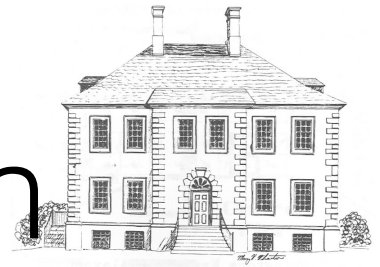


Carlyle Connection

“It’s a fine beginning.”



Have You Hugged a Historic House Museum Today? By Susan Hellman

For several years, an unsettling topic has roiled the historic house museum profession. Can a historic house museum survive in today’s world? These are extremely challenging times for everyone; historic house museums are no exception. Yet lean times are when historic house museums matter most. We provide educational, enriching, and downright fun experiences at low cost to families of all economic levels. We offer great value to our local communities. Instead of seeing a tough economic climate as an impossible challenge, house museum staff and supporters must seize the opportunity to find this cloud’s silver lining. Can we increase our visibility, stature, and value? How can we find a way to create financial sustainability that will help preserve our sites and further their missions?

Historic house museums became popular in the United States beginning around the 1950s. The 1976 Bicentennial greatly increased American interest in history and historic sites. After the passage of the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act, federal and state governments provided monies to offset the high operating costs of historic house museums. But beginning in the 1990s, government money slowed to a trickle. Historic sites that had relied on government support began to falter and were forced to make disastrous cuts. A decade later, the recession caused tremendous harm to the already-struggling industry. The not-so-secret of historic house museums is that most, including Carlyle House, run shockingly large annual deficits. Some, like Carlyle House, have generous parent organizations that cover financial shortages. Others have large endowments that pay operating costs. Sites without a safety net or an endowment have had to close their doors and/or make painful cuts, generally to staffing. Cuts to staff and programs lead to disillusionment, and public visitation drops, as does revenue. House museums that are

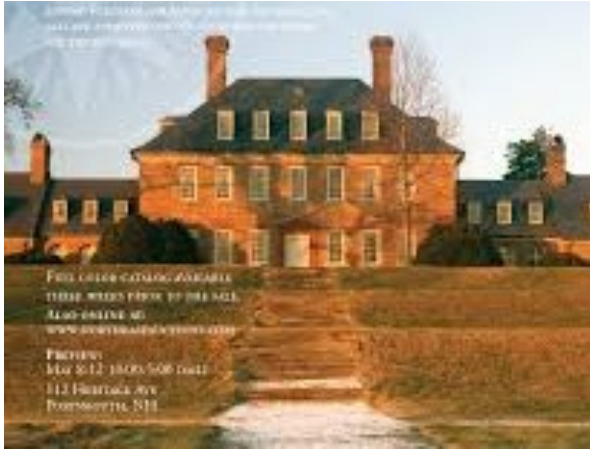


Robert E. Lee's Boyhood Home

struggling for survival are increasingly viewed as out of touch, elitist, and unresponsive to societal changes, often because they can no longer afford to offer public programming.

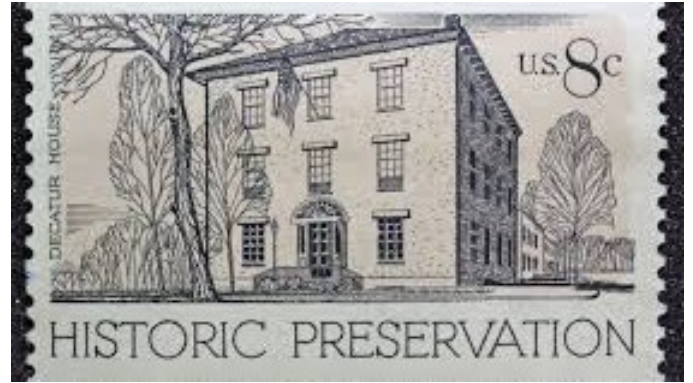
Some owners of historic house museums, hoping to at least preserve the house itself, have attempted radical strategies, including selling off the properties. Many of you remember when the Lee-Jackson Foundation sold the Boyhood Home of Robert E. Lee into private hands in 2000. The house is no longer open to the public, but it appears to be well cared for and in good condition. Unfortunately, a sale doesn’t always work that way. Take the case of Carter’s Grove, completed in 1755 for Robert “King” Carter’s grandson, Carter Burwell. The mansion is an architectural gem, a star in every American architectural history curriculum. By 2007, the site was losing money as an historic house museum and putting an undue financial burden on its owner, the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. CWF decided to sell the site to

the seemingly perfect buyer, a wealthy Virginian with a love of history who planned to fully restore the house and reopen it to the public. But the buyer went into bankruptcy and the plantation deteriorated. CWF put the estate on the market again with a \$14.95 million price tag. A year later, an equity investor from Chicago bought the estate for \$7.5 million, a half-price bargain. Hopefully, history will not repeat itself and the new buyer will properly care for this historic gem.



