



A Newsletter for the Volunteers of the 1820 Col. Benjamin Stephenson House

The Volunteer

RoxAnn Raisner, Director

Some Notes on Candles by Sid Denny

The Stephenson probate records indicate that the Stephensons made a single purchase of candles. The implication is that they made their own. The single purchase is also interesting for another reason. The purchase was for eight pounds of candles for \$4.00. The candles were purchased from A. Evans. Interestingly, A. Evans seems to have been a butcher or livestock seller. All of the beef purchased by the Stephensons was purchased from Evans. Additionally, Evans was paid \$4.00 for his services during the 1819 4th of July celebration hosted by Benjamin Stephenson. Beef was selling at 4 to 6 cents a pound, meaning that up to 100 pounds of beef were purchased for the celebration. Evans also was paid \$5.00 by Stephenson for killing some of Stephenson's pigs and salting the pork.

The obvious implication of all this is that the candles purchased by the Stephensons from Evans were tallow candles.

Candles were made from tallow (rendered beef fat) or beeswax. Both were valuable commodities. Pogue's store advertised for the purchase of both items. In an ad in the *Edwardsville Spectator* in September 1819, Robert Pogue offered to buy "at the highest prices" 50,000 pounds of beeswax and tallow. A year later Pogue placed an ad in the November 7 issue of the *Spectator* asking people to come and pay their debts. The ad says that "... from persons who cannot bring the cash, the following articles will be received in payment as the same, viz Bees-Wax, Ginseng, Black Snake Root, Feathers, Lard, Butter, and Tallow."

In general, the beeswax used in candle making was collected by individuals as a seasonal activity to supplement their income. Joseph White, a resident of "Goshen Township" (probably close to modern Glen Carbon), wrote a letter to his brother in

1812. He says, "Bees are scarce but out from the settlement plenty beyond your expectations[.] (t here may be found from one to six or seven betrees [sic] in a day. I find some every year."

A second description of honey or beeswax collection can be found in the Draper Archives of the Wisconsin Historical Society. In a section dealing with St. Louis is the following:

....and others, in the fall, would take a team and a barrel or two, start off into the woods bee hunting and soon fill their barrels, in some instances, finding more bee trees, they would cut them, squeeze out the honey to waste, ball up the wax and [illegible] their load with that article, for which they found a market in St. Louis. A small quantity of bees wax mixed with tallow hardened the candle for summer use. Honey was then about half a dollar a gallon."

Based upon all of the above it seems that pure tallow candles were fine during the winter but tended to melt in the summer, so beeswax was added to harden the candles made for summer use.



Ben's Brigade Meeting

March 22 at 4 p.m.

Plan to attend the first militia meeting of 2008. Members will discuss upcoming events and activities. A documentary video about drill is also scheduled. New members are always welcome.

Contact Walt Raisner or the director if you plan to attend.

March 2008



SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7 Adult Tour, 2-3:30 p.m.	8
9 Sewing Circle 1-3 p.m.	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17 Board Meeting 7 p.m.	18	19	20 Adult Tour 10a.m.-12p.m.	21	22 Ben's Brigade Meeting, 4 p.m.
23 Sewing Circle 1-3 p.m.	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

- March 7, **Thomas Dunn Education Foundation Tour**, 2-3:30 p.m. 24+/- adults
- March 9, **Sewing Circle**, 1-3 p.m., Meeting will take place at the Edwardsville Public Library
- March 17, **Board Meeting**, 7 p.m.
- March 20, **St. Charles Park and Rec. Tour**, 10 a.m.-12 p.m., 33 adults
- March 22, **Ben's Brigade Meeting**, 4 p.m., Members will watch a new video entitled "Von Steuben's Continentals" and discuss plans for the upcoming season.
- March 23, **Sewing Circle**, 1-3 p.m., Meeting will take place at the Edwardsville Public Library.



Two of our young docents, Lillian and Valerie Klebenow, took a break from their duties to enjoy a spontaneous snowball fight during last month's big snow. The sisters had no mercy; even the photographer, Anna Csar, wasn't safe.

Volunteers of Excellence: Amy Mullane & Elizabeth Edwards



It is a cold, snowy day at the Stephenson House as I stand, camera in hand, in the presence of two ladies in their undergarments. I am preparing to take photos of what would have been considered a scandalous scene by 1820 standards: two ladies clothed only in their shifts, stockings, and corsets, in plain view of a spectator. Hugh Hefner would surely want to see more skin but our ladies aren't posing for a centerfold; they are demonstrating the outstanding lengths to which some volunteers will go to recreate history. They are Amy Mullane and Elizabeth Edwards, this month's Volunteers of Excellence. (Or, as Hef would call them, our March centerfolds.)

