



LINDEN PLACE

MANSION SCULPTURE GARDENS BALLROOM



As Linden Place re-examines its history as part of our preparation for the installation of a Rhode Island Slave History Medallion we will be sharing the stories we have uncovered about the house, its inhabitants, and most importantly the enslaved and free black people connected with Linden Place and our community. Here is our first installment. Some stories are straight forward and anecdotal, and some are nuanced and painful. As part of the medallion project, one goal is to create a safe space at Linden Place to discuss a difficult topic. We welcome your comments and insights as they will help us in our journey to that goal.

The Rhode Island Slave History Medallion

At our Annual Meeting last fall, Linden Place announced our participation in the Rhode Island Slave History Medallion Project (RISHM). As explained by Charles Roberts during that meeting, the effort is a statewide public awareness program committed to marking the historic sites connected to the history of slavery in Rhode Island. Mr. Roberts, the Executive Director and Founder of RISHM, shared that he grew up in a household that instilled in him that to know who you are, you have to know where you have been to know where you are going. So, with like-minded volunteers they formed a committee in 2017 to begin this work. The plan is that over the next few years to place at least one medallion in each of the 25 Rhode Island cities and towns historically associated with enslavement. The design of the medallion itself showcases the artistic achievement of an enslaved stone cutter, Pompe Stevens. He took ownership of his work by signing his name to the stone he carved for his brother Cuffee Gibbs. The winged angel motif was popular at that time, and today lends itself to RISHM's message to "help us create a tapestry of angels across Rhode Island". To further enhance the message of the medallion, the use of QR code technology imprinted on the medallion will allow a visitor to links the historic information on a website to their phones. Our very first introductory meeting with Mr. Roberts to explore this project and its importance took place at Linden Place.

Linden Place will share this medallion honor with places such as Bowens Wharf in Newport, Smith's Castle in North Kingstown, Patriot's Park in Portsmouth and the East Ferry Wharf in Jamestown. Information on those locations can be found at www.rihsm.org. An important part of this project is accurately telling the stories of slave-related history, the unvarnished hidden truth.

Almost 20 years ago, a letter to the editor of the Providence Journal insisted that Linden Place be torn down because of its connection to the "abomination of slavery". Our Executive Director at the time, James Burke Connell, wrote a preservation response, which resonates today.

"Linden Place is the only DeWolf "great house" extant and has therefore, by default, become a catalyst for discussing slavery. This is acceptable if the conversation is factually correct, contextually accurate, and mindful of slavery's place in Linden Place's incredibly rich two centuries long history."

Keeping Mr. Connell's words in mind, from time to time in our Newsletters, and on our website and Facebook page, we will be sharing the stories we have uncovered about the house, its inhabitants, and most importantly the enslaved and

free black people connected with Linden Place and our community. Some stories are straight forward and anecdotal, but some are very nuanced and painful. As part of the medallion project, one goal is to create a safe space at Linden Place to discuss a difficult topic. Your participation and input will help us in that goal.

"The installation Ceremony of a Medallion at Linden Place is planned for Juneteenth, the annual holiday observing the end of slavery in the U.S. and marks the day (June 19, 1865) when news of emancipation reached people in the deepest parts of the former Confederacy," said RISHM's Executive Director Charles Roberts. "I believe that this commemoration, held on the grounds of the home of the slave-trading DeWolf family will serve to mark that moment in time when a healing took place at Linden Place, the Historic House Museum, celebrating it as part of that Beloved Community spoken about by Reverend Dr Martin Luther King Jr".

Follow us as we explore the nuances of our history – the next installment of our story will be about Daniel Tanner, the barber of Linden Place, and a "Knight of the Razor".



RISHM, Bowen's Wharf, Newport



RISHM, Patriots Park, Portsmouth



RISHM, Smith's Castle