Our former print newsletter, *The Glessner Journal*, is no longer being produced. In place of that publication, we started issuing a weekly e-newsletter each Wednesday starting April 1st. Since we do not have an email address for you (or you indicated your preference for a print copy), we are summarizing some of the highlights of the issues published from mid-August through early-November. We hope you enjoy reading through the articles and will go online to read our blog articles and other web content and look at our YouTube videos. The e-newsletter is currently being issued via email on the first and third Wednesday of each month. If you would like to start receiving our e-newsletter, please send your email address to William Tyre, Curator & Program Director, at wtyre@glessnerhouse.org.

**$350,000 grant received from the National Endowment for the Humanities**

It is with extraordinary pleasure and gratitude that we announce the receipt of a $350,000 grant to be used to complete the installation of the geothermal system at Glessner House. News of the grant award was received in August, when it was also learned that of the 60 projects submitted nationwide, Glessner was one of only 14 that were approved for funding. The geothermal system, when complete, will utilize this green technology to provide efficient heating, air conditioning, and humidity control throughout the building for the first time in its history! Structured with ten zones throughout the building, the system will provide a dramatically improved environment for our collections, and will also make the House much more comfortable for guests and staff. The project was initially launched in 2015 with a $100,000 gift from long-time docent and member Joy Hebert.

Work will begin this fall; stay tuned for exciting development including video coverage of the installation, and specialized hard-hat tours of work in progress!

**Glessner House recipient of 2020 Silver Lining Award**

We are very pleased to announce that Glessner House was selected as one of two Midwest museums to receive the new Silver Lining Award from the Association of Midwest Museums. The Silver Lining Award was created in 2020 to honor museums whose responsiveness and resourcefulness during the COVID-19 pandemic have resulted in creative change for their organizations and a positive impact on their visitors, communities, and overall sustainability.

The Silver Lining Award was presented during an online community celebration on Friday November 6 attended by staff, board, and other supporters of Glessner House, as well as representatives museums across the Midwest. Speakers included Rabbi Mordechai Gershon of Chabad South Loop and Galina Isman of Tiny Tunes Studio, both of whom have been conducting their activities in our courtyard during the start of the pandemic. It was a special day to celebrate Glessner House!
Christmas at Glessner House

Christmas is one of the most special times of the year to experience Glessner House. It is no wonder that it was voted one of the “Top 10 holiday historic home tours in the U.S.” by 10Best and USA Today in 2019! The house will be decorated for the holidays from November 25 through December 30.

Christmas Candlelight Tours will be offered over the weekends of December 12-13 and 19-20. These special 45-minute docent-led tours will highlight Christmas customs as observed by the Glessner family in the late 19th century. The house will feature elaborate decorations of the period including a live 10-foot tree decorated with period ornaments, toys and holiday crafts, and the dining table set for an eight-course Christmas feast. Period Christmas carols will be played on the Glessners’ Steinway piano, and their beloved cook, Mattie Williamson, will demonstrate how to make chicken timbale, an item featured on the Glessners’ Christmas menu in 1895.

Nine tours, limited to four people each to ensure safe social-distancing, will take place each day. The first tour begins at 4:30pm and the last tour begins at 6:30pm. Advance tickets are required and can be purchased on the website, glessnerhouse.org/programs.
50th Anniversary designating Glessner House as Chicago's first landmark

On October 14, 1970, exactly 50 years ago, the Chicago City Council designated Chicago’s first two landmarks - Glessner House and Clarke House - under a strengthened ordinance that provided true protection for the buildings. Glessner House had been designated a landmark a decade earlier under the original ordinance that was purely honorary. Several events in October commemorated this anniversary. On October 14, we presented a program exploring the history of landmarking in the city (an interesting mix of politics and preservation) and the work that has been undertaken to preserve these two buildings. On Saturday October 17, as part of the Chicago Architecture Center’s Open House Chicago, we organized a panel discussion showing the impact of landmarking - past, present, and future - in the diverse Third Ward. The panel consisted of William Tyre, Alderman Pat Dowell, and urban planner Jeremi Bryant. Geoffrey Baer (who trained as a docent at Glessner House in 1987) presented a story on the history of landmarking as part of his “Ask Geoffrey” segment on Chicago Tonight on WTTW on Thursday October 8.

Thank you to our donors!

On behalf of the board, staff, and Narcissus (shown below; he does occasionally think about someone other than himself), we would like to thank all of our generous donors, old and new, for their gifts during the period June 1 through September 30, 2020. Cash and in-kind gifts totaling more than $169,000 were received to support operations during this critical time when tours and other programming have been significantly reduced.

