

# ROYALL HOUSE & SLAVE QUARTERS

Summer 2014

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Listing a Life

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### 2014 Tours

Saturdays and Sundays  
May 17 - October 26  
1, 2, and 3 p.m.

### Admission

FREE for members  
Adults \$7  
Seniors and Students \$5  
Children \$4  
Families \$16

### Royall House and Slave Quarters

15 George Street  
Medford, Massachusetts  
[RoyallHouse.org](http://RoyallHouse.org)



# News

## The Slave Dwelling Project Comes to Medford



The Slave Quarters on our site, though unique in the North, is one of hundreds of cabins and quarters across America that once housed enslaved people. But the number of slave dwellings that remain is dwindling.

Preservationist Joseph McGill Jr. hopes to slow that decline. Since founding The Slave Dwelling Project four years ago, Joe has slept in some sixty such structures in an effort to call attention to the importance of documenting, preserving, and maintaining these unwitting monuments to the lives of enslaved individuals and communities, and his goal is to stay overnight in all that remain. By focusing attention and resources on preserving these historically important dwelling places, he is helping to ensure that the people who lived in these structures are remembered.

We are honored to welcome The Slave Dwelling Project to Massachusetts in October for a series of events over three days, including two overnights in the Slave Quarters, made possible by the generous lead sponsorship of Tufts University. We hope you will join the Royall House and Slave Quarters for a weekend of education and discussion, and help support the continued preservation and interpretation of this important historic site.

*continued on page 3*



**Tufts**  
UNIVERSITY

congratulates the  
***Royall House***  
for keeping history alive.

We look forward to  
continuing our partnership.

[tufts.edu/home/neighbors](http://tufts.edu/home/neighbors)



## Rotary Club of Medford

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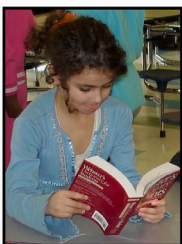
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**The Rotary Club of Medford** raises funds to help provide goods and services to benefit humankind. We grant gifts to Medford organizations and to humanitarian efforts beyond the city. Some of the programs we support include, but are not limited to:



*Dictionaries to Every Third Grader \* Food Baskets for Families in Need \* Scholarships \* Josh the Otter Water Safety Awareness for Children \* AED (Automated External Defibrillator) Units to Youth Sports Leagues \* Nobeoka International Student Exchange \* Interact Club of Medford High School \* Relay for Life Team Medford Rotary CARES \**



*For more information, please visit our website [MedfordRotaryClub.org](http://MedfordRotaryClub.org)*





## Giving Voice Weekend October 10-11, 2014

### The Slave Dwelling Project with Special Guest Joseph McGill, Jr.



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#### **Saturday, October 11, 3-5 p.m.**

#### **Giving Voice: Slavery's Physical Legacy**

The annual Giving Voice benefit event on the museum grounds, which raises awareness and support for the preservation of this important historic site, will feature Joseph McGill Jr., founder of The Slave Dwelling Project. The event will include music, refreshments, and tours of the slave quarters and the mansion.

*\$40 Royall House and Slave Quarters members; \$50 non-members. Reservations recommended, but walk-ins are welcome.*

#### **Saturday, October 11, 9 p.m.**

#### **Overnight in the Slave Quarters**

Please join Joseph McGill Jr. for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to stay overnight in the only remaining freestanding eighteenth-century slave quarters building in the North and reflect on its history. Donations and event sponsorships will help support an invitation-only overnight for students from Medford High School and Tufts University the previous evening.

*\$200 donation requested. Space is limited to 12 guests. Reservations required.*

*Those interested in the limited attendance events described above are encouraged to visit our website at [RoyallHouse.org](http://RoyallHouse.org), email [Programs@RoyallHouse.org](mailto:Programs@RoyallHouse.org), or call 781-396-9032 as soon as possible for more information.*

### **The Royall House and Slave Quarters Thanks Lead Sponsor Tufts University**

Tufts University, lead sponsor of the Giving Voice Weekend, will also host a talk and reception on the university's Medford/Somerville campus on Thursday, October 9 from 6 - 8 p.m. Joseph McGill Jr. of The Slave Dwelling Project will introduce his work to the Tufts community. Reception to follow.

