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SANKOFA



Look Back For the Future: The Sankofa of *Deep Rivers*

For the Akan people of Ghana, the maxim *take from the past for a better future*, is called Sankofa (SAHN-ko-fa). It is symbolized by a bird facing backward to retrieve an egg from its back while its feet point forward. Sankofa is also depicted in a more stylized heart design. Ebenezer Maxwell Mansion's *Deep Rivers* Black History House Tour, Literary Parlors, and online events beckon us to experience Sankofa for ourselves through the lives of Black Victorians.

My Sankofa epiphany happened somewhere between reading the Literary Parlor's *Pudd'nhead Wilson* by Mark Twain and watching worldwide protests sparked by George Floyd's murder by Minneapolis police. In that interval, the ancestors' voices boomed, "Read our stories, taste our recipes, hear our music, visit our buildings, and see how we navigated and thrived in the oppressive racism of our day." "Go ahead," they prodded, "look inside the egg!"

In the Sankofa egg, we see the courage of Caroline Le Count, who, in 1867, worked to desegregate Philly streetcars; we witness how Roxy shrewdly saved her child from a life of slavery in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*; and we meet architect Julian Francis Abele, who helped design the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

In the yolk is the tale of Madison Washington, the protagonist in Frederick Douglass' "The Heroic Slave." This short story is based on an 1841 slave revolt, where 128 enslaved Africans wrested themselves from a life of exploitation and commandeered the slaver Creole to the freedom in the Bahamas. And finally, once the egg was cracked, the music of Philadelphia composer and band leader Francis Johnson, born in 1792, filled the Mansion parlor and allowed me to "hear" the past.

I expect more Sankofa moments like these in future *Deep Rivers* events. There are more powerful, stunning, and inspiring experiences from the past to help us shape a better future – like our ancestors did for us – for generations to come.



Regina Robinson is an adult educator with a strong interest in African American history. She lives in the Queen's House in the Tulpehocken Station Historic District with her husband, John, and rescue dog, Iggie. Her interest in history began in childhood where she loved listening to elders' stories about their lives and the accomplishments of their Black heroes. She holds a master's degree in Media Ecology from New York University.

by Regina Robinson

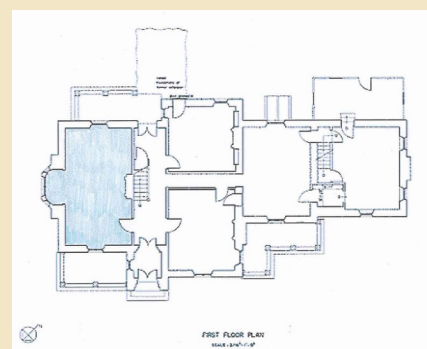
VIRTUAL TOURS AT THE MANSION via ZOOM

TOUR OF THE 1860s DOWNSTAIRS

Since we could not open the museum's actual front door to guests for tours, we opened the virtual front door in May for a tour of the 1860s downstairs. Experienced docents Cindy Iavecchia and Kathleen Sholinsky guide guests room by room through the first floor. Guests see close-up images of items from the collection for a more in-depth experience than enjoyed during an in-person tour.

"Your format with visual diagram folded into photographic images rolled perfectly with script dialogue. Thank you for your personalized efforts and great presentation. The antique roadshow should find a way not to sell but to present how a collection can display real treasures to share. A great show and share a collection!" (William Benkert)

Virtual tours of the 1860s downstairs are offered on Thursday, Friday, and select Saturday afternoons at 2:00 pm. Reservations are required. Members of Ebenezer Maxwell Mansion attend FREE. The cost for non-members is \$5. Register online at <https://ebenezermaxwellmansion.org/visit/>



DEEP RIVERS VIRTUAL TOUR via ZOOM – coming soon

The coronavirus delayed the premiere of the Mansion's new docent-led tour entitled DEEP RIVERS – HOW AFRICAN AMERICANS WADED THROUGH THE WATERS OF OPPRESSION TO ACHIEVE GREATNESS IN THE 19TH-CENTURY.

Therefore, Ebenezer Maxwell Mansion is pleased to announce that our new interpretive docent-led tour Deep Rivers is going virtual. Live docents take you virtually through the museum highlighting the lives, stories, and achievements of 19th-century Black entrepreneurs, intellectuals, and artisans with soundscapes and images. We will mail recipe cards and identity cards to participants on the virtual tour. The experience begins as a soprano sings Deep River (a Negro spiritual). Historical figures highlighted in the tour are W.E.B. DuBois, Francis Johnson, Henry Ossawa Tanner, Sarah Mapps Douglass, John S. Trower, Dr. Rebecca Cole, Dr. Eliza Grier, Elizabeth Keckley, Ebenezer Bassett, Octavius V. Catto & Caroline LeCount, Julien Abele, and Abby Fisher. The tour is immersive with images, music, and sound elements. Tenea Wilborn and John Brown, will guide guests and answer questions. Shav'on Smith wrote Deep Rivers.

