



LIBERTY HALL



SUMMER
2006

LIBERTY HALL
HISTORIC SITE



ORLANDO BROWN HOUSE

Vol. 7, No. 2

LIBERTY HALL HISTORIC SITE 218 WILKINSON STREET FRANKFORT, KY 40601 (502)227-2560 WWW.LIBERTYHALL.ORG

LIBERTY HALL HISTORIC SITE

features two houses, Liberty Hall (1796) and the Orlando Brown House (1835), as well as a large historic garden. Liberty Hall was the home of one of Kentucky's founding fathers and first US Senators, John Brown, and his family.

TOURS

The houses are open for guided tours March through mid-December.

Tuesday-Saturday
10:30am, 12noon,
1:30pm, 3:00pm

Sunday
12noon, 1:30pm,
3:00pm

\$5 for adults, \$4 for seniors,
\$2 for 18 years and under

For more information,
call us at
1-888-516-5101
or email us at
libhall@dcr.net

Putting History into Perspective

BY SARA HARGER ELLIOTT, DIRECTOR

Liberty Hall Historic Site (LHHS) is in the enviable position of having two historically significant houses and their accompanying gardens and grounds. In addition to the architectural legacy there are thousands of letters and documents associated with the Brown family that form the basis of the story told at LHHS. From the founders, John and Margaretta Brown, to the "thoroughly modern" great-granddaughter, Mary Mason Scott, the Brown family is a microcosm of life in Kentucky from the earliest days to the mid-20th century.

In order to tell their story, we have chosen a non-traditional method of interpreting LHHS. We consider the site to be a learning laboratory or a teaching environment rather than a standard historic house museum. We use a combination of architecture, decorative arts, and interior design to "set the stage" for the telling of the

Brown family story. Due to financial constraints the interior of the houses have not been restored although the interior of the Brown House is "sympathetic" to the original. Since our guests are seeing an inaccurate representation of the interiors, we have developed what we call "teaching panels" that are samples of wallpaper, wall color, carpet samples, and window fabrics all of which were available in Kentucky in the early 19th century. Through the use of primary and secondary research we are able to establish a physical backdrop for the story of the Brown family, their slaves, their friends and colleagues whose stories are part of our tour.

The Browns left a treasure trove of primary source materials and what better way to tell their story than to let the Browns speak for themselves. The tours of LHHS combine secondary resource research with the words of the Brown family to give a



Photo by Nicole Markle

more in-depth look at such topics as the U.S. Constitution, slavery, medicine in the 19th century, spiritualism and women's rights. Using our motto of "putting history into perspective" we hope our guests will leave LHHS having learned something new or gained a new insight into a topic they thought they already understood.

This edition of "The Gazette" grew out of discussions with various guests about why we do what we do. We hope that this will clarify our philosophies and the method to our "madness". If you haven't been to see us in a while, please come by. We would love to see you!



CURATORIAL REVIEW

By SAM RICHARDSON, CURATOR OF COLLECTIONS

Many guests, as they visit our site, pay particular attention to some of the smallest details. We encourage this and are happy that our guests have an interest in history and the houses. A curator's decision to move or change features in an exhibit is done according to research, not personal preference. Here are a couple of frequently asked questions recorded during a typical Liberty Hall tour:

1. Why are there so few candlesticks in the rooms?

Within the past year research has been done that revealed that Liberty Hall has been displaying too many candlesticks in our exhibits. Primary sources like estate records and paintings from the time period show that rooms did not have multiple candlesticks lying around unused. Many candelabras were left empty and only had candles in them when in use. Candles were an expensive form of light. Animal fats were often used, making the candles susceptible to insects and other pests.

According to the inventory for Henry Shouse of Frankfort, Kentucky, in 1816 his estate was worth over \$14,000. (We do not have John or Margaretta Brown's probate inventories.) With all this wealth he had listed only five candlesticks. Like Mr. Shouse, the Browns had money but did not spend a lot on surplus candlesticks. Also, paintings of early 19th century house interiors depict many instances of very few candlesticks and/or empty candlesticks. Because we had over 60 candlesticks on exhibit in Liberty Hall alone, we have removed the majority of them in order to be more accurate in our interpretation.

