Our former print newsletter, *The Glessner Journal*, is no longer being produced. In place of that publication, we started issuing an e-newsletter in April 2020. 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 September through December. 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 at wtyre@glessnerhouse.org.

$100,000 Adopt-a-Landmark grant received to complete roof project

We are very pleased to announce that Glessner House was one of 12 projects city-wide to be awarded an Adopt-a-Landmark grant through the City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development. The program is funded by downtown construction projects through the Neighborhood Opportunity Bonus program. The $100,000 grant will be used to undertake much needed repairs to several portions of our roof, as identified in an extensive assessment of the roof completed by Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates in May 2021. The full project, including the assessment and initial repairs completed this fall, has a total price tag of nearly $300,000, of which the Adopt-a-Landmark grant represents the final portion of funding needed. We are deeply grateful to the City for this grant and also wish to acknowledge a challenge grant from the Estate of Mary Alice Molloy, a gift in memory of Mae B. and James D. Hinchliff, and many additional gifts from members, friends, and supporters. We look to providing an update on the work in the spring of 2022!

New Art Institute exhibit features original Glessner House items

Morris & Co. wallpapers, draperies, upholstery fabrics, and rugs are defining features of the decoration of Glessner House. We are excited to announce that several original pieces including the Hammersmith rug from the main hall, a Kennet drapery panel from the parlor, and the beautifully embroidered Lotus portiere, also from the parlor (shown above), are included in the new exhibition, *Morris and Company: The Business of Beauty*, at the Art Institute of Chicago, now through June 13, 2022. The exhibition explores the longevity of Morris’s popularity, highlighting the company’s design tenets and favored techniques. Approximately 40 works will be included, many donated to the Art Institute by John Bryan and the Crab Tree Farm Foundation. In conjunction with the exhibit, look for a series of special events at Glessner House during the first half of 2022, including lectures and tours, exploring William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones, and William De Morgan, and their impact on Glessner House and design reform in the late 19th century.
ONLINE - Geothermal for Historic Buildings

*Thursday, January 20 at 7:00pm CST*

Geothermal energy is the thermal energy in the Earth’s crust which can be harnessed for heating and cooling purposes. This green technology eliminates the dependence on fossil fuels and is an efficient way to provide optimum temperature and humidity conditions in historic buildings. This program will be led by Mark Nussbaum of Architectural Consulting Engineers, who is currently overseeing the installation of geothermal systems in two National Historic Landmark buildings in the Chicago area. The project at Chicago’s Glessner House (1887, H. H. Richardson, architect) is being undertaken with a generous Sustaining Cultural Heritage Grant from the National Endowment of the Humanities. Installation of the system at Pleasant Home in Oak Park (1897, George W. Maher, architect) represents a collaboration between the Park District of Oak Park and the Pleasant Home Foundation.

During the presentation, Nussbaum and others involved in the projects will discuss how a geothermal system operates, the basic components including wells dug hundreds of feet deep, and how each building provided unique challenges in retrofitting the system to its specific architectural design. The program will be recorded, and all attendees will receive a link afterwards which will remain active for seven days.

*$10 per person / $8 for members*

ONLINE - William De Morgan and the English Arts & Crafts Movement

*Sunday, January 30 at 2:00pm CST*

William Frend De Morgan (1839-1917) was one of the most inventive and innovative craftsmen of the English Arts & Crafts movement. Largely remembered today for his collaboration with William Morris, De Morgan transformed 19th century English ceramics with his luster glazes and dramatic depictions of everything from Medieval galleons to fantastic creatures. The Glessners chose several De Morgan designs for their Prairie Avenue home, including two sets of fireplace tiles, a galleon tile triptych, and a large loop-handled vase.

This online presentation will be given by Sarah Hardy, curator-manager of the De Morgan Foundation in London. The collection was amassed by De Morgan’s sister-in-law, Wilhelmina Stirling, and bequeathed to the Foundation, which today cares for and interprets the large collection of ceramics, paintings, and other decorative arts by De Morgan, his wife Evelyn, and their contemporaries.

The program will be recorded, and all attendees will receive a link afterwards which will remain active for seven days.

*$12 per person / $10 for members*

Mattie and the Chocolate Factory

*Sunday, February 6 at 2:00pm CST (this is an in-person program)*

When Frances Glessner listed “bon bons” in her dinner book, to what was she referring? Where did they come from? Did Mattie make everything from scratch or were there local sources for ready purchase? Mattie and the Chocolate Factory is an opportunity for attendees to experience Mattie demonstrating how home cooks made candy from 1892 to 1912 - the years she was employed as the Glessners’ cook. (Mattie is portrayed by Ellie of ElliePresents).