Cost: \$5

Cost for residents in 19144: FREE (for a limited time)

Reservations are required. Make your reservations online at <https://ebenezermaxwellmansion.org/deep-rivers/>



Elizabeth Keckley



John Trower



Francis Johnson



LOOKING BACK



LITERARY PARLOR RETROSPECTIVE

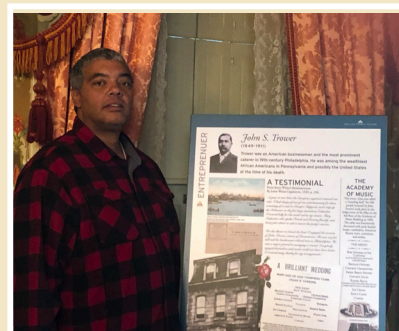


Guests at February's Literary Parlor
Topic – Elizabeth Keckley's autobiography

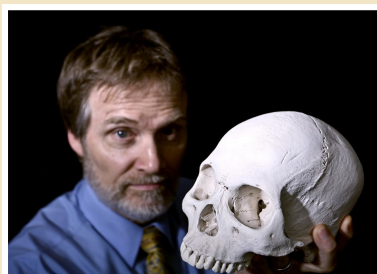
In 2020, Ebenezer Maxwell Mansion's Literary Parlor began offering Black authors book selections every other month. In February, we discussed Elizabeth Keckley's autobiography, *Behind the Scenes or Thirty Years a Slave and Four Years in the White House*. Twenty-five people attended, and a lively discussion ensued. In April, the Literary Parlor went virtual via ZOOM for a discussion of *Eight Cousins* by Louisa May Alcott. May's Literary Parlor selection was Frances Harper's *Iola LeRoy*, one of the first books written by an African American woman. The summer line-up included *North and South* by Elizabeth Gaskell in June, *Pudd'nhead Wilson* by Mark Twain in July, and *The Heroic Slave* by Frederick Douglass in August. The virtual ZOOM format enables guests from out-of-state to attend.

DEEP RIVERS OPENING RECEPTION

On March 7, Ebenezer Maxwell Mansion hosted the opening reception for Deep Rivers with over 100 guests. The reception featured an actress portraying Elizabeth Keckley, a former slave who became the dressmaker for Mary Todd Lincoln. Pianist, Stephen Page, performed music by Francis Johnson, the first African American composer to publish his compositions. James Lyons, great-grandson of John Trower, answered questions about his famous great grandfather. Trower's great-great-grandson, Michael Umstead, brought homemade mini-pies prepared with the help of his daughter.



Michael Umstead



Dr. Robert D. Hicks

ZOOM PRESENTATIONS WITH Q & A

1918 PANDEMIC Q & A

During Pennsylvania's "stay at home" order, Ebenezer Maxwell Mansion hosted a live question and answer ZOOM meeting with Dr. Robert D. Hicks, Senior Consulting Scholar at the Mutter Museum at the College of Physicians of Philadelphia and co-organizer of their 1918 flu exhibit. The city of Philadelphia was one of the hardest hit by that epidemic, claiming 20,000 lives. Thirty-one people attended on May 2.

PICKLE MAKING & ABBY FISHER

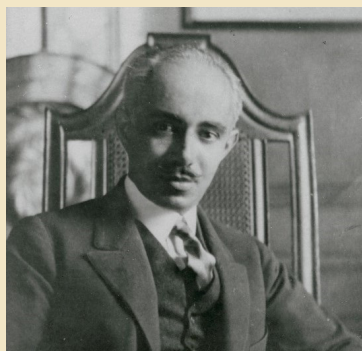
Philadelphia's 19th-century food expert Becky Diamond demonstrated an easy recipe for homemade pickles. Guests learned about Abby Fisher, a former slave, famous for her award-winning pickles. Though Fisher could not read or write, she wrote and published a cookbook in 1881. Becky also showed how to make ginger cookies adapted from Fisher's 1881 cookbook. Attendees received two recipe cards – one for pickles adapted from Fisher's recipe and ginger cookies. Twenty people attended on July 18.





