



# Tate House Gazette

## News from the Tate House Museum

Connecting people to Maine's colonial roots and helping them to discover, imagine, and value the relevance of this history to our lives.

Volume XIX,  
Number 5

January 2011

## Clock Jack Acquired for Kitchen

At a special meeting on January 6, the Collections Committee unanimously approved the purchase of an 18<sup>th</sup>-century clock jack, or spit engine, used to roast meats in colonial British kitchens. The purchase, made possible by dedicated NSCDA-ME furnishing funds, is the first of several upgrades recommended to improve the interpretation of the Tate House interior and celebrates our 2010 Year of the Kitchen program. Hollis Brodrick of Portsmouth, NH, kindly gave Tate House Museum first dibs on this remarkable and rare artifact, for which we are very grateful.

Clock jacks represent state-of-the-art colonial cooking technology; they mechanically turned a spit of meat held by andirons in front of a fire. They appeared in upper-class British homes and are also documented in colonial New England taverns and merchant-class houses. The Tate House jack, a beautifully preserved example with a brass

faceplate and cast iron gears, was probably made in England between 1740 and 1760. Jacks, installed above the fireplace hearth, used pulleys and lines to operate. Planning is underway for the installation of this fabulous new object that will truly enliven Tate's kitchen interpretation. Please plan to see it in the new season ahead. Many thanks are extended to Martha Timothy and the NSCDA-ME Board of Managers for their support of the educational mission at Tate House Museum. *Laura Fecych Sprague*



## Mast Exhibit Update

Plans are being formulated to move two twelve foot logging wheels from Storyland in Glenn, New Hampshire and transport them to the Landing School in Kennebunkport. Dick Gilbane and Tom Thomsen are working on the logistics of obtaining the services of a mason, a welder and a lift truck to extract the exhibit from the building. This may involve cutting a hole through the building that is 3 feet wide and over 12 feet tall!

The staff and students of the school will then restore and prepare the wheels for outside display. The wheels and a section of "mast pine" will be displayed by the Means House so that they may be viewed by commuters along Congress Street, just as 18<sup>th</sup> century visitors would have been able to view the activity of the mast yard. Members of the Stroudwater Village Association have been meeting with THM members to discuss this exciting upcoming addition to the neighborhood.

**BOARD OF  
DIRECTORS****2010-2011****OFFICERS**

Peter W. Cook

*Chair*

Theresa Libby

*Treasurer*

Christina Jackson

*Secretary***DIRECTORS**

Susan Bowditch

Richard Gilbane

Cynthia Griswold

Perry Hopf

Sally Lombard

Victoria Kurtz

Mary Louise  
Sprague

Thomas Thomsen

Anne S. Upton

Ann Worster

**STAFF**

Dick Kempton

*Site Coordinator*Laura Fecych  
Sprague*Consulting  
Curator*

## Education Committee News

With the New Year comes new challenges and planning for the museum's educational outreach. We have a lot on our plate and hope that all museum members will contribute to the planning process. A committee is forming and your help is needed. Two new Tate House Museum Board members have agreed to co-chair the committee with some direction from Chairman of the THM Board, Peter W. Cook.

Susan Bowditch comes to THM with extensive experience in education and program development at Castle Tucker Museum, The Joshua Chamberlain Museum, and the Peabody Essex Museum. Ann Worster was the Program Director for the San Francisco Maritime Museum, Intern Coordinator at Maine Historical Society, and docent at Victoria Mansion. Both women have served non-profit cultural and preservation organizations in administrative positions.

A meeting of the Education Committee is scheduled for February 1st at noon. The following topics need to be discussed and placed on the agenda for future Education Committee meetings. All docents, volunteers are invited and urged to attend this important planning meeting. We need you!

