



## Day of Thanksgiving and Prayer.

In Council, Nov. 29, 1821

Whereas it has pleased Almighty God to extend blessings of his merciful Providence to this city in restoring the health, and preserving the lives of its inhabitants—And whereas Council, sensible of the blessings, and grateful to God for his continued mercies, have determined that a day should be set apart for Thanksgiving and Prayer.

Resolved unanimously, that WEDNESDAY the 12<sup>th</sup> day of December next be set apart as a day of Thanksgiving and Prayer to God for the many blessings conferred on the inhabitants of this city—that the Clergymen of all denominations be requested to perform Divine services in their several places of public worship, and that the citizens do abstain from their daily avocations on that day.

In obedience to the above resolution I do hereby request that, on the day set apart by Council for Divine Service, the shops in the city be shut, labor be suspended, and that all would unite in Prayer and Thanksgiving to God for his protecting care during the past season.

The Marshall and City Constables are required to observe and prevent interruption of the solemnities of the Day.

James Morrison, Mayor.

December 6, 1821. *Daily Georgian.*

## American Restaurant J. FECHAUX,



Having since his return to this city met with cheering encouragement both from inhabitants and residing strangers, begs leave to acquaint the public generally that he has opened his new Establishment near the Exchange, and next door to Mr. Trochlot's Confectionary, where will be found at any hour of the day until midnight, every article relating to his line, viz:

**RELISHES** of all sorts

**PASTRY** and, cookery, both in the American and French style  
**OYSTERS**, plain and done in any way which cooking will

admit

**BEEF-STEAKS**, Terrapins, Soups, Coffee, &c.

**BREAKFASTS, DINNERS, OR SUPPERS**, served up hot or cold

**CHOICE DISHES** and **PASTRY**, sent out to private families at the shortest notice

>Military Corps and other Associations furnished with Oyster or any other Suppers

His charges on the whole will always be found moderate and suitable to the times.

On Monday his three Rooms will be in readiness, and he will then begin to deal out his small pastries, consisting of Minced Meat, Oysters, Cranberry and Apple Pies, which will be served out every day at 11 o'clock. A.M.

J. FECHAUX flatters himself with the hope that from the goodness of his fare as well as by his care, the cleanliness of his house, and the promptness of his attendants, he will be able to retain and serve the patronage of the public and particularly that of his former customers.

N.H Mr. Dargene, well known in the first Hotels in New-York, Augusta and at Saratoga Spring as a top-rate cook and excellent pastry maker, is now attached to the above establishment and will of course do his utmost to suit the taste and please the palate of those who may visit the Restaurant. November 29, 1821. *Daily Georgian.*

## DAVENPORT HOUSE

### CALENDAR—November 2011

**Tuesday, November 1 from 9:30 until 11:30** - Road Scholars/Preservation Program

**6 to 8 p.m.** – SAA Junior Interpreters

**Wednesday, November 2**

**from 9:30 until 11:30** – Road Scholars/Preservation Program

**12:30 p.m. in the Kennedy Pharmacy** – Coastal Museum Association with Jamie Credle as speaker on the Program in New England Studies

**6 p.m.** – Veteran Junior Interpreter meeting (topic: 1820s clothing)

**Thursday, November 3 at 8:30 a.m.** – Davenport House Endowment Directors

**Friday, November 4 at 9 a.m.** – Fall Garden Planting

**9 to 10:30 a.m. in the Kennedy Pharmacy** – make-up Docent Training Class (content session)

**10:30 in the Kennedy Pharmacy** - 2012 Oyster Roast Committee meeting

**Saturday, November 5 at 5:30** – Yellow Fever Cast Party and Program Evaluation

**Monday, November 7 at 7 p.m. in the Kennedy Pharmacy** – Harvest Lecture Series program delivered by Dr. Tim Drake on "Death and Burial Customs in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century"

