

Lesson Plan: Comparing Colonial American Homes: The Moffatt-Ladd House (Portsmouth, NH) and the Lee Mansion, (Marblehead, MA)



Moffatt-Ladd House and Garden (view from garden) on the left, Lee Mansion on the right

*Workshop: Reaching for Truth: Exploring the Issue of Slavery in the Era of the American Revolution*

Daniel Ritchie, U.S. History Teacher, Marblehead High School

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A special thanks to the curators, historians, and tour guides at both sites for this professional development workshop and that helped provide the information needed to create this lesson plan. Teachers who plan to visit these sites will find an outstanding group of professionals that are ready and willing to share their knowledge, passion for history, and access to historical resources to ensure the lives and lessons from the past endure.

### 1) Learning Objectives:

Students will analyze and compare by analyzing architecture and spaces from each home to make connections and conclusions about the past.

Students will visit two colonial-era homes. It is important that students visit at least one of these homes. The Moffatt-Ladd Home is in Portsmouth, NH and the Lee Mansion is in Marblehead, MA. Both offer a vivid look at what life was like in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century in American history, from the lives of two prominent merchant families. If site visits to both homes are not possible, there are resources on both websites to compare (see “Resources” section of this lesson plan).

Grades: 9-12

### 2) Context:

This lesson can be conducted during a unit on Colonial America/American Revolution. For AP US History, this would be conducted during the teaching of Period 3, 1754-1800. The purpose of this lesson is to encourage the use of architecture as a primary source to analyze how two wealthy New England families lived during the mid- to late-1700s.

It is important to note to students that information regarding the Lee Mansion and how each room was utilized is largely historical conjecture. Many of the sources – especially concerning the use of slaves and servants – were lost along the way. The Moffatt-Ladd Home has many more of these sources on hand, thus one can piece together a clearer historical picture. Despite these missing pieces, students will be asked to explain how they feel each room was utilized and why. Questions, such as how servants or slaves were used, what each room says about who may have utilized it, and what types of architectural elements are similar and what elements differ, will all be an important part of this lesson.

### 3) Duration:

Three to four days total: One day for students to read the material. One day for a site visit to either the Moffatt-Ladd Home (Portsmouth, NH) or the Lee Mansion (Marblehead, MA). Add another day if the instructor can do both sites.

One day should be for in-class time after the visit(s) to discuss their experience with both homes and what the architecture of each home says about life for two wealthy merchant families in the mid- to late-18<sup>th</sup> century in two coastal New England towns.

### 4) Resources used:

loc.gov/teachers (Primary Source Analysis Tool)

moffatladd.org

marbleheadmuseum.org/properties/lee-mansion/

- This site has a series of pictures from the Lee Mansion and an animated history of the home: <https://vimeo.com/103383514> . If a site visit to the Moffatt-Ladd home in Portsmouth is the only possibility, students should be instructed to use this website to gather information about the Lee Mansion.

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1. Students should read about the history of each home before visiting. For the Moffatt-Ladd Home, this is located under the → by(nxt`MIX`<ZnujZ®tab from <http://moffatladd.org/historypeople.html>. For the Lee Mansion, students can visit the Marblehead Museum website: <http://www.marbleheadmuseum.org/properties/lee-mansion/>. The background reading from the website for Jeremiah Lee, along with an excerpt about Marblehead at this time is provided below. Students should take notes in the <xZ`Gbyd`3n{Zy` H nxi yaZZ{.
2. Depending on the level of the class, students may also tackle the issue of slavery in New England at this time. Students should read the excerpt from *Black Portsmouth* to help build their contextual knowledge before visiting the homes. Further, to gather context about slavery in Marblehead, students can read an excerpt from the e-book: *History of Essex County, Massachusetts: With Biographical Sketches of Many of Its Pioneers and Prominent Men, Vol. 2* (1888), p. 1078-1084. ([https://books.google.com/books?id=k98\\_AQAAMAAJ&pg=PA1079&lpg=PA1079&dq=slavery+in+marblehead&source=bl&ots=k0oQ3xcFr8&sig=VFO8G7zGDfH5NCBHjIXVPO5sAjc&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjzns7hosvXAhVEh1QKHS40AncQ6AEIMzAC#v=onepage&q=slavery%20in%20marblehead&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=k98_AQAAMAAJ&pg=PA1079&lpg=PA1079&dq=slavery+in+marblehead&source=bl&ots=k0oQ3xcFr8&sig=VFO8G7zGDfH5NCBHjIXVPO5sAjc&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjzns7hosvXAhVEh1QKHS40AncQ6AEIMzAC#v=onepage&q=slavery%20in%20marblehead&f=false)). The excerpt from the e-book that mentions Jeremiah Lee is provided below.
3. Students can fill out additional notes from this reading on the Pre-Visit Notes Worksheet.

