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Tours

Public tours will resume on May 25, 2013. In the meantime, please contact Director@RoyallHouse.org to arrange group tours for next spring.

Admission

Members FREE
Adults \$7
Seniors and Students \$5
Children under 18 \$4
Families \$16

Royall House and Slave Quarters

15 George Street
Medford, Massachusetts
RoyallHouse.org



Authors Bring History to Life at the Royall House and Slave Quarters

Over the past three years, the Royall House and Slave Quarters has welcomed several authors to speak about their work and how they incorporated historical settings and events into their narratives. M. T. Anderson shared insight on the colonial Boston settings of his *Octavian Nothing* novels, written for young adults but enjoyed by all ages. This past summer, playwright Lydia Diamond spoke eloquently about her writing, noting that she works “to celebrate the humanity that lived between and around the pain. I am aware that my ancestors, who were enslaved people, lived and cried, and loved and laughed, agitated and manipulated, more fully aware of their own predicament than we’ll ever be, but always human and always with a will to live.” On October 13, Sally Gunning, author of three novels set in 18th-century Boston and Cape Cod, captivated an audience of her readers, some new to the Royall House and Slave Quarters, and some visitors who have just discovered her work.

Ms. Gunning shared the real stories behind the novels—*The Widow’s War*, *Bound*, and *The Rebellion of Miss Jane Clark*—which she found in the process of extensive research in primary source documents. For example, she drew inspiration from cases she read in the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court records. These documents revealed intriguing conflicts involving everyday people, most of whom have not had their stories recorded elsewhere. Ms. Gunning’s careful research provided her with engaging narratives and the ability to recreate the world of 18th-century Massachusetts on the eve of Revolution.

These three authors may write fiction, but their dedication to historical details results in stories that give twenty-first century readers a unique opportunity to imagine the world of the past.



From the Executive Director

This summer I visited Historic Deerfield in north-central Massachusetts to give a talk about the Royall House and Slave Quarters and northern slavery for a lecture series on early African-American history presented by the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association (PVMA). Archaeologist Alexandra Chan shared the bill with her usual enthusiasm and aplomb. It's always good to get out of town to clear the mental palate. More importantly, my sojourn provided some valuable insights into one of the central dilemmas of the public history we strive to practice here at the Royall House and Slave Quarters.

We talk about northern slavery, but there are conundra in doing so. We know *the nature and extent* of the Royall estate, including a sense of how many people lived and worked on the site, but we are unable to assign specific names to specific roles. There are several reasons for this, but our general answer is that recorded history traditionally said little about enslaved people.

There is another, perhaps more subtle, phenomenon here. Northern slavery was a *system* and talking about systems requires a broad sweep and a wide-angle lens. However, in conveying the "big picture," we sometimes can lose sight of the human side of the institution, especially at the individual or family level. The solution? "Individualization." By this somewhat awkward term, I mean conveying stories about specific people (named or unnamed) and using these to bring the "system" into sharper focus.

I learned some invaluable approaches to this worthy goal in Deerfield. The village is dominated by an astonishing aggregation of eighteenth and nineteenth-century houses (eleven in all), two museums, and stories that have been presented and interpreted since the 1880s by the PVMA. A second entity, Historic Deerfield, started in 1952 and spearheaded the preservation of the buildings and created the Flynt Center of Early New England Life. Together the two offer a rich array of material culture, landscapes, and interpretation across three centuries.

Recently, the Deerfield historians have worked to broaden their interpretation to include the African-Americans who lived and worked on the farms and in the industries of the area. Records show there was a population of enslaved Africans in the Pocumtuck Valley as early as 1695. Museum staff have made impressive strides on "individualization." The central vehicle is a Guide/Map that links specific historic houses and sites to individuals. This is available in print and in an interactive version:

<http://memorialhall.mass.edu/activities/afram/index.html>.

This approach shows the wide range of stories, highlights the pervasiveness of the system over a single village and a long period, and interweaves the stories of enslaved Africans into the broader narrative, including emancipation. Not every story is at the same level of detail, nor every building still extant, but the overall effect is most compelling.

