



John Jay Homestead State Historic Site is one of six state historic sites and twelve parks administered by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation—Taconic Region. For information about tours of the historic house, school programs, and special events held throughout the year, please contact:

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The Friends of John Jay Homestead, a not-for-profit organization, was founded in 1977 to increase public appreciation and awareness of John Jay Homestead State Historic Site and to supplement the work of New York State by providing funding and volunteer assistance for John Jay Homestead's preservation, restoration, and interpretation.

The Friends have subsidized important building and landscape restoration projects in recent years, raising funds through special events like the annual Barn Dance and the Homestead Country Fair. For membership and event information, please contact:



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JOHN JAY HOMESTEAD STATE HISTORIC SITE AND
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John Jay Homestead State Historic Site **GUIDE TO THE GROUNDS**



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE: On pages 6-7 of this booklet you will find a map, marked with points of interest around the property. These building and landscape features are discussed in the numbered entries that begin on the next page. As you walk around the grounds, you will also encounter outdoor interpretive signs that explain important areas. Please note that these interpretive signs and buildings on the site have identification numbers which do not correspond to the numbers used in this guide. At the back of this booklet is a guide to significant trees and a map showing their locations.

JOHN JAY HOMESTEAD STATE HISTORIC SITE

John Jay (1745–1829), one of America’s principal Founding Fathers, retired to his farm near Bedford, New York in 1801, after 27 years of distinguished public service. Jay had co-authored the Treaty of Paris, which ended the Revolutionary War, and the Federalist Papers, which aided ratification of the U.S. Constitution. He served as President of the Continental Congress, U.S. Secretary for Foreign Affairs, first Chief Justice of the United States, and second governor of New York State. During many years of devoted service to the State and the Nation, he looked forward to the day when he would retire with his wife and children to “the house on my farm in Westchester County...”

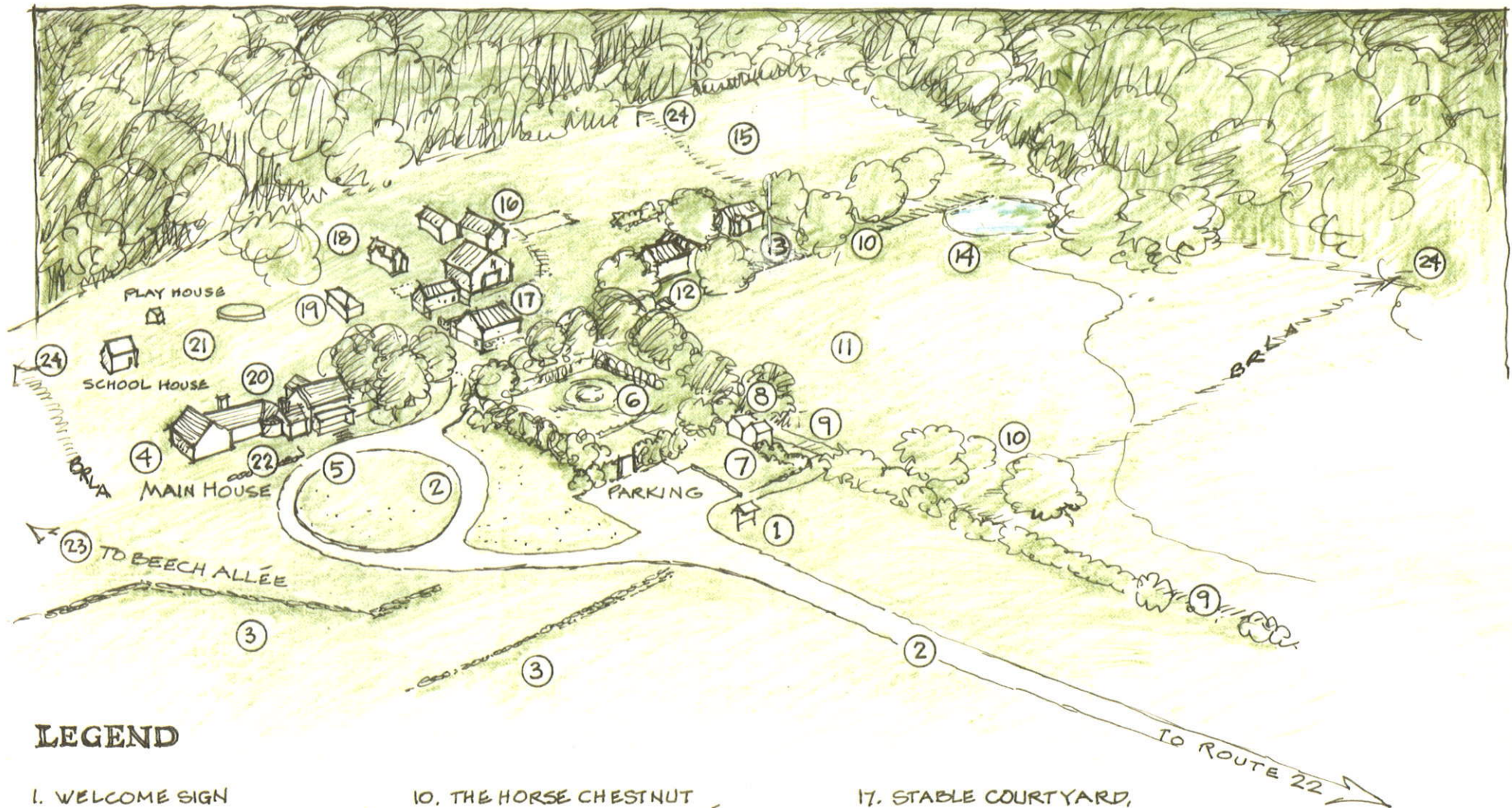
His property remained a working farm and rural retreat for five generations of the family, until Jay’s great-great-granddaughter died in 1953. Today, the house, grounds, gardens, and farm reflect 150 years of the Jays’ changing tastes and needs. 62 of the original 750 acres remain as a New York State Historic Site, open to visitors for exploring the property’s fascinating history and remarkable natural beauty.

