

President Henry Tucker moved into this house in 1775, and was quickly embroiled in a major crisis. For, on the night of August 14 that year a group of Bermudians brought several whale boats into Tobacco Bay on the North Shore of St. George's, crept up the hill to the small building which served as Bermuda's arsenal, broke into it, and stole the gunpowder which was sent to the Revolutionary American Forces besieging Boston.

President Henry's father, Colonel Henry Tucker, whose portrait by Blackburn hangs in the house, was part of the conspiracy. So was the President's brother, St. George, whose portrait by Durand we also have, as well as a number of other relatives. But President Henry himself was married to Frances Bruere, daughter of fiercely patriotic Royal Governor General George James Bruere, and the days that followed must have been ones of anguish and crisis for him.

The powder was stolen because the Continental Congress had declared a ban on exports to all British colonies not taking part in the revolt. The 13 mainland colonies were the granary for Bermuda, Bahamas and the British West Indies, and the ban was a shrewd blow.

An unofficial Bermuda delegation to Philadelphia asked that the ban be lifted, but were rebuffed by the Congress, unless Bermuda supplied the powder in the colony's magazine. This the Bermudians did — and the ban was eventually lifted.

The theft of the powder led to a British warship being stationed in Bermuda, and there were a number of clashes between British, seamen and Bermudians. Feeling ran high, and it would appear that among the colony's leaders President Henry was one of the few who were able to work with both sides to promote internal peace.

We do not have President Henry's portrait; others in the house depict his mother, Anne Tucker nee Butterfield (another old Bermuda name) and brothers and sisters, including Thomas Tudor Tucker, later a treasurer of the United States, and Nathaniel Tucker, a dreamy poet and doctor of medicine, who settled in Yorkshire, England. Late in life Nathaniel became a convert to the ideas of the Swedish theologian Swedenborg, and his translations of Swedenborg's works influenced several major English writers such as Blake, and this is probably his best claim to fame.

FURNITURE

Much of the furniture in the House was collected by President Henry's sister Frances, whose great grandson, Mr. Robert Tucker of Baltimore gave these collected pieces to the house when he died in 1950 at the remarkable age of 102. Notable among the pieces in the museum are:

In the drawing room, an English mahogany cabinet with original Japanese fan hinges, made c. 1750; a Bermuda cedar tea table with drake feet (c. 1730); an American mahogany china case with a unique pierced pediment top and original panes and brass hinges (c. 1760); a Bermuda cedar chest with interesting dovetail design signifying the particular cabinet maker (c. 1750), and a mahogany piecrust table, the top being one piece of wood and having a birdcage and ball and claw feet, (c. 1810). In the dining room: a large mahogany dining table made from a tree grown in Cuba.

In the far bedroom: a Bermuda cedar highboy with original brass (c. 1760) and an English mahogany tester bed with a beautiful hand-sewn quilt (c. 1750).

In the nursery: a three-sided cedar cradle-bed and a unique English mahogany secretary with mirrors (c. 1750). In the study, a Bermuda cedar drop leaf table (c. 1730) and an English mahogany breakfront housing an assorted collection of Tucker family silver engraved with their coat of arms.

JOSEPH HAYNE RAINEY

A short flight of stairs leads from the study into the old kitchen which was kept as a separate building years ago. During the U.S. Civil War the kitchen was rented by Aubrey Harvey Tucker to Joseph Hayne Rainey as a barber shop, and the room is now a memorial to him.

Mr. Rainey was a free black man who with his wife, escaped from South Carolina aboard a blockade runner early in the war. In St. George's he ran a successful business while his wife became Bermuda's premier dressmaker. Mr. Rainey educated himself aided by his customers, and he also partook of the life around him. In 1866 he returned to South Carolina and in 1870 was elected a member of the House of Representatives in Washington. Sworn in on December 12 that year, he was the first black member of the House. He retained his seat throughout the reconstruction era, ending his Congressional years on March 3, 1879. He died at the age of 55 on August 2, 1887, and was buried at Georgetown, S.C.

Tucker House, like most old Bermuda homes, has large cellars underneath which were used as slave quarters and storage areas during the 1700s. A portion of these cellars has been converted into a bookstore.

