

**TRANSACTIONS OF THE
MASSACHUSETTS HORTICULTURAL
SOCIETY FOR THE YEAR 1904. PART
I, PP. 159-202: JOHN RICHARDSON:
HIS HOUSE AND GARDEN**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649346776

Transactions of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society for the Year 1904. Part I, pp. 159-202:
John Richardson: His House and Garden by Robert Tracy Jackson

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

ROBERT TRACY JACKSON

**TRANSACTIONS OF THE
MASSACHUSETTS HORTICULTURAL
SOCIETY FOR THE YEAR 1904. PART
I, PP. 159-202: JOHN RICHARDSON:
HIS HOUSE AND GARDEN**

#

JOHN RICHARDSON: HIS HOUSE AND GARDEN

By ROBERT TRACY JACKSON
Cambridge, Mass.

REPRINTED FROM
TRANSACTIONS OF THE
MASSACHUSETTS HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY
FOR THE YEAR 1904. PART I

SB
413
1P4
J3
1904

1000



John Richardson

JOHN RICHARDSON: HIS HOUSE AND GARDEN.

BY ROBERT TRACY JACKSON, CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

Presented for publication, October, 1904.

Having been requested to prepare a notice of my friend the late Mr. John Richardson, and his garden, for the Transactions of the Society, I undertook the writing with pleasure, as it seemed that some adequate description should go on record of this remarkable man, his interesting house and garden, all now a memory only, for their material presence is a thing of the past. He was a rare old man, it was a rare old house, and a rare old garden, and it was my privilege to know them intimately.

The Olivers who in colonial times built and lived in the old Richardson, or Everett house, as it is usually called, were intimately associated with the owners of many famous old houses in Cambridge and Medford, so that some account of these houses and their owners is also given.

I would express my warm thanks to kind friends who have given me information, especially Mrs. Alonzo Prouty, a relative of Mr. Richardson's; Mrs. C. R. Howard; and Henry M. Spelman, Esq., of Cambridge, who sought in the Registry of Deeds for facts in regard to the Lowell and other lands. A list of obituary notices of Mr. Richardson, and references made use of, is given at the end of this paper.

MR. RICHARDSON AND HIS FAMILY.

The late Mr. John Richardson, well known as a skilful horticulturist, and especially known for the choice seedling peonies that he raised, was born in Boston the 19th of February 1798, and died in Dorchester the 22nd of September 1887, in the ninetieth year of his age. He was a "remarkable man. . . . whether we consider the versatility of his gifts, his extensive reading and wonderful memory, the unusual refinement of his

nature and tastes, or the uprightness of his character and the purity of his life." (Obituary notice, 3). Simple, without ostentation, he was a man of marked individuality of character, vivacious, original, of quaint personality, a gentleman of the old school in the best sense of the word; beloved by his intimates, respected by all. He left a lasting impression on those who knew him. He was very generous to charities, as attested by those who had good reason to know. One day he greeted his pastor's daughter with the words:—"I saw you coming, so brought down my purse to save the trouble of going up for it."

The accompanying portrait is from a daguerreotype taken in Dorchester, the 25th of September 1851, he being then in his fifty-fourth year. The signature, however, is from a manuscript signature written in 1887, a few months before his death. For the loan of the daguerreotype reproduced, also for access to the interesting old account books and brief diary of Mr. George Richardson, running from 1819 for some twenty-five years, and for many facts in regard to Mr. John Richardson, I am indebted to his relative, Mrs. Alonzo Prouty, who was an inmate of his household for some seventeen years.

