



THE HERITAGE

The Next Major Project... The Heritage Room Tapestries

“... the use of tapestry in the Garrett-Jacobs dining room is possibly the last example of its type in the U.S.”

The above quotation is what the “experts” have consistently indicated over the past year to the GJMEF Heritage Room Capital Project Committee (Frank Dittenhafer II, Chair and Members, Jim Durkay and Barry Casanova). None of them knew of any comparable 19th century installation of European tapestries in the United States which still remain on the walls. The tapestries, which were woven originally in the first quarter of the 17th century, are a complete set. The scenes, borders, and verdure were woven at the same time for installation in the same room.

The “experts,” who were consulted are distinguished curators, fine arts appraisers, and textile conservationists—11 in all. The experts confirmed that the application of tapestry in this manner was very popular with a select group of American families and their architects. The decoration of interiors with costly textile from the 17th and early 18th centuries was central to the image of “artistic interiors” – a reflection of status of the owners at the time of their creation.

A bedroom tapestry does exist at the Vanderbilt National Historic Site at Hyde



Park installed 20 years later. Another expert reported that a set of Baumgarten tapestries remain on the dining room walls in a private home in Manhattan; however, they are American made. All the rest have come down.

The Heritage Room exists today as perhaps the least modified of all of the original 40+ rooms within The Garrett-Jacobs Mansion. The 17th century northern European tapestry covering the dining room walls was installed in the 1880s when the room was built and “redecorated” in the Gothic Revival style by New York architect, Stanford White. Two complete scenes hang on the right and left side of the fireplace. The remaining walls and surfaces were literally “upholstered” with tapestry verdure to fit the residual areas.

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The 110th Anniversary... The Great Baltimore Fire and the Engineering Society

The Fire started on Sunday morning, February 7, 1904 supposedly “when a lighted cigarette was dropped through a grate in front of the John E. Hurst Company warehouse located on the southeast corner of German (now Redwood) and Liberty Streets. The dry goods stored in the basement were soon in flames and within ten minutes the building literally exploded.” (Dilts 3)

“Fanned by a southwest wind, the fire consumed 140 acres of commercial property and destroyed 1,343 buildings within 30 hours. The total losses were estimated between \$125 to \$150 million which included some 2,500 firms that were temporarily out of business. Not one life was lost! Interestingly, the buildings that survived were developed by United States engineers over the previous 20 years.” (Palmore 8)

Formed in early February, 1905 by Alfred Quick, a water engineer for the City of Baltimore and four other municipal engineers, the

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"Heritage" is distributed to members and friends of The Garrett-Jacobs Mansion Endowment on a quarterly basis.

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MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Garrett-Jacobs Mansion Endowment Fund is to preserve and restore the Mansion as a National Historic Landmark and to share the history, architectural and civic legacy of the Mansion for the benefit and education of the public.

The Great Baltimore Fire and the Engineering Society

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Engineering Society of Baltimore's (ESB) timing was significant—it marked the first anniversary of the Great Fire. "Out of the ashes, the engineers along with leading bankers, lawyers, and politicians including some, who later became members of the Engineering Society, set out not just to restore the city, but make it better." (Palmore 8).

The most dramatic contribution was the development of a water and sewage system. Before the Fire there was no sewage system; the privies and water closets drained into backyard cesspools. The water system, a bit better, dated back to 1804 included wooden pipes. "Because of those remarkable engineers foresight, the harbor lines and docks were readjusted and streets were improved in the process." (Palmore 8)

Let's advance to 1960 when the Engineering Society of Baltimore acquired the vacant, unheated, set-to-be-demolished Garrett-Jacobs Mansion, a mansion far removed from the 1904 devastating fire. Yet, it is a testament to the ESB's members and



its Women's Auxiliary, who restored and preserved it. This chapter in ESB's history is not about improving lousy water and sewer systems; rather, restoring a near-forgotten mansion to its original architectural grandeur. Today it is the exquisite meeting and dining place for all professionals. ■

Dilts, James D. *The Engineers 1905-1980*. Baltimore: The Engineering Society of Baltimore, 1980.

Palmore, Jo Anne. "The Engineering Society" *The Mill Corridor* June 1996.

Outreach Programs at the Mansion...

The Boys and Girls Club of Metropolitan Baltimore celebrated its Annual Holiday Party on Monday, December 9th from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Held in partnership with the ESB, these events help the Boys and Girls Club fulfill its mission: "To inspire and enable all young people, especially those who need us the most, to realize their full potential as productive, responsible, and caring citizens." That evening the children participated in a gingerbread house construction and decorating contest. After a casual dinner, there was some light entertainment. As the children departed, they were presented with an age and gender appropriate wrapped gift. Does this sound

like a tradition to you? In her day, Mrs. Garrett held Christmas parties in the Hall of Mirrors for the messenger and newsboys of the city where they were entertained with vaudeville shows. Each child received one dollar and a box of candy to take home.

Meals on Wheels held its *Thanks for Giving Donor Reception* on November 14. While the GJMEF did not do anything directly for this event; nevertheless, the Mansion provided the elegant surroundings and attentive service for this well-known organization that provides basic nutritional meals for the elderly.

