

Our Institutional History

1955:

~ Katherine Summerlin, step-daughter of Mr. Goette of the Goette Funeral Home (now the Kehoe House Inn) purchases the house and side-garden with the intent of demolishing it for a parking lot to accommodate the funeral parlor. The seven founders of Historic Savannah Foundation try several times to convince Mrs. Summerlin to sell the property. She finally concedes and at the time of the sale the house was vacant.

~ Historic Savannah Foundation purchases the Davenport House for \$22,500, hours before its imminent demolition.

1962:

~ Restoration of Davenport House is completed.

1963:

~ Davenport House opens to the public as a house museum.

~ Mrs. Ethelyn Nightingale McKinnon begins her tenure as director of the Davenport House.

1964:

~ Davenport House bedrooms are "refurbished."

1965:

~ Davenport House is featured on the cover of the Savannah phone book.

1967:

~ Davenport House is featured in the March *Magazine Antiques* along with other Savannah sites.

~ Davenport House is included in the historic Savannah architectural survey, *Historic Savannah*, which was funded by the Junior League of Savannah and Historic Savannah Foundation.

1972:

~ Davenport House is placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

1973:

~ Davenport House purchases the lot behind the museum.

~ Davenport House conducts archeological dig of lot behind the Museum.

1974:

~ Trustees Garden Club begins work to create a garden at Davenport House.

1975:

~ Lady Bird Johnson visits Davenport House.

1977:

~ Mrs. Ethelyn Nightingale McKinnon received the Davenport Trophy from Historic Savannah Foundation for her work at the Davenport House.

1983:

~ Davenport House installs its museum shop on the ground floor.

1988:

~ Davenport House acquires its first SCAD student interns.

~ Davenport House gets a new metal roof and has its chimney bricks pointed.

1990:

~ Davenport House Committee is appointed.

1991:

~ Davenport House conducts a Conservation Assessment Survey to evaluate its collections and operations.

1992:

~ Davenport House commissions scholar Susan M. Mays to research the life of Isaiah Davenport.

~ Davenport House Museum Committee affirms interpretation of the historic house to focus on Isaiah Davenport and his family between the years 1820-1827.

1993:

~ Davenport House conducts the first major restoration since the house opened, including window replacement, rear porch and structure stabilized, etc.

1994:

~ Davenport House commissions scholar Ellen Rogers to write *Furnishings Plan and Recommendations for the*

Collection. The Isaiah Davenport Estate Inventory (DI) becomes the basis for interpretation of the Museum.

~ George Fore conducts a paint analysis and paint chronology of Davenport House interiors.

1995:

~ The Davenport House Collection Policy is created, based on professional museum standards and ethics. The document governs collections care as well as the process of acquisition and disposal of museum objects.

~ Davenport House Guidebook published.

~ The Davenport House's mission statement is revised.

~ A reproduction floor cloth in a faux marble design is commissioned and installed by Bob Christian.

1996:

~ The Olympic torch passes by the Davenport House.

~ Davenport House adopts a hurricane disaster plan.

~ A major restoration and replacement of exterior shutters is completed by Shuttercraft.

1997:

~ The Attic Sale fund raiser is held. De-accessioned objects as well as donated items were sold with the proceeds benefiting the Museum.

1998:

~ Davenport House is featured in an episode of *America's Castles* on the A&E television network.

~ Visitation numbers peak at 66,000 due principally to the popularity of *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* book/movie.

1999:

~ The Davenport House Endowment Fund is created for the perpetual care of the Davenport House with founding donors being Craig Barrow III, Dale Critz Sr., Wiley and Clare Ellis and Cornelia Groves. Generous donations poured in from the community.

~ DH Restoration Committee holds its first meeting in March.

~ Frank Welsh begins an extensive paint analysis to discover original colors, wood graining and wall treatments. He discovers the original wood graining on the interior doors and evidence that wallpaper was the principle wall treatment. These findings are presented in November to the DH Restoration Committee.

