

January 2015

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The 1820 Col. Benjamin Stephenson House



The Volunteer

From the Director

In the weeks ahead there will be several volunteer training sessions scheduled at the house. Currently, I have two on the calendar. If you plan to attend a session, please let me know.

January 10, 9 am, Gift Shop. Attendees will learn the procedures needed to operate the

museum shop.

February 14, 9 am - Dressing 1820. The appropriate way to wear your 1820 clothing will be discussed and demonstrated.

CORRECTION: In last month's newsletter the training session *Dressing 1820* was mistakenly

scheduled for February 18 at 12 pm. Be sure to update your calendar with the February 14 date and time.

Happy New Year!



Things to Remember...

In The Kitchen

Interpreters who have demonstrated in our 1820 kitchen will be familiar with what it takes to keep it clean and working properly. Several of our new interpreters may not know the basics so I will offer some insight, guidelines, and 'what not to do'.

1. **Don't leave it for someone else to clean-up.** If you've spent the day in

the kitchen cooking or demonstrating a period activity, be sure to clean-up after yourself. This includes sweeping and wiping down the table.

2. **Wash it.** All pots, pans, dishes, and utensils that were used should be washed in hot, soapy water. Tip: a capful of bleach in the water will disinfect. Wash as you go then the task is not as

overwhelming. If you've made bread, don't leave
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Tin washbasin turned upside down to dry.



How a tin bucket looks when it's not properly dried after use.

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the dough bowl to harden; put it to soak as soon as you have finished using it.

3. **The modern sink.** There is a sink hidden under the stairs. It is a very small sink with a less than efficient drain. Do not put food stuff or dough residue down it. Liquids only.
4. **Dry the tinware.** There are several pieces of tinware used in the kitchen; wash basin, buckets, kettle, tea pot, etc. It is essential that these items be cleaned and thoroughly

dried after each use. All buckets and the washbasin should be turned upside down to prevent rusting.

5. **In winter months.** At the end of the day, open the two doors associated with the small hidden sink and turn on the window heater (set between 65-70 degrees). This will help prevent the water pipes from freezing.
6. **Modern items.** Keep them out of sight!
7. **Throw out the trash.** At the end of the day, always check the pantry, dry sink and hidden modern sink for forgotten trash.
8. **Check supplies.** If you notice that cooking supplies are running low or we are completely out of something then let the director know ASAP.
9. **Secure it.** Always check the windows (upstairs and down) and doors at the end of the day. Are they closed, locked, and secured?
10. **Summer months and the AC.** Do not use the air conditioner if there is a fire in the hearth. The unit does not have enough power to compete with a fire and outside temperatures. Also, keep the windows, chimney, doors and stairwell door

closed when the unit is in use.

11. **Firewood.** Please refill the storage bin with firewood and kindling after a full day of demonstrating.



The hidden sink with both doors opened at the end of the day. Do not leave these open when visitors are on site.

Upcoming Dates

- The house will be closed during the week in January and February.
- January 10, 9 a.m., Volunteer Training: Gift Shop Docent
- January 17, Playing the Past (Girl Scout Badge Program)
- February 7, Winter Dinner & Auction
- February 14, 9a.m., Volunteer Training: Dressing 1820
- February 21, Playing the Past (Girl Scout Badge Program)
- March 12-14, MOMCC Conference
- March 21, Playing the Past (Girl Scout Badge Program)
- April 11, Trivia through the Decades
- April 15, SIUE Life
- Long Learning, adult tour
- May 2, Junior Gardener (Girl Scout Badge Program)



What to Wear & How to Wear It.

Your persona, as a historically clothed interpreter, must be fitted in the authentic dress of the period. The job of an interpreter is to educate the public about the past and what you wear is the first step in that education. How credible would an 1820 Federal Home be if all the interpretive staff dressed in WWII or Victorian clothing? Many individuals figure that old time clothing is old time clothing and anything from the Rev War to the Civil War works because the public will not know the difference. In actuality, that person is the one who doesn't understand the historical importance period correct clothing can make in the credibility of the site. Much time, effort and research has been invested in dressing the 1820 Col. Benjamin Stephenson House, now we must dress ourselves appropriately.