**Tuesday, November 8 from 9:30 until 11:30**- Road Scholars/Preservation Program

**12 noon in the Kennedy Pharmacy** – Davenport House Committee

**6 to 8 p.m.** – SAA Junior Interpreter program

**Wednesday, November 9 from 9:30 until 11:30**- Road Scholars/Preservation Program

**12 noon** – Trustee's Garden Club/Design Subcommittee meeting

**Thursday, November 10 at 2 p.m.** – May Day Committee meeting

**Friday, November 11 from 4 to 7 p.m.** – Garden Rental

**Saturday, November 12 from 4 to 7 p.m.** – Garden Rental

**Monday, November 14 at 7 p.m. in the Kennedy Pharmacy** – Harvest Lecture Series program delivered by Dr. Veronica Gerald on "*All Shut-eye Ain' Sleep: Burial Customs and Homegoing Customs of the Low Country*"

**Tuesday, November 15 from 6 to 8 p.m.** – SAA Junior Interpreter program

**Thursday, November 17 from 8:45 to 4 p.m.** – Volunteer Trip to Bluffton

**6 p.m. at Trinity United Methodist Church** – Historic Savannah Foundation Annual Meeting, program speaker Todd Groce, reception to follow

**Monday, November 21 from 9 until noon** – December interpretation prep

**ALL STAFF MEETING** – 5:30 p.m.

**Tuesday, November 22 from 6:30 until 8 p.m.** – SAA Junior Interpreter/December interpretation prep

**Wednesday, November 23** – DH closes at 1 p.m./last tour at 12:30 p.m.

**Thursday, November 24** – Thanksgiving/Museum closed

**Friday, November 25** – SAA JI Day – all day

**Evening** – Holly Jolly Trolley Tour (every night through December 23)

**Saturday, November 26** – SAA JI Day – all day

**Monday, November 28 at 2 p.m.** – DH Docent December Interpretation Preview

**Tuesday, November 29 at 10 a.m.** – DH Docent December Interpretation Preview

**6 to 8 p.m.** – SAA JI tea and costume program

### KEEP IN MIND FOR DECEMBER:

- **December 1 through 15** – 25% off shop discount for Friends, Staff and Volunteers

- **Saturday, December 3 from 5 to 7 p.m.** – Davenport House Christmas Party (Y'all Come!)

- **Monday, December 26 through Friday, December 30** – Holiday Evening Tours by Candlelight (Get your costumes ready!!)

### SHOP NEWS:

- **New selection of games:** See handsome wooden game boxes featuring the Davenport House logo for a double deck of cards, dominos and “shut the box” games at \$14.95 each.



- **Fragrance item:** In November we expect a shipment of scented wax bowls from the Habersham Candle Company, Cornelia, GA. This Georgia produced item provides a fragrance without being lit (unlike a candle) and sells for \$22.50.

- **Thank you:** Our terrific inventory workers on September 30 were **Charlotte Rehmert, Arla DaCamara, Raleigh Marcell, Gail Connolly, Dottie Kraft, Lauren Purcell, Beth Kinstler and Paula Cummins.**

### DOCENTS:

- Our Fall 2011 Docent Training Class of five is finishing up the class-

room portion of the course. Following that, each participant will follow four different docents on a tour and then present an evaluation tour to Dottie before giving tours to the public. Please welcome **Pete Connolly, Mary Kosmal, Tom Owens, Patty Rogers and Lynn Townsend** to the DH family.



- **Tour Time!** Please know that a 40 minute tour that is advertised as being 30 minutes is acceptable; a 50 to 55 minute tour that we advertise as 30 minutes is not. You may know this story, several years ago the DH was called by a AAA rep who asked if we had changed what we do. DH staff responded “No.” The rep said AAA had sent a secret shopper to the visit us and the tour took 50 to 55 minutes instead of the advertised 30. We realize this tour time gives some docents stress in not being able to complete a tour in the allotted time. Please know that no one is standing behind you with a stop watch. However, some docents take an overly long time, particularly in the basement before going upstairs. Your guests and your colleagues would appreciate your keeping the tour moving.

