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DESCRIPTION OF THE NEW ENGLAND HISTORIC, GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY'S HOUSE.

By the Rev. EDMUND F. SLAFTER, A.M.

[From the Preface to the Hon. Charles H. Bell's Dedication Discourse, Boston, 1871.]



grayish sandstone, while the heavy caps of the windows and doors, and other trimmings, are of sandstone from Nova Scotia. Over the entrance is inscribed:—

NEW ENGLAND
HISTORIC, GENEALOGICAL
SOCIETY.

There are three rooms on the first floor : the one in front is occupied at present as a reception-room, where members of the Society may meet for consultation and general conversation ;* in the rear of this is the Directors' Room, where they hold their monthly meetings and where the officers prepare their correspondence. It is furnished with desks, cases and drawers for their convenience. These two rooms have white marble fire-places, with grates for open fires. The extension, nineteen and a half by eleven feet in the clear, is constructed into a Fire-proof Room. It has double walls of brick ; the floor and ceiling are also of brick and cement arched upon iron girders of great strength, capable of resisting falling walls or timbers in case of fire. It is furnished with shelves and a hundred and twenty-one drawers for receiving the rare books and manuscripts belonging to the Society.

* This room is now shelved and used entirely for pamphlets.—EDITOR.



On the second floor there are also three rooms: one over the entrance hall, and another over the Fire-proof Room, both used for the reception and arrangement of books and pamphlets; the third has an area of forty by twenty feet, and contains that part of the library which is in most constant use. The entire walls are lined with glazed cases of black walnut, in which the books are protected from dust. It is furnished with tables and desks for the convenience of those who may resort to the library for historical investigation. This room is known as the Library.

The third and fourth stories of the original structure are thrown into one, and the whole area is occupied as a hall for the public meetings of the Society. It is agreeably lighted from the roof and by windows in front and in the rear. A gallery, approached by an iron stairway, extends around the entire hall. The walls above the gallery are lined throughout with shelves, which are filled with books less frequently called for. A dais rises at the east end of the hall, which is occupied on public occasions by the president and other officers of the Society, and the readers of historical papers. The cellar is dry and commodious for storage, and contains a large furnace from which heat is conveyed to every part of the building. All the rooms throughout the house are furnished with gas-fixtures and chandeliers, by which abundant light is furnished whenever it is needed for reading or writing. The cost of the property, including the reconstruction of the house and its adaptation to the purposes of the Society, has been over FORTY-THREE THOUSAND DOLLARS.

[An elaborate and carefully prepared history of the Society's estate, in Somerset street, from the first settlement of Boston to the present time, by the Rev. Mr. Slafter, will be found in the appendix to his "Quarter Century Discourse," delivered before the society on the 18th of March, 1870, pages 43 to 47.

The Society's House is on the west side of Somerset street, midway between Ashburton place and Allston street, and is numbered eighteen. In the adjoining house, the late Rear-Admiral Charles H. Davis, U.S.N. (*ante*, xxxi. 340) was born, the two houses having been built in 1805, by his father, the Hon. Daniel Davis, solicitor general of the commonwealth of Massachusetts. Nearly opposite, on the east side of the street, stands the house in which the Hon. James Lloyd entertained Lafayette as his guest in 1825. It is now a public house known as the "Somerset." A short distance north, on the east side of the street and numbered 37, is a house in which Daniel Webster at one time resided. On the same street, not far distant to the south, will be found the edifice erected, and, till within a few years occupied, by the First Baptist Church; and the Congregational House, in which *The Congregationalist* and *The Literary World* are published, and the Congregational Library and various societies are located. Other objects of interest in this vicinity are noticed in Drake's "Old Landmarks of Boston," pp. 362-6.—EDITOR.]

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