Renting History

Housing and Labor on Public History's Front Lines

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ABSTRACT: House museums and historic sites have long functioned as unconventional providers of housing where employees who live onsite provide rental payments or exchange labor for housing. This article charts the growth of renting among house museums from the early twentieth century to the 1990s. House museums came to constitute a new class of landlord while tenants emerged as critical agents in the preservation of these sites. Whereas scholarship on the evolution of public history practice has focused on the public-facing labor of museum employees, shifting the focus to museum apartments reveals the intertwined nature of housing and labor in the growth of public history in the last century.

KEY WORDS: labor history, house museums, public history, housing, site management

In the United States, countless tenants find themselves renting from unconventional landlords: house museums, historical societies, and heritage organizations. Apartments situated in former servants' quarters, caretaker's residences housed in the back rooms of historic house museums, and small apartments whose rents provide income to historical societies operating on a shoestring budget attest to the ways renting and providing housing is a practice that touches much of the field of public history. In fact, data collected on historic house museums since the 1990s suggests that renting or exchanging labor for housing have become quite commonplace. Nevertheless, the practice of renting remains nearly invisible to those who visit these sites and noticeably absent from public-facing conversations about historic site management and financing solutions.[1]

1 The title of this article references, in part, the work of Amy Tyson, *The Wages of History: Emotional Labor on Public History's Front Lines* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013); for present-day examples of these renting practices see "Heritage House Program," Strawbery Banke Museum, https://www.strawberybanke.org/heritage-house-program; Kathleen Burge, "Modern Occupants of the Deane Winthrop House and Other Historic Homes are Caretakers of the Past," *Boston.com*, August 12, 2012, https://www.boston.com/news/local-news/2012/08/12/modern-occupants-of-the-deane-winthrop-house-and-other-historic-homes-are-caretakers-of-the-past/; on

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This was not always the case. Beginning in the early twentieth century, historic house museums emerged as some of the first public history institutions which gravitated towards the provision of housing as an experimental financing, labor, and site management strategy. Rather than being hidden from public view, tenants were the frontline workers most visitors encountered as interpreters and tour guides at these sites. Their curatorial and domestic labor provided the material lens through which visitors experienced historic house museum interiors. Tenants also warded off unwanted visitors as an onsite security presence. The monthly rent tenants paid to museum administrators financially sustained many of these organizations. Museum administrators frequently and openly discussed the problems and opportunities posed by renting and providing onsite housing for staff. For twentieth-century visitors, the role of tenants and renting were hypervisible in the interpretive narratives, collections display, and labor practices of historic house museums. Museum administrators likewise understood that tenants were essential to the daily operation of historic house museums.[2]

While practical literature and how-to manuals detailing the site management and financing solutions for house museums first emerged in the 1990s, few scholars have addressed the historical intersection and evolution of housing and labor practices at historic house museums.[3] Public historians have instead revealed much about the interpretive, educational, and political projects advanced by museums since their inception in the nineteenth century. As this scholarship notes,

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data collected about historic house museums that includes renting and housing see Peggy Coats, "Survey of Historic House Museums," *History News* 45, no. 1 (January/February 1990), 26; Sherry Butcher-Younghans, *Historic House Museums: A Practical Handbook for Their Care, Preservation, & Management* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 149; Jennifer Pustz, *Voices from the Back Stairs: Interpreting Servants' Lives at Historic House Museums* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010), 143.

2 For examples of this phenomenon covered nationally see Marc Ferris, "At Home With History: For Live-In Caretakers, the Rent is Low, but the Bathroom Can Be Very Busy," *New York Times,* March 30, 2003; Andree Brooks, "Parties in a Mansion: Elegance for Rent," *New York Times*, August 20, 1983; Kenneth C. Turino and Max A. Van Balgooy, eds., *Reimagining Historic House Museums: New Approaches and Proven Solutions* (Washington, DC: American Association for State and Local History, 2019), 24–26; Daniel R. Poster, "Some Museum Caretakers Work at Home," *Los Angeles Times,* July 2, 1989; Mirna Alfonso, "Landmark Museum Rescued From Flames," *Los Angeles Times*, March 19, 1986; Ann LoLordo, "Live-in Curator Tends Mencken Flame," *The Baltimore Sun,* December 14, 1984; Virginia Lee Warren, "Doris Duke to Restore Old Newport Houses for New Tenants," *New York Times,* September 25, 1969; "Strawbery Banke Reaches Outward To Portsmouth's Old South End," *History News* 28, no. 6 (June 1973), 122–23; "Junior League to Restore Salem House, Gun Shop," *History News* 15, no. 6 (April 1960), 65; "Tenant Is Sought to Take Care of Whitman House," *Courier-Post*, December 23, 1948; "Charleston Foundation Gives Progress Report," *History News* 19, no. 8 (June 1964), 136; "Ideas," *History News* 32, no. 9 (September 1977), 232; Sally Anne Schmidt, "Saving Galveston: A History of the Galveston Historical Foundation" (PhD dissertation, Rice University, 2009), 66.

3 See for example Butcher-Younghans, *Historic House Museums: A Practical Handbook for Their Care, Preservation, and Management*; Donna Ann Harris, *New Solutions for House Museums: Ensuring the Long-Term Preservation of America's Historic Houses* (Lanham, MD: Alta-Mira Press, 2008); Rebekah Beaulieu, *Financial Fundamentals for Historic House Museums* (New York: Roman and Littlefield, 2017).

a significant portion of our modern heritage infrastructure of museums, historic sites, and historic preservation initiatives evolved from nineteenth century efforts to save, preserve, and interpret domestic spaces.[4] White and Black women alike seized on house museums as vehicles for participation in American political life by crafting interpretation at these sites that upheld or challenged the dominant racial and sexual order. These initiatives revolved almost exclusively around the preservation of domestic spaces of wealthy elites, a material and historical focus that meant many twentieth-century house museums had a surplus of space easily utilized as rental housing.[5] By the twentieth century, this patchwork of local museums expanded to include larger professional and governmental organizations invested in making meaningful connections between public audiences and the past through the preservation and interpretation of historic houses. At every stage of these developments, tenants were integral as interpreters, curators, groundskeepers, and sources of revenue.[6]

This article explores the historical origins and evolution of renting and housing practices at historic house museums from the interwar era to the early 1990s. Rather than a peripheral or quirky practice of museum founders, I argue that renting and tenant labor were vital to the interpretive, labor, and curatorial practices of house museums throughout the twentieth century. Although managers, founders, and administrators have played outsized roles in traditional scholarly accounts, a combination of rental income from tenants and day-to-day labor managing collections, making repairs, hosting visitors, and undertaking domestic work helped sustain these sites. As public history's "frontline workers," tenants have thus

4 Patricia West, *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America's House Museums* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999); Stephanie E. Yuhl, *A Golden Haze of Memory: The Making of Historic Charleston* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); James M. Lindgren, *Preserving Historic New England: Preservation, Progressivism, and the Remaking of Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); William J. Murtagh, *Keeping Time: The History and Theory of Preservation in America* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2006).

5 On the roles of white women in the work of historic house museums see West, *Domesticating History*; Barbara J. Howe, "Women in Historic Preservation: The Legacy of Ann Pamela Cunningham," *The Public Historian* 12, no. 1 (Winter 1990): 31–61; Gail Lee Dubrow and Jennifer B. Goodman, eds., *Restoring Women's History through Historic Preservation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Steven Hoelscher, "The White-Pillared Past: Landscapes of Memory and Race in the American South," in *Landscape and Race in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 2006). On the roles of Black women in historic house museums see Tara Y. White, "History As Uplift: African American Clubwomen and Applied History," *The Public Historian* 43, no. 2 (May 2021): 11–19; Joan Marie Johnson, "'Ye Gave Them a Stone': African American Women's Clubs, the Frederick Douglass Home, and the Black Mammy Monument," *Journal of Women's History* 17, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 62–86; Fath Davis Ruffins, "'Lifting As We Climb': Black Women and the Preservation of African American History and Culture," *Gender and History* 6, no. 3 (November 1994): 376–96.

6 Denise D. Meringolo, *Museums, Monuments, and National Parks: Towards a New Genealogy of Public History* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012); Seth C. Bruggeman, *Lost on the Freedom Trail: The National Park Service and Urban Renewal in Postwar Boston* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2022); John H. Sprinkle Jr., *Crafting Preservation Criteria: The National Register of Historic Places and American Historic Preservation* (New York: Routledge, 2014); Ian Tyrrell, *Historians in Public: The Practice of American History, 1890–1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

played significant roles in the interpretive and administrative evolution of house museums. Following a framework developed by researchers and sociologists in the 1990s, examinations of "frontline workers" in public history have focused on the emotional labor undertaken by costumed guides, hostesses, and other staff interfacing with public audiences. Exploring the role of renting at these sites reveals the actual extent of house museums' dependence on tenants for far more than public-facing interactions with museum visitors. Without tenants, many twentieth-century house museums would have had no staff for interpretation, collections management, groundskeeping, or security, and would have lost a valuable source of operating revenue. In other words, tenants helped make historic house museums possible.[7]

To chart the meteoric rise of renting and leasing in the interwar period to the withdrawal of tenants from public view by the close of the twentieth century, this article looks to heritage and public history organizations both large and small in New England and the mid-Atlantic region. In Philadelphia and central New Jersey, organizations that emerged from the historical work of white women buoyed by the Sesquicentennial Celebration in 1926 gravitated towards renting and leasing as an experimental site management strategy and creative financing solution in the midst of the Great Depression. These organizations included the Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks (PSPL); the New Jersey Division of Historic Sites; the Germantown Historical Society (GHS); and the Upsala Foundation. In postwar New England, the embrace of renting to tenants and employees among preservation and heritage organizations both large and small was especially pronounced. These institutions included organizations such as the Heritage Foundation (today Historic Deerfield, Inc.) and smaller house museums with meager budgets such as the Porter-Phelps-Huntington Museum (PPH) in Hadley, Massachusetts, and the Amherst Historical Society (AHS) in Amherst, Massachusetts.

From the interwar period to the 1980s, tenants played conspicuous roles in the development, interpretation, and financing of these sites. Museum founders chose tenants that conformed with the racial and sexual norms embedded in the historical narratives museum visitors encountered in these spaces. As such, many—though not all—museum tenants in the twentieth century were white, married couples whose presence helped validate the heteronormative interpretation of these sites.[8] Organizations discussed here such as the New Jersey Division of

7 On historical examinations of labor practices at public history sites see Tyson, *The Wages of History*, 13–14; Richard Handler and Eric Gable, *The New History in an Old Museum: Creating the Past at Colonial Williamsburg* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 171–76; Ywone Edwards-Ingram, "Before 1979: African American Coachmen, Visibility, and Representation at Colonial Williamsburg," *The Public Historian* 36, no. 1 (February 2014), 9–35; Minju Bae, "Unraveling 'Under One Roof': The Tenement Museum and Its Discontents," *Labor* 17, no. 1 (2020), 75–90; Emma Jay Walcott-Wilson, "Tour Guides as Place-makers: Emotional Labor, Plantation Aesthetics, and Interpretations of Slavery at Southern House Museums" (PhD dissertation, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 2020).