~ Penelope Hobhouse, renowned garden designer, is contracted to work on garden design improvements.

~ A patron donates the Kennedy Building at 323 East Broughton to the Davenport House for use as the Museum's gift shop/orientation area and office.

~ The Davenport House Drawing Room mantelpiece is returned and reinstalled.

~ Chimneys and fireplaces are sealed from the outdoor elements, stopping the damaging effects of 36 years of drafts, moisture and air pollution entering the Museum.

~ A ceiling medallion in Isaiah's Office is installed by notable ornamental plasterer David Flaharty of Philadelphia.

~ The Museum acquired of late 18th century corner cupboard. It is a rare example of late 18th century low country-made furniture.

~ A web page is created for the Museum.

2000:

~ Scholar Page Talbott is contracted to work on refining the Museum's period room interiors and interpretation.

~ Davenport House Preservation Standards and Cleaning Methods for Collection Care is adopted by the Davenport House Committee.

~ A second Endowment Fund is created for the perpetual care of the DH Garden. An original donation of \$10,000 inspired others to give.

~ A series of Restoration/repairs of worn/damaged collection items was undertaken by Greg Guenther.

~ Any unnecessary electrical outlets, vents and lighting fixtures are removed.

~ All window sashes and frames were repaired or replaced and glass re-glazed.

~ The Museum made repairs to plaster work, walls and ceilings.

~ A state-of-the-art air conditioning system is installed.

~ The Davenport Trophy was awarded to Clare Ellis and Cornelia Groves in recognition of their substantial contribution to the preservation of the DH.

2001:

~ The first Savannah Garden Expo is held as an education program/fundraiser to benefit the Davenport House and Historic

Savannah Foundation. Clare Ellis and Lyn McDonald were co-chairman.

~ Consultant Dr. Page Talbott's recommended authentic reproduction wallpaper to Restoration Committee.

~ Museum floors are refinished.

~ Authority Sarah Chase presented her paint analysis findings from work at the Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace to the Restoration Committee. This analysis is the basis for the paint colors on the bedroom level of the Museum.

~ A building assessment provides recommendations for improving lighting, fire protection and accessibility.

~ The Museum acquires a set of six Hitchcock chairs similar to those owned by the Davenport family.

2002:

~ The Davenport House-Kennedy Pharmacy Historic Structures Report produced by Surber Barber Choate and Hertlein Architects.

~ The first Ethelyn Nightingale McKinnon Award is presented to longtime volunteer Anne Pearce Moye.

~ The Davenport House collection records are computerized using the PastPerfect software program.

~ Reproduction wallpaper is hung by nationally known wallpaper hanger/historian Jim Yates.

~ The Museum's interior doors are restored to the original faux grained surface by nationally known craftsman Malcolm Robson.

~ UV protective shades are installed to the two exhibit floor windows.

~ The Museum acquired an Asher Durand's engraving of John Trumbull's Declaration of Independence.

~ Historically accurate bed hangings, curtains and slipcovers were installed in the Master Bedroom.

~ Jamie Credle was named director

2003:

~ The custom of closing the Museum for a week in January for annual cleaning began.

~ The DH Docent Training Program is initiated.

~ The Museum began publication of a monthly volunteer newsletter.

~ The DH Junior Interpreter Program is initiated.

~ *Dreadful Pestilence: Encountering Yellow Fever* program premiered in October.

~ Evening Christmas tours began (week between Christmas and New Year's).

~ The annual giving campaign, Friends of the Davenport House, began.

~ The Museum acquired a set of bamboo chairs similar to those owned by Davenport Family.

~ The DH Cyclical Maintenance Plan is completed and implemented.

2004:

~ *Dreadful Pestilence* was recognized by the Georgia Association of Museums and Galleries as the "Museum Program of the Year."

~ Frank and Lucy Brannen donated a silhouette of Sarah Rosamond Davenport.

