

Seward House Museum

Hand-on-History Camp

Garden Activity Kit:

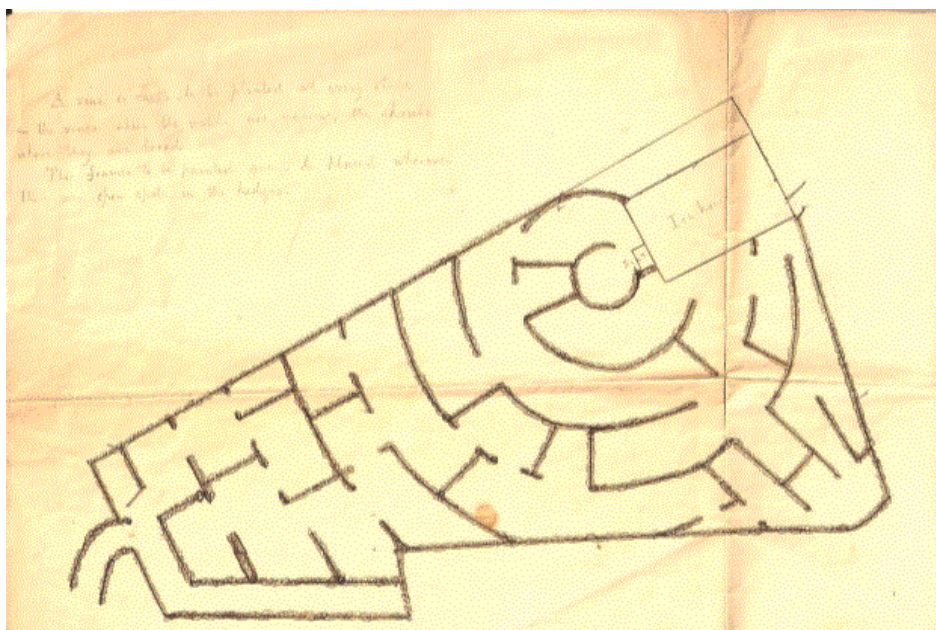


Bring your Activity Book with you from the camp box!

Welcome to the Seward House Museum’s historic grounds and gardens! To get started on this activity kit, make your way to the Museum, located at 33 South Street in Auburn. Feel free to park anywhere in our lot, or, if you live nearby, walk over! Once you’ve arrived, make your way to the visitor’s entrance porch in the rear or southern part of the grounds.

Stand on the porch with your back to the museum and face the grounds. If you walk out straight ahead towards the gazebo, you should notice a numbered signs in front of you. (Number one is by the porch, number two is the gazebo, number three is located near the stone barns, etc.) This is a walking trail of the gardens—follow it by moving forward until you reach stop number four.

Activity One: The Maze. Believe it or not, this small, triangular grassy piece of yard between the trail, fence, and stone barns was once the home of a labyrinth hedgemaze designed by Mr. Seward’s son Fred! This is what Fred’s maze looked like:



In your activity book, design and draw your own maze. Imagine that, like Fred, you could put this anywhere you wanted— at home, a family member or friend’s house, or even a school or park! Where would your maze go? Would you put anything in the center of it?

Activity Two: The Summer House. Keep walking up the trail until you find stop number five. This little building is called “Mr. Seward’s Summer House.” This is what it looked like when he lived here 150 years ago:



Mr. Seward called this his “summer house” because on hot days he used to escape his larger home for this shady spot. But Mr. Seward did more than cool off here. He wrote many of his most famous speeches in the “summer house.” It provided a quiet place to think as he fought to make the world a better place.

Why don't you try it? Enter the summer house and think. What are three ideas you have that would make the world a better place? Write them down in your activity book.

Activity Three: The Sundial. Follow the trail back towards the house until you find stop number seven: Mr. Seward's sundial. Does it look familiar?



Mr. Seward brought his sundial to Auburn shortly after he retired from politics in 1869. During Seward's life, there were no time zones or national timekeeping system, so a tool like this allowed him to tell solar time, or time fixed by the sun in which noon is established as the moment when the sun is highest in the sky.