Points of Interest:

- 1 **Welcome Sign (at Parking Lot):** The welcome sign provides information about tours of the historic house and announcements of upcoming activities. Please help yourself to the brochures!
- 2 **Entrance Drive and Circular Drive:** The road that brought you to the parking lot was created for public access to the historic site in the 1960s. The historic entrance to the Jay property was what is now Lyon Ridge Road, half a mile to the north on Route 22; the entrance drive began there and wound through the woods behind the main house to connect with the circular drive in the front. The part of the original drive that adjoined the circle has grassed over. Most of the rest of it was on land that is now privately owned.
- 3 **The Front Lawn and the Ha-ha’s:** The front lawn was originally established by John Jay in the style of the “pleasure grounds” of 18th-century English country estates. In order to keep grazing livestock from getting too near the main residence, Jay built two stone-faced embankments called “ha-ha’s.” These barriers were too tall for the animals to climb over, yet were almost invisible to anyone looking down the lawn from the house.
- 4 **The Main House:** The wooden part of the south facade of the house (with the porch) shows the building substantially as Jay knew it; the large stone wing on the western side was added by his great-great-granddaughter around 1925. Tours of the historic house are available; its period rooms are furnished in the style of the 1820s.
- 5 **The Linden Row:** In front of the main house are three linden trees. John Jay planted trees here to shade the porch, in imitation of a similar row of trees in front of his childhood home at Rye, New York.

