



# Friends of John Jay Homestead *Inc*

## Newsletter

VOL. XXXIII, No. II

FALL 2010

### Historic Bedroom Restoration in Progress

By Nancy Dexter\*

Members of the Friends of John Jay Homestead House Committee under the leadership of Heather Langham are working with Site Curator, Allan Weinreb on a plan to restore a second floor bedroom of Bedford House to an 1820s appearance. The restoration of this room is an important one, as it brings the room's interpretation in line with the other rooms in the house. It will be interpreted as the bedroom of John Jay's daughter, Nancy, which gives us the opportunity to convey her role in managing the Jay household in the 1820s.



*Miniature portrait of Ann Jay (Nancy), painted by Gideon Fairman.*

Nancy Jay, whose formal name was Ann, was the female head of the household after her mother, Sarah, died in 1802. Nancy stayed home and managed the house for her aging father during the period 1802-1829. During the 1820s, Nancy's widowed sister, Maria, traveled frequently, while her brother Peter Augustus lived in New York City and Rye, and her brother William resided here in the house with his wife, Augusta.

Nancy was 37 in 1820, and in the miniature portrait here, she resembles her father with a narrow jaw, thin face and small shoulders. Nancy Jay had many interests, including gardening and collecting seashells, and the plan is to include items in the room that relate to her interests, and that help tell her story.

Recently, Site Curator, Allan Weinreb, conducted an informal tour and informative talk about the plans for the restoration of the bedroom, which is situated in the oldest part of the house (1787-1790). Mr. Weinreb pointed out that John Jay did not reside at the property until 1801, and prior to this time, the house was the home of the Farm Manager. An original sketch of the house shows a window facing west from the back second story room. The room had no opening in the chimneystack for the fireplace, as "it was typical not to have heat in an employee's second-story rooms," explained Mr. Weinreb.

From 1799 to 1801, the house was altered to be the permanent home for John Jay and his family. The front stairs were moved, new wings were added to the house, and at that time a working fireplace was installed in the back bedroom.

Mr. Weinreb explained that choosing the furniture and décor is a bit of a guessing game, as there are no interior sketches to work from and there is no written documentation outlining which objects were actually in Nancy Jay's room. He pointed out that no formal inventory was ever done during that time period, since there was no need to produce one.

In 1964, the John Jay Homestead State Historic Site opened to the public, after an extensive restoration. At that time, the back bedroom was interpreted as that of the Farm Manager in the 1787-1790 time period. The interior was crude, including iron strap hardware for the door and other features indicative of an employee's room.



*Balloon Chair*

During the 1990s, the Friends hired curator Liz Leckie to develop a furnishing plan based on the 1820s time period. This bedroom is the last room to undergo this reinterpretation. A false, reproduction window has been installed on the west wall, where a window had been from 1801 to 1924; this window was eliminated when the Iselin Wing was built in the 1920s. We have also constructed a reproduction fireplace mantle for the room, based on an historic one in an adjoining bedroom. The room has undergone extensive plasterwork, and the trim has been primed in a subtle cream color.

The next big step is to find an appropriate wallpaper of the period. Mr. Weinreb explained that there are only about six companies that make reproduction wallpaper, and there is a useful online database where different antique wallpapers can be viewed and compared. New curtains and bedhangings must also be created, and the House Committee is seeking out appropriate pictures for the walls. The Venetian stripe carpet selected by the House Committee under the leadership of Joan Montross, and financed and installed by the Friends in \_\_\_\_ year?, will be reinstalled in the room after painting and wallpaper work is completed. Plans call for the installation of items from the Jay Collection including two balloon back chairs from Paris, which are currently being restored, and the recently identified Biennais mirror, which will be placed on a dressing table in the room.

Once the room is complete, the tour will include a discussion of Nancy's role in the management of the household, her life as a single woman in her 30's living in 1820's Bedford, and her relationship with family and friends. When John Jay died in 1829, William became the man of the house, and his wife, Augusta, assumed the roles that Nancy had held. Nancy spent the rest of her years living a quiet and genteel life with Maria in New York, traveling, corresponding with her siblings, and continuing her interests in religion and gardening. The relationship between Nancy and Augusta is little documented but can be the grounds for interesting speculation.

\* With assistance from Allan Weinreb, Melissa Vail and Wendy Ross.

