

# Telling a Whole History: Methods of Interpreting Domestic Servants at Historic House Museums

AASLH Annual Meeting  
St. Paul, Minnesota  
September 18, 2014

Dr. Jennifer Pustz  
William Tyre, M.A.  
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# Downton Abbey “Local Edition”: Lessons From an Outreach Lecture

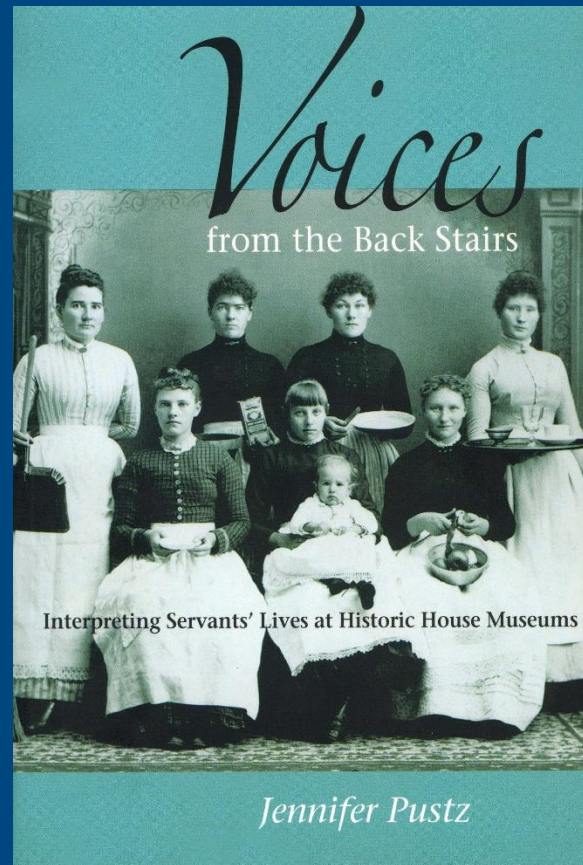
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Telling a Whole Story: Methods of  
Interpreting Domestic Servants in  
Historic House Museums

*2014 AASLH Annual Meeting*

*Jennifer Pustz, Museum Historian*

# Warning: Shameless Self-Promotion





# HISTORIC<sup>®</sup> NEW ENGLAND

*Defining the past. Shaping the future.*





Bridget, how did your new stove work to day?

It is the best Baker in the world. It bakes Bread in 40 minutes, Pies in 10 and Rolls in 12 minutes and as light and sweet as can be made.

THE EXCELSIOR ALWAYS AHEAD. See other Side

SERVING AND WAITING AT THE TABLE

BY ELEANOR MARCHANT

THE SERVICE FOR CHRISTMAS DAY

OF ALL days in the year Christmas should be reserved for home gatherings, and for the young housekeeper the idea of celebrating the first Christmas dinner in the new home is filled with delightful possibilities.

Begin your preparation some time in advance, arranging for dainty name cards and souvenirs appropriate to the day. These may consist of tiny baskets twined with holly and filled with home-made sweets and confections and are easily prepared at home. Novel candle-shades for the candlesticks or candle-labra may also be in readiness. They should be of liberal dimensions (as large

inary work early the following morning. As breakfast is the first meal to be disposed of, it should receive first consideration from the hostess, and as it will naturally be early, it should be simple, so that it may be easily prepared and quickly cleared away. The following menu is suggested:

Mandarins and Malaga Grapes  
Oatmeal with Whipped Cream  
Breaded Lamb Chops  
Toast Hashed Browned Potatoes  
Coffee

Naturally the Christmas dinner will claim the largest share of the housekeeper's attention. As examples of the two

White Mountain Refrigerators



## CHAPTER II

### GENERALLY RECOGNIZED DUTIES

#### Duties of Housekeeper

A MANAGING housekeeper should be possessed of thorough executive ability. Necessarily she is well bred and well educated. To her duties she often in our country brings a knowledge of refined housekeeping gained in her own home, a knowledge of life and its conventions, and the tact to direct those serving her which is commonly given alone to those bred in early years to gentle living.

