

# SAGA OF HISTORIC SAPPINGTON HOUSE

## Yesterday ~ an Elegant Frontier Home

The story begins with John Sappington who served in the American Revolutionary War as General George Washington's bodyguard at Valley Forge in 1778. While on furlough in Maryland, he married Jemima Fowler soon moving to what is now West Virginia. Later in Kentucky, Daniel Boone encouraged John to go West to Missouri with Jemima, their 17 children and 40 families to settle the wilderness. In 1805, he purchased a Spanish land grant and other lands that measured three-miles long and one-mile wide (approximately from Big Bend to Lindbergh Boulevard).

As each son married, John gave him a tract of 200 acres, and on October 27, 1808, second son Thomas married Mary Ann Kinkead. They moved into the newly built Sappington House, now located at 1015 S. Sappington Road in St. Louis 63126, but then a part of Louisiana Territory. His and Mary Ann's was the first registered marriage license in St. Louis County. Thomas was a farmer, a first lieutenant in the War of 1812 and later a justice of the peace.

Their daughter Lucinda married Granville O. Eades. One of Lucinda's five daughters, another Mary Ann, married Christopher Hawken of the Hawken rifle manufacturing family, and she was the mistress of nearby Hawken House built about 1855. After Thomas' first wife Mary Ann died, Thomas aged 60 years married Elizabeth Houser, and together they had four children: Therese, Fountain, Marshall and Washington. Marshall lived in the Sappington home through the Civil War until 1877. Many Sappingtons are buried in the family cemetery on Watson Road.

Afterwards, the Roses, Wingates, Nickels and Picrauxs resided at Sappington House before it was vacated, and subsequently purchased by the City of Crestwood. Civic leaders, historians, architects and the Sappington family were instrumental in bringing about the total restoration completed in 1966. The Thomas Sappington House Museum volunteers greeted over 1,600 friends and neighbors during its first few weeks open, inviting them to relive early 19th century St. Louis history. And in 2016, we celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a re-enactment of Thomas' and Mary Ann's wedding ceremony heralded by a cannon blast.

### House Construction:

Sappington House was built in 1808 by slave labor during Thomas Jefferson's presidency. The floor plan is of the Federal style, popular on the East coast between 1780 and 1830. This house has two rooms down and two upstairs with symmetrical features, doors and windows across from each other. Because Historic Sappington House has not been relocated, the foundation of fieldstone with lime mortar is unchanged as are the architectural features listed below.

- No nails were used; only wooden pegs hold the framework together. The roof is wooden shingles.

- Antique, wavy glass from Ste. Genevieve and St. Charles replaced broken window panes.
- At a time when most houses were clap-board or more commonly log cabins with dirt floors, Sappington House was built with brick made from Missouri clay and river sand. Facing the road, the bricks are laid in a pleasing pattern of the more decorative Flemish bond rather than the plainer English bond on the back of the house.
- The home's woodwork is a masterpiece of artisanship, especially the living room mantel which is a country interpretation of the iconic oval design favored by the Adams Brothers, Scottish architects. Under the stairway, graceful Prussian green scrollwork is on display.
- The upstairs wood floors are original and thus are 209-years-old. The fireplace in the child's bedroom still has the hexagon-shaped hearth stones that were reproduced in the other four fireplaces.
- Closets and built-in cabinets denote the richness of the home since interior spaces with three walls and a door were taxed by the government at that time.
- The kitchen was added about 1818, perhaps after an especially cold winter when meals from the separate summer kitchen could not be served warm.

All these structural characteristics are still visible and enhance the beauty and historical significance of the house.

### **Today ~ an Exceptional Historic Museum**

At Historic Sappington House, the **Thomas Sappington House Museum** is a National Historic Landmark tucked away in a 2.5- acre park, featuring lush lawns and a small lake with a fountain. A stunning and rare example of Federal architecture in Missouri, the historic structure, and flower and herb gardens appear as they did over 200 years ago. It is judged to be the oldest brick home in St. Louis County. Meticulously restored and elegantly refurbished by Mrs. Carolyn McDonnell of the McDonnell aeronautical family, the site allows visitors to look back in time to see how the Sappington family lived in the early 1800's.