Friends of John Jay Homestead  
P.O. Box 148  
Katonah, NY 10536

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

- S. Mackintosh Pulsifer, Chairman
- Melissa Vail, President
- Laurie Heffner Lewis, Vice President
- Pamela W. Hubbard, Secretary
- Jonathan L. Stanley, Treasurer
- Marilyn McClure Beck
- Carol E. Brier
- Dale N. Forster
- John H. Freund
- Barbara J. Gatfield
- Francis A. Goodhue, III
- Sascha Douglass Greenberg
- Steven C. Krane
- Ursula G. LaMotte
- Heather G. Langham
- Thomas G. Lee
- Peter T. Michaelis
- Katherine Moreau
- Catherine Jay O’Callaghan
- Anne Homer Polk
- James B. Renwick
- William Kelly Simpson
- C. Compton Spain

Wendy F. Ross, Executive Director  
Mrs. E. Albert Berol, Trustee Emeritus

**OUR MISSION**

The Mission of Friends of John Jay Homestead, Inc., a non-profit, educational corporation founded in 1977, is to increase public appreciation and awareness of the history of our nation, our region and John Jay’s many contributions as a founding father of our country; to encourage use of John Jay Homestead State Historic Site for both educational and recreational purposes; and to supplement the work of New York State by providing funding and volunteer assistance for the preservation, restoration and interpretation of the site, which dates from 1787.

**NEWSLETTER STAFF**

Nancy Dexter, Editor      Lisa Brotmann, Layout

**HOW TO REACH US:**

Phone: 914.232.8119, Fax: 914.232.5974  
Email: friends@johnjayhomestead.org  
Website: www.johnjayhomestead.org

**IN THIS ISSUE...**

- Historic Bedroom Resotation in Progress . . . . 1
- Letter from President & Executive Director . . . 2
- Letter from the Site Manager . . . . . 3
- Barn Dance & Country Fair Weekend . . . . . 4
- Barn Dance & Country Fair Weekend . . . . . 5
- Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Lecture Sold Out . . . . 6
- Historic Huguenot Street Trip . . . . . 6
- Education Program Update . . . . . 7
- Eighth Year of Summer History Camp . . . . . 7
- Save the Dates for Spring 2010 . . . . . 8

# Letter from President and Executive Director

Dear Friends,

What a fabulous fall we’ve had at the Homestead! Our annual autumn events, including the Barn Dance and Fair, were better than ever with record-breaking attendance at this year’s charming and well-planned Fair. Our annual Goodhue Lecture was opened to non-members because of the wide appeal of our speaker, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and the Iselin ballroom was filled to capacity that evening, including many people who had not been to the Homestead before. A group of hearty history lovers braved a day of cold and damp to enjoy a special tour of Historic Huguenot Street in New Paltz, NY as part of our focus on John Jay’s Huguenot heritage—to be examined and celebrated in the upcoming back parlor exhibit. And on almost every fall day at the site, volunteers have gathered to plan and create exciting initiatives including a community garden, refurbishment of areas in the main house, thought-provoking lectures for next year and, of course, ongoing efforts to move forward on the Carriage Barn renovation project.



*Friends' President Laurie Lewis with Executive Director Wendy Ross at the 2009 Sponsor's Cocktail Party.*

A common theme running through all these efforts? The valuable contributions our MEMBERS make to the continued vitality and preservation of John Jay Homestead. Friends of John Jay Homestead MEMBERS envision, plan and help bring to life the interesting and engaging events we enjoy at the site. MEMBERS provide the volunteer power needed to entertain guests at the Barn Dance, to welcome thousands of people to the site for the Fair and to assist New York State Historic Site staff with education programs, tours and upcoming exhibits. MEMBERS help spread the word about the exciting things happening at the site, and MEMBERS provide critical financial support for our ongoing mission.

In a challenging financial and fundraising climate, MEMBERS provide our organization’s backbone, a strong network of constituents who understand the value of the Homestead as an historic treasure and irreplaceable community resource. If you’ve renewed your membership, thank you. If you haven’t already renewed for next year, please go to our website and click on the membership link. And most importantly, please continue to spread the word about the Homestead to let people know that their support will keep history alive at Jay’s Bedford Farm. For Friends of John Jay Homestead, MEMBERS matter!

Laurie H. Lewis  
President

Wendy F. Ross  
Executive Director

**NOT A MEMBER YET? NEED TO RENEW?**

**We have a matching gift program that lasts until the end of November, so join soon.** To become a member, call the Friends’ office at (914) 232-8119; email friends@johnjayhomestead.org or visit www.johnjayhomestead.org.