Auction catalog for contents of Carter's Grove

Selling a site isn't the only drastic approach employed by organizations hoping to cut financial losses. For example, the National Trust for Historic Preservation owns twenty-seven historic sites across the country, many of which rely heavily on the Trust for financial support. The Trust has implemented various tactics in an attempt to create economic independence for these sites. At one site, Decatur House on Lafayette Square in Washington, the Trust entered into a partnership with the White House Historical Association, which established the National Center for White House History at Decatur House in 2010. On the plus side, White House Historical spent millions of dollars renovating the house, which had extensive deferred maintenance that the Trust could not afford to undertake. On the negative side, many regard this "solution" as a failure because the house no longer operates as a historic house museum, and is not available to the general public. We can no longer delight in Benjamin Henry Latrobe's exquisite design or experience the grandeur of the double parlor. The stories of Stephen Decatur, Latrobe, the Beale family, and our old friend John Gadsby are now a mere footnote to the story of the White House.



Decatur House

At another Trust site, Woodlawn in the Mount Vernon area of Fairfax County, a similar strategy is in process. In 2010, the Trust entered into a partnership with the newly-created Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food and Agriculture. Arcadia leases approximately five acres of land at Woodlawn and cultivates the old formal garden. They use organic farming practices, host field trips to their farm at Woodlawn, sell their produce to the CEO's restaurants, and operate a farmers market on wheels that serves underprivileged areas. The Trust is finalizing an arrangement at Woodlawn similar to the Decatur House arrangement, wherein the Trust would continue to own the site and Arcadia would take over operations and site management. Arcadia plans to convert Woodlawn from a historic house museum to an events venue. The role of Pope-Leighey, a Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Usonian House on the property, is unclear in this potential scenario.



Woodlawn, early 20th century

Of course, many historic house museums have been greatly successful during this tumultuous period, and continue to be financially sustainable without having to resort to drastic measures. Mount Vernon is the most obvious example, but cannot be viewed as a typical house museum. Many sites with lesser name recognition are also doing fine in this challenging economic climate. Two examples are Bruce more in Cedar Rapids, Iowa and the Lower East Side Tenement Museum in New York City.

When Margaret Douglas Hall passed away in 1981, she left explicit instructions that her Bruce more estate and its 19th-century mansion benefit the Cedar Rapids community. While many house museums rely on revenue from rentals for weddings and other events, Bruce more cannot. Mrs. Hall's will specifically prohibits private events on the site. Instead, Bruce more exists today as a historic house museum and community cultural center. The site hosts plays, concerts, art shows, parties, even a hot-air balloon festival. Bruce more's operating budget is funded by endowment income, tour and usage fees, membership contributions, the gift shop, grants, and donations. Bruce more Inc.'s laser-like focus on maintaining status as a key beneficial community resource has made the site a vital element in Cedar Rapids, and ensured its financial stability. It may not have the name recognition of Mount Vernon, but it plays an important role in Cedar Rapids. And it doesn't hurt that at least three lions lived on the property during its history.



Howard Hall, Leo, and friend at Bruce more

The Lower East Side Tenement Museum does not have the name recognition of Mount Vernon, nor does it operate as

a cultural center. Instead, it tells a radically different story from most other historic house museums. The visitor learns about the difficult lives of actual immigrant families by touring restored apartments representing different time periods and ethnic groups. Tour the apartment of Victoria Confino, a 14-year old Greek Sephardic who lived here in 1916. Visit the 1870s German saloon of John and Caroline Schneider. See the Levine family's garment workshop from the turn of the century. All of the apartments represent real people who actually lived in the building at 97 Orchard Street. The museum is one of the hottest tickets in New York. Tours sell out daily and advance reservations are highly recommended.



Lower East Side Tenement Museum

Where does Carlyle House fit into this patchwork of solutions geared towards solving the historic house museum puzzle? Fortunately, Nova Parks considers the site an educational treasure dedicated to serving the residents of northern Virginia. If you live in the City of Alexandria, Fairfax County, Arlington County, Falls Church, Loudoun County, or the City of Fairfax, your tax dollars help support Carlyle House and its twenty-four sister parks. Better yet, Nova Parks generates 85% of its total operating revenue from the parks themselves. In other words, golf course fees, site rentals, water park admissions, retail sales, and yes, Carlyle House admissions, etc. produce 85% of the organization's overall revenue. This is a staggeringly high percentage for a public agency or local government, and most consider this high level of self-sufficiency a national model. Therefore, although Carlyle House does not bring in enough funds to support itself, our sister parks make up the difference. This gives us the ability to focus on our educational mission, and to provide high quality public programming. We are

educating a new generation of history lovers, and that's what matters most to us and to Nova Parks.

