



DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

OAHP AND TQM

Recently the staff of the Office of Architectural History and Historic Preservation completed two and one half days of Total Quality Management training. Our session was designed to develop a specific Strategic Plan to achieve OAHP mission goals. OAHP mission goals are seen as a subset of the goals of the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Finance and Administration as well as those of the Facilities Services Group.

The mission of OAHP is the creation of a better understanding of the heritage of Smithsonian buildings through historic preservation planning and practice for the Institution; research on and dissemination of the architectural history of Smithsonian Buildings; and maintenance

and preservation of the OAHP "Castle" Collection.

OAHP goals which we determined would help us to achieve this mission are:

- To be the primary coordinator for the architectural history of and the center for decisions on the historic buildings and the OAHP "Castle" Collection.
- To be integral to the achievement of the goals of Facilities Services Group, Finance and Administration and the Smithsonian.
- To enhance appreciation of the buildings and the furnishings as part of the entire Smithsonian collections.
- To be a model in the non-profit sector on how to integrate needs for both preservation and growth.
- To function as a team in which each member is responsible for the whole, in order to create a productive working environment which will make OAHP a good partner to other Facilities Services Offices.

Each goal we set was broken down into one, two or three objectives. We developed multiple strategies for the realization of these objectives. In order to monitor

these strategies, we have assigned a lead person both to oversee the strategy and to report to the group regularly. Leaders were chosen not necessarily on the basis of their expertise, but rather to involve the entire staff in team building.

Our process has just begun, but because of this training, we believe that we have a better understanding of where we are going and how we are going to get there. With this very straight-forward understanding of the process of "continual improvement", we have entered the world of "Total Quality Management".

C.F.

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A NEW NAME FOR A COLLECTION AND ITS KEEPER

The Smithsonian Furnishings Collection, established in 1964 to furnish the Institution's administrative offices in the "Castle," consists of over 3000 objects. Included in the collection are nineteenth century furnishings such as sofas, desks, chairs, chandeliers, lamps, prints, paintings and photographs meant to harmonize with the period of the building's early years. The collection, however, also includes a wide range of objects which directly relate to the Smithsonian, from architectural details (removed from SI buildings during renovations) to the Ceremonial Mace and the Badge of Office.

In order to reflect more accurately its scope and function as well as emphasize its connection to the Office of Architectural History and Historic Preservation, the Smithsonian Furnishings Collection will be renamed the *OAHF "Castle" Collection* effective July 1, 1991.

The Registrar of the SIFC, Rick Stamm, will henceforth be known as Keeper, OAHF "Castle" Collection. Peter Muldoon will continue as Restoration Specialist for the OAHF "Castle" Collection.

R.S.



James Smithson Plaque, NPG, attributed to A. Canova, ca.1817

IN SEARCH OF LULU SMITHSON

A rash of inquiries concerning the whereabouts of a Miss Lulu Smithson has caused the Office of Architectural History and Historic Preservation to pause and reflect on the esoteric phone calls we have received over the past years.

Despite OAHF's small staff and low profile, people from all parts of the country have managed to locate us. Naturally, the Office receives many calls from students involved in history, art or architecture projects, as well as from concerned citizens requesting help in preserving their local monuments and buildings. Many of the calls, while exceeding our archival capacity, have not yet stymied this seasoned staff.

As many as three callers recently requested information on how to reach Lulu Smithson, whom they

described as a "descendant of James Smithson." Smithson, who died childless, never visited this country. He nonetheless bequeathed a large sum of money to the United States government to found in Washington an institution bearing his name. This gift was conditional; the Smithsonian would never have been the recipient of the bequest if Smithson's nephew, and only heir, had heirs of his own. It is interesting to note that the name Smithson, like Smith or Jones, is a fairly common name: 23 Smithsons are listed in the Washington area phone books alone.

An architectural firm in Houston, Texas, admiring the Castle building, called looking for a contact number for the building's architect, James Renwick, Jr. Renwick, who built the Smithsonian's first building between 1847-1855, died in 1895. Ever-resourceful Historic Preservation specialist Amy Ballard recommended that they call new age guru Shirley MacLaine.

One father who contacted us was looking for the "famous Tulip Staircase at the Smithsonian" mentioned in his daughter's favorite Nancy Drew mystery. Thinking that it really existed at the Smithsonian, he wished to photograph it for his child. Dr. Cynthia Field, searching in vain for this fictitious staircase, suggested instead that he visit the Octagon House, so that he could take his daughter a picture of a real staircase

purported to be haunted by a ghost.

Recently a homeowner from Frederick, Maryland, while wallpapering his living room, discovered an inverted cross laid into the wall level with the plastering. Envisioning a demonic infestation of his house, he called to inquire if the OAHP staff were familiar with such configurations for domestic architecture from the early 1820s. We are still concocting our response. Any suggestions are welcome.