8 Queer men and women have also served as caretakers and tenants of historic house museums in New England, although their involvement here is beyond the scope of the present article. For

Historic Sites, the Heritage Foundation, GHS, and the PSPL explicitly rented to married couples in the hopes of maximizing available labor and rental income by encouraging husbands to work for wages outside the home while their wives performed domestic, curatorial, and interpretive labor. Such arrangements were not a panacea to solve all the site management problems of house museums, however, and administrators actively negotiated the spatial and legal limits of renting at their sites. In turn, Heritage Foundation tenants and the tenants of organizations such as PPH and the PSPL actively sought accommodations at museums, attributing their desire to live in a house museum as both a byproduct of the increasingly fraught rental market and a means to facilitate a special sense of place somehow lacking in mainstream rental housing.

If tenants constituted a discrete class of public history workers in the first half of the twentieth century, by the 1980s changing trends in museum professionalization and the professionalization of public history more broadly displaced many tenants from heritage work at historic house museums. By collapsing work and home beneath one roof, the housing and labor practices of house museums encouraged many tenants to assert a sense of ownership and authority over museum interpretation and collections—a reality that ignited tensions between tenants and site administrators that professionalization helped resolve. Tenants of the Heritage Foundation and Upsala, for example, regularly used collection objects or interchanged their own belongings with museum collections. Other tenants with the PSPL and GHS utilized museum spaces in ways that conflicted with administrators' vision of the historical authenticity they hoped to portray to museum visitors. These practices troubled the interpretive and curatorial authority of site administrators as well as sites' professional responsibility to museum collections. The professionalization of public history in the 1970s and 1980s—coupled with the death of museum founders and the mounting maintenance costs of museum apartments—encouraged many sites to restructure their institutional relationships to renting and leasing. By the close of the twentieth century, renting and leasing had not vanished from the landscape of public history, but had become harder to see. Concrete boundaries erected between tenants and the interpretive and curatorial practices of house museums meant most tenants merely provided income to institutions in the form of monthly rent or menial labor as a caretaker or groundskeeper.

Tracing the historical evolution of housing and labor practices at historic house museums challenges conventional definitions of "landlords," "tenants," and what it means to do public history. Private market landlords, real estate agents, and state and federal housing agencies, as the case of house museums reveals, were far from

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examples of this phenomenon see Sara Patton Zarrelli, "The Long Road to Restoration: An Administrative History of Longfellow House-Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site," (Washington: National Park Service, 2021), 12–15; Kenneth C. Turino, "Case Study: The Varied Telling of Queer History at Historic New England Sites," in Susan Ferentinos, ed., *Interpreting LGBT History at Museums and Historic Sites* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014).

the only entities shaping rental housing conditions in the United States in the twentieth century—despite their representation as the primary agents influencing urban and suburban housing practices in traditional scholarly accounts.[9] To reframe house museums as landlords makes explicit an uncomfortable reality: the practice of public history is inextricably entangled with the logics of real estate, finance, and capitalism. Scholars of historic preservation have long noted that heritage initiatives sought to control, manage, and profit from interventions in the real estate market and house museums were certainly not exempt from these motivations. But excavating the historical roots of the housing and labor practices illustrates that doing public history work at house museums invariably meant engaging in the real estate and financial practices of landlords to ensure that fledgling institutions could survive.[10]

The legacy of tenants and renting continues to present opportunities and challenges in equal measure to house museums. Unlike grants through which many small public history organizations and nonprofits rely on to make ends meet, renting provides a consistent and reliable source of revenue with virtually no strings attached to its usage. This degree of financial self-determination is increasingly rare in the neoliberal, resource-scarce reality many institutions face.[11] But as tenants vanished from public view in the late twentieth century, open dialogue about renting and the provision of housing has similarly gone silent in academic and professional conversations about the management of historic house museums. Most museum staff are not trained in the finer points of tenancy and housing laws, landlord-tenant relationships, or local and state housing codes. Institutions develop their housing practices, leases, and other rental policies on an ad hoc basis. Such an approach often puts additional labor on staff whose time and energy are already stretched thin between the pressing demands of museum work and places tenants

9 On traditional accounts that center private market landlords and state and federal housing authorities in the history of rental housing see N.D.B. Connolly, *A World More Concrete: Real Estate and the Remaking of Jim Crow South Florida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014); Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019); Rhonda Y. Williams, *The Politics of Public Housing: Black Women's Struggles Against Urban Inequality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Arnold Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940–1960* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); Beryl Satter, *Family Properties: Race, Real Estate, and the Exploitation of Black Urban America* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2009).

10 For histories that explore preservation and other heritage work's entanglement with capitalism, see Max Page and Randall Mason, eds., *Giving Preservation a History: Histories of Historic Preservation in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 2020); Whitney Martinko, *Historic Real Estate: Market Morality and the Politics of Preservation in the Early United States* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020); Cameron Logan, *Historic Capital: Preservation, Race, and Real Estate in Washington, D.C.* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).

11 Grants have become one of the largest sources of operating revenue for many small nonprofits but have made many organizations reliant on the desires of funders, financial institutions, and wealthy philanthropists. See Claire Dunning, *Nonprofit Neighborhoods: An Urban History of Inequality and the American State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022); Karen Ferguson, *Top Down: The Ford Foundation, Black Power, and the Reinvention of Racial Liberalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

in precarious or uncertain housing arrangements.[12] Understanding the historical evolution of renting and leasing at these sites provides one pathway to make public history sites fairer workplaces and more equitable providers of housing.

The Landlords: In Search of Revenue and Labor

Beginning in the interwar period, museum administrators turned to onsite housing to solve a series of site management and administrative problems exacerbated by the Great Depression and a lack of formal financing mechanisms for historic house museums. Frances Ann Wister embodied the ethos of many administrators who embraced renting as an innovative site management practice. The descendant of an elite Germantown family, Wister mobilized the Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks (PSPL) in 1931 to save the historic 1765 Samuel Powel House in Society Hill from demolition. Private donations ensured that the PSPL could purchase the Powel House at 244 South Third Street in 1931 for $30,000.[13] But private donations only covered the initial sale. To afford their purchase, the PSPL took out a $12,000 mortgage. Wister intended to restore the Powel House, which had severely deteriorated after its conversion into a horsehair and bristle warehouse in the late nineteenth century.[14] Expenses quickly piled up. Lead architect Horace Wells Sellers proposed restoring the Powel House at a cost of over $41,000, an estimate that included securing and reinstalling the home's original woodwork which at some point had been removed and stored in the University of Pennsylvania Museum.[15] The Powel House required other, more mundane costs such as installing a furnace, as "work on the fine colonial rooms cannot begin until the building can be heated."[16] Once completed, an elaborate Colonial Revival-style garden in the home's side yard necessitated consistent upkeep and maintenance.

Struggling to find a reliable source of revenue to fund the Powel House's restoration and initial stabilization, a consensus emerged among PSPL board members that securing a rent-paying tenant was the most stable financing solution.

12 For example, staff at Strawberry Mansion in Philadelphia have created their own type of lease for the house's caretaker's quarters. See The Committee of 1926, "Work for Rent Policy," circa 2000. Staff at historic sites and museums have been stretched thin by a variety of new professional needs and institutional commitments; see Hannah Turner, *Cataloguing Culture: Legacies of Colonialism in Museum Documentation* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2020), 133–35; Tyson, *The Wages of History*, 52–54.

13 Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks, "The Powel House," promotional pamphlet, circa 1933, Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks Papers, Temple University Urban Archive.

14 Clifford Lewis to J. Hamilton Cheston, December 14, 1939, Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks Papers, Temple University Urban Archive.

15 "Interior From the Powel House," *Bulletin of the Pennsylvania Museum* 21, no. 99 (January 1926), 68; Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks, "Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors," March 9, 1932, Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks Papers, Society for the Preservation of Landmarks.

16 Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks, "The Powel House," promotional pamphlet, circa 1933.

Figure 1. Edith Appleton Standen, the first tenant of the Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks, circa 1946. (Source: Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives Section of the Office of Military Government, United States, 1946).

In 1934, Wister received a serendipitous request "from a friend to occupy the major portion of the back building of the Powel House."[17] This "friend" was Edith Appleton Standen, a Nova Scotia-born curator who had attended Oxford (see figure 1). In 1928, Standen emigrated to the United States to take a museum studies course taught by Paul Sachs, the director of Harvard University's Fogg Art Museum.[18] Standen was well-connected within the professional preservation and museum network in the northeast United States: her uncle, William Sumner Appleton, had founded the Society for the Preservation of

17 Frances Ann Wister to J. Somers Smith, May 19, 1934, Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks Papers, Temple University Urban Archive.

18 Kirrily Freeman, "The 'Monuments Woman': Captain Edith Standen and the Restitution of Looted Art," *Journal of the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society*, vol. 18 (2015), 31.

New England Antiquities (SPNEA) in 1910. Like the PSPL, SPNEA worked to preserve colonial-era New England houses throughout the early twentieth century.[19] Through Sachs, Standen secured employment working for Joseph Widener as secretary and curator of his large art collection housed in his suburban Philadelphia estate, Lynnewood Hall.[20] It was likely through her connections with Widener, Sachs, and her uncle that Standen learned of Wister's plans for the Powel House. To Wister, Standen embodied a perfect tenant. Not only would Standen's monthly rent payments contribute directly to the upkeep and restoration of the Powel House, but Standen's status as one of Wister's social and professional peers ensured that the Powel House retained a respectable public aura.

Wister's acceptance of Standen as the PSPL's first tenant reflected how museum founders looked to tenants to enact and embody the racial, gender, and social hierarchies embedded within these sites' interpretation. Standen inhabited the dual roles of tenant and "hostess" whereby she greeted visitors and showed them through the Powel House as the restoration progressed. "Hostesses" became the public faces of most institutions during the interwar period. Often dressed in colonial-era gowns or costumes, hostesses embodied and enacted for visitors the domestic roles of house museums' former inhabitants. At Colonial Williamsburg, for example, visitors to the reconstructed governor's mansion would be led through the house by a hostess performing "the role that the governor's wife would have played" in the eighteenth century.[21] At the Powel House, Standen could have easily stood in for Elizabeth Willing Powel, the wife of the home's first occupant and mayor of Philadelphia, Samuel Powel. The Powels, the PSPL stressed, were "famous for their hospitality and within their walls the notables of the day often gathered."[22] Standen thus performed her own gender and class respectability to visitors who learned of the corresponding respectability and hospitality of the home's first inhabitants and guests. But as Standen's work with Widener's art collection absorbed more of her time, she decided to hire a series of young, white couples to greet visitors and maintain the home's furnace and garden in her stead.[23]

Site administrators increasingly gravitated towards renting to white couples throughout the 1940s and into the 1950s to maximize the labor of tenants. While not stated explicitly, the racial preferences of museum administrators were evident

19 Lindgren, *Preserving Historic New England*; Hosmer, Jr., *Preservation Comes of Age*, 133.

20 Sharon Zane, oral history interview with Edith A. Standen, January 6–13, 1994, interview in possession of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

21 Alena Pirok, *The Spirit of Colonial Williamsburg: Ghosts and Interpreting the Recreated Past* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2022), 69; Handler and Gable, *The New History in an Old Museum*, 178–80.