In a perfect world of historical interpretation, we all would begin building our wardrobes from the skin out, starting with our undergarments to ensure a proper and appropriate fit of our outer garments. Unfortunately, none of us is born with the inherent knowledge that interpreting is our calling, or that we will even enjoy it for long. Most interpreters want to "try on" the role before investing in a period wardrobe, which can be expensive. A period-appropriate corset is one of the most expensive items a female inter-



preter will purchase, but it is an essential foundation to her ensemble. Cost for a quality, fitted corset normally runs anywhere from \$150 to \$300.

Last summer Amy and Elizabeth decided to take the next step toward developing period-appropriate wardrobes. Amy and Liz had previously sewn other items for their themselves, including shifts, caps, and neckerchiefs; but they were missing the one item necessary to display the right silhouette—the corset. Both have been volunteering as interpreters at Stephenson House since 2005 and felt that they needed corsets before sewing garments.

Sewing a corset is a practiced skill, so seamstress Holly Turner of Holly's Alterations in Potosi, Mo., was engaged to help with the project. Liz and Amy took a road trip to Holly's studio and spent the day being measured and fitted. (Unlike a modern bra, a corset must be fitted to the wearer; off the rack will not suffice.) The pattern used to create the finished items was Mantua Maker #1801-3 - 1800-1820 Corset.

In past newsletters, Volunteers of Excellence have been featured in their outer clothes. But I thought it would be fun to picture Amy and Liz in the underclothes they worked so hard to obtain. I want to thank both for their willingness to pose for this issue of the *Volunteer*. We hope that their efforts will inspire others to take the next step toward authenticity.

To make this possible, seamstress Holly Turner has negotiated a special rate \$119 for anyone else from the Stephenson House who would like to have a corset made.

(By the way, a properly fitted corset is very comfortable and supportive to your back.)

RoxAnn



News & Needful Things

THANKS:

- Thank you, Amy and John Mullane, for the donation of two wooden card tables.
- Thank you, Liz Edwards, for the ladies' boots and lace-up shoes donated to the wardrobe.
- Thank you, Arlene Bell, for the serrated knife donated to the Valentine Dinner.

WANTED:

- firewood for the kitchen
- child's dress form
- gallon glass jars

- old, used candle wax
- male dress form (torso)
- feather pillows
- styrofoam heads for displaying caps, bonnets, and hats
- flour
- honey
- tin pie pans and plates

NOTICE:

- The Stephenson House resumes regular operating hours Thursday, March 6.

From the Hearth:

Traditional Corned Beef and Cabbage



Cooking Directions:

Place corned beef in large pot or Dutch oven and cover with water. Add the spice packet that came with the corned beef. Cover pot and bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer. Simmer approximately 50 minutes per pound or until tender.

Add whole potatoes and carrots, and cook until the vegetables are almost tender. Add cabbage and cook for 15 more minutes. Remove meat and let rest 15 minutes.

Place vegetables in a bowl and cover. Add as much broth (cooking liquid reserved in the Dutch oven or large pot) as you want. Slice meat across the grain.

Prep Time: 10 minutes
Cook Time: 2 hours 35 minutes

3 pounds corned beef brisket with spice packet

10 small red potatoes

5 carrots, peeled and julienned

1 large head cabbage, cut into small wedges



Building on the Right Foundation



Boston Museum of Fine Arts
#49.904 - 1820s or earlier

Most of us are familiar with the parable of the two builders.

You know it. It's the one that says, when a person "builds a house on solid rock...it will not collapse because it is built on bedrock." But when anyone "builds a house on sand...it will collapse with a mighty crash" (Matthew 7:24-27).

The same may be said of a period impression.

The right foundation garments were—and are—essential for any woman who is past her girlhood, or who has a body-fat percentage greater than 3.

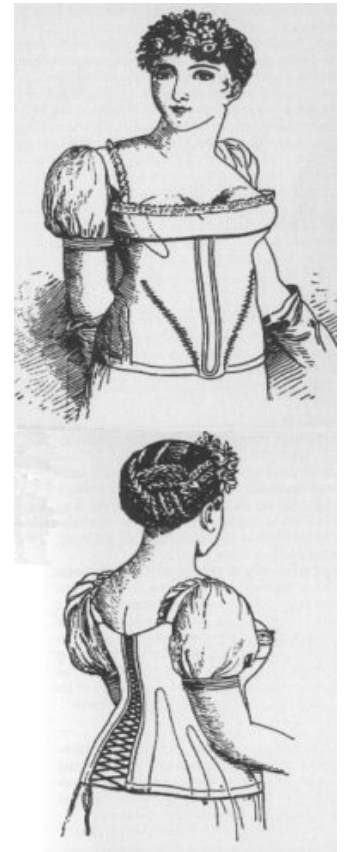
This is because most women—like us today—were not blessed with the ideal figure for their time. So they needed assistance to get and maintain the right fashion silhouette.