#### 5) Resources from the workshop:

*Black Portsmouth: Three Centuries of African-American Heritage*, Mark J. Sammons and Valerie Cunningham (excerpt, highlighting the Moffatt-Ladd House and the NH Petition of Freedom (1779)).

NH Petition of Freedom, <http://www.trinityhistory.org/AmH/SlavesNH1779.pdf>

Petition for freedom to the Massachusetts Council and the House of Representatives, January 1777, <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6237/>.

Artifacts from each site.

#### 6) Structure:

##### a. Exercises:

1. Students should xZNX`{aZ`UNWl`xn| I X`xZNXb` `bjj` n| {`{aZ`<xZ`Gbyd`3n{Zy`H nxi yaZZ{.
2. f nk ujZ{Z`MIX`XbV| yy`{aZ`<xk`Mt`@n| xVZ`" I Njtyb`Annj` , nxi yaZZ{ from the Library of Congress.

##### b. Outcomes:

1. Students will use their ab(nxMjMIMjty`yi`bjj` to examine physical spaces and what conclusions can be drawn from their respective visit(s).
2. Students can share their findings in class discussion and build on each other's findings to draw conclusions about life for wealthy merchant families at this time in American history.
3. Students can further examine an artifact from each home and use historical analysis to deduce the purpose of the artifact.



Jeremiah Lee, 1722-1775

Source: <http://www.marbleheadmuseum.org/properties/lee-mansion/who-was-jeremiah-lee/>

Jeremiah Lee, 1722-1775



A ship owner and merchant, Col. Jeremiah Lee was one of the most affluent men of the English North American colonies. His vessels, laden with salted and dried fish, sailed to ports around the Atlantic Ocean and returned to Marblehead with wine, fruit, textiles, flour and other commodities. In 1766, at age 45, Col. Lee began building the Mansion. Only the best quality woodwork, hand painted wallpaper and custom-made furnishings were used in this public statement of Lee's wealth and importance in the community. Amazingly, most of the architectural elements remain intact. Combined with the desire to build his Mansion in the manner of an English gentleman, Jeremiah Lee was also an ardent patriot.

He was active in town government and served as Colonel of Marblehead's town militia for 25 years. Lee participated in the Massachusetts province's new congress and was elected leader of a regional political body that dealt directly with the military governor appointed by King George II and III. Using his trading agents in Spain, Lee procured weapons and ammunition which he then smuggled into various locations in towns outside of Boston. His involvement in the preparations for armed conflict between England and the colonies in April 1775 turned deadly after a meeting with John Hancock, Samuel Adams and fellow Marbleheaders, Elbridge Gerry and Azor Orne. The three Marblehead men had settled down for the night at the tavern where they had held their meeting. Disturbed by the British Regulars marching toward Lexington, the men left the tavern and hid in a corn field. Jeremiah Lee became ill with fever from the exposure and died three weeks later in Newton at age 54, on May 10, 1775.



By the 1760s, Marblehead was a cosmopolitan shipping center. Many of the town's merchants prospered and built impressive homes but Jeremiah intended his Mansion to be monumental in both size and in the quality of the interior. All four facades were faced with wood that was cut to resemble stone and grains of sand were blown onto the wet paint to add the appearance and texture of stone. The interior was graced with a spacious central hallway and soaring staircase surrounded by rooms highlighted with elegantly carved moldings, hand crafted wallpapers and opulent furnishings. The grandeur extended to the 2nd floor, up to the more intimate proportions of the 3rd floor and stopped at the breathtaking, 360° view of Marblehead from the cupola.