- **ADD ONs:** Please understand we add on visitors who get to the front desk between 5 and 8 minutes past the tour start time to allow them a chance to visit without having to wait 20 minutes for the next tour. We try not to add anyone after the group has seen the office. We appreciate your patience and cooperation with this. PLEASE KNOW: You, the docent, do not have to repeat everything in your orientation for late arrivers. You may say, ***“This was the home of the master builder Isaiah Davenport and was built in 1820. I am happy to repeat the earliest part of***

***the tour at the end for you. The museum has the standard museum rules,”*** and then continue their tour.

- **A docent asked,** how high the ceilings are: Basement 7’4” originally 6’-7 1/2”, 1st floor 11’10”, 2nd floor 8’8”, Attic – 8’6”

- **Woods:** In the past, docents may have been told that the interior woodwork in the exhibit area is mahogany. This is incorrect. We believe it to be pine.

### VOLUNTEER TRIP – THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 17 – ALL DAY!

**Rice Plantations Center, Civil War Pillage and Contemporary Art Colony! BLUFFTON, SC**

Please have your check into Jeff by Thursday, November 3 to participate in the DH volunteer field trip to Bluffton. Once all the travelers have paid, staff will figure out transportation arrangements. The museum has secured a 12-passenger van. Several travelers are driving in individual cars. If there are more van passengers than space in the van, staff will ask individual drivers to add travelers to their cars. All in good fun!

**Note date and travel times:**

**TRAVEL DATE** – Thursday, November 17.

**DEPARTURE FROM THE DH PARKING Lot** - 8:50 a.m.

**RETURN FROM THE DH PARKING LOT** - 4 p.m.

### FALL PLANTING

-**Raleigh Marcell** will lead volunteers in planting Italian pots and the parterre on Friday, November 4 at 9 a.m. Plant materials will include white cabbage, white peacock kale, red giant mustard, bright light Swiss chard, variegated glechoma, curly parsley, dwarf white snapdragons, medium snap dragon, blotch white pansies and white dianthus. An extra flat of dianthus is on order to put in the niches out front. These plants are to last us until May!



- **Garden Rentals in November**  
The word about town is that “every” square is rented for Friday, 11/11/11 weddings. The DH garden is as well. It should be a fun late afternoon to do an exceptional Savannah wedding walk. The DH also has a rental on Saturday November 12.

**JIs AND JI DAYS**

- **JI Meeting in November:** It will be nice to have veteran JIs back at the DH after the break in October for the *Yellow Fever!* program. The November meeting will be on Wednesday, November 2 from 6:30 until 7:30 p.m. in the Kennedy Pharmacy. The program topic will be 1820s clothing. Also on the agenda will be working the Christmas Party, having a JI Christmas party, working Holiday Evening Tours and planning programming/activities for the New Year.

- **SAA JIs:** The new Savannah Arts Academy class is meeting on Tuesday nights through November 22. They will give their first tours to the public on Friday, November 25 and Saturday, November 26. Please welcome these newest DH volunteers **Shelby Anton, Abbey Beeler, Katie Bradle, Clare Devlin, Aaron Jennings, Sophie Lichtman, Molly Mayne, Zoe Mims, Liana Mosley, Haley Powell, Skylar Rank, Hunter Ray, Samantha Snyder, Mary Charlotte Terradas, and Jarod Weis.**

**ANNUAL GIVING**

The DH is entering its *Friends of the Davenport House Annual Giving Campaign* which the museum has done since 2003 to add needed income to the operations budget. **Cornelia Groves** and **Archie Davis** are co-chairing the effort this year. Currently we have 140 Friends of the DH and we hope to make and surpass that number in 2012. Volunteers are asked to participate even though they already provide an extraordinary commitment to the museum through their

time and efforts. We would love to get 100% volunteer participation as a sign of support in what amount they (you) are able to contribute. All Annual Giving funds stay with the museum and help keep the lights on and the AC running. In this age of inflation, the funds are needed more than ever. Thank you for being a part of this museum community.

