

LANCASTER, PA., NEW ERA—THURSDAY, APRIL 8, 1965  
AT METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

# Women Visit New York To See Finest Examples Of Americana

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A memorable climax to the nine-weeks' series of antiques lectures held for the benefit of the Rock Ford Foundation occurred Wednesday when a portion of the class of 100 students visited the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.

At a very early 6 a.m. Wednesday, 30 women from Lancaster and vicinity arrived at the car barn on Chestnut St. and boarded a waiting bus, spirits lively despite a steady drizzle of bone-chilling rain.

The eager group arrived at the museum in the heart of New York at 10:30 a. m. where they met Lester Slatoff, antiques expert from Trenton, N. J., who had conducted the series of classes at the Fulton Theater. Slatoff had agreed to take his students on a tour of the American wing so they could see first hand the finest examples of the period antiques he had discussed during his course.

The American wing of the museum was opened to the public in 1924 and consists of three floors of exhibits, spanning early America from the early 17th to early 19th centuries.

A tour of the wing is an exciting experience. Unlike the traditional set-up of most museums, the period rooms were open, with no ropes preventing the class from entering into each room to wander among the furnishings.

The group was lucky to have the lecturer to lead them, for Slatoff is no newcomer to the museum. In addition, his father was a cabinetmaker and antiques dealer and Slatoff himself has been personally involved in the complicated world of antiques for over 30 years.

The wealth of knowledge he imparts to his students is actual, colorful and brimming with sidelights. He enables his students to not only learn the design of the piece, but he imparts to them bits of background pertaining to the history of the period as well as the people by whom the antiques were used.

The tour began in a reconstructed parlor taken from the Thomas Hart house built in Ipswich, Mass., before 1675. It is the earliest of the museum's American rooms. It features an enormous fireplace of large, irregular

bricks and is furnished with 17th century oak and pine furniture, much of Massachusetts origin.

An impressive room was next on the tour. Called the "Ship's Room," it recalls the era when a ship's structure was actually used in the New England area, turned upside down to form the roof of the house. As Slatoff pointed out, ships were built strong and heavy and made durable structures for homes. In this room is a long trestle table, built about 1630, the oldest piece of Early American furniture in the museum.

Other pieces in the room include a William and Mary side chair constructed of a combination of curved relief carving on the back and stretchers and a cane seat. The chair, of about 1690 origin, was probably made for a sweetheart or wife, said Slatoff, because of the elaborate construction.

One of the doors in the room had a mortar and pestle knocker, indicating it was probably the door of an apothecary's shop. Unusual bull's eye transoms, set in diagonally, adorned the door at the top.

In the Woodbury Room, taken from the John Hewlett house built in Woodbury, L.I., about 1740-50, the fireplace features Dutch tiles depicting Biblical subjects. This is flanked by a closet, in the rear of which is a concealed panel which once led to a secret stairway. A collection of Stiegel glass is encased in the closet.

Furnishings are of the period, including an unusual pencil post Queen Anne bed "worth your life to find today," said the lecturer. The bedspread, breathtaking in its fine detail, is of quilted and embroidered linen dating to 1720.

Fireplaces played an important part in the life of early America, said Slatoff. In the Portsmouth, R. I., room, dating before 1763, the



ON THE STEPS of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City Mrs. Enrique Penades, left, and Mrs. Norman Crill, pause for a quick look at the city activity, before entering

the famous building. The two women were among a group of antiques-minded Lancaster area women who toured the American wing of the museum Wednesday.

fireplace is surrounded with its original tile and the paneled sliding doors over the fireplace, close over shelves which were used to hold dishes, keeping them warm. The lecturer wondered aloud to his class, how the early American housewife prevented her long skirts from catching fire as she leaned over to put foods into the shelves.

The Queen Anne chairs in front of the fireplace were covered with early crewel that had outlasted the chairs it originally covered.