Joseph, the eldest son, went to Harvard College in 1768 and got married in 1771. Mary, the eldest daughter, married wealthy Newburyport merchant Nathaniel Tracy in February 1775 and Col. Lee died only 3 months later without leaving a will. The war, a business network based primarily on credit and the complexities of a new form of government disrupted everything. It took 13 years for the estate to be settled. In 1788, Lee's estate was declared bankrupt and the assets were liquidated.

After 1785, title to the Mansion was held by mortgage holders. Following the death of the Lee's eldest son, Martha waived her widow's rights and title passed to her son-in-law Nathaniel Tracy. Title then went to his creditors. In 1804, nearly thirty years after Lee's death, the Mansion was bought by a bank which owned it until 1904, when it ceased operations. The bank made few changes to the building and the Marblehead Historical Society purchased the Mansion in 1909.

Martha Lee

Martha Lee died in Newbury in 1791 at age 62, surviving her husband by 16 years.

The eldest daughter, Mary, married in 1775.

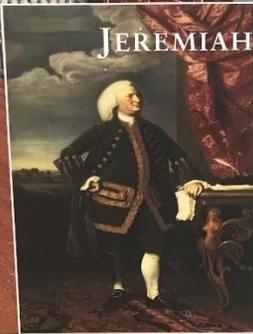
Her son served as a Captain in the Marblehead regiment and died at age 37, in 1785.

The other two sons, Nathaniel and Joseph died prior to 1785.

One daughter married in 1785 and another daughter died in 1785 after childbirth.



**JEREMIAH LEE MANSION** is a superlative example of Colonial Georgian architecture. Many of the mansion's original decorative elements have been preserved, including rare 18th century wood carvings and English hand-painted wallpapers—the only such wall treatments surviving in place. The house is furnished with an outstanding collection of early American decorative arts



**JEREMIAH LEE** was one of the most successful and affluent men in America before the Revolution. A leading merchant in Marblehead, he owned one of the largest fleets of vessels in the English colonies.

**Information at 781-631-1768**  
**MARBLEHEADMUSEUM.ORG**

-informational placard in front of Lee Mansion.

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1887.

There were, at this time, about sixty merchants engaged in the foreign trade, besides a large number of shoremen, who prosecuted the fisheries. Some of the houses built by these merchants were among the finest in the province, and one, the palatial residence of Col. Jeremiah Lee, is said to have cost over ten thousand pounds. Nearly every family of sufficient wealth

MARBLEHEAD.

1079

owned several negro slaves, and Col. Lee is said to have owned a large number, whom he employed in the work of loading and unloading his ships as fast as they arrived in foreign ports.

Slavery, so far from being considered an evil, was regarded as the only normal condition of the negro, and the institution was fostered and encouraged throughout the province. The church records of Marblehead bear evidence that even the clergymen of the town owned negro servants, some of whom were baptized and received into the church. Slave marriages are recorded also on the records of all three of the earlier churches.

A very interesting tradition is related concerning the Rev. Peter Bours, one of the earlier rectors of St. Michael's Church. It seems that among other servants, the reverend gentleman owned a very ill-tempered and vicious woman. One night, in a fit of ugliness, she attempted to take the life of her master, and the next day, having some regard for his personal safety, he sold her. With the money thus obtained, Mr. Bours procured a life-size portrait of himself, painted by one of the most celebrated artists in the country.