~ The Davenport House's mission statement was revised and a three year plan was proposed.

2005:

~ The Isaiah Davenport House Museum received the *Preserve America Presidential Award for Private Restoration* in an Oval Office ceremony which included President George W. Bush, First Lady Laura Bush, HSF President Zelda Tenenbaum and DH Director Jamie Credle. A delegation of DH supporters traveled to Washington to attend the event, which included a reception and program in the Rose Garden.

~ The DH was awarded funds to conduct an institutional survey (MAP 1) through Museum Assessment Program, which is funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services and is administered by the American Association of Museums. The DH matched the grant award and a site team was assembled to conduct the work for the two-year survey.

~ DH Endowment Director Chairman Craig Barrow was named Museum Patron of the Year by the Georgia Association of Museums and Galleries.

~ A volunteer maintenance team was assembled to discuss maintenance issues. This initiated an annual process delineated by the Museum Cyclical Maintenance Plan.

~ Textile expert Natalie Larson of Colonial Williamsburg was consulted on a slip-cover project for the Drawing Room, Morning Room and Office.

~ Graduate Intern Melissa Turgeon cleaned, indexed and appropriately stored items from the 1973 archaeological dig.

~ The DH developed a pilot program titled, *Potable Gold: Savannah's Madeira Tradition*.

~ The DH recruited Savannah Arts Academy students for a special Junior Interpreter Program.

2006:

- ~ DH Collections Policy and Procedures was revised and approved
- ~ Appropriate slip covers were installed in Office, Drawing Room and Morning Room.
- ~ A sisal rug to simulate grass matting was installed in Cornelia's Room.
- ~ Davenport House Disaster Plan was reformulated.
- ~ The front steps repaired by mason Alex Skelton.
- ~ IMLS MAP 1 grant executed with a self-study and a site-visit by a surveyor.
- ~ The basement level including the museum shop was renovated and painted. New lighting was installed.
- ~ A new website www.davenportmuseum.org was created and put online.
- ~ Seven weddings were performed in the garden on Valentines Day
- ~ The October living history program was revised to include the character Miss Mary Lavinder, Georgia's first female doctor

2007:

- ~ The Davenport House Museum: Savannah's Beacon of Preservation was published
- ~ The Museum acquired the engraving of "Rev. Henry Kollock D.D. Late Pastor of the Independent Presbyterian Church Savannah".
- ~ The Museum acquired the engraving entitled "Surrender of Cornwallis".
- ~ The Museum accepted a loan of a c. 1780 tea set from the Colonial Dames of Georgia.
- ~ Davenport House began a partnership with the Visitors TV Network. A site-specific video is produced to be shown in 2,800 hotel rooms in the city.
- ~ Davenport House, Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace and the Andrew Low House instituted the Pioneers in Preservation Pass, a multi-site visitation pass.
- ~ A new living history program, "**our once cheerful island': The World of Savannah in 1824** was presented in October.

2008:

- ~ The Kennedy Pharmacy rehabilitation began.
- ~ Two new living history programs, "Tea at Mrs. Davenport's and Tea in the Garden", were introduced
- ~ "**Greater than anything ever witnessed in Savannah": Welcoming General Lafayette, the Nation's Guest**, living history production, was Researched, developed and presented in October
- ~ SCAD graduate student Kristi Chase conducted her Masters Thesis on the Davenport House's "tenement era".
- ~ DH patron Cornelia Rankin Groves received the Davenport Trophy, the highest honor bestowed by Historic Savannah Foundation.

2009:

- ~ Artist Allan Drummond created custom art-work for a Davenport House towel.
- ~ Three new programs, *This Old House: Director's Preservation Tour of the Davenport House*, *Early Bird's Preservation Tour of the Landmark District's East Side*, and *Curator's Tour and Highlights of the Collection* were researched, developed and presented in the spring
- ~ Kennedy Pharmacy's rehabilitation was completed. Jim Abraham was the project manager.
- ~ A revised yellow fever living history program entitled *Yellow Fever! Savannah Epidemic of 1820*, was presented in October. The production included a 12 cast and utilized the entire museum site from the Kennedy Pharmacy to the Museum's attic
- ~ Repairs were made to the bluestone sidewalk
- ~ An accessibility initiative was undertaken.
- ~ The Museum entered into a partnership with Tauck Tours to present a series of after hours experiences for motor coach patrons.