**HARVEST LECTURE SERIES FOCUSES ON DEATH, DYING, FUNERAL, BURIAL CUSTOM – AND THE CELEBRATION OF LIFE!**

The Davenport House Museum offers its first *Harvest Lecture Series* on the first two Monday evenings in November at 7 p.m. with the speakers exploring death, mourning, funeral and burial customs of the American past with an emphasis on the coastal South. Annually the museum hopes to identify topics and speakers that will enliven the understanding of local and regional history relating to material culture interpreted in Savannah’s house museums and tour industry. “For this first series we are sticking with a popular topic which certainly the Davenports as well as all families knew– death and dying. Not intended to be morbid, learning about these topics will reveal the commonalities and the differences between today and the past. With so much focus on the ghostly in Savannah, grasping what historically has happened and is happening to people at the end of a loved one’s life should be very useful to tour guides and museum people - as well as the simply curious - throughout the city,” noted **Roger Smith**, president of the Davenport House Committee.

“We heard the first speaker on **South Carolina Public Radio** show ‘*Your Day*’ talking about a historic house he is connected with and how



customs of death and dying are celebrated in its interpretation,” offers **Jamie Credle**, director of the Davenport House. As luck would have it,

**Dr. Tim Drake** whose day job is as Deputy Director for Pesticides and Etymology at Clemson University, is happy to share with the Savannah community his “all consuming” enthusiasm for history and historic preservation. One of his deep interests is his topic on Monday, November 7, “*Death and Burial Customs in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.*” In May, Drake was recognized with a Daughters of the American Revolution Historical Preservation Medal for saving and interpreting buildings in South Carolina.

“Way back in 1989 **Dr. Veronica Gerald** was the keynote speaker at the ‘*Cultural Survival in the Antebellum South*’ symposium presented by the McKissick Museum of the University of South Carolina. Her presentation was thrilling and brought in both her Gullah heritage and dialect mixed with her academic background. I remember it more than 20 years later,” continues Credle. Gerald is a professor of English at Coastal Carolina University, a Gullah Geechee Heritage Commissioner and the author of *The Ultimate Gullah Cookbook*. The topic on Monday, November 14 will be “*All Shut-eye Ain’ Sleep*”: **Burial Customs and Homegoing Practices of the Low Country**. She is a native of Mullins, South Carolina, a descendant of African slaves brought to Brookgreen and Longwood Rice Plantations in Georgetown County from the grain coast of West Africa in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. She was educated in the Horry County School system, at the University of Maryland, Atlanta and Emory Universities. She is considered a foremost scholar on Gullah history, culture and the Low Country.



You are welcome to attend one or both programs free of charge but you need to call and reserve a place. The program is funded by the 2011 Davenport House Oyster Roast.

## RECOVERING FROM THE FEVER!

The October's *A Mortality Prevails!* living history program was successful with over 500 patrons attending the 18 performances. The majority of the talent were volunteers with most providing their own costumes. The program creation was provided free of charge.

Our aim was to see more patrons which we did and to provide a different sort of presentation. With our town hall meeting and vignettes in the house, we did that.

The talented and generous cast included **Raleigh Marcell, Jeff**



**Freeman, Iain Woodside, Lauren Purcell, Shannon Wichers, Jan Vach, Jody Christie, Jamal Touré, John**

**Leonti and Tiffany Miller.**

**Claudia Mills** created the hall marquee. **Tiffany Miller** helped adapt the pharmacy backdrop from an old banner used for the Savannah Garden Expo. **Marshell Canney** and **House of Canney** are responsible for most of the beautiful costuming with special note to John Leonti's mayor suit. He was a real *Beau Brummell*.

There was a lot of support staffing for the event. It was vital having capable shop workers to handle the large crowds. Shop workers included **Rachel Zettler, Gail Connolly, Frances Colón, Carlie Ayn Williams** and **Gayle Mongrandi**.

