

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: <b>New Jersey</b>
COUNTY: <b>Mercer</b>
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE <b>MAR 28 1974</b>

H/B  
 2/19  
 N 4457150  
 E 540340

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**1. NAME**

COMMON: **Samuel Sloan House**

AND/OR HISTORIC:

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER: **238 South Main Street**

CITY OR TOWN: **Hightstown** CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:

STATE: **New Jersey** CODE: **34** COUNTY: **Mercer** CODE: **021**

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

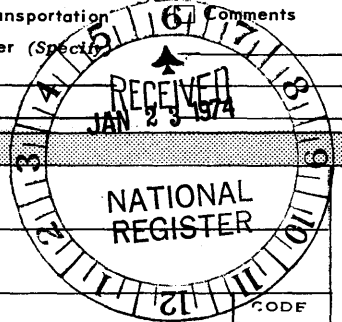
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious		
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific		

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME: **Miss Josephine Dawes**

STREET AND NUMBER: **238 South Main Street**

CITY OR TOWN: **Hightstown** STATE: **New Jersey** CODE: **34**



**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: **Mercer County Courthouse**

STREET AND NUMBER: **209 So. Broad St.**

CITY OR TOWN: **Trenton** STATE: **New Jersey** CODE: **34**

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY: **New Jersey Historic Sites Inventory**

DATE OF SURVEY: **1972**  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: **Historic Sites Office, Department of Environmental Protection**

STREET AND NUMBER: **P. O. Box 1420, John Fitch Plaza**

CITY OR TOWN: **Trenton** STATE: **New Jersey** CODE: **34**

STATE: <b>New Jersey</b>
COUNTY: <b>Mercer</b>
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY NUMBER
DATE <b>MAR 28 1974</b>

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This is a two-story, plus attic, frame house of cross-shaped plan. The most striking exterior features are a broad piazza, surrounding three sides of the front "arm" of the cross, a square cupola, flat-roofed, as is the entire house, and the flat board frieze of the attic story, punctuated by elongated octagonal windows and elaborately curved brackets hung with onion drops.

The house might be best described as Carpenter Italianate. It combines the impressive and simple massing usually associated with the Italian villa, with fanciful eclectic detail and jigsaw carpentry. Jigsaw fretwork trims the frieze, the cupola roof edge, the window entablatures and the piazza roofs. Fluted pilasters edge the corners of the building mass, and the motif is repeated on the porch pillars. Bracketed and festooned with drops, their capitals are free adaptations of Corinthian models. The balusters of the piazza, which has been enlarged with semi-circular ends, are bulbous classical vase shapes.

The windows are four over four with thick center muntins; at the front, along the piazza, they are French windows. The doorway, recessed in the wall, is bracketed and paneled, with a simple rectangular transom.

The cross plan, with one large room occupying each arm is similar to the plan of the house shown in Design XXVIII in Sloan's City and Suburban Architecture. The published house differs, however, in the location of its main entry at the side, and in having only two bays across the projecting front.

The detailing of the interior is rather modest, consisting of simple, but attractive, round-headed fireplaces, under-window panels, heavily paneled doors and tubular cove moldings.

Several old photographs in the possession of the present owner show the house in various-multi-colored exterior paint schemes.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



**2. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian |  16th Century |  18th Century |  20th Century  
 15th Century |  17th Century |  19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **1856-1859**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political           | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science             | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture           | _____  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater             | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            |   |  |  |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Samuel Sloan House is a rare surviving example of a dwelling related to "pattern book architecture" with a documented association with the architect-author of several of the most influential of these treatises.

