawbacks such as accompany every change are most perceptible in modern country houses, still, even in these, great progress is visible. The older country residences along the Atlantic sea-board are, in many respects, well adapted to the climate, and not insusceptible of artistic decoration. They are, however, better adapted for summer than for winter weather, and it is difficult to supply the colour and the appearance of comfort demanded by modern taste without detracting from their somewhat Quakerish elegance. One fresh from European experiences can hardly but feel that the beauty of colonial mouldings and carvings has been somewhat exaggerated, while a uniform coat of white or grey paint, indoors and out, is apt to strike him as rather chilly in effect. The common disposition of the main hall, wider than in England, adds unnecessarily to the discomfort to be experienced in an old-fashioned American

house in front to cold air be mo. double doors and at a considerable expense for fuel. Now, although the younger architects of America, as might be expected of men who have broken with tradition, have quite generally fallen into an unchastened, mongrel style, full of affectations and overladen with bad ornament, still this much may be said for them, that they have almost as generally sought to secure comfort and convenience as well as a picturesque outline, and a warm and harmonious scheme of colour as well as an abundance of rather cheap decoration. Here and there, indeed, common sense and good taste have so far prevailed, that only a carping criticism can find much to decry. It is because it belongs to the smaller class, and may afford a good idea of what American architects are aiming at in domestic design, that it has been thought well to give here a description of Mr. Fenn's house, illustrated by drawings furnished by himself.

Like most American country houses, alas! the building is wooden. We Americans have hardly, as yet, arrived at the stone age. As will be seen by reference to our illustration (I.), it has two main storeys, with a basement and a roomy attic. The two views here given show the house to be as picturesque as it is really desirable it should be, standing, as it does, among such picturesque surroundings. But a comparison of them with

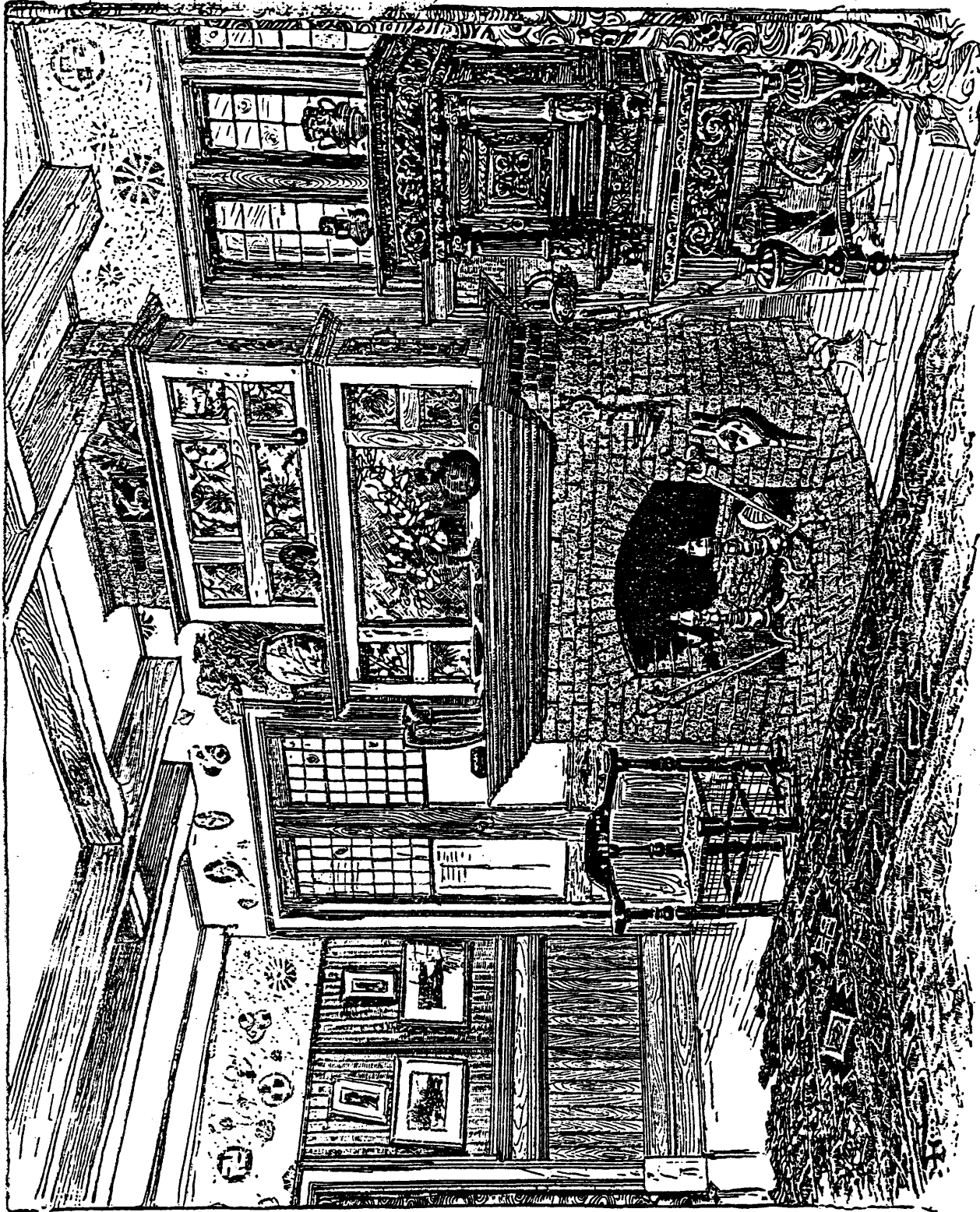
the ground-plan (II.) will show that its interesting projections and recesses result logically from the most convenient possible disposition of the space to be roofed in. Considering that, in the American climate, the piazza is as important as the chimney, a happier disposition can hardly be imagined. You enter by a porch sheltered on two sides by the building itself, and on the third and fourth by the rising slope of the hill and by a skilfully arranged screen of evergreens. The roof of this porch makes one