#### Furnishings:

From floors to walls to ceilings, volunteer docents weave stories of everyday life through the historic objects in the Museum. Here is a sampling.

- Textiles: 1825 hand-loomed reversible carpet and English chintz drapes

- **Antique Furniture:** Prized cherry sugar chest and a John and Thomas Seymour's sideboard with biscuit top legs
- **Art:** Theorem painting and a memorial artwork showing a weeping willow stitched with human hair
- **Books:** Family Bible and adult Lucinda Sappington Eades' prayer book listing the birth and death dates of the enslaved people who worked at her house
- **Cultural Artifacts:** Courting candle and a courting mirror
- **Household Utensils:** Walnut burl bowl and a broom made from a yellow birch sapling thinly stripped up and down and finally tied off near the bottom with hemp rope, both production skills likely learned from the Osage Native-Americans
- **Clocks:** Mahogany Seth Thomas pillar and scroll clock with wooden works to a Willard eight-day banjo clock
- **Luxury Furnishings:** Apothecary chest circa 1820 and Chippendale mirrors
- **Metalwork and Silver:** Coin silverware and a set of French pewter metric measuring cups
- **Necessities:** Chamber pot and the outhouse
- **Needlework:** Many quilts and a sampler made by ten-year-old Silvia Dale in 1808
- **Pottery and Porcelain:** Wedgewood and the Staffordshire soup plates depicting the U.S. Capital building before the British burned it during the War of 1812
- **Toys:** Papier-mache doll and a jack straws game

At Sappington House, these and many other functional and beautiful things can be found that tell us what their lives were like over 200 years ago.

Historic Sappington House also includes the nationally-recognized **Library of Americana and Decorative Arts**, where one can study or casually browse through the collections of U.S. and Missouri histories, genealogy and extensive research books that Mrs. McDonnell accessed to refurbish what was a mansion in its day.

Embodying the true spirit of hospitality, **The Barn restaurant's** motto is that delicious food and caring friends are good for the soul. Barn customers can choose from a mouthwatering array of freshly prepared farm-to-table breakfasts all day, lunches, and hand-crafted pastries/baked desserts. Dinner is served Thursday through Saturday evenings, and catering for special events is available.

Above The Barn, the **Loft Gift Shop**, chosen by *Riverfront Times* readers as Best St. Louis Gift Shop, offers "Rustic Chic" items for your lifestyle and garden. Proceeds from shop sales benefit non-profit Historic Sappington House. Each location: the Sappington House Museum, the Library of Americana and Decorative Arts, and the Loft Gift Shop are staffed by volunteer assistants.

Located near the Interstates-44 and -270 intersection, we are less than 20 minutes from the Gateway Arch. For added interest, Historic Sappington House is adjacent to **Grant's Trail** and **Father Dickson Cemetery**, a burial ground founded in 1903 for African-Americans.

Whether it is natural beauty or a historical/cultural experience or chic shopping or delectable dining that you crave, you will enjoy visiting Sappington House, a welcoming destination for special events, tours, and school field trips. For a preview, stroll around <http://sappingtonhouse.org/>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZTpcndOoqco>  
<https://www.facebook.com/SappingtonHouseFoundation/>  
And then come visit Sappington House by car, bus, or bicycle and enjoy your stay!

### **Tomorrow ~ an Enduring Heritage, Ours to Preserve**

Some of the same things that make Historic Sappington House a landmark also present challenges for ongoing preservation. The regulations of the National Registry of Historic Places require that no gutter system can be installed, thus when it rains, water pours down the soft brick exterior. And because the wetness does not drain away from the foundation, the problems are compounded. Moisture seeps into the thick walls, trapping it and causing interior finishes to mold and deteriorate, but also resulting in wall cracks suggestive of possible extensive structural damage.

Your contribution will support urgently needed improvement projects:

- \$8,000 Repair plaster and paint interior
- \$2,500 Remove plaster and inspect southeast corner of parlor and master bedroom walls
- \$1,000 Repoint eroded joints around west door
- \$400 Monitor cracks to gauge interior integrity

Consider becoming a vital part of the special experience that is non-profit Sappington House. Without members, volunteers and donors, Historic Sappington House could never accomplish its mission of preserving the past by inspiring generations to discover and truly appreciate their own and the community's heritage.