

ESTABLISHED 1907



FRAUNCES TAVERN® MUSEUM

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**NEW EXHIBITION THAT RECREATES AMERICA'S FIRST
CONFEDERATION-ERA DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS IN NEW YORK CITY
TO OPEN AT FRAUNCES TAVERN® MUSEUM IN JUNE 2022**



New York, NY, May 23, 2022—While Fraunces Tavern in New York City is one of the 18th-century's best-known taverns and the site of General George Washington's famous farewell to his officers at the end of the American Revolution, it is less known that in the late 1780s, the site at 54 Pearl Street in lower Manhattan was also home to the nation's first executive governmental building that housed three offices of the Confederation Congress. (Although Congress met in City Hall, the space was too small for the government's departments and other office space had to be leased.) In 1785, the Department of Foreign Affairs, Department of War and offices of the Board of Treasury leased space at the Tavern and remained tenants there until 1788. Thanks to an extraordinary document—a cashbook that detailed the purchases for the Department of Foreign Affairs during its time at the Tavern that is now housed at the National Archives—the Department's office will be recreated in a new permanent exhibition, *Governing the Nation from Fraunces Tavern*, set to open on June 22, 2022. Featuring approximately 60 objects, most of which are authentic to the period and many of which have never before been on public display, including tables, chairs, desks, maps, newspapers and other items, visitors will have the opportunity to travel back to post-colonial New York City and enter the Department of Foreign Affairs office as it appeared during a fascinating period in the nation's history when John Jay was the first Secretary of Foreign Affairs. Visitors will learn about the diplomatic, military and financial challenges that all three departments faced after the Revolutionary War and how those challenges affected the formation of the U.S. Constitution.

“We are in the unique position of having access to a rare, surviving cashbook from the Department of Foreign Affairs,” explains Craig Hamilton Weaver, co-chairman of the Museum and Art Committee at Fraunces Tavern Museum. “We diligently researched each object in the cashbook and acquired authentic items to create an accurate setting that allows the visitor to step back into history. This is indeed a magnificent gift to the nation.”

After an exhaustive search to locate objects that would have been found in the original office, visitors will not only see an extraordinary assemblage of fine American and British decorative arts, many pieces of which have been donated from private collections, but they will also gain insights into an often-overlooked period in American history. Objects such as *A New and Accurate Map of East and West Florida Drawn from the best Authorities*, a circa 1760s map engraved by J. Prockter, London, highlighting Spanish-controlled West Florida; a rare copy of the French-language newspaper *Courier de L'Europe* published in London on September 29, 1786, reporting on America's diplomatic activities with Prussia and Spain; and an array of directional and mapping compasses will help to illustrate the Department's first two pressing matters. The Barbary Pirate Crisis, which led to the 1787 diplomatic treaty with Morocco to end pirate seizures of American vessels in the Mediterranean Sea, and negotiations with Spain regarding control of the Mississippi River will be examined in the exhibition to offer visitors insights into what it took to form a new government as well as a deep appreciation for those individuals who rose to the challenge to do so.

“We want visitors to have an immersive experience,” said Scott Dwyer, director of Fraunces Tavern Museum. “The exhibition room was designed and will be arranged to give the sense that John Jay, his under secretary, diplomats, translators, clerks and messengers might enter and resume work at any moment.”

Additionally, the office's furnishings will illuminate the socioeconomic stratification of the staff who worked in the room. From Henry Remsen, Jr., Jay's undersecretary for foreign affairs, to the two clerks, a part-time French translator and a messenger, the hierarchy of those employed there will be clearly seen through the caliber of each staffer's work space in his desk, chair and even desk set; the seniority of the employee's position correlated to the finery of his work area and accoutrements. For example, Under Secretary Remsen's desk has a full writing set made of late 18th-century fused Sheffield plate while the clerk's desk has a pewter inkstand and the messenger's station has a simple stoneware inkwell. The under secretary's desk also features examples of Chinese porcelain that would have come to New York aboard the *Empress of China*, the first American ship to trade with China. The ship returned to New York Harbor and distributed

its cargo for local merchants the same year the Department of Foreign Affairs office opened at Fraunces Tavern. Aboard was Samuel Shaw, who would become America's first Consul to Canton (now Guangzhou), China.