II.—THE GROUND-PLAN.

1585  
DCT

shows the you immediate entrance to parlour and dining-room,  
it com- piazza and staircase. The roof above the hall rises



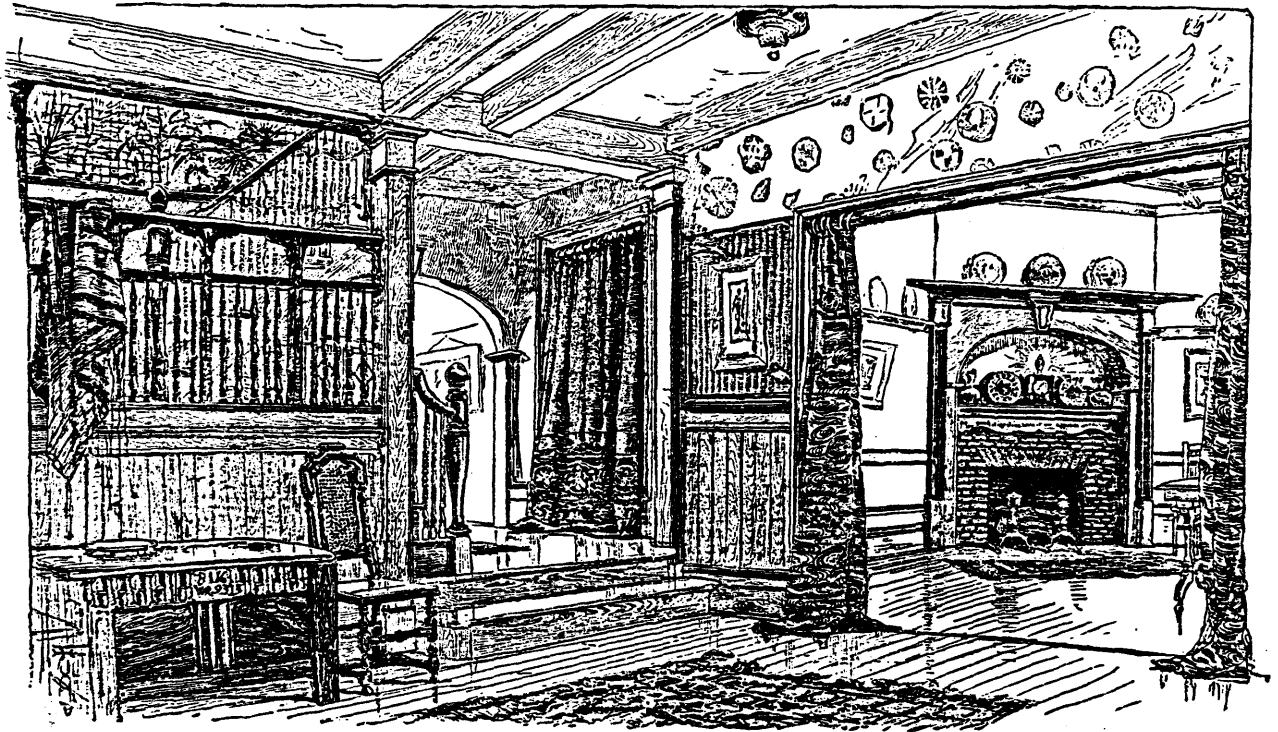
III.—THE HALL, FIREPLACE.

