

The Clinton Dining Room

George Clinton (1739-1812)

The room you see before you is named after George Clinton, a Revolutionary War general, early patron of Fraunces Tavern and the first American governor of New York State. His portrait by Ezra Ames hangs above the fireplace to your right. Below it, on the mantel, sits his sword.

Clinton was elected to the Continental Congress in the years leading up to the War. He voted in favor of the Declaration of Independence and left the Congress when George Washington appointed him a brigadier general of the New York militia. By 1777, Clinton became the first American governor of New York. He eventually went on to serve as vice president to both Thomas Jefferson and James Madison.

Clinton's most well known connection to Fraunces Tavern is the dinner celebration he gave at the end of the War on November 25, 1783: the day the British army evacuated from New York City, which they had occupied since Washington's retreat after the Battle of Long Island in 1776. The guest list included General George Washington and thirteen toasts were given including "To the memory of those heroes who have fallen for our freedom" and "May courage support what justice has gained." The Sons of the Revolution in the State of New York still honor this historic event every year on the anniversary of Evacuation Day and recite the toasts in memory.



Sword scabbard of George Clinton, detail; Maker Unknown; Steel and brass, 1777; Gift of Frederick Samuel Tallmadge, 1904.

Private Dining Rooms and Federal Period Design

The Clinton Dining Room is an example of one of the more genteel private dining rooms that could be found in Fraunces Tavern.

Such rooms were used to accommodate private clubs, societies and business groups that met here regularly. It is decorated in the Federal style which was popular in America for some time after the Revolutionary War (ca. 1780's to 1820's). Architecture and design from this era boast classical motifs such as the urns atop the mirror to your left and the incorporation of Roman columns on the fireplace to your right. The neoclassical design movement, which started in Europe, was inspired by mid-eighteenth century excavations of ancient Roman cities and the unearthing of Greco-Roman antiquities. For American designers and their customers, the design took on an additional significance. It recalled the ideas of democracy and the republic tracing back to ancient Rome and Greece: new concepts for the young country.

Furnishings

The room is set for a formal dinner and exemplifies the contrasting elegance of a tavern's private dining room to the rusticity of its public rooms. Matching Chinese-export porcelain dishes and silverware with mother-of-pearl handles are a contrast to the mismatched pewter plates and plain banged metal tableware found in the rest of the tavern. The dinner table sits atop an imported rug while public rooms maintained bare floors. Placed around the parameters of the rooms are sideboards and serving tables, an accommodation that gained popularity in America during the Federal period. Not only did the presence of the tables add elegance to the room, but they served a practical purpose for servicing the meal. Though the dining table is already set, serving dishes, food and drink sit atop the serving tables. Extra plates and silverware sit on the lower shelves in the event they were needed. For Samuel Fraunces to uphold a good reputation for his tavern, it was crucial that the customer was taken care of immediately. Therefore, a formal dining room such as this traditionally held at least two servants and everything that was needed was right in the room.

The sideboard behind the dining table is called a host's desk dating from 1775. Here, the chairman of the club hosting the dinner could record the party's tab, oversee the servants and generally make sure that all that was needed was taken care of. After dinner he might serve cordials or wine to his guests from this desk.

After a meal, the party might shift to a more informal tone as the gentlemen sat down for a cup of tea or coffee or for a game of cards and drink. The small mahogany tea table on the left side of the room (and the two serving tables on the right) are believed to be the work of Duncan Phyfe, one of the best known cabinet makers of the Federal era. Phyfe's workshop was only a few blocks away from Fraunces Tavern, on the corner of Fulton and Church.

Highlights

Portrait of George Clinton by Ezra Ames (1768-1836); Oil on canvas, Early 19th Century; Gift of Dr. George Clinton Andrews, 1976.

Mirror; Maker Unknown; Glass, gold leaf and gesso over wood, ca. 1805; Anonymous gift.

Blue and white Chinese export ware; ca. early 19th Century; bequest of William Taylor Morson, 1963.

Steel, silver and Mother-of-Pearl Silverware; Maker Unknown, England; ca. 1770; Museum Purchase, 1986.

American Sheraton Dinner Table and Side Chairs; Maker, Unknown ; Mahogany, ca. 1800; Bequest of William Taylor Morson, 1963;

Imported Rug , Gift of Dr. Charles C. Lucas, Jr., 2010.

Serving Tables; Maker, Duncan Phyfe (attributed), New York; Mahogany, 1800; Bequest of William Taylor Morson, 1963.

American Hepplewhite Sideboard (Host's desk); Maker Unknown, American; Inlaid mahogany with Hepplewhite brass pulls, 1775; Gift of Mrs. Moses K. Goodridge, 1953.

Pembroke table (Tea table); Maker, Duncan Phyfe (attributed), New York; Mahogany, ca. 1810-1815; Bequest of William Taylor Morson, 1963.

Foldover-top card table; Maker, Thomas Sheraton (attributed), Massachusetts; Mahogany, 1800; Bequest of William Taylor Morson, 1963.

The following items have been generously lent by the Brooklyn Museum:



Cellaret; Maker Unknown, Pennsylvania; Walnut and yellow pine, ca. 1820; Bequest of Mrs. Laura L. Barnes. (Located on left side of the room under mirror)

Pair of knife boxes (detail in photo at left); Maker Unknown, American; Mahogany, ca. 1800; Bequest of Samuel E. Haslett.

The Clinton Dining Room

George Clinton (1739-1812)

The room you see before you is named after George Clinton, a Revolutionary War general, early patron of Fraunces Tavern and the first American governor of New York State. His portrait by Ezra Ames hangs above the fireplace to your right. Below it, on the mantel, sits his sword.

Clinton was elected to the Continental Congress in the years leading up to the War. He voted in favor of the Declaration of Independence and left the Congress when George Washington appointed him a brigadier general of the New York militia. By 1777, Clinton became the first American governor of New York. He eventually went on to serve as vice president to both Thomas Jefferson and James Madison.

Clinton's most well known connection to Fraunces Tavern is the dinner celebration he gave at the end of the War on November 25, 1783: the day the British army evacuated from New York City, which they had occupied since Washington's retreat after the Battle of Long Island in 1776. The guest list included General George Washington and thirteen toasts were given including "To the memory of those heroes who have fallen for our freedom" and "May courage support what justice has gained." The Sons of the Revolution in the State of New York still honor this historic event every year on the anniversary of Evacuation Day and recite the toasts in memory.

Private Dining Rooms and Federal Period Design (ca. 1788-1825)

The Clinton Dining Room is an example of one of the more genteel private dining rooms that could be found in Fraunces Tavern. Such rooms were used to accommodate private clubs, societies and business groups that met here regularly. It is decorated in the Federal style which was popular in America for some time after the Revolutionary War. Architecture and design from this era boasts classical motifs such as the urn atop the mirror to your left. This classical revival, which started in Europe, was inspired by mid-eighteenth century excavations of ancient Roman cities. For American designers and their customers, the design took on an additional significance. It recalled the ideas of democracy and the republic tracing back to ancient Rome: a new concept for the young country.

Furnishings

The room is set for a formal dinner and exemplifies the contrasting elegance of a tavern's private dining room to the rusticity of its public rooms. Matching Chinese-export porcelain dishes and silverware with mother-of-pearl handles are a contrast to the mismatched pewter plates and plain banged metal tableware found in the rest of the tavern. The dinner table sits atop an imported rug while public rooms maintained bare floors. Placed around the parameters of the rooms are sideboards and serving tables, an accommodation that gained popularity in America during the Federal period. Not only did the presence of the tables add elegance to the room, but they served a practical purpose for servicing the meal. Though the dining table is already set, serving dishes, food and drink sit atop the serving tables. Extra plates and silverware sit on the lower shelves in the event they were needed. For Samuel Fraunces to uphold a good reputation for his tavern, it was crucial that the customer was taken care of immediately. Therefore, a formal dining room such as this traditionally held at least two servants and everything that was needed was right in the room.

The sideboard behind the dining table is called a host's desk dating from 1775. Here, the chairman of the club hosting the dinner could record the party's tab, oversee the servants and generally make sure that all that was needed was taken care of. After dinner he might serve cordials or wine to his guests from this desk.

After a meal, the party might shift to a more informal tone as the gentlemen sat down for a cup of tea or coffee or for a game of cards and drink. The small mahogany tea table on the left side of the room (and the two serving tables on the right) are believed to be the work of Duncan Phyfe, one of the best known cabinet makers of the Federal era. Phyfe's workshop was only a few blocks away from Fraunces Tavern, on the corner of Fulton and Church.

Highlights

Portrait of George Clinton by Ezra Ames (1768-1836); Oil on canvas, Early 19th Century; Gift of Dr. George Clinton Andrews, 1976.

Mirror; Maker Unknown; Glass, gold leaf and gesso over wood, ca. 1805; Anonymous gift.

Blue and white Chinese export ware; ca. early 19th Century; bequest of William Taylor Morson, 1963.

Steel, silver and Mother-of-Pearl Silverware; Maker Unknown, England; ca. 1770; Museum Purchase, 1986.

American Sheraton Dinner Table and Side Chairs; Maker, Unknown ; Mahogany, ca. 1800; Bequest of William Taylor Morson, 1963;

Imported Rug , Gift of Dr. Charles C. Lucas, Jr., 2010.

Serving Tables; Maker, Duncan Phyfe (attributed), New York; Mahogany, 1800; Bequest of William Taylor Morson, 1963.

American Hepplewhite Sideboard (Host's desk); Maker Unknown, American; Inlaid mahogany with Hepplewhite brass pulls, 1775; Gift of Mrs. Moses K. Goodridge, 1953.

Pembroke table (Tea table); Maker, Duncan Phyfe (attributed), New York; Mahogany, ca. 1810-1815; Bequest of William Taylor Morson, 1963.

Foldover-top card table; Maker, Thomas Sheraton (attributed), Massachusetts; Mahogany, 1800; Bequest of William Taylor Morson, 1963.

The following items have been generously lent by the Brooklyn Museum:

Pair of knife boxes; Maker Unknown, American; Mahogany, ca. 1800; Bequest of Samuel E. Haslett.

Cellaret; Maker Unknown, Pennsylvania; Walnut and yellow pine, ca. 1820; Bequest of Mrs. Laura L. Barnes. (Located on left side of the room under mirror)