- 6 **The Formal Gardens:** Through the white gate off the parking lot are two formal gardens that were begun by John Jay's descendants in the mid-19th century, then redesigned by later generations of the family. The fountain and the sundial at their centers were in place by the early 20th century. Today, members of the Bedford Garden Club maintain these gardens.
- 7 **The Herb Garden:** The herb garden was created in 1991 on the site of an historic cutting garden and greenhouse. The herb garden was designed by Page Dickey, a garden designer, writer, and member of the New York Unit of the Herb Society of America. The main paths radiating from the center divide the beds into four quadrants of herbal plants: medicinal, culinary, fragrance, and pest repellent. In addition, there is a special salvia border. The northern part of the garden contains a bed of dye plants and two long borders of shrubs and ground covers. Members of the Herb Society maintain the herb garden.
- 8 **The Potting Sheds:** The white clapboard structure consists of two potting sheds that served the formal and cutting gardens in the 19th and 20th centuries. Attached to the sheds on the south is the foundation of a now-lost greenhouse.
- 9 **The Farm Road:** The Farm Road was the working route to the barnyard from Jay Street (Route 22). As you walk down along it, you might encounter a horseback rider or two. The Farm Road is part of a system of trails now used by members of the Bedford Riding Lanes Association.
- 10 **The Horsechestnut and Maple Allées:** The Horsechestnut Allée was planted along the Farm Road by John Jay's son William; it was in place by 1821. William's son, John Jay II, planted elm trees among the horsechestnuts later in the 19th century. The Maple Allée, which intersects with the Farm Road by the white brick cottage, was planted sometime in the 19th century.

- 11 **The Brick Lot:** The large meadow south of the Maple Allée was where itinerant brick makers, hired by John Jay, made bricks for construction of the Brick Cottage and the main house.
- 12 **The Brick Cottage:** The large white house with green shutters was built by John Jay in 1799–1800 as a home for his farm superintendent. The house was enlarged a number of times in the 19th and 20th centuries. It is closed to the public at the present time.
- 13 **The Prefabricated House:** Further down the Maple Allée is a Montgomery Ward, mail-order house built in 1922 for farm employees. Today, the building is used for equipment storage.
- 14 **The Ice Pond:** The Ice Pond was created in the mid-19th century for producing ice, which was cut from the pond during the winter and stored in an ice house. Some ice from the pond was used as kitchen ice, but most was used for chilling the milk produced here, keeping it cold on its way to the railroad for shipment to New York City.
- 15 **The Pasture and the Old Orchard:** Dairying was a major aspect of operations for most of the farm's history, and this area was used for grazing. Some outbuildings once here have disappeared; you can see the long foundation of a 20th-century poultry house toward the trees. In John Jay's time, that area was an apple orchard.
- 16 **Main Barn, Cow Barn, and Garage:** The largest barn (with the red clapboard upper story) was the main barn; its stone foundation was built in the late 1700s. It was rebuilt by William Jay in the 1830s. Stop in and see an exhibit describing the history of farming on the property. The stone foundation near the main barn was once a cow barn. Attached to it is a building constructed in 1918 that contained garage space for automobiles and a carpenter shop. This building is now a private residence.



LEGEND

1. WELCOME SIGN
2. ENTRANCE DRIVE
AND CIRCULAR DRIVE
3. FRONT LAWN AND THE HA-HAS
4. THE MAIN HOUSE
5. THE LINDEN ROW
6. THE FORMAL GARDENS
7. THE HERB GARDEN
8. THE POTTING SHEDS
9. THE FARM ROAD

10. THE HORSE CHESTNUT
AND MAPLE ALLEES
11. THE BRICK LOT
12. THE BRICK COTTAGE
13. THE PREFABRICATED HOUSE
14. THE ICE POND
15. THE PASTURE
AND THE OLD ORCHARD
16. MAIN BARN, COW BARN
AND GARAGE

17. STABLE COURTYARD,
CARRIAGE BARN,
AND COACHMAN'S HOUSE
18. DRAFT HORSE BARN
19. LAUNDRY/RESTROOM BUILDING
20. NORTH COURT GARDEN
21. NORTH LAWN
22. TERRACE GARDEN
23. THE BEECH ALLEE
24. BRLA TRAIL SYSTEM