Gifts also helped to fund two special projects - the installation of the U/V-blocking film on windows throughout the house to protect the collections (in memory of Raymond Terry Tatum), and the restoration of George Glessner’s bedroom (in memory of docent Karen Oliver).

A full list of donors can be viewed on the website at: glessnerhouse.org/2020-donors
Significant materials acquired for Glessner House archives

In late October, Glessner House acquired three banker’s boxes of important archival materials relating to Glessner House and the family. The items were purchased from a dealer in upstate New York who acquired them earlier in the year at an estate sale. The most significant find was a collection of twenty letters from H. H. Richardson to John Glessner spanning the entire period of their collaboration, from April 1885 to April 1886, the last letter written just three weeks before Richardson’s death. (Two of the envelopes are shown above). These letters have never been seen by Richardson scholars, and significantly deepen the understanding of the architect-client relationship during the design of the house.

Other materials include photographs and negatives, scrapbooks, correspondence, Isaac Scott sketches, paintings by Helen Macbeth, and two beautiful memorial books prepared after the death of John Glessner in 1936. The materials are currently being sorted and cataloged, and we look forward to sharing exciting discoveries in upcoming issues of the newsletter.

Update on George’s Bedroom

During September and October, George’s bedroom underwent a dramatic transformation, which included the stripping and refinishing of the oak trim throughout the room, and the installation of a reproduction of the original Morris & Co. “Poppy” wallpaper. All work was undertaken by talented craftsmen working for National Decorating, which has worked on a variety of projects at the house over more than forty years. The remaining part of the project involves replicating the Morris & Co. drapes in the “Tulip” pattern. Drapery hardware, trim and tie-backs have been ordered, and the custom made fabric is being readied for production. We hope to have the drapes completed and hung before the end of 2020. Once completed, the room will be formally dedicated in memory of long-time docent Karen Oliver.

U/V blocking window film installed

We are pleased to report that the project to install U/V blocking window film through the house was completed on October 6 by TintToU. This film blocks 99.9% of all U/V rays, providing significant protection to the textiles, furniture, and other collections on display. The film also reduces heat transmission through the windows in the summer, and provides a modest insulating factor during the winter. The project, which cost $11,100 in total, was funded by a $5,500 matching grant from the National Trust Cynthia Woods Mitchell Fund for Historic Interiors, and generous gifts from members and friends of the late preservationist Raymond Terry Tatum, in whose memory the project was completed.
Secrets of Glessner House
Part 9: Early Electricity
September’s secret looks at surviving elements of the early electrical system in the House including wiring, wood conduit, and outlets and plugs, including those on top of the partners desk in the library (shown at right).

Secrets of Glessner House
Part 10: Human Engineering
October’s secret looks at the period of 1938 to 1945, when a human engineering laboratory operated out of Glessner House. What is human engineering, who developed the idea, and how did the laboratory end up at Glessner House?

Secrets of Glessner House
Part 11: The Dovecote
November's secret looks at the dovecote, located above the hayloft door in the coach house, and home to up to nine pairs of doves during the Glessners' occupancy of the house. Learn more about this unusual feature of the house, view it from the inside, and see the exterior up close with new drone images.
Thomas Wilfred, Lumia, and Frances Glessner Lee's Clavilux Junior

It is possible that you have never heard of Thomas Wilfred or Lumia, and it is almost certain that you have never encountered a Clavilux. In this article, we explore the development of Thomas Wilfred's light art known as lumia and how Frances Glessner Lee came to acquire one of his Clavilux Junior units in 1930, so that she could enjoy the experience in the comfort of her own home.

Clavilux Junior Unit #86 in operation (Carol and Eugene Epstein Collection, courtesy of Yale University Art Gallery)

The Lithographic Technical Foundation opens in Glessner House - 1945

The research laboratories of the Lithographic Technical Foundation opened at Glessner in October 1945, exactly 75 years ago. For the next two decades, LTF’s use of the building ensured its survival, while many of the neighboring houses were torn down. In this installment of the blog, we look at how the research laboratories made use of the house, and we share a beautiful set of photographs taken by Hedrich Blessing in 1946.

The Thanksgiving Day protest march of 1884

Protest marches have become all too common in 2020. In this installment of our blog, we look back at a significant Chicago protest march on Thanksgiving Day 1884, which came down Prairie Avenue, and raised issues that culminated in the events that took place at Haymarket Square in May 1886.
Celebrating our Steinway during National Piano Month!

