

Neighborhood survey to help guide Lippitt House programs

Former Preserve Rhode Island summer intern, Melissa Higgins, has returned to the Lippitt House to include the museum in her thesis, *Searching for Relevance: The Importance of Conducting Visitor Studies in Historic Houses*, to be completed for her Master's Degree in Museum Studies at the Harvard University Extension School. Melissa is working with several historic house museums to survey their communities to gather information on interests and current levels of participation in order to create better programs for local residents.

Melissa has attended public events at Lippitt House to record guest experiences and interest in the museum. In addition, a survey will be mailed to the College Hill neighborhood and emailed to event attendees and to Preserve Rhode Island's *Around the Block* e-newsletter audience. Goals of the survey include gathering data on demographics, choice of leisure time activities, what respondents hope to achieve/take away from the leisure activities they engage in, whether respondents are familiar with historic house museums in the area, and what themes related to historic

house museums are of interest to respondents.

Finally, Melissa will put together a focus group to delve more deeply into prospective themes of public programs to identify activities of interest and to solicit feedback on promising ways to engage the community and build stakeholder groups.

If you're interested in receiving a survey, please contact Melissa at (413)237-2659 or melissa_higgins13@hotmail.com.

RI Historical Society continues to catalogue entire collection

Preserve Rhode Island and the Rhode Island Historical Society are collaborating to catalogue the entire Lippitt collection. The Lippitt House Museum includes remarkable artifacts and furnishings, the majority original to the house. While the collection had been inventoried, it was lacking the professional catalogue that is the foundation for interpretation and curation. The Rhode Island Historical Society has developed a comprehensive system for cataloguing objects and archival information. Its work at the Lippitt House is a pilot project, extending their system to collections owned and housed by other organizations. Centralizing information in one state data bank, by indexing the kinds of materials available for research and display, would be useful to scholars and curators. Access to the catalog will be managed according to best practices, keeping in mind the security of the materials themselves. The cataloguing project is underway and will continue in 2011.

Lippitt House Office Makeover

In January, the staff reorganized the Lippitt House office, cleaned, consolidated files, repainted the floor, and purchased affordable IKEA furniture to create an efficient work space for volunteers and staff members.



Host your next gathering with us!

The Governor Henry Lippitt House Museum is a wonderful setting for many occasions. Whether you are planning a romantic wedding, anniversary, special birthday, retirement party, lecture, or business meeting, the museum will provide a unique and intimate setting in all seasons. Contact Dave Wrenn at (401)453-0688 or dwrenn@preserveri.org for more details.

We Can't Do All This Without Your Support!

The Lippitt House Museum relies on the generosity of volunteers and donors to preserve the property and present it for public use and enjoyment. Our growing cadre of volunteers have a good time while they help the Museum. We welcome people to get involved! If you are interested in volunteering to help provide public programs, conduct historical research or take care of the property, please contact us. Finally, special thanks to the many generous donors who help with financial support of the house and programs. Thank you for helping preserve this remarkable National Historic Landmark for now and for future generations.

Governor Henry Lippitt House Museum

An Historic Property of Preserve Rhode Island

199 Hope Street
Providence, RI 02906

Phone: (401)453-0688

Fax: (401)453-8221

LippittHouse@preserveri.org

www.preserveri.org

Preserve Rhode Island

Valerie Talmage
Executive Director

Susanna Prull
Preservation Services Rep

Kurt Bagley
Property Manager

David Wrenn
Lippitt House Administrator

Connie O'Connor
Development Administrator

Missy Bennett
Bookkeeper

PRESERVE RHODE ISLAND is the statewide non-profit for historic preservation. Our mission is to protect Rhode Island's historic structures and unique places for present and future generations. We carry out our mission in two major ways: Stewardship - we are ourselves stewards of historic properties; and Preservation Services - we help others throughout the state to be great stewards.



957 North Main Street, Providence, RI
(401) 272-5101 www.preserveri.org

An Historic Property of Preserve Rhode Island

Governor Henry Lippitt House Museum

2010 Annual Review

December 3, 2010

Historic Structures Report Completed



West elevation drawing

Mesick Cohen Wilson Baker Architects has submitted a draft Historic Structures Report for the Lippitt House and is in the final stages of completing the project. The three-year study is providing a wealth of information about the house and will be the "bible" for planning repair and maintenance projects for years to come.

