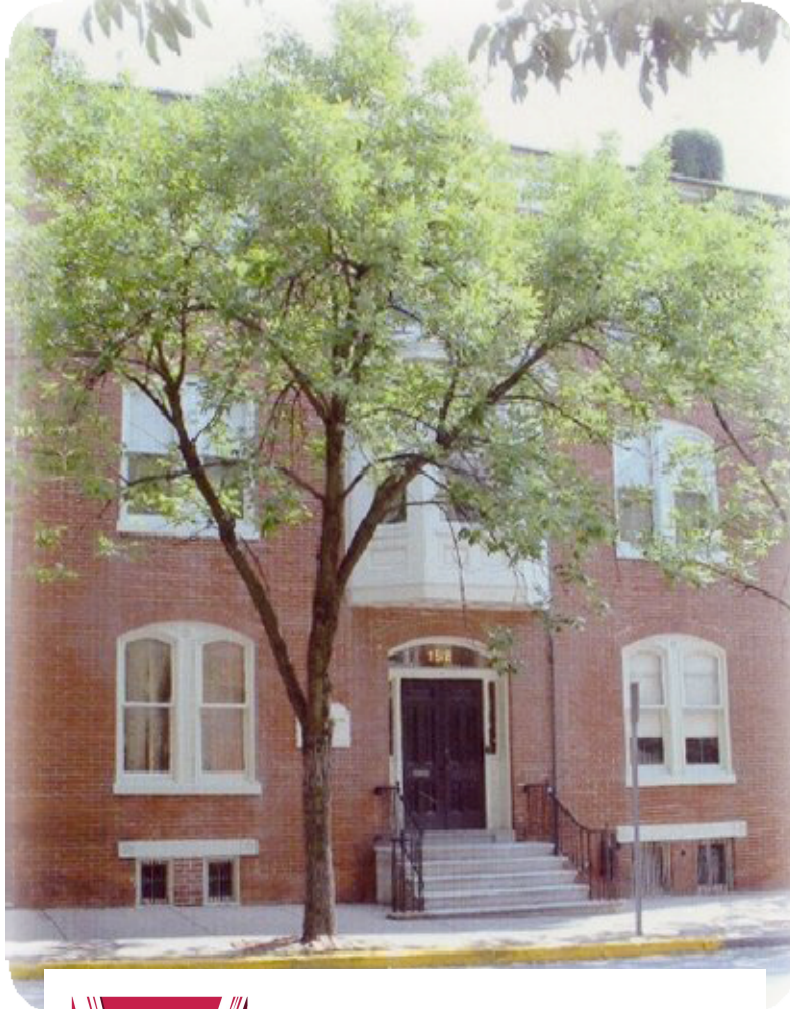


# THE BONHAM HOUSE

## TEACHERS' EXHIBIT GUIDE



YORK COUNTY  
**HISTORY**  
— CENTER —

717-848-1587

[www.yorkhistorycenter.org](http://www.yorkhistorycenter.org)

# THE BONHAM HOUSE

*Location & Address:* 152 West Market Street  
York, PA 17103

*Telephone:* 717-848-1587

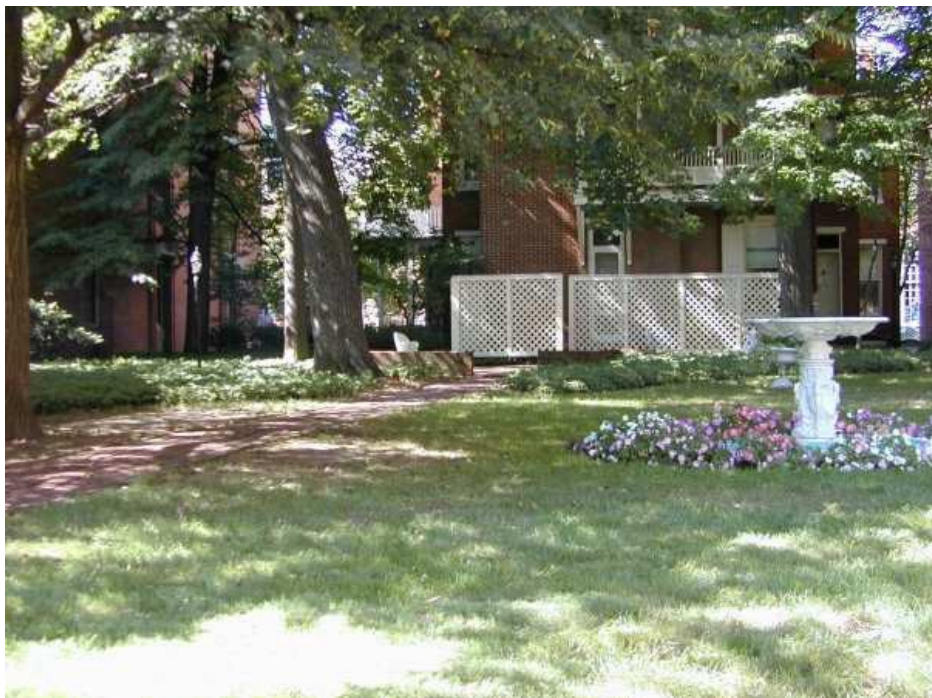
*Website:* [www.yorkheritage.org](http://www.yorkheritage.org)

*Reservations:* Education Department  
717-848-1587, ext. 301  
[education@yorkhistorycenter.org](mailto:education@yorkhistorycenter.org)

## TEACHERS ARE WELCOME TO VISIT THE HISTORY CENTER FOR FREE TO PLAN A FIELD TRIP!

We will make every effort to have a staff member meet with you to discuss your needs and plan your field trip. However, it is recommended that you make an appointment to meet with a member of our staff beforehand. If you arrive unannounced, they may not be able to meet with you.