Assembling as many New York- or mid-Atlantic-made furnishings as possible to be seen in *Governing the Nation from Fraunces Tavern* was another goal in organizing the exhibition to ensure that the room would be authentic to what would likely have been in the original space. One example to be seen at the messenger's station is a circa 18th-century, brace-back Windsor chair made by



Walter MacBride, who worked at 63 Pearl Street in the vicinity of the Tavern.

Another such object is a circa 1770-1785, mahogany tilt-top tea table, which was likely made in the vicinity of lower Manhattan where many furniture makers were known to have worked at the time. The table features details characteristic of New York style, such as a flat top (rather than the dish top that

was popular in other regions), a vase-form pedestal with a cup and square, webbed feet, all of



which are typical of New York-made furniture. Although made later than the time period for the office (circa early 19th century), a pair of brass andirons with the rare mark of New York City craftsman David Phillips is included in the exhibition to exemplify other common, locally produced objects during that period. Phillips may have been

working earlier as an apprentice near the neighboring South Street Seaport. In a small yet authentic homage to the important document that guided the reconstruction of the office, a leather-bound account book with entries dating from 1765 at the Garret Abel Company of South Street in lower Manhattan, will be seen placed on the clerk's desk, representing the Foreign Affairs cashbook that informed the object selection for the exhibition. In addition, a facsimile of a page from the actual Foreign Affairs cashbook from 1785 will hang on the wall near the visitor area.

Other featured objects in the exhibition include the negotiation table, made in New York of mahogany and pine in the Chippendale style, c. 1780. The table has carved knees and claw-and-ball legs and is composed of three heavy, solid boards. The strongly carved, original legs have fully developed shells and robust feet. Placed centrally in the room, this is where much of the official business would have been conducted, maps examined and debate likely to have occurred. Another highlight of *Governing the Nation from Fraunces Tavern* will be found hanging above the clerk's desk: British engineer Bernard Ratzer's engraved map, *Plan of the City of New York in North America*, published in 1776 by Jeffreys & Faden, London, commonly referred to as "the Ratzer map." One of the best depictions of the city before the Revolutionary War, it was

originally issued in 1770 and was heavily influenced by a 1767 map of New York by British engineer John Montresor. The map offers a bird's-eye view of lower Manhattan Island, eastern New Jersey and western Brooklyn and includes the city's important landmarks, many of which are listed in the legend or key. Additionally, an excellent example of a late-18th-century book press with the rare feature of a built-in drawer will also be seen in the office. Such pieces of equipment were used to copy the multitude of correspondence and documents generated by the office.

Governing the Nation from Fraunces Tavern is made possible through a major gift from Stanley and Elizabeth Scott who are longtime supporters of the Museum.

For American history aficionados, those fascinated by diplomacy and its early beginnings in the new nation, decorative arts enthusiasts and those interested in New York's role in 18th-century history, *Governing the Nation from Fraunces Tavern* should not be missed.

About Fraunces Tavern Museum:

Fraunces Tavern Museum's mission is to preserve and interpret the history of the American Revolutionary era through public education. This mission is fulfilled through the interpretation and preservation of the Museum's collections, landmarked buildings and varied public programs that serve the community. Visit the rooms where General George Washington said farewell to his officers and where John Jay negotiated treaties with foreign nations. Explore six additional galleries focusing on America's War for Independence and the preservation of early American history. Fraunces Tavern® Museum is owned and operated by, and FRAUNCES TAVERN® is a registered service mark of Sons of the Revolutionsm in the State of New York, Inc., a Section 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation instituted in 1876 and incorporated in 1884. Copyright © 2022 SRNY, Inc. All rights reserved. To learn more, visit our website at frauncestavernmuseum.org.