*This program is free and open to the general public, and no reservations are necessary. Location: Tufts University, Cabot 205, 170 Packard Avenue, Medford.*

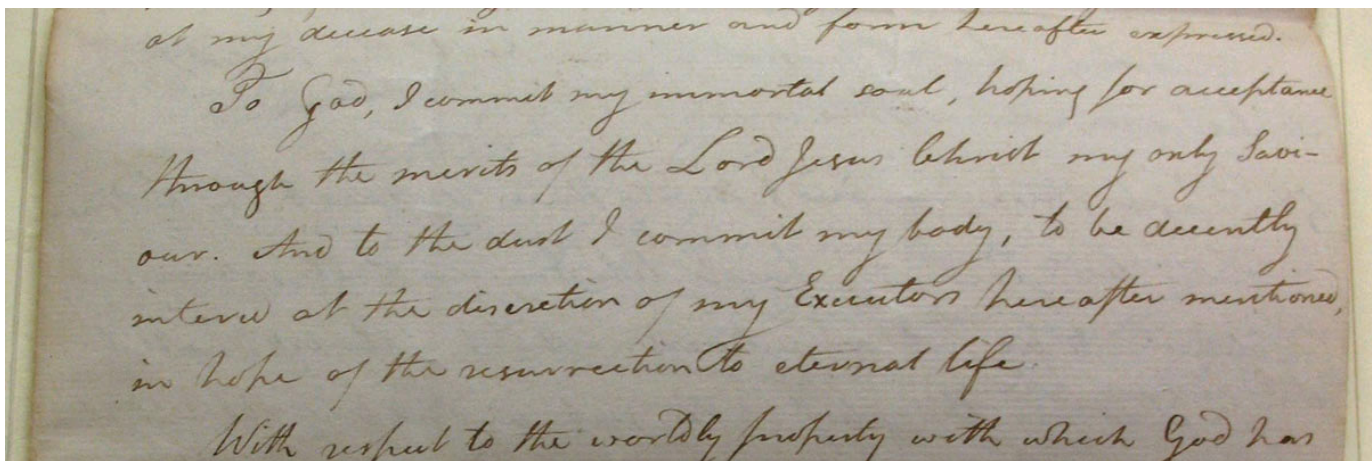


## Chloe Spear: Leaving a Legacy, Listing a Life

What might a historian of the future learn about you from a list of everything in your house? How might that historian come to know what's important to you from how you plan to distribute your property after your death? In wills, the choices individuals made about how to dispose of their property help us to discern their personal values and priorities in life. Probate inventories—detailed lists of the property in a deceased person's estate—enable us to imagine the physical spaces through which members of a household moved on a daily basis; from this material detail, we can make informed guesses about the conditions of their lives. The wills and probate inventories of Isaac Royall Sr. and his son are some of the most valuable sources we have for understanding the mindsets of these two elite men and interpreting what life was like for the enslaved and free residents of the Royall House.

white man in the Boston area. But where Belinda's life story—or a stylized version thereof—was recorded in her own lifetime in her petition, the details of Spear's life are recounted in a short book called the *Memoir of Mrs. Chloe Spear* (1832). Authored by a white woman who was a fellow congregant at Boston's Second Baptist Church, the *Memoir* appeared in print a full seventeen years after its subject died.

Why was Chloe Spear worth remembering, according to the author of the *Memoir*? The book stresses Spear's piety and industry. Beaten by her master for trying to learn to read, Spear nonetheless acquired a psalter and not only learned to decipher the words but also embraced their spirit, becoming a lay leader of sorts within Boston's Baptist commu-



Excerpt from Chloe Spear's will

Early American wills and probate inventories disproportionately represent men, white people, and the wealthy—unsurprisingly, as people in each of these categories were more likely to own property in the first place. However, property ownership was not restricted to people of extraordinary privilege, and consequently, the archives also contain probate records relating to women, people of color, and those of less-than-Royall wealth. An especially rich and revealing example comes from a formerly enslaved woman named Chloe Spear, who died in Boston in 1815. Like Belinda, the Royall House slave remembered for her moving petition for a pension from her master's estate, Spear was reportedly captured in Africa as a child, eventually finding herself enslaved to a wealthy

nity. After her emancipation, Spear toiled as a laundress and boardinghouse-keeper, earning enough money to purchase a house in Boston's North End. Many of the *Memoir's* details about Spear's religious activities and her property acquisition can be corroborated by other contemporary sources, including her probate records (her will, inventory, and other documents associated with the will's execution). But the probate records also provide a window into elements of Spear's experience that the *Memoir*, authored as it was by a white woman, fail to illuminate.