We thank you for your cooperation!



# INTRODUCTION

How many families can say they lived in a house for almost 100 years? The Bonham family did just that from 1875 to 1965.

Horace Bonham trained as a lawyer, but his real passion was in artwork. He spent most of his life as a painter of portraits, landscapes and genre scenes, and many of his paintings can be seen in the house. He and his wife, Rebekah, had four daughters and moved into this townhouse in 1875. His second child, Elizabeth (affectionately known as “Bessie”), lived in the home until she died in 1965. At the time of her death, she had lived in her family’s home since she was two-years-old: 91 of her 93 years. As she had never married or had children, she willed her home and all of its contents to the Historical Society of York County (now the York County Heritage Trust).

Rooms in this three-story house reflect the period from the 1850s to the 1930s. Through a guided tour, visitors learn about life for an upper-middle class family, and about the Bonham family in particular, during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.



*Elizabeth “Bessie” Bonham was Horace Bonham’s second daughter. She lived in her family’s home for 91 years until her death in 1965.*



# A TYPICAL TOUR

Horace and Rebekah Bonham were married in 1870. They had four daughters: Mary, Elizabeth, Amy, and Eleanor. This building was the “family homestead” from 1875 to 1965. As a result, nearly all of the artifacts in this museum pertain directly to the Bonham family, and were used by the family in their daily lives. The Bonham House is a rare, firsthand look into the personal lives of the Bonham family.

## CASE ROOM

Tours of the Bonham House begin in this room, which has cases containing artifacts relating directly to the history of the Bonham Family. Photos and other family member-specific items are located in these cases.

## FOYER

The entrance to the house is lined with stained glass windows that date to the 1870s. A large fireplace and mantle are located directly across from the front door, a sign of the family’s wealth.



## TEA PARLOR

The front parlors of the home were used for entertaining. Ladies would typically gather in this room for tea and other social meetings. A “music room” is located in the back of the parlor. All of the Bonham sisters could either sing or play an instrument, a common trait of young ladies at the time.

## LIBRARY

As books became more affordable in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many upper class families stocked their homes with new and classic books. A domino game is also in progress on the library table.

## DINING ROOM

A dining room was used as much for entertaining as it was for eating. Dinner parties were common for wealthy families of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and elegant glasses and china were important to make a good impression on guests. There is a special door in this room for servants to use, allowing them to enter and leave the room without disturbing the party.

## MASTER BEDROOM

This bedroom resembles how Horace and Rebekah Bonham would have remembered it. Fireplaces exist in just about every room, as even the most well built homes could still be cold and drafty in the winter. Pictures of both Horace and Rebekah may be seen on either side of the bed.

## SITTING ROOM

In her later years, Elizabeth Bonham lived almost exclusively on the second and third floors of her home. One of her favorite activities was to sit in this room and look out its windows, which offer a nice view of Market Street below. Some local visitors to the Trust remember looking up into this window and seeing Bessie wave at them from her chair.

## GUEST BEDROOM

Interpreted as a guest bedroom, this room also displays some items collected by Bessie Bonham during her trips around the world. In addition to visiting Europe and the Middle East, Bessie had a particular fondness for Japan and the Japanese culture.

## DRESSING ROOM

A key artifact located in this room is a - an item worn in the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries that was designed to help women achieve a slim figure. Young boys sometimes wore corsets as well, as it was thought the tight-fitting garment would aid in their posture. In reality, corsets were extremely constricting and often caused great physical pain for women, who were expected to wear them throughout their lives.



## ART GALLERY

Today, this room is used as a gallery to display some examples of Horace Bonham's

artwork. Horace kept an art studio in the backyard, where the sunlight allowed him to see clearly to paint. Horace specialized in portraits and landscapes, and would often portray the same people repeatedly, sometimes using different styles. Books pertaining to family history are also on display in this room.

## SERVANT'S BEDROOM

A small bedroom like this could have been used as a sleeping space for a servant. Though often portrayed as abused or mistreated, servants were typically treated well by the families for which they worked. Some families even paid for their servants to have fine clothes, allowing them to dress as well as the family.

## SERVANT'S STAIRCASE

This winding, hidden staircase runs throughout all three floors of the Bonham House. Narrow and tucked into a wall, the stairs begin outside the dining room, lead to the servant's bedroom, and continue up to the top floor. The servant's staircase allowed housekeepers to move freely throughout the house without disturbing the family members using the main staircase.

## CHILDREN'S PLAYROOM

This room was a nursery for the Bonham girls; a place for them to keep their toys and play (especially if their parents were expecting guests). The idea of having "tea parties" with dolls was actually a way for young girls to practice the social graces they were expected to know and master by the time they reached adulthood.