She is, under the mistress, head of the house. She hires and discharges all servants. She sees personally that all work is thoroughly and properly done. She is, with constant kindness in her heart for human frailty, on the watch to detect and correct any wrongdoing on the part of any servant. She should never spy, never go quietly to detect errors. Her approach should always be known. She should gain the good will and affection of those she directs by unfailing good order and kindly interest in each of them. Let her have few rules, but those few most effectively kept. If she has the confidence and respect of those under her, she has their support. The heads of the house must fully indorse her in every detail of her administration.

The housekeeper is sometimes also secretary to the mistress of the house. But at all times she takes entire charge of the house; in fact, is what her name denotes, — a keeper of the house.

She oversees the closing of the town house and the opening



*Facing page 8.*

HOUSEKEEPER.



HOW BIDDY SERVED THE TOMATOES UNDRRESSED.

"Indade, Ma'am, an I'll not take off another stitch, if I lose me place."





*Codman House, Lincoln, Massachusetts*





*Codman servants in 1903: Ellen, Nelly, Mary, Reine and Watson.*





*Roseland Cottage, Woodstock, Connecticut*





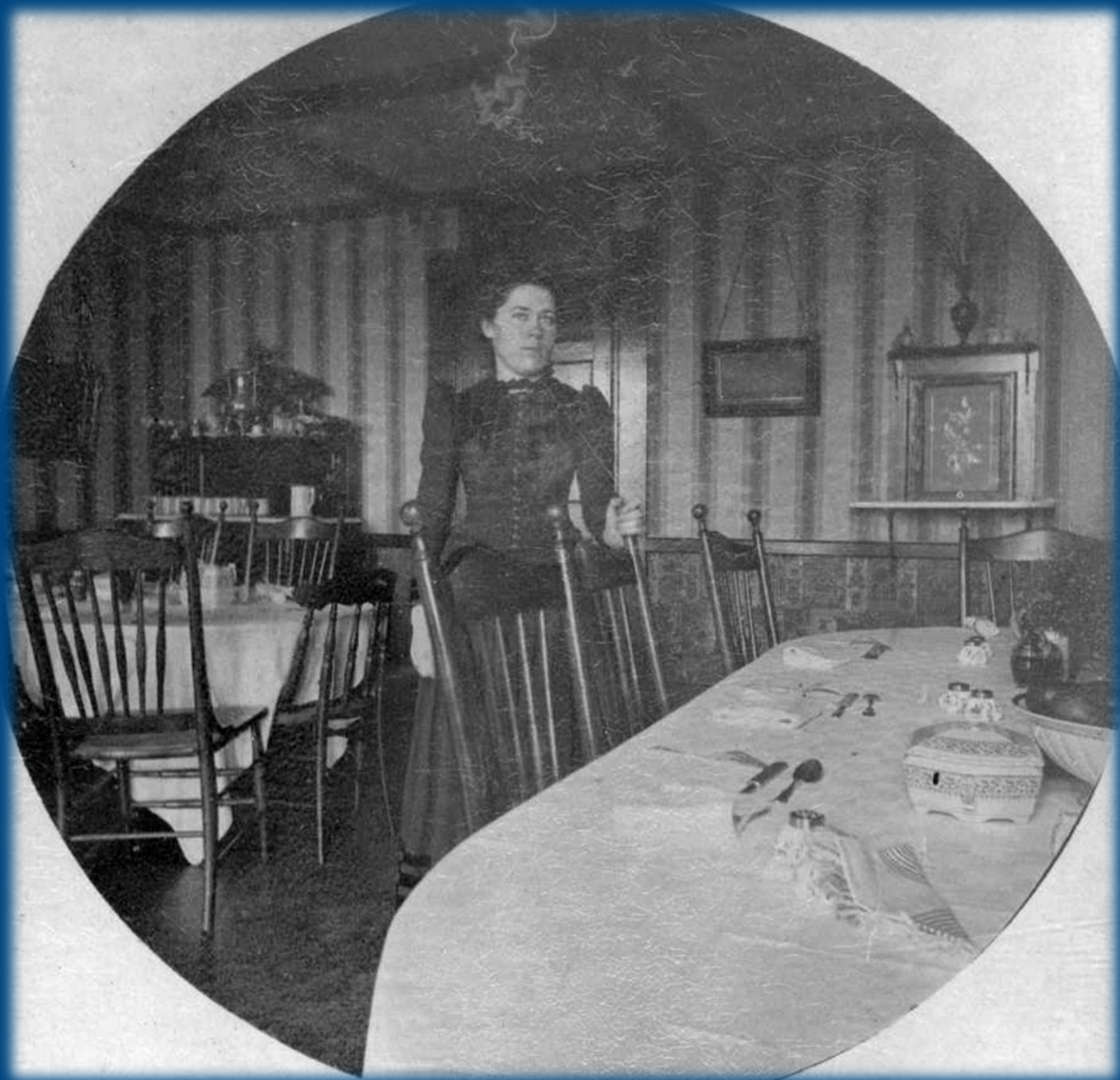
*Jane Stewart at Roseland*



*Castle Tucker, Wiscasset, Maine*







**Date: Sunday,  
January 5th  
Time: 2:30pm**

*Teapot Raffles &  
Trivia with prizes.*



## Downton Abbey Talk & Trivia Canton Public Library



Friends of the Canton  
Public Library  
786 Washington Street  
Canton, MA. 02021

*Registration is required  
and space is limited.  
Friends members \$10  
Non-members \$15*

Fans of **Downton Abbey** are invited to a celebration of all things **Downton**, with tea, trivia and commentary on the history, culture of the period by Ms. **Jennifer Pustz** of **Historic New England**.

Period dress is encouraged!  
Prizes for Best Outfit and Best Hat!  
Afternoon Tea will be served.  
Tables of 6 Ticket sales begin  
Nov. 21 at 6:30pm. Cash or check.



Sagadahoc Preservation, Inc. Presents:

***Voices from the Back Stairs:***  
**Domestic Servants in 19th & 20th Century**  
**New England**

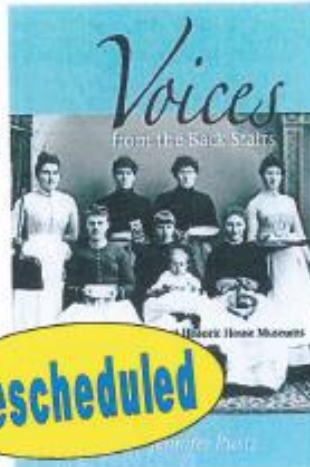
Lecture by Jennifer Pustz  
Museum Historian at Historic New England



**Sunday, March 10th, 2013, at 3:00 P. M.**  
Winter Street Center, 880 Washington Street, Bath, Maine  
For more information, please call 443-2174 or  
[www.sagadahocpreservation.org](http://www.sagadahocpreservation.org)

  
**HISTORIC**  
**NEW ENGLAND**  
*Defining the past. Shaping the future.*

**Downton Abbey,  
the Local Edition:  
Domestic  
Servants  
in Old  
New England**



**Wednesday, March 12, 7:00 PM**

Jennifer Pustz, author and museum historian at Historic New England, discusses her book *Voices From the Back Stairs*, focusing on the lives of New England domestic servants in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Generously funded by the Friends of the Library, free and open to the public.

**Hamilton-Wenham Public Library**  
**978-468-5577 hwllibrary.org**



# *Downton Abbey* Tea in Canton, Massachusetts





DOWNTON ABBEY  
TEA, TALK AND TRIVIA



Sponsored by the  
Friends of the  
Canton Public Library

Hosted by  
Ms. Carolyn Elkort &  
Ms. Kathy Fox Alfano





The Historical Society of Cheshire County presents...

## Voices from the Back Stairs

Domestic Servants in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century New England