Sarah Hatfield, noted chocolate aficionada, will discuss what was going on in Chicago in the commercial candy making arena during the same time frame. Guests will be treated to hot tea and samples of Mattie’s handiwork as well as commercially-made confections from Flesor’s Candy Kitchen, a regional concern that has been in business since 1901.

*$35 per person / $30 members*
Secrets of Glessner House
Part 21: Summer Cooling
In Part 21 of Secrets, we look at the ways in which the Glessners kept their Prairie Avenue house comfortable during the summer months. Although the family headed off to their summer estate, The Rocks, in May each year, John Glessner would return to Chicago for part of the summer to tend to his business affairs. Learn about wire screens, lake breezes, window shades, and more in our newest Secrets video!

Secrets of Glessner House
Part 22: The Range
For Part 22 of Secrets, we venture into the kitchen to explore the stories behind the gas range, including the cooks who used it through the years. Find out how this new technology, which took hold in the 1880s, transformed how people cooked.

Secrets of Glessner House
Part 23: Portieres
Part 23 of Secrets explores the use of portieres at Glessner House, a practice rarely employed in modern decor, but commonly seen in well-to-do households of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. You will also get a glimpse of an extraordinary, embroidered silk portiere now on exhibit at the Art Institute (see page 1 for more information).

Secrets of Glessner House
Part 24: The Ouroboros
Our newest installment of Secrets explores the ouroboros, one of the more whimsical features of the house. Depicted as a snake or dragon eating its own tail, we will explain its meaning and history, and how it came to be incorporated into both the exterior and interior design of the house.
Chicago Fire Stories Part II: The Glessners
John and Frances Glessner arrived in Chicago in December 1870, just ten months before much of the city was destroyed in the "great conflagration." In this article, we will briefly review their first year in Chicago, the birth of their son George just six days before the fire, and then share a first-hand account of the fire and its aftermath as recorded by John Glessner.

Chicago Fire Stories Part III: Mrs. O’Leary
The 150th anniversary of the Great Chicago Fire in October focused attention on many aspects of the “great conflagration” that consumed a significant portion of Chicago between October 8 and 10, 1871. The story of Mrs. Catherine O’Leary and her cow kicking over a lantern (as depicted by Norman Rockwell, at right) first surfaced before the flames were extinguished, and although she was cleared of any involvement in the fire just two months later, the legend has endured to this day. During her lifetime, the burden of blame had a profound effect on Mrs. O’Leary, forcing her to largely withdraw from public life, and dying with a heavy heart in 1895. In this third and final installment of Chicago Fire Stories, we share the facts of her life before, during, and after the Fire.

Controversy Upon the Stage: The Ballet Russes Comes to Chicago, 1916
The idea for this month’s article began with a postcard. Among recently acquired Glessner family items was a framed real photo postcard from 1916 featuring a portrait of the Swiss conductor Ernest Ansermet, with a short message in French on the reverse addressed to Frances Glessner Lee. A quick review of Frances Glessner Lee’s journal confirmed how Frances Glessner Lee and Ansermet met. A deeper dive into Ansermet’s reason for coming to Chicago that year uncovered a long-forgotten story of one of the most controversial performances to ever take place upon the Chicago stage.

The Glessners’ Christmas Tree
John and Frances (Macbeth) Glessner, both born in the 1840s, would have seen the tradition of a Christmas tree evolve during their childhood. Frances Glessner’s journal provides interesting information about the Christmas trees that were displayed at 1800 S. Prairie Avenue, ranging from the small tabletop tree of 1888 set up in the school room (shown at right), to the elaborate and much larger tree in the main hall illuminated with electric lights in 1911.
Happy 150th birthday George Glessner!

George Macbeth Glessner (who added the first name of John to his name following the death of his infant brother in 1875) was the eldest child of John and Frances Glessner. He was born on October 2, 1871, in their home at 69 Park Avenue in Chicago just six days before the Great Chicago Fire. George received an excellent education, being taught by private tutors at home, before attending Harvard University, where he studied geology and civil engineering, earning his degree in 1894. During his time at Harvard, he was a member of both the Camera and Electric Clubs and served as treasurer of the Cycling Club.

In June 1898, he married Alice Hamlin in Springfield, Ohio (the same city in which his parents were married in 1870) and the couple went on to have four children – Elizabeth, Frances, John, and Emily. For many years, he worked for Warder, Bushnell & Glessner, and then International Harvester, rising to the position of manager of the Utility Division at Harvester.