The use and lighting of candles for special events at Liberty Hall Historic Site will be diminishing. Melting wax not only causes drippings to build up on brass and silver candlesticks, but also leaves spots of wax on table tops. More importantly an open flame and original family furniture do not mix. By allowing burning candles we run a very serious and unnecessary risk to both homes and the priceless collections they contain.

Continued on Page

EDUCATION NEWS

By NICOLE COX MARKLE, CURATOR OF EDUCATION

Whew! Only half way through 2006 and I am already coming up for air. After having my first child in April, establishing three new programs, and working with my fellow teammates to complete the exhibit "Our Castle at Frankfort: The Life and Times of a Kentucky Family" I am beginning to pull from my secondary battery pack. Luckily, in the midst of our busy season, we gained a new team member, Emily Boggs, who worked with us as an intern. We all appreciated her enthusiasm and diligence as she tackled many hurdles with us. I, in particular, have to thank her. For without her I am sure I would have failed to complete my tasks. Thank you Emily!

I am looking forward to the coming school year and the possibility for an increase in school groups. If you are a teacher, or know a teacher looking for requirement fulfilling field trips, please take a look at what Frankfort has to offer. Visit www.visitfrankfort.com for more information about Frankfort fieldtrip packages and to receive a packet of information.

A Few of My Favorite Things...

ADVENTURES OF THE
LHHS SUMMER INTERN
By Emily Boggs

As a rising senior at Eastern Kentucky University, it was time to leave my lifeguarding years behind me and get a "grown-up" summer job. I've always been interested in historic sites, so when the opportunity to work at Liberty Hall arose, I was thrilled. To borrow a line from the musical *The Sound of Music*, "these are a few of my favorite things..." Here's a little insight into some of my adventures as the Liberty Hall Intern!



"Eureka!" Moments—the internship requires a lot of research on the Brown family, their houses, and the history of the time period. Nearly every day, I had a "eureka!" moment, where puzzle pieces started to come together, and I found reasons for why things were the way they were.

Orlando Brown—this man is by far my favorite Brown family member, and was the subject of most of my research. While the Orlando Brown House is right next door, not a great deal of research had been devoted to Orlando, his family and his house. A large part of my job was to incorporate my research on Orlando's house in the normal tour, and to extend the history of the site into the Civil War era of the 1860s.



LIBERTY HALL HISTORIC SITE
presents an exhibit

“Our Castle at Frankfort”

The Life and Times of a
Kentucky Family

August 3-September 30

AMERICAN FOUNDERS BANK GALLERY
201 LIMESTONE DR.

When I first saw Orlando’s portrait, I was convinced that he must have been full of himself and conceited. After reading his letters and journal from 1820, my view of Orlando changed significantly—he is so interesting and full of character. While it’s true that he may have been a “party animal,” he was also a renaissance man and very much a family man. In researching Orlando and his branch of the family, eureka moments abounded!

Special Events—I loved the special events at Liberty Hall that give you an inside look to what life was like in the early 19th century. I especially enjoyed the Rites of Passage series that is held once a month through September. In the most recent one, a speaker explained rituals of southern courtship, which provided another eureka moment about questions I had concerning the courtship of Orlando and his first wife, Mary Watts Brown. (Can you tell I really like eureka moments? Come take a tour with me, and I’ll tell you all about it.) I have also enjoyed lunchtime lectures and nighttime tours, which literally allow you to see the house in a “different light,” if you will.

More special events come in the form of children’s programs—Family Fun Saturdays, Seeds, Weeds & History Camp, and Shakespeare Camp. In helping with Seeds, Weeds & History, I learned how to give educational programs to a younger audience and learned a couple gardening tips in the process!

Exploring Downtown Frankfort—while this doesn’t directly relate to the site, one part of interning in Frankfort that I’ve loved is exploring the neighborhood. I love the old buildings and atmosphere of downtown Frankfort...it seems to be its own little town, secluded from the rest of the city.

19th Century Fashion—I’ve become almost obsessive in my research of early 1800s fashion. Ladies, can you imagine wearing a corset and full-length gown every day from the time you were five years old? Men, a daily three-piece suit?

Giving Tours—Today I was informed that the length of my tours are rivaling Randy’s. Liberty Hall is so interesting; I just have to tell you everything there is to know about early Kentucky life!

