



Setting A Fine Table At Woodlawn: Porcelain and Pottery Tablewares, 1800-1835

Laura Fecych Sprague, Independent Museum Curator and Member of Woodlawn's Professional Advisory Committee

In recent issues of the *Woodlawn Museum Newsletter* (see Spring 2004 and Fall 2004), Earle Shettleworth and Tom Johnson discussed notable portraits and furniture found in the Woodlawn Museum collection. The Blacks also owned many fine porcelain and pottery tablewares which fill one of the rooms most enjoyed by visitors today – the spacious, well-lighted china closet or pantry, where open shelves and cupboards are lined with covered tureens, platters, stacks of soup and dinner plates, and bowls. In numerous sizes, shapes, and colorful patterns, they represent a period when Americans sought refinement and gentility in their daily life, especially at the tea or dining table.

Beginning in colonial times Chinese and English manufacturers provided American households with desired

goods, notably Chinese export porcelains, and English pottery and porcelains in imitation of the costly Chinese wares. Transfer-printed earthenwares became available in a wide range of patterns and colors. The Woodlawn Museum collection features a particularly good selection of these wares in a range of decorative styles. Some date to September 1827 when the Blacks purchased goods from Joseph S. Hastings, a Boston china and glass merchant (figure 1). Many of the individual forms listed on the Hastings invoice can still be found in the china closet, along with later additions.

Mary Cobb and John Black would have begun assembling their furnishings at the time of their marriage in 1802 when they went “to housekeeping” in Gouldsborough.

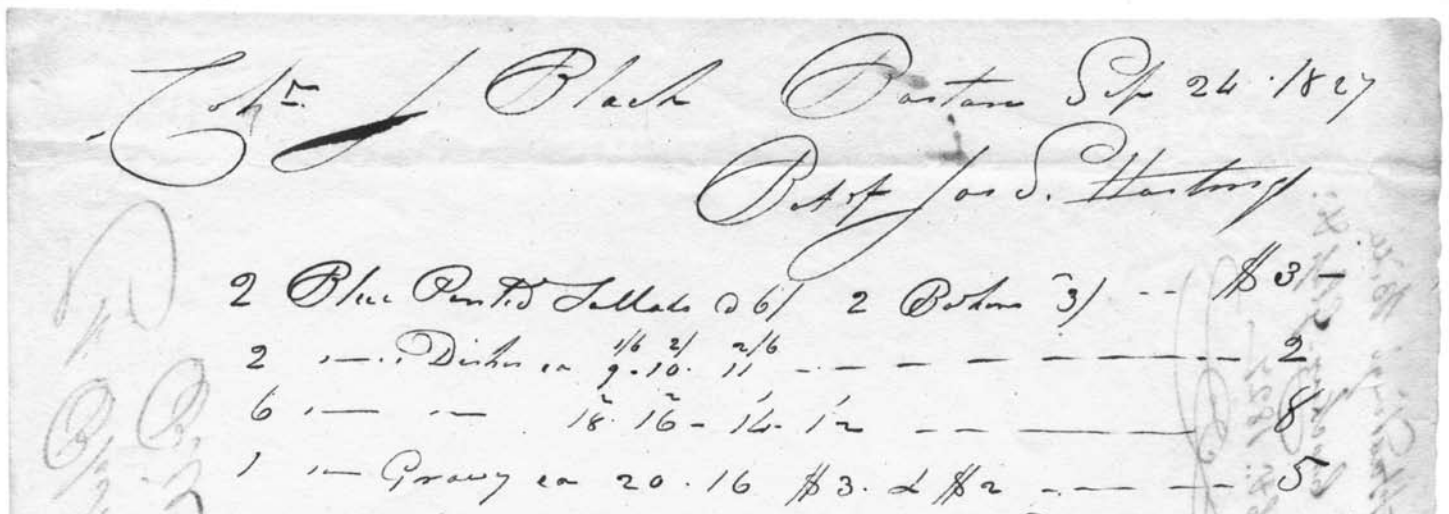


Figure 1. Detail of invoice for tablewares purchased from Joseph S. Hastings, Boston, September 24, 1827. Black family archives, Woodlawn Museum.

continued on page 3...



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The Director's Desk

Joshua Campbell Torrance, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

A Busy Fall at Woodlawn

I want to update you on some the exciting happenings at Woodlawn.

On August 19th, the Woodlawn Professional Advisory Committee gathered at the museum to advise the board and staff, providing valuable insights and suggestions. They also reviewed the plans and progress of the preservation project. A few weeks later, Woodlawn was honored to welcome a study group from the Society of Architectural Historians for a tour and afternoon tea. Mr. Christopher Monkhouse, James Ford Bell Curator at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts and member of the Woodlawn Professional Advisory Committee, led the group.