Education Topics:

- Committee Chair
- Procedure for scheduling docents
- Spring training: PHD (Portland History Docents) and ongoing Tate House Museum docent interpretive updates
- Specialized Tour Docent Recruitment (Architecture, Garden, Trunk, Collections)
- Soup and Connoisseurship Topics and Calendar
- School Curriculum Alignment Subcommittee
- Museum Opening Activities
- New Exhibits
- Educational Outreach
- Representation with other standing committees

Please plan on attending this scheduling meeting and let us know your interests and the best times to schedule meetings on these important topics. This is an open meeting to all and, if possible, let Dick Kempton know you plan to attend. *Peter W. Cook and Ann Worster*

## Memorial Donations Received

Tate House Museum wishes to thank the families of Neal Bragdon, who died on November 6<sup>th</sup> and Elizabeth "Betty" Robinson, who died on December 24<sup>th</sup>, for naming the museum as recipients of memorial donations. Neal was a gifted educator with a passion for teaching and was a docent who helped train members of the most recent docent class. Betty was a member of the National Society of Colonial Dames of America in the State of Maine and was a president of NSCDA-ME. She was also secretary of the Sulgrave Manor Board while a member of the NSCDA.

The Board of Directors is considering using these memorial donations as seed money to support our new mast exhibit this year. Thank you to all who have been able to make these memorial contributions in memory of Neal and Betty.

## For History Lovers – Portland Docents Class Starts in February

For the sixteenth consecutive year, Portland area history lovers will have a unique opportunity to do something fun for themselves and good for their community. Starting in mid-February, the Maine Historical Society will host a program of ten free classes on local history, art, and architecture, as well as on public speaking.

The program is called the Portland's History Docents, and it's designed to produce volunteer guides for six area historical sites, including the Wadsworth-Longfellow House, the Portland Observatory, the Tate House Museum, Victoria Mansion, and the Maine Narrow Gauge Railroad.

"Portland really is unique, for making this great program available to people interested in history," Bill Hall, the program's manager, commented. "The History Docents has been recognized throughout New England for the quality of its training, not to mention

just for its amazing durability and popularity," Hall added. "In the past 15 years, we've graduated about 600 people from the course. You can get involved, meet interesting people, and learn a lot about the region we live in, while you volunteer with some of the local museums."

Graduates of the program are asked to donate about six hours a month as guides at one of the historical sites sponsoring the training.

The Portland's History Docents classes run on Thursday mornings, 9 AM to Noon, beginning at the Maine Historical Society in Portland on February 17 and concluding on April 21. Graduation will take place at the Fifth Maine Regiment Museum on Peaks Island on May 5.

More information is available at Greater Portland Landmarks, 774-5561, extension 104.

## Development Committee News

The Development Committee is planning a series of events and other strategies to develop membership and expand our educational mission, while increasing our income.

- The acquisition and preservation of an exhibition of a life sized mast tree and caissons is being moved from Storyland in NH to the Landing Boat School in Kennebunkport for preservation and weatherizing. It will be an outdoor exhibition for Tate House by early summer.
- April 30<sup>th</sup> 2011 there will be a festive dinner party to honor "Mast Agent" donors to the Tate House Museum. Esteemed author and historian, Colin Woodard, will be the guest speaker. Invitations with particulars will be mailed in March.
- The Decorative Arts Symposium will take place in late September. We are presently negotiating with Tilbury Press to collaborate with us on this established and well known event and other programs throughout the year.
- Two "Rambles" are in the planning stages: one to Deerfield, Mass and one to Newbury, Mass. Both of these sites are replete with Colonial architecture.

Sponsors, underwriters, and collaborators will be solicited to support these events., as well as our garden teas, cemetery tours, school tours and architectural tours.

We are happy to report that the Annual Appeal has been responded to by 96 donors and \$13,500 dollars raised so far. Every week we are pleased that more people are answering our request for help and sending contributions.

To date we have received several generous grants and memorial gifts that are reported on elsewhere in this Gazette.

*Lillian Haversat, Perry Hopf, William Hubbell, Sally Lombard, Tom Thomsen, Annie Upton, Mary Louise Sprague, CHMN.*

---

### Notes from the Site Coordinator

- To view the calendar of THM activities, just go to [www.tatehouse.org](http://www.tatehouse.org) and scroll to the bottom of the page and click on Current Calendar.
- Please call or email the office if your email, phone, or mailing address has changed. Thanks.