22 Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks, "The Powel House," promotional pamphlet, circa 1933.

23 Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks, "Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors," November 15, 1939, Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks Papers, Society for the Preservation of Landmarks.

in their repeated selection of white tenants at these sites. Like a singular "hostess," couples performed similar symbolic interpretive labor by enacting a gendered division of work at historic houses. By the 1950s, the PSPL structured this gendered division of labor into the leases they negotiated with their new tenants. At this time, the PSPL's properties had grown to include a small house on Elfreth's Alley in Society Hill and Wister's ancestral Germantown home, Grumblethorpe. A typical lease for tenants at these properties required that the "wife Lessee agrees to act as hostess to visitors to the house between ten A.M. and five P.M. on weekdays" while the husband would take care of the furnace, put out the trash, and clean the garden.[24] While museum apartments were not necessarily exclusive to white couples, these arrangements meant that apartments were most accessible to middle- and upper-class families and that administrators assumed wives would not work outside the home for wages. Correspondence between the Porter-Phelps-Huntington Museum in Hadley and Abbott Lowell Cummings of SPNEA reveals this mindset. Cummings suggested that stationing a couple in the museum's apartment where "the woman would be the one in charge" while "the husband has another occupation" was most desirable. Such an arrangement meant that women would assume the bulk of interpretive labor while their husbands financially supported their family.[25]

Beyond serving as attendants at these houses, women bore the majority of domestic and interpretive labor as tenants, mothers, and wives. New Jersey Division of Historic Sites administrators required that female tenants assume responsibility "for the housekeeping of the property," perform "assigned clerical work," and act as curator in the "handling of the museum collection in the building."[26] "Housekeeping" entailed more than light cleaning. Museum administrators expected female tenants to perform a vast range of domestic and curatorial duties in museum spaces at the same time tenants' husbands expected their wives to maintain the apartments in which they lived. This doubling of domestic work required a staggering degree of physical labor from female tenants. Women living at sites managed by the New Jersey Division of Historic Sites were regularly expected to "perform housekeeping chores necessary to maintain the house" including "dusting, mopping, and heavy cleaning such as scrubbing and washing windows as well as some work on the grounds," in addition to arranging "exhibit items for display and see[ing] to their preservation and protection."[27] In the privacy

24 Lease between the Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks and Frank A. and Marjorie W. Tebo, 1948, curator's file, Powel House Building Records, Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks Papers, Temple University Urban Archive.

25 Allister F. MacDougall to Catherine Sargent Huntington, 1975, Catherine Sargent Huntington Papers, University of Massachusetts Amherst Special Collections and University Archives, Amherst, MA.

26 C. P. Wilber to W. L. Seubert, December 11, 1950, New Jersey Division of Historic Sites records, New Jersey State Archives.

27 New Jersey Division of Historic Sites Personnel Record for Vivian Boughner, Lillian G. Boeck, Emma I. Cocker, Norma D. Farrell, Marjorie Hammell, Mary T. Hewitt, Bessie Hoffman,

of their apartments, female tenants then turned to the daily upkeep of their own domestic spaces and families. Myrtle Stewart, tenant at the Indian King Tavern in Haddonfield, New Jersey, for example, raised her three daughters—Babetta, Helen, and Alice—in the attic quarters of the tavern all while receiving "hundreds of visitors."[28] Many women maintained long-term employment with museums, transforming their apartments into homes where they raised their own families.[29] As mothers and wives, tenants labored in public and private to keep up with routine museum maintenance and their private domestic housework.

Women often emphasized their capabilities as housekeepers, wives, and mothers to prospective landlords to secure housing at museums and historic sites. When Verda Anderson moved from Elizabeth, New Jersey, to Deerfield, Massachusetts, for her son, Kurt, to attend Deerfield Academy, she promptly wrote to Henry Flynt in 1951 seeking housing. Already by the early 1950s, Henry and Helen Flynt's efforts to purchase and preserve many of Deerfield's colonial-era homes was well-known, especially among long-time Deerfield residents anxious of Flynt taking valuable real estate off the town's already meager tax rolls.[30] In time, the couple would amass some two dozen houses on Deerfield's main street for their use as historic house museums to display their growing collection of decorative arts. Anderson likely heard of Flynt from her colleagues at Deerfield Academy where she took a position as secretary. Harriet F. Childs, a fellow secretary in the Deerfield Academy offices, had lived in the Heritage Foundation-managed Frary House since 1943 where she paid rent to Flynt and worked as a hostess showing interested viewers the circa 1750 house, tavern, and ballroom.[31] Hoping to secure a similar arrangement, Anderson positioned herself as a capable mother and housekeeper, writing that "God has seen fit to entrust me with a good piece of human material and it is up to me to help him grow to 'full capacity.'" Anderson alluded to her separation from her husband, Stanley, arguing that the "New England virtues" embodied in Deerfield's historic houses would keep her son "happily occupied and I will have the freedom to do my job as a mother."[32] But as a recent divorcee, Flynt found Anderson too "temporary" and without financial support from a husband denied her request.[33]

Emma Hotkamp, Eleanor Ray, and Myrtle Stewart, circa 1960, New Jersey Division of Historic Sites records, New Jersey State Archives.

28 "Lit Brothers—Camden Salutes a Good Neighbor: Mrs. Myrtle Stewart," January 28, 1959.

29 Kevin W. Wright with Deborah Powell, *The Bridge that Saved a Nation: Bergen County, New Bridge and the Hackensack Valley* (Mount Pleasant, SC: Arcadia Publishing), 5–6.

30 Elizabeth Stillinger, *Historic Deerfield: A Portrait of Early America* (New York: Dutton Studio Books, 1992), 55.

31 Harriet E. Childs to Henry Flynt, January 17, 1962, Frary House Records, Historic Deerfield Archives, Deerfield, MA.

32 Verda F. Anderson to Henry Flynt, 1951, Wilson Print Shop File, Historic Deerfield Archives, Deerfield, MA.

33 Henry Flynt to Verda F. Anderson, December 27, 1951, Wilson Print Shop File, Historic Deerfield Archives, Deerfield, MA.

Flynt relied almost exclusively on married women whose rents helped finance his preservationist agenda in Deerfield and whose labor fulfilled his interpretive vision. Deerfield Academy provided a near-constant source of reliable tenants and income for Flynt. Founded in the 1790s, Deerfield Academy primarily catered to the needs of the surrounding rural student population until the 1920s when headmaster Frank A. Boyden sought to transform the school into an elite preparatory institution.[34] But as the faculty and staff increased to accommodate Boyden's ambitious vision, new faculty needed to obtain suitable housing in the largely rural village of "old" Deerfield. Boyden found a ready ally in Flynt, who believed Deerfield's history of Revolutionary-era individualism provided a powerful Cold War narrative of American exceptionalism.[35] As Flynt bought up houses on Deerfield's main street, he brokered their occupancy with Boyden. Under these arrangements, Flynt would lease the homes to Boyden who in turn sublet the homes to Deerfield Academy professors and their wives. Despite this hierarchy between Boyden and Flynt, Flynt made clear that tenants worked for the Heritage Foundation as hostesses through the spring, summer, and early fall.[36]

To manage the increasingly unwieldy operation of historic houses and museum collections, Flynt chartered the Heritage Foundation in 1952 to oversee his growing collection of houses and early American decorative arts. At that time, Flynt owned or rented five houses on Deerfield's main street, whose annual collected rents accounted for the majority—55 percent—of the Heritage Foundation's total cash income.[37] By the early 1960s, the Heritage Foundation owned nearly a dozen houses, at which time rental income accounted for roughly 30 percent of total income for the Heritage Foundation.[38] Rental income helped finance the growth of the Heritage Foundation in these formative years as Flynt's project grew in scope and scale to encompass over a dozen historic buildings and thousands of objects, furniture, and textiles. When Flynt died in 1970, rental income was second only behind the Heritage Foundation's large endowment in the organization's annual income.[39] Rents on Flynt's Deerfield houses in the 1950s and 1960s could fluctuate from 70 to 100 dollars a month, a range many tenants found to be "a little steep for Deerfield" and slightly higher than average rents in Massachusetts in 1950 and 1960 which hovered

34 Briann G. Greenfield, *Out of the Attic: Inventing Antiques in Twentieth-Century New England* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009), 143.

35 Henry Flynt and Samuel Chamberlain, *Frontier of Freedom: The Soul and Substance of America Portrayed in One Extraordinary Village, Old Deerfield, Massachusetts* (New York: Hastings House, 1957), 7.

36 Stillinger, *Historic Deerfield,* 19–20.

37 Heritage Foundation, "Statement of Income and Expense and Capital," 1954, Heritage Foundation Trustees records, Historic Deerfield Archives, Deerfield, MA.

38 Helen G. Flynt, "Statement of Income & Expenses," 1963, Heritage Foundation Trustees records. The other two thirds came from a combination of earned dividends, stocks, and investments, and miscellaneous income from the sale of books and wallpaper.

39 Heritage Foundation, "Operating Statement for the Year Ended December 31, 1970," 1970, Heritage Foundation Annual Reports, Historic Deerfield Archives, Deerfield, MA.

around 47 and 75 dollars per month, respectively.[40] "The rent may seem high," Flynt wrote to one prospective tenant, "but I know I can get it and probably more."[41] Indeed, Deerfield residents and Deerfield Academy staff had few options to secure housing in the village unless they chose to live four miles north in the more urban setting of Greenfield or five miles south in the industrial village of South Deerfield.

Renting likewise provided financial benefits to smaller organizations with fewer resources than Flynt's Heritage Foundation. The Germantown Historical Society (GHS), which owned seven historic houses along Germantown Avenue in the heart of the Philadelphia neighborhood, openly admitted their operations were "dependent on regular rental income."[42] In the early 1960s, the GHS's rental income constituted just under ten percent of their operating income.[43] By the early 1980s, GHS administrators decided to raise the monthly rental payments on their properties to generate additional revenue.[44] This shift made the GHS increasingly dependent on rental income: by 1981, rental income had jumped from ten percent to roughly one-third of the organization's annual income.[45] As with the GHS, the trustees of the Porter-Phelps-Huntington Museum (PPH) in Hadley, Massachusetts, relied on rental income to make ends meet. A small house museum on the Connecticut River, the museum's founder, James Lincoln Huntington, had carved a small apartment out of his on-site residence to generate income when the PPH foundation faced financial difficulties in the 1950s.[46] By the late 1970s, "real estate owned by the foundation" including three apartments and farmland had become "a major source of income."[47] At that time, rental income comprised roughly one third of the total operating income for PPH.[48] Large or small, renting was an indispensable source of revenue for heritage organizations.

