

Moffatt-Ladd House & Garden Newsletter

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New Acquisitions

Barbara Ward, Gerry Ward, Jane Nylander, Richard Nylander, and Sherry Cullimore, had an opportunity to select approximately 80 objects appropriate for the



Moffatt-Ladd House from the Joan Pearson Watkins Trust. As a result, 2014 has been a banner year for collections acquisitions. We are particularly excited

about the addition of ceramics similar in type and decoration to objects noted in the early inventories of the house.

As we were still in the midst of examining these wonderful treasures, a Portsmouth sideboard came up for auction at



Northeast Auctions. We had long felt the need to replace the New York sideboard in the Dining Room with a suitable Portsmouth example, so we were delighted to be able to acquire the sideboard, shown below, for a very reasonable price with funds from previous deaccessions. Attributed to the



workshop of Portsmouth furniture makers Judkins & Senter, it is an outstanding example of Portsmouth furniture of the Federal period, which is noted for its exquisite figured veneers in contrasting light and dark woods. It has a few minor conservation issues – most notably small sections of missing veneer – and will be treated over the winter months by conservators at East Point Conservation in Brunswick, Maine.

“Our Old House” Festival Features Garden

Having featured the history of the house’s preservation in 2012, and its 250th birthday in 2013, we decided to focus this year’s Our Old House Festival on the garden and garden-related activities. Volunteers from Slow Food Seacoast, Seacoast

Permaculture, the Northeast Unit of the Herb Society of America, the Urban Forestry Center, the NH Governor’s Lilac and



Wildflower Commission, Portsmouth Health Foods/ Nelson Farm, and Northeast Shade Tree were all on hand to involve participants in learning about how to care for their flowers and plants, and how to grow their own vegetables and herbs. Cynthia Hosmer conducted two amazing flower arranging demonstrations, and Ed Maas of the



National Pigeon Association discussed pigeon-

raising, shedding light on Alexander Hamilton Ladd's hobby and the use of the many pigeon roosts in the Warehouse. Martha Cox of Great Works Painting Conservation, Hollis Brodrick of the



Antiquarium, Sandra Tarbox, Sarah Vedrani, and Sandra Rux were stationed throughout the house. Members of Doris Rice's watercolor class and other local artists painted in the garden, and there were crafts and activities for

children as well. Thank you to our generous sponsors: Tree House Toys, EPort Wood Products, Granite State Minerals, NBT Bank, Aland Realty Group, Peoples United Bank, Piscataqua Savings Bank, Rolling Green Nursery, Sheraton Portsmouth Harborside Hotel, York Insurance Agency, Hilton Garden Inn, Portsmouth Harbor Events, Residence Inn Downtown Portsmouth, Atlantic Media, Springer's Jeweler's, Spectrum by Design, Izzy's Frozen Yogurt, and Blue Moss. In-kind donations were provided by Marshall Rental, Jardinere Flowers and Blue Mermaid Island Grill.

Soiree Features Prince Whipple and Silent Auction

This year's Soiree featured a moving performance by actor Keith Mascoll in the role of Prince Whipple talking about his experiences as enslaved servant to William Whipple, and a silent auction of items donated by area businesses, and individual staff members and Colonial Dames. Wonderful hors d'oeuvres were donated by local restaurants, all making for a festive evening. We are delighted to report that we netted more than \$4,000 for the evening, and that the



NSCDA-NH voted to donate \$1,000 of the proceeds to the African Burial Ground Memorial Park in memory of the enslaved members of the Moffatt and Whipple households. The remainder of the proceeds will go to support the new educational programs initiative on the 1779 Petition of Freedom (see grant story, opposite).



Window Project Complete

The last of the newly restored window sash were returned to the house this spring after being conserved by Jade Mortimer of Heartwood Window Restoration in Hawley, Mass. The finishing touches were applied to the window frames, sills, and pediments, and new Lexan panels to protect the windows will be put into place between now and next March. The Window Project, which has been funded through the generosity of NSCDA-NH members and the Friends of the Moffatt-Ladd House as well as grants from NH's Land and Community Investment Program and the Institute of Museum and Library Services, has been conducted in conjunction with clapboard and structural repairs. The house now has a beautiful new coat of paint to go along with the gorgeous windows. Although we are extremely proud of the extensive work that has been accomplished, we are also aware that the Ell portion of the house desperately needs repair and painting.



There is always work to be done! Thank you to everyone who makes the proper preservation of this truly wonderful historic landmark possible.

Staff Talks Highlight House's History

Throughout the summer, staff members presented public talks on topics from "William Whipple: Signer of the Declaration of Independence," to "What's Behind that Door: Hidden Spaces of the Moffatt-Ladd House," "Stirring the Pot: Three Centuries of Cooking at the Moffatt-Ladd House," and "William Jones Ladd and the Civil War." Marsha Gmyrek's



hidden spaces was especially popular, perhaps because of the publicity picture at left; but all of the talks were excellent.

