A new framework for talking history

By Diane Cowen
STAFF WRITER

When the Heritage Society reopens the historic Kellum-Noble House this week, it will not only give visitors access to the city’s oldest surviving structure again, but also will address a topic that many Houstonians have remained uncomfortable with: slavery.

The Kellum-Noble House – the city’s oldest structure still on its original foundation – closed in 2014 for extensive repairs. When tourizing the centerpiece of Sam Houston Park’s collection of historic homes, guests will hear about more than the house owner’s, the Kellum and the Noble. Events will discuss the slaves who lived and worked there.

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In 1954, the city staked the Llano-NOble House for demolition, but it was spared and underwent restoration work in 1996.

Renee Hooper and her daughter, Haley, watch the remaining three turkeys strut and gobble around the yard.

When touring the Llano-NOble house, guests will not only hear about the slaves who lived and worked there but also about the house’s owners but also about the house’s owners and the house’s history.

The Nobles came with their own slaves when they first arrived, as was customary when they bought or inherited their names as listed in the deed and property records. Frank, Jaina, Billy, 26; Dec; or Ambrose, 26; Mary, 22; and Author, 22; and James, 28; and Johnny, 22; and Hale, 22. Frank, 26, was listed as a “journalist,” a name that appears on a large pile of papers in the house. It is a reminder that their own story is intertwined with the story of the house and its owners.

The Nobles were a wealthy Connecticut family, so when the “marriage” was allowed, the Niketon House was changed into a boarding house, where bedroom daughter from her first marriage lived with her two little girls and their slaves. The divorce documents showed that they fought over one slave, a key trove.

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