Left: Participant of June’s Seeds, Weeds, and History Camp identify the native Kentucky plants in Liberty Hall’s garden through a memory game. **Center:** Roland Stayton, past Master of Shively Lodge 951, shares Rudyard Kipling’s Poem “The Palace” at the end of his Masonic history presentation at the July *Hunger for History* Program. **Right:** Participants of the first annual Camp Shakespeare pose for a picture just before their Friday evening performance.

Photos by Nicole Markle



AN OPPORTUNITY TO GIVE...

Dear friend of LHHS,

We are looking for some items that can aid our programming and curatorial efforts. Can you help us? Your contribution is appreciated! Check out next month's Gazette for an updated list of needs and supporters.

WET/DRY SHOP VACUUM
DEHUMIDIFIER
HUMIDIFIER
FINE CAMELS HAIR PAINT BRUSHES
BLENDER

TO RESPOND TO ANY ONE OF THESE NEEDS,
PLEASE CONTACT

SARA HARGER ELLIOTT, LHHS DIRECTOR
(502) 227-2560 OR 1-888-516-5101
SARA@LIBERTYHALL.ORG

Many thanks to those who gave money toward...

Wish List

Mrs. Scott D. Breckinridge Mr. William Cory
Mrs. Buckner Hinkle Ms. Nancy Baird

Computers

Mrs. Marshall Hardy Mrs. David Bland
Mrs. William Alden

Garden Labels

Ms. Sarah Davis Mrs. S. Cecil Perry
Mrs. Carl Rankin Ms. Louise Gardner
Mrs. John E. Pappas Farnsley
Mrs. Edward Oldham Mrs. Kenneth Medaris
Ms. Monnie Gay Long Mrs. Robert Brewer
Mrs. Robert Spiller Mrs. William Fishback

Dishwasher

Anonymus Donor

SPECIAL THANKS TO...

Mrs. Robert Spiller for a Coffee Maker
Mrs. Downey Gray Jr. For Camp Shakespeare scholarship
Mrs. Margaretta Clulow for donation of Brown Family Letters
Mr. John Elliott for setting up computers
and transferring data

Curatorial Review Continued

2. Why are the silver and brass objects not polished?

Museum professionals normally clean silver in their collections by using a calcium carbonate/denatured alcohol blend. Silver that is lightly washed and dried right away will hardly ever build up tarnish. We clean, not polish, our collection using a non-abrasive form of wash. If there is no tarnish present on the silver, a phosphate-free detergent (e.g. Ivory soap), will be sufficient. When washing, do not allow the silver to come in contact with a metal sink, because the silver will scratch. Use a plastic tub with distilled water.

Cleaning and polishing are two completely different techniques. Polishing silver will make a piece look like new, but it will cause harm, especially to antique silver. Many of those "miracle" dips and creams will actually remove layers of silver. These dips are made up of acids. Acids are corrosive and will pit or corrode bronze, silver, and organic materials such as wood and ivory. Ivory handles are found on some of Liberty Hall's silver pieces. Powder sprays although non-abrasive will over time build up and become difficult to remove. Maintaining the silver collection while on display is very important. Lacquering or waxing is not recommended for silver because of the difficulties in obtaining an even coating. Instead, in an open display like Liberty Hall, where surface protection of the object is necessary, a micro-crystal-line wax such as "Renaissance" is recommended.

Most silver becomes tarnished because of sulfur-containing materials, particularly hydrogen sulfide. The most common tarnish-causing elements are wool, felt, food, fossil fuels, rubber, latex, and certain paints. Tarnish build up can be increased in a humid environment. This reason alone is why maintaining a consistent relative humidity level is *crucial* here at Liberty Hall.

Hopefully this short question and answer section will help our readers understand why Liberty Hall Historic Site is exhibited in the fashion that it is. If you have a question about the collections you would like to see answered in this column, send it to libhall@dcr.net.

RANDY'S RAMBLINGS

Notes, ideas, and other new information from Randy Huff, Curator of Research and Tour Guide



Below are the definitions of some terms you might hear the staff use during a tour.