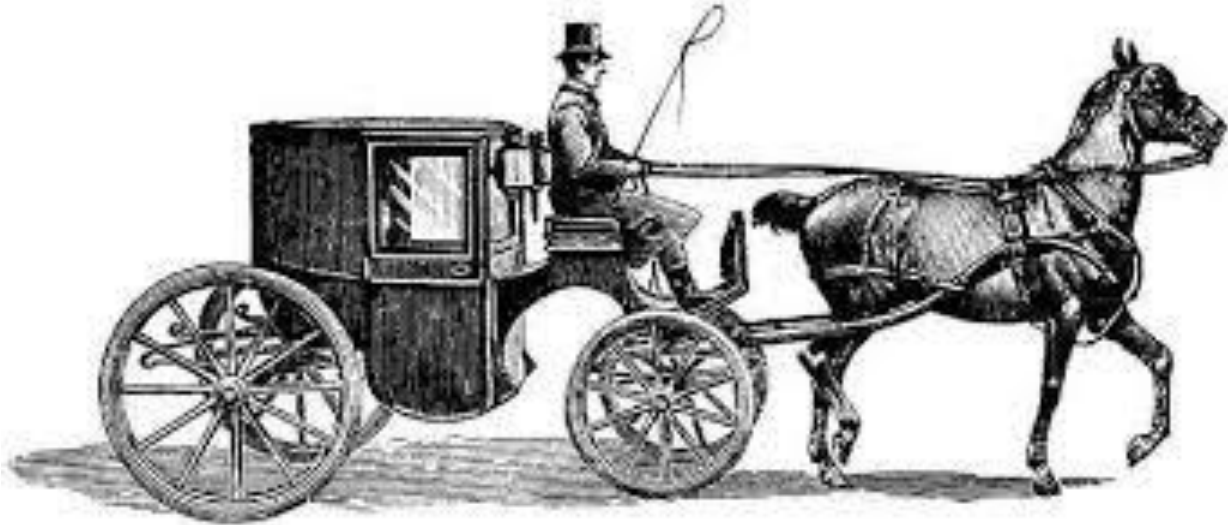
In your activity book, tell us what time it is based on this sundial. To read it, find the gnomon on the dial—the tall piece extending from its face—and follow the shadow line it is casting. What number is the shadow pointing towards? If you or someone with you has a watch, is the sundial time the same?

Activity Four: The South Porch. After stopping to check what time it is, make your way past the fountain and to the porch that has a globe on it. Go halfway up the steps, then ask the adult that's with you to take a picture of you on the South

Porch. Guess what, you'll be with good company, look at the picture below; see anyone familiar? Notice it looked a little different back then!



Activity Five: Lions or Griffins? Welcome to the front of the Seward's House! Believe it or not, this house was built over 204 years ago, though it would have looked a little different then. For your last activity, look to your right. You should see a gate leading out to South St. Make your way in that direction until you see a stone block between the sidewalk and the road. That's called a carriage or mounting block, and they were used to help people step down from their horse and buggy.



Step on that block, and pretend like you were visiting the Seward's back in the 1850s. Look to the top of the gates on your left and right, what animals do you see? Draw a sketch in your activity book, and label it "Judge Miller's Lions":

The terracotta lions were put in by the man who built this house, Judge Elijah Miller, whose daughter, Frances, would marry Mr. Seward. Eventually they would inherit the house, and just like Judge Miller, they wanted a stone animal to greet their visitors as well. Do you see any other statues near the front of the house?

Make your way back down the walkway to the front steps and look at the griffins Mr. Seward had put on the stairway. A griffin is a legendary creature with the body, tail, and back legs of a lion and the head and wings of an eagle.

Activity Six: Back to the Porch

Return to the visitor's porch where you started your journey today. When the Seward family lived here, this was known as the "kitchen porch" since it opened from the house kitchen into these gardens. The Seward family grew many of their own fruits and vegetables; they also raised a lot of farm animals in their barns. In the spirit of that, please find a special seasoning kit which includes lots of herbs and spices for you. Take it home, and try your hand at the recipe card included inside!