**Wednesday, May 28, 2014. 7pm.**

FREE public event

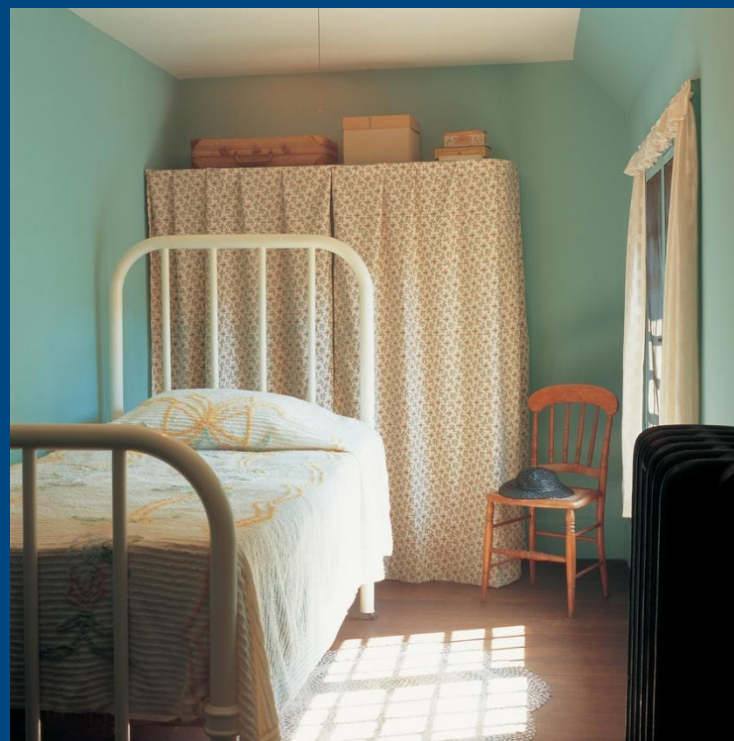
246 Main St., Keene, NH 03431. 603/352-1895. [dired@hscnh.org](mailto:dired@hscnh.org)

Program coincides with the Society's exhibit *Your Grandmother Trusted Wright's*, on view until 6/6/2014