To commemorate National Piano Month in September, we celebrated one of the most cherished objects at Glessner House – our Steinway Model C Parlor Concert Grand. Here are a few fun facts with which to amaze your friends during Zoom happy hours and virtual dinner parties.

- The piano case was designed by Francis H. Bacon, who was hired as the chief designer at A. H. Davenport & Co. in 1885 after working for two years in the office of H. H. Richardson. A sketch for a similar piano by Bacon appeared in the May 23, 1885 issue of the *American Architect and Building News* and featured elaborate carving on the inside of the lid, which was omitted on the Glessners’ instrument.

- Steinway & Sons completed its work on the piano in August 1887 when it was then shipped to A. H. Davenport & Co. in Boston for decorating and finishing. Steinway provided the works set within the unvarnished mahogany case and lid. Davenport provided the legs, desk (music rack), and lyre (for the pedals), in addition to completing all the carving and inlaid satinwood and mother-of-pearl decoration on the fall board (the lid over the keyboard).

- Bacon is also responsible for the walnut piano bench, which was designed to accommodate two pianists. Frances Glessner enjoyed playing four-hand arrangements with her friends, and her collection of piano music included four-hand arrangements of all nine Beethoven symphonies and Franck’s Symphony in D minor, the latter of which was a gift from CSO music director Frederick Stock. The Glessners hosted the famous piano duo of Guy Maier and Lee Pattison several times during the 1920s.

- The Model C was the second largest piano produced by Steinway & Sons and was only a few inches shorter than a concert grand. The first fully developed Model C was made in 1886, so the Glessners’ instrument was among the first ever made. It measures 7 feet 5 inches in length and weighs 900 pounds.

- The piano was shipped to the Glessners on December 23, 1887. The first mention of the piano in Frances Glessner’s journal is on Sunday January 8, 1888 when good friend Frank Baird, a prominent vocal teacher, accompanist, and organist, stopped by for tea. She wrote in her journal, “Mr. Baird said he never had his hands on the equal of our piano.”

- After the Glessners died in the 1930s, their daughter donated the piano to Harvard University where it was placed in the president’s house. In the late 1970s, Gardner Cowles, editor and publisher of *Look* magazine, visited the house and learned about the piano. As a trustee of Harvard, he coordinated the return of the piano to Glessner House in 1979. The piano was officially dedicated at a concert by Etsko Tazaki in April 1980. She was a protégé of Sir Georg Solti, who attended the event with his wife, Lady Valerie Solti.
Tile triptych by William De Morgan

The work of designer and potter William De Morgan is well represented at Glessner House and includes two sets of fireplace tiles and a magnificent loop-handled vase. Often overlooked, however, is a beautiful tile triptych depicting a galleon which hangs in its historic location over the north-facing window of the library. De Morgan created no less than 18 standard ship designs which were reproduced as single tiles, or across multi-tile panels, as is the case with the Glessners’ piece.

The original pencil drawing for the triptych, now in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, was executed during De Morgan’s years in Chelsea, 1872 to 1881. The drawing is pricked, indicating that the design was transferred to the tiles using a traditional method. With this process, the pattern is pricked with tiny holes, placed on the tiles, and then pounced with a fine powder that filters through the holes, leaving dots on the tile forming the outline of the design. In this way, the main features of the design are the same on each triptych, but since they are finished freehand, each piece is unique.

The Glessners’ triptych, still in its original ebonized frame (not shown), depicts an eagle-prowed galleon, featuring three sails and long flags, facing toward a setting sun at the left. The silhouette of thirteen figures can be seen on the deck, including a seated king surrounded by musicians and attendants, and sailors at work. Happy fish jump from the sea and birds can be seen flying overhead. The triptych is an excellent example of De Morgan’s red lusterware, displaying a finish he experimented with extensively throughout his career. The process involved mixing copper or silver oxides into white clay which was painted on to the fused glaze finish of the tile. After firing in the kiln with reduced oxygen, the clay could be wiped away revealing the metallic luster which had adhered to the surface.

At least ten other examples of this basic design are known to exist, some in red luster, others in full color. In addition to variations resulting from the hand painting such as the decoration of the sails, the number of figures on the deck or birds in the sky, other more significant variants include the ship facing left or right, the depiction of the prow as an eagle or a swan, and the presence or absence of the sun. Later tiles show another major change with a huge mythological bird of prey known as a Roc overhead, being attacked by archers standing on the deck.