During the 1910s, he moved his family to New Hampshire, to take up permanent residence at The Rocks, his parents’ summer estate near Bethlehem. He served four terms in the state legislature – 1913, 1915, 1925, and 1927 – serving on the House Judiciary Committee, the Revision of Statues Committee, and the Board of State Institutions. During his time as representative, he was one of the key players in establishing New Hampshire as the site of the first presidential primary in the country – a distinction which continues to this day.

He was the owner and manager of the Bethlehem Electric Company and the managing director of the affiliated Lisbon Light and Power Company. Deeply committed to his community, he served as the vice president of the Littleton Savings Bank, and as president of the Littleton Hospital Association.

He died in January 1929 at the age of 57 from pneumonia which developed after a successful operation for appendicitis. Funeral services were held at The Ledge, his home at The Rocks, and were conducted by Rt. Rev. John Thomson Dallas, Bishop of New Hampshire. Businesses in Bethlehem closed for the day and the flag on the town building was flown at half-mast. He was interred in the Maple Street Cemetery in Bethlehem, NH. His wife Alice died in 1943.
We are very excited to announce the launch of a new project to recreate the missing dining table and sideboard, made by the prominent firm of A. H. Davenport & Company in 1887. The dining room table was six feet in diameter and opened to sixteen feet in length when fully extended - seating 18 people. The massive sideboard, designed in H. H. Richardson’s office, featured five intricately carved panels and distinctive brass hardware. The original furniture was left in the house after the Glessners died in the 1930s, and was subsequently sold off before the house went up for sale in 1965.

Atelier Burke of Newton, Wisconsin has been selected to recreate the two pieces, and will utilize historic techniques to produce pieces as close to the original as possible, aided by two high quality photos of the room taken in 1923 (one shown above). Patrick Burke is a master wood carver, sculptor, designer and furniture maker with 25+ years of experience. Past projects include recreating the top section of two elaborate sideboards by Pottier & Stymus for Whitehall (the Flagler Museum) in Palm Beach, FL, two thrones for Canada’s Parliament House of Senate in Ottawa, and a massive 17-foot mantelpiece designed by architect Frank Furness and built by Daniel Pabst.

The project has been made possible by a major lead gift from an anonymous donor and other gifts. Total cost will be around $100,000, and we hope to have both pieces in place before the end of 2022. Stay tuned for updates!
Focus on Collections
Be sure to check out our “Object of the Month” posted at the beginning of the month on “The Collection” page of our website, under the Explore tab. Recent postings include:
September  Bust of Cicero saved during the Great Chicago Fire
October    “The Blind Fiddler” compote
November   Temperantia guéridon
December   Bronze statue of Narcissus

Fanny’s Scrapbook

Scrapbooking is a hugely popular hobby today but the tradition of saving various printed items into an album has a long history. Glessner House has an album assembled by Fanny Glessner as a child in the 1880s. Each year during the Christmas season, it is brought out and placed in an open position on the desk in her bedroom, as though she is in the midst of adding holidays scraps to its pages.

The popularity of assembling scrap books (also written as scrap-books and eventually scrapbooks) grew in the 19th century with the advent of chromolithography, a method which made colorful printed pieces readily available. These ranged from greeting cards and calling cards to advertising trading cards and small decorative pieces like flowers and birds, known simply as “scraps.” The earliest documented use of the term scrap book is from 1821, exactly 200 years ago. By 1879, shortly before Fanny would have started pasting items into her album, the term was first used as a verb. Fanny’s album, with its gold-embossed green leather cover, was patented on March 28, 1876, by Bernard J. Beck of Brooklyn, New York. Beck’s improvement in scrapbooks was his method of producing the spacers placed in between the pages at the spine, providing space so that the pages, and the book itself, would lay flat after items were pasted inside.

The most important advancement in scrapbooks (not found in Fanny’s album) was patented by author Mark Twain in 1872. His scrapbooks, advertised as “self-pasting,” had small dots of glue arranged in a grid on each page, which only needed to be wetted to adhere items inside. It is estimated that Twain earned $100,000 from his invention, nearly half the amount he earned on all the books he wrote!
Ongoing ways to support and engage with Glessner House

Face masks will be a part of our daily lives for a while longer. 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.

**The house will be closed for tours during the months of January and February as we undertake work to complete the installation of our geothermal HVAC system.** During that time, 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. 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.

Our best wishes to all our friends and supporters for a healthy and prosperous 2022!

Bill Tyre, Executive Director & Curator

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