



THE SCHUYLER HOUSE OF 1777

A GUIDE TO THE FURNISHINGS

*"I care not what others may do;
As for me and my house, we will
serve our country"*

Philip Schuyler, 1775

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The purpose of this guide is to point out some of the furnishings in the Schuyler House and what is known about them. We do not know exactly what each room in the house looked like, but we have an idea of some of the items in the house and how the homes of that time were furnished. We also rely on the architecture and archaeological material that has been found around the grounds and in the house. The furnishings are typical period pieces except for only a very few original Schuyler family objects.

The beautiful country home of General Philip Schuyler, considered to be one of the finest on the east coast, was deliberately burned by the British in 1777. When British General Burgoyne offered his apologies to General Schuyler for the destruction, he replied that "I would have done the same."

General Schuyler was fortunate that one of his lumber mills had not been burned by the British. The house you see today was constructed in 29 days in November 1777. Window glass, nails as well as the large lock on the front door, were salvaged in the ruins to be used in the new construction. Glass and nails (which were made by hand) were not easy to get, especially during a war.

MAIN HALL

As you enter the main hall of the Schuyler House, you are sure to notice the wallpaper and the floor covering. The wallpaper has been reproduced from original paper dating from 1795 found on the walls of this room during restoration in the early 1960's. The hall dates from 1795

The floor covering is reed matting that has been painted over and over again to give the look you see today. It is a forerunner of today's linoleum.

The grandfather clock is on loan from The Museum of The City of New York and dates from 1785. It is believed that the clock was made in New York City. There is an inscription inside the clock which reads "I Serve thee with all my might. I toll the hours by day and night. Do you example take by me, and serve thy God as I serve thee."

The hall furniture consists of Windsor chairs and bench. The mirror above the bench dates from the 1770's and uses a mythical phoenix as decoration. The two framed prints in the hall are engravings from Gen. Burgoyne's book "The State of the Expedition from Canada", London, 1780 and are maps showing British positions during the Battles of Saratoga.

THE PARLOR

Entering the Parlor you are sure to see the painting of General Schuyler over the fireplace which is a copy taken from a miniature by John Trumbull. The 18th Century painting over the

desk is of an unknown young Schuyler boy and was given by the Chambers Estate, Philadelphia, Pa in 1980, who are descendants of the Schuyler family. The desk dates from 1750 and was made of Cherry in Connecticut. It came from Gracie Mansion, the residence of the Mayor of New York City. On the desk is a small dictionary from 1798, a quill pen and a clay pipe. The brass candlesticks on the desk are Queen Anne period, early 1740's.

The 58 key Cherry inlaid Hepplewhite piano was made in Rutland, Vermont in 1752. It remained with the Sexton family of Fortsville, Vermont until it was purchased for this room in 1969. The Schuyler's were fond of music. A painting exists at the Schuyler Mansion in Albany, NY showing Schuylers around a piano much like this one in the hall, which was used as a family room at the time.

The fifes on the piano are examples of British and American instruments of the period. The British is silver plated brass and was found on a farm just north of the Battlefield. The American fife is iron and was found on Van Schaick island in the Hudson River south of the Battlefield. From an old inventory we know the General had a book in his library entitled "German Flute". Fife's like the ones on exhibit, were all called "German", because the first of this type was made in Germany. The silver basket is coin silver. It was common to sometimes use silver coins to make fine silver.

The painting above the piano is a 1935 copy of "Wheat Fields" by Jacob Rysdael, a Dutch artist of the Colonial period. The looking glasses on either side of the painting have gilded plaster trim. It is said they came from the Chase House, Annapolis, Maryland and are on loan from the Metropolitan Museum, New York.

The wrought iron candlestand, circa 1770's, came from the Garbisch Estate in Maryland and was purchased for this room.

The silver plated candlesticks are early examples of Sheffield plated copper and date from 1770-1780.

The English camelback sofa and Hepplewhite wing chair are typical of the furniture of the period. Next to the chair is a small Dutch 1759 edition of the New Testament and is inscribed "Cathariena Ten Broeck Haar Psalm Book Febuary de 1772" one of the early Dutch families in this area. The glasses date from the 1770's.

The west wall or the wall to your right as you enter the parlor is papered in the original wallpaper which is believed to date from 1830. The other three walls are papered with reproduction wallpaper.

The Hepplewhite card table is set up for playing cards. Cards were a popular form of entertainment in the Colonial period. The table is Hepplewhite. The cards are reproductions. The open back chairs English mahogany and date from 1780.