The emergence of a national American architecture in the nineteenth century was made possible largely through the wide dissemination of changes in style via publication. The Federal and Classic Revival styles were popularized by Benjamin, Biddle, Haviland, Lafever and others. In much the same way the mid-century revival styles were brought to attention through the published works of A.J. Downing, A. J. Davis and Samuel Sloan. In particular, Sloan was responsible for making generally available designs in the Italianate style, in his version characterized not only by bold and impressive massing, but by a frilling of elaborate carpentry more usually associated with the Gothic Revival. Sloan's designs appeared frequently in the late 1850s in Godey's Lady's Book and were collected in several books appearing in the 1850s and '60s (see bibliography).

The best-known extant work executed from these published designs is Longwood in Natchez, Mississippi. In this case, Sloan himself superintended execution of the design (albeit largely by mail from Philadelphia), as attested by the Nutt papers in the Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

A far more usual approach was the modification of the architect's "ideal" design according to the whims of the client and the abilities of the local contractor. The house in Hightstown, despite its association with Sloan himself, is typical rather of this latter category.

Attribution to Sloan is largely based on his ownership of the property, purchased on July 19, 1856, from John C. Ward. Furthermore, a loose piece of millwork survives in the house, inscribed in pencil in a mid-nineteenth century hand, "Samuel Sloan Hights Town."

(continued)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Harold N. Coledge, Jr., "A Sloan Check List," JSAH, XIX (Mar 1960), 34-38.  
 Sloan Samuel, City and Suburban Architecture (Philadelphia, 1859).  
 \_\_\_\_\_ The Model Architect (Philadelphia, 1852).  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Constructive Architecture (Philadelphia, 1866).

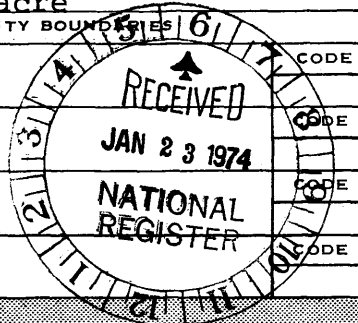
**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		40° 15' 57"	74° 31' 32"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: less than one acre

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE



**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE: Channing Blake - Architectural Historian  
Constance M. Greiff - Director

ORGANIZATION: Heritage Studies DATE: 1971

STREET AND NUMBER: 17 Clover Lane

CITY OR TOWN: Princeton STATE: New Jersey CODE: 34

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name: Richard Sullivan  
 Title: Commissioner, Dept. of Env. Protection  
 Date: Jan. 10, 1974

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

W. R. Mortensen  
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: 3/28/74

ATTEST:

Charles Greiff  
 Keeper of The National Register

Date: 3-27-74

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE	New Jersey	
COUNTY	Mercer	
FOR NPS USE ONLY		
ENTRY NUMBER		DATE
		MAR 28 1974

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

**INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

Samuel Sloan House  
Mercer County 021  
New Jersey 034

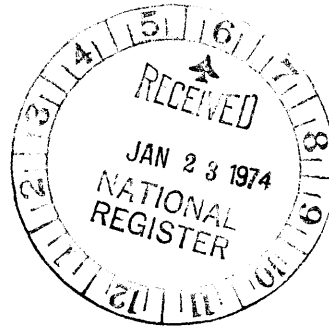
(Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

8. Significance

Evidently the years in Hightstown were not among Sloan's most successful financially, although they were extremely fruitful in terms of published designs. On February 28, 1859, the house reverted to the Central Bank of New Jersey and a Mr. Jonathan E. McChesney.

It was acquired by the family of the present owner in the 1880's and has been maintained in excellent condition.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

PROPERTY NAME: Sloan, Samuel, House

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: NEW JERSEY, Mercer

DATE RECEIVED: 1/23/97 DATE OF PENDING LIST:  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: DATE OF 45TH DAY: 3/09/97  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 74001168

NOMINATOR: STATE

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT  RETURN  REJECT 2.12.97 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

*Additional Documentation Accepted*

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept

REVIEWER GB

DISCIPLINE Historian

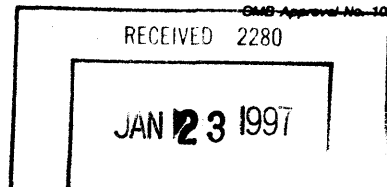
TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet



NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
NJ Mercer Co.  
Samuel Sloan House

Section number 8 Page 1

(additional documentation)

ARCHITECT/BUILDER:

- remove: Sloan, Samuel
  
- add: Dey, James B., Jr. (builder)  
Hammell, James (supplier)  
Combes, John F.R. & Co. (supplier)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Samuel Sloan House

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(additional documentation)

### The "Samuel Sloan" House 238 South Main Street

by Robert W. Craig

What was undoubtedly the finest house built in Hightstown before the Civil War still stands proudly at the northwest corner of South Main and South Streets, an elegant two-story frame house of Italianate design built in 1856 and known as the Samuel Sloan house. It has been the home of the Dawes family through most of this century, and it carries two distinctions: it is the finest example of historic preservation in Hightstown, thanks to its owner Miss Josephine Dawes, and it is the only house in Hightstown or East Windsor Township that is listed on both the New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places.

So far as is known it appears to have been the first house in town built in any of the so-called "picturesque" styles, which were beginning by the 1850s to overtake the popularity of the Greek Revival even in rural towns like Hightstown. And it is a very balanced, careful, intelligent, yet spirited composition, evidently the product of a very skilled designer--certainly one with more talent than any of the resident builders of that time have shown. It seems that it must have been the work of an out-of-town hand. But was it the work of Samuel Sloan?

Samuel Sloan (1815-1884), a Philadelphia architect with an outstanding national reputation, was one of the great masters of the Italianate style; could he have designed and built a house here? What an extraordinary stroke of luck it would have been for the town! By the middle of the 1850s he was known, both through his own completed works and by the books of designs that he published for a national audience. And he did receive some New Jersey commissions. He designed a series of 10 "Italian Villas" and the town plan for the new town of Riverton, on the Delaware, in 1851, an early Philadelphia suburb. He did some repair or remodeling work at the New Jersey Statehouse in Trenton during the decade, and he would go on to design the second New Jersey State Insane Asylum at Greystone Park, near Morristown, after the Civil War.

The house does not appear to match any of Sloan's published designs or to be derived from them, so it doesn't seem to be a "Sloan" house in that sense. But it is good enough to be by Sloan, and the mystery has been whether he designed it, and whether he had it built for



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(additional documentation)

himself. For a long time the answer has seemed to be yes, because an interior molding removed thirty years ago was found to be inscribed on the back "Samuel Sloan" "Hights Town." It was assumed that this meant Sloan the architect.

A circumstantial point that favored the Sloan-the-architect theory has been that whoever Sloan was, he was a newcomer to Hightstown. Through the 18th century and the first half of the 19th, there was no family of Sloans here. Although a John Sloan was once thought to have moved to Hightstown in the 1780s, a re-examination of the source document has shown that it was someone with another name.

Complicating the problem is Sloan, the architect, himself. His own papers were not kept intact after his death, so there is no large body of papers or drawings that would make a list of his commissions easy to compile. Even the most extensive list to date, which was published in 1987 in a biographical dictionary of Philadelphia architects, is incomplete. It does not include the Hightstown house. Sloan has also had at least one biographer, but he was unable to resolve the difficulty either.

Even so, it is now clear that, whoever designed the house, the Samuel Sloan who occupied it was not the architect. On February 27, 1855 a merchant from Upper Freehold Township named Samuel Sloan bought an existing store on the westerly side of Main Street for \$1,050 from local entrepreneurs Alfred Perrine and Benjamin Marlatt. (Mercer County Deeds [hereafter MCD], vol.31, pp.181-3) It stood on a lot 48 feet 7 inches wide and 98 feet deep that extended to the middle of Grape Run in the rear. The property was situated between John C. Ward's store lot to the south and John W. Dey's store lot to the north. Having apparently bought the property with his own funds, he mortgaged it for \$1,400 on April 19 to raise money to build a new store. (Mercer County Mortgages [hereafter MCM], vol.H, pp.448ff) He then hired James Hammell, a Trenton builder, to construct the new store. The front portion was 24 feet wide and 28 feet deep, 2 stories high, and a small rear section was only 12 feet deep. Since it was only about half the width of the lot it is unclear whether the old store was torn down, but it seems more likely that the new store was built beside the existing one.

