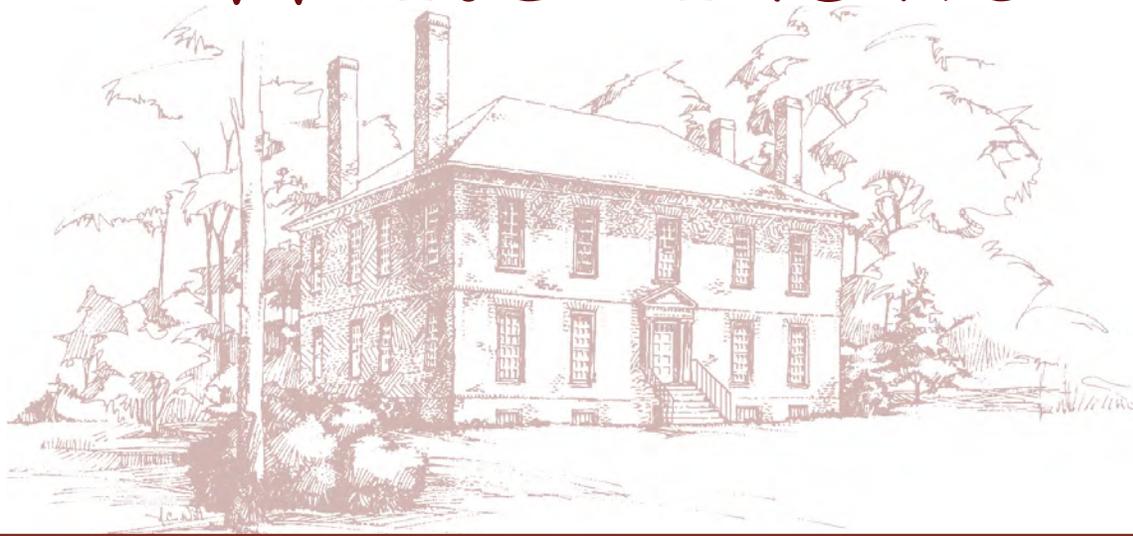


Wilton News



Volume XVII, Issue 1

Spring 2017

Interpreting the Enslaved Experience at Wilton

This spring, Wilton House Museum introduced physical evidence of the enslaved people who worked at Wilton by commissioning two reproduction bed rolls or bed ticks. Plantation owners such as the Randolph family provided rudimentary bedding for the enslaved who labored within the main residence. Typically, these bed rolls or ticks would be found in the corners of service areas and hallways, but often within the formal bedchambers. Usually, this was in the form of striped linen fabric (ticketing) stuffed with inexpensive padding such as straw or corn husks. A course woolen blanket and rope or string to tie the bed when not in use would complete the tick or roll.



References to rolls, ticks, and pallets can be found in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century estate inventories. This documentation provides evidence of the close proximity of members of households such as Wilton between free and enslaved individuals. The inexpensive value given the bedding is in stark contrast with the expensive textiles and feather mattresses slept on by white members of the gentry household. It is unknown how frequently the rolls or ticks were used, but assumed most of the enslaved house workers had separate quarters nearby the main house.



Little documentary evidence survives to inform us on the lives of the enslaved women (mostly) who lived as domestic slaves at Wilton. What is known today is gleaned from accounts and estate inventories giving little more than age, sometimes occupation, and more often than not, their monetary value as property. At Wilton, these reproduction bed rolls and blankets can be found in the Nursery (rolled up) and in the Girls Chamber (unrolled) to give evidence of the presence of an enslaved nurse and servant whose duty was to care for the Randolph children.

Created by noted textile historian Natalie Larson based on documentary and surviving evidence, these bed rolls communicate greater historical accuracy to Wilton's interiors and better illustrate and incorporate the lives and agency of those who forcibly worked at Wilton for over 100 hundred years.

A Transformative Campaign

Setting a goal of securing \$125,000 for the care, preservation, and sharing of Wilton House Museum, this year's fundraising total reached yet another milestone. Between June 1, 2016 and May 31, 2017, this year's campaign received more than 600 individual contributions, totaling \$152,054! This total exceeded the goal by \$27,000 and last year's fundraising total by \$12,000, making this the fourth annual campaign in a row to achieve the highest ever total in giving.

As a gathering place for discussing life in Virginia, admiring Southern decorative arts, encouraging historic preservation, and considering how the past continues to shape life in America today, Wilton House Museum is an educational, architectural, and cultural resource for those in our community. Because of the generous support of hundreds of friends and donors, gifts made in 2016-2017 ensure Wilton House Museum maintains and expands this role, while also providing essential support for the museum to address its greatest needs.

Thank you for your willingness and generosity to invest in Wilton House Museum's mission. Together, with this landmark fundraising total, we will strive to honor the commitment made by those to this year's campaign to continue serving our community as a premier historic house museum.