40 Barbara Frederick to Henry Flynt, July 24, 1954, Wilson Printing Office Records, Historic Deerfield Archives, Deerfield, MA; US Census, Historical Census of Housing Tables: Gross Rents, https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/tables/time-series/census-housing-tables/grossrents.pdf.

41 Henry Flynt to Barbara Frederick, August 6, 1954, Wilson Printing Office Records, Historic Deerfield Archives, Deerfield, MA.

42 GHS Administrator to Prospective Tenant, August 28, 1989, Germantown Historical Society Property Records, Germantown Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA.

43 "Germantown Historical Society Income and Expenses," April 30, 1963, Germantown Historical Society Financial Records, Germantown Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA; "Germantown Historical Society: Treasurer's Report," March 23, 1965, Germantown Historical Society Financial Records, Germantown Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA.

44 To protect the identities of tenants and administrators, pseudonyms have been used for all evidence collected after 1970; GHS President to Prospective Tenants, September 1, 1981, Germantown Historical Society Property Records, Germantown Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA.

45 "Germantown Historical Society General Operating Account," September 30, 1981, Germantown Historical Society Financial Records, Germantown Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA.

46 Kari Ann Federer, "Historic Structure Report: The Chaise House and Corn Barn, the Porter-Phelps-Huntington House, Hadley, Massachusetts," (Boston: Boston University, 1989), 36.

47 PPH Board President, memo to PPH Board of Directors, 1979, Porter-Phelps-Huntington Papers, Hadley, MA.

48 "Porter-Phelps-Huntington Foundation Budget," May 1, 1979, Porter-Phelps-Huntington Papers, Hadley, MA; "Financial Report," April 30, 1982, Porter-Phelps-Huntington Papers, Hadley, MA.

As with Heritage Foundation-owned properties, apartments managed by smaller museums and historic sites such as the GHS, PPH, and the Amherst Historical Society (AHS) were priced at or above market-rate rents. Monthly rents on GHS-managed properties in the 1980s ranged from $200-$375, well above the Germantown neighborhood's median monthly rents which hovered between $150 and $220 in 1980. The AHS's apartment rented slightly below average monthly rent in Amherst at $150 in the 1970s and $225 in the 1980s when Amherst's median monthly rent fluctuated from $150-$259 in that same period.[49] Determining rental rates on museum apartments increasingly intertwined real estate speculators and landlords with museum administrators. For example, to tabulate rent for the three apartments scattered throughout the PPH's eighteenth-century farmhouse, PPH administrators called upon local Hadley, Massachusetts, landlord and preservationist Mac Gress to advise the museum's real estate activities. "Since this sort of thing is every day [sic] business" for Gress, PPH administrators explained, his expertise would be invaluable in determining a "more equitable and neater way" of managing PPH's apartments.[50] Gress advised PPH administrators to align their rental practices with other landlords in the area by requiring that tenants pay their own heating and electric bills. Gress made no suggestion to adjust rent on PPH's largest two-bedroom apartment where monthly rent was set at $400 in 1980, well above the average $287 monthly rent for surrounding Hadley that same year.[51] Like the Heritage Foundation, inflated rental prices at institutions such as the GHS, AHS, and PPH helped finance these organizations' preservation initiatives.

Other than a guaranteed source of revenue, tenants provided a stable physical presence at museums and historic sites. Many museums expected their tenants to act as an on-call security force, or "Sentinels on guard against the depredations of a careless public" as one museum landlord put it.[52] Security was one of the most common reasons museums cited their decision to rent to tenants.[53] "Someone living in the house," went one common line of reasoning, "might discourage prowlers."[54] Many administrators worried that increased public attention to museums in the years surrounding the Bicentennial would lead to an uptick in

49 US Census, Census of Housing, 1970 and 1980, data collected from Social Explorer.

50 PPH Board President to PPH Board of Directors, 1979, Porter-Phelps-Huntington Papers, Hadley, MA.

51 "Minutes of the Porter-Phelps-Huntington Museum Board Meeting," September 25, 1980, Porter-Phelps-Huntington Papers, Hadley, MA; US Census, Census of Housing, 1980, data collected from Social Explorer.

52 Sarah Dickinson Lowrie, *Strawberry Mansion: First Known as Somerton, the House of Many Masters* (Philadelphia: The Committee of 1926, 1941), 197.

53 Marc Ferris, "At Home With History: For Live-In Caretakers, the Rent is Low, but the Bathroom Can Be Very Busy," *New York Times,* March 30, 2003.

54 Doheny Sessions, "A Brief Report of the 1967 Season for the Twentieth Annual Meeting of Porter-Phelps-Huntington Foundation," May 24, 1968, Porter-Phelps-Huntington Papers, Hadley, MA.

burglaries and the theft of museum collections.[55] In the eyes of museum administrators, tenants were quite literally at the front line of museums in their capacity as security guards to protect museums from theft and vandalism. In this role, tenants were framed as "Curator-Watchmen" expected to perform their duties as interpreters and site managers alongside ensuring the security of their apartments and the entirety of the museum.[56] Tenants did encounter burglars and "prowlers" in this capacity, including tenants who thwarted an attempt to break into the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Germantown property, Cliveden, in the 1970s.[57] The presence of tenants at historic sites also protected against natural disasters and other physical plant problems that could endanger museum collections such as burst pipes, fires, or leaky roofs.

Despite the advantages renting offered museum founders, renting created a unique set of challenges for site administrators that many institutions failed to satisfactorily resolve. "Space," wrote Jennifer Pustz in her 2010 study of house museums, "is always at a premium at historic house museums," and the issue of space became the defining challenge for museum landlords throughout the twentieth century. Museum administrators understood space as a zero-sum game in which museum apartments removed space for public interpretation, collections storage, or administrative offices. Servants' quarters most frequently made the transition into museum apartments, in part because these spaces were already separate from the public areas of historic houses. But the qualities that made servants' quarters good apartments—their isolation from the rest of the house—also made them ideal for storage space and administrative offices. To choose one use for these private areas often meant making difficult choices about how and whether a museum's administrative and interpretive priorities could manifest elsewhere onsite.[58]

At Heritage Foundation-owned houses in Deerfield, Flynt worked to resolve these tensions with his contractor, Bill Gass, who oversaw the restoration and renovation of the majority of Flynt's properties.[59] Gass worked with Flynt to design apartments that balanced Flynt's desire for interpretive and collections storage space and tenants' desires for modern, spacious apartments. In every house Flynt purchased, Gass transformed back rooms, working ells, or newly constructed additions into small one- and two-bedroom apartments for Flynt's hostesses and their husbands. Once constructed, Gass and Flynt worked to maximize the

55 Caroline K. Keck et al., *A Primer on Museum Security* (New York: New York State Historical Association, 1966); "Theft of Museum Collection Proves Need for Security," *History News* 27, no. 4 (April 1972), 93; Jack Leo, "How to Secure Your Museum: A Basic Checklist," *History News* 35, no. 6 (June 1980), 10–12.

56 "Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee," November 3, 1967, Porter-Phelps-Huntington Papers, Hadley, MA.

57 Almira Saunders, oral history interview with Joel Gardner, January 18, 1990, interview in possession of Cliveden.

58 Pustz, *Voices from the Back Stairs*, 143.

59 Greenfield, *Out of the Attic*, 158.

available interpretive space in these apartments while ensuring they harmonized with their historic settings. Kitchens became a significant sticking point for Gass and Flynt in the ensuing negotiations. With his background in contracting, Gass proposed installing "Pureaire Kitchens" from the Detroit-based Parsons company in each apartment (see figure 2). First sold in 1936, the Parsons Company marketed their "Pureaire Kitchen" to landlords and other property owners seeking to modernize outdated kitchen spaces in older buildings.[60] The "Puraire" model enclosed a range, sink, oven, and refrigerator into a steel cabinet that took up just eight square feet and could be installed in any room with electrical outlets and running water.[61] The "Pureaire" model's size and unobtrusive white steel cabinet design allowed Flynt to offer fully-equipped apartments to his tenants that took up as little valuable interpretive space as possible. When the Parsons Company discontinued the "Pureaire" model in the early 1950s, Flynt turned to Gass to fill the gap. Gass proposed similar models, the "Perfectionette" and the "Murphy Cabranette," but Flynt found them to look "somewhat new."[62] Gass offered to design his own modular kitchens that only occupied five square feet of space—enough room for Flynt to consider adding a "flat top washing machine on the same wall."[63] Once installed, Henry and Gass turned to Helen Flynt, who designed covers for the modern appliances so they appeared "to look rather old" but were nevertheless "thoroughly modern equipment."[64] Through these design choices, Flynt and Gass shrunk apartments to their smallest possible size to maximize available interpretive space.

Despite their small size, design strategies such as the "Pureaire" kitchen were no perfect solution. Choices made by Flynt in the 1940s and 1950s often failed to ride out emerging trends in museum interpretation in the latter decades of the twentieth century. Flynt's first full-time curator, Joseph Peter Spang III, negotiated the physical limits of Flynt's apartments with new interpretive priorities throughout his career at the Heritage Foundation. Flynt hired Spang in 1959 to oversee his collections and mentor students affiliated with the foundation's summer fellowship. Whereas Flynt was guided by his own aesthetic tastes for colonial-era decorative arts, Spang sought to integrate scholarly and professional research standards into

60 "Kitchen Cabinet Unit Saves Space: Designed for Tenants in Small Homes," *The Detroit Free Press,* February 23, 1936; "Pureaire Sales Increasing: Parsons Co. Reports 300 Per Cent Gain," *The Detroit Free Press,* February 21, 1937; "News of Food: New Kitchen Has a Stove, Refrigerator, and Sink Fitted Into Eight Square Feet," *New York Times,* March 1, 1948.

61 "Parsons Pureaire Kitchen," promotional pamphlet, Frary House Research File, Historic Deerfield Archives, Deerfield, MA.

62 William Gass to Henry Flynt, November 24, 1950, Wilson Printing Office Records, Historic Deerfield Archives, Deerfield, MA.

63 Henry Flynt to William Gass, November 27, 1950, Wilson Printing Office Records, Historic Deerfield Archives, Deerfield, MA.