Happiness and prosperity were not long to be Sloan's lot in Hightstown. On August 10, 1855, with his new store finished, he placed an advertisement that would run weekly in the *Village Record*, announcing his "NEW STORE, NEW GOODS! The Subscriber has completed his large and commodious Storehouse at Hightstown, 2d door above the Bank, and laid in a large stock of NEW GOODS." (VR, 8/10/1855) As perhaps an omen of things to come, though, the ad was set upside-down in the paper the first time it appeared. It also did not explain precisely

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Samuel Sloan HouseSection number 8 Page 4

(additional documentation)

what sort of goods he sold, but it did say he would accept payment only in cash or country produce bartered at local market rates, rates which were published in the paper. In January 1856, the *Village Record*, offering some free publicity, noted that Sloan had presented the editor with "one of Kinnear's Patent Lamps, for the sale of which he is the only agent in this place. They are manufactured in the neighboring village of Cranberry [sic], by W.M. Fulton, and are calculated for burning oil, lard, or even kitchen grease.... Call at Sloan's and get one of these lamps." (VR, 1/18/1856) Would Sloan later install these lamps in his house?

Another brief setback would occur two months later, when Hammell evidently did not pay a subcontractor on the store construction job, Jonathan Smith. Smith filed a mechanic lien against Hammell for this project on March 21, 1856, claiming he was owed \$194.30 for labor and materials (see Mercer County Mechanic Liens [hereafter ML], vol. A, pp.31, 43). Apparently Sloan was not involved in this dispute financially, but he apparently became dissatisfied with Hammell, whom he evidently did not choose to build his house.

It would be over nine months before Sloan placed his second ad, which gave more specifics. In May 1856, he again advertised his "New Cash and Produce Store" as the place to go for "the best selected stock of fancy dress goods ever offered in this place," as well as shawls, parasols, fans, a "large assortment of Gentlemen's Summer Goods," boots and shoes, hats and caps, crockery ware, "groceries of all kinds," fancy cloth fabrics, and much more. (VR, 5/23/1856) But by now he had growing competition. There were other grocery stores in town, and new merchants also came to town that year to specialize in the fancier types of goods that Sloan sold. A month before, G.E. & R. Barker announced their new store specializing in clothing and fancy goods, opposite the Baptist Church. (VR, 4/11/1856) That September, E.W. Cutter, announced that he was about to open a new clothing store at No.5 Stockton St., Hightstown, N.J., "with a large and splendid assortment... selected with great care from the best houses in Philadelphia and New York, and suitable for the Fall Trade, consisting of Dress, Frock and Over Coats... Doeskin, ... Cassimere... Velvet... Silk... Satin... all made in the most elegant manner...." (VR, 9/5/1856) In October, Charles Sax announced the opening of his new clothing and furnishing store "in Maine [sic] street, three doors north of the Central Bank." (VR, 10/10/1856) Sloan also had to compete in similar lines with John Butcher and with George W. Coward & Co., with C.W. Mount in hats, boots, and shoes, and with James Paxton in groceries and variety goods. (VR, 2/13/1857)

But Hightstown was growing, times were good, and Sloan turned attention to providing a suitable place for his family to live. He was 40 years old in 1856, and with his wife Catherine Ann, they already had at least four children; in 1850 their household also included a clerk