## Museum Emergency Response Kits

We are in the process of assembling two Emergency Response Kits, one for the Tate House and one for the Means House. Each "trash" barrel will be stocked with supplies to have on-site to deal with emergencies. Hardware stores are not always open when you really need them! If you have items on the list that you would like to donate, please email the office at [info@tatehouse.com](mailto:info@tatehouse.com) or call Dick at 774-6177 and he will keep a list so that contributions will not be duplicated. Cash donations are also appreciated as they can fill the gaps in our shopping list!

We need to make two kits total at approximately \$280/kit.

Each kit should contain:

Roll of plastic -1  
 Clear goggles -1  
 Nitrile Gloves -10 pairs  
 Leather gloves -1  
 Caution tape -1 rolls  
 Duct tape -2 rolls  
 Door wedges -2  
 Hammer -1  
 Scissors -1  
 Pliers -1

Screwdriver -5 in 1  
 Crow bar -1  
 Hacksaw -1  
 Nails  
 Screws  
 Flashlight -1  
 Batteries for flashlight  
 Extension cord, heavy-duty grounded -1  
 Power strip -1  
 Rope -100 feet  
 Small first aid kit -1  
 Thermal blanket -1  
 Bungee cards -3  
 Utility knife -1  
 Clipboard with legal pad -1  
 Sharpie marker -1  
 Wind-up radio -1  
 Rubber boots or, boot covers -2  
 Aprons, plastic or tyvek -2

**Please contact the office by March 1<sup>st</sup> if you can donate items. After that date we will purchase items that are needed to complete the kits.**

## THM members visits THM chair at Bowdoin!

Stand up and cheer for Laura Sprague, the Consulting Curator of Decorative Arts at the Bowdoin College Museum of Art's outstanding show "Sit Down! Chairs from Six Centuries."

Chairs selected from the museum's extensive collection of American and European furniture began with the oldest piece in the exhibition, c. 1500. The tall box-like French Gothic joined armchair, was enhanced by linen fold paneling and precisely carved tracery. A second oak joined chair, 1663-1667, had a more robust form almost completely clothed in Renaissance and Baroque designs of scrolls, plants and a pair of supporting human forms. This important chair was given to the college in 1872 by a descendant of the attributed maker, William Searle of Ipswich, Mass.

Both near-thrones greeted the visitor in the first gallery alongside the open symmetrical flowing form of the Nurse Hat Chair created of polyurethane and stainless steel in 2008 by Richard Prince. One's

senses were immediately alerted to expect superb quality, contrasts of styles, techniques and materials. There were no disappointments.

The chronological range of chair styles was fleshed out by borrowings from across Maine and NE as well and from many private collectors. The Maine Historical Society, Historic New England, and Victoria Mansion loaned chairs. The THM collection was proudly represented by a Windsor chair mounted on its own small podium beneath an oil portrait by Gertrude H. Fiske of "Grandmother 1926." The painting included a very similar Windsor chair. This technique of presenting chairs in a mini environment, sometimes a painting, sometimes a photograph, appeared throughout the galleries with great success.

The show sparked with the wide range of styles, materials and techniques providing surprises, fun, new information and pleasurable satisfaction with old favorites. Excellent labels were very useful in clarifying details.

*Shirley Hibbard*

## Stroudwater Villagers attend THM Winter Frolic

Stroudwater Villagers were invited to a Wine and Cheese Party at the Tate House Museum. It was held in the Lafayette Parlor of the Means House. A festive lighted Christmas tree greeted guests as they came through the front door. The dining table was generously laden with holiday decorations and innovative fare prepared by Sally Lombard and Wayne Milliken.

The Docents, volunteers and members of the Tate House Museum were also invited to this affair. Many of the Docents were in Colonial costume contemporaneous with the 1775 building of the Tate House Museum. A large number of attendees participated in the Twilight Tours being offered of the Tate House ground floor. Many of the decorations were made by Ginny Bishop. Tiny LED lights illuminated the first floor windows of the Means House. All together, there were about 50 guests at the affair.