64 Henry Flynt to Roland Cook, July 13, 1953, Dwight-Barnard House Records, Historic Deerfield Archives, Deerfield, MA.

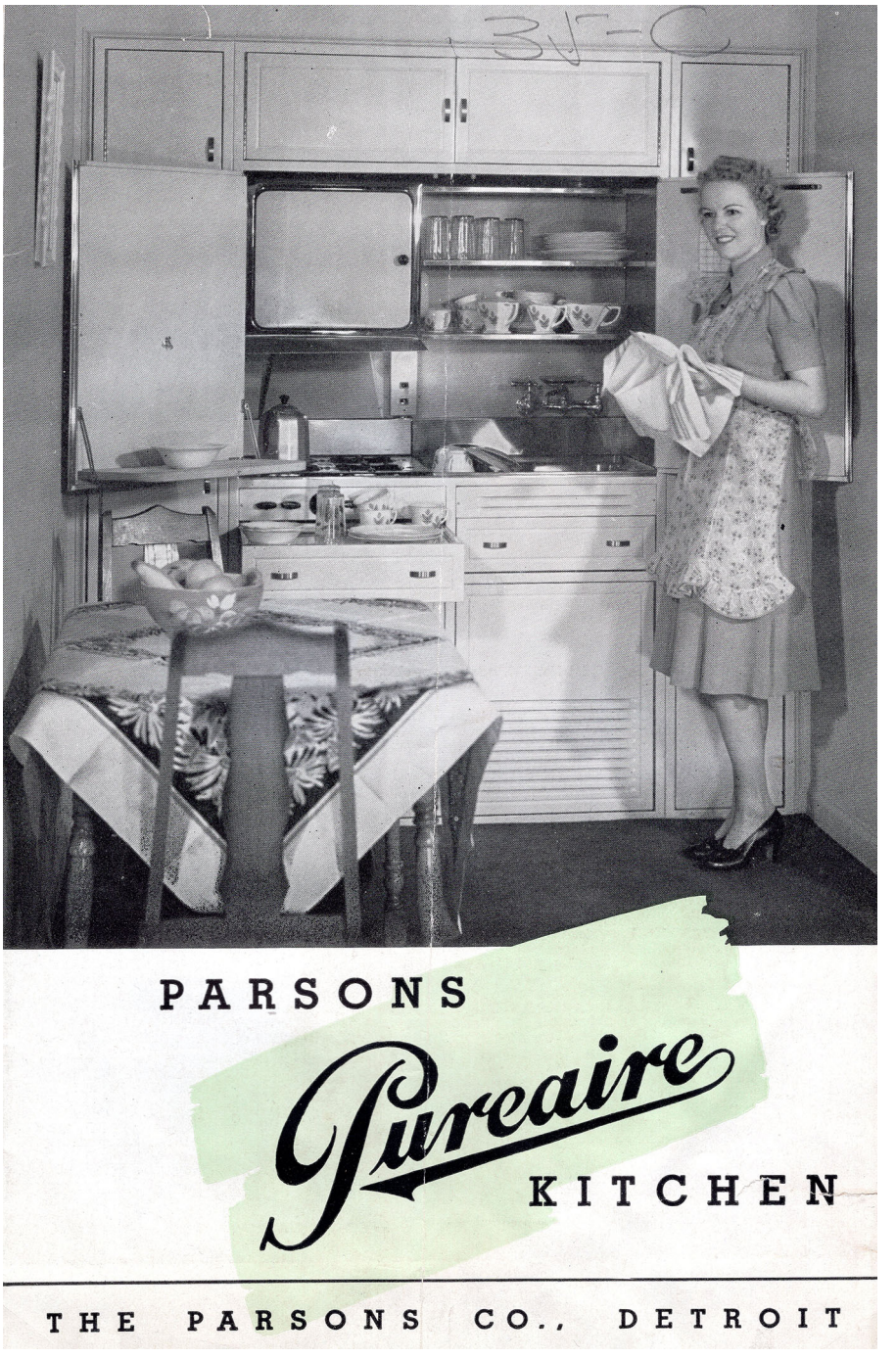

Figure 2. Circa 1950 flyer for a "Pureaire" Kitchen used by tenants of the Frary House. (Frary House Research File, Historic Deerfield Library, Deerfield, Massachusetts)

the Heritage Foundation's museum displays and interpretation. Reflecting newfound interest in social and women's history among public and academic historians, Spang hoped to highlight the historical labor of women in Deerfield who had first mobilized in the nineteenth century to preserve much of Deerfield's built environment.[65] One such woman was C. Alice Baker, who had purchased and restored the Frary House in the 1890s.[66] By the 1980s, Spang hoped to reinterpret the Frary House to explore Baker's legacy, but the creation of a new apartment in the back ell of the house in the 1940s precluded these efforts. Spang explained that "to make the custodian's apartment nicer," Flynt had subsumed a portion of Baker's parlor into the new apartment. To "bring this house back to the way Miss Baker had it" required significant restoration work that Spang worried would deprive "the tenant of half of her living room" by reclaiming the apartment for the house's public interpretation.[67] As Spang discovered, museum apartments solved many site management problems, but so too did they create new and often unforeseen issues.

If museum apartments tested the spatial capacities of museums, they in turn placed museums and tenants in a legal gray area. Both Wister and Flynt discovered not long after mobilizing the PSPL and the Heritage Foundation, respectively, that renting apartments from their museum properties complicated their efforts to simultaneously administer their organizations as nonprofits. Flynt first learned of these legal conflicts when Deerfield town assessors notified the Heritage Foundation board that the museum portions of Heritage Foundation-owned houses qualified as tax exempt, but the revenue-generating apartments did not. "In my opinion," wrote board member Charles Stoddard Jr., the apartments were "being used for the purposes for which the corporation was formed" by housing staff. Stoddard recommended caution, warning Flynt that from "the public relations point of view it might be best in the long run to let the assessors handle the matter."[68] Despite the potential "public relations" pitfalls, Flynt insisted the entirety of museum houses remain tax exempt, appealing the Deerfield assessor's denial of

65 On this trend in the broader historical profession, see Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995); Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990); Lara Leigh Kelland, *Clio's Foot Soldiers: Twentieth-Century U.S. Social Movements and Collective Memory* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2018); on the role of women as preservationists and historians in Deerfield prior to Flynt, see Marla R. Miller and Anne Digan Lanning, "'Common Parlors': Women and the Recreation of Community Identity in Deerfield, Massachusetts, 1870–1920," *Gender and History* 6, no. 3 (November 1994): 435–55; Michael C. Batinski, *Pastkeepers in a Small Place: Five Centuries in Deerfield, Massachusetts* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004).

66 Suzanne L. Flynt, *Poetry to the Earth: The Arts and Crafts Movement in Deerfield* (Deerfield, MA: Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association, 2012), 20–21.

67 Joseph Peter Spang, III, "Inside Frary House," oral history interview, January 1991, Historic Deerfield Archives, Deerfield, MA.

68 Charles Stoddard Jr. to Henry Flynt, December 31, 1954, Ashley House Records, Historic Deerfield Archives, Deerfield, MA.

tax exemption to the Massachusetts Appeals Court in 1955.[69] Flynt emerged from this legal scuffle successfully, ensuring that his rental apartments could still provide valuable income while remaining exempt from local real estate taxes.

Like Flynt, Wister encountered similar legal quandaries. When Wister first offered the Powel House apartment to Edith Standen, she readily admitted that a rental apartment presented legal liabilities to the newly formed PSPL. So too did these arrangements jeopardize Wister's efforts to save the historic Upsala mansion in Germantown after a devastating fire in 1941. Like the PSPL, Wister stationed a rent-paying tenant in the back building of the eighteenth-century mansion after mobilizing the Upsala Foundation in 1944 to purchase the house. "The city [of Philadelphia] thought it strange that we charged rent for a tax free house," warned one Upsala Foundation trustee after the city assessors performed an annual inspection.[70] Soon the city acted on these suspicions. In 1945, the City of Philadelphia's Board of Revision of Taxes refused to exempt the PSPL from real estate taxes on Grumblethorpe, a home that included a small apartment the PSPL rented for $35 a month. Wister appealed and benefitted from previous legal precedent in the state of Pennsylvania. One 1933 act cited in the appeal exempted "institutions of purely public charity" from taxation. The courts likewise pointed to "YMCA of Germantown vs. City of Philadelphia," a 1936 case brought after the Germantown YMCA refused to pay taxes for operating lodging facilities. In that case, the court decided that the YMCA was in active competition with lodging facilities in the city, but Wister collecting rent to "support and increase the efficiency, facilities and purpose" of the PSPL hardly qualified as commercial or competitive with surrounding rental housing.[71]

To avoid additional legal squabbles, Wister devised new methods to skirt the legal questions posed by tax exemption on the PSPL's rental properties. At the Powel House, Wister decided that Elizabeth Standen would "pay a certain amount each month toward the up-keep" of the house, but would not sign a lease. "This would have to be an agreement, not a lease," Wister explained, "as we are exempt from taxes."[72] This kind of verbal agreement offered tenuous legal cover to Wister and the PSPL, at best, and denied legal accountability for tenant and landlord, at worst. While a verbal agreement may have worked with Standen, Wister adapted traditional leases for successive tenants at the Powel House and Upsala. Rather than pay rent, administrators would "ask more services" from their tenants in

69 Heritage Foundation, "Application for Abatement of Real Estate Tax," 1955, Ashley House Records, Historic Deerfield Archives, Deerfield, MA; "Heritage Foundation vs. Board of Assessors of the Town of Deerfield," Commonwealth of Massachusetts Appellate Tax Board, October 10, 1955, Ashley House Records, Historic Deerfield Archives, Deerfield, MA.

70 Upsala Foundation, Inc. Board Meeting Minutes, September 12, 1978, Germantown Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA.

71 *Philadelphia Society for Preservation of Landmarks vs. City of Philadelphia*, 1808 (CCP, 1945), 2–4.

72 Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks, "Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors," May 2, 1934, Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks Papers, Society for the Preservation of Landmarks.

exchange for housing.[73] These documents legally bound tenants to upholding the expectations of their employers and made their housing situations contingent on their ability to be good workers.

In requiring labor in exchange for housing, house museums extended longstanding labor practices that existed prior to their transformation into museums. Laborers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries regularly traded seasonal or domestic labor for onsite housing.[74] At the Porter-Phelps-Huntington Museum (PPH), laborers worked the farmland and maintained the extensive family household from the mid-eighteenth century onward. The museum's apartment extended these spatial and labor arrangements into the twentieth century. In the mid-1960s PPH museum administrators transformed the attic chamber of John Morrison, a Scottish landscape gardener and Revolutionary War prisoner-of-war, into one of three apartments where tenants were expected to clean and manage the museum's collections.[75] Museum apartments did not simply mirror historical labor arrangements, rather, they adapted them to the conditions of museum work. When the Chew family donated their Germantown mansion, Cliveden, to the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) for use as a house museum in 1973, NTHP staff decided to keep the Chew family's domestic servants, Russell and Almira Saunders, as full-time caretakers and tenants at Cliveden. Rather than replicate the domestic labor conditions under the Chew family, the NTHP expected Almira and Russell to "do all that cleaning up and down and be out of the way before the house opened at 10 o'clock." Compared to their work under the Chew family, the NTHP's domestic work required Almira and Russell to begin their workdays in the early hours of the morning rather than work throughout the day.[76]

These hybrid leases and work contracts prompted a shift in the language museum administrators used to describe their tenants. Rather than frame museum occupants as "tenants," many administrators over time chose to label them as "caretakers." In the 1940s and 1950s, Wister negotiated standard lease agreements with tenants to occupy the "back building" at Upsala for a monthly rental payment of $15.[77] But by the 1970s, leases at Upsala reflected an indecision on the part of administrators. At this time, a typical "lease for apartment at historic house" specified that rent was "to be paid by services" but the "tenant is actually a caretaker

73 Upsala Foundation, Inc. Board Meeting Minutes, September 12, 1978; Frances A. Wister to Howard Blake, October 18, 1950, Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks Papers, Temple University Urban Archive.