The newspapers of this period and for many years previous offered abundant evidence of the existence of negro slavery in Marblehead. A few of the advertisements copied from their files will doubtless be found of interest:

the sum of £350 for the use of the schools, and the trustees were instructed to report annually as to their condition. At a meeting held by adjournment, it was voted to establish three new schools for teaching reading, writing and arithmetic. Messrs. Jayne, Phippen and Ashton were selected as teachers, and the trustees reported that about one hundred and sixty scholars attended each of these schools. A few years later the town voted to erect two new school-houses on account of the crowded condition of the schools. Children were expected to be qualified to read before entering these schools, and, as a consequence, the children of the poor, whose parents in many instances could not read themselves, were denied admission. The town elected a committee to investigate the matter, and it was found that one hundred and twenty-two boys were untaught. To remedy this evil, it was voted that the children of the poor should be taught the necessary branches to qualify them for entrance into the schools at the expense of the town. This was the foundation of primary schools and the beginning of the present system of public instruction in Marblehead.

Governor Barnard having dissolved the Legislature of Massachusetts, and refusing to call it together again, a convention was held in Boston, in September, 1768, "to deliberate on constitutional measures to obtain redress of their grievances." The day after the convention adjourned, a body of British troops

"Ran away from his master, Capt. Richard Trevett, of Marblehead, a Negro Man Named Pompey, about Twenty two years of age; a Lusty-Tall fellow. He had on when he went away a striped homespun jacket, cotton & Linen shirt, dark coloured Kersey Breeches, gray yarn stockings, round To'd Leather heel shoes and Felt Hat.

"(NOTE).—He deserted his Master's service in the Shallop Ann at Plymouth. Whoever shall apprehend the said Runaway and him safely convey to his said Master at Marblehead or to Mr. Francis Miller in Boston, near the Green Dragon, shall have fifty shillings reward and all necessary charges paid.

"Aug. 6, 1724."

"To be sold by Jacob Fowle, Esq., and Mrs. Susannah Palmer, Administrators of the estate of John Palmer, late of Marblehead, deceased, a likely Negro Man, about 25 years old, and a fine Negro Boy, about 14.

"Marblehead, Oct. 15, 1750."

"Ran away from Capt. John Diamond, at Marblehead, on Tuesday, the 11th of September Instant, a Spanish Negro Fellow named Cuffe, about 25 years old; speaks broken English, and can talk Spanish Language. He is a tall, slim Fellow; had on a new felt Hat, striped homespun Jacket and Breeches, New Shoes with square Buckles. Whoever will bring or send the said Negro to Mr. Norwood, Innholder at Lynn, shall have Two dollars Reward and all necessary charges paid. All masters of vessels and others are cautioned not to conceal or carry off the said Negro, as they would avoid the penalty of the Law.

"Sept. 29, 1759."

The excitement incident to the passage of the Stamp Act did not cause the citizens of Marblehead to forget other matters of local importance. At the annual meeting in March, 1767, a board of trustees was chosen to direct and manage the affairs of the schools. There were several public schools in the town, but they were in a deplorable condition, and the well-to-do families preferred to send their children to private teachers. The town appropriated

landed in Boston and marched to the Common. The selectmen were requested to furnish quarters for the soldiers, and, as they refused to do so, the State-House was opened for their reception. The presence of British soldiers in the capital town and the frequent impressment of American seaman by ships of the British Navy, excited the indignation of the people throughout the province. These attempts to bring the people into subjection to the will of the ministry of Great Britain were firmly resisted by the colonists, with a determination never to yield.

During the spring of 1769 a brig belonging in Marblehead was boarded off Cape Ann by a lieutenant and a party of seamen from the British sloop-of-war "Rose," and an attempt was made to impress some of the crew into the British naval service. The brig was the "Pitt Packet," commanded by Captain Thomas Powers, returning from Cadiz to Marblehead. The crew at once determined to resist the transfer of any of their number to the British sloop, and a hand-to-hand fight followed. A party of marines was sent to the assistance of the lieutenant, and for over three hours the heroic sons of Marblehead defended themselves against every attempt to compel them to surrender. During the struggle two of the Americans were severely wounded and the British lieutenant was killed by a blow from a harpoon thrown by a sailor named Michael Corbitt. At length, overpowered by force of numbers, the brave men surrendered, and Corbitt was taken to Boston to be tried for murder.

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**Pre-Visit Notes Worksheet**

Moffatt

Ladd

Whipple

Lee

Other Notes on Slavery in New England:

