

## Antebellum Rockbridge Style: The Margaret Poague House



MARGARET WILSON POAGUE (1816–84) was the widow of James Alexander Poague (1800–42), whose family<sup>1</sup> had settled in the mid-18th century on a small tributary of the North (Maury) River, soon called Poagues Run. James operated a store near there on the Valley Pike, today's U.S. 11, and another store in Colliertown, where he and Margaret lived until his death in 1842. She and their four children then moved to the Poagues Run land where, about 1847, a handsome Greek Revival-style farmhouse was built for them. (The builder's name is not known.)

<sup>1</sup> The name was sometimes spelled Pogue.

*Right, the Margaret Poague House today.  
Below, east across the house toward Poagues Creek*



Both photos by Dan Pezzoni for the Virginia Department of Historic Resources



On that farm, located between Fancy Hill and Natural Bridge, she and five enslaved workers raised horses, milk cows and other cattle, sheep, and swine, and crops that included wheat, corn and oats. Margaret died in 1884 and was buried near her husband in the graveyard at Falling Spring Presbyterian Church.<sup>2</sup>

The brick house was built into a bank so that its front (northwest) elevation is two stories in height while its back elevation rises above a full basement, creating a

<sup>2</sup> *Central Presbyterian*, Richmond, July 23, 1884, p. 5.

Much of the information in this article, including the analysis of the influence of Asher Benjamin, comes from documentation included in the National Register of Historic Places, provided by J. Daniel Pezzoni, architectural historian, and Delos Hughes, the late owner, in 2007. The information on Oak Lawn is from a 1937 Works Progress Administration report by Rada Moore.



Left: Margaret Poague House, rear view today.  
Below: The Poague House in 1937, with its full-width porch. (Note the resemblance to Oak Lawn, in the sidebar below.)



three-story rear façade. The front entryway porch was truncated in the early 1900s from a full-width porch.

The interior has a center hall and a wide stair, with one large room on the southwest side of the stair and two smaller rooms on the northeast side. The plan is repeated on the second floor, although with a narrower hallway.

The mantels and other details were modeled on designs in two of Asher Benjamin's pattern books that provided designs and advice for countless builders of the day and

almost singlehandedly directed America's architectural taste toward Greek Revivalism (*The Practical House Carpenter*, 1830, and *Practice of Architecture*, 1833). In fact, as the next page shows, the Margaret Poague House provides a vivid example of Benjamin's influence.

In 2004, Delos D. Hughes, a retired professor of political science at Washington and Lee University, bought the Margaret Poague House, restored it, and donated it to W&L, which has returned it to private ownership. ■

### OAK LAWN

The Poague House shares many features with Oak Lawn, built in 1849 for Nathan Moore, in the nearby community of Fancy Hill. Oak Lawn was of brick with a stepped or molded cornice and a limestone foundation extending halfway up the basement story (notable in the photo of the rear, right).

Architectural similarities suggest that the Moore and

Poague houses were built by the same unknown builder. Oak Lawn also underwent an evolution similar to that of the Poague House. Those changes included the addition of Oak Lawn's full-façade front porch (left), with classical columns and turned balusters, probably in the early 20th century, when the Poague House front porch was also remodeled.

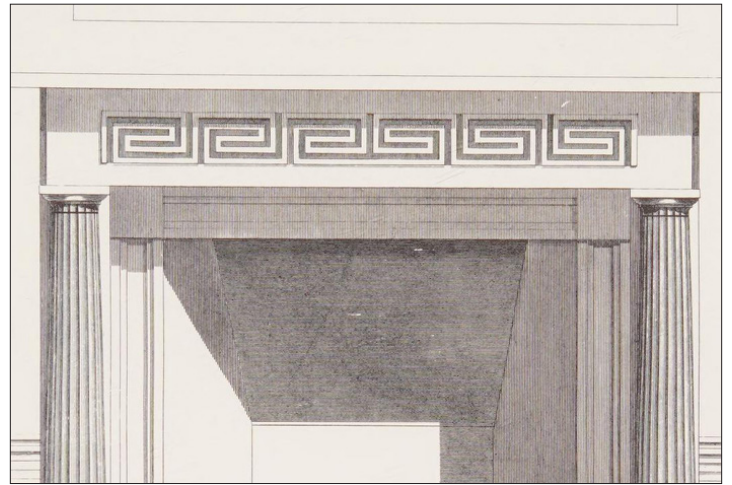


# HOW A LEADING 19TH-CENTURY ARCHITECT'S PATTERN BOOKS INFLUENCED LIVING SPACES IN ROCKBRIDGE COUNTY

Three photos by Dan Pezzoni for  
Virginia Department of Historic Resources



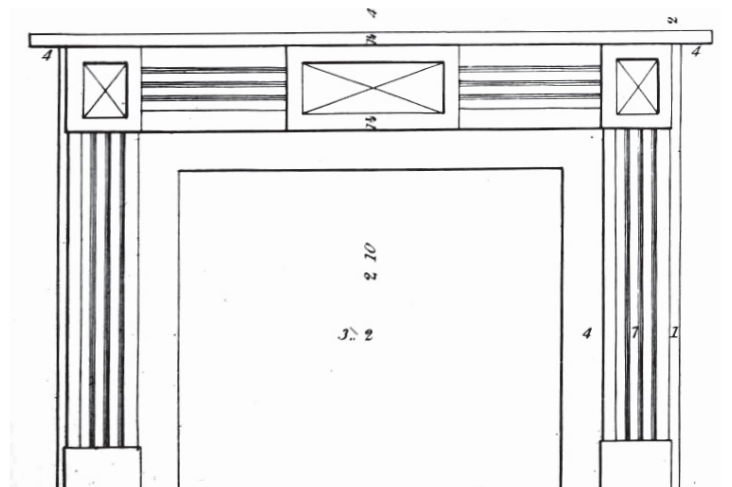
*Poague House,  
parlor mantel*



*Plate in The Architect, or Practical House Carpenter,  
written and illustrated by Asher Benjamin, 1830*



*Poague House,  
main floor, east room mantel*



*Plate in Practice of Architecture,  
written and illustrated by Asher Benjamin, 1833*



*Poague House, transom  
and front door, left*

*Plate in  
Practical House Carpenter,  
right*