H.E.

HISTORIC BELL HOUSE

An article in a recent issue of the National Trust's Preservation News titled "Making Bell House Sound," caught the attention of OAHP's Peter Muldoon. The article described the meticulous restoration of a Georgetown residence which just happened to have a Smithsonian connection. As a result of Peter's enthusiastic review of the article, the entire OAHP staff visited this historic property.

Located at the corner of 35th Street and Volta Place, N.W., Bell House, erected in 1853, was purchased in 1881 by then Smithsonian Regent Alexander Graham Bell for his father. Bell maintained a laboratory in the carriage house in which he conducted experiments directed toward advances for the hearing im-

paired. In 1988 Bell House was acquired by the Denver-based telecommunications company US WEST as a Washington base for corporate Chairman Jack MacAllister.



The Bell House, erected in 1853

Under the guidance of Denver interior designer Bette Anderson, US WEST restored and furnished the house. Anderson, who had never been involved in the restoration of a period house, did meticulous research at Philadelphia's Athenaeum, home of the Victorian Society of America, the University of Virginia and other institutions here and in England. She also discussed the project with local historian William Seale, author of numerous books on Victorian style.

Upon entering the house, it was immediately evident to OAHP that Anderson's research resulted in a model restoration which took into ac-

count the needs of the 20th century. The care, skill and devotion of Anderson and her restoration team to this project were admirable from the beautiful faux Carrara marble treatment of baseboards by famed local craftsman Malcolm Robson, to the sensitive installation of smoke detection sensors in the historic rooms. The interior restoration provided a worthy setting for the many pieces of 19th century furniture Anderson collected to create Bell House's Victorian ambience.

One of the most challenging tasks for an architect is the design of additions to historic structures. The addition should not be identical to the original structure but should complement the original design. OAHP was impressed with the treatment of a 3,000 square foot addition by the previous owner. The interior of the addition was transformed into a kitchen with state-of-the-art equipment cleverly designed in a way which echoed the Victorian details of the house.

Although Bell House is not open to the public on a daily basis, you may telephone its staff at 202-333-6701 should you desire further information.

A.B.

FLOOD DAMAGES OAHP COLLECTION PIECES

On Friday evening, May 17, water was sighted pouring out of a storage room in the basement of the Castle's south tower. The water came from a broken water main located in the Enid Haupt garden and flowed into the room through a window well bringing with it rich brown mud from the garden. The room and one adjacent to it are used as temporary storage for furniture, prints and paintings belonging to the OAHP Castle Collection.

Spending most of the night at the site, the OPLANTS team, with Office of Facilities Services Director, Richard Siegle and ODC director Bob Dillman in attendance, pumped the three feet of accumulated muddy water out of the rooms. The following day, a second team lead by A.C. Clark, Warehousing Foreman SISC, assisted the OAHP staff in removing the damaged furniture to a storage room at 1111 North Capitol Street where the pieces will be monitored for further damage. Clean up of the rooms by the staff of the South Group, Building Manager's Office, continues and it is hoped that the rooms will be safe for future occupancy by collection pieces.

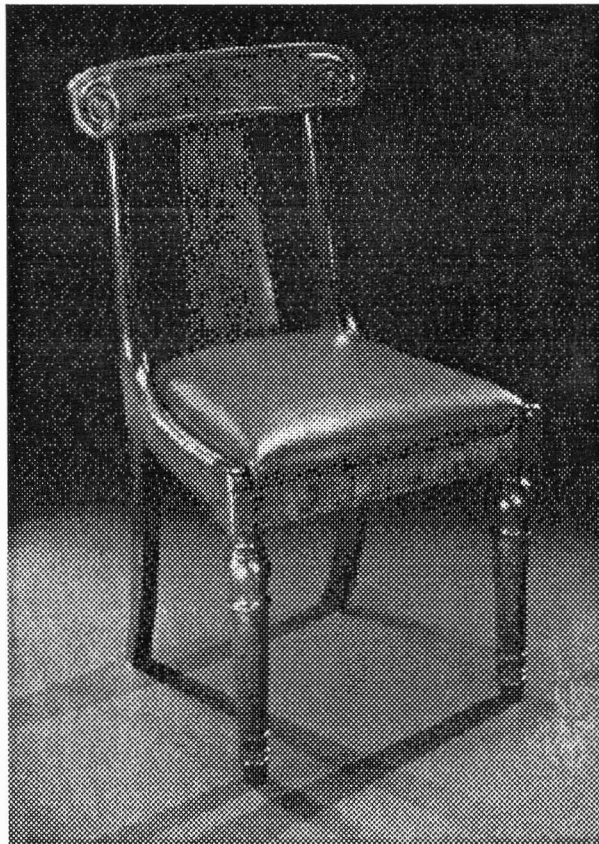
OAHP wishes to thank all the people involved in this effort. It is due to the quick

response by the OPLANTS teams that damage was kept to a minimum, not only to the collection pieces, but also to the building itself.