2010:

- ~ A series of renovations took place to the lower level of the Museum including an update to the kitchen and an accessibility upgrade.
- ~ The Davenport House was recognized with **Governor's Award in the Humanities**.
- ~ The Museum purchased a drawing by Christopher Murphy showing a detail of the DH Entrance.
- ~ The Museum created a new program, *Discovering 1820s Savannah: Early Bird's Walking Tour of the City Isaiah Knew*.
- ~ Intern Tiffany Miller upgraded collections storage with curtains for storage units.

2011

- ~ The Museum introduced a new fundraiser, the **Davenport House Oyster Roast**, at a private home in Beaulieu.

- ~ The Museum began awarding the first Davenport House Community Service Scholarship. The first recipient was Raven Bryant, a graduating senior at Savannah Arts Academy.
- ~ The Museum acquired a replication of a 1765 Rhode Island watch box to house the gold watch representing Isaiah Davenport's timepiece in the Office.
- ~ The Museum hosted two summer interns, Amy Jackson, Wesleyan College in Macon, and Amy Blankshein, SCAD.
- ~ The Museum began a partnership with Armstrong Atlantic State University's Road Scholars program and presented the program **How to Save a House: The Preservation of the Davenport House Museum and the Founding of Historic Savannah Foundation**.
- ~ The Davenport House Harvest Lecture Series was inaugurated. The speakers were Dr. Tim Drake of Clemson University on **Death and Burial Customs in the 19th Century** and Dr. Veronica Gerald on *All Shut-eye Ain' Sleep: Burial and Homecoming Customs in the Low Country*.
- ~ With funding from the Trustees Garden Club the garden ambient lighting was upgrade.

2012

- ~ The Museum conducted a construction and landscaping project to the lane between the Kennedy Pharmacy and the Davenport House which visually linked the two buildings.
- ~ Two ornamental crab apple trees were removed and two new ones acquired to replace them.
- ~ Repaired were made to ten windows being affected.
- ~ Four orientation panels were created for the basement level. There topics included *What style is it, People at the DH, Who was Isaiah Davenport, Why does this house matter*.
- ~ The Museum produced two DVDs through Cosmos Mariner Production. They are *The Historic Savannah Foundation Story* and *Isaiah Davenport, Portrait of a Master Builder*.
- ~ The Museum initiated Davenport House Dancers (early 19th century dancing) program with professional dancer Elizabeth Albe as instructor.
- ~ The DH Harvest Lecture program welcome Martha Katz-Hyman who spoke on *The World of a Slave: The Material Culture of Slavery in the United States*.
- ~ The Museum sponsored two Preservation Festival events, Isaiah Davenport, the Carpenter and The Garden Party.
- ~ The Museum sponsored three summer interns. Meredith Halloran, who assisted with the annual maintenance inspection and collections inventory; Doreen Roy, who conducted a windows assessment with a comprehensive report and Emma Smith, transcribed the Isaiah Davenport's biography and counted the steps between the three Preservation Pass Partners.
- ~ The second Davenport House Community Service Scholarship was awarded to Carlie Ayn Williams, a graduating senior at Savannah Christian Preparatory School.
- ~ The Davenport House presented an artificial food making workshop with John Sherrer of Historic Columbia Foundation.
- ~ The museum presented 2012 Oyster Roast at a private home on Schley Avenue.