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(additional documentation)

apprentice and perhaps a servant girl.(1850 U.S. Census) On July 19, 1856, he bought nearly half an acre on the west side of South Main Street from John C. Ward. The purchase price was \$670.50, an indication that the land was an empty lot in a good location.(MCD, vol.39, pp.91ff) The deed also mentioned the existence of South Street, which must have been only recently opened. Ward took back a purchase-money mortgage for \$600 to finance the sale.(MCM, vol.I, pp.430-431) By the end of July workmen were already started on the house. By late September, the local editor reported "Mr. Sloan is erecting a dwelling house on the upper [i.e. south] end of Maine street, which promises to be a very pretty and attractive building. The style differs materially from the other buildings in that part of town."(VR, 9/26/1856) He could have said *any* part of town. By those who were building it and would not get paid, it was described as "a two-story frame dwelling house fronting twenty-five feet in width by thirty-six feet in dept[h] with a wing on each side eleven and one-half feet in width by sixteen feet in depth, the whole having a finished attic and a two-story kitchen and wash house in the rear twenty-four feet in depth by twenty-one feet in width and a frame barn twenty feet in width by thirty feet in depth..." (ML, vol.A, p.40) This brief description says nothing about the impressive front porch or the high quality of the trim and architectural millwork, or the beautiful cupola (actually a "lantern") that crowns the roof. It was, apparently, Hightstown's first house in the Italianate style. It was so unexpectedly fancy that according to oral tradition that has come down through the Dawes family, some people took to calling it "Sloan's folly."(Josephine Dawes, personal communication) The Sloan family were already occupying it by April 1857.(MCM, vol.K, p.79)

Sloan was becoming overextended, and he would not be able to fully pay for his house. It may never be known who performed each role in its construction, but some of the players are known from the mechanic liens that would be filed against Sloan later. Hammell was involved again, evidently this time only furnishing materials. He filed a claim against Sloan on July 28, 1857 for \$141.00 that he stated was due him for materials used in Sloan's house. Local merchants Jacob Early and William W. Taylor, whose lumber and coal yard was right next to the railroad freight depot, filed against Sloan on September 8, 1857 for \$125.74 in materials. They provided some of the lumber for its construction. John F.R. Combes & Co., another supplier, filed on September 12th for \$105.34. But Combes & Co. filed against both Sloan and "David D. Dye," [sic] indicating that Sloan owned the property but that Dye had contracted for the debt. This was an indication that Dye was acting as the contractor, and that he, not Sloan, had placed the order with Combes. Combes was from outside the area, and it is not clear what building products he furnished. Lastly, David B. Dey Jr. filed on September 25th. He was evidently the "Dye" that Combes & Co. had named. Dey claimed that Sloan had not paid him a whopping \$571.39, for labor.(ML, vol. A, pp. 40, 42, 44, 48-49)

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NJ Mercer Co.  
Samuel Sloan House

Section number 8 Page 6

(additional documentation)

Unfortunately none of the bills of particulars that accompanied the filing of these claims have survived.

The large labor claim indicates that Dey was the builder, a fact that he would confirm in court later. But did he originate the design? No evidence one way or the other has been found, but builders often bought and executed fancy designs from out-of-town architects, and this one has the look of an architect-designed house. The growth of Hightstown had reached a remarkable pace in the mid-1850s, even if it only lasted a brief time. It was a propitious moment to launch a new style. Architects were beginning to notice possibilities in Hightstown. The year 1857 saw the construction of three churches, one of which brought a new and talented architect/builder to live here, Thomas Tibbs, who built the Presbyterian Church. And in July 1857 an even more talented Trenton architect, Charles Graham, began advertising his services in the *Village Record*.(VR, 7/31/1857) But we have no reason to think that either of them designed the Sloan house, and no one knows who did.