FATHER'S OFFICE

At the end of the hall is "Father's Office". So-called because it was hand written on an old floor plan. It is here that General Schuyler administered his various affairs. As a land owner he was very interested in surveying. This is reflected in the unusual brass and mahogany surveying instrument on the floor near the bookcase and is similar to one used by George Washington. It was made by Francis Watkins, a clock maker in London in 1770. The handle and shaft are one solid piece hollowed out to hold metal works and a chain drive. The brass dial is calibrated in yards, poles, furlongs and miles. The bundle of metal objects near the surveying wheel is a 100' surveyor's chain with iron handles. The books in the bookcase reflect Schuyler's interest in religion and history. Among the books is a Wilbur family bible dating from 1791. They were one of the early families in this area. Four volumes on the history of France, and various religious books in Greek, Latin, Dutch, German, and English. One of the Dutch hymnals contained hymns for almost any purpose from rain, good crops to victory in battle.

The pewter basin on the small Hepplewhite shaving stand near the door dates from 1760. The mirror above the table is Chippendale.

The silver plated spurs on the bookcase were worn by Schuyler's aide de camp, Lieutenant Francis Winney. A powder horn, shot pouch, small lantern, a Chinese tea cup, said to have had tea from the Boston tea party in it, which was given to General Schuyler as a souvenir and telescope of the period are also on the bookcase.

The barometer thermometer is Sheraton style and has inlaid Conch shell design. It is signed by its maker F. Bartotal and dates from 1770 and was made in either Boston or New York City. The small map of America is from 1746. The engraving on the wall near the desk is of Lady Harriet Ackland and her staff rowing down the Hudson on the evening of October 7, 1777 to visit her wounded husband, Major John Ackland, in the American Hospital. The English engraving dates from 1784 and has one of the earliest illustrations of the new American flag. The large framed map of the Province of New York, January 1, 1779 is a reproduction. The other small framed map is from Burgoyne's book of 1780. General Schuyler used such maps to show many of his distinguished visitors such as George Washington in 1782 and others, the battle plans of Burgoyne.

On the desk is a writing box that can be closed and carried from

place to place. Reproductions of an invoice in Schuyler's hand and a newspaper from the period are also on the desk. The scales date from the 1770's as does the pottery ink well and sander. The Native American arrowheads, including a Sturgeon knife, were found along the banks of the Hudson River behind the house and represent a variety of types ranging from the Brewerton, Otter Creek (an area stretching from New York and Vermont to Quebec, Canada) and Snook Kill (a small river flowing into the Hudson River in New York State) sites and ranging in age (done with carbon dating from charcoal found at these sites) from 3000 to 1350 BC. The arrowheads were part of the furnishings of the Schuyler House before it became Federal property. The Hudson River was as important to Native American culture and trade as it became to the Colonists. Sturgeon, by the way, was a favorite fish found in the Hudson and enjoyed by Native Americans, the Schuylers and was a favorite of President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

The ivory topped oak cane and remaining furniture also date from the 1770's. The Venetian blind in the office and the two in the hall are also 18th century. People are often surprised to learn that the blinds go back that far, but they were very popular and practical.

THE DINING ROOM

The dining room is furnished in period pieces on loan from The Metropolitan Museum of Art and The Museum of the City of New York. On the dinning table are a pair of Sheffield silver plate on copper candlesticks and a large Chinese export porcelain punch bowl. The gate leg table with a coffee urn and Lowestoft tea cups is an original Schuyler piece. The oval tray on the wall above the table is hand painted, English and dates to 1800. The inlaid sideboard is from the old Dutch Gansevoort family. There is a town named for them not far to the north. On the sideboard is a pair of Sheraton mahogany knife boxes with inlaid wood Conch shell design circa 1780. In one of them are five silver spoons made in Hartford, Connecticut in 1804. The chairs are mahogany Hepplewhite and are upholstered with black horsehair.

The walls are papered with reproduction wallpaper from the original found in the parlor during restoration. We know that this paper was printed in England and was printed in sheets, rather than rolls. A tax stamp was found on the back of one of the sheets indicating it had been made prior to the repeal of the Tax Laws in England in 1832. It is thought that the paper dates between 1795-1805.

The portrait of Catherine Schuyler above the mantel is a copy, given by Harold Walenta, of an original by Thomas McAlwoth (circa 1762-67) owned by the New York Historical Society. The two galipots are 18th Century French and have small Lion finials. While these are decorative, galipots were used for jams, jelly's, grease or ointments in Colonial times.

The Butler's Tray near the window dates from the mid 1770's. The crystal wine glasses and decanters are all 18th century. The marble topped Butler's Table can be opened and contains a small desk. The teapot on it is black basaltware and the bread tray is painted tin. Above this table is a "Scripture" painting. During the 1770's and on into the 19th Century, artists would paint a number of religious scenes but leave the faces blank. Traveling from town to town, the painter would sell his painting to a family and then paint the faces of the family on the prepared painting. This particular painting depicts Christ preaching His first Lesson at the Temple, but the faces are not Schuyler family.

THE SECOND FLOOR HALL

On arriving on the second floor, there is a small hall that adjoins the three rooms and has a staircase that leads to the attic, which is not open to visitors. The sea chest is 18th century and linen press is from the Schuyler family. In the linen press are examples of linen sheets. It is important to note that General Schuyler grew flax and built the first linen mill in America in 1767.

THE MIDDLE BEDROOM

The small "Middle Bed Room" is furnished as it would have been for children. The Schuylers had fifteen children but seven of them died in infancy.

As you look through the doorway, to the left is a trundle bed. This was a space saving way of having two beds in the place of one. The beds have rope under the mattress. The object on the bed is a "Bed key". Each night you could tighten the rope for a firm bed or loosen it. The terms "sleep tight" and "all keyed up" are related to the use of the bed key.

The wash stand and English pewter wash bowl are typical of the period. The highchair is also 18th Century. The small room next to this room is a store room. The hat boxes, folding cot, small chests, baskets and toy cradle are all period pieces. The small doll in the cradle is an "apple doll"; the head is an apple, the body is made of leather and the uniform is like George Washington's.

The spinning wheels and other items are stored as they would have been in Schuyler's time. The wooden clock reel with four arms was used for winding skeins of thread. A popping sound was made when a skein was complete and this device served as the inspiration for the children's rhyme "Pop goes the weasel".

THE CLOSET

Going to the North Bedroom, you pass one of the two closets on this floor. In the closet are extra pillows, bedding, andirons and a number of wooden pegs where clothing would have been hung.

THE NORTH BEDROOM

As you look in the North Bedroom, to your immediate left is a large blanket chest. On the top is the oldest European item in the house. It is the Lowber-Strover family bible and was printed in London in 1587 and is dedicated to Queen Elizabeth I. The Lowber-Strover families lived in the Schuyler House from the time it was sold by the Schuyler's in 1837 until it was donated to the National Park Service on May 2, 1950.

The chest between the two windows is a Schuyler piece. On it is a Sheraton shaving mirror and a small magnifying glass. The black chair is upholstered in horsehair and is one of the chairs made for a delegate to Independence Hall and the Continental Congress in 1776 by Thomas Affleck of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. On the candle stand and table is a thimble that belonged to General Schuyler's mother.

Over the mantle is a sampler sewed by Mary Hudson aged 11, in 1794. It reads "When spring advances fresh and gay, and lambkins leave their dams to play, the thrush and blackbird both unite to charm the ear and please the sight." On either side of the sampler are two blue and white Delft Dutch gallipots on loan from Cooper Union, New York. There is a small tin and wood foot warmer near the fireplace. Foot warmers came in many forms and there are a number in this house. It was said that you always took a foot warmer to church in the winter because the sermons were so long your feet would freeze.

The bed dates to the time of the Burgoyne campaign. The bed covers, trim and drapes are reproductions of period design. The gold colored gown, shoes and cotton hose all belonged to Catherine Schuyler. The hose bear the initials "CS" and a number. Hose were made to order in lots of 25 pair and each pair had its own number. The gown was remade by her daughter Catherine Malcolm for a reception for the Marquis de Lafayette in 1824.

The mahogany washstand holds a Chinese export porcelain wash basin. The small table has a crystal wine glass and a small early Dutch bible on it.

The floor is covered with grass matting and the rug is a hand woven reproduction of a "Venetian" style rug in the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

THE SOUTH BEDROOM

Going to the South Bedroom you find twin beds. The one nearest the door is an original piece and the other is a reproduction. Near the far bed is a black arrow back chair made in nearby Washington County, NY in the 1770's. On the mantel are a pair of

brass candlesticks made in Williamsburg, Virginia and a Willard clock made in the 1800's in Boston. The large brass device next to the fireplace is a bed warmer that would be filled with hot coals and placed in a bed to warm it up on cold nights. A pair of foot warmers of similar design are also near the fireplace.

To the right of the fireplace is another small closet with shelves and wooden pegs for clothes.

The table next to the Windsor chair has a small hymnal on it. On the dressing table is a small painted pin box, a goffering iron used to press the ruffled shirts and dresses of the day. A few small medicine bottles adorn the table. It was common to have bitters and other medicines nearby. The other objects in this room include a small "Courting Mirror" and a fine chest of drawers. Mirrors were expensive in the 18th century. A mirror like this one would have been given by a man to a woman while they were courting before marriage.