2013

- ~ The Museum executed a series of repairs which included making all windows operable, repairing several windows (sills, frames, and sashes), painting (including the dormers and touch up painting through the exhibit area except the faux graining).
- ~ The Museum Removed and replaced refrigerant and condensate pipe insulation in the attic and on the outside of the building.
- ~ The Museum Installed a new roof on the Kennedy Pharmacy.
- ~ The Museum initiated the Committee for the Evolution of the DH to plan the site's vision to fully restore the museum house and move the shop to the Kennedy Pharmacy building.
- ~ The Museum created two interpretive panels for the lobby area – one names the enslaved people at the DH and the other shows how the basement area may have looked.
- ~ The Museum produced through Cosmos Mariner Productions a DVD entitled *Yellow Fever in Savannah* as an orientation for its Yellow Fever programming. The film received a Telly Award.
- ~ The Museum created a brochure providing information on the history and evolution of its courtyard garden.
- ~ The Museum began a relationship with East Broad Street Elementary by welcoming two third grade classes for a 3-hour program.
- ~ Harvest Lecture Speaker was Dr. Loren Schweningen who spoke on *RUNAWAY SLAVES in Savannah and the South*
- ~ The third Davenport House Community Service Scholarships were awarded to Ellie Darbyshire of Savannah Country Day School and Rachel Zettler of Savannah Arts Academy.

~ The DH Community participated in the 2013 Oyster Roast at a private home on Dancy Avenue.

~ The Museum began an archaeological project which will conclude in 2014.

2014

– 2014 DH OYSTER ROAST was held at Lebanon Plantation hosted by Marry and Howard Morrison.

MAINTENANCE:

– Painting: Executed a painting project of the shutters, porch and doors. In the process, we found six shutters were rotten. They were replaced.

– Interior/Stair Railing: A wood sample was analyzed (finish cross sectional analysis) yielding information about its history and composition.

DISADHERENCE OF STAIRHALL WALLPAPER:

– National Trust for Historic Preservation grant partially funded a study to determine the causes of the problem.

PLANNING (EVOLUTION OF THE DH/KP):

– Coastal Heritage Society/Preservation produced schematics and reconfigurations documents for the transformation of the KP into office and gift shop space and the lower level of the DH into staging, orientation and meeting space. Estimation work is ongoing.

ZONING:

– The DH's zoning designation was changed by the Zoning Board of Appeal to "Assembly Hall" allowing for garden use/rentals.

SHOP:

– Following a study trip to Charleston museums/historic sites, the DH shop upgraded displays and merchandise selection during 2014.

PUBLIC RELATIONS:

Website: Put purchasing capabilities on the DH website for selected shop items, museum admission and program ticketing.

EDUCATION/INTERPRETATION/RESEARCH:

– Archaeology Project: The LAMAR Institute conducted an excavation in January, analyzed the evidence and has written a draft report which will be finalized in 2015.

– Lafayette Fête: For the spring Savannah Tour of Homes and Gardens the Museum created a living history program which featured dancing, French pastries and discussion of the visit of Lafayette to Savannah.

– Road Scholars/ASU: The Museum created two new experiences for senior travelers through this program. For the spring series the DH presented "Alcohol Consumption in Early 19th Century" and in the fall it presented "Lafayette in Savannah."

– Yellow Fever: Dreadful Pestilence, the DH's premiere living history program was updated for its final season in October.

– Awarded the third Davenport House Community Service Scholarship to Liana Mosley of Savannah Arts Academy

RECOGNITION:

– VIDEO AWARDS: Two documentaries about the Davenport House garnered prestigious Telly Awards in March 2014. Both were created for the Museum by Michael Jordan and Nate Nauert of Cosmos Mariner Productions.

– The Silver Telly (the highest level of Telly Award) in the category TV Programs, Segments, or Promotional Pieces—Documentary, was captured by "Isaiah Davenport: Portrait of a Master Builder," a half-hour documentary Cosmos Mariner Productions created for the Davenport House Museum.