The rooms of the American wing are furnished according to their different periods, but in the Verplanck room, all the furnishings, with few exceptions, have been reassembled from their original home.

the residence of Samuel and Judith Verplanck at 3 Wall St., New York City.

Included are a rare accordion-type card table, so named since it does fold away in accordion style. It is somewhat heavy in design, unlike the refined pieces of Philadelphia origin, the lecturer pointed out.

An unusual Queen Anne mirror displayed the Phoenix Bird, symbol of good luck typical of the era. Tiny bells on the top, when blown by the wind, were also reputed to discourage evil spirits.

The class also had an opportunity to see fine collections of glassware including a display of Bristol glass of mid-18th century and original

Tiffany pieces, so elegant and delicate.

Of special interest were two Pennsylvania rooms which featured a corner fireplace and corner cupboard, both taken from a house in Lebanon County and dating to 1761.

A dresser in the room contained a fine display of slipware pottery and illuminated texts, or fraktur. The room's chandelier was adorned with Stiegel candle holders hung from the main structure. A painted dower chest (1785) and bridal boxes were also unique objects on display.

At this point in the tour, the group adjourned for lunch in the museum's restful cafeteria, laid out around a refreshing looking pool.

Following lunch, Slatoff told his students he would now take them from the "quaint and charming" to the "sublime and sophisticated," and the tour resumed in the main exhibition gallery where the group saw a Philadelphia Chippendale "pompadour" highboy, so called because of the carved bust in its pediment. Carved details illustrated fables of La Fontaine and other subjects.

A small alcove off the central gallery features the office of Gadsby's Tavern taken from Alexandria, Va. The tavern was built in 1793 and the original English wall-paper with painted and applied Chinese motifs is reapplied to the museum's display of the room.

The office features an exceptional New England secretary (1760-1775) with drawer structure in the Bombay or kettle design.

The Assembly Room of the same tavern is also reconstructed. It was in this room that George Washington danced on his last birthday ball in 1798. He died in 1799. Interesting furnishings in the room include a Philadelphia spinet, the earliest instrument of its kind in America, said the lecturer. It bears a date-mark of 1739.

A fine Queen Anne walnut sofa is also featured, in a place of honor under the musicians' balcony. "It is one of the most satisfying pieces of Queen Anne furniture you'd ever hope to find," said Slatoff. It was originally made for James Logan in Philadelphia in 1740.

The lecturer also showed his students one of the finest Chippendale pie crust tables in the museum, dating from 1750. "It took a craftsman three to four days to carve into the original piece of wood to achieve the crust design," said Slatoff.