Fashion of the early 19th century mandated a) a high, firm bust and b) a body with no curves below the waist, descending smooth and straight, like a column, from high waistline to floor. To achieve this, the vast majority of women wore

stays.

Modern people shudder when hearing the word "stays" or "corset." But this is due to historical misinformation. The purpose of corseting is not to change the proportions of the body in any dramatic way. Rather, it is to move the "squishy" parts to the appropriate place on the frame, and then hold them there, creating the illusion of smooth, toned flesh.

Just as most women today would not think of leaving the house without a brassiere, women then would not have considered themselves dressed without a set of stays.



French corset à la Ninon, 1810,
from Nora Waugh's Corsets & Crinolines



Boston Museum of Fine Arts
99.664.34 - 1820s

Valentine Dinner 2008

Thank you, volunteers!



Arlene Bell stokes the fire in the parlor in preparation of the first guests' arrival.



Saturday night's servers take a much-deserved break. (L-R) Blu Remmler, Kathy Schmidt and Arlene Bell.



Guests enjoy the musical entertainment provided by the Kukielski sisters, Hope and Clare.



Servers Arlene Bell and Lisa Shashek take a moment to pose for the camera.



Liz Edward and Lillian Klebenow prepare to plate the desserts.



Lillian Klebenow puts the finishing touches on dessert.



George Edwards relaxes after tending the fires.



Bill Brecht waits to serve the next course.



Intern Anna Csar prepares to lay down the law—or maybe just the cheese cake.



Volunteer Leonard Gnojewski and his wife Carol enjoy the elegant evening in the master bedroom.



Rudy Wilson and Samantha Forehand sport the stylish yellow gloves of support staff.

House Trivia

Test your house knowledge with the following trivia questions. Answers are located at the bottom right of this page.

1. What is the estimated number of bricks used in the construction of the house?
A. 100,000 B. 200,000 C. 300,000
2. What is the name of the indentured servant who accompanied Ben during his War of 1812 Peoria campaign?
A. Washing Will B. Hark
C. Tobe D. Barksley
3. How did Lucy's father receive the nickname of "Indian"?
A. He was raised by the Iroquois.
B. He married a Native American woman.
C. He had been an Indian fighter.
D. He traveled extensively in India.
4. How old was Ben when he died in 1822?
A. 34 B. 45 C. 54 D. 64
5. What was Lucy's maiden name?
A. Smith B. Swearingen
C. Edwards D. Todd
6. How many children did Ben and Lucy have when they lived at the house?
A. 3 B. 5 C. 2 D. 4
7. What was the name of the local craftsman who constructed the mantels?
A. Daniel Smith B. Daniel Tolman
C. Daniel Todd D. Daniel Kirkpatrick
8. What was the name of the man Palemon Winchester was accused of murdering in 1825?
A. Daniel Smith B. Daniel Tolman
C. Daniel Todd D. Daniel Kirkpatrick
9. What name appears on the gravestone rubbing located in the orientation room?
A. Texanna P. B. Elvira J.
C. Thomas I. D. Lucy S.
10. Who was Stephenson's closest neighbor?
A. Mr. John Robinson B. Mr. Ninian Edwards
C. Dr. Todd D. Mr. Daniel Tolman
11. What is the name of the slave Lucy inherited from her father?
A. Dot B. Winn C. Caroline
12. How many of the mantels are original?
A. 1 B. 2 C. 3 D. 4 E. None
13. What was the local newspaper called in 1820?
A. *The Gazette* B. *The Spectator*
C. *The Yankee* D. *The Tribune*
14. In what year did Lucy die?
A. 1834
B. 1840
C. 1850 D. 1828
15. Fire was a leading cause of death for women.
A. True B. False
16. Blue Tower Spode has been in continuous manufacture since 1814.
A. True B. False

1. A 2. C 3. C 4. C 5. B 6. D 7. B 8. A 9. A 10. A 11. B 12. D 13. B 14. C 15. B 16. A

Hear Ye, Hear Ye! Calling all volunteers!



As you all know, the “busy” season is quickly approaching. We have many tours coming up in April and May, and if you or anyone you know would be interested in helping with the tours, we would appreciate the help. We have volunteer opportunities that range from working in the gift shop, working as an interpreter, and helping with research, to helping with the gardens and grounds, and that is just the beginning. Please spread the word to your friends. And keep up the good work! The Stephenson House staff is grateful for all the time and effort the volunteers put in.

The Volunteer

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