



Friends of John Jay Homestead *Inc*

Newsletter

VOL. 34

SUMMER 2011

Fabulous Finds

Allan Weinreb



John Jay's silver hot water urn, and the silver-lined heating iron compartment inside.



Portrait of William Jay II

Here are two of the many "Fabulous Finds" John Jay Homestead's curator, Allan Weinreb, has presented at his biannual curatorial talks. Please join him on Sunday, October 2 (2:00pm) or Thursday, October 6 (7:00pm), for the next installment in the series. Mr. Weinreb will bring you up close to original portraits of the Jays, discussing the members of the Jay family and examining the different approaches to painted portraiture over the course of American history. This hour-long program is free for Members; \$10 for non-members. Please call the site at 914.232.5651 to reserve your seat, as space is limited.

JOHN JAY'S SILVER HOT WATER URN

On display in the front parlor is the Sheffield plate hot water urn John and Sarah Jay used when serving tea to their guests. Sheffield plate was a technique invented in England for cladding an inexpensive base metal with silver; unlike the later technique of electroplating, the silver was fused to copper with pressure and heat. Jay's urn was made in England, in the George III/Neoclassical style, in the 1790s.

The urn did not hold either tea or coffee. It was made to supply hot water when tea was served. In Jay's time, tea was brewed to a strong concentration in teapots, in fairly small batches for the best flavor. The tea drinker could then dilute his or her cup of tea to taste with hot water from the spigot of an urn like this one. This kept the tea hot while suiting the preference of the drinker. So how did the water remain hot in the urn? A look inside will reveal that: in the middle of the body of the urn is a cylindrical compartment for holding an iron bar heated in a fire. With the iron bar in the compartment, the water would remain hot for hours.

PORTRAIT OF WILLIAM JAY II

One of the artistic treasures in the Homestead's collection is this portrait of William Jay II, John Jay's great-grandson. The portrait was painted by John Singer Sargent, the most fashionable Society portraitist of the late nineteenth century, in 1888, when William was forty-seven years old.

Sargent was renowned for his ability to get a good likeness while subtly enhancing the good looks of his sitters – a knack he was sometimes bothered by, once describing portraiture as "a pimp's profession." In many of Sargent's portraits, there is great energy that comes from a masterful use of color and from swashbuckling brushwork, but often, there is a lack of psychological depth. Sargent recognized that many of his portraits were attractive, but superficial. This one isn't.

At first glance, William looks poised and confident, as one would expect from a Society portrait, but a more probing examination reveals a different story. There is a hint of melancholy in William's eyes, as he gamely tries to muster up a half smile that does not convince. Looking over to his left hand, one finds a small masterpiece of painterly rendering. William is squeezing his lapel tightly, as if he is suffering some private torment. The portrait simultaneously conveys the secure impression William wants to give, while subtly revealing something of his inner self. We may never know the source of the personal difficulty that the artist perceived in William Jay. But it is inarguable that Sargent did a superb job of bringing it out in this extraordinary work of art.

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*
- Allison Bamford
- Dale N. Forster
- John H. Freund
- Barbara J. Gatfield
- Francis A. Goodhue III
- Sascha Douglass Greenberg
- Alexander N. Hamer
- Mary Hamill
- Ursula G. LaMotte
- Heather G. Langham
- Stephen Meyers
- Katherine Moreau
- Catherine Jay O'Callaghan
- Robert H. Saunders
- William Kelly Simpson
- C. Compton Spain
- Caroline A. Walker
- Wendy F. Ross, *Executive Director*

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 LAYOUT Lisa Brotmann

HOW TO REACH US:

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

IN THIS ISSUE...

- Fabulous Finds 1
- Letter from President 2
- Site Manager's Letter 3
- The Farm Market 3
- What's New at the Homestead 4
- Annual Report
 - Friends' Annual Meeting 5
 - Financial Statement 5
 - 2010 Accomplishments 6
 - 2010 Accomplishments 7
 - Membership List 8 & 9
 - Friends Board & Committee News .. 10
 - Barn Dance/Country Fair Ad 11
 - Save the Dates 12

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

What a wonderful year this has been – growth and dynamism, expansion and excitement, inside the house and out. It's hard to write about our year past, when we're such a forward-looking group and have so much that we're excited about for the future. Nonetheless, we're very proud of all we accomplished this past year – we'll just try not to spoil next year's President's Letter.



Friends President Melissa Vail.

Inside the Main House:

- Nancy Jay's bedroom is most elegantly refurbished – a two-year project – and adds wonderful content to our telling about the lives of women. And the Jay Ladies Luncheon is becoming a must-attend event on everyone's social calendar.
- The Summer Kitchen is now open as a hands-on immersion teaching space. Our biggest challenge is getting visitors to put down the objects and go back to the rest of the house.
- Our exciting and important Back Parlor exhibit *Slaves, Slavery and the Jay Family* traces this family's role in the most important political issue of the 19th Century, and puts front and center what we know of the people of color who lived and worked with the Jays.

Outside:

- Our gardens have never looked more beautiful, and we held our second annual Garden Party, to celebrate the contributions of our indefatigable garden partners, and to raise dedicated funds for landscape projects.
- We hosted a hugely successful Volunteer Clean-up Day.
- And we opened a Teaching Garden (with partner InterGenerate), planted daffodils, trimmed hedges, rebuilt a garden gate, unveiled a Woodland Walk, removed invasives from the Ice Pond and the Fountain Garden....