The cast looked forward to the treats volunteers brought each evening. They really did "work for food."

Thank yous go out to the food/snack providers **Judy Howell** and **Susan Wenzlick, Karen Matteo, Helen Linskey, Charlotte Rehmert, Martie Campbell, Linda Meyer, Marty Barnes,**



**Betty Schwarz, Sissie Simpson** and **Jan Kemp.**

Of chief concern was the safety of our guests, so having volunteers to watch and assist with groups moving up and down the stairs – particularly to the attic – was important. We are grateful to the group monitors **Deanna Clarke, Helen Linskey, Marty Barnes, Lindsey Scott, Hannah Morales, Elijah Scott, Gayle Mongrandi, Carlie Ayn Williams, Rose Ann Hooper, Jamillah Kelly, Lauren Booker, Gabrielle Rashleigh** and **Marty Barnes.**

Contributing to the popularity of the program was the support from the local media. We know we received support from **Savannah Morning News, ConnectSavannah, 98.7 FM, WJCL** and **WTOC.** The staff would like to know other outlets that supported the museum by promoting the program. The DH is also grateful to merchants who allowed it to put posters in their windows.

## COLLECTIONS NOTES

- **Handsome new object:** See in the Office our new watch box made by **Foley Cabinet-making.** It is similar to a Rhode Island piece ca. 1765 (Item #0056 Brunk Auction's). The details are: 7 1/2 tall x 6/8, cherry dovetailed, mahogany tablet door with carved shell pediment, restoration glass, brass hinges and knob. Thank you to **Claudette Engvall** for finding a craftsman to make the box and seeing to its completion.



- Also in the Office under the level are three carpenter's planes which indicate Mr. Davenport had and understood the tools of his carpenter's trade.

## MADEIRA TOURS OF FALL:

On October 21, the DH completed its fall series of Madeira tours. It took a large volunteer effort to

make this series happen. Thanks to the volunteers who helped with it all - **Roger Smith, Karen Halloran, Marty Barnes, Maria Sanchez, Abby Schreiber, Charlotte Rehmert, Dottie Kraft, Helen Linskey, Sherene Lamarche, Frances Colon, Katherine Owens, Brooke Wilford** and **Pat Seguire.** The series will begin again in March and run through the spring on Thursday and Friday evenings.

## Historic Savannah Foundation Annual Meeting:

Welcome in the new HSF year on Thursday, November 17 at Trinity Methodist Church at 6 p.m. Todd Groce will speak on "*General Sherman: Savannah's First Preservationist?*" HSF's annual report will be presented, out going board members will be recognized and new board members will be welcomed. New Davenport House Committee members will be recognized as well.

## WORTH MENTIONING:

- **A farewell note:** Our fine volunteer Rene Fila and her husband Joe recently moved to Greensboro, NC. We will miss them both.
- **Visitation:** At the end of the fiscal year, we learned that our annual visitation for 2010-2011 was 35,390 which was 2,770 over the previous year.
- **On the phones:** Thank you to Helen Linskey who did extra phone duty in October
- **New on the weekends:** Gabrielle Rashleigh will give tours on the weekends at the DH.

## IT'S CRAZY BUT IT'S ALMOST HOLIDAY TIME: LET'S GET READY

*November is the month the museum preps for the December holiday season.*

The DH schedule is as follows:

- **Invitations and Party - Invitations to the DH Christmas Party** will go out around November 14. The party will be held **on Saturday,**

**December 3 from 5 to 7 p.m.** when volunteers, Friends and staff will enjoy each other's company. Volunteers are always generous in providing dishes (appetizers and sweets) for the bountiful table. There will be a sign-up on the kitchen door in November for volunteers to note if they will bring a dish and what it might be.