The *Memoir* tells us little about Spear's connections with other men and women of color. Here the will

points toward a richer, more complicated story. Spear left five hundred dollars to her grandson, who lived in Salem. Six women—most of them identifiable as women of color who attended Second Baptist Church—received between twenty and fifty dollars each, in addition to Spear’s clothing and linens. Fifty dollars apiece went to Cesar Fletcher, whom Spear identified as “a man of Colour named for my late husband,” and Primus Grounds, “a Man of Colour and at Present a member of the Second Baptist Church in this town.” At one level, these bequests corroborate the *Memoir’s* claims that Spear was a deeply religious woman who worshipped at a church that admitted both black and white congregants. But the will also suggests that within that interracial church community, worshippers formed a tighter circle of mutual support and admiration, naming their children after one another and looking out for each other’s economic well-being. This was a social network that the white author of the *Memoir* might simply have been unable to see.

Spear’s probate inventory, meanwhile, builds a picture of her economic life that confirms the *Memoir’s* account of her worldly success, even while fleshing it out with material detail. While the *Memoir* singles Spear out (very few people, rich or poor, black or white, male or female, had book-length biographies written about them by their friends), the probate records allow us to look at Spear in the context of the large pool of people whose wills were executed around the same time.

A sample of fifty wills from the year of Spear’s death shows that the total value of her estate fell about in the middle. Given that she had been a slave some thir-

ty years earlier, and that the population of will-writers skewed wealthier than the general population, this is evidence of Spear’s impressive economic advancement over the course of her life as a free woman. Moreover, the items listed in her probate inventory allow us to imagine what her day-to-day life might have been like. Her property included: utilitarian household items (such as a “Bake Kettle Spider & old Skillett”); the tools of a laundress (“1 Pair Flat Irons,” “1 Folding Board & Bench”); and several luxury goods and furnishings (“1 Ebony Tea Table,” “2 Small Looking Glasses,” “5 Pictures,” and a seven-dollar “Brass Fire Sett”). Although Spear clearly scrimped and saved (her assets included \$625 in “Notes of Hand,” or IOUs), she also allowed herself some of the household goods that served as markers of refinement in the early nineteenth century.

At first glance, it might seem that probate records are primarily about money and how it gets distributed after someone’s death. But probate records also give us insight into meaning in a person’s life. Chloe Spear did not leave us an account of her life in her own hand; indeed, she signed her will with a simple X. But she tells us something of who she was through her disposition of her hard-earned wealth.

Margot Minardi is an Assistant Professor of History and Humanities at Reed College in Oregon, where she teaches courses in colonial and Revolutionary American history, early African American history, and social reform. She is the author of *Making Slavery History: Abolitionism and the Politics of Memory in Massachusetts*, published in 2010, and is a member of the *Royall House and Slave Quarters’ Academic Advisory Council*.

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Excerpt from Chloe Spear’s Inventory



## Race and American Education



**Craig Steven Wilder**, Professor of History at MIT, shared powerful reflections on race and education in America with members and guests at the Royall House and Slave Quarters on April 16. In his important and widely reviewed new study, *Ebony and Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America's Universities*, Professor Wilder argues that many of America's revered colleges and universities were soaked in the sweat, the tears, and sometimes the blood of people of color.

In his talk, Professor Wilder examined the contrasting figures of “the matriculating Indian” and “the uneducable Negro” to explore the limits on access to higher education in the second half of the 18th century. Looking closely at the experiences of two friends, the Reverend Samson Occom—a member of the Mohegan nation who became a Presbyterian minister—and poet Phillis Wheatley—the first African-American woman to be published—Professor Wilder demonstrated how illusory were even the modest hopes of education held by Native and enslaved Americans.

Though hailed by well-wishers as possessors of exceptional talents, Occom and Wheatley could find no institutional structures that would support them in intellectual, literary, or religious pursuits: Dartmouth College became a far different institution than the one Eleazar Wheelock described when he enlisted Occom to raise funds for his proposed “Indian school,” and Wheatley struggled to make ends meet or publish her work after she was legally freed from bondage in 1778. The mid-eighteenth century had seemed to offer openings for educational opportunity, but the experiences of Professor Wilder's protagonists appear to suggest that a Revolution proclaimed in the cause of freedom seemed to have the paradoxical result of further confining the unfree and dispossessed in the new nation.

The question of access to higher education is a staple of our current news media. Professor Wilder's talk suggested that perhaps this is because there is no better indicator of the fundamental fault lines in a modern society.

## News Briefs

The March 2014 issue of **Yankee Magazine** features the Royall House and Slave Quarters in “A Powerful Voice, by Aimee Seavey. “While the Colonial-era existence of Northern slavery is a shameful truth,” she notes, “the museum, as the only recognized example of freestanding slave quarters remaining in the North, embraces its role as an opportunity for education.”