Giving Back

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) in Richmond would like to offer our sincere thanks and appreciation for the items donated to newly arriving refugees. The family who received these items was the Abdullah family from Somalia. The Abdullah family's story is a powerful one. In 2012, Mr. and Mrs. Abdullah escaped extreme violence in Somalia and fled through the Saharan Desert, crossing through Ethiopia, Sudan, and Libya. The family received no welcome along the way, and continued their flight until sailing for the Island of Malta. Once there, they applied for refugee status and began the rigorous background check and security screening processes. Mr. Abdullah and his wife had three children while in Malta. Mr. Abdullah worked as a waiter and in kitchens to support his family. Finally, after being displaced for more than five years, the Abdullah family resettled in the United States in January 2017 with help from the International Rescue Committee. Mr. Abdullah speaks English and his wife is attending English classes at the IRC. Mr. Abdullah is already active in the job search and is collaborating with his Employment Specialist. The family is so happy to have a place to call "home" and wants to express their thanks to Wilton House Museum. With your donations, the IRC was able to save money that would have been used on household items to instead pay rent and basic expenses. Included here are photos taken at the airport upon the Abdullah's arrival.

We hope to have more photos to share of the family at their home and in their new city of Richmond.



UPCOMING MUSEUM EVENTS



Jammin' on the James - June

Saturday , June 10; 6:00 PM

Join us for the opening concert of our series with a performance by Richmond native Lara Ruggles. Lara's soulful original sound is sure to captivate the audience.

Free to the public. - Donations are encouraged. The Museum will be open for tours prior to the concert so come early, secure your place on the terrace and enjoy a tour of the house.



Preservation Conversation - Stratford Hall

Friday, June 16; 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM

Join us this summer for coffee with the preservation and curatorial experts from historic sites featured in our exhibition Vivid View: The Art and Science of Paint Analysis and discover their latest restoration initiatives. Illustrated talks explore the physical evidence and review the curatorial process followed by a panel conversation with those in attendance. Optional exhibition tours follow.

\$15 each or register for all three for \$40. Purchase tickets in advance through the Wilton website.



Family Day - Paint it Up!

Wednesday, June 28; 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM

Bring the family by for a tour of the historic house, geared for elementary and middle school aged children, followed by a special activity related to Wilton's current exhibition, VIVID VIEW: The Art and Science of Paint Analysis. After taking a special tour of Wilton's current exhibition and learning about the importance of paint create your own masterpiece. Learn some of the basics of painting a still life in order to create your own work of art.

\$5 admission. Advanced reservations are required Purchase tickets in advance through the Wilton website.



Jammin' on the James - July

Saturday , July 8; 6:00 PM

The summer series continues with the upbeat sounds of Another Level - kick off your shoes and be ready to dance on the terrace!

Free to the public. - Donations are encouraged. The Museum will be open for tours prior to the concert so come early, secure your place on the terrace and enjoy a tour of the house.



Family Day - Paint it Up!

Wednesday, June 28; 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM

Bring the family by for a tour of the historic house, geared for elementary and middle school aged children, followed by a special activity related to Wilton's current exhibition, VIVID VIEW: The Art and Science of Paint Analysis. After taking a special tour of Wilton's current exhibition and learning about the importance of paint create your own masterpiece. Learn some of the basics of painting a still life in order to create your own work of art.

\$5 admission. Advanced reservations are required Purchase tickets in advance through the Wilton website.



Preservation Conversation - Montpelier

Friday, July 28; 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM

Join us this summer for coffee with the preservation and curatorial experts from historic sites featured in our exhibition Vivid View: The Art and Science of Paint Analysis and discover their latest restoration initiatives. Illustrated talks explore the physical evidence and review the curatorial process followed by a panel conversation with those in attendance. Optional exhibition tours follow.

\$15 each or register for all three for \$40. Purchase tickets in advance through the Wilton website.

KEEP UP WITH ALL OF WILTON'S PROGRAMS AND EVENTS AT

WWW.WILTONHOUSEMUSEUM.ORG/EVENTS

UPCOMING MUSEUM EVENTS



Jammin' on the James - August

Saturday, August 12; 6:00 PM

We close out the series this summer with the fantastic Adrian Duke Project - and we look forward to seeing you all next summer!

Free to the public. - Donations are encouraged. The Museum will be open for tours prior to the concert so come early, secure your place on the terrace and enjoy a tour of the house.

Family Day - Color Creator

Wednesday, August 23; 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM

Bring the family by for a tour of the historic house, geared for elementary and middle school aged children, followed by a special activity related to Wilton's current exhibition, VIVID VIEW: The Art and Science of Paint Analysis. After taking a special tour of Wilton's current exhibition and learning about the importance of paint create your own masterpiece. Learn some of the basics of creating paint in order to create your own work of art.

\$5 admission. Advanced reservations are required Purchase tickets in advance through the Wilton website.



