



Carlyle House DOCENT DISPATCH

Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority 

July 2006

Peter Scott Desk Discovered in Museum Collection

Mary Ruth Coleman

Ron Hurst, Vice-President of Collections at Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and member of the Board of the Friends of Carlyle House, recently informed us that the desk in Carlyle's study has a definitive attribution to important colonial cabinet maker, Peter Scott of Williamsburg. Colonial Williamsburg has been investigating Scott pieces and became interested in learning more about our desk last year. A team of curators and conservators from CWF came to the Carlyle House and carefully measured, examined and photographed our piece.

Colonial Williamsburg Foundation has several Scott pieces in their collection and has the original receipt for a bureau dressing table that Scott made for his landlord, Daniel Parke Custis of New Kent (near Williamsburg) in 1754. The piece next appears on Custis's estate inventory in 1757 and then on the list of things widow Martha takes to Mount Vernon when she marries George Washington in 1759. It later is listed on George's estate inventory at his death in 1799. It also appears in the 1835 Chapman painting of George and Martha's chamber at Mount Vernon. The bureau table spent about 130 years at Tudor Place after Martha's death, before it was returned to Mount Vernon by the family in 1937, where it currently resides.

According to Mr. Hurst, the Custis-Washington piece is structurally identical to our desk and bookcase, which has a history in Gloucester County, also near Williamsburg. They both have the same base moldings, foot shape, foot blocking, dust board construction, dovetail patterns, drawer construction and secondary woods (oak and yellow pine). The following Scott pieces have been definitively identified: four bureau dressing tables, two desks, seven desks and bookcases, three tea tables, a sideboard table (which has the same history as the bureau table at Mount Vernon) and two dining tables.



CARLYLE HOUSE

Mary Ruth Coleman, Director
Jim Bartlinski, Curator

Peter Scott (1696-1775) was almost certainly a British immigrant, who was recorded in Williamsburg as early as 1722. He moved to a shop on Duke of Gloucester Street in 1733, where he continued to practice the cabinet trade until his death in 1775 at the advanced age of eighty-one. While no signed examples of his work are known, Scott's name appears in the ledgers and account books of prominent Virginians including John Mercer, Carter Burwell, Robert Carter, Thomas Jefferson and the aforementioned Daniel Parke Custis.

The desk and bookcase in the Carlyle collection was purchased in 1992 from Brill's Antiques of Newport News, Virginia. The piece had come from a family in Gloucester, Virginia, and fourteen years ago was described as a "Williamsburg desk and bookcase ca. 1740-60". At no time have we ever thought it was originally owned by John Carlyle. It was chosen for the collection because Carlyle's 1780 probate inventory lists one walnut desk and bookcase valued at 12 pounds, which we believe would have been made in Virginia. It is very exciting to now have a definitive attribution to Peter Scott who supplied furniture to the Virginia gentry for more than fifty years.

Docent Refresher Training, I & II

On Tuesday, July 18th at 6:30 pm, Mary Ruth will present part one of docent training—a slide lecture on the life of John Carlyle, the history of the site and on the current Furnishing Plan for the museum. The training will last about two hours.

For the second part of training, Jim Bartlinksy will be giving an in-depth tour of the house including information about room uses, preservation, and paint colors. This special curatorial tour will be held in August. Sandwiches will be served at both sessions. The summer is a great time to take a fresh look at the information and update your tour. Please sign up in the office if you plan to attend.

If you know anyone who you think might like to become a docent, please let them know about the training and pass on their contact information to a staff member. We will be glad to call any prospective docents and give them more information about our volunteer opportunities.

A Note from Mary Ruth

New Curator of Education Selected

We are delighted to announce that Erin Adams will be returning to the museum! In 2004 when Erin enrolled in the Museum Studies Graduate Program at GWU, she began working for us as the Housekeeper. Since that time she has spent a semester internship here as well as working as a weekday, weekend, and rental supervisor. She is currently our Museum Shop Manager. Erin has the education and experience to come right in and help out in all areas of our operations. Congratulations Erin!

Tour Request

Please cut your introductions in the Servant's Hall to a minimum of 5 minutes. After watching the video, visitors are anxious to get upstairs!! We have had a few complaints, so try to get to the upper floors quickly.

Housewarming

Docents are needed on Sunday, August 6th from noon to 4 pm as we celebrate the 253rd anniversary of the day the Carlyle family moved into their new home. This annual event is free to the public and often draws a large crowd. The house will be full of costumed interpreters reenacting *a day in the life* of the Carlyle family. Please sign up in the office for this special event.

New Roof for Museum

We are delighted to report that Congressman Jim Moran has obtained a \$50,000 grant from *Save America's Treasures* to assist the Northern Virginia Regional Park



Authority put a new roof on the Carlyle House. The permits have been obtained from the city of Alexandria and the bid packages have gone out. We expect the work to start on the new roof in November after our rental season is over. This is a

very important step in stabilizing the house as it reached its thirtieth year anniversary last January. We hope the coming hurricane season will pass us by with no harm to the house and collection before the installation!