I believe the underlying methodology could well be applied to our single site. This could take several forms, including a Medford-wide site map, a room-by-room guide for our buildings, and links to regional sites and itineraries. All worth exploring!

In the coming months, I will be talking more with our new friends in Deerfield and hope to learn more about the nitty-gritty of their "individualization" efforts. Stay tuned!

Tom Lincoln, Executive Director

News Briefs

Day campers from **St. Katharine Drexel** in Roxbury came for a tour in July, generously paid for by Associated Grant Makers' Summer Fund. The students ranged from third to sixth grade and asked a variety of good questions.

The **Medford Garden Club** held a lovely reception on our grounds at our gardens' peak in June, spearheaded by member **Sarah Cummer**. A tour of the landscape and buildings followed. The group also made a generous donation to our **Landscape Committee**. Thank you!

Architectural historian **Alexander von Hoffman** of Harvard University brought an enthusiastic group of students for a special architecture-centered discussion and group tour. He has a real knack for linking architecture to society and history and will be our featured speaker in March 2013.

Maud Ayson, Director of Education and Public Programs for the **Freedom's Way Heritage Association**, came for a visit in late June. The Association works on the **Freedom's Way National Heritage Area**, which involves 45 cities and towns in eastern Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire from Malden to Fitchburg. The overall project works to link historic and cultural sites, landscapes, itineraries, and resources in the region, with a broad emphasis on "historic events that influenced democratic forms of governance and intellectual traditions that underpin concepts of American freedom, democracy, conservation, and social justice." We'll be talking more about how the Royall House and Slave Quarters fits into this broad mosaic.

The historic trees of Medford were the theme of this year's Fourth Annual Medford Historic Bike Tour, organized by the Medford Historical Society and held on Saturday, September 22.

Anne Donaghy and **Lindsey Rider** shared with riders a short overview of the history of the Royall House and Slave Quarters landscape, a setting enjoyed by all while eating lunch provided by Whole Foods at the conclusion of the day's ride.



On Saturday, September 29, we opened our doors free of charge to more than ninety visitors who came for the eighth annual Museum Day Live!, sponsored by *Smithsonian Magazine*. Thank you to the very hard-working volunteers who made this afternoon a great success: **Theresa Kelliher**, **Elizabeth Merrick**, and **Gracelaw Simmons**.

Many thanks to **Rob and Charlie Dillman** of Bestsellers Café in Medford Square for handling book sales during the Sally Gunning booksigning.

Shop locally with us! The Royall House museum gift shop, located in the Slave Quarters building at 15 George Street in Medford, will be open for holiday shopping on **Saturday, December 8 from 12 noon till 2 p.m.** The museum shop has many **unique, local, handcrafted gift items**, perfect for holiday giving. Please stop by to say hello, browse our wares, and nibble a holiday cookie or two! All gift shop proceeds support the work of the Royall House & Slave Quarters museum. For more information, please visit RoyallHouse.org, leave a message at 781-396-9032, or find us on Facebook.

ROYALL HOUSE & SLAVE QUARTERS

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Recent and Upcoming Programs

On November 14, the Royall House and Slave Quarters held the first of its fall and winter season programs, welcoming **historian J. L. Bell** for an illustrated lecture on “Penelope Royall, Cuba Vassall, and the Families of Tory Row.” Mr. Bell described the impact of the American Revolution on not only the wealthy residents of Cambridge but also the enslaved Cuba Vassall. Penelope Royall Vassall had inherited Cuba from her father, Isaac Royall Sr. After being widowed in 1769, Penelope sold Cuba and her children to her nephew John, who lived across Brattle Street in the mansion now known as Longfellow House—Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site.



Mark your calendars for our 2013 programs:

January 16, 2013:

“Beans and Bacon and Hasty
Pudding!”

*Kathleen Wall, Food Historian
Plimoth Plantation*

March 20, 2013:

“Country Houses in Colonial
America”

*Alexander von Hoffman
Harvard University
Graduate School of Design*

May 15, 2013:

“Master of the Mountain:
Thomas Jefferson and His
Slaves”

*Henry Wiencek
Historian/ Author*