



Winter 2008-2009

Royall House Reporter

The Newsletter of the Royall House Association

INTERPRETING THE KITCHEN CHAMBER

On the second floor of the Royall House is a room that is marked by its plain molding, lack of fire-place tiles and basic plaster walls. This is the Kitchen Chamber and a major focus of our efforts to best convey the “meanings of freedom and independence” here at the Royall House and Slave Quarters. As part of our Strategic Plan, the Royall House Association is working to reinterpret this room to show the presence of the enslaved Africans in the house. The goal is to represent conditions and appearances based on the historic evidence to bring “history to life” and enrich the visitor experience.

Beginning the reinterpretation – In the early 20th century, the Kitchen Chamber was furnished by the Boston Tea Party Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), who played an integral role in the original efforts to save the property from destruction (and whose descendants today are among our supporters). The room was decorated as a bedroom with Colonial artifacts, including a tea chest from the Boston Tea Party. Several years ago, we began discussions with the DAR about the need to reinterpret the room in concert with our new mission. In early 2008, we carefully inventoried and stored the furniture and moved the tea chest to the Sarah Bradlee Fulton Room so it would remain a focus of the tour. We then stripped off the wallpaper to reveal the original plaster walls. Finally, an interpretive poster was displayed for visitors.



Kitchen Chamber: note plain molding, fireplace surround, and white plaster walls

The historic record – The reinterpretation, of course, is not being undertaken in a vacuum. The historic record is clearest in the 1739 Probate Inventory of Isaac Royall, Senior. As that document shows, in the mid-18th century, the Kitchen Chamber was very likely a living and working area for some of the enslaved Africans. Moreover, the large quantities of linens in this room made it likely that the preparation and storage of towels, tablecloths and other domestic items was a key focus. Finally, location is important: the room is across the hall from the Marble Chamber (the Royalls’ bedroom), which bespeaks the importance of such convenience to the masters of the house, particularly at night.

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Annual Appeal 2008/2009 - “Starting Our Second Century”

Please support this year’s Annual Appeal with your generous donation. Details enclosed with this newsletter.

A Gift for You - donate \$50 or more and receive a special gift as a small token of our appreciation.

Questions? Call (781) 396-9032 or e-mail RoyallHouseED@comcast.net Thank you for your support!

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The Kitchen Chamber (1739 Probate Inventory)

(Note variant spellings; 0:0:0 amounts are pounds, shillings, and pence):

- 1 Looking Glass 8:0:0
- 1 pr AndIrons Shovel & tonggs 2:0:0
- A Cloaths horse 1:0:0
- A Close Stool 1:10:0
- 3 Chares :10:0
- A Seal Skin trunck 12/ a leather Do 1:4:0
- 2 Negros Beds and Beding @ £4 4:0:0
- A pine table & folding Board 2:0:0
- 2 brushes :8:0
- 1 doz. Diapaer table Cloths 36:0:0
- 5 Do at 10/ 2:10:0
- 6 Breakfast Do 4:10:0
- 6 Damask knapkin @ 10/ 3:0:0
- 9 ordinary Do 5/ 2:5:0
- 12 towells 5/ 3:0:0 **£71:17:0** [*total value of contents in £ sterling*]

Explanatory Notes:

- 1 - *Document cite:* "An Inventory of the House of Isaac Royall, Esq^r taken by us the Subscribers this twenty- Ninth Day of July, 1739" [Middlesex County Probate Court File Papers, First Ser. 1648-1871, Case #19545].
- 2 - 'Do' is the abbreviation for 'ditto.'
- 3 - 'Diapaer' is a spelling of 'Diaper.' A type of linen with a twill weave, used for tablecloths, towels, or napkins. Named after its origins in Ypres, Flanders. ('Diaper' is a phonetic derivative of the word 'Ypres.')
- 4 - "Negros Beds" – in some cases, these were simple pallets or mattresses filled with straw and covered with ticking. In other cases, they were simple wooden bedframes. The exact type used here is not known.

The plan going forward – Although the "bones" of the room are evident now, considerable additional work is needed to restore the Kitchen Chamber as close as possible to its 1739 appearance. This is Phase One and includes: repairs to the shutters and window casements, plastering (walls and ceiling), whitewashing, trim painting in an historically accurate color, and miscellaneous carpentry. We have secured cost estimates for this work (about \$25,000) and are seeking funding. Phase Two involves furnishing of the room with appropriate items that illustrate its purpose and condition in the mid-18th century. We have consulted with professionals at Phillipsburg Manor, a contemporaneous site in New York that has undergone a similar reinterpretation process. The key is to show two things: the use of the room and the physical presence of enslaved Africans.

Visitors this tour season saw the Kitchen Chamber in the initial stages of reinterpretation. The reaction was very positive; many told us that it helped them better understand the history of the Royall House and the people who lived here long ago. The contrast between the Kitchen Chamber and the Marble Chamber just across the hall is now very plain; that itself is very powerful. We are hopeful that the full reinterpretation of this room will help us do an even better job of conveying the rich and important history of the Royall House and Slave Quarters.

Meet Our New Directors

We're excited to announce that three new Directors have joined the RHA Board. Special thanks to Peter Gittleman and the Nominating Committee!

Jennifer Pustz

Jennifer currently serves as the museum historian for Historic New England, with a Ph.D. in American Studies from the University of Iowa. Her research focus is domestic service in the 18th through 20th centuries. Her new book *Interpreting the Lives of Domestic Servants at Historic House Museums* is due out in 2009. She has extensive experience in research, exhibitions, tour development, and guide training.

Bridget Samburg

Bridget is a freelance reporter for the *Boston Globe*, *Yankee Magazine*, and *Success Magazine* and conducts investigative reporting and research for nonfiction books. She holds a B.A. from Mount Holyoke College; her M.A. in Journalism is from Northeastern University. She has a longstanding interest in American history and architecture.

Pamela Speciale

Pamela is a Massachusetts native and a professional city planner with a long history of community involvement. She is a long-time and committed member of the Daughters of the American Revolution and has served as a board member or committee chair for various community organizations. She brings grant writing skills to the Royall House Association with a particular interest in youth education.

News Briefs

- ◆ The **Boston Tea Party Chapter** of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) filled our meeting room to overflowing in October. The group enjoyed a tour and graced us with a generous donation. Thank you!
- ◆ The **2008 Tour Season** was quite successful, and included group tours from several Tufts classes, students from Lunenburg, Princeton alumni, Medford families, professionals from Saudi Arabia, architects, and others, as well as visitors from all over the country.
- ◆ A film crew and actors working on behalf of **The Commonwealth Museum** spent two days filming at our site. Actors portrayed Isaac Royall and other 18th century figures for upcoming "touch screens" at the Museum.
- ◆ **Robert Augart** of Medford generously cleaned our gutters earlier this fall. His company is found at www.AugartConstruction.com
- ◆ **Professor Joanne Pope Melish** of our Academic Advisory Council paid us a visit in August and offered a number of excellent insights based on her extensive scholarship and experience. We hope to see her again soon!
- ◆ Gracelaw Durney of the RHA Board has generously created **GreySeaDesign**, an online shop selling crocheted scarves and other handcrafted and vintage items to benefit the Royall House Association. The shop can be found at www.GreySeaDesign.etsy.com. RHA members receive a 10% discount on all GreySeaDesign merchandise; just mention your membership in the Message box during checkout. Thank you, Gracelaw!

Royall House Shoppe Holiday Offerings

The Royall House Shoppe (in the Out Kitchen) offers memorabilia and gift items to visitors and supporters. The Shoppe is open at Public Programs, during Tour Season and on special occasions. All purchases directly benefit the Royall House Association. Featured books include:

Great Houses of New England (Blackburn and Gross). Includes stunning new photos of the Royall House as well as other distinctive NE properties. List \$55 - our special price \$40 (lower than Amazon.com)

Alexandra Chan's book, *Slavery in the Age of Reason* about the Royall House archaeological dig and its lessons. Special discounted price, \$35 each.

Other titles include: *Crusader for Freedom*, *A Life of Lydia Maria Child* (Clifford), and *The Incredible Ditch* (Seaburg and Dahill), about the Middlesex Canal.

Royall House memorabilia: totebags, paperweights, magnets, journals, postcards and a perennial favorite – the Royall House Holiday Ornament – all priced at \$10 and under! New this year – handmade crocheted items available online [see the News Briefs for details.] Coming soon: an online presence for the Shoppe! Thanks for your support!

Mention your membership and receive a 10% discount on all purchases!

Our Mission: The Royall House Association explores the meanings of freedom and independence before, during and since the American Revolution, in the context of a household of wealthy Loyalists and enslaved Africans.

The Royall House and Slave Quarters is located at 15 George Street, Medford, MA 02155. To join, or for more information: (781) 396-9032 or www.royallhouse.org

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear RHA Members and Friends:

As the 2008 Tour Season closes I would like to take a moment and thank our outstanding team of tour guides that volunteered their weekends in the last six months to provide the public with the opportunity to step back in time and learn about life in our corner of Colonial America. Through their efforts, we continue to fulfill our core mission as a cultural and educational resource for the general public.

I would also like to send out a special thanks to Francis Stahler for the countless hours she put into running the Royall House Shoppe. The Shoppe helped enhance the tour experience for visitors and provides a sizable boost to the RHA budget. Fran's efforts are greatly appreciated.

Janet Carr is stepping down from the Board of Directors after many years of dedicated service. I'd like to thank her for her significant contributions to enhancing and strengthening the RHA and for the positive impact she has made in helping to shape the organization as it exists today.

I'd also like to welcome our three new Directors to the Royall House Board. I am confident we will benefit from their energies, talents and perspectives as we enter our "Second Century."

As you can see from the activities described throughout this newsletter, we are moving ahead here at the RHA. As fall turns to winter, we continue with our re-interpretation plans, research, outreach and Annual Appeal. And, please join us for our four-part Public Program series that kicks off in November and runs through May, 2009!

Thank you for being a member of the Royall House Association. (And, if you are not yet a member, please join us! Your support is greatly appreciated.)

— **John Woods, President**



Kitchen in the Royall House, late summer 2008

Online bonus:

Additional photos of the Kitchen Chamber follow this page

Additional photos of the Kitchen Chamber



Ceiling molding and plaster walls



Shutters requiring restoration



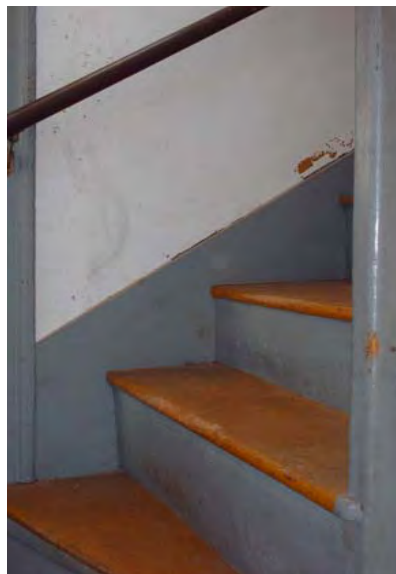
Windows looking north



Fireplace trim and DAR plaque in center.



Fireplace surround. Note the plain design.



Stairs or "slave corridor"
leading to third floor