The Royall House and Slave Quarters is now registered with **Amazon Smile**, who will donate 0.5% of all linked Amazon purchases. If you're an Amazon shopper, please consider designating support for the Royall House and Slave Quarters through the new Amazon Smile campaign.

**Volunteers needed** to staff our registration desk on tour weekends through October. Even just one afternoon a month would help. Contact [Director@RoyallHouse.org](mailto:Director@RoyallHouse.org) for more information. And thank you!



## **Community Open House Day**

### **One Minute's Freedom: The Story of Mum Bett**

This year's annual community open house on Saturday, May 31st, coincided with two performances of "One Minute's Freedom: The Story of Mum Bett." Both standing-room-only audiences, which included guests of all ages, were entranced as storyteller/reenactor Tammy Denease brought to life Elizabeth Freeman – a remarkable heroine known as Mum Bett or Mumbet – who successfully sued for freedom from slavery in western Massachusetts in 1781. These special programs were co-sponsored by Historic New England and supported in part by a grant from the Medford Arts Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency. A steady stream of visitors from Medford and several other communities explored the buildings and grounds at their own pace during the open house, asking thoughtful questions of volunteer guides stationed throughout the site.



## Funder Support Helping to Improve Visitor Experience

The Royall House and Slave Quarters has recently begun a new major initiative to install artifacts from our collection and information panels in the second-floor chamber (currently known as the Tidd Room) of the mansion. This project is made possible in part by a recent generous gift from the Society of Colonial Wars. The new installation of permanent display panels, which we expect to complete by the end of 2014, will expand the museum's interpretation of events following the departure of Isaac Royall Jr. in 1775.

A Revolutionary War panel will highlight events during the encampment of soldiers from the New Hampshire First Brigade on the estate, including General Washington's interrogation of British deserters in the mansion and the legend of Molly Stark's observation of the British evacuation of Boston from a hatch in the mansion roof. A second panel will trace the fates of the estate's enslaved Africans after Royall, a Loyalist, fled the country, including a petition of formerly enslaved Belinda to the new Massachusetts legislature in 1783 for a pension for herself and her invalid daughter from Royall's estate. Other panels will discuss Medford's role in the Revolution, and the Tidd family, who owned and lived at the estate from 1810 to 1860.

A recently awarded significant grant from Cummings Foundation, which was founded by Medford native Bill Cummings and Joyce Cummings, is also helping the Royall House and Slave Quarters to make big changes. In 2013, we received one of the foundation's "\$100K for 100" grants to support in-depth educational field trips at the site for elementary school students. The first \$25,000 of this grant is helping us to address preservation, accessibility, and sustainability issues to ready the Slave Quarters meeting room for school programs.

As we begin to implement the balance of the Cummings Foundation grant for program staffing and student transportation, and to welcome our first school groups, the foundation has recently announced additional support for site resto-

ration. In addition to providing a solid foundation to build and grow our school and youth program offerings, this grant will now also provide us with opportunities to address needed preservation work and improve the visitor experience throughout the site.

As a small nonprofit organization, the Royall House and Slave Quarters relies on funding from individuals, foundations, and corporations to achieve our big and small goals, from reinterpreting a room to hosting a new educational program for the community. If you are interested in learning more about projects in need of support and ways you can help, please contact us at [Development@RoyallHouse.org](mailto:Development@RoyallHouse.org).





## Tufts University and the Royall House & Slave Quarters – Community Partners

Did you know that part of the campus of nearby Tufts University stands on land that was previously part of Isaac Royall's estate? Today, Tufts is a long-time supporter and invaluable partner of the Royall House and Slave Quarters and the close relationship we have with the Tufts community helps us to better share the site's important story.

Many Tufts alumni, staff, and students share their talents with us each year as board members and volunteers. For example, Tufts first-years helped us with yard work at the site last fall as part of their orientation. Additionally, Tufts community members currently serving on our board include Michael Baenen, Chief of Staff for Tufts President Anthony Monaco; Elizabeth Ammons, the Harriet H. Fay Professor of Literature at Tufts, and Co-President Peter Gittleman, a Tufts alumnus. Christina Hunt, a Tufts Museum Studies graduate student, also recently served on our board in an "emerging professional" role.