74 Marla R. Miller, *Entangled Lives: Labor, Livelihood and Landscapes of Change in Rural Massachusetts* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019); Bernard L. Herman, *Town House: Architecture and Material Life in the Early American City, 1780–1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

75 Miller, *Entangled Lives*, 216; Deborah Dumaine, oral history interview with the author, August 8, 2023, interview in possession of the author.

76 Almira Saunders, oral history interview with Joel Gardner, January 18, 1990, interview in possession of Cliveden.

77 Lease Agreement between The Upsala Foundation and Peter Hughes, June 1945, Upsala Foundation Records, Germantown Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA.

and not a tenant."[78] The New Jersey Division of Historic Sites insisted on categorizing their tenants as caretakers and employees, requiring all prospective tenants to pass the New Jersey civil service exam to qualify for housing at their historic sites.[79] But the legal agreements landlords brokered were nevertheless leases—not work contracts—with an attached "rider" specifying the terms by which tenants would exchange labor for housing.[80] While landlords may have outwardly identified their tenants as "caretakers" or employees, their private legal agreements tell another story. In the eyes of museum administrators, housing and labor were intertwined.

The Tenants: Authority, Authenticity, and Visibility at Home and Work

Tenants navigated between the expectations espoused by their landlords and employers and their own desires for their homes in choosing to rent from a museum or a historic site. The difficulty in securing safe, sanitary, and affordable housing in the postwar era pushed many tenants in search of alternative housing sources. Urban renewal, the construction of the federal interstate highway system, and postwar policies that favored single-family homeownership drastically reduced the rental housing stock in deindustrializing states such as Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey.[81] The effects of these policies placed tremendous pressure on urban and rural housing markets alike. From 1950 to 1960, vacancies in Philadelphia hovered at just above 1 percent of available housing stock.[82] In rural areas like Deerfield and western Massachusetts, depopulation and migration to

78 "Lease for Apartment at Historic House Known as Upsala Rent to Be Paid By Services Tenant is Actually a Caretaker and Not a Tenant," January 1, 1987, Upsala Foundation Records, Germantown Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA.

79 Olga G. Atkins, report on Von Steuben House, 1952, New Jersey State Division of Historic Sites Records, New Jersey State Archives, Trenton, NJ.

80 For examples of this documentation see "Agreement between Germantown Historical Society and Marion C. and John R. Spencer for 5208 Germantown Avenue," June 1965, Germantown Historical Society, Property Records, Philadelphia, PA; "Agreement between Germantown Historical Society and H. Walter Gruber for 5214 Germantown Avenue" June 1944, Germantown Historical Society, Property Records, Philadelphia, PA; "Agreement between Germantown Historical Society and Susan Bruce and James Irwin for 5218 Germantown Avenue," March 1982, Germantown Historical Society, Property Records, Philadelphia, PA; "Rider attached to and forming part of Agreement of Lease between the Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks, Lessor, and Frank A. Tebo, Lessee, for 244 S. Third St., Philadlphia, Penna," Powel House Records, Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks Papers, Temple University Urban Archive, Philadelphia, PA.

81 Lizabeth Cohen, *Saving America's Cities: Ed Logue and the Struggle to Renew Urban America in the Suburban Age* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2019); Connolly, *A World More Concrete*; David M. P. Freund, *Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 176–97; Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); Satter, *Family Properties*.

82 US Census, "Characteristics of Housing for the City: 1950," https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1950/housing-volume-5/15870149v5p7ch1.pdf; US Census, "General Housing Characteristics: 1970 and 1960," data for Philadelphia Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area.

larger cities and suburban areas such as metropolitan Boston left behind abandoned and deteriorating housing. As in urban areas, available rental vacancies in Deerfield and surrounding Franklin County were desperately low, dipping below one percent by 1960.[83] Landlords profited from these housing shortages, charging exorbitant rents for substandard housing. Black and other nonwhite tenants disproportionately bore the burdens of these practices—and in western Massachusetts Puerto Rican migrants working in the region's tobacco fields faced an especially acute shortage of suitable apartments. But white residents unable to afford a single-family home faced their own difficulties securing stable rental housing. Tenants repeatedly expressed that the tight rental housing market motivated their desire to live in a museum and access "convenient and relatively inexpensive housing." For these lucky few tenants, museums presented a viable alternative to the postwar rental housing crisis.[84]

In addition to the tight postwar rental market, tenants consistently explained that their choice to live in a museum facilitated a special and intimate sense of place somehow lacking in the mainstream rental market. In their correspondence to Flynt, tenants regularly underscored that living in a museum property was a unique opportunity that brought them closer to the village's rich history. "There is a place on Madison Circle in Greenfield that may be vacant a little later in the summer, which looks as though it might be suitable for us," wrote one tenant to Flynt in 1951, "but of course, [it's] not old Deerfield."[85] Just down the Connecticut River in Hadley, Massachusetts, tenants at PPH expressed similar sentiments. Smith College graduate Deborah Dumaine reflected that "the grandeur of the house and the history, the wonderful feeling of antiquity" at the eighteenth-century home distinguished her two-room apartment she rented in 1970 as "magical."[86] While available apartments in nearby cities like Greenfield supplied adequate housing, living in an apartment with "the wonderful feeling of antiquity" was "a dream come true" for tenants who perceived historic buildings as more "authentic" than rental housing elsewhere.[87] By the 1960s, these assertions became widespread among proponents of the so-called "back-to-the-city" movement, who rejected homogenous postwar

83 US Census, "Tenure, Vacancy Status, Condition and Plumbing Facilities, and Structural Characteristics for Counties: 1960," data for Franklin County, Massachusetts.

84 Taylor, *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership*; Stephen Burghardt, ed., *Tenants and the Urban Housing Crisis* (Dexter, MI: The New Press, 1972); Joseph Carvalho III, "The Puerto Rican Community of Western Massachusetts, 1898–1960," *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* 43, no. 2 (Summer 2015): 52; Mercedes de Miranda, Elizabeth B. Warlick, and Suzanna M. van Dijk, "The Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks: An Evaluation of the Site Management Role," (April 1990), 11, Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks Papers, Temple University Urban Archive.

85 Ella Wright to Henry Flynt, June 16, 1951, Wright House Records, Historic Deerfield Archives, Deerfield, MA.

86 Deborah Dumaine, oral history interview with the author, August 8, 2023, interview in possession of the author.

87 Ruth Blinn to Henry Flynt, May 6, 1963, Wells-Thorn House Records, Historic Deerfield Archives, Deerfield, MA.

suburban housing in favor of more "authentic" lifestyles presented by city living.[88] Far from being the sole concern of urban "pioneers" relocating to historic urban neighborhoods, appeals to authenticity undergirded the desires of museum tenants.

The special and intimate sense of place that attracted tenants to museum apartments often overrode the very real material problems tenants encountered after moving in. The archival record of these institutions is littered with the objections of tenants to the condition of museum apartments. Tenants of the Heritage Foundation wrote regularly to Flynt complaining of broken staircase railings, inadequate heat distribution, cracked and broken windows, poor maintenance, and "the hundred and one items that come up" with older houses.[89] The New Jersey Division of Historic Sites likewise reported that apartments housed in the state's fifteen historic properties were "inadequate and undesirable."[90] Several houses owned by the state had "no heating system," forcing tenants to heat their apartments using their stoves throughout the winter.[91] Heating bills most frequently aroused the ire of tenants whose landlords expected them to heat their apartment in addition to the entirety of the museum building they were stationed in as stipulated in their lease.[92] Despite these problems, many tenants chose to remain in museum apartments for several years, citing their connection to housing that felt more authentic and historic than traditional rental housing that shared the problems of inadequate heat and poor maintenance.

Due to their proximity to public museum spaces, museum apartments and the nature of serving as a "host" or "hostess" at these historic sites blurred the boundaries between work and home. Tenants experienced this intermixing of private and public-facing spaces in myriad ways. For many tenants, choosing to live in a museum apartment entailed "a loss of privacy."[93] The AHS stipulated in its leases that tenants would allow the Amherst chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution and "members of the Historical Society use of the kitchen occasionally

88 Suleiman Osman, *The Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn: Gentrification and the Search for Authenticity in Postwar New York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Aaron Shkuda, *The Lofts of SoHo: Gentrification, Art, and Industry in New York, 1950–1980* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

89 Ella Wright to Henry Flynt, February 28, 1955, Wright House Records, Historic Deerfield Archives, Deerfield, MA; Julia Hale Thompson to Henry Flynt, 1947, Wilson Printing Office Records, Historic Deerfield Archives, Deerfield, MA; James Kilbreth to John Banta, June 27, 1974, Deerfield Academy Property Rentals Records, Historic Deerfield Archives, Deerfield, MA; Joseph Peter Spang, III, "Inside Sheldon-Hawks House."

90 Minutes of the New Jersey Department of Conservation and Economic Development, December 12, 1950, Bergen County Historical Society Records, New Jersey State Archives, Trenton, NJ.

91 Alden T. Cottrell, "Report on the Formation of the Commission on Historic Sites Now Under the Jurisdiction of the Division of the State Department of Conservation," Administration of Historic Sites Records, New Jersey State Archives, Trenton, NJ.

92 Margaret M. Palmer to Henry Flynt, February 13, 1957, Sheldon-Hawks Correspondence Records, Historic Deerfield Archives, Deerfield, MA.

93 Ferris, "At Home With History."

with advance notice."[94] Other historical organizations regularly asked their tenants to share their bathrooms—often the only working bathroom in the entire museum—with visitors.[95] With little physical space to spare, museum apartments also doubled as office space for staff and tenants alike. PPH's then-curator, Sarah Lane, lived in an apartment inside the house; as one of the only available workspaces for staff, Lane's living room functioned as a public space where staff and "callers must walk through her bedroom to get to her living-room/kitchen." This situation disturbed PPH board members. "I do not think we should expect the curator to be without her own private space any more than we would expect it of ourselves," PPH's president argued.[96] By the 1980s, the PPH board placed Lane in a separate apartment on-site that provided significantly more privacy, but many museums did not have the physical capacity to make material changes that would provide a greater separation between work and home.