Preservation Conversation - Monticello

Friday, August 25; 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM

Join us this summer for coffee with the preservation and curatorial experts from historic sites featured in our exhibition Vivid View: The Art and Science of Paint Analysis and discover their latest restoration initiatives. Illustrated talks explore the physical evidence and review the curatorial process followed by a panel conversation with those in attendance. Optional exhibition tours follow.

\$15 each or register for all three for \$40. Purchase tickets in advance through the Wilton website.



Gatsby Afternoon Picnic

Saturday, September 9 (with raindate of September 10); 11:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Grab your boater, your garden party finest, your picnic basket, and join our partnership with the Art Deco Society of Virginia. Journey back in time to the 1920s where afternoons on the lawn consisted of friends, food, and frivolity!

Tickets must be purchased through artdecova.org



CLOSING LECTURE

Art Under the Microscope

Join us before the exhibit comes down.

Thursday, September 14; 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Presenter: Dr. Susan L. Buck, Ph.D., Conservator and Paint Analyst

Explore the hidden world of materials beneath the surface of fine art to discover what they can tell us about the history and hidden meaning of works of fine and decorative arts.

\$10 - with light reception. Purchase tickets in advance through the Wilton website.

KEEP UP WITH ALL OF WILTON'S PROGRAMS AND EVENTS AT

WWW.WILTONHOUSEMUSEUM.ORG/EVENTS

Conserving the Collection

This spring, two items in Wilton House Museum's permanent objects collection were conserved by furniture conservationist Bill Ivey. These newly conserved objects of mid-eighteenth century English furniture reflect the aspirations of the Virginia gentry and their taste for hot drinks and quick games.

Bill Ivey treated a Neoclassical style Mahogany Gaming Table c. 1770 to stabilize the table's structural integrity. Specifically Mr. Ivey addressed the end assembly which has become visibly unglued and the adjacent side of the interior backgammon playing surface. Covered in embossed and polychrome leather, the interior backgammon surface had become disengaged from the rabbet or frame holding it in-place. The delicate inlay of the reversible and removable checkerboard table top also required stabilization.

Additionally, the museum also conserved a Rococo or Chippendale Style Mahogany Kettle Stand c. 1760. One of the gallery sides was off the stand and the joints of the gallery were cleaving.



The kettle stand and gaming table reflect social activities of the eighteenth century. Their display at Wilton House Museum illustrates the gendered spheres of influence within the household. Displayed directly below the portrait of Anne Harrison Randolph in the Master Chamber, the kettle reflects her role as hostess. Sharing tea with Mrs. Randolph in this more private room would have been an honor. Likewise, the gaming table within the more masculine sphere of the Study was a place where the Randolph gentlemen enjoyed socializing with friends - when fueled by drink could become rowdy, as evident in Wilton House Museum's gaming table. There is a record of historic spilling and staining of liquid over its life.

Entering the collection in the 1950s, these items also reflect the tastes and interests of the mid-twentieth century when acquired from a local dealer by the museum's furnishings committee. It was during this period that the Colonial Dames made a concerted effort to furnish the historic interiors of Wilton as period rooms based on Randolph estate inventories.

Stakeholders Contribute to Strategic Plan

Throughout the spring, Wilton House Museum has been working with Richmond-based Floricane Consulting to conduct a community engagement initiative to strengthen the museum's strategic planning.

Working with the museum's employees and Strategic Planning Committee, Floricane facilitated stakeholder roundtables with leadership donors, program attendees and cultural partners, educators, and neighbors. The capstone event in this process was an open house held at Wilton to receive direct feedback from the public.

Thank you to the many people who took part in this effort to position Wilton House Museum to achieve a clear, audience-centered vision for the future.



Visitor's Count - Be Our Guest!

Wilton House Museum has partnered with the American Association of State and Local History (AASLH)'s Visitors Count program to survey our museum tour visitors. Over several months, we worked closely with AASLH to craft and administer a survey to allow us to better understand the interests of our visitors and evaluate our tour experience. The results of these surveys will inspire our museum's on-going strategic planning and influence long-range goals in better understanding and identifying with our audiences. Wilton House Museum wants to include the voices and opinions of those who visit our site in the crafting of meaningful and engaging tour experiences.

The Visitors Count Program is a visitor research program that provides visitor generated answers and evaluation of services. "Guided tours of the museum remain our primary product and expression of our mission," shares Executive Director Keith D. MacKay. "We must continue to invest in this program and assess its successfulness in doing so." Visitors Count goes beyond tallying attendance numbers or gathering demographic information; rather, it will provide an understanding of what visitors expect, need, and want when visiting an historic house museum like Wilton. More importantly, it will help gauge what will entice them to return and remain engaged.

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

The National Society of The
Colonial Dames of America in
the Commonwealth of Virginia
at WILTON
215 South Wilton Road
Richmond, VA 23226