## *Come and Visit...*



*Above: Kitchen, Phillips House, Salem, Massachusetts*



*Right: Servant's bedroom, Beauport, Gloucester, Massachusetts*





# Interpreting Domestic Servants at Glessner House Museum



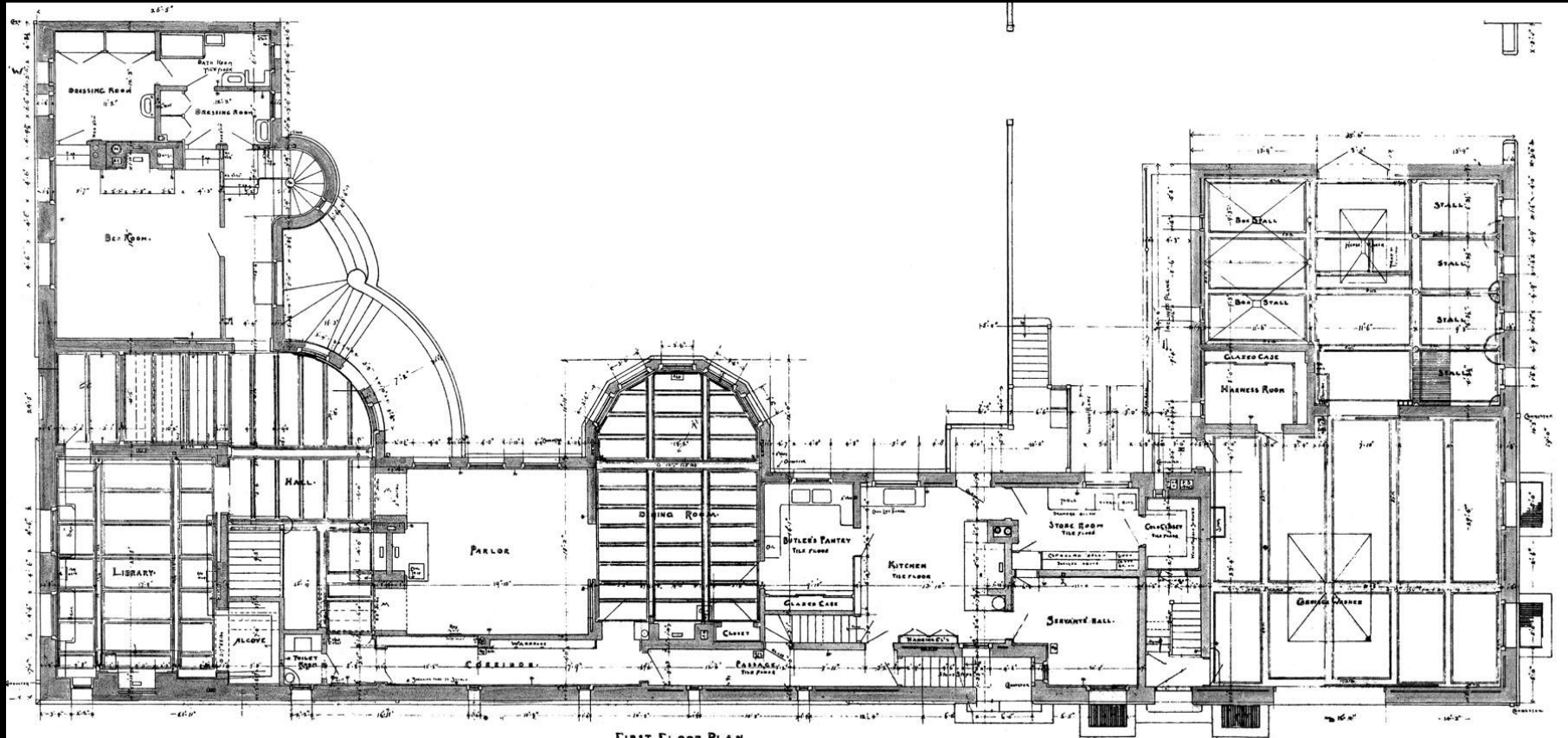


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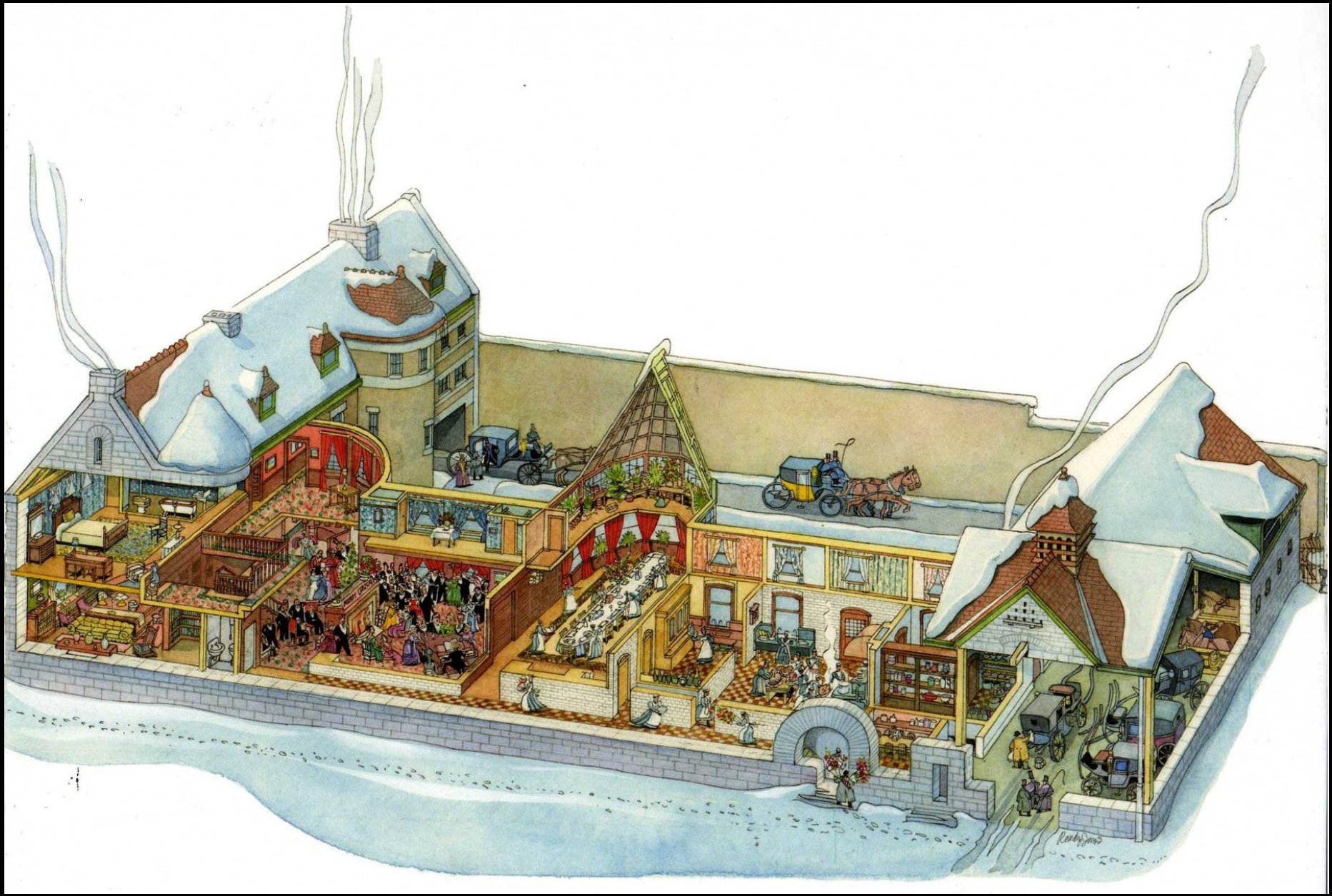