While the Tufts community provides the Royall House and Slave Quarters with valuable support and expertise, our site also acts as an extended classroom for students. Our close proximity provides students with a unique opportunity to learn firsthand about the impact of slavery in New England and to participate in efforts to interpret and share a historic site with a complex story. Tufts Museum Studies graduate student Andrea Williams recently completed a project to research the lives of the enslaved individuals who lived at the site, and this spring we served as an example client for a group from a Tufts social marketing class, who focused their project on creative ways to market visiting the museum to college students. We also frequently host Tufts classes on topics such as American History and Museum Studies for tours, and offer free regular tour admission to all Tufts students.



Tufts University President Anthony P. Monaco addresses a group of Tufts University senior alumni as they visit the Royall House and Slave Quarters on April 5, 2014. (Alonso Nichols/Tufts University)

Tufts University has also been a long-time partner and much-appreciated sponsor of many of our events and programs. This year, Tufts is a lead sponsor of the Royall House's Giving Voice weekend, which will take place October 9 - 11. On Friday, October 9, Joe McGill, Founder of the Slave Dwelling Project, will present a public lecture on the project at Tufts. Then, a select group of Tufts students will have the opportunity to stay overnight in the Slave Quarters with McGill and others, and to participate in discussion led by him.

We truly appreciate and look forward to continuing to build our warm relationship with Tufts and its community. In April, a Senior Connection group of 60 Tufts alumni, many of whom had never visited the site, enjoyed a special tour. If you are a Tufts student, alumnus, or faculty or staff member, we would love to welcome your class or group of any age for a tour this season. We also welcome you to contact us if you are interested in sharing your time and talents with us as a volunteer. *Please contact [Director@RoyallHouse.org](mailto:Director@RoyallHouse.org) for more information.*

## Volunteer Spotlight

Ellen Manes-Meunier read an article in the local paper about funding the Royall House and Slave Quarters had received to develop a hands-on tour for fifth grade students. As a retired teacher with 35 years experience in fifth grade classrooms, she saw this as a perfect opportunity to get involved with a local nonprofit organization and to reengage with budding historians. Ellen has lived in Medford for nearly 30 years and has been casually interested in local history and, in particular, that of the colonial period in Massachusetts. Involvement in creating a new program connecting schools with local historical sources, especially one focusing on an area of history that has been shamefully overlooked, appealed to her need to fill her time with meaningful commitment. It promised to be fun, as well, and so far she says it has been.



## School Programs Update

Approximately 200 students, from seven classes ranging from 3rd to 7th grade, piloted the new “Parallel Lives: Life and Work on a Northern Plantation” program this spring. “Parallel Lives” explores daily life in 1758 from the perspectives of two pairs of children living at Ten Hills Farm – the privileged daughters of Isaac Royall Jr. and two enslaved children.

Three 5th grade classes from Cambridge, Sarah Baszto’s class at the Cambridgeport School and Kathleen Drew’s and Emily Lyon’s classes from the King Open School, came in April to gain an understanding of slavery before their in-depth study of four abolitionists. From Malden, 5th graders visited from Kathy Cutting’s class at Linden STEAM Academy and Lisa Casaletto’s class at Forestdale School. For Tom Vorenberg’s 7th graders from Belmont Day School, a first-hand look at slavery complemented their study of Portuguese colonization in the Congo.

Medford 5th graders also made their annual field trip, with 18 classes, totaling 338 students, visiting over a busy two days in early June. We hope some Medford 5th grade classes can attend “Parallel Lives” next year or host a pre-visit in-school presentation to deepen their learning experience on site.

Implementation of school programs and the museum educator position are funded by a generous multi-year grant from the Cummings Foundation, along with transportation subsidies to ensure that students from a full-range of school districts have access to this important American history. Additional support for bus transportation comes from East Cambridge Savings Bank and Eastern Bank.

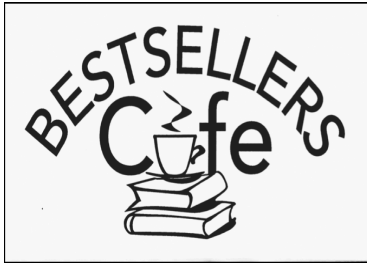
For more information or to inquire about scheduling a program for your class, please contact Olivia Searcy at [education@royallhouse.org](mailto:education@royallhouse.org)



## Bestsellers Café

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The Royall House & Slave Quarters thanks  
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generously donating graphic design services  
toward the museum's reinterpretation efforts.

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New program for grades 4-6

*Parallel Lives: Life and Work on a Northern Plantation*

Explore daily life in 1758 from the perspectives of two pairs of children living on a country estate outside Boston—the privileged daughters of one of New England's wealthiest families and two of the children their family enslaved.