Forten Family Objects

This stop is one of our object highlights!

Displayed in and around this parlor are three amazing objects that were once in James Forten’s home and still belong to his descendants. The table and samplers here have never been exhibited in a museum before, so you are among the first people outside of the Forten family to get a chance to examine them.

The Forten family lived a few blocks south of where the Museum stands today, on Lombard Street, and they created a home that was fashionably furnished and had a reputation for hospitality to strangers. This table was probably made here in Philadelphia and shows off its quality with expensive mahogany surfaces. It was designed with a folding top so that it could be stored against a wall when not in use. It has five legs: the fifth one swings out to support the top.

The samplers in the case nearby would have served as testaments to the Forten children’s education. They are colorfully decorated with floral and other patterns, the alphabet, poetry, and more. Margaretta and Mary Forten made these to practice fine sewing and literacy. Like the table, they have been treasured by generations of Forten family descendants.