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FIRST FLOOR PLAN



















The servants who  
are with us now  
Nov 1<sup>st</sup> 1893 are all  
to be paid an extra  
months pay Christmas  
1894.

Fredrick Reynolds

John Gear

Thattie Williamson

Alice Hassett

Julia Johnson

Antonine Gersling

Annie Johnston

Charles Nelson

Martin

Martin left in  
Nov 1893 - or Dec

Julia Johnson left  
Jan 9<sup>th</sup> 1894

Sarah M<sup>rs</sup> Connick  
came as housemaid  
Wednesday Jan 10<sup>th</sup>  
1894



Belle Soomar

Oct- 15- 1894

Laundress - \$6.00 per week

Real name

Bidget Soomen

left without notice April 26<sup>th</sup>

1895 - Told falsehoods.

Dec 25<sup>th</sup> 1894.

In one employ and who  
had a months wages  
at Christmas 1894

Fredrick Reynolds

John Hear

Charles Nelson

Thattie Williamson

Antonie Eversling

Alice Hassett

Alice Hassett died

March 9 - 1895.

after twenty one years  
service -





*THE MANAGEMENT  
of SERVANTS.*

*A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO THE  
ROUTINE OF DOMESTIC SERVICE*

*By the Author of*

*"MANNERS & TONE OF GOOD SOCIETY"*





Instructions for the Household -  
1901 - 1800 Prairie Ave

dressing

When the weather is warm,  
open the windows and door  
to court yard early in the  
morning and at about six  
in the evening - Open only  
doors and windows which  
have wire screens -

Keep all closed from ~~noon~~  
9 o'clock in the morning until  
six in the evening -

Do not leave any electric  
lights burning when they are  
not needed -

Keep a bottle of filtered  
boiled water in the glass in  
dressing room -



INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE  
HOUSE EMPLOYEES AT  
THE ROCKS

SUMMER OF 1892.

Trifles make perfection.—*Emerson.*



Whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing  
well.—*Earl of Chesterfield.*

## THE ROCKS

1892

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These instructions are given to simplify the house-keeping. They do not contain every item of each employee's duties, but enough to indicate what is expected. The work should be done just as well and as promptly, and with as much attention to details, as in the city house, and the house must be quiet from ten o'clock at night until seven in the morning. The work that is done before seven should be done quietly, so that the family and guests may not be wakened if they wish to sleep.

While the farm and its walks are intended for the pleasure of all, and there is no part from which you are prohibited, it is our wish that the ferns and all natural growth be uninjured, the birds undisturbed, etc. The garden from which flowers may be gathered adjoins the vegetable garden, and here they are free to all, but of course to be



## THE COOK.

Besides your regular duties and the care of the kitchen, small dining room, and all pantries, closets and cupboards connected with the kitchen, you are to care for the milk room, refrigerator, and maids' earth closet, and have the wood room under your supervision.

There are cans provided for refuse from kitchen. In these **no coffee grounds, bones, egg shells, tin cans, broken glass or china**, or anything else which will injure the pigs, must be placed. These things are to be put in a separate place, and either burned in the kitchen stove or buried. You should see that these cans are emptied every day, washed out clean, and then brought back to the house. The refuse will be carried away by one of the farm men. The Footman will keep the wood rooms clean, and observe that the cans are properly cared for also.

Save the soap grease for the farmer, and send it to him often, so that it will never be objectionable about the house.

Stay at home every fifth Sunday.

The Housemaid when through with her own work will assist you as long as there is anything to do.

## THE HOUSEMAID.

You will take entire charge of all the bedrooms, sweeping and dusting every one in the house once a week, including all of the rooms on the third floor; and keep the family bedrooms in perfect order at all times.

At the same time you arrange the beds for the night, dump the second story earth closet, and deposit one charge of earth immediately afterwards.

Take entire charge of the bath room and closets in the second story, and in fact of the whole house above the first floor.

A portable bath tub has been provided because there is not a large supply of water, and you must look after this, prepare the bath when called for, and take it away from the bedroom after it has been used.

Answer the bedroom bells.

Take care of all the stairs except the front stairway.

Take care of every hall upstairs.

Help the Cook with her work whenever not occupied with your department. Help her with washing her dishes and with her cleaning.

Stay at home every fifth Sunday.















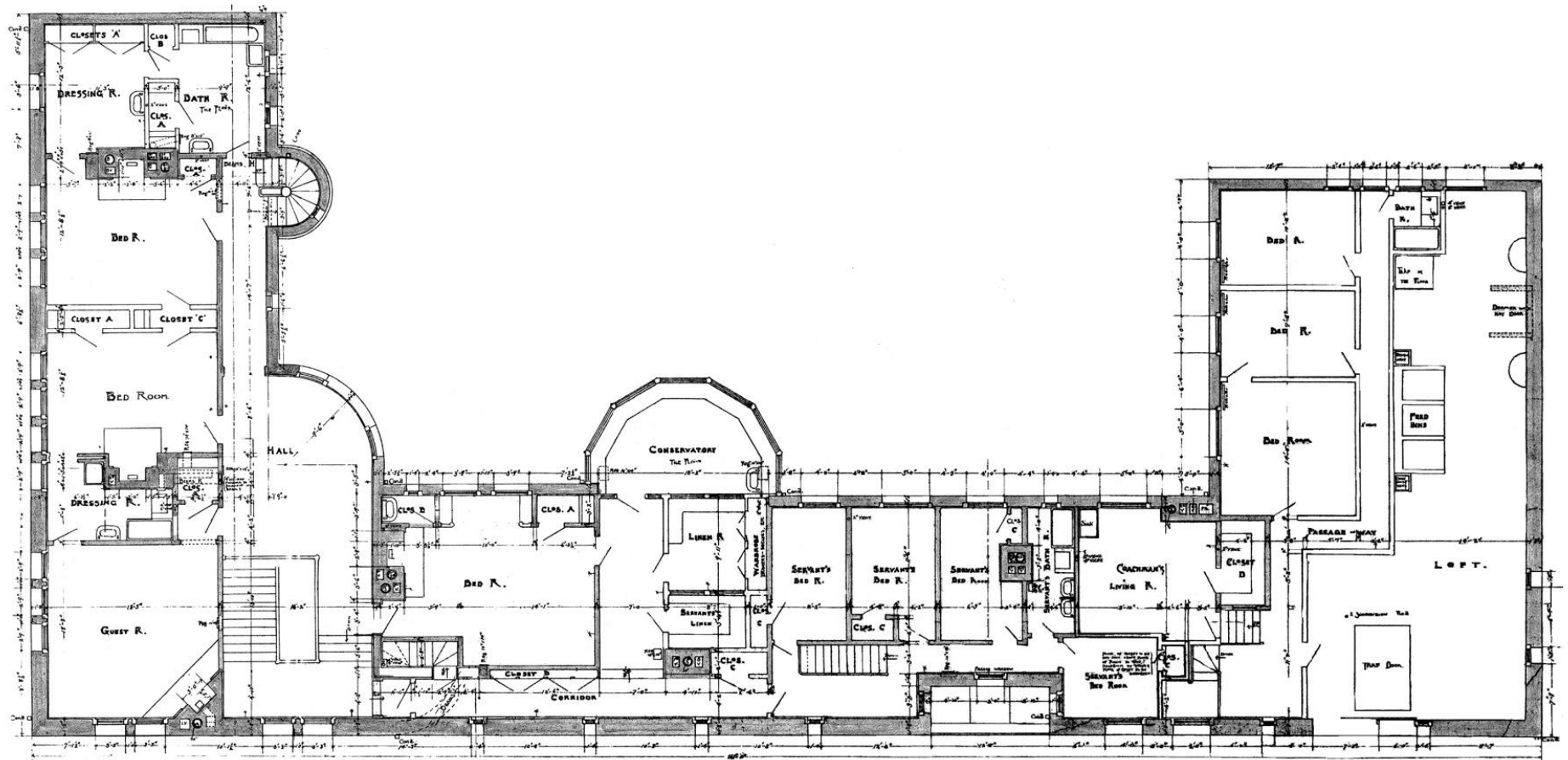












SECOND FLOOR PLAN



























# Prairie Avenue Servants

Behind the Scenes  
in  
Chicago's Mansions  
1870-1920

MARY ALICE MOLLOY





Byers-Evans House Museum, Denver, Colorado

## Servants

Mrs Nucam      Nutron  
Haywood      Servant Maid  
Sutton      "      Man

People Outside of school  
Mr Tucker  
Mrs "  
Mr Snow

---

Sunday Nov. 29.

It is now Sunday morning I am not quite well yet it is half past ten. And I am sitting up in bed writing in my journal on more. This morning Mr. Shaw came in my room and saw me lying down reading a book of Adventures he said it was not the thing to read on Sunday so he took it away from me and brought the New Testament and a Sunday paper to read. I held it up before my nose



Nice dinner too. I know one thing ~~is~~ that  
Is that the servant is a black head, sometimes  
I feel like knocking her down she comes  
By the side of me and looks right at me  
Fairly stares me, and always looking at me  
And laughing.

After dinner we came in our room  
Gov. Elbert Reading a news paper that a  
Man in the house lent him this man  
Can talk good english at half past eight  
Governor went and returned the paper.



















Dinner Dec 31 - 1911

Dear Mother & Father & all

Sunday afternoon keeping house with the children, Emma & Mary went calling on Mr. & Mrs. Myers, this is a ideal day, yesterday morning it was 5 below zero. We had a white Xmas this year, Well Santa Claus was here and left lots of things for the children. Edith a doll, fur & snuff, games, doll dresser & doll set new doll dresses and doll chair.

Ruth doll buggy, doll dresses new shoes games doll chair, and Xmas tree for both, also small Xmas tree for Ruth. every body here was well remembered by Santa Claus. I got \$15.00 in gold from Evan's this year

Edith & Ruth are taking a walk

Happy New Year to all

I killed another hen for New Year's dinner to-day, didn't have a sign of eggs yet. I have 15 hens left now, this has been a very cold winter so far I feeling first rate this winter am taking every precaution not to take cold. I hope and pray to get through the winter without a cold. I make the hot whiskey and egg nogg suffer. We were glad to hear that Santa was good to all of you at home makes us happy also. We are all going to church to-night as this year is drawing to a close only a few hours left. Love to all from Dane  
excuse haste Happy New Year















# Volunteer Survey

## Before the Renovation

- 70% said visitors somewhat interested; 20% very interested
- 10% of volunteers neutral; 15% somewhat interested; 75% very interested
- 5% somewhat likely to skip the room; 35% somewhat unlikely; 60% very unlikely

## After the renovation

- 45% said visitors somewhat interested; 45% very interested
- 20% somewhat; 78% very interested
- 5% neutral; 15% somewhat unlikely to skip the room; 80% very unlikely to skip

DEDICATION  
MANNER  
EGALITARIAN  
LIVED  
FAMILY  
BOOKS  
ATTIC  
FLOOR  
MOVIES  
COMPLICATED  
LOYAL  
treated  
INTERESTING  
FASCINATING  
FUTURE  
BASEMENT  
OPPORTUNITY  
TV  
BY  
SHOPS  
HISTORIC  
APPRECIATED  
FORTUNATE