R.S.

OAHP CASTLE COLLECTION

Many of the period pieces of furniture, glass, porcelain and lighting devices comprising the OAHP "Castle" Collection are unique in design or style, making the collection increasingly important to



Boston Side Chair, photo by Rick Vargas, OPPS # 91.1019.

scholars, dealers and antique buffs alike. As most of the collection is usually behind closed doors in the offices of the Castle, and very few pieces

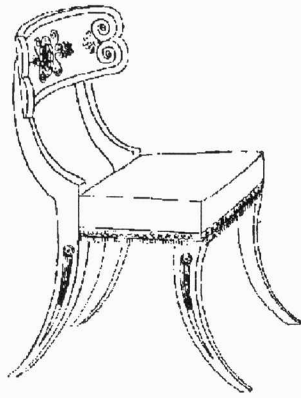
have descriptive labels describing them, most staffers are unaware of the special qualities of the objects in the Castle Collection. This column will profile a collection piece in an attempt to familiarize readers with the collection.

BOSTON SIDE CHAIR

- ca. 1830 - 1840
- Structure: Primary wood is mahogany with maple as a secondary wood on the front seat rail only.
- Dimensions: H.33 1/2" X w.18" X D.19 1/4".

The most popular form of side chair of the Classical style in the United States was a variation of the Klismos chair, a type dating from fifth century BC Greece. The most notable design feature of this form is the unifying continuous line which flows from the stiles to the seat rails to the inwardly

curved legs or "sabre legs". These chairs were illustrated on painted vases recovered at Pompeii and Herculaneum. The Klismos chair was re-in-



Klimos Chair

troduced by the French designers Charles Percier and Pierre Fontaine after the French Revolution, when the symbols of Greek democracy suited the political climate. This chair differs from the classical Klismos form in several ways. The two back legs are sabre shaped, while the front legs are of the Roman turned type such as those seen in *Ackermann's Repository of Fashionable Furniture*, 1809-1826. This chair is also unusual in its treatment of the back splat and the crest rail. The Klismos chair most commonly had a horizontal stay-rail, while this chair has a very distinctive obelisk-shaped vertical splat. Following the classical precedent illustrated in Thomas Hope's *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration*, 1807, the crest rail is mounted on top of the stiles instead of between them.

The chair, made en-suite with a drop leaf table also in the OAHF "Castle" Collection, was purchased for the collection in 1988 for use in

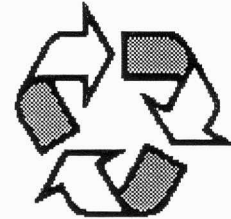
the Secretary's Meeting Room on the second floor of the Smithsonian Building. In the May issue of "The Magazine Antiques" noted furniture historian, Page Talbott, featured the chair in an article titled "Seating Furniture in Boston, 1810-1835." The article was illustrated by a color photograph of the chair taken by OPPS' Rick Vargas (though, to our dismay, Mr. Vargas was not given credit by the magazine as per our wishes.) The chair has also attracted the attention of a major American furniture manufacturer which is licensed by the Smithsonian to produce and sell reproductions of selected Smithsonian furniture. The Century Furniture Company of Hickory, North Carolina reproduced the chair as part of its "Smithsonian Collection" and it is sold in furniture showrooms around the country. Proceeds from the sale of this and other pieces from the collection go toward future acquisitions for the collection.

R.S.

RECYCLING EFFORTS AT OFS AND OAHF

The Office of Architectural History and Historic Preservation and the Office of Facility Services have begun recycling their white paper. The initiative was modelled after the Smithsonian Institution Archives' program. Leslie Sagle, an archives technician, encouraged the SIA staff to set aside their white

paper starting back in August of 1990. Concerned with the amount of waste paper being generated in the Archives, she decided to collect the paper and take it to the recycling receptacles in the Natural History Building.



Boxes scattered around the offices are carried over to the Natural History Building loading docks. NMNH has the facilities to recycle not only white paper, but colored paper, newspaper, and cardboard as well. Presently, however, due to limits on the scale of operations, OAHF and OFS are collecting white paper and some newspaper only. The Archives has just recently started collecting colored paper. These offices are working to help institute a building-wide program.

H.E.

CONTACTS IN OAHF

- » Cynthia R. Field, Director, OAHF.....357-2064
- » Amy Ballard, Historic Preservation Specialist357-2571
- » Rick Stamm, Keeper, OAHF "Castle" Collection357-4986
- » Peter Muldoon, Restoration Specialist, OAHF "Castle" Collection357- 1409
- » Heather Ewing, Architectural Historian357-2064