UPCOMING EVENTS

SEPTEMBER



JULIAN FRANCIS ABELE – AFRICAN AMERICAN ARCHITECT

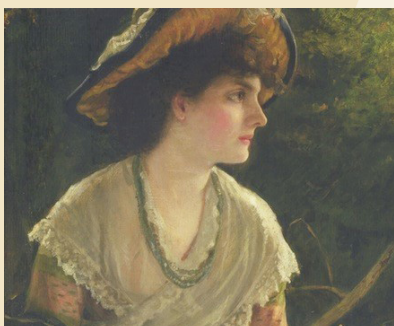
Saturday, September 12, 1:00 pm

Illustrated presentation followed by Q & A via ZOOM

DuRay Montague hosts a fascinating presentation about the life and work of Julian Abele, followed by a Q & A. Abele, a notable graduate of the Institute for Colored Youth, became a prominent African American architect working for Horace Trumbauer.

Cost: \$6, Member cost: \$5

Reservations at <https://ebenezermaxwellmansion.org/interactiveqa/>



LITERARY PARLOR – *THE MAKING OF A MARCHIONESS*

Sunday, September 20, 1:30 pm

Join bibliophile, Kate Howe, for a lively discussion via ZOOM about Frances Hodgson Burnett's Cinderella-like story *The Making of a Marchioness* via ZOOM.

Cost: \$6

Reservations at <https://ebenezermaxwellmansion.org/literary-parlor/>



THE SECOND GREAT MIGRATION

Saturday, September 26, at 1:00 pm

Join social activist and artist Julie Rainbow for her talk about the Second Great Migration, followed by a live Q & A via ZOOM. Philadelphia's rich cultural history will be celebrated through the immersive, multifaceted storytelling experience of migration. These stories are relevant to generations of families that are old and new residents of the City.

Cost: \$6, Member cost: \$5

Reservations at <https://ebenezermaxwellmansion.org/interactiveqa/>



TEA WITH FREDERICK DOUGLASS

Coming in this fall

The world premiere of this new play by Shav'on Smith, sponsored by a PNC Arts Alive grant, will be professionally recorded and released on Vimeo this fall. Maurice Tucker stars as Frederick Douglass.

Updated information and ticket prices at <https://ebenezermaxwellmansion.org/tea-with-frederick-douglass/>

AT THE MANSION

OCTOBER



SPOOKY LITERARY PARLOR

Friday, October 16, at 7:00 pm

Join us for a spine chilling evening of Victorian ghost stories. Volunteers select a favorite 19th-century scary tale to read aloud to the group. Select a story that can be read aloud in less than 10 minutes. If you want to be a reader, email diane@ebenezermaxwellmansion.org with your selection. Reservations are required. Time allows for only eight individual story readers, so submit your choice early.

Cost: \$6

<https://ebenezermaxwellmansion.org/literary-parlor/>

DECEMBER



CONVERSATIONS WITH SANTA

Saturday, December 5, 10:00 am to 12:30 pm

Schedule an appointment to meet with Santa on ZOOM!

Because of the coronavirus, Santa must stay at the North Pole until Christmas, but you can meet with him virtually via ZOOM. Bring your wish list!

The first appointment is at 10:00 am. Appointments are scheduled every 15 minutes. Only 12 appointments are available so make your reservation early.

Cost: \$8 per family

Cost for residents with 19144 zip code: \$2 per family

<https://ebenezermaxwellmansion.org/conversations-with-santa/>



HOLIDAYS WITH JOHN TROWER

Saturday, December 12, at 1:00 pm

Join Becky Diamond via ZOOM as she prepares sponge cake and chicken croquettes which are both often seen on Trower catering menus. Learn about Philadelphia's most successful 19th-century caterer as well as a philanthropist. Watch Becky's chicken croquette demo and join her while she makes sponge cake. Attendees will receive the recipes through the mail.

Cost: \$6, Members FREE

<https://ebenezermaxwellmansion.org/interactiveqa/>

Make reservations online at <https://ebenezermaxwellmansion.org/> or call 215-438-1861

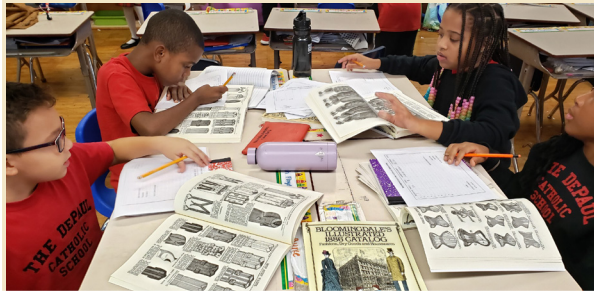
Educational Program for Children

by Diane Thompson

The education program took part in two festivals - Johnson House's Juneteenth and Cliveden's Revolutionary Germantown Festival in 2019. Our activities engaged the crowds with information and quizzes on both Declaration of Independence and the Emancipation Proclamation. We saw over 100 people combined.