municates. From the vestibule you advance into higher than that of any other portion of the build-  
the square hall (III.), which, as a hall should, gives ing; and is further distinguished by the turret-like

OCT 1 1905

cap of the two-storeyed piazza, which is really an adjunct of it. The attic under this roof is Mr. Fenn's studio, and the space under the cap of the tower is utilised for storing canvases, &c. Exteriously, the woodwork of the cottage is painted a dark brown; the plastered surfaces, plainly indicated in the drawing, have, unfortunately, been disturbed by some meaningless incised forms, intended as ornament; but these may be easily covered up by a fresh coat of plaster. Some vines, which have

here a light salmon colour; and a frieze is simulated by placing, on a narrow shelf, a row of blue-and-white Delft and Spanish-Moorish platters. A few fine pieces of old Nankin blue-and-white porcelain may be admired on the mantelshelf of the dining-room; and a number of prints in red ink, after drawings by Mr. Burne Jones, occupy the remainder of the wall-space. The drawing-room is mostly in warm greys, corresponding with the Japanese *portière* with its pattern of waves and tortoises in black



IV.—THE HALL, LOOKING INTO THE DINING-ROOM.

only just been planted, will eventually hide a good part of the exterior surface in any case; and their fresh green will make an acceptable contrast with the brown and grey of the building.

The colour-effect of the interior is already all that could be wished for. Much of it is undoubtedly due to the artistic arrangement of Mr. Fenn's choice though small collection of *bric-à-brac*, and to the draperies of doors and windows. But, as it left the hands of the architect, Mr. Ficken, it must have appeared a pleasant and inviting interior. The wainscoting of the hall, its ceiling, and the woodwork of the stairs are of Georgia pine varnished to a fine golden hue, which strikes the keynote for all the three principal rooms. The wall above the wainscoting is a cream tint, with panelling of yellowish matting. In the dining-room (iv.) this last is replaced by the painted surface of the wall,

and white, and with the window of opalescent glass, and bookcases curtained with Japanese brocade. The unplastered brick of the hall chimney should be remembered when forming a conception of the harmony of warm, subdued tones furnished by the architect, to which Mr. Fenn has added little but blue and green and gold, his share of the decoration culminating in the tail of a magnificent stuffed peacock, which depends from its perch on the staircase window-sill. The over-mantel, as shown in the drawing, is in stamped and gilt Japanese leather.

The upper rooms are all in the same light golden-yellow tone; but each has its individual effect, due to its outlook or to its decoration, or to both. From a railed platform on the roof of the wing which contains the offices and the servants' rooms, a view may be had almost as wide as that from the summit of the neighbouring hill.

R. RIORDAN.

OCT 1 1906