Through these difficult economic times, Carlyle House continues to fulfill its mission to preserve and interpret the site, its history and collections, as an educational resource for people of all ages and backgrounds to explore the life and times of the Carlyle family in Alexandria, Virginia. Like Brucemore, Carlyle House is a community gem; and like the Lower East Side Tenement Museum, Carlyle House has many compelling stories to tell. Carlyle House is fortunate to be owned by an organization that recognizes the important role that the site plays in the local community, and has no desire to implement radical money-making schemes. Most important to its success, the house has a long history of talented and dedicated staff members, a stellar and committed guide corps, and an extremely supportive Friends organization. These elements combine to ensure a bright future for Carlyle House, no matter the economic forces.



Note: The information above is also based on numerous conversations with Laurie Ossman, Director of Museum Affairs, Preservation Society of Newport County; Stephanie K. Meeks, President and Chief Executive Officer, National Trust for Historic Preservation; David J. Brown, Executive Vice President and Chief Preservation Officer, National Trust for Historic Preservation; David Janssen, Executive Director, Brucemore; Morris J. Vogel, President, Lower East Side Tenement Museum; David Young, Executive Director, Cliveden; George W. McDaniel, Executive Director, Drayton Hall; Erin Carlson-Mast, Executive Director, President Lincoln's Cottage; Max van Balgooy, President, Engaging Places, LLC; Steve Bergstrom, Director of Finance and Budget, Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority; Blythe Russian, Park Operations Superintendent, Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority.

News from the Educator

This fall has yet again been filled with a lot of activity! In October we had a very successful new program Trick or Treat at Carlyle House. John Carlyle made a special appearance to hand out candy to the 267 children and their families who stopped by.



John Carlyle personally welcomes trick or treaters!

This was the first year we have had such an event and I am looking forward to it becoming an annual tradition among the many Halloween festivities in Old Town. School tours are up and running again and we have seen an increase in the number of students that participated in school tours this fall. So far 254 students visited Carlyle House up from 226 at the same time last year. Hopefully this trend continues in the spring when field trips become more frequent. I held a successful Museum Teacher training in September which introduced the new objects to the popular Discovery Through Trash program. I also participated in Docent training with Helen in which we recruited 5 new volunteers. We plan to have training in the spring. I am in the early stages of planning Camp Carlyle 2015 with the dates set for next summer. The dates will be July 6-10, July 20-24, and August 3-7 and the camp will again run Monday- Friday from 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. Registration will open January 1st.

~Vanessa Herndon



News from the Curator

We have had a very lively and exciting fall at Carlyle House with new programming, interpretations and a twist on an old favorite. This year's Death and Mourning exhibit had some fresh ideas breathed into it (very ironic indeed!), and we were most grateful to Doug Cohen who graciously loaned us his box of doctor's materials to enhance the deathbed scene in the Master Chamber. (see photo)

This October, the house continued its tradition of showing different moments in time during a period of death and mourning in a family during the 18th century. Visitors began their tour meeting Cook who was dressed in mourning preparing candlesticks for upstairs. Then they entered the Master Chamber where John Carlyle had just died and his body was

wrapped up in a sheet in the bed with the doctor's instruments on display on a table at the foot of the bed. In the Study, visitors moved to another moment in time: after the funeral, John Carlyle's family members and slaves would have packed up his belongings once the probate inventory was completed. To illustrate this, Vanessa and I closed the Peter Scott desk in the study and draped sheets over the furniture. We arranged one of the mannequins, a young enslaved woman named Sibreia, in front of the covered chairs as though she was the one doing the work.

In the Passage, Parlor and Dining Room, everything was arranged as though the funeral itself was taking place. There were beverages, candles, rosemary, and an invitation to the funeral in the Passage with Moses ready to greet visitors and serve drinks as well as receiving notes of sympathy that were delivered. The family was receiving visitors in the Parlor and the coffin was in the Dining Room as usual. Upstairs, visiting family members, such as Charles Little, a cousin who was an executor of John's estate may have arranged sleeping pallets in the Upper Passage and we had mourning jewelry and china on display. In the Girls' Chamber, Penny was serving tea to John's eldest daughter, Sarah, who was mourning the loss of her father and being consoled by her step-grandmother, Sybil West. George William's room was accented by a single black tricorne hat on the field bed. Overall, it was quite a noteworthy interpretation!

It led to another successful re-enactment of the Death of John Carlyle and we had a dozen re-enactors portray Col.



Carlyle's family members and neighbors for 82 visitors. This was one of our best recent years for visitors to this event. Our thanks go out to Footsteps to the Past and the Old Presbyterian Meeting House who made this event possible.

