



Decoding Primary Source Documents at Liberty Hall Museum

Documents speak volumes and can give us insight into historical events, but what exactly is a document? A document is a written or printed paper or record furnishing information or evidence. Do you think you have ever handled a document? Have you ever received a receipt from a restaurant or store? That receipt is a document, and that “document”, if found two hundred years from now, could provide a historian in the year 2220 vital information about the diet of people living 200 years ago.

The document you’ll be examining today is a specific type of document, called a primary source document. That means it was created at the time under study.

The document below is a copy of the original document. We have provided this document for study purposes because the actual document may be too fragile to handle. While analyzing this document, you will be doing the work of a historian. When you read a social studies textbook, have you ever wondered “how do we know that happened?” or whose viewpoint is being represented. This is your opportunity to directly explore how historians record history.

Instructions:

- Start by looking at the document itself. Do your best to read the document and try to pick out a few words. We have provided a transcribed version for you of the document to make things a little easier.
- Read through the transcription.
- Follow the prompts on the worksheet:
 - Collect Knowledge
 - Analyze the Information
 - Question the Document
- Remember to think about what conclusions you can draw about this period in history from reading the document.

Tag us on Social Media!

If you enjoyed decoding this document, we'd love to hear about it! Please share your stories and pictures by emailing the museum or tagging us on our social media platforms!

- Email: libertyhall@kean.edu
- Facebook: libertyhallmuseum
- Instagram: @libertyhallmuseum

Document:

Newspaper: New Jersey Journal, Elizabethtown, New Jersey

Printed: February 18, 1806

TO BE SOLD,

At the Tontine Coffee House, in New-York, on the 20th March, at one o'clock, if not previously sold by private contract;

THE COUNTRY SEAT formerly belonging to Governor Livingston, and now the property of Mr. Belafise, situated on the Morris Turnpike road, one mile from Elizabeth-Town, in New-Jersey.—

The House is in the best order, has a front of eighty feet, and contains fourteen rooms with fire places, large Cellars, &c.

The Barns, Stables, Coach Houses, and all the other out buildings, have been erected within five years.

There is also a Hot House 60 feet in length, filled with the finest fruits, such as Peaches, Nectarines, Cherries, &c., and the best sorts of Grapes. Behind the Hot House is a large Wash House with Cisterns and Pumps, and a winter Milk House; the same flies heating the Hot House & the Coppers of the Wash House.

An Ice House now filled.—A kitchen Garden of nearly an acre and a half, surrounded by a high Espalier Fence, covered with fine fruit and containing all the best sorts of Vegetables and small fruits known in Europe and America.

The Garden or pleasure ground in front of the house (of three acres) has gravel walks round it, and contains a great variety of flowering shrubs, Flowers and Fruits imported from different parts of Europe.—The whole containing about twenty-two acres.—The land in good order, having an Orchard and a Spring of excellent water which never freezes in winter nor fails in summer, and which supplies a Fish Pond.—There is a good Pump in the Kitchen Yard, and several good Cisterns.—The premises may be viewed after the first of March.

Also to be sold, on the 16th day of March, by Auction, at E. Town, several lots of Land amounting to more than 80 acres, which now form a part of the Farm belonging to Mr. Belafise.—Any person purchasing the House lot, may have an opportunity of buying these lots either in part or the whole of them, by private contract, by applying to Mr. Belafise.

The title is indisputable and possession will be given in May.

Elizabeth-Town, N. J. Feb. 17, 1806.

** * The Sale of the several out LOTS of LAND, above mentioned, is postponed until Wednesday the 2d of April next.*

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There is also a Hot House 10 feet in length, filled
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Background information: When William Livingston died in 1790 the house and land were inherited by his second eldest son, Henry. Henry did not want the house in New Jersey, and eventually sold the land in 1798 to a man known as Lord Bolingbroke or George Belasise. In 1806, Lord Bolingbroke sold the land to Thomas Eddy. It was not until 1811 that Liberty Hall was purchased by Peter Kean for his mother, Susan Livingston Kean Niemcewicz, who brought the home into the Kean family.

Collect Knowledge:

What is the date? _____

Who is the author? Do we know? _____

Where was this document printed? _____

Analyze the Information:

1. How many different gardens are included on the property?
 - a. Why would potential buyers be interested in knowing what kinds of food were already growing on the property?
2. This sale is not only selling the house. What other buildings are being offered for sale?
 - a. Why were those other outbuildings so important to daily life in 1806?
3. This is a Real Estate advertisement. What is different about this advertisement than Real Estate ads we see today?

Question the Document:

What questions does this document raise? Feel free to email your questions to the museum at libertyhall@kean.edu.

In the transcription, the empty brackets that look like this [], mean the transcriber was not sure what was printed. Even printed word from 214 years ago can sometimes be hard to decipher!

Try your hand at figuring out what those words might be and send us an email with your best guess at libertyhall@kean.edu.

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