AT REST ~ This is a 19th century room arrangement where all the furniture is placed along the perimeter of a room. If a piece of furniture was needed, it was pulled out into the room then pushed back when it is no longer being used. The public rooms (usually the drawing room and the dining room) of a house would have been used in this fashion. Being at rest should not be confused with seasonal room changes such as removing the carpets and heavy draperies in the summer time.

ROOM ARRANGEMENT-PLACEMENT ~ The only room in the house that we are pretty sure has not changed location is the formal parlor/drawing room. There is no solid documentation on any other room in the house. We know Margaretta had her bedroom on the first floor for a time. From the 1934 HABS report Mary Mason Scott tells us that the room that is now the dining room was a bedroom. We must always remember that our current concept of how a house should be planned and laid out can not be applied to a historic house. Rooms were more multi-purpose, many

beds were in one room, and privacy was not as common.

EDUCATION PANELS ~ Copies of paintings showing wall and carpet color, placement of furniture, style of drapery, and placement of objects on a wall. Period paintings are one of the best examples that show historic rooms.

ESTATE INVENTORIES ~ These inventories, taken after the death of a property owner, list the household items, such as beds, silver, carpets, etc contained in the deceased's home. We use these to find what was coming into Frankfort during John and Margaretta Brown's lifetime.

NEWSPAPERS ~ Used to find information on what was available in Frankfort in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Such things as paint colors, furniture, food and news from other parts of the country and the world are examples of the kinds of information found in local newspapers.

FAMILY LETTERS ~ First hand documentation of the Browns life at Liberty Hall.

DOCENT MYTH ~ Stories that have been told and are still told in some historic houses that are not necessarily true. Some examples are closet taxes, window taxes, door taxes, blood being used for paint, double stairs so a lady's ankle would not be seen by the man following her, high ceilings for heat to rise, coffin doors, newel post to put your mortgage papers in, and many many more. These stories sound great but were answers created by guides to answer questions to which the guides did not have a well-documented answer.

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Historic House Museum Brochure
presented with the

AWARD OF MERIT

at the
2005 Kentucky
History Awards

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

*You're invited to Liberty Hall Historic Site's
Event of the Year.*

A Very

*Brilliant
Party*

October 5th and 6th

\$65 per guest and \$100 per couple

*Join us on a **1911** ocean voyage!*

UPCOMING EVENTS

RESERVE YOUR SPOT TODAY FOR
HAVE YOU READ
THE WORKS
OF...?



FRIDAY, OCTOBER 14: **Lewis Carroll**
Classic children's literature

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 11: **Margaret Wise Brown**
Children's story books with special guest
author from the Kentucky Book Fair

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9: **Charles Dickens**
Popularization of children's Christmas stories

Program begins at 7:00pm. Admission is \$10
per person. Evening will include topic appropriate
refreshments. Reservations are required.

For more information or to make reservations, please
call 502/227-2560 or 1-888-516-5101 or
email us at libhall@dcr.net

August 3 through September 30: *"Our Castle at Frankfort" The Life and Times of a Kentucky Family* Explore the history and times of Liberty Hall through five collection pieces. Take this special opportunity to learn more about John and Margaretta Brown. Exhibit at American Founders Bank - 301 Limestone Dr.

August 26, September 30, and October 28 : *Family Fun Saturdays* Parents are you looking for activities that will bring the family together and create memories? Join us at LHHS to create family trees, cook on the hearth, and make vintage halloween toys.

September 15: *Final Perspectives on History Program: Kentucky's Haunted Houses* This is your last chance to join us for our summer candlelight series. Lynwood Montell, Emeritus Professor of Folk Studies at Western Kentucky University. Begins at 7:00 at Liberty Hall. \$8 per guest. Reservations are required.

September 20, October 18, and November 15: *Hunger for History Lunch Series* Bring your lunch to LHHS on the third Wednesday of every month. Join us for an in-depth look into history. Program is free and begins at noon.

October 5 and 6th: *A Very Brilliant Party* You are invited to join us as we set sail on a 1911 voyage around the world during the Liberty Hall Historic Site event of the year. \$65 for individuals and \$100 groups of two.

Bank, Curatorial Review, Save the date for "A Very Brilliant Party"
Putting History into Perspective, LHHS exhibits at American Founders

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