John Richardson was of the sixth generation descended from Thomas Richardson, one of three brothers who came over from England about 1635. This branch of the family lived successively in Charlestown, Woburn and Lancaster, in that portion of the town which later became part of the town of Princeton (Vinton). John Richardson, the youngest of several children, was the son of William and Susannah Richardson, his mother's maiden name being Susannah Walker.¹ The children were, Thomas B., settled in Tiffin, Ohio, and died at the age of eighty; Nicholas Boylston, a merchant in Hayti; William, settled in Richmond, Virginia, and died at about seventy years of age; Susan Boylston, born about 1785, died 3 August 1832, aged

¹ William Richardson Jr. (son of Wm. and Esther (Joslin) Richardson) married Susannah Walker, 12 Nov. 1779. (Vital records of Princeton). Vinton says (p. 617), that William's wife was a Miles. This, Mrs. Prouty assures me, is an error. There was a lady, Mary Miles, who lived with the Richardsons, and was called Aunt Miles, though not a near relative, which perhaps, gave rise to the error; she is buried in the family lot at Forest Hills cemetery. There is no evidence for two wives.

forty-seven; Dudley, born about 1789, died 3 Nov. 1808, aged nineteen; George, born about 1796, died 16 May 1861, aged sixty-five; and John, born 1798 (from Vinton, combined with records from monument at Forest Hills cemetery, and Suffolk deeds). William Richardson, the father, came from Princeton, Mass., and was a dry goods merchant, making a special feature of silk. He lived and had his store at 65 Cornhill, on the south corner of Williams Court, colloquially known now as Pi, or Pie Alley (Figs. 5, 6). The name Cornhill was retained until 1824, when it with other parts of the same street received the name of Washington street. William Richardson appears at this location, 65 Cornhill, in conjunction with Dudley Walker, in the Boston Directories of 1796 and 1798; in directories of 1800-1816 he appears at the same location by himself, and in 1818 his son Nicholas appears at the same location and in the same business. As shown by probate records Nicholas was a partner of his father's before the latter's death. Later he went to Hayti, as above stated.

This old locality is interesting as a part of old Boston as well as the birthplace and early home of Mr. John Richardson, so that records of the sales are introduced here. They were kindly supplied to me by Mr. Spelman. Joseph Ford of Boston sold to William Richardson and Dudley Walker, merchants, both of Boston, the estate No. 65 Cornhill, 26 August 1796. (Suffolk Records, Book 184, p. 117). A sketch of the land as described in the deed is given in Fig. 6. There was a brick house on the premises and the consideration was \$7,000. Dudley Walker sold his half to William Richardson, 19 April 1800 (Book 197, p. 260). William Richardson sold to Gardiner Greene, of Boston, gentleman, on 19 December 1806, consideration \$20,000 (Book 197, p. 260). Gardiner Greene reconveyed to Richardson on 17 February 1809. William Richardson died intestate 1 December 1815. His inventory includes a mansion house, \$15,000. His heirs are not named in the probate records, but on 22 December 1819, Thomas B., William, George, Susan B., John and Nicholas B. Richardson convey to Samuel Fales (Book 266, p. 153), reciting that they are heirs at law of William Richardson, deceased. In that deed the passageway is called Williams Court; the Winthrop



FIG. 5.—From Bonner's map of Boston in 1722. "A. The Old Church, 1830" = site of the present Roger's Building. "C. Old South [Church], 1660." "E. Church of England, 1688," = King's Chapel. "K. French [Church], 1716." "a. Town House" = Old State House. "b. Governor's House." "Bishop's A[llay]" = Hawley St. since 1800. "Common St. [after 1836, and] Tremonnt St." = Tremonnt St. "Coopers A[llay since 1829 and] Mackrell L[ane]" since 1789 = Kilby St. "Hilliers L[ane]" = Brattle St. since 1820. "King St." = State St. since 1784. "Leverett L[ane]" = Congress St. since 1800. "Marlbrough St. [and] Cornhill" = Washington St. since 1824. "Pudding L[ane]" = Devonshire St. since 1784. "Queen St." = Court St. since 1784. "Rawsons L[ane]" = Bronsfield St. since 1829. Savages Court, after 1789 Williams Court, now colloquially known as F1, or Pie Alley. The entrance archway to Williams Court from Cornhill, since 1782 has been called Webster's arch and lies above the letter h, in the word Cornhill. (Change of names from Nomenclature of Streets, City of Boston, 1879. Compare Figs. 6-7.)