Education and Public Programs:

- We helped run another successful set of History Camps
- We paid for an ever-greater number of children to come for class trips, with the Mayo-Smith Bus Fund
- We helped celebrate St. Matthew's bicentennial, with a fascinating set of paired lectures by Terry Elsberry and Allan Weinreb
- We expanded our reach to other groups too, including Neighbors Link, the White Plains Youth Advisory Bureau and the Columbia-Barnard Alumni of Westchester
- Another exciting set of lectures, Scholars and Goodhue both.

Now for 2011, already underway – because it's so much fun to talk about the programs we're unrolling too.

- Agriculture, in a big way. Bee-keeping school, heritage breed chicken-and-egg co-op, sheep-shearing, and our Farm Market – with over 1,200 customers on each of the first two Saturdays!
- New exhibit in the works, on the Jay Ladies, and more generally the lives of women.

And more Goodhue and Scholars Lectures, and more fun at the Country Fair and Barn Dance, and more enticements to bring people to this marvelous, important site.

But those are just the headlines. It's important to remember the context too....a difficult economy, affecting our supporters and our New York State partner both. We're tremendously proud of being able to keep growth, momentum and excitement going against these challenges.

How do we do it? With our partners. Heather Iannucci and her site staff. The groups that care for parts of our landscape. The groups with whom we plan and deliver programs. And at the absolute head of the line – you, our members. Your time, your ideas, your presence, and of course your financial support. We are ambitious about this place: it's becoming ever busier, more prominent, more independent, and more deeply supported. With your help.

Melissa Vail

SITE MANAGER'S LETTER

The following letter is a summary of Heather Iannucci's 2010 Annual Report as presented at our Annual Meeting on May 25, 2011:

In 2010 we completed the restoration, furnishing, and reinterpretation of two period rooms. We worked with expert conservators and curators to bring Nancy Jay's bedroom to life while keeping it true to our 1820s interpretation. The room now allows us to tell an engaging story about the woman of the house and about women's issues of the 19th century in general – a part of our story that was previously lacking. Our Summer Kitchen focuses on the "back story" of John Jay's home, highlighting the lives of the servants and slaves who contributed to the operation of the house and farm. This year we'll be expanding the interpretation in the Summer Kitchen to include the anti-slavery sentiments and activism of the Jay family, and we'll be doing preliminary planning for a re-interpretation of the house's main kitchen.

2010 saw the addition of other educational programs. Our *Slaves, Slavery and the Jay Family* exhibit tells the stories of some of the Jay Family Slaves, and outlines the involvement in slavery and the anti-slavery movements by the Jay family. We added two new school programs to our repertoire, and saw a continued increase in the use of the Friends' Margaret Mayo-Smith Bus Fund. 2011 has already seen new schools bringing students to the Homestead, and the site staff is busy planning the next Back Parlor Exhibit on the first two generations of Jay women to live in the house.

Our environmental initiatives expanded last year to include a communally worked educational vegetable garden installed and managed by InterGenerate; local Eagle Scout Cameron Krane created a butterfly garden; Bedford Audubon built and placed six blue bird houses in our newly restored meadows; and our first, annual Volunteer Clean-up Day brought over 250 volunteers to the site to perform tasks such as the removal of invasive plants around our historic ice pond. In 2011, you'll see we have continued our environmental initiative with InterGenerate's chicken and egg co-operative, bee keeping workshops, eco-tours, farm market, and tree planting in partnership with Bedford Garden Club's Branch Out program.

The state continued its investment in capital projects at the site during 2010 with the completion of design for a new HVAC system, and significant carpentry restoration and repairs made to the Main House, Coachman's House, Brick Cottage, and Potting Sheds. This year we'll be working with the Friends to install new lighting on the grounds, and new spot lights were recently installed in the ballroom.

Finally, although we still haven't secured final project approval from the DoT for our \$300,000 Carriage Barn grant, we continue to move the non-construction portions of the Education and Visitor Center Project forward. The state's own Peebles Island Resource Center began fabrication of the exhibit cabinetry, at a substantial savings.

I have the assistance of a dedicated team of staff and volunteers who consistently rise to meet the challenges I throw their way. Friends of John Jay Homestead continue their dedicated and generous support of the Homestead. And we have enthusiastic community partners that help us meet our lofty goals and continue to expand our reach. Thank you!

Respectfully submitted,
Heather Iannucci



Site Manager Heather Iannucci.

JOHN JAY HOMESTEAD FARM MARKET

By Heather Iannucci

In 1860, John Jay II provided a site for the Bedford Farmers' Club's Market Fair. "The object of the Market Fair... is to create a home market for the sale and exchanging of farmstock and products, and manufactured wares..." From a leaflet for the Katonah Market Fair, 1860.

The Homestead Farm Market opened for the first time on June 25 and will operate every Saturday, from 9:00am to 1:00pm, through October 15. On opening day we had over 1,500 people purchasing fresh baked goods, locally grown produce, and other items from our 25 vendors. We invite the community to come out and show their support



for these incredibly hardworking local farmers, bakers, cooks and vendors. Get to know your farmers first-hand, how they make their products and help preserve the environment. Our hope is that this new market becomes a hub of community activity. Shoppers can enjoy a walk, sightsee and explore flower, herb and vegetable gardens or picnic on the historic grounds of John Jay Homestead. Many weeks will feature musical guests, educational demonstrations, and activities sponsored by local community organizations. Sign up for our e-news blasts at <http://www.johnjayhomestead.org/what-snew/farmmarket.html> to receive information about what will be at the market each week.