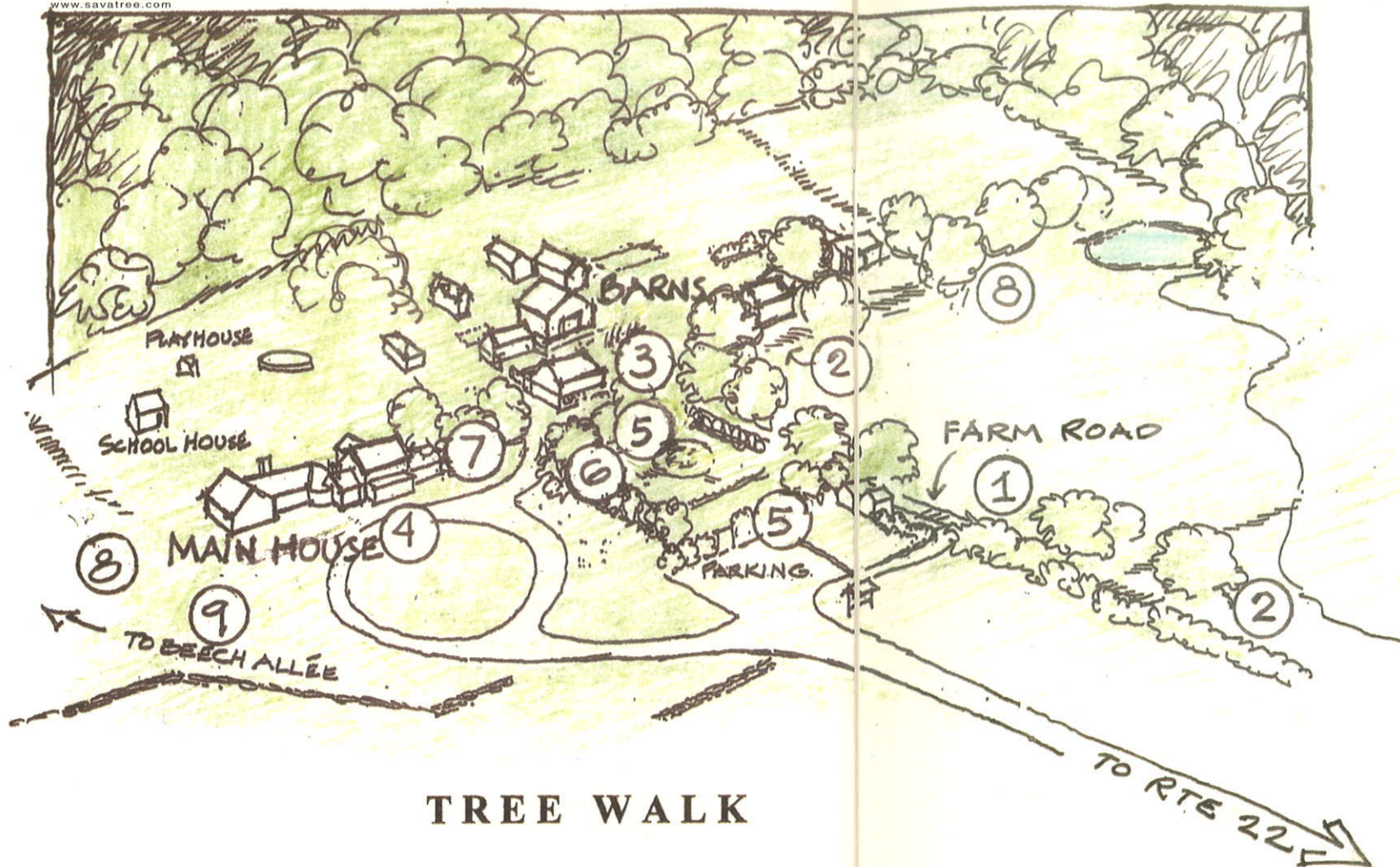
- 17 Stable Courtyard, Carriage Barn, and Coachman's House:** Separating the barnyard from the stable courtyard is a stone wall. The stable courtyard was associated more with the main house than with the farm. The main portion of the carriage barn (minus the wooden extension) was constructed by John Jay around 1800, and it will be our Education and Visitor Center opening in 2010. The coachman's house, opposite it, was built in 1800 with an apartment for John Jay's coachman above and stalls for horses below. It now houses the offices of Friends of John Jay Homestead.
- 18 Draft Horse Barn:** The small, shingled building with three stable doors housed the farm's draft horses. These work horses were larger and less elegant than those used for riding and carriage driving. The draft horse barn was built between 1870 and 1885.
- 19 Laundry/Restroom Building:** The square, dark, shingled building across from the draft horse barn was constructed as the Jay family's laundry around 1885. Its interior has been remodeled to provide public restrooms.
- 20 North Court Garden:** The sectional garden on the north side of the main house, between the wings, was created in the 1990s by the Hopp Ground Garden Club. Its members maintain the garden to beautify the house entrance used by visitors in wheelchairs, and to display a representative sampling of plants from around the historic site.
- 21 North Lawn:** The round stone structure up the hill was a cistern that held the water supply for the main house. The grey stone building is a schoolhouse, built in 1826 for John Jay's grandchildren; inside it is an exhibit about the building's history. The small white clapboard building is a playhouse, constructed in 1925 by Eleanor Jay Iselin for her young son. The rectangular, flat area north of the playhouse was the location of a tennis court, built in the early 20th century. In the mid-19th century, an orchard of pear trees grew in this area.