The three surviving examples closest to the Glessners’ piece all reside in England and include one of four galleon triptychs in the De Morgan Collection in London, one at Wightwick Manor in Wolverhampton (a property of the National Trust), and one made in 1886 for De Morgan’s friend, Charles Lutwidge Dodgson for the fireplace of his room at Christ Church, Oxford. Dodgson is better known as Lewis Carroll, author of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, and it has been noted that the galleon, and the other fireplace tiles which featured fantastical creatures, were inspired by *Alice* and Carroll’s nonsense poem *Jabberwocky*. After Dodgson’s death, the tiles were made into a fire screen which is still used in the Senior Common Room at Christ Church, Oxford.
One of the newest additions to the collection is Frances Glessner’s silver niello pocket watch, with Swiss movement, acquired in September from Hess Fine Auctions in St. Petersburg, Florida. The diminutive piece, with a face measuring just 1-1/8 inches in diameter, shows wear on its elaborately decorated case, indicating it was often carried by its owner.

Niello refers to a mixture, usually comprised of sulfur, copper, silver, and lead, that is formed into a paste and spread over etched metal, filling the gaps. Once fired, it melts and turns black, forming a distinct contrast with the polished metal decoration. The Glessners’ rice bowl on display in the dining room, acquired from the government of Siam at the close of the World’s Columbian Exposition, is another example of niello (see Object of the Month for February 2017).

The inside of the case is inscribed, “Frances Glessner, 1800 Prairie Ave., Festival 1894.” The reference to the 1894 festival is uncertain, as there is no mention of the watch in her journal, but there is one possible clue. She did attend the Cincinnati May Festival in 1894. Her good friend, and Chicago Orchestra founder, Theodore Thomas, served as music director of the biennial choral festival from the time of its founding in 1873 until his death in 1905.

The watch was acquired from Spaulding & Co. in Chicago, generally regarded as the leading jewelry house west of New York City. The Glessners purchased many items from Spaulding’s through the years, including most of their silver flatware and holloware. The firm was founded by Henry Abiram Spaulding (1837-1904) when he purchased the business of S. Hord & Co., founded in Chicago in 1855. Spaulding began working in the jewelry business at the age of 20, and, in 1871, was appointed the general representative for Tiffany & Co. in Europe, maintaining his office in Paris. In 1888, unable to convince Tiffany & Co. to open a branch in Chicago, he left the firm and opened Spaulding & Co. An article from 1894 noted, “In less than five years, Spaulding’s has been made to Chicago what Tiffany’s is to New York, and it is doubtful if any other business establishment in the city attracts so many visitors who come to see the unique and magnificent display of beautiful things.”

The company occupied a six-story building at the southeast corner of State and Jackson. The manufacturing departments occupied the upper floors, producing the diamond mountings and special designs in gold and silver for which the firm was known. The sales floors featured jewelry, watches, stationery, silverware, leather goods, clocks, statuary, bronzes, cut-glass, and objets d’art. In 1893, they received international recognition for producing the 500 gold, silver, and bronze badges presented to the national and local officers, directors, and chiefs of departments at the World’s Columbian Exposition.

Spaulding & Co. later moved to new showrooms in the McCormick Building at Michigan and Van Buren, and in 1934 moved into the Drake Hotel. In 1973, the firm was acquired by Stewart S. Peacock, great-great grandson of the founder of C. D. Peacock, and he operated the business until it closed in 1989.
Ongoing ways to support and engage with Glessner House

Face masks will be a part of our daily lives for the foreseeable future. For a donation of $25 or more to the Glessner House COVID-19 Relief Fund, you will receive your own Morris face mask, which combines safety and style into one. To make your donation and receive your face mask (we will select the pattern for you), simply mail a check made payable to “Glessner House” or make your donation online. Your mask will ship within 24 hours of the receipt of your donation. Masks will also be available in our shop during all regular tours.

Stop in our courtyard and peek in our windows! The courtyard is open from 9:00am to 5:00pm every non-tour day: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Sunday.

Take a virtual tour of the house online! The link is permanently posted at the top of our home page.

Make a gift to our annual fund to provide ongoing operating support. Or become a member or renew your membership to receive valuable benefits and show your support for Glessner House.

Our online store offers a variety of publications that provide perfect reading material to learn more about Glessner House in addition to the new items noted above. Browse our shop online today.

Select Glessner House as your charity of choice while shopping on Amazon. Select Glessner House on the AmazonSmile page, and then continue shopping as you normally would.

We continue to wish everyone peace and good health and look forward to seeing you soon!

Bill Tyre, Executive Director & Curator

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