**- December Interpretation** - On Monday, November 21, volunteers and Jeff will prep the museum exhibit rooms for holiday interpretation. Since Christmas was not observed with decorations—Christmas trees and gift giving, etc. — the way we do by early 19<sup>th</sup> century Savannahians, the Davenport House's interpretation during the month of December focuses on the end-of-year observance (New Year's Eve and New Year's Day) which was more secular and celebratory. Docents may pick up a copy of the December interpretation from Dottie by November 22.

**- Up and Running:** Everything will be all set for December interpretation by the late afternoon of Monday, November 21 when the DH will have an **ALL STAFF MEETING** to review the exhibit area and discuss the season. [All Staff Meeting at 5:30 on November 21].

**- Volunteer Docent Training for Holiday Interpretation:** There will be a training/refresher of our December interpretation on Monday, November 28 at 2 p.m. and Tuesday, November 29 at 10 a.m. Docents should choose a time that suits them best.

**- Holly Jolly Trolley Tour:** The DH and Old Town Trolley partner to present holiday tours November 25 through December 23. There can be as many as three trolley tours a night – 6:20, 7:50 and 8:20. At the DH, tours emphasize our December interpretation and should last no more than 20 minutes. We could use volunteer assistance with this duty. Jeff, Raleigh and Jamie are the staff involved with presenting these tours.

**- Holiday Evening Tours:** The DH's exclusive public holiday hospitality and celebration will be the week between Christmas and New Year's when our DH folks don their finery (authentic period costumes are preferred – not required) to welcome

visitors during an open-house program which lasts from 6 to 8:30 p.m. (December 26 through 30). You will hear more about this. Staff can provide information about where costumes may be obtained!

**A look at the DH guest register:**

During the month of October 2011, the Davenport House saw visitors from 43 states and 8 different countries including Australia, Belgium, Canada, England, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, and Scotland. Home-towns included Aptos, CA, Long Neck, DE, Myakka, FL, Shawnee, KS, Calvert City, KY, Chaska, MN, Papillon, NE, Colts Neck, NJ, New Windsor, NY, East Northport, NY, Owasso, OK, Bend, OR, Idalou, TX, and Horse Pasture, VA.

**Where They Heard About Us (in descending order of frequency):**

Tour guides (Ghost Tour); trolley tours (Old Town Trolley, Oglethorpe Tours, Old Savannah Tours); brochures; Internet; guide books (Fodor's, Frommers, AAA, Lonely Planet); Visitors Center; concierges (Hyatt, 1895 B & B); friends; relatives; books (Eugenia Price); walk by; map; return visit; magazine; history; New York Times; former JI; dating former JI.

**What They Had To Say:** "Very nice." "Well presented." "Very Interesting tour guide." "Excellent guide." "Loved it." "Best house tour so far." "Wonderful." "Beautiful." "Extremely informative and enjoyable." "Very well done." "Wonderful tour guide, Pat." "Unforgettable" "Great presentation." "Fabulous." "Like the tour and the house." "Enjoyed Dirk's guided tour. Very informative." "Savannah's finest." "Thank you! We really enjoyed the tour." "Enjoyed details shared." "Fun and informational." "Pat was wonderful." "Educational." "It feels like a family lived here." "Authentic charm!" "Awesome tour guide!" "Such a pretty house." "Excellent. Informative. Entertaining." "Thank you, Karen, for a wonderful tour." "Our guide was fabulous - house amazing."

Notes from a lecture:

## **Architecture and Landscape of Federal New England**

(I hope you can see Isaiah Davenport in these lecture notes. I sure did.)

The most anticipated lecture I attended at the Program in New England Studies (PINES) this past summer was the one given by J. Ritchie Garrison, Director of the Winterthur Program in American Material Culture, who spoke on **Architecture and Landscape of Federal New England**. His comments stemmed from the research he did in completing the book Two Carpenters: Architecture and Building in Early New England, 1799-1859. The two carpenters in his book are father and son, Calvin and George Sterns of Northfield, MA. However, I could not help substituting Isaiah Davenport's name into Garrison's remarks which were about the environment and times which shaped Davenport, the builder. The below are embellishing notes all to be attributed to Garrison.