The Heritage Room Tapestries

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The visual appearance of the relatively unaltered original Dining Room of Robert and Mary Garrett is compromised by the deteriorated condition of the tapestries. Time has greatly diminished the overall condition of the tapestry and appearance of the room. The most severe damage is located on the door leading from the Heritage Room to the adjacent Kitchen. Here the tapestry is severely deteriorated due to strain when the door was opened and closed.

What Conclusion can be drawn from this Expert commentary?

“... the poor condition of the tapestry must be stabilized as soon as possible before further loss occurs.”

The expert commentary and recommendations suggest consistently that the tapestries are not only a unique, surviving original installation, but are also too “interwoven” with the history of the building, the Garrett-Jacobs family, the Gilded Age, and Stanford White to simply be removed and/or discarded—not to mention they are 400 years old.

How to move forward within the short-term context of arresting continued deterioration and longer-term conservation measures has presented the Endowment Fund and Engineering Society Boards with a challenging quandary for many years. The GJMEF Heritage Room Committee’s charge during 2013 was to present a recommendation for “something appropriate” which could be done soon with cost being an important, but not a primary determinant.

After consideration of many options regarding the tapestries, the Committee developed a plan which appears both feasible and appropriate. It has received the preliminary endorsement of the GJMEF and ESB Boards. The multi-phased approach involves a short-term action plan and a long-term commitment. They are:

1. Proceed with initial phases of conservation to arrest continued

deterioration and safely store tapestries on site at the Garrett-Jacobs Mansion until actual off-site conservation treatment, stabilization and consolidation, backing, and reinstallation may occur.

2. Proceed with high resolution digital scanning of the Tapestries and make digital reproduction printed directly onto the highest quality heavy cotton twill fabric.

The Heritage Room Committee felt that this is the most appropriate course of action that best positions the GJMEF and ESB in the short term and long term to accomplish complimentary (not conflicting) goals as the necessary funds are raised. Additionally, the Committee noted the following benefits of this approach:

- With the original Tapestries removed, cleaned, and in storage, the Heritage Room has high-quality printed cloth reproductions of the 17th century tapestries hanging on all wall and door surfaces reinforcing the Mansion’s history, authenticity, and story without compromising this unique room’s environment and marketing role.
- The remaining Tapestry Conservation effort can be completed in sequenced phases for specific panels/wall areas over an extended time of five to ten years. This effort should coincide with availability of funds, campaign pledges, and financing options capitalizing on “before/after” appearances that correspond with replacement of the printed cloth reproductions by the original conserved 17th century panels.

Based on the above plan, the Heritage Room Capital Project Committee and GJMEF Board are proceeding with proposal procurements and final pricing to go ahead with the initial short-term tapestry conservation and photographic reproduction efforts. Stay tuned. ■

Most Successful Year Yet... Crush Wine Tasting Event

The Engineers Club of Baltimore kicked off its 7th annual “Crush” wine tasting event at the Mansion on Friday, November 8th. The Crush is one of the fundraising events held to benefit the Garrett-Jacobs Mansion Endowment Fund.

“This year’s Crush was our most successful year yet,” said Bob Leach, Crush organizer and past President of the Engineers Club and Garrett-Jacobs Mansion Endowment Fund. “With the help of our 15 corporate sponsors and 241 attendees, we helped raise **\$25,000** for the Garrett-Jacobs Mansion Endowment Fund.”



“The Wine Coach,” Laurie Foster (center)

This year’s theme was “Judgment at the Mansion” inspired by the 1976 Judgment of Paris wine tasting. In an effort to recreate the Paris wine tasting, Crush organizers meticulously hand-picked both French and American wines for three different categories. Crush-goers had the chance to vote for their favorite wine in each category in a blind tasting that would once again determine a winner among the wines of France and the United States.

For those attendees hoping to learn more about wine tasting and wine in general, “The Wine Coach,” Laurie Foster was on-site sharing her love and expertise on the subject of fine wines. Foster is the host of her radio show “The Sipping Point:” on WBAL 1090 AM on Saturdays at 12 noon.

Just as the American wines conquered over the French in 1976, so they did at Crush 2013. On November 8th, the U.S. won best out of the three wine categories. For just \$75 per person, Crush attendees enjoyed top quality wines, food, music, and company in one of the grandest homes in Baltimore. ■



The Fireball at the Mansion Saturday, February 15, 2014

Please join us for the 2014 Garrett-Jacobs Mansion Endowment Fund's annual Fire Ball. This winter we'll drive away the winter frost with an elegant evening of sampling fine foods and decadent drinks while dancing to live music in the opulent setting of this historic mansion.

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Your support can help the trustees in their on-going effort to restore and preserve this landmark property, listed in the National Register as part of the Mount Vernon Place Historic District and documented in the Library of Congress as part of the Historic American Buildings Survey.

Benefits include a subscription to the Heritage Quarterly and advance notice of public events at the Garrett-Jacobs Mansion.

Complete this coupon and mail check to:
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