The floor is covered with grass matting and, like the North Bedroom, another handwoven reproduction rug.

THE KITCHEN

The kitchen was added in 1778. The original kitchen was in the basement. Food would be passed up into a closet in the dinning room for serving. This was clumsy and the heat and smoke would have been bothersome to servants and family. The new kitchen was built to be spacious. The rooms above the kitchen were probably sleeping quarters for some of the Schuyler slaves. In addition to the large fireplace, there are deep reproduction ovens outside for baking bread. Above the restored fireplace are a number of items used in a colonial kitchen including an unusual brass and metal meat scale made by Clarenback & Kneip in England in the 1770's. The andirons are from the Schuyler family and one of the large cranes for holding pots in the fire was found on the grounds and is said to have come from the house the British burned.

The corner cupboard was made in the mid 1700's. The two large pewter plates are English. One was made in Manchester. The other by Birch & Villers, London 1775-78. The brown and black "slipware" pottery is of local origin and somewhat unique. One of the kitchen table is set for a meal with both original and reproduction plates, cups, forks, knives candlesticks as well as candle shears used to trim the wick to prevent candles from dripping.

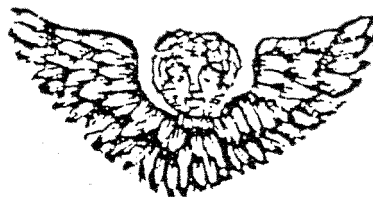
On the large table in front of the fireplace are a number of kitchen items. These are all period pieces and a few should be noted. A large wooden bowl and milk sieve have a carved "J.S. 1710" and belonged to Johanas Schuyler in 1710. Johanas Schuyler was Philip Schuyler's grandfather. The Salamander or waffle iron

with the carved design is very similar to one used by Thomas Jefferson's cook Julian.

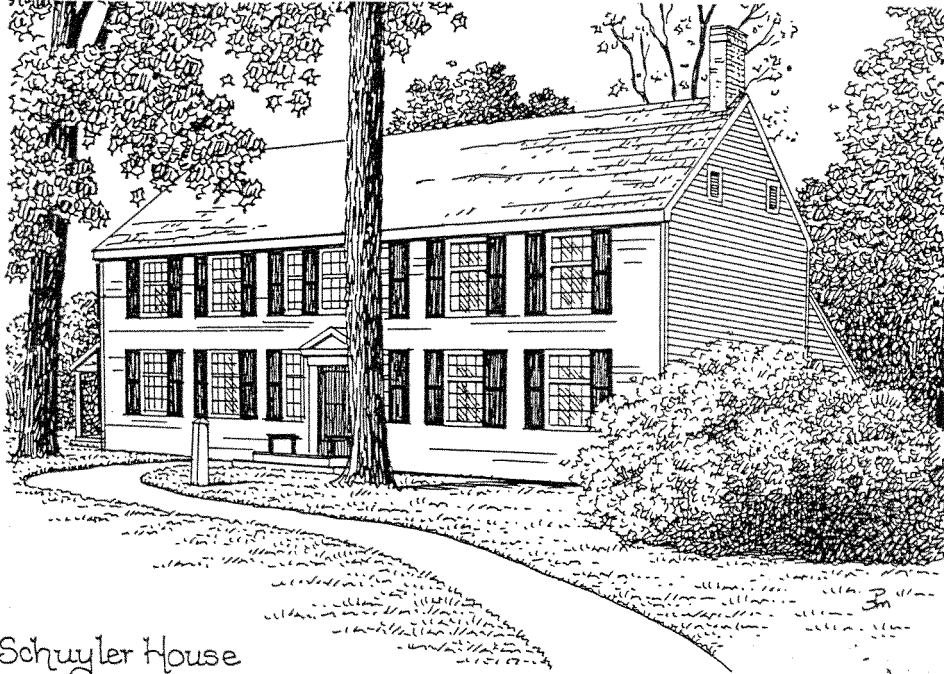
Here in the kitchen, in addition to food preparation, candles were formed in molds or dipped, wool and flax were processed and spun. In one corner are flax hetchels used to break up the flax fibers. A flax winder as well as a spinning wheel would be usually in use. Herbs would be grown in the gardens and hung in the kitchen for drying and for use. There is also a bee keep, which would be outside. Honey was an important sweetener in those days.