## Site Manager's Letter

Dear Friends,

Autumn is always the most exciting time of year at the Homestead! Congratulations on another successful Barn Dance & Country Fair weekend. The "Best of Westchester, Best Outdoor Family Event" is truly fitting! The Henry Louis Gates, Jr. lecture was superb. And an interesting and informative lecture by food historian and author Peter Rose helped us celebrate New York's Quadracentennial. Looking forward, on November 4th the site's curator, Allan Weinreb, will present the second Curator's Fabulous Finds on Chinese Export art, and don't forget to reserve your seat for the Farmerettes lecture on November 12th.

Earlier this year John Jay Homestead State Historic Site was included as a site on the Underground Railroad Heritage Trail. Interpretive signs relative to our designation are in design. Our inclusion on the trail will be enhanced by two exciting projects that focus on our slave-owning and anti-slavery past:

Katonah Museum of Art (KMA) and John Jay Homestead have joined together in offering a cultural history immersion experience to school groups. The new program combines KMA's latest exhibit, "Bold, Cautious, True: Walt Whitman and American Art of the Civil War Era" with the Homestead's "Slavery, Abolition, and the Jay Family" program. At KMA, students will be introduced to a variety of narrative works including: genre paintings, visual allegories, caricatures in social/political cartoons for publications, exquisite landscapes, and portraits of important American figures. Tours will focus on developing skills to read and appreciate historical art as an expressive story of the time. At the Homestead, students will be encouraged to think like



*Site Manager, Heather Iannucci*

historians and social scientists. Why did many of the Founding Fathers continue to own slaves as they established a new nation where "all men are created equal?" What is the difference between a servant and a slave? What is the difference between abolition and manumission? While they tour the historic house museum and study primary sources, including objects and documents, students will come to understand John Jay's conflicting attitudes as slave owner and manumission advocate and learn about his son William's role in the abolition movement.

We are also developing an interpretive plan for the historic Summer Kitchen, located on the Main House's basement level. This new area of interpretation will focus on the "back story" of the house, highlighting the lives of the servants and slaves who contributed to the operation of the house and farm. The Summer Kitchen will be developed as an experience separate from the regular historic house tour, adding to a growing list of things to do during a visit to the Homestead. Special events, workshops and school programs will also take place in this space.

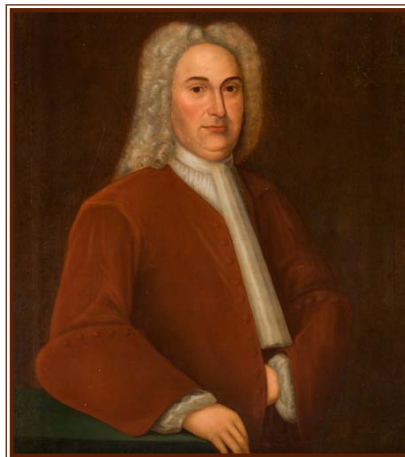
Last year at this time I was telling you about the new orientation video we were filming. The approximately 12-minute long video was given its premier this year at the Sponsors' Cocktail Party. The video will provide visitors with a brief, yet comprehensive, biography of John Jay, and will be shown in the theater of the new Carriage Barn Education and Visitor Center. It will also be provided to school groups as a pre-visit material to review in the classroom, and will be available for purchase in the gift shop.

Heather Iannucci  
Site Manager

---

## Huguenot Exhibit Opening on December 4

To celebrate the opening of the second exhibit in the back parlor, titled From Oppression to Freedom: John Jay and His Huguenot Heritage, Friends of John Jay Homestead are hosting a cocktail reception on Friday, December 4. The event, beginning at 6:30 p.m., will take place in the period rooms of the Main House at John Jay Homestead. The exhibit will include such objects as the letter of denization that allowed Auguste Jay, John Jay's grandfather, to live and conduct business in the English colony of New York; as well as an oil portrait of Auguste; his son's silver seal and the family's oversized 1724 copy of The Book of Common Prayer.



*Auguste Jay, John Jay's grandfather, was a Huguenot who emigrated to America after King Louis XIV outlawed the public practice of Protestantism in France.*

Honorary Chairs of this exhibit opening are Alec Cobbe (a John Jay descendant) and his wife, Isabel, who will travel from England for the event. A featured guest for the evening is Count Pierre F. de Ravel d'Esclapon, a lawyer at the firm of Dewey & LeBoeuf LLP, who will make brief remarks at the reception.

Tickets for the event are \$100 per person for Friends' members; \$125 for non-members. Valet parking will be available. For more information or to purchase tickets, call the Friends' office at (914) 232-8119; email [friends@johnjayhomestead.org](mailto:friends@johnjayhomestead.org); or visit [www.johnjayhomestead.org](http://www.johnjayhomestead.org).