The period designated at the Stephenson House is 1820-1825. Even though Lucy continued to live in the house after Ben's death (1822) until 1834, we will focus on the 1820-1825 time period.

Period correct clothing is one of the most important considerations when developing a historical interpretation. Your clothing is the first thing visitors see about you. As you develop a historic wardrobe and persona, there are several things to keep in mind:

Who is Your Persona?

As you begin to put together a period wardrobe, ask yourself two questions. Who am I? What would this person have worn? Some people were slaves to fashion, others were more practical. Which category do you fall into? Lucy Stephenson, Elvira Edwards and women of a high social class paid attention to the latest fashions. It was a visual symbol of their social status. They had money for fine fabrics and trim. An indentured servant, slave or laborer had more pressing concerns than the current style of bonnets.

The residents of Edwardsville came from many different backgrounds, they had different life experiences and that is what makes them interesting. Reflect this diversity in your clothing. A variety of



Country Wedding by John Lewis Krimmel, c. 1820

styles gives a better picture of 1820 Edwardsville.

What is your persona's economic background?

If you are portraying Lucy Stephenson, you should be dressed in a fashionable gown reflecting your social status. However, if you are a poor laundress, your garments should be made for working and of less fine material. Keep in mind, the quality of fabric was a symbol of economic status. Everyone wanted the finest fabric but not everyone could afford it.

What did the slaves wear?

One misconception is that the house slaves dressed in inferior, poorly made, rough garments. It would have been a bad reflection on the Stephenson family to dress the house servants so poorly. The servants dressed in clothing reflecting the Stephenson's wealth and were fitted in the fashions of the day. The fabric used for their clothing was a lesser grade of the fabrics worn by the family.

Clothing worn by the field slaves (if they had any) reflected their status in life by cut and fabric. Workers in the field dressed in rougher fabrics that tended to be looser in

fit. A loose fitting garment had a practical side. Slave owners practiced a form of mass-production by cutting out garments for a large number of slaves all at once, not caring about the fit. This form of production was more cost effective when clothing a large number of people.

Avoid cookie-cutter fashions.

Not everyone dressed the same. Very little clothing was mass-produced. Garments were fitted to the person, not purchased off the rack. Styles would have been similar but not identical. Located in a culturally diverse area, Edwardsville's residents would have exhibited a wide range of clothing styles.

Individuals on the frontier knew, rather quickly, what was fashionable out east. Ladies magazines, letters from eastern relatives, fashion dolls, and newspapers keep the fashion conscious up to date. With the close proximity to St. Louis, the Mississippi, and a strong political connection to Washington, the residents of Edwardsville were not as 'frontier' as we might imagine.

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Pepper-Pot: A Scene in the Philadelphia Market, by John Lewis Krimmel, c. 1811.

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Wear your Clothing in the Appropriate Way.

If your garments were originally worn in a particular way, then we must wear them that way. Do not let modern ideas ruin your historic persona. In the 1820s, good social etiquette was expected to be followed. If you want your character to be believable, then we must follow 1820 etiquette.

Examples:

1. Don't let your shortgown hang open...pin it shut.
2. Wear a hat or head covering when outside.
3. Gentlemen wore coats and vests. It may be uncomfortable in the summer but that is what was appropriate.

4. Keep your skirts below the knees. Unless you're advertising for business, no 'hunching' them up when standing or sitting.

Adopt a Period Mindset.

Once you are dressed in period clothing, keep in mind the person you are portraying. Conduct yourself in an appropriate way. Watch your body language. As citizens of the 21st century our mannerisms would be somewhat appalling to 19th century sensibilities. Example: Respectable women did not sit slouched in a chair with an arm slung over the back and their legs agape. This is a common sight today but not in the 1820s. Now if you are portraying a prostitute, then maybe.