On the west wall is a gray cupboard which contains both original and reproduction tin cups, plates, forks and knives. On top of the cupboard are candle molds, a candle box and an assortment of knives and cleavers. Next to the cupboard is a cheese mold and a large reproduction perforated tin lantern. Perforated lanterns like this came in all sizes and with various decorative designs. Behind the kitchen is a restored privy or outhouse and a very large iron pot used for dying cloth.

The National Park Service and the Old Saratoga Historical Association maintain this house under a cooperative agreement and are always happy to have new suggestions and comments.

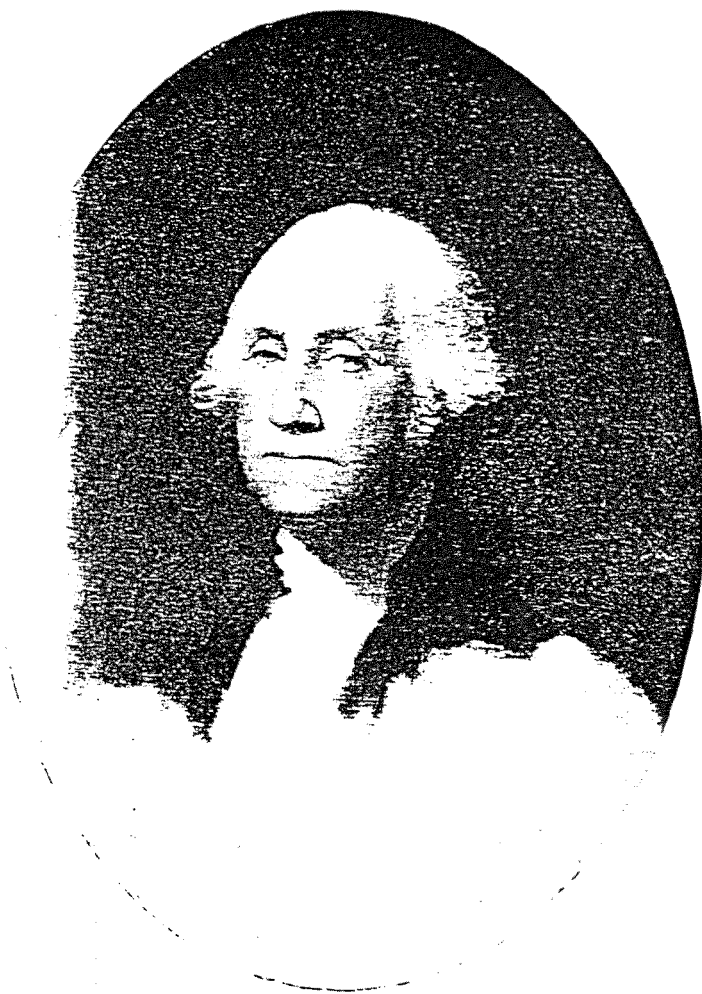


From a Dutch Hymnal, 1759



Schuyler House

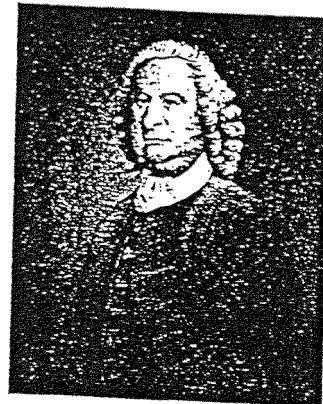
SCHUYLERS GUESTS AND VISITORS



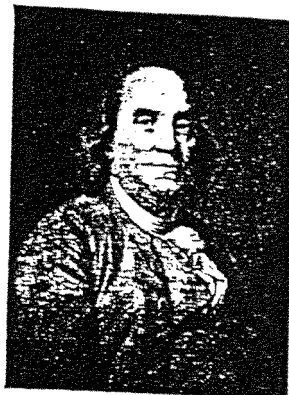
Washington



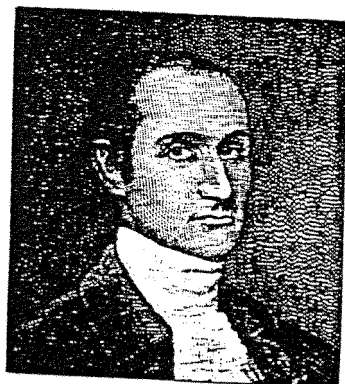
Charles Carroll of Carrollton



Philip Livingston



Benjamin Franklin



John Jay



Baron Steuben



Mrs. Philip Schuyler



General Burgoyne



Baroness Riedesel



Lady Harriet Ackland



Lafayette



Count de Rochambeau



Marquis de Chastellux



Alexander Hamilton



Mrs. Alexander Hamilton
(Elizabeth Schuyler)