In blurring the lines between employer and employee, museum apartments facilitated unique opportunities for landlords and employers to surveil tenants' private lives. Of course, landlords had long conducted invasive and intrusive incursions into the privacy of tenants, but site administrators at museums policed their tenants in pursuit of maintaining a sense of historic authenticity at their sites. The GHS regularly made the private matters of their tenants museum business. For example, when Brenda Smith and Howard Blake moved into the apartment adjoining the GHS's headquarters in the early 1980s, GHS administrators scolded the couple for their private domestic disputes and verbal arguments.[97] "The society expects certain standards of conduct," GHS's director explained to prospective tenants, "We ask that tenants observe the semi-public nature of the Society."[98] Smith and Blake's "violent arguments" breached these "standards of conduct," Lawrence argued, continuing, "you are not living in your own private house."[99] The GHS likewise policed spaces deemed "semi-public" including backyards where administrators were "displeased to see" the toys of their tenants' children and required these spaces largely out of public view to be subjected to the same scrutiny as public

94 "Agreement concerning the renting of the apartment in the Strong House on North Prospect Street, Amherst, Massachusetts," June 21, 1976, Amherst Historical Society collection, Amherst, MA; "Agreement between the Amherst Historical Society and Benton L. Hatch, concerning the renting of the apartment in the Strong House on North Prospect Street Amherst, Massachusetts," May 13, 1965, Amherst Historical Society collection, Amherst, MA.

95 Ferris, "At Home With History."

96 PPH Board President to Board Members, July 22, 1981, Porter-Phelps-Huntington Papers, Porter-Phelps-Huntington Foundation, Hadley, MA.

97 "Agreement Between the Germantown Historical Society and Tenants for apartment adjoining GHS Headquarters," 1980s, Germantown Historical Society Property Records, Germantown Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA.

98 GHS Director to Prospective Tenants, 1980s, Germantown Historical Society Property Records, Germantown Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA.

99 GHS Director to Tenants, 1980s, Germantown Historical Society Property Records, Germantown Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA.

museum areas.[100] That museum administrators considered their apartments to be "semi-public" extensions of public museum spaces revealed how tenants were expected to maintain the illusion of historic authenticity even in their private lives.

Arguments, children's toys, and the regular rhythms and needs of daily life might have been more acceptable in traditional rental housing but at historic sites these activities impinged on the re-created past presented to public audiences. Indeed, rather than prioritize the need for privacy, museum administrators privileged the experience of visitors to these sites. Tenants' installation of window air conditioning units at Heritage Foundation-owned sites illustrated this practice at work. To keep cool in the humid Deerfield summers, many Heritage Foundation tenants purchased and installed window air conditioning units that projected from windows visible to visitors and from the village's street. These air conditioning units "offend my 18th century eye," fumed one Heritage Foundation trustee, and shattered the illusion of a quiet, eighteenth-century streetscape Flynt and other Heritage Foundation trustees had worked hard to curate for visitors to the rural village.[101] Such modern alterations did intrude upon the visual sense of history presented to visitors, but visitors were under no pretense they had stepped back in time—private homes with modern conveniences abounded throughout the village of Deerfield and were visible from any one of the Heritage Foundation's properties. But, as with the GHS, Heritage Foundation tenants were not living in a private home in the eyes of their landlords. Tenancy was contingent on their ability to uphold the Heritage Foundation's interpretation of eighteenth-century domestic spaces.

Despite their loss of privacy, the collapsing of work and home beneath one roof allowed many tenants to express and enact a sense of ownership over these historic sites and the narratives museum administrators charged them with interpreting. Deborah Dumaine reflected that "we only had a little, tiny corner" of PPH in their two-room apartment but felt that the whole museum was hers. Such feelings were reinforced by PPH's director, who encouraged Dumaine to use herbs from the museum's garden in her cooking.[102] These feelings of ownership extended to the museum collections tenants were expected to interpret in their respective museum houses. Peter and Marie Hughes directly contributed to the growth of collections at the Germantown mansion Upsala through their personal and familial objects. Sometime after moving into the house in 1945, Peter and Marie researched, designed, and constructed an eighteenth-century "reproduction of an old dry sink" which they installed in the home's kitchen. When Peter and Marie vacated their apartment at Upsala in 1951, administrators purchased the sink from the couple for

100 GHS to Prospective Tenants, May 13, 1986, Germantown Historical Society Property Records, Germantown Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA.

101 Jack Baker to John King, June 26, 1974, Deerfield Academy Property Rentals Records, Historic Deerfield Archives, Deerfield, MA.

102 Deborah Dumaine, oral history interview with the author.

Figure 3. The English pearlware saucers, teacup, and coffee cup Richard and Ruth Hatch used to decorate their apartment in the Ashley House. Source: Tea set, Wedgwood & Co., Staffordshire, England, 1805–15. Lead glazed, refined white earthenware (pearlware) with underglaze cobalt blue enamel, transfer printing, overglaze iron-orange enamel, and gilding. (Historic Deerfield, Deerfield, Massachusetts, Gift of John B. Morris, 0913. Photo by Penny Leveritt)

permanent display in the house.[103] Richard and Ruth Hatch, tenants of the Heritage Foundation-owned Ashley House, regularly interchanged Flynt's collections with their own ancestral family objects. To decorate their apartment, Ruth removed several pieces of early-nineteenth century English pearlware, including a teacup, saucer, sugar bowl, and creamer, from the museum display cases in Ashley House and arranged them on "an attractive shelf" in her living room (Figure 3).[104] Richard and Ruth in turn placed "certain objects including my old family cradle, set of three-legged fireplace skillets and pots, and some dated handmade linen covering a part of the 18th century" on public display for visitors to the Ashley House.[105] Flynt expected hostesses to be knowledgeable about their home's restoration and the

103 Upsala Foundation, Inc. Board Meeting Minutes, November 19, 1951, Upsala Foundation Records, Germantown Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA.

104 Henry Flynt to Richard Hatch, December 12, 1952, Ashley House Records, Historic Deerfield Archives, Deerfield, MA.

105 Richard Hatch to Henry Flynt, June 24, 1952, Ashley House Records, Historic Deerfield Archives, Deerfield, MA.

various colonial-era objects on display.[106] Instead of any old cradle or skillets, Ruth could point to a cradle generations of her family had used to raise their children and skillets her family had used to cook by an open hearth. By intermixing her family's eighteenth-century objects with Flynt's collections, Ruth enacted her sense of ownership over museum spaces and authority over the interpretive narratives visitors encountered through museum collections.

These intimate associations between tenants and museum collections were a direct outgrowth of the labor system structured by museums. After all, it was tenants who were responsible for not only being knowledgeable experts about museum objects, but also for their care, cleaning, and arrangement in museum spaces. Tenants took great pride their care of museum collections. Deborah Dumaine regularly expressed her excitement at creating flower arrangements in PPH's historic flower bowls and vases—a technique the museum's director taught her personally. Arranging flowers "was about the most exciting thing I could think of doing, and I knew which vases to use," Dumaine proudly recalled.[107] Designing the historical arrangement of flowers in ways that used museum collections felt fulfilling and allowed Dumaine to acquire new skills in historical decorating techniques. Flynt actively encouraged his tenants to forge personal associations with museum collections. When the Heritage Foundation received a large donation of eighteenth- and early-nineteenth century furniture from the estate of Rowena Russell Potter for display in 1960, Flynt "stored" much of this new acquisition in Joseph Peter Spang III's apartment in the rear of the Sheldon-Hawks House. Already, Spang was using museum objects, including a "desk and bookcase," provided by Flynt from his collections to furnish his new apartment. With the addition of Potter's donation, Flynt put "the best pieces in the museum" for public viewing but "there was such an excess that we put a lot of it in my apartment," Spang recalled. These new furnishings included "a very handsome gate-leg table, an English sofa, two wing chairs," and several English rugs. Once furnished, Spang's apartment resembled many of the museum spaces on display for public view as he used museum collections as everyday furnishings for his home (Figure 4).[108]

Changing professional standards of care increasingly discouraged tenants from exercising authority over museum collections and interpretation and made renting and tenancy less visible to the average visitor. Whereas an administrator such as Flynt might once have been comfortable with Richard and Ruth Hatch handling and displaying museum collections as they would their own personal belongings, by the 1970s and 1980s museum administrators came to understand these practices as professional liabilities. In part, this shift reflected the increased representation of public historians with advanced degrees in history, anthropology, museum and historic site administration, and historic preservation seeking employment beyond

106 "Hostess Cards," Frary House Records, Historic Deerfield Archives, Deerfield, MA.

107 Deborah Dumain, oral history interview with the author.

108 Joseph Peter Spang III, "Inside Sheldon-Hawks House," oral history interview, March 5, 1991, Historic Deerfield Archives, Deerfield, MA.

Figure 4. Joseph Peter Spang III's apartment in the Sheldon-Hawks House, circa 1960s. All the objects pictured here were museum collection pieces. (Historic Deerfield, Deerfield, Massachusetts)

the ivory tower. The academic training and backgrounds of this new cohort of history workers eschewed the informal preservation and maintenance practices of their predecessors in favor of professional standards of care that prioritized authentic interpretative, display, and curatorial practices based upon sound historical evidence and research. Practical literature on house museum administration underscored the necessity of integrating this specialized knowledge into museum administration, urging administrators to "enlist the aid of a trained conservator" whose "special knowledge" of museum collections would "avoid senseless and irreversible damage."[109] As male preservation professionals had appropriated the history work of women's voluntary organizations in the early twentieth century, so had a new generation of public historians redirected the history work of museum tenants into a professional ethos now uncomfortable with the prospect of damage incurred from tenants handling museum collections.[110]

109 Butcher-Younghans, *Historic House Museums*, 103, 126.

110 On this professional shift in the landscape of public history, see Robert Kelley, "Public History: Its Origins, Nature, and Prospects," *The Public Historian* 1, no. 1 (Autumn 1978), 16–28; Meringolo, *Museums, Monuments, and National Parks: Toward a New Genealogy of Public History,* xvi-xx.

As museum administration professionalized in the 1970s and grew to encompass professional scholars and practitioners, tensions continued to build over the interpretive authority of tenants. For administrators affiliated with the PSPL, tenants appeared to undermine the PSPL's authority by engaging in interpretive practices less rooted in historical authenticity. These tensions heightened when Edwin and Anne Moore moved into the Powel House as host and hostess in 1952.[111] Edwin, a realtor, and Anne utilized the Powel House as their own base of operations for the Colonial Philadelphia Historical Society (CPHS), an organization that Edwin founded in 1955.[112] The CPHS—like the PSPL—was one of many organizations sponsoring the preservation of Society Hill amidst the city of Philadelphia's ongoing urban renewal projects in the neighborhood.[113] Edwin leveraged his position as caretaker at the Powel House to augment his own historical expertise in ways that increasingly bristled against the desires of PSPL administrators.[114] As "charming host and hostess" for the Powel House, Edwin and Anne were expected to facilitate many of the PSPL's social events.[115] But Edwin and Anne raised eyebrows when they hosted a "soiree" for the CPHS where Edwin dressed as "18th century Mayor Samuel Powel" and Anne as "a bewigged Mrs. Powell."[116] "This looks like the Moores are carrying things a little too far," grumbled one board member, "it looks like we are raising the money and Mr. Moore is appropriating the house for his glory."[117] While administrators with the PSPL wanted their tenants to feel empowered to host social events in the Powel House, they drew the line at social activities and interpretive practices perceived to fall outside of the authority of the PSPL.

