

Girandoles

by
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A few weeks ago I was in Elinor Townsend's house looking for a set of girandoles that were listed in her will to come to the Historical Society. I found the three piece set on the mantle, but couldn't find the "basket of fruit" set. I finally did find them in a side room and so they all have a new home in LeRoy House.



of wood. There are birds and butterflies, houses and flowers. In the dark hall, it was hard to see them and when we moved the clock, we were able to get it back working and it keeps perfect time - - if I remember to wind it. It even rings on the quarter hour and strikes on the hour.

Some other items that we received from the Townsend Estate include tables,

Girandoles are ornamental branched candlesticks. Sometimes they are attached to either side of a mirror, but usually they are free standing candle holders that are very elegant. The word, "girandole" is French but was taken from an Italian word meaning a radiating burst of light like a fireworks.

They were first introduced in the 17th Century but became very popular in homes of the wealthy in the 18th Century. The ones that we received date to about 1850. The bases are marble with a gilt bronze design. The cast bronze figures are finished on only one side, which means that they are displayed on a mantle or against the wall, so you can't see the back side. Although some girandole sets were made for a table and can be viewed from all sides.

One of the sets that came from the Townsend House were missing all of the crystals or prisms. Below each candle would hang 10 prisms and there were five candles, so I needed to find 50 matched crystals. I couldn't find antique ones but I found a lamp supply company on the internet and I was able to find reproduction glass prisms. They weren't cheap, but Barb Elliott suggested that we use the memorial money that was donated in memory of her mother, Maybelle Anchor. Barb said that when she saw those girandoles, she thought of her mother, so we ordered 50 glass prisms. Each one is wired to a square glass piece that is hung from the brackets on the girandoles. Barb came in last week and helped me hook all of the crystals onto the girandoles. Now they are

really magnificent.

At a time when houses were lit with candles, anything that would reflect the light made the room brighter. So the prisms catch the candlelight and to make the whole effect more dramatic, we have placed the girandoles in front of a huge mirror with a massive gold frame, also a gift from the Townsend Estate. Below the mirror is a very classic marble topped pier table. The table, mirror and girandoles are in the main hall, which used to be pretty dark, but certainly now is quite grand. We had to move the 1740 English tall case clock that was donated by the Woodward family into the land office and actually it looks much better there.

Now you can see all the intricate designs that have been pieced together from small pieces

bles, chairs, many pieces of coin silver tea spoons from some of the early LeRoy families, several paintings and two parian statues. We also received an 1870s Eastlake style music cabinet, which belonged to Charlotte Keeney. It now stands in the back parlor next to the Steinway piano filled with antique music books.

It's really amazing to see what a few changes can take place that will make the LeRoy House look so much better. In addition to the girandoles and furniture, we have also received several boxes of photographs and papers from the Townsend and Keeney family that need to be sorted, but a quick look in some of the boxes indicate that there are some historical treasures waiting to be discovered.

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