The report includes:

- ◆ Beautiful measured drawings, including elevations and floor plans
- ◆ A detailed conditions assessment

pointing out building issues, large and small

- ◆ New research on the history of the building, including a discovery that the house was built for comfort as much as show. The plumbing, heating and gas systems were cutting edge for 1863, earning the house praise as "the most comfortable house in Providence"
- ◆ Recommendations for treatment include setting priorities for urgent, necessary and important repairs

Approaching its 150th anniversary, some parts of this well-constructed house are reaching the end of their life. The Historic Structures Report gives Preserve Rhode Island guidance to preserve the Lippitt House for the next 150 years!

Inside this issue:

Historic Structures Report	1
2010 Hunter Music Series	1
A Concert-goer's Review	2
Tours & Community Venue	2
Halloween Murder Mystery	2
Alcove Restoration	3
CHNA Award to Preserve RI	3
Book to Feature Abby Lippitt	3
Neighborhood Survey	4
Cataloguing of Collection	4
Office Organization	4
Host Your Party at Lippitt	4
Support Lippitt House	4

Hunter Music Series reaches adults and kids alike

The 2010 Hunter Music Series continues to become a greater success each year! Our outdoor family concert attendance more than doubled, with over 160 guests for the Billy Harley concert in August. Families also danced, twirled and bounced around the Lippitt Garden in July with the Toe Jam Puppet Band.

Our two evening concerts inside the museum were sold out. With our new "jazz club" approach in the library, guests could sit at small cocktail tables while enjoying the concert, their beverages and hors d'oeuvres.

Our Cole Porter concert, featuring Yvonne Monnett and

Donald Blais, in June was a wonderful opportunity to combine the history of the family with the music of the evening, as Porter was a friend of Lytton Doolittle, Mary Lippitt Hunter Doolittle's husband.

Read a review of the final concert featuring Amera-nouche on the next page.



Guests take their seats at the Cole Porter Concert in June



Toe Jam Puppet Band in July



Billy Harley in August

Ameranouche dazzles in final 2010 Hunter Music Series Concert

A Concert-goer's Review by Lew Dana

Hearing a concert in a grand old house adds in all sorts of ways to the pleasures of the music. First, there's the fun of walking out of the evening darkness into a tall entry hall warmly lit by chandeliers glittering with brass and crystal. And, after selecting from an array of appealing hors d'oeuvres, having time to sip a glass of wine and saunter from room to room, pretending you own the place.

The lights blink off and on, and it is time to compose oneself for sedate listening.

The stately salons of the Lippitt House Museum - Providence's most intact

Victorian house, they say - may never have heard anything as un-sedate as this. The rooms bounced and echoed with a delightful frenzy of music on a Friday evening as the jazz trio Ameranouche entertained a sold-out audience.

Driving rhythms of bass and guitar backed lead guitarist Richard Shepard's sparkling runs and endlessly inventive harmonies. Even when playing in a minor key, Ameranouche's music still resounded with exuberance. We heard everything from 1930s jazz classics to the Beatles in arrangements that blended the spirit of legendary Gypsy guitarist Django Reinhardt with Shepard's unique contemporary



Ameranouche's lightning fast acoustics fill the house in November

musical vision.

Happy applause, an encore, and, as we stepped into the hall, a send-off choice of freshly-made spice cake or biscotti. Yes, definitely the way to listen to any kind of music.

Tours and Community Venue

Lippitt House welcomed many new visitors via tours and several private rentals by non-profits, businesses and local groups. In addition to our usual tours on Fridays and several Saturdays in the summer, we welcomed tourists during *Tour Rhode Island* and the Central Congregational Church *Garden Tour* in May, Smithsonian Magazine's *Museum Day* in September, and three buses of Providence College students and their parents in November. The House was also the setting for the College Hill Neighborhood Association's monthly board meetings, two lectures and a dinner for the Review Club of Providence, an all day conference for Hasbro from Pawtucket, the 1772 Foundation Annual Meeting and Dinner, and a holiday party for the Brown University Pathology Department. We also received many other unique visitors through our Formal Wedding Photography rentals and a photography session with Vintage Girl Studio.

Halloween Murder Mystery a real thrill!

From the moment guests arrived for the Halloween Costume Dance Party at the Lippitt House on the evening of October 29th, they knew they were in for an adventure! The evening was full of the unexpected and that's how it went, right from the start.

Arriving guests were greeted at the door by the party's hostess, a rather cool and aloof but elegant lady dressed rather regally. As they were loudly announced by the butler, some giggled self-consciously but all seemed delighted as they joined the party.

