

The Volunteer

The 1820 Col. Benjamin Stephenson House

Bed Wrenches

By Julie Mangoff

December 2015

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This month, RoxAnn asked me to research bed wrenches, like the one in the children's bedroom at the Stephenson House. She wanted to know what types of rope beds they were used for.

Rope beds were tightly strung by hand. Over time, as people used the bed, the rope would stretch. In order to retighten the rope, people would either manually pull the rope taught or use a bed wrench.

In the course of my research, I could only find cases of bed wrenches being used to tighten the rope spring for beds where the rope is woven through holes in the frame. Weaving Haus Antiques, a company that builds traditional rope beds and their accessories, stated on their website that beds with pegs did not need bed wrenches to tighten the rope spring. Their website is at: <http://ropebed.net/Wrench.html>.

RoxAnn's hands-on experience with the bed wrench at the Stephenson House supports my research. She discovered that it works perfectly on the bed where the rope is woven through the frame of the bed. The one time she attempted to tighten the rope on the bed with pegs, the bed wrench applied too

much pressure and one of the pegs flew off (never to be seen again).

If you are curious how a bed wrench was used to tighten a bed with the rope woven through the frame, a person would begin at one end of the bed and insert the forked side of the bed wrench between the frame and the rope (so that the rope was nestled between the two prongs) and twist the wrench until the rope was taught. The person would then hold the tightened rope and pass the wrench to a second person on the other side. This person would repeat the process on the other side of the bed. The two people would work their way down to the other end of the bed and retie the rope when they were finished; thus making the rope taught again. A good video demonstration is at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MUj7RYgOGLo>.

This is also an occasion I would like to reprint some other information regarding rope beds (originally published in *The Volunteer*: July 2015):

After doing a little research on the subject of English phrases, I discovered www.phrases.org.uk. This website has compiled hundreds (if not thousands) of

idiomatic expressions. This website is a wonderful resource for learning about the history and origins of common phrases in English-speaking countries. While exploring, I learned many interesting facts about the phrase "sleep tight, don't let the bed bugs bite."

I had always thought that "sleep tight, don't let the bed bugs bite" was derived from rope-sprung beds. "Sleeping tight" meant that one had to tighten the rope for comfortable sleeping. However, the real origin of this expression is much more abstract.

The phrase, "Sleep tight, don't let the bed bugs bite" was not used until the middle of the twentieth century. This expression was an extension of the older phrase, "sleep tight." The first documented case of the short version was in the middle of the 1800s. The phrase was not used to refer to the tightening of ropes. Instead, it relies on one of the old definitions of the word "tight." It used to mean "well," or "soundly." With this in mind, the phrase "sleep tight" simply means "to sleep soundly."



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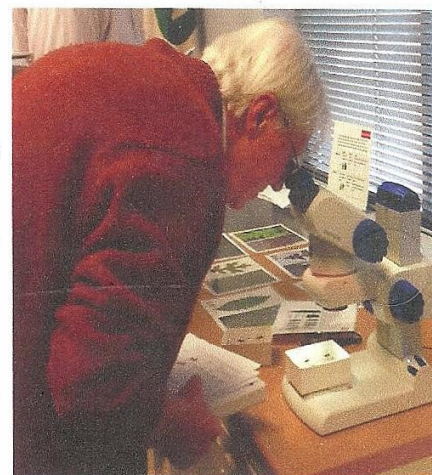
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November Photos



Above: Photo of the women who each have hand-made ball gowns for the Candlelight Tour. Below: Time-lapse photo of the kitchen during set-up for the Candlelight tour. Both photos by Julie Mangoff. Left, Top: volunteers dancing during the Candlelight tour. Left, Middle: Exterior of the Stephenson House decorated for the Candlelight Tour. Both photos taken from the Stephenson House Facebook page. Left, Bottom: Time-lapse photo of the dining room decorated for the Candlelight Tour. Photo taken by Julie Mangoff.



December 2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5 Playing the Past 9:00 A. M. — 12:00 P. M.
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13 Sewing Circle 1:00 P. M.	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22 Board Meeting 7:00 P. M.	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31	Closed for Christmas	
Closed for Christmas						

Upcoming Dates

- December 5: Playing the Past,
9:00 A. M. — 12:00 P. M.
- December 13: Sewing Circle,
1:00 P. M.
- December 22: Board Meeting,
7:00 P. M.
- December 24 — 31: Closed for
Christmas, Enjoy the Holiday!

Thank You!

- Everyone who helped out
with or brought food for the
Christmas Candlelight Tours

**Starting January 1st,
the Stephenson House
will be open only on
Saturdays and Sundays**

The Stephenson House on Facebook

The Stephenson House is nearing 500 likes on Facebook. The more likes we have the more people will see us online. Our goal is to exceed 500 likes by the end of the year, so if you have not done so, please like us!

If you have not seen our Facebook page, next time you are on, Facebook just search for 1820 Col. Benjamin Stephenson House and you should be able to find us.



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If you have any articles or stories you would like to be added to next month's edition of *The Volunteer*, please contact the editor at: jamangoff@gmail.com.

www.stephensonhouse.shutterfly.com

News & Needs

Needs...

- volunteers to help with school tours
- unprocessed honey
- volunteers to help with house tours, gift shop, garden & grounds, grant writing & research, as well as special events
- cleaning supplies such as Windex, toilet bowl cleaner, hand soap, disinfecting wipes, bleach, and toilet paper
- seamstresses to sew clothing for the volunteer wardrobe
- bolt of 100% cotton batiste