It is important to understand the inter-relatedness of human culture and the natural environment – in this case New England. Culture is shaped by the natural environment (which of course includes coastline, rivers, hills, as well as natural resources such as trees, clay and stone) and historical timing. The natural landscape influenced choices. Between 1790 and 1840 radical change took place in the landscape of New England as well as up and down the Eastern Seaboard. "The Atlantic was New England's front door." And, the rise and fall of prosperity was related to the influx of cash to the area.

The French Revolution, the largest and the longest war of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, lasted until 1815. The long war in Europe shaped and affected New England. With war "tying up" European business, much Caribbean and European merchant endeavors were taken over by American merchants (to China and the Far East). American merchants filled a void. With the rise in



The Dinner Party. Ca. 1820.  
Henry Sargent. BMFA.

circumstances, consumption filled the void left by the war (the American Revolution). In harbor paintings of seaports like Boston one can see the change which took place in domestic centers.

Great architecture happened all over, not just in Boston.

Asher Benjamin, the American architect whose pattern books stabilized architecture and transitioned between the Federal period and the Greek Revival, was a New Englander. With rapidity people were moving around and transferring design ideas. These ideas were transferred by people as well as by books, including Benjamin's pattern books. Architecture was much more conservative than other material culture. For example clothing fashions changed much more rapidly than architecture. Domestic architecture was a reflection of conventionality, and it stabilized the family and human relationships.

As for Boston in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, bridges were being built (the one between Boston and Cambridge for example), people were thinking expansively – building a seawall and large buildings. Huge commercial projects on the waterfront were undertaken bringing in laborers and craftsmen from the countryside. But this all came to a halt with *Thomas Jefferson's Embargo in 1807* [remember the earlier DH newsletter article] and resulting economic collapse of New England. [Is this why Davenport left New England?]

Artisans in moving away from the city and from New England intro-

duced things they had learned in the urban center, including the elliptical fan light which was seen in 1805 Boston, to their new homes. They used pattern books a bit but not a lot. They had seen (and maybe worked on) the works of Charles Bulfinch, the architect of note whose works can be seen on Beacon Hill including the Harrison Gray Otis House(s) as well as the Massachusetts State House, and University Hall – Harvard, Faneuil Hall expansion, U.S. Capital; and adapted them to their new environments.

Competition for business drove innovation in the building trades. A builder could make more if he could do something new and be the “go to” person for the innovation. This innovation was not always a “top down phenomenon.” Creating something new could separate you from the rest of the market. And, where would these innovations be demonstrated? In builder's homes! Carpenters brought innovation as well as popular and well executed conventions to their homes. For example, carpenters often built free standing staircases in their homes. However, these took three weeks to build, were very expensive, and were often too expensive to employ in a client's home. A carpenter's home could make his reputation.

Much of the transfer of design and building techniques/innovations came not from pattern books but from what the artisan had learned on the job and brought with him as he moved. These artisans were showing what they learned on the job. As people moved around, worked on or at places, design concepts from England -- high end (not the highest but high end) concepts -- began to be employed in carpenter's homes and well as those of their clients. And, the integration of these houses followed: the hall on the first floor was for sorting hu-

man beings, the second floor was for entertaining and circulating through rooms (Note: See the Henry Sargent paintings *The Tea Party* and *The Dinner Party* that “all” house museums of the period use) and the third floor was for bed chambers.

The Northeast (and the South for that matter) was not divorced from what was going on in the rest of the world. There was the international language of shipping. Warehouses had to be functional, accessible and vertically integrated. The Sternes of Garrison's book understood the seaport world as did Isaiah Davenport.

**A note:** I was so excited to hear this lecture and feel a rejuvenated appreciation of “the carpenter” as a player in architectural innovation and the spreading of building concepts, I went up to thank Mr. Garrison following his talk. He mentioned being familiar with the DH and said Isaiah Davenport produced “high end” work for his clients in the same vein as his subjects the Sternes. In other words, the work demonstrated through the Davenport House is a reflection of the American experience, American concepts, and American innovation. In that, it is second to none in Savannah!  
MJC



The Tea Party. ca. 1824.  
Henry Sargent. BMFA.

# *A Docent Asked About: Free People of Color in Savannah*

After a question from a docent about the “hows” of free-people-of-color in Savannah, we decided to transcribe the notes from one of the lectures at the recent ***Slavery and Freedom*** symposium held through the Telfair/Owens-Thomas House in October. Any misrepresentation of Sumler-Edmonds work as stated in the notes below is with the DH note-taker.

## **Free Black Life in Antebellum Savannah**

**Dr. Janice Sumler-Edmonds** of Huston-Tillotson University in Austin is an authority on the subject through her work on the Mirault family in Savannah.

She began her discussion by relating that years ago in her teaching career she had to convince her students that there *really were* free blacks in antebellum Savannah. She bookended her symposium talk with two generations of Mirault family members -- Louis Mirault in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and his grandson Simon, Jr. during the Civil War and later era.

Louis Mirault was a tailor born in the West Indies. As a skilled artisan he paid taxes and had a profile similar to that of his white counterpart. The major exception was as free black man he was restrained by the discriminatory laws of the time which included:

- Being required to have a white guardian
- Having to register annually and pay a fee. His name and that of other free people of color was published in the newspaper
- Being required to work 30 days without compensation for the county

Sumler-Edmonds noted that the word “free” in the *free man of color*

label is a misnomer, because it does not capture the place in society they held. There was a distinct lack of freedom. However, within the constraints, some prospered. And, because of their race, they were linked to the enslaved population though they served no slave holder .

It was a growing assumption in the white community that if free people were left alone they would give enslaved people hope and aspirations. Thus as the 19<sup>th</sup> century progressed through the antebellum era the Georgia legislature passed more and more restrictive laws which we refer to as *black codes*.

### **Question: *Who were free people of color in Savannah?:***

They were people who were born free or emancipated. Those born free from the West Indies formed the nucleus of the free black community. However, some free blacks migrated from their homes in other states (Sumler-Edmonds noted a black family from New York that moved here). Also, one could either be manumitted by his master or buy his freedom For example—Andrew Bryan bought his wife and daughter out of slavery. Several free blacks married enslaved women and purchased their freedom.

**Question:** How large was the community? Demographically, the antebellum free black population was never as large or comparable in numbers with the free black population in Charleston. (1790 census – 112 free people of color in Savannah, 568 in Charleston; 1810 - 530 free people of color in Savannah, 1400 in Charleston; and 1840 – 632 free people of color in Savannah, 2,700 in Charleston )

**Question:** How did they manage to survive? One explanation is the

church which was the heart and soul of the black community. It provided institutional support for the black family (even though it was not recognized by law) and provided avenues for leadership to emerge.

Examples of leadership:

**Andrew Marshall** convinced the white community to allow the first black church. The First African Church had a membership of 1,400 people – both enslaved and free.

**Henry Cunningham** was born into slavery and obtained his freedom in 1802. That same year, Second African Baptist Church was founded where he was preacher. He had a rebellious nature and ran afoul of the law including on one occasion reading ***David Walkers Appeal*** (1829) – a indictment of racism - in public.

Free people of color contributed to the economy of the city – owned real estate (not after 1818 though)

### **As businesspeople:**

Male free people of color were tailors, barbers, draymen, etc. Free black women helped to support their families through paid labor – hucksters, seamstresses, nurses, washer women.

The authorities often looked the other way with regard to education and clandestine schools. However being a teacher put literate blacks at risk. The punishment on the books for being caught and convicted was a \$100 fine and 39 lashes. Sumler-Edmonds says this was not strictly enforced.

**Question:** Why couldn't a free black be kidnapped into slavery? That is the point of the guardian who could attest to the status of the free person.