The Bronze Telly, in the category Non-Broadcast Productions—Education (for academic use) goes to "Yellow Fever in Savannah," a six-minute orientation video Cosmos Mariner Productions created for the Davenport House Museum.

– Award of Excellence in Education and Interpretation: The DVD produced by Cosmos Mariner Productions for the DH's Yellow Fever program entitled Yellow Fever in Savannah received the Coastal Museums Association's first organizational awards for education and interpretation.

2015

WALLPAPER PROJECT: In January and early February following the removal of the existing wallpaper and preparation of the wall surfaces by Two Brothers Plastering, Inc. new wallpaper, Berrien Ribbon Trellis, was installed by Jesse Coopersmith of Alan Coopersmith Wallpaper, LLC in the DH Entrance Hall and Stairs. The paper was exactly copied and produced by Adelphi Paper Hangings, LLC from fragments found in the Major John Berrien House across Broughton Street from the Kennedy Pharmacy. Authorities say this paper was used in the Berrien House in the 1820s.

EVOLUTION OF THE KENNEDY PHARMACY AND THE DAVENPORT HOUSE – Moving Ahead: In accordance with HSF Capital Campaign initiative the DH leadership agreed to move forward with plans to evolve the site. Exhibit designer/Museum Planner Doug Mund of dmdg2 was found to bring clarity to the project. The DH's Ad Hoc Committee on

the Evolution of the DH/KP, which is a group of Museum stakeholders, met in September and enthusiastically welcomed Mund's insights into the future of the site. Under his facilitation the site is undergoing Campus Master Planning.

STRANGER THAN FICTION: After six years of successful performances, the Museum decided to give its signature October program living history production Dreadful Pestilence: Savannah's Epidemic of 1820 a rest. In hopes of capturing a portion of the audience in town to experience ghostly and paranormal activity in October, as well as entice locals to a new show, Raleigh Marcell researched, developed and directed a new show called Stranger than Fiction: An Exploration of the Extraordinary in Old Savannah, which premiered in 2015 with a cast of eleven performers.

URBAN SLAVERY: After expanding its training to docents on the subject of Urban Slavery in 2014, the Museum created the program entitled Early 19th Century Urban Slavery in a Mechanic's Household in Savannah, GA for Road Scholar participants offered through Armstrong State University. As part of this initiative, a brochure on the subject was created to amplify and supplement daily docent-led tours.

ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT RESULTS: In February, Lamar Institute turned over the results of its work on the property including artifacts and the two volume analysis Deep, Dirty Secrets: 2014 Archaeological Excavation at the Isaiah Davenport House, Savannah, GA, which is now accessible on the Museum's website. Coastal Museums Association presented Lamar Institute with an Award of Excellence in Education and Interpretation for its work on the Davenport House's project.

GOOD PEOPLE/NEW PEOPLE: The Museum welcomed and served over 33,000 visitors through daily tours and special programs in 2015. To accomplish this in informed ways the ever faithful, joyful and growing corps of docents, shop volunteers and staff and performers answered the call to service. Six new volunteer docents and one adult staff docent were welcomed during the year along with five summer Junior Interpreter program participants and thirteen Savannah Arts Academy Junior Interpreters. Two JIs and one SCAD student stepped up to staff docent. The Museum welcomed three new shop volunteers and three new shop assistants. In 2015 the Museum expanded its opportunities for interns and welcomed five interns during the year including four summer interns. One intern, Renick Hall, worked at the Davenport House during her two quarters at SCAD.

DH TEAM/MAKING IT HAPPEN: A team of committed volunteers hunkered down and went all-out in creating fundraisers for the DH in 2015. Under the leadership of Jan Vach and Linda Meyer the 2015 Oyster Roast was an unqualified success. Jan followed this with a mini-fundraiser, Girls Night Out, at her home. The two are teaming up again along with their committee members Brooke Wilford, Katherine Albert, Ann Koontz, John Leonti and Diane Kaufman to present the 2016 Low Country Boil and Oyster Sampler at Delta Plantation.