Guests were invited to wear period costumes and most were indistinguishable from the evening's performers who intermingled with them. Completing the atmosphere was the New York-based vaudeville duo of Gelber and Manning and a guest trumpeter, Bob Leive, who filled Lippitt House with the sweet sounds of period jazz.

Guests happily mingled, enjoying sights and



Photos by Vintage Girl Studios

sounds, hors d'oeuvres, and drinks while admiring the fabulous interior of Lippitt House. The happy party atmosphere was abruptly shattered by a macabre woman shrieking, "Evil, I say! There's evil in this house!" as she wandered from room to room among the guests.

From that point onward, "things" began to happen - a participatory séance, murders, lovely dancing maids in the Drawing Room,

clues were discovered and accusations flew! In the end, the mystery was cleverly solved - the "dead" danced and guests left this historic mansion with unforgettable memories of a fun-filled evening.

The Halloween Costume Dance Party was produced by Chifferobe and featured performances by Miss Wensday, Kristen Minsky, and The TropiGals, and musical artists Gelber and Manning.

Alcove restoration comes alive

Art conservator Bob Dodge continues his painstaking restoration of a trompe l'oeil alcove in the front of the House on the second floor. The project is made possible by generous funding from the Felicia Fund.

As restoration progresses, the surface of one of two primary walls appears to look restored from a distance, but up close another



intensive stage in the restoration process has just begun - the challenge of recreating minute details of the shading that bring the two-dimensional faux painted wood panels and

mouldings to life. The shading technique originally employed is unusual because it was created with small gradations of very thin lines that require detailed recreation as opposed to a traditional artist's technique of blending and blurring colors together for a similar effect.

Next time you are in the house, ask us about visiting the alcove to see Bob's progress for yourself!

Preserve Rhode Island receives College Hill Neighborhood Association's 2009-2010 award for extraordinary service to the community

An excerpt from the award: "In the press of everyday life it is easy to forget that a neighborhood is not just lines on a map or a bundle of demographic data but a specific place—to live, to work, to gather as a community. In our shared spaces—from our streets to our places of worship to our favorite watering holes—we discover ourselves in community. As an organization devoted to preserving and maintaining our shared places, Preserve Rhode Island plays an essential role in our community, ensuring that our beautiful and historically significant structures are protected from ne-

glect, so that we will always have richly evocative places in which to gather.

On College Hill, Preserve Rhode Island maintains and administers the Governor Henry Lippitt House Museum at 199 Hope Street. For the past year, Preserve Rhode Island has generously provided meeting space for the College Hill Neighborhood Association's monthly Board meetings. It has been a special pleasure to conduct our business in such elegant surroundings.

Preserve Rhode Island's commitment to

College Hill extends beyond its relationship to CHNA. Since 2008, Preserve Rhode Island has hosted musical events open to the community at the Lippitt House. On behalf of the community, CHNA wishes to express deep gratitude to Preserve Rhode Island, for their commitment to our community, and to the preservation of our historic places.

Congratulations and sincere thanks from CHNA and the College Hill neighborhood!"

Abby Lippitt featured in biography of Juliette "Daisy" Gordon Low

Stacy A. Cordery, a history professor at Monmouth College in Illinois, contacted the Lippitt House about the connection between the Lippitt family and Juliette "Daisy" Gordon Low, the founder of the Girl Scouts. The staff immediately recalled the photograph (at right) of Abby Frances Lippitt Hunter in Daisy's wedding party portrait. They were indeed good friends.



Abby Lippitt ca. 1893

With this exciting discovery, Ms. Cordery requested permission to use the two photographs shown here in her biography of Daisy, which will include interesting, amusing, or odd bits about Daisy and her world.

Ms. Cordery has also reviewed many of Daisy's letters and other primary sources and shared with us some fascinating details that shed light on Abby's personality. Below is a quote from a letter Abby wrote to a friend on January 2, 1884 about the marriage of Daisy's sister:

"By this time Nellie must be married and off and Daisy has time to think about it. She will miss her awfully and what a nuisance it is any way this getting married and leaving everybody just for the sake of a man. I am only too thankful that May has not taken any such notion. When she does I shall quietly cut my throat."

Yikes! Seems like Abby didn't think too fondly of marriage, although she herself later married in 1893.



Juliette "Daisy" Gordon Low at center. Abby Lippitt top row, third from left.