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CEDAR GROVE

**Lansdowne Avenue, Fairmount Park West
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

One of the oldest houses open to the public in Fairmount Park, Cedar Grove served as a summer home for five generations of the same Quaker extended family, the Paschalls and the Morrises, who came to America at the time of William Penn (1644-1718). Originally situated on fifteen acres in the Frankford section of Northeast Philadelphia, this native gray stone house was built in 1748 in the local domestic style. The ground floor rooms all open to the outside, suggesting easy country living rather than the formality of a grand mansion. After the house and the family objects were donated to the City of Philadelphia in 1926, Cedar Grove was meticulously taken apart, reassembled at its present location on Lansdowne Avenue in Fairmount Park West, and opened in 1928 as an historic house museum administered by the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Cedar Grove contains an extensive collection of original family furnishings and decorative arts providing a rare opportunity for visitors to see furniture from early Pennsylvania through Neoclassical styles and a wide range of household articles displayed in their own historic context. Convenient and innovative household features, practical furnishings, and simple decorations suggest the abiding influence over design and renovations held by the women of Cedar Grove.

The Paschall-Morris Family & the History of Cedar Grove

While successfully managing her late husband's dry goods store and maintaining a household with three children on High Street (now Market Street) in Philadelphia, Elizabeth Coates Paschall (1702-1767) purchased land that adjoined her brother's farm four miles outside

of the city in 1746. There, on Harrowgate Lane, Elizabeth commissioned construction for Cedar Grove, a two-and-a-half-story summer house.

With a single exception, Cedar Grove's ownership moved through the female line of the Paschall-Morris family. The house went first to Elizabeth's daughter Beulah Paschall (1732-1793) and then to Beulah's niece Sarah Paschall (1772-1842). In the years following their marriage in 1795, Sarah and her husband Isaac Wistar Morris (1770-1831), enlarged the house to accommodate their family of nine children. They added the south half of the house that includes a large front room, kitchen and pantry, two large bedrooms on the second floor, and a bathing room. They also built a third floor, converting the original gable roofline into a "broken pitch" or gambrel roof with a large lunette window in the center.

Sarah and Isaac's son Isaac Paschall Morris (1803-1869), the only male to inherit Cedar Grove, was purported to be one of the twenty richest men in Philadelphia from his involvement in the iron industry in manufacturing parts for ships. It was apparently he who added a piazza across the north and west fronts, similar in style to porches found on Quaker meetinghouses. His daughter Lydia Thompson Morris (1849-1932) was the last member of the family to own Cedar Grove. When the construction of railroad tracks cut through the property in 1888, Lydia and her brother John moved the two-hundred-year accumulation of family furnishings from Cedar Grove to Compton, a new house they built in Chestnut Hill which is today part of the Morris Arboretum. Encouraged by the vision of Philadelphia Museum of Art director Fiske Kimball (1888-1955), Lydia Thompson Morris donated Cedar Grove and the family furnishings to the City of Philadelphia in 1926.

Rebuilding Stone by Stone

Kimball found "it entirely feasible and attractive to restore" the house to its original form and to physically move it to a scenic Fairmount Park location. Philadelphia architects Ritter and Shay prepared detailed drawings of interior and exterior elevations and floor plans prior to dismantling Cedar Grove. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* in February 1927 reported the meticulous nature of the project: "Attention to detail has been remarkable in the rebuilding . . . Every stone, every piece of wood (and they number into thousands) was marked carefully and was replaced

exactly as it has been before the demolition.” The article quoted the relocation supervisor William Carver as declaring that “only three beams had decayed to the extent of having to be replaced.”

Cedar Grove Room by Room

Over the 140 years that the house was in use, additions and renovations improved Cedar Grove to a sizable home of ten rooms plus third floor servant quarters.

Front Parlor – The front parlor, appropriately furnished for entertaining guests as well as for general day-to-day household activities, is the first room seen by visitors to Cedar Grove. The tall case clock is made of walnut with a swan’s neck pediment, ogee feet, fluted quarter columns, and a silver-washed brass dial. On the desk nearby sits a brass Argand lamp containing a tubular wick with an oil reservoir on its side and a base of blue jasper embellished with classical figures. The sofa, chairs, and card table were ordered from Philadelphia cabinetmaker Thomas Whitecar (d. 1824). Standing near the far window is a worktable with a five-sectioned top drawer used for storing sewing equipment with a large bottom drawer for holding works in progress.

Dining Room – Cedar Grove’s original front parlor was specifically converted into a dining room when Sarah and Isaac Morris built the addition after their marriage in 1795. A drop leaf mahogany table is set for dinner with Chinese export porcelain, Irish glass, and green bone-handled knives and forks—replicas of the ivory-handled ones once owned by Elizabeth Paschall. The eight mahogany side chairs with pierced trefoil splats are from a set of twelve, attributed to Philadelphia chairmaker James Gillingham (1736-1781). The large armchair with carved tassels is believed to have belonged to Caspar Wistar of Germantown (died 1752), the father-in-law of Captain Samuel Morris (1734-1812) whose portrait hangs over the sideboard.

Ironing Room – The proximity of this original room to the kitchen, dining room, exterior yard, and the small back stairway (most likely used by servants) suggests that this space functioned as a utility room. Effective in flattening table and bed linens, a large mid-1700s walnut press on display is operated by threaded wooden screws.

Kitchen – Full of innovative and convenient features such as the built-in cupboards, large cooking hearth, indoor bake oven, and hot water boiler, the kitchen was most likely designed to Sarah’s specifications after her marriage in 1795. Other items on view include redware dishes, pewter plates, baskets, cooking pots, cups, and saucers. The plain pine kitchen table represents the utilitarian furniture that would have been in most 18th-century homes. A rare set of fanback Windsor chairs comes from a set of twelve made by Philadelphia’s most prolific Windsor chairmaker, John Letchworth (1759-1843). A baby walker is outfitted with bamboo turnings similar to Letchworth’s adult chairs. Gallipots, like the ones on display in the kitchen, were used to store ointments and salves (such as “Black Salve” made of malted fat, bees wax and common black pitch for sores, boils, and cuts). According to the diary in which she documented remedies, Elizabeth Coates Paschall had extensive knowledge of medicine and medical theory derived from friends, family, and neighbors as well as Native Americans and medical publications.

Second Floor

Elizabeth Coates Paschall’s Bedroom – As this upstairs room dates to the original construction, the Museum interprets the space as Elizabeth’s bedroom. A prominent feature is the mid-1700s triple chest made of cherry with long leaf pine drawer sides and white cedar drawer bottoms, secondary woods that are characteristic of early Philadelphia manufacturing. The small sections of the chest could be taken apart for carrying up narrow winding staircases like those at Cedar Grove. The bed, with fluted foot posts and Marlborough-style block feet, is draped in green gauze used as a mosquito curtain.

Nursery/Sewing Room – Although family members called this room the “nursery,” the direct access to the servants’ stairway indicates that it might have been used as a utility or storage area. The room is now interpreted as a sewing room but still contains a small rocking Windsor chair with an inscription on a plaque under its seat: “James B. & Lydia P. Thompson, m. 1809/All of the children (of the family) were rocked in this chair/Rebecca (our mother), Phebe, John, Mary/-- John T. & Lydia T. Morris.” It is rare to find a Windsor with original rockers.

Master Bedroom – A highlight of this large bedroom, part of the Morris addition, is a walnut dressing table attributed to Philadelphia cabinetmaker David Evans (1748-1820), which was one

of a pair purchased in 1774 for Beulah Paschall. A tripod table holds silver plated English Sheffield candlesticks that date to 1800.

Bathing Room – Although conveniences for bathing were rare in Philadelphia homes throughout the 19th century, insurance surveys indicate that this room, another section of the Morris addition, was used for bathing. A sponging tub is installed in the room. A corner cupboard with graduated shelves displays pieces of household ceramics.

Guest Bedroom – As informal entertaining among women with children was often conducted in upstairs front rooms, this bedroom highlights toys from the period, including a rocking horse, cradle, doll, and miniature table with chairs set with a child's tea service of blue transfer printed English Staffordshire pottery. The room also contains an unusual two-sided wall of built-in closets, shelves, and chest of drawers.

The Philadelphia Museum of Art is among the largest art museums in the United States, showcasing more than 2,000 years of exceptional human creativity in masterpieces of painting, sculpture, works on paper, decorative arts and architectural settings from Europe, Asia and the Americas. The striking neoclassical building, housing more than 200 galleries and standing on a nine-acre site above the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, is an oasis of beauty and enriching activities-including programs for children and families, lectures, concerts and films.

For additional information, contact the Marketing and Public Relations Department of the Philadelphia Museum of Art at (215) 684-7860. The Philadelphia Museum of Art is located on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway at 26th Street. For general information, call (215) 763-8100, or visit the Museum's website at www.philamuseum.org. (7/26/02)