Sandie Tarbox discussed the evolution of the Moffatt-Ladd kitchen, and presented a beautiful display of 18th-century delicacies made in her home kitchen. We brought

out the Confederate naval flag confiscated in 1865 by Ladd, the first Union soldier to enter Richmond after its capture, for Lisa Arbogast's talk on "William Jones Ladd and the Civil War."

Girl Scouts Explore Women's Lives

Doing a number of events and programs within a short space of time is always a challenge. We were delighted to again host a Girl Scouts overnight in May – just one day before Children's Day. As usual, the Girls had a wonderful time, and regaled us with their interpretation of the lives of Sarah Catherine Moffatt, Katharine Moffatt Whipple, and Maria T.H. Ladd. In addition to taking tours of the house,

performing their skits, and making marbled paper for journals that they write in with quill pens, the girls also



helped out in the garden, and planted heirloom nasturtiums which were distributed at the Old House



Festival. The girls really enjoy the two days of learning about history in a unique environment, and they feel especially proud of the work that they do in our garden.

House Receives "Museums for America" Grant

We are proud to announce that the Moffatt-Ladd House was awarded a "Museums for America" grant of just under \$25,000 from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The grant supports a new educational programs initiative geared toward students in grades 9-12. It provides funds for Sidney Pietrak to act as staff assistant, and for several consultants: actor/educator Keith Mascoll (featured in story about this year's Soiree), Sam Tombarelli of Portsmouth High School, Valerie Cunningham of the Portsmouth Black Heritage Trail, and Jayne Gordon of the Massachusetts Historical Society -- to develop on- and offsite learning experiences and online resources centered on the issues addressed by the 1779 Petition of Freedom. The Petition was signed by 20 "Natives of Africa now held in bondage," in Portsmouth, NH, including two men enslaved by the Moffatts and Whipples who lived in the house during the Revolution: Prince Whipple and Windsor Moffatt. Although the Petition has been studied and published, awareness of its importance, and the story of the Black experience in the North, still receives less attention than it should in school curricula and public history sites. The Moffatt-Ladd House is the site on Portsmouth's Black Heritage Trail where the story of the Petition is told, and as the Revolutionary home of signer of the Declaration of Independence and slave-owner William Whipple, provides the ideal environment in which to study the impact of this document and what it reveals about attitudes and values as they evolved during more than a decade of revolutionary rhetoric and upheaval. Teacher workshops and online resources will assist educators in utilizing curriculum sets which will include supporting documents and images for crafting answers to document-based questions and dramatic re-imaginings of the genesis of the Petition and the white community's reaction to it. By approaching the subject in different ways, these programs will

actively involve students of divergent learning styles in gaining a deeper understanding of the institution of American slavery as it existed in the Revolutionary era.

Children's Day Attracts 1,800 to Site

Our participation in Pro Portsmouth's Children's Day was a great success again this year. Parents, grandparents, and children, toddlers, babies, and strollers galore flooded the grounds and Warehouse, as everyone

enjoyed the pirate-themed crafts and our activity-based treasure hunt. This year's event



followed close on the heels of our Girl Scouts' overnight, and we never could have been so prepared, so well in advance, without the help of the many volunteers who cut fabric for bandanas, filled "treasure bags," and cut paper for pirate flags. Thank you to everyone who helped with the preparations and to those who took part in directing crafts and activities on Children's Day itself.



Grass Steps Restoration

Grass steps require constant attention, and while we treat ours with the utmost care, and limit their use to brides and bridal parties, they need to be restored every 15-20 years. The previous wooden understructure of the steps had begun to rot, and were



beginning to erode. This understructure was expertly replaced by Jason Kindstedt of Green Penguin Landscaping, with a wire mesh support material that allows the grass to firmly root in the soil while being securely held in place by the wire

mesh. The results are quite stunning, and we hope will last well into the next decade and beyond. Thank you to everyone who generously contributed to this effort with their gifts!



New Holiday Event

On the weekend before Thanksgiving, we will be holding our first-ever "Celebration of Wreaths and Trees." Inspired by the 1851 description of Christmas traditions by Charlotte Ladd Coues, and



the mention of Christmas trees and Christmas stockings that Charlotte remembered from her childhood in the house, the Great Hall and grounds will come alive with trees and wreaths submitted by local businesses, organizations, and individuals. The event will be

held on Saturday November 22, from 1PM to 8PM, and Sunday November 23, from 1PM to 4PM. Admission is \$5 for adults, and children 12 and under are free. Enter a wreath or a tree, volunteer to be a part of the event, but most of all, just come and enjoy it! We have been very pleased by the community response. Our plan is to hold the event every other year, in even years. The Portsmouth Garden Club holds their Festival of Trees every other year in the odd years, so the two events will not be held in the same year.

Text and design by Barbara M. Ward
Photos by Sidney Pietrak and Barbara M. Ward