And, special thanks to Buzz Mooney who created tunnel walls in the modern-day kitchen and hid all of the cabinets and appliances. His background in theater was genius as he and staff created a new experience for our guests. For the first time, visitors entered the tunnel vaults after going through the museum. They met with Col. Washington and learned about water sprites and saw the skeleton of "Kitty Carlyle." (see photo) This exciting month of fresh programming was capped by Vanessa's wonderful night of hosting trick or treaters as you read about earlier! This winter, we will have a lot more programs and the house is currently arranged with a new interpretation. And, the holiday dessert table will be set up on Monday, December 8th, so mark your calendars now and we hope you will come see it in person!

~Helen Wirka



*Friends of
Carlyle House*

*Holiday Open
House*

*Sunday, January 11,
2015*

6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

*Tour the house by
candlelight,
enjoy refreshments
and period music.*

*Please RSVP
acceptances only by
Monday, December
29*

*(703) 549-2997 or
carlyle@nvrpa.org*



Carlyle House Upcoming Events

Soldier's Christmas

Saturday, December 6; 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Come join us at Carlyle House for an annual holiday tradition the first Saturday in December! Step back in time to enjoy colonial life in Alexandria during the holidays at the time of the American Revolution. The Soldier's Christmas program will feature re-enactors from the First Virginia Regiment. Take part in festive activities, including live music, demonstrations of military drill, fife and drum, gaming, and cooking. Sample historic beverages and meet the men and women of the American Revolution. The program takes place on the grounds of Carlyle House immediately following the annual Scottish Walk in Old Town Alexandria. We will offer open house tours during the event. FREE Admission.

Historic Alexandria Candlelight Tours

Saturday, December 13; 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Sunday, December 14; 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Make Historic Alexandria Candlelight Tours part of your 2014 holiday season celebration. See – and taste – historic Alexandria in a whole new light this holiday season! This year's Candlelight Tour blends chocolate and history through special tastings, seasonal decorations, period music, and tours highlighting chocolate through time. Sites include Carlyle House, Gadsby's Tavern Museum, and Lee-Fendall House. The Historic Division of Mars sponsors this historic chocolate event. The tour is self-guided and the sites may be visited in any order. A free shuttle is provided running in a continuous loop between the sites. For information, tickets, and group sales information, please contact Gadsby's Tavern Museum at 703.746.4242. Tickets for this event can also be purchased online at <http://shop.alexandriava.gov>. Advance ticket purchase is recommended. Ticket prices are \$20 for adults, \$15 for seniors, and \$5 for children (ages 6-17).

Fun With Needlework Workshop

Saturday, January 20; 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Make an heirloom! Learn about colonial samplers and stitch your own in the historic and beautiful Carlyle House. Reservations required. \$20 fee includes materials.

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Susan Hellman
Director
Helen Wirka
Curator
Vanessa Herndon
Educator
Kayla Marciniszyn
Collections



Carlyle House Historic Park is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums.

News from the Site Director

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your continued support and good will. Carlyle House is fortunate to have such a dedicated and generous Friends organization. Our Friends do a fantastic job of supporting us by providing funds for little extras that we normally could not afford. To see the latest example of Friends generosity, please stop by and visit the architecture room. For years, our docents have told our visitors the story of the Carlyle House restoration by using an assortment of tattered photos as visual aids.

Of course the images weren't always tattered, but they have been well-loved and well-worn by time. Thanks to the Friends, and a lot of effort by Carole Smith, we now have eight professionally mounted, sized, and framed images to present to our guests. It makes a world of difference.

This year's Annual Appeal and its focus on education and interpretation offers yet another example of the Friends' generosity. The funds collected from the Appeal will go towards enhancing our educational and interpretive programming in a meaningful way. We hope to purchase a replica of General Braddock's uniform in order to enhance our Braddock interpretation. We plan to install a new display in the exhibit room early next year, using iPads to better engage the technologically-savvy visitors and tell our story in a new and fresh way. Children attending our camps and programs love to dress in period clothing, but we have very few items for boys. Annual Appeal funds will go towards purchasing Revolutionary War uniforms for the boys so they can have as much fun as the girls. Speaking of camp, the Appeal also includes a "send-a-kid-to-camp" component. While our summer camp is very reasonably priced, it is out of reach for many economically disadvantaged children. We want our camp to be available to children of all economic classes. The staff of Carlyle House is committed to fostering and encouraging a new generation of history lovers. Each child who attends a camp or a program here leaves with a smile on his or her face and a greater appreciation of our history.

You should receive your invitations to the holiday party any day now. This year, the Friends Board decided to do something a little different by shifting the party from December to January. Many people have other obligations in December, and it can be difficult to relax and enjoy one another's company. This year we will celebrate on January 11, and we hope you all can join us!

Happy holidays to all, and we look forward to seeing you soon.

~Susan Hellman



Summer camp fun

Carlyle House Historic Park

A property of the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority

121 North Fairfax Street ~ Alexandria, Virginia 22314

www.novaparks.com