These tensions over interpretive authority threatened to boil over at other PSPL sites. When the PSPL acquired the elaborate eighteenth-century Hill-Physick House in 1965, PSPL trustees coordinated an extensive restoration under the guidance of Philadelphia architectural historian George Roberts. In his restoration, Roberts prioritized the Federal-style changes to the structure inaugurated by Philip

111 Society for the Preservation of Landmarks, "Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors," September 17, 1952, Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks Papers, Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks.

112 Society for the Preservation of Landmarks, "Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors," September 21, 1955, Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks Papers, Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks.

113 Francesca Russello Ammon, "Digital Humanities and the Urban Built Environment: Preserving the Histories of Urban Renewal and Historic Preservation," *Preservation Education and Research* 10 (2018): 22; "LITS Salutes a Good Neighbor: Edwin C. Moore," *The Philadelphia Inquirer,* June 30, 1961.

114 "Edwin Moore, Historian, Dies," *The Philadelphia Inquirer,* November 1, 1967.

115 Edwin C. Moore to Frederick Hemsley Lewis, February 15, 1957, Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks Papers, Temple University Urban Archive.

116 "The Philadelphia Scene . . . Back to the Colonial Days," undated newspaper article, Powel House files, Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks Papers, Temple University Urban Archive.

117 Symington P. Landreth, note on correspondence file between Edwin Moore and PSPL Board, Powel House files, Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks Papers, Temple University Urban Archive.

Sing Physick after 1815, while disregarding—and in the case of the home's stables, destroying—the architectural fabric of the home's original occupant, Henry Hill. Caretaker and tenant Harry P. Eisman openly questioned the home's restoration and challenged its authenticity. In 1967 Eisman wrote to PSPL president Frederick H. Levis, noting that while "George Roberts may be a talented man with the drafting board," the restoration erased the home's earlier history, creating a gulf between the home's construction in 1798 and its occupancy by Physick beginning in 1815. "It leaves many people wondering," Eisman argued, "and much on my part to explain away" these interpretive choices to inquisitive visitors.[118] The reply from Levis refused to cede authoritative ground. "Your almost total lack of knowledge of the facts," Levis wrote, conflicted with the scholarly expertise of Roberts, "an eminent architectural historian [who] needs no support from me." "In the future," Levis concluded, "I request that you concern yourself with your responsibilities in the care of the house and grounds," rather than question the PSPL's interpretive choices.[119] Such conflicts only became more common as house museums professionalized over the latter decades of the twentieth century.

The experiences of a tenant like Eisman reflected a new generation of administrators and their attitudes towards the role of tenants at their sites. The administrators that stepped into the roles of founders such as Wister and Flynt reflected the trend toward professionalization that decoupled many tenants from more visible interpretive and curatorial labor at house museums. In 1971, just one year after Flynt's death, Heritage Foundation trustees newly rebranded the foundation as Historic Deerfield, Inc. By 1975 a new executive director, Donald Friary, took over the operations of the foundation. With a doctorate in American Civilization from the University of Pennsylvania, Friary oversaw Historic Deerfield's transformation into a professional museum that erected concrete boundaries between tenants and the care and interpretation of museum collections. The work of tenants was gradually absorbed over the 1970s by a new training program for tour guides that hired outside the traditional pool of Deerfield Academy wives; a new architectural conservator, William A. Flynt (grandson of Henry Flynt), who held an advanced degree in architectural history from the University of Vermont; and additional curatorial staff such as Philip Zea, a graduate of the Winterthur Program in Early American Culture. As a result of these changes, Historic Deerfield's rental apartments operated solely as a source of income for the organization, a byproduct of this new generation of administrators' efforts to structure "rental deals on a more businesslike basis" rather than the informal housing and labor practices that once predominated. Already placed in back ells and faraway rooms, these changes made

118 Harry Paul Eisman to Frederick H. Levis, December 21, 1967, Hill-Physick-Keith House Records, Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks Papers, Temple University Archives.

119 Frederick H. Levis to Harry Paul Eisman, January 3, 1968, Hill-Physick-Keith House Records, Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks Papers, Temple University Archives.

renting nearly invisible as tenants were pushed out of their roles as interpreters, curators, and frontline workers.[120]

Administrators could exert greater control over the interpretive practices, collections handling and care, and rental arrangements of their sites, but they could not control the inevitable material decay and deterioration of their physical facilities or the neighborhoods surrounding them. By the 1970s, many museum apartments had experienced over three decades of continuous, everyday use by tenants. The resultant wear and tear on these spaces was one of many financial burdens facing house museums as maintenance costs outpaced rental income. Administrators at urban historic sites such as the GHS faced additional obstacles as the demographic characteristics of Germantown changed dramatically around the society's historic rental properties. Decades of white flight from the neighborhood meant that GHS officials struggled to mitigate the institutional divestment that characterized interracial and nonwhite neighborhoods. By 1969, the "deteriorating conditions" of Germantown meant that officials could no longer secure insurance coverage for their historic properties, a product of insurance redlining in the wake of urban uprisings in the late 1960s. If the GHS wished to continue some degree of insurance coverage, they would face higher premiums on top of mounting maintenance and preservation costs for their rental apartments—problems that joined a growing list of interpretive, educational, and administrative needs for the organization.[121]

An early sign of the crisis in funding and administrative capacity yet to come, the mounting maintenance and insurance costs of rental apartments such as those managed by the GHS encouraged some institutions to divest themselves of renting altogether. The widespread use of easements allowed museum administrators to sell rental housing while ensuring professional standards for their continued preservation and care. Easements functioned as a restrictive covenant conveyed by property owners to preservation organizations that required future owners to adhere to preservation restrictions stipulated at the time of sale. Their gradual adoption by preservation and heritage organizations over the 1960s reflected the movement's broader intersection with the conservation movement where easements had long functioned as a common tool to preserve large swathes of land in perpetuity. Easements became more attractive in the early 1980s when Ronald Reagan's federal tax policies recategorized easements as a qualifying tax deduction. Beginning in the late 1980s and accelerating in the early 1990s, the GHS rapidly divested itself of several apartments in "deplorable" condition by deeding façade easements on former rental properties to the Philadelphia Historic Preservation Corporation who assumed responsibility

120 Stillinger, *Historic Deerfield: A Portrait of Early America*, 58–68; John S. Banta to James Kilbreth, June 28, 1974, Deerfield Academy Property Rentals Records, Historic Deerfield Archives, Deerfield, MA.

121 David W. Young, *The Battles of Germantown: Effective Public History in America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2019), 134–35; Bench Ansfield, "The Crisis of Insurance and the Insuring of the Crisis: Riot Reinsurance and Redlining in the Aftermath of the 1960s," *Journal of American History* 107, no. 4 (March 2021), 899–921; Letter to Howard D. Saylor, May 7, 1969, Germantown Historical Society Property Records, Philadelphia, PA.

for their preservation and restoration. In doing so, the GHS largely abandoned renting as an interpretive, curatorial, and financial practice.[122]

Conclusion: Out of Sight, Out of Mind?

The GHS was not alone in confronting administrative difficulties in the 1990s. By the early 2000s, public historians were sounding alarm bells of a deeper crisis facing historic house museums from chronic underfunding, low attendance, and deteriorating facilities.[123] Renting and tenant labor had sustained many institutions over the preceding century, but without serious changes posed its own set of financial and professional risks to house museums struggling with maintenance backlogs and efforts to upgrade and professionalize their curatorial practices in the twenty-first century. As house museums responded to this crisis by creating new programming and cutting-edge interpretive material, renting and the provision of housing grew further apart from discussions of labor conditions in the public history workplace. But housing and labor were not severed irrevocably. Caretakers still exchange labor for housing. Tenants still provide an onsite security presence and valuable operating revenue in the form of monthly rental payments. Despite their seeming invisibility, museum apartments make clear that housing and labor conditions at public history sites remain intertwined.

From the first decades of the twentieth century, museum administrators viewed housing as a guaranteed method to secure stable sources of revenue and labor from their tenants. These dual goals—rental income and inexpensive labor—shaped a public history workplace in which the tenants and employees of institutions were often one and the same. But renting was not a simple or straightforward solution for these organizations. The advent of professionalization in the 1970s and 1980s largely sorted out renting from the interpretive and curatorial labor of these sites, placing renting out of sight and out of mind. This legacy has complex

122 "Deed of Façade and Open Space Easement," June 1992, Germantown Historical Society Property Records, Philadelphia, PA; Jane Silverman, "The Trade-Off That Pays Off," *Historic Preservation* 34, no. 2 (March 1982): 32; "Preservation Features: Legal Tools," *Historic Preservation* 20, no. 2 (April 1968): 48–49; Robert Campbell, "Making Properties Pay Their Way," *Historic Preservation* 34, no. 1 (January 1982), 26–31.

123 Marian Godfrey and Barbara Silberman, "What To Do With These Old Houses," Pew Charitable Trust Magazine, (Spring 2008), https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/reports/2008/04/30/what-to-do-with-these-old-houses-spring-2008-trust-magazine-briefing; Richard Moe, "Are There Too Many House Museums?" *Forum Journal* 16, no. 3 (Spring 2002): 4–11; Carol B. Stapp and Kenneth C. Turino, "Does America Need Another House Museum?" *History News* 59, no. 3 (Summer 2004); on the crisis facing house museums in the 2000s see Gerald George, "Historic House Museum Malaise: A Conference Considers What's Wrong," *History News* 57, no. 4 (Autumn 2002): 21–25; Turino and Balgooy, eds., *Reimagining Historic House Museums*; Franklin D. Vagnone and Deborah E. Ryan, *Anarchist's Guide to Historic House Museums* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2015); Hilary Iris Lowe, "Dwelling in Possibility: Revisiting Narrative in the Historic House Museum," *The Public Historian* 37, no. 2 (May 2015): 42–60; AASLH Historic House Affinity Group Committee, "How Sustainable Is Your Historic House Museum?" *History News* 63, no. 4 (Autumn 2008), 1–12.

consequences for present-day staff who find themselves in the unwanted or unexpected position of landlords and property managers. So too does the legacy of renting pose additional interpretive challenges and opportunities. As cultural and heritage organizations increasingly seek to tell the stories of marginalized and working people, museum apartments are often swept away to create new interpretive spaces in historic working and laboring spaces that transitioned into apartments in the twentieth century.[124] After a century of developing onsite housing, unceremoniously transforming museum apartments into alternative interpretive spaces fails to account for the essential role of housing and labor at these sites *after* their transition into museums. Indeed, tenants' rent and labor functioned as everyday vehicles for public history to professionalize, legitimize, and sustain itself at historic house museums. Housing and labor are equally essential to understanding this story and to the work of public historians seeking to improve the public history workplace.

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124 Pustz, *Voices from the Back Stairs*, 143.