

## Wreaths and Trees 2014

This new event was inspired by the 1851 description of Christmas traditions by Charlotte Ladd Coues in



which she wrote about the Christmas trees and red and blue stockings that she recalled from her childhood in the house. On the Saturday and Sunday before Thanksgiving, the Great Hall, Dining Room, Warehouse, and grounds came alive with trees and wreaths submitted by local businesses, organizations, and individuals. Planned as a biennial event to take place in even years, our inaugural celebration was a great success, with more than 50 individuals and businesses taking part. The first prize for the best tree went to Kate Clifford and the Moffatt-Ladd Garden Committee for their dried flower tree (below). The first place for a wreath went to the



Piscataqua Maritime Commission, and the honor for the best tabletop tree went to Strawberry Banke Museum. The friendly competition among local businesses, and the decorating days leading up to the event were lots of fun for

everyone, especially the event committee which included Sallie Mackie, Sherry Cullimore, Sue Hills,

Lennie Ogden, Viki Guy, and many staff members. It was a great way to reach out and involve our neighbors in a festive celebration, and we can hardly wait for November 2016! We were very pleased by the large number of members who took advantage of their free admission to



the event. We want to thank Northeast Shade Tree for lighting the Whipple Horse Chestnut tree in memory of the founder and long-time owner of the company, Jeffrey Ott, who did so much to care for, and promote the history of our beloved tree (which celebrates its 240<sup>th</sup> birthday next year!)

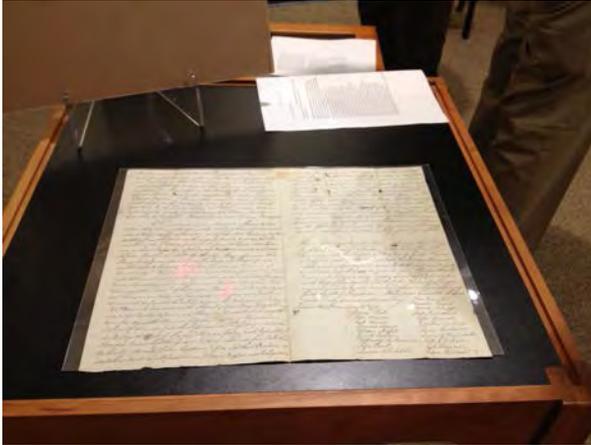
## Exploring the Issue of Slavery in the Revolution

In early October students from Portsmouth High School spent a full day at the house exploring the genesis of the Petition of Freedom signed in 1779 by



20 “Natives of Africa held in bondage,” in Portsmouth, NH. Two of the signers were men enslaved by the Moffatts and Whipples: Windsor Moffatt and Prince Whipple. 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. The ideas generated during the students' day at the house will be further developed into dramatic re-imaginings of the events of 1779, and students will present their projects to staff and consultants during follow-up visits to the school in November. 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 museums. Through this program, which is funded by a *Museums for America* grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, students are actively gaining a deeper understanding of the meanings of freedom and liberty in the Revolutionary era.

## Preservation Challenges

Portsmouth's North End continues to attract development. The now completed Portwalk project will soon be followed by Harborcorp's 360,000 square foot, six-story hotel, convention center, condominium complex, Whole Foods market, and parking garage. Both designs have drawn criticism from local residents who want the city to encourage development that is in keeping with Portsmouth's smaller scale historic architecture. The city has now adopted character-based zoning to preserve the scale and massing of the remaining 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings throughout the city, including those immediately abutting the Moffatt-Ladd garden. Plans to develop these lots suggest that the density of buildings in our neighborhood will continue to increase. Working with local preservation groups and landowners, we hope to ensure that this development is as respectful of our property as possible, and that sites of archaeological significance such as the Prince and Dinah Whipple house site, which was the home of Portsmouth's first Ladies'

African Charitable School, are properly treated and studied. Compromise will be inevitable. While individuals may differ on how we should proceed, there is agreement that vigilance and cooperation are key to surviving and thriving amidst these challenges. Whatever the outcome, the Moffatt-Ladd House & Garden will continue to preserve a piece of the past and precious greenspace in the North End for future generations. We will be reaching out to our new neighbors to determine how we can best serve their needs, and how we can function as a community resource for new hotels, new condominium owners, and new apartment dwellers.

## Chair on the Road

One of our Chinese Chippendale chairs is now at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston as part of *Made in the Americas: The New World Discovers Asia*. The landmark exhibition explores the impact of Asian imports on the colonial Americas from the first objects that arrived in Mexico on the Manilla galleons in 1565, to the more well-known imports of the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Our chairs, once owned by John Wentworth, the last royal governor of New Hampshire, or his sister and brother-in-law, were made in London about 1760, and represent the finest expression of the "Chinese taste" in England in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The show will be in Boston until February 15, 2016. It then travels to the Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library where it will be on view from March 15, 2016, until January 3, 2017.



## Frontline Training

Since 2013, we have been part of the Frontline Training Committee of the Greater Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce. Hospitality staff from all sectors of the economy have joined together to explore Portsmouth with *Ultimate Treasure Hunts*. This has been an entertaining way to meet people from other types of organizations,



while also learning about what Portsmouth has to offer for visitors. Our Programs Coordinator Sidney Pietrak now co-chairs this committee. Plans for 2016 include the creation of short videos about different parts of the city.

## Sulloway Bequest Funds Garden Improvements

The new garden steps and railing near the High Street entrance, and re-sodding of the Herb Garden hill and first terrace have been made possible



through the generosity of long-time supporter and NSCDA-NH member Faith Sulloway. These steps were a vast improvement for guests at the more than sixteen weddings held in the garden in 2015. More improvements are on the way next year that will make the garden even more pleasant and user-friendly.

## Children's Day Attracts 3,200 to Site

After a grueling and long winter, people were poised to get out and enjoy the gorgeous Spring weather for Pro-Portsmouth's annual Children's Day, which has become a major event for us at the Moffatt-Ladd



House & Garden. The crowds were bigger than ever, but we managed them very well with the help of member and community volunteers, and our seasoned

staff. In addition to pirate-themed crafts and our activity-based treasure hunt, visitors were invited to see the first floor of the house. Foodways expert and staff member Sandie Tarbox, shared intriguing facts about 18<sup>th</sup> century food preparation, and volunteers and staff members guided visitors through the other rooms. 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.



## Painting Continues.

As part of our ongoing effort to repair and paint all of the buildings on the property by the end of 2016, the south wall of the Ell, and the East and South walls of the Counting House have



received treatment this year by preservation specialist Keith Trefethen. Volunteers Barbara and Fred Engelbach, Nancy and David Borden, and Sherry Cullimore helped to paint the Ell. The platform behind the roof balustrade, and the front door of the Counting House are scheduled for repair this year. Please consider making a gift to help finish these tasks.

## Special Tribute

On October 13, 2015, we paid special tribute to long-time guide Joseph A. (Andy) Melville, who died in late August. The service was led by a former head of the NH Scottish Games, an organization of which Andy was a leader and founding member. We will always remember Andy's wit and wisdom. His daughter, Andrea, has designated the Moffatt-Ladd House & Garden as a charity to which gifts may be made in Andy's memory. Farewell, friend!



## “Our Old House” Festival

This year’s Festival again focused on the garden and garden-related activities. Volunteers from Slow Food Seacoast, Seacoast Permaculture, the Northeast Unit



of the Herb Society of America, Green Alliance, Emery Farm, Blue Ocean Society, Juniper Hill Landscaping, Preservation Alliance, Portsmouth Department of Public Works, Seacoast Beekeepers, Soaps and Sachets by Marla, and Northeast Shade Tree were all on hand to share information about their activities and products. Erik Wochholz, curator of Historic Landscapes at Strawberry Banke Museum demonstrated how to distill essential oils, and

Heather Dawson of Wel-kinwood turned small wooden vases for succulents. Sherry



Cullimore demonstrated iron conservation. Martha Cox of Great Works Painting Conservation, Jon Brandon of East Point Conservation, Sandra Tarbox, Sarah Vedrani, Sandra Rux, and Gerry Ward were stationed throughout the house to talk about the collection and domestic life. Members of the NH Art Association painted in the garden, and there were crafts and activities for children as well. Thank you to our generous sponsors: Tree House Toys, Granite State Minerals, Cambridge Trust, Piscataqua Savings Bank, Rolling Green Nursery, Sheraton Portsmouth Harborside Hotel, Hilton Garden Inn, Portsmouth Harbor Events, Residence Inn Downtown Portsmouth, Hampton Inn, Atlantic Media, Springer’s Jewelers, Hunkins Real Estate, Portsmouth Harbor Cruises, Izzy’s Premium Frozen

Yogurt, Old Ferry Landing, Hotel Portsmouth, and the Betty LaBranche Agency. We also had in-kind donations from Blue Mermaid, Marshall Rental, and from all of the volunteers who provided baked goods for a bake sale to benefit the house.

Next year it is our plan to do something a bit different for our “opening” event. Stay tuned for more details!

## Soiree Raises Funds for New Garden Railing



Classical music filled the air for the annual Soiree, as guests enjoyed outstanding hors d’oeuvres, and perused the silent auction of more than forty items gathered by Mary Waples and members of her Soiree committee.

The items from individuals, organizations, and merchants throughout the region were expertly arranged in the Dining Room, Great Hall, and Parlor. Thank you to all of these generous donors for making our event such a success, and to the donors who



provided the outstanding food: the 100 Club, Beach Pea Baking Company, Blue Mermaid Island Grill, Ceres Bakery, Hilton Garden Inn, Oar House Restaurant, Portsmouth Gaslight Restaurant, and Surf Sushi. The new railing was installed in September by local artist Peter Happny, who has, over the years, designed and made all of the exquisite iron railings in the garden.



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