Preservation work on the middle kitchen wing is nearing completion including the preservation of the trim, gutters, windows, and shutters. On the front portico, replacement columns (copies of the originals) have been made and the capitals (see photo, right) have been removed for conservation. We are working with the Maine Historic Preservation Commission on the restoration of the porch decking. Including work from the previous year, over half the main house is now preserved.



The Preservation Campaign, which is funding the preservation of both the carriage barn and main house, is also making great strides. As of this letter, total gifts and pledges now exceed \$969,229 against our one million dollar goal. See pages 6 & 7 for a update on the Preservation Campaign.

In October Woodlawn's governing board, the Hancock County Trustees of Public Reservations and the museum staff participated in a two-day strategic planning retreat. We discussed the future direction of the organization while committing to ensure Woodlawn's place as Maine's premier historic estate. The resulting plan will provide a framework from which we will operate in the coming years.

Collections Manager, Rosamond Rea and I joined more than 800 museum colleagues from throughout the region at the New England Museum Association 2005 Annual Conference held from November 16-18 in Burlington, Massachusetts. The Museum received a grant from the Keepers Preservation Educational Fund to cover the costs of sending the staff to this important conference.

Please make sure to visit Woodlawn either in person or on the web at www.woodlawnmuseum.org. You can see the progress we are making to restore this beautiful home to its original splendor and learn more about how you can participate in the many programs offered at Woodlawn. 🍂



Tableware... (continued from page 1)



Figure 2. Attributed to Miles Mason, Lane Delph, Staffordshire, England. Teacup, coffee cup, and plate, porcelain decorated with transfer-printing in underglaze blue and gilding, 1800-1806.

Three English porcelain tea and coffee sets date to the early years of their marriage. One features a transfer-printed Chinese landscape with temples (figure 2). The set includes small plates for cakes and two different cups, a round-sided cup for tea and a cylindrical cup, or can, for coffee. Each piece is further embellished with an elegant gilt border of



Figure 3. Staffordshire, England. Teapot with stand, porcelain decorated with hand-painted enamels, and gilding, 1805-1810. The underside of each piece of this elegant tea set bears the pattern number “317” in gray enamel. The hand-painted gilt border of swags and tassels is particularly elaborate.

grapes and vines. Of exceptional quality, it is attributed to Miles Mason, a successful English porcelain maker in Staffordshire, England. Given its remarkable state of preservation, it must have been treasured by subsequent generations. Because teapots and other serving pieces do not survive in this pattern, the Mason wares may have been intended for use with a silver service. The maker of a second set has not been identified but the quality of the hand-painted landscape scenes makes it an important example of early British porcelain (figure 3). The underside of each piece bears the pattern number “317.” With further research, this number, the monochromatic painting, distinctive shapes, and gilt ornament may all help reveal the factory where the porcelain was made. A third service, of slightly later date, is simply decorated with sprigs of flowers in colorful enamels. Marked by the New Hall Works of Shelton, England, it is another unusual survivor (figure 4). In all, remnants of eight different tea sets survive at Woodlawn.



Figure 4. New Hall Works, Shelton, Staffordshire, England. Teapot with cup and saucer, porcelain decorated with polychrome enamels, 1812-1835. These porcelains bear the factory’s printed mark.

“Elegant blue printed dining sets,” also from the Staffordshire region of England, were advertised for sale across New England during the early 19th century. Landscape scenes, both familiar and exotic, continued to be popular subjects. The Blacks dined with wares depicting “Italian Buildings,” “The Port of Latachia,” “Lucerne,” “Hoboken in New Jersey,” and English cottages, among others. Blue painted “sallads [sic],” and “dishes” in two sizes and for gravy are among the forms John Black bought from Joseph Hastings in 1827 (see figure 1). A sauce tureen, dish, and plate marked by John Mare of Staffordshire may



be among the wares purchased from Hastings (figure 5). The unusual factory mark on these forms coincides with the date of the invoice. Also found in the Woodlawn pantry are a number of soup and dinner plates depicting scenes from the Ottoman Empire as it existed in the early 19th century (figure 6). These patterns, with their exotic mosques and minarets, were based on engravings in published books. It



Figure 5. John Mare, Staffordshire, England. Sauce tureen with stand, earthenware decorated with transfer-printing in blue underglaze, 1800-1825. These examples feature an unusual impressed factory mark.



Figure 6. Staffordshire, England. Plate, earthenware decorated with transfer-printing in underglaze blue, ca. 1825. Scenes from the Ottoman Empire may have held special appeal as John Black's brother lived in Constantinople during the 1820s and 1830s.

may be that small groups of wares with similar designs were purchased as replacements for damaged pieces, a practice well documented in Maine households.

The Orient long captured the imagination of Westerners, providing both goods and inspiration throughout the nineteenth century. The Blacks owned Chinese porcelains made for export (figure 7). This ubiquitous tableware was referred to as “Canton,” after the port from which it was shipped to the West. Its presence in many Maine households is also well documented. Simply painted with blue



Figure 7. China for export. View of the Butler's pantry showing the variety of pieces known as “Canton ware,” porcelain with hand-painted underglaze blue decoration, 1800-1850. These porcelains are well documented in many Maine households.

landscape scenes, the platters, plates, and other forms are much admired today. Finer serving pieces are represented by a covered dish and plate from the Derby Porcelain Works (figure 8). Decorated with underglaze blue, red enamel, and gilding, the pattern imitated Japanese Imari porcelain. A more extensive table service survives made of ironstone, an improved earthenware first patented by Charles Mason in 1813 (figure 9). Innumerable English factories readily copied this opaque and heavy ware which were often left unmarked. Such is the case with the set at Woodlawn. Like the refined Derby porcelains, the ironstone decoration also took its inspiration from Oriental designs. Costly to produce, with over seven hand-painted colors and gilding used in the bold decoration, the ironstone was eminently durable which accounts, in part, for its high survival rate.



These elegant tablewares, set out on handsome mahogany furniture with fine damask linens and sparkling silver and cut glass, greatly contribute to our understanding of the Blacks' aspirations. The family may have lived far removed from the nation's cultural centers, but their level of sophistication and refinement was comparable to that found in the best homes in America. 🍷



Figure 8. Derby Porcelain Works, Derby, England. Plate and covered bowl, porcelain decorated with underglaze blue, red enamel, and gilding, 1800-1825. This colorful pattern was inspired by Japanese designs.



Figure 9. Staffordshire, England. Footed bowl, ironstone decorated with underglaze blue, polychrome enamels, and gilding, 1825-1840. Like the Blacks' finer Derby porcelains, this heavier and more durable tableware also took its inspiration from Oriental patterns.

A Glimpse into the Archives

For many years, John Black recorded the weather each day. These records may be found in the Woodlawn Archives under the heading "Thermometrical Observations taken at Ellsworth." Three times each day he would note the temperature, sky conditions and wind direction. When he was away, or unable to take the readings himself, he had someone else in his employment do it for him.

As an example, one hundred fifty years ago on Christmas Day the temperature was 20 degrees at 8 AM, rose to 34 degrees at 1 PM, then dropped back to 29 degrees at 9 PM. The day began cloudy. By 1 PM it had started to snow. The wind was NE. During the entire month of December 1855 the lowest temperature he recorded was -4 degrees and the highest was 52 degrees.

In a letter written on December 29th 1855 to his son-in-law, David Dyer, in Boston, John Black notes the coldest temperature reading of the month:

"Enclosed I will send you a letter for my sister Mimpriss [Elisabeth Black Mimpriss] which I will thank you to send by next Steamer Packet for Liverpool. Is there a regular express from Boston to London via Liverpool? I wish to send a Small Box to London and would like to know the best way to forward... The ale you sent me last proves to be unfit for use. We have opened about 1 doz. Bottles and not one fit for drink. And considerable of the previous Cask was not much better. What can be done in this case? The cask you sent Geo [George Nixon Black] proves very good. Why this difference?"

"We have few inches of snow upon the ground and mercury 4 below at sunrise this morning."

- John Black 🍷



Preservation Campaign Pledges and Donations to Date

Woodlawn Museum Board of Trustees	\$201,868.43	Fundraising events	\$12,585.00
National Trust for Historic Preservation	\$5,000.00	Other income	\$4,586.37
The 1772 Foundation (<i>\$40,000 in summer 2004 & \$50,000 in Spring 2005</i>)	\$90,000.00	Sub-Total:	\$923,729.85
Maine Historic Preservation Committee's New Century Program	\$20,000.00	Pledged by challenge grant donor	\$45,500.00
Fisher Foundation	\$5,000.00	<i>The donor pledged \$1 for every \$3 raised, up to \$50,000. In response we have raised \$136,435. If we raise an additional \$13,565 by Jan. 31 we will receive the entire \$50,000.</i>	
Davis Family Foundation