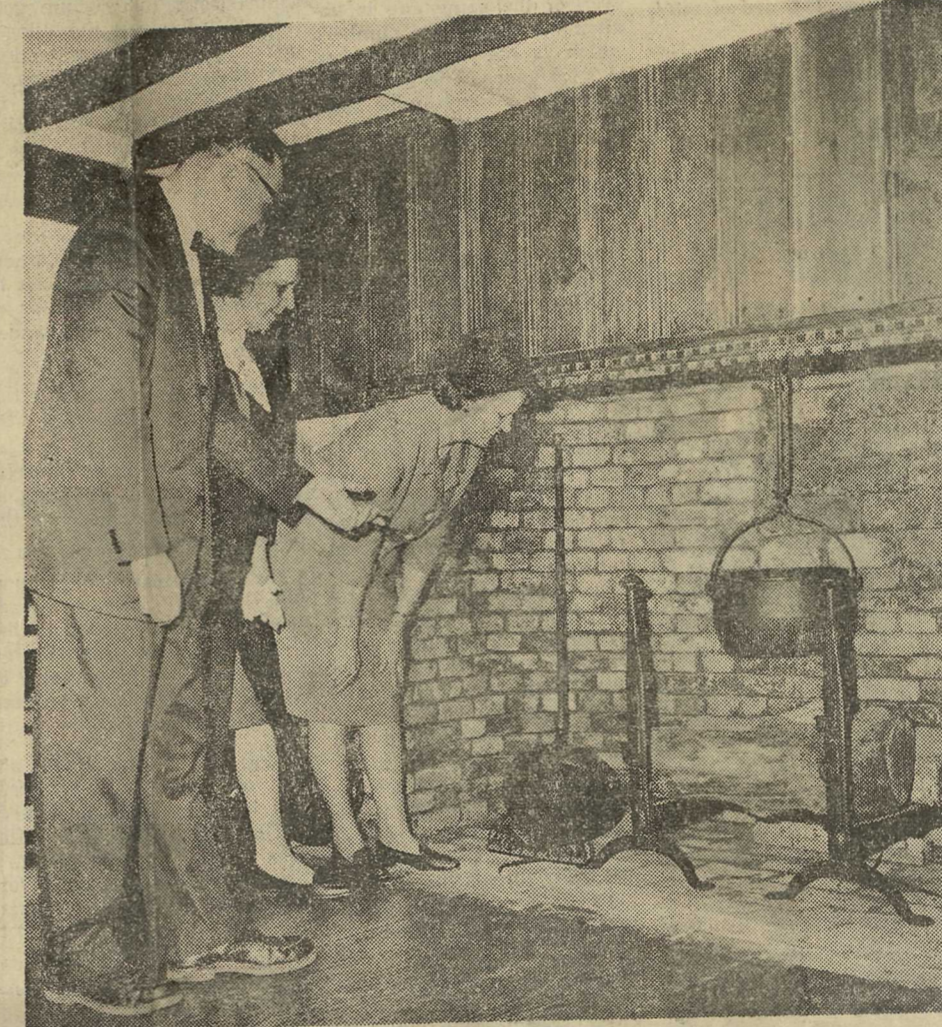
One of the most interesting of rooms was the all Early American Marmion room, taken from the Virginia plantation home of the Fitzhugh family, located 25 miles from Mt. Vernon.

The room was transplanted in its entirety. The fireplace



EARLIEST EXAMPLES of Colonial craftsmanship are on display in the rooms of the American Wing. Mrs. Robert Reynolds, left, and Mrs. James Hazeltine, right, study the de-

tail of a mid-17th century New England chest with unusual sunflower pattern. The chest sits directly under leaded diamond pane windows, made about 1680.



CLOSE LOOK at the enormous fireplace which is the focal point in the earliest of the Metropolitan Museum's American rooms, is taken by Mrs. Gordon Otis, center, and Mrs. John

Woodward, right. Antiques expert, Lester Slatoff, left, who led the tour points out the fireplace hardware of Massachusetts origin, dating before 1675.

opening is lined with its original Sienna marble and above hangs the gilt-gesso looking glass of rococo design that had originally hung in the room. The Marmion room dates from about 1750-75.

Adjoining the large gallery is a dining room removed from a house at 915 Pratt St., Baltimore, built just before the War of 1812. Furniture made in and about Baltimore is exhibited including a fine collection of Hepplewhite chairs.

A unique and elaborate Bal-

timore sideboard with veneers and inlaid plates of Sheffield silver and ivory, is seen in an adjoining room.

Another room is the one taken from a "derelict" house in Petersburg, Virginia, built about 1800, with walls covered with replicas of the original gold patterned silk. The room features fine examples of Duncan Phyfe, Sheraton and Hepplewhite furnishings, which the group had studied in the lecture series.

After completing the tour of the American Wing, Slat-

off took the group on a hurried trip through the European wing, comparing the tastes in decor.

It was a tired but gratified group that trooped into the bus for the return trip to Lancaster at 3:30 p.m.

"Antiques" was the topic for discussion during the entire journey home. Comments of "wonderful," "marvelous" and other appreciative thoughts on the trip were expressed. It was unanimously agreed that a number of return visits were in order.