Peter W. Cook, volunteer Director of the Tate House Museum, welcomed all attendees and expanded on the status and future of the Tate House Museum. The gift shop was consolidated by Teresa Libby and co to give a spacious center to the original kitchen of the Means House.

Many thanks to the numerous volunteers who stayed after the event to help put the parlor back in working order. *Reg Lombard*

## Soup and Connoisseurship

The next S&C will be February 8, 2011 at 5:30 P.M. "**Retired Curator's Choice**"—“ A review of recently privately acquired or offered objects for an English merchant class family newly settled in a growing urban district of Maine environment. Objects will be presented from a variety of disciplines and discussed in terms of their cultural significance and the many strands available for their interpretation in a historic house museum.

Great stuff...and lots to think about in terms of our collection's growth potential.

Presenter: Peter W. Cook

## Upcoming Dates to Save:

Education Committee Meeting —February 1, 2011

Soup and Connoisseurship— February 8, 2011

PHD training program begins—February 17, 2011

Contact the office about Ramble Interest Survey — March 1st

Contact the office about emergency response kit items— March 1st

Patron's Dinner —April 30, 2011 (revised date)

Annual Plant & Tag Sale —May 28, 2011 (*Now is a good time to start collecting items for the sale!*)

## Preservation Projects Garner Foundation Support

Vital preservation projects will continue at Tate House thanks to a generous \$3,500 grant awarded by the Edward H. Davies Benevolent Fund of the Maine Community Foundation and a \$4,000 grant from the Phineas W. Sprague Memorial Foundation. These funds will help match Maine's New Century Community Program grant for window conservation and a drainage plan. The funds from the Davies Benevolent Fund will be devoted to hiring Mohr & Seredin Landscape Architects to create a plan for drainage improvements,

based on many years of archaeological, soil, and other research, that can be implemented in the year ahead. The goal for this work is to re-grade around Tate House to create positive water flow away from the building.

We are most grateful for the support of these important local foundations. In a competitive non-profit world, we are thrilled to have garnered funding to help preserve our National Historic Landmark. *Laura Fecych Sprague*



Tate House Museum  
1267 Westbrook Street  
Portland, ME 04102  
Change service requested.

[www.tatehouse.org](http://www.tatehouse.org)

---

## ***Ramble Interest Survey!***

Rambles are day trips that are designed to enrich members and friends through the visitation of historic sites, museums and other cultural resources in the area. They are open to members and friends who wish to join in the fun and adventure. In order to plan for the interests of our membership we are asking Gazette readers to “call in” their interest in the following two potential trips. By calling in...you are not registering to travel...but are definitely willing to consider going on one or the other or both of these exciting THM adventures. This is your museum...let us hear from you.

**RAMBLE TRIP #1.** (April) We have heard from many quarters that there is an interest in returning to the Newbury, Massachusetts area to visit the following sites: Spencer-Pierce Little House and the Swett -Isley House. These are two extraordinary first period houses owned by Historic New England. They truly speak of New England’s roots and early settlement. We would also plan to visit one or two private early period homes with important collections of decorative arts. This is a one-day trip with lunch being provided. Travel will be by chartered motor-coach from the Tate House.

**RAMBLE TRIP #2** (May) Historic Deerfield is a museum of superb houses and outstanding collections located in Deerfield, Massachusetts. This would be an overnight trip staying at the Deerfield Inn or another accommodation in the area. We would visit houses on The Street and also enjoy the great collections exhibited in the Flynt Center of Early New England Life. Google “Historic Deerfield” for a peek at the historic houses, accommodations, collections and gift shop. This would be a trip to remember. Travel by Chartered Motor Coach.

Let us know your interests and our Ramble Committee will do the rest! Please call Dick Kempton at 774-6177 or email the office at [info@tatehouse.org](mailto:info@tatehouse.org) and let us know if you are interested in attending these Rambles. **We would like to have responses to this Interest Survey by March 1<sup>st</sup> so that we can set the actual dates and/or destinations.**

Note: Cost will be determined by season rates and number of people traveling.