- 22 Terrace Garden:** The terrace garden was designed in 1924, at the same time as the large stone wing. The garden remains much as it was originally. Members of the Rusticus Garden Club maintain the terrace garden.
- 23 The Beech Allée:** If you don't mind a steep hill, walk to the circular drive in front of the house, and proceed down the old, grassed-over entrance drive to the Beech Allée. The enormous trees here lined the estate drive, creating a spectacular canopy for the carriages that brought the Jays and their guests to the main house. The beech trees were planted in the mid-19th century by John Jay's grandson, John Jay II. The land just beyond the allée was sold by the family in the mid-20th century; it is now privately owned.
- 24 BRLA Trail System:** The Bedford Riding Lanes Association (BRLA) maintains trails throughout northeastern Westchester County for its members' use. The portion of the BRLA trail at John Jay Homestead is open to the public. The trails continue beyond the state historic site onto privately-owned land, however, and those areas are open only to registered BRLA members. For information about joining the BRLA, call (914) 234-BRLA.



"I believe that you and I derive more real satisfaction from attending to our vines and fruit trees, than most conquerors do from cultivating their favourite laurels."

— JOHN JAY TO A FRIEND, 1810



TREE WALK

- 1 Common Horsechestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*)—In an 1860 farm survey, the Farm Lane was referred to as the “carriage path.” It was lined with horsechestnut and elm trees. Surviving letters reveal that John Jay’s son William planted many of the horsechestnut trees now on the lane.
- 2 Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*)—Today, the western side of the Farm Lane is planted primarily with red maples. Red and sugar maples, known for their vibrant fall color, line the road to the Ice Pond. The road once continued all the way to Maple Avenue.
- 3 Cucumber Magnolia (*Magnolia acuminata*)—This tree is known to reach a maximum height of 100 feet with a six-foot diameter. These two specimens are likely among the largest in the area.
- 4 Linden (*Tilia americana*)—Native tribes used the inner bark of the American linden to make a strong rope as well as a potent tea that treated lung ailments and heartburn. The two lindens in the formal and herb gardens (5) are of a rare ‘weeping’ variety.

- 6 American Dogwood (*Cornus florida*)—This tree with white spring flowers is a common sight throughout the East Coast. In colonial times and later, its wood was used to make spindles for weaving.
- 7 Weeping Red Mulberry (*Morus rubra*)—The red mulberry is a close relative of the white mulberry (known as the food of the silkworm), and is a vigorous species native to this area. Its fibrous bark was used by native Americans for blankets and cloaks.
- 8 Eastern White Pine (*Pinus strobus*)—This native pine has long been one of the most important commercial trees in America. Its wood has been used for building items as diverse as ship’s figureheads, shingles, windows, and plywood composites.
- 9 European Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*)—The long-lived European beech was brought to North America before 1752. The Beech Allée was planted by John Jay II in the mid-19th century and was an impressive feature on the road that was once the main entrance to the property.

Imagine the landscape around you with very few trees. When John Jay moved here in 1801, most had already been felled for use as fuel and as building material. Jay soon began planting new ones. He once wrote his son, “It always gives me pleasure to see trees which I have reared and planted; and therefore I recommend it to you to do the same...”