Also, watch your language. Modern slang is a hard habit to break. Be aware of the

"yah", "ok", "uhuh", "ya know" etc.

Research your clothing.

Doing a bit of research, can shed light on your persona and prevent you from having egg on your face in the end. You will have no one to blame but yourself if your clothing is wrong. Do not rely on someone telling you what to wear, they could be wrong. Familiarize yourself with fashions of the 1810s & 1820s. A basic knowledge will help you greatly. Know the differences between a shortgown worn in 1760 and one worn in 1820. Recognize characteristics of a 1790 coat compared to an 1825 coat. This understanding keeps you from wasting money on clothing that is not appropriate to your period. It is very embarrassing to have someone come up to you, as you are giving a tour, to point out that your cabbage rose print skirt is more appropriate for Victorian...trust me, I know from personal experience. The sad thing is, if I had done more research I would have known better.

Stay within your period.

Obviously, styles overlapped from one decade to the next. It is your job to use some common sense when deciding how far to take the context of a garment. The older generations tended to cling to the fashions of their youth. Example: Knee britches went out of fashion by the early 1800's but certain individuals continued to wear them, for various reasons, well into the 1820s.

On the other hand, large powdered wigs were still fashionable in the 1790s but completely gone by the 1820s. The style of big hair, big iron hips, little waists encased in an 'armor' clad corset pushing your bosom up around your ears was over...thank goodness! The discovery of Pompeii made everything Grecian desirable. Styles shifted to flowing lines and high waists in an effort to mimic the statues uncovered.

Also, do not become a victim of the 'If they da had it, they da used it' mentality. If they didn't have it, they didn't have it. There are no exceptions.

Keep an Open Mind.

When starting out everyone makes mistakes, but we learn from them. Move forward knowing that what you believe to be true now may change in the future.

Winter Dinner & Auction

February 7, 2015

Leclaire Room

Lewis and Clark Community College, Edwardsville Campus

Tickets \$45 each or Table for 10 - \$400

5:00 p.m.

Registration · Social Hour · Cash Bar · Silent Auction Begins

6:00 p.m.

Dinner catered by Bella Milano

Prime Rib · Chicken Milano · Cavatelli with Meat Sauce

Baby Carrots in Maple Glaze · Green Beans with onions and bacon

Milano House Salad · Au Gratin Potatoes

Dessert

7:15 p.m.

Silent Auction Closes · Oral Auction · Entertainment



R.S.V.P. by January 22, 2015

2015 Sewing Circle Dates

Mark your calendars now! Sewing Circle will meet on the following dates in 2015.

This gathering is open to anyone wanting to learn about period sewing techniques, socialize with other volunteers, share their needlework projects, and broaden their knowledge of the Federal period.

Both men and women are invited to attend and share their talents. Participants are encouraged, but not required, to wear period appropriate clothing (either

their own or something from the Stephenson House wardrobe). Please RSVP with the director.

- January 11 & 25
- February 8 & 22
- March 8 & 22
- April 12 & 26
- May 24
- June 14 & 28
- July 12 & 26
- August 9 & 23
- September 13 & 27
- October 11 & 25
- November 8 & 22
- December 13





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News & Needs

Thank you....

- Walt Raisner for the donation of a hunting frock and man's shirt to the wardrobe.
- Liz Edwards for washing the piles of laundry after the Girl Scout program and the Candlelight Tours.

Needs....

- volunteers to help with school tours, house tours, gift shop, garden & grounds,

grant writing & research, special events.

- cleaning supplies such as Windex, toilet bowl cleaner, Swiffer dusters, hand soap, disinfecting wipes, bleach, paper towels, toilet paper, brasso
- seamstresses to sew clothing for the volunteer wardrobe
- bolt of 100% cotton batiste

News....

- The house will be closed during the week in January and February. Regular hours resume March 5, 2015
- Be sure to purchase your tickets for the Winter Dinner and Auction!

