Docent Dispatch

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Carlyle House Architecture

By Susan Hellman

<u>Attic</u>: During the Carlyle period, the attic was unfinished and probably used for storage. It's possible that slaves may have slept up here, although the space was unheated. Green subdivided the attic into six rooms and added dormer windows to the front and rear elevations, making this a habitable space. He used the doors from the Carlyle first floor for these six rooms. Holes in the chimney indicate that Green used stoves to heat this area. It is unclear who lived in this space during Green's time. It could have been some of his nine children, hired workers, slaves, or even overflow hotel guests.

<u>Basement</u>:
As you can see from the 1970s photo of

the cellar, the brick flooring here dates to the restoration. The floor had been lowered by about a foot at some point in time. There was a doorway on the south wall that was bricked over during the restoration because it was not original to the house. The well in the gift shop was probably used for cooling

perishables, and was closed up ca 1780-85. The restoration crew purposely left the outline of the well in situ, so that future visitors would know where it was.

The current bathroom area was a room with a fireplace and a well that may have been a cistern. The well was 4' in diameter and 13' deep, and was filled in the early 20th century. This room also had the brick structure you see in this photo. What is that? The restoration team never figured that out. The well was under that pile of bricks. The cat was found in the southeast chimney mass of this room when the chimney wall was being removed for structural reasons. The restoration team put the cat back in the same place they found it.

<u>Vaults</u>:
James Green constructed the area under the terrace to be used as storage for his hotel business. He built similar

storage vaults under the hotel at the front of the house, possibly under the lawn as well. Green also moved the original keystone from the front of the house to the exterior doorway leading into the vaults from the rear garden. Early 20th century urban legend claimed that these vaults were the foundations of a native American fort upon which Carlyle built his house, which we know is nonsense. We refer to the westernmost room as the rubble room, as it contains architectural elements of the house that were removed during the 1970s restoration. The curved thing that looks like a boat is the frame for the 19th century fanlight that hangs in the Architecture Room.

The easternmost room contains a well at the far end (above). We do not know who dug this well, but it was dug between 1750 and 1850, and predated the construction of the vaults. Notice that it is cut off by the wall; the entire well isn't contained within the house. Does this mean that the well dates to the Carlyle period, before the one-acre property had been whittled down to ¾ acre?

For more information, see the restoration report on the alexandriava.gov website: Search "Fauber Garbee" Alexandria.

Dear Micheline:

For the past 23 years, Thursday morning visitors to Carlyle House have had the pleasure of following Dr. Micheline Levy's tour. That changed the first week of May, when Micheline decided to step away from her usual Thursday shift. Although she will no longer be here every Thursday morning, Micheline will continue to be involved with Carlyle House by volunteering on an as needed basis. She has promised to come whenever we need her. Those of us who got to spend time with her every Thursday will miss her hugs and her smile. In light of her many years of service to Carlyle House, we will award Micheline the title of Docent Emeritus at our fall Volunteer Appreciation Dinner. We hope that you will join the celebration on Sunday, September 10. Thank you, Micheline! This is au revoir, not adieu.

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