The 2019-2020 school year started with two-part lessons on the Industrial Revolution, targeting third graders, and the Emancipation Proclamation, targeting fifth graders. We gave our first lessons to two 3rd grade classes at The DePaul Catholic School. Fifty-five students took part in the hands-on experiences involving a timeline to place inventions in perspective. Students discussed how and where the Industrial Revolution started and the changes it made in daily life. They used some devices, such as an apple peeler, a coffee grinder, and a green bean slicer. Students also used a catalog to "buy" some everyday items and tried their hands at figuring out how an elevator works and how to break a code.

We took the Emancipation Proclamation lessons to Fitler Academics Plus School's 8th-grade classes. We delved into the topics of slavery and the Civil War using a timeline. We used maps to see how the US had changed over time and the US Constitution to see changes from its original writing in 1787, to incorporating the Reconstruction Amendments.



DePaul Elementary Third Grade Students

With the onset of COVID 19, we began writing remote learning lessons to supplement student's learning. Currently, six lessons that mostly focus on Black History are posted online with a seventh for students at the Waldorf School of Philadelphia. They will be using the lawn as an outdoor classroom when school resumes. Eventually, we hope to include all lessons in a workbook.



Diana Thompson
Education Coordinator

In 2019, Ebenezer Maxwell Mansion hired Diana Thompson as our Education Coordinator. Ms. Thompson was the Education Director at Grumblethorpe Historic House and Garden for twelve years. In that capacity, she worked with seven different schools, serving students from Kindergarten through Eighth Grade. She developed a curriculum and taught classes with another educator.

The Mansion tasked Thompson with creating a curriculum about 19th-century topics for school students. She did so and rolled out the Mansion's new education program in 2019. Thank you, Diana.

REMEMBERING PETER SOLOMON

by Diane Richardson



Peter Solomon

Ebenezer Maxwell Mansion mourns the loss of Peter Solomon, a long-time volunteer and former board member, who passed away on July 14, 2020.

Peter loved the Mansion. In the 1980s, he was among the first core group of neighbors who opened the building for tours and hosted events such as the annual Dickens Christmas Party. He knew the history of the building and its residents.

When I first became the Executive Director of the Mansion in 2007, Peter Solomon was President of the Board of Directors. Because I was inexperienced as a museum director, Peter guided me through the first several years. He hired a grant writer; he arranged for a board retreat; he called on his contacts to help promote the Mansion. Peter Solomon trained me as a docent.

Recently Peter was not directly involved in the operations of the Mansion; however, he remained one of our best supporters and promoters. On many occasions, he featured stories about the Mansion and its programs on his radio show *Conversations with Peter Solomon* on Philadelphia's 94 WIP.

The Mansion received several donations in memory of Peter Solomon. The money will help us pay the videographer who is filming *Tea with Frederick Douglass*.

PLEASE SELECT MEMBERSHIP LEVEL:

{ } **Young Friend** (Under 30) \$25

- Unlimited docent-led tours
- Research privileges in the library
- Invitations to members-only events
- Advance notice of programs and events
- Discounts to Victorian workshops and events

{ } **Mansion Friend** \$50

- All privileges listed above

{ } **Mansion Sponsor** \$70

- All privileges listed above
- Membership for immediate family

{ } **Mansion Conservator** \$150

- All privileges listed above
- Membership to the North American Reciprocal Museum Program – free admission to over 985 museums nationwide-
BEST VALUE!

{ } **Mansion Sustainer** \$250

- All privileges listed above
- Two guest passes for docent-led tours

{ } **Mansion Preservation Circle** \$500

- All privileges listed above
- Acknowledgment in newsletter
- Two additional guest passes

{ } **Mansion Benefactor** \$1,000

- All privileges listed above
- Gift membership for a person of your choosing

* * * * *

{ } **Business Bronze** \$250

- Business logo on the Mansion's website with a link to your website and acknowledgement in the Mansion newsletter

{ } **Business Silver** \$500

- Same as above with special silver acknowledgement.

{ } **Business Gold** \$1,000

- Same as above with special gold acknowledgement.

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EBENEZER MAXWELL MANSION
Gazette

Ebenezer Maxwell Mansion
200 West Tulpehocken Street
Philadelphia, PA 19144

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EBENEZER MAXWELL MANSION
Victorian House Museum & Garden

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