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Press Contacts:

Robyn Liverant
Robyn Liverant Public Relations
robyn@robynliverant.com
212.472.6947

Allie Delyanis
Fraunces Tavern Museum
adelyanis@frauncestavernmuseum.org
347.468.3186

*Image captions: Chippendale Table, New York, 1780, mahogany, 2021.01.001, Photo ©John Bigelow Taylor; *Plan of the City of New York in North America*, Bernard Ratzer, Jeffreys & Faden, London, 1776, 2013.03.001; Book Press, late 18th century, wood, 2022.03.003, Photo ©John Bigelow Taylor; *Courier de L'Europe* Newspaper, London, September 29, 1786, linen, 2022.04.006; Society of the Cincinnati Teacup and Saucer, China, 1790, porcelain, Samuel Shaw, Pierre Charles L'Enfant, 1969.01.006a,b; Brace-Back Windsor Chair, Walter MacBride, New York City, 18th century, 1987.04.001, Gift of Craig Hamilton Weaver, Photo ©John Bigelow Taylor; Tea Table, New York, 1770-1785, mahogany, 2022.01.007, Gift of Craig Hamilton Weaver, Photo ©John Bigelow Taylor; Leather-Bound Account Book, Garret Abel Company, South Street, Lower Manhattan, 1765, 1993.01.001, Gift of Mrs. Sophie Matthews, Photo ©John Bigelow Taylor.

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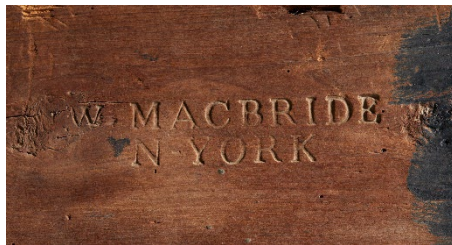
Governing the Nation from Fraunces Tavern Opening June 22, 2022, for Permanent Display

Images Caption Sheet*

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Chippendale Table
New York, 1765-1780
Mahogany, carved knees, ball and claw feet
2021.01.001
Photo ©John Bigelow Taylor



Brace-Back Windsor Chair
Walter MacBride (branded W MacBride, N-York)
New York City, late 18th century
1987.04.001, Gift of Craig Hamilton Weaver
Photo ©John Bigelow Taylor



Chippendale Tea Table
New York, 1770-1785
Mahogany; flat, tilt-top, vase-form pedestal with cup, having webbed, ball and claw feet
2022.01.007, Gift of Craig Hamilton Weaver
Photo ©John Bigelow Taylor



Chippendale Desk
1750-1780
Cherrywood
1963.01.028
Bequest of William Taylor Morson
Photo ©John Bigelow Taylor



Chippendale Side Chair (1 of 4)
Probably New Jersey, 1775-1785
Mahogany; ribbon back, through tenoned, original slip seat and corner blocks
2022.01.001, Gift of Craig Hamilton Weaver
Photo ©John Bigelow Taylor



Desk
American, late 18th century
Straight legs, interior pigeonholes, exterior drawer
2022.03.002



Book Press
American, late 18th century
Wood; rare front drawer
2022.03.003
Photo ©John Bigelow Taylor



Society of the Cincinnati Teacup and Saucer
China, 1790
Porcelain
Samuel Shaw, Pierre Charles L'Enfant
1969.01.006 a,b



Platter with reticulated edge
China, late 18th century
Porcelain
X167



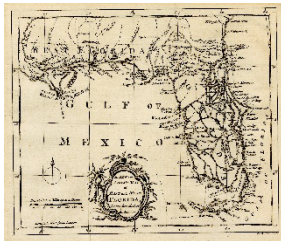
Desk Set
Inkstand, Inkwell, Sand Shaker on Fused Sheffield Plate
English, 18th century
2022.03.001 a-g



Inkstand
1780s
Pewter
2022.04.002 a,b



Plan of the City of New York in North America
Bernard Ratzer
Jeffreys & Faden, London, 1776
2013.03.001



A New and Accurate Map of East and West Florida, Drawn from the best Authorities
J. Prockter, engraver
London, 1760s
1987.07.016
Gift of Louis Bach



Leather-Bound Account Book
Garret Abel Company
South Street, Lower Manhattan, 1765
1993.01.001
Gift of Mrs. Sophie Matthews
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