Meanwhile, Sloan's financial troubles became apparent to everyone in 1857. That year, as his house was being finished, the economy of the United States went into a short, but steep, depression. Although the construction costs he had to bear together with the increased competition he faced might, by themselves, have been enough to bankrupt Sloan, the coincidence of the economic downturn could only have made things worse. By April 1857, perhaps in an effort to save his business, he took on a partner, Andrew A. Gaddis, and changed the firm name to Sloan & Gaddis. (Gaddis, probably another newcomer to Hightstown, lived in a large, new, rented house on Mercer Street that was owned by John Butcher.) On April 10th, he re-mortgaged his house and store properties, obtaining an unspecified, large amount of money for them from the Central Bank of New Jersey, Hightstown's only commercial lending institution. But the loans were all short-term, and Sloan's finances continued to sink. His business collapsed later that summer, and the *Village Record* of August 7, 1857, contained a large ad announcing the liquidation sale of Sloan's store goods. In weeks the store would be closed. In November the paper announced that Sloan & Gaddis's account books were in the hands of a receiver, P.F. Slack, who was authorized to collect payments and to pay creditors, and to finish the job by the end of the year.(VR, 11/27/1857)

After the filing of the mechanic liens, the bank had no choice but to foreclose. On September 17, 1857, it filed a bill of complaint against Sloan in the New Jersey Chancery Court in Trenton.(NJ Chancery Court Docket, vol.3, p.407) \*The litigation would stretch on well into the following year, as the court waited for months for Sloan's creditors to file their answers to

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(additional documentation)

the Bank's bill of complaint. The outcome was understood by all long before the final decision was rendered. Sloan tried but could not overcome his financial problems. The sale in August of the business property of Sloan and Gaddis brought in \$3,000, which was turned over to the bank as a partial payment. (Central Bank of N.J. v. Samuel Sloan et al., 1857, NJ Chancery Court papers, NJSA [hereafter Bank v. Sloan]) In November 1857, after his store closed, he obtained a position as a purchaser for the New York firm T.W. Lord, which bought agricultural products wholesale, including potatoes, poultry, pork, and other produce. (VR, 11/27/1857) It was a job, but one that was not lucrative enough for him to keep his house. He was too far into debt and had already defaulted on his mortgage.

Sloan's motivations may never be known, but he not only lost the house, he apparently forfeited any sympathy or good will the community might have had for him. According to the *Hightstown Excelsior* newspaper, the town awoke on Monday morning, April 25, 1858 to find Sloan's house trashed:

**"THE INTERIOR OF A HOUSE REMOVED:**

On Monday morning last our usually quiet borough was thrown into undue excitement by the announcement that the interior fixtures of the house lately occupied by Samuel Sloan had been seriously mutilated, and numerous sashes, doors, marble mantles, locks, shelves &c., removed to parts unknown. The property in question was in possession of Mr. Sloan, who had removed therefrom about the first of last April [1858], although it was shortly to be sold by the sheriff of Mercer to satisfy numerous debts contracted by said Sloan.-- Suspicion rests strongly upon the only person who could [have] had access to the building [ie. Sloan], and the unanimous wish of our inhabitants is that speedy justice will overtake him. Verily Pride and poverty are bad companions." (HE, 4/29/1858)

The item implies that Sloan, himself, had also removed to parts unknown. Sadly, the Sloans were in the house for only about a year when they left it. The editor went back the following week to view the scene, and he reported extensive damage on both the first and second floors, with a great deal of what was salvageable removed. (HE, 5/6/1858) After this incident, the local papers wrote no more of his activities, and his whereabouts after that date remain unknown. It is not even clear from the court record whether he or Gaddis showed up in court.

The bank's lawsuit against Sloan was finally concluded in the aftermath of the vandalism. It was decided in the bank's favor in mid-June 1858. It featured testimony by Robert E.

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(additional documentation)

Morrison, the president of the bank, and by witnesses for the several claimants. Morrison brought into evidence the seven promissory notes that the bank held, given and signed by Sloan and Gaddis. William Roszel of East Windsor appeared as a witness for Dey, telling the court that he was a carpenter in Dey's employ and that he did some of the work on the Sloan house and barn. He confirmed that Early and Taylor had furnished some of the lumber. (Bank v. Sloan) And John Evans, of Trenton, appeared as a witness for John Hammell. He told the court that he had worked for Hammell in the summer and fall of 1856, doing mostly shop work, making "sash, doors, mouldings, and such like," and indicating that he performed some of the work and made some of the Sloan entries in Hammell's daybook. (Bank v. Sloan) Thus it appears likely that Evans may have made and Hammell delivered at least some of the fancy interior moldings that were installed in Sloan's house. The fact that one of them was marked on the back with both Sloan's name and the name "Hights Town" means that it was shipped in from some other town or city, such as Trenton. Hammell not only lived on West Front Street in Trenton at that time, he had his carpentry shop at Fair Street, near Factory Street. (1857 Trenton city directory)

Another point in Hammell's testimony bears on the matter of who supplied woodwork for the house. Hammell told the court that he had supplied materials to Sloan until November 8, 1856. Dey, however, stated that he did not begin construction work until late September. (Bank v. Sloan) It is unclear whether the progress of construction had advanced far enough that all the interior woodwork had been ordered by that point, or whether Sloan switched to another supplier. In December 1856, Enoch Dey & Co. (any relation to David B.?) announced the opening of a steam-powered sash, blind, and door factory, Hightstown's first, which was right around the time that the interior finish woodwork of Sloan's house would have been installed. (VR, 12/19/1856)

A writ was issued by the court on July 1, 1858 ordering a sheriff's sale of the property, to be held after a two-month period elapsed to allow for advertising the property for sale. Ads were placed in the *Village Record*, describing the house as "elegant." The auction was held at Scattergood's Railroad Hotel in Hightstown on September 7th, at which time the Central Bank of New Jersey was the high bidder, offering \$6,150 for the two properties. That amount, though probably more than any other property in Hightstown Borough had sold for up to that time, even with the money previously raised by the sale of the store goods, was still \$3,746.50 less than what Sloan owed. (MCD, vol.42, pp.70-71; Bank v. Sloan)

Just before the end of the year, the bank would sell the house to Dr. Joseph E. McChesney, a prominent local physician whose brother, Dr. Charles G. McChesney, had served for more

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than a decade as New Jersey's Secretary of State. It would soon become both his house and his office, but at the time of the sale, it was still in such a condition that it would be three months before he could occupy it. As late as March 24, 1859, the editor of the *Hightstown Excelsior* newspaper would report that McChesney was still readying the former Sloan house for his family and his practice; a week later he reported that McChesney had moved into the house. (HE, 3/24, 3/31/1859) The lantern became a popular spot to climb up to; some of McChesney's children would scribble their names on the bare plaster, and over the years many other persons would also inscribe their names. The names are still there. The McChesneys kept the house until 1884, after which it passed through the Chamberlin family and then the Dawes family, which has now had the property for nearly 80 years.

But what about the hope that Samuel Sloan the architect designed this house? Should we give up completely on the idea? No. It is possible that a more exhaustive review of his early published designs may turn it up, either in the two volumes of his *The Model Architect*, or perhaps in the pages of *Godey's Lady's Book*, where he also published designs. Could there have been a distant family relationship between the two Sloans? Cousins perhaps? Maybe. But it is clear that even if the design came from Sloan, he didn't build it for himself and he never lived there. And unfortunately, with that fact, the story will inevitably lose some of its appeal.

But we must trade one mystery for another. If our Samuel Sloan was not the famous architect but only a namesake, why did he, a minor merchant whose entire career in Hightstown from beginning to end lasted only two years, build the fanciest house that the town had ever seen, then disappear to parts unknown, possibly having trashed his own creation? No doubt McChesney fitted out the house well, but because of the vandalism, we may never know what fine fixtures were removed, and never know for sure how much fancier Sloan meant for it to be.