

# Inventory offers insight into Winder's personality

**T**hough the house has vanished and none of the furnishings of the Bloomsbury mansion can be found, an inventory taken at the death of Gov. Levin Winder in 1819 offers an insight into the personality of the Winder family.

Through Gov. Winder's travels and constant association with leading metropolitan areas prior to his death in 1819, he was in a unique position to see the latest in European fashions integrated into American architecture and furnishings.

Through the inventory (only a portion of which follows) taken by Robert Leatherbury and John Landreth, a unique room-by-room "tour" is given, noting everything from the rugs in front of the hearth to paper curtains (or shades) on the windows. It is rare picture of the Winder home, just as the governor and his family may have left it.

Interior designer Robert Withey, known for his knowledge of 18th- and 19th-century furnishings, said the often-mentioned "paper curtains" were an indication that, like many typical homes on the Eastern Shore, the house did not have drapes or curtains. "What they called window curtains are what we would call window shades. They were probably painted and decorated shades and could have been Chinese or Italian," Withey said.

The inventory, furnished by Les White of Princess Anne and a preservation officer at the Maryland State Archives in Annapolis, notes furnishings in the mansion's *Blue Room* and *Green Room*, an apparent reference to the wall colors.

Entering the *Green Room*, which appears to have been the bedroom of Gov. Winder, Robert Leatherbury noted the following: one mahogany bedstead, one mahogany desk, one old dressing table, one old bookcase, one small looking glass, three paper window curtains, one shaving case with razor, one small leather trunk, three small pictures and one bedstead.

*Passage furniture upstairs* included eight window blinds, 12 cane bottom chairs, one wooden clock (valued at \$10) four family pictures and the George Washington's camp chest. (The camp chest was probably the most historically valuable piece in the house, and is detailed in a future story in this six-part series).

The *Blue Room* featured one toilet, one curtained bedstead, one old looking glass, one easy chair, one dressing table, one washstand, one washbowl, one pitcher and three paper curtains.

The *Blue Room*, apparently on the first floor, was a bedroom, if the inventory proceeded in an orderly manner from room to room, then from floor to floor.

According to Withey, it was customary to have a first-floor bedroom, or "boarding room," to serve as a sick room so that the needs of the ill could be readily attended.

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Guests in the Winder's *Dining Room* would have seen two mahogany card tables, one walnut dining table, one small cherry table, one map of Pennsylvania, one carpet and hearth rug, one pair of cast-iron andirons, and one pair shovel and tongs.

Under *Household Furniture in the Back Room*, Leatherbury noted one small mahogany table, one pair shovel and tongs, one pair small brass andirons, one floor carpet, three paper curtains and one pair of cast-iron andirons.

In the *Hall*, Leatherbury found one "sopha," 12 mahogany chairs, two mahogany card tables, one mahogany tea table, one large mirror, one hearth rug, one pair andirons, one pair shovel and tongs, one picture of the Washington family, one picture of Penelope, one picture of Cleopatra, two family pictures and one furniture brush.

The *Parlour* was furnished with one mahogany "Side Board," one set of mahogany dining tables, 12 Windsor chairs, one large mirror, two knife cases, one floor carpet and hearth rug, one pair brass andirons, one pair shovel and tongs, one fender, three paper curtains, one map of the world, one map of the United States..."

"The contents are typical of somebody that was a free land holder and a gentleman of taste. Winder would have been in the same society as President Washington," Withey said.

The dozen Windsor chairs, valued at \$12 in 1819, could easily run in the hundreds of thousands of dollars in today's antique market.

Also listed were nine beds, the



**SOMERSET ARISTOCRACY.** Levin Winder and his wife Mary Stoughton Sloss Winder are shown in portraits painted at the home, Bloomsbury in Somerset County, by Pennsylvania artist William Clarke in 1793. A portion of the formal gardens can be seen behind Mrs. Winder, which included a fountain and pool. The mansion of the Winders' is shown to the right of the governor. Mrs. Winder, according to a contemporary, was "a good woman, and very much the lady." The portraits are now owned and displayed in the Baltimore Museum of Art.

lowest being worth \$58 and the highest valued at \$83.

"They lived so entirely different from the way we live today. The Winders, like other families, had a lot of houseguests that often stayed for a month or more at a time. People liked to get out of the city and visit their country relatives," he said.

At least 60 books were listed as being in the house in 1819. This collection, Withey said, indicates that Winder "... had quite a good library, which shows he was well-read in travel and about the world

and the nation. He was obviously impressed with Washington (from the books and pictures in the house) who was everybody's hero at that time," Withey said.

The wooden clock mentioned in the inventory was of American manufacture, Withey said. "The works were probably made cheap in Connecticut and local people made the case," he said.

In the garret (attic) Leatherbury found "one small rose water still."

"Rose water was frequently

used by the ladies on their face and bodies. The still was probably made of copper and was used to produce rose water. Rose petals were collected and distilled," Withey said.

In the cellar were eight barrels of brandy, 17 barrels of pork and fish and 19 stone pots, probably filled, Withey said, with sausage and other meats.

Cut glass bowls, queensware china, "six goblets marked 'W'" and 14 green-handled knives, 20 old forks and 14 china plates with a set of gilt tea china were part of the accessories used to set the table for dining. Withey said the green-handled knives were made of ivory

and dyed green, which was fashionable at the time.

The value of Winder's slaves and personal belongings in the house, excluding the farm and other holdings, was estimated at more than \$15,000.

For reasons yet unexplained, the two men taking the inventory listed under *Farming utensils* two grindstones, one chariot and harness, and "one Masonic gilt Trowell." The most coveted of Winder's personal treasures during his life, this trowell was used by Winder when he served as Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Maryland to

lay the cornerstone of the Washington Monument in Baltimore in 1815.

Of all the hundreds of items in the house, only three pieces are known today to have come from the mansion. They are the two portraits of Winder and his wife now in the Baltimore Museum of Art, and the camp chest of President Washington.

Like the mansion and the gracious way of life at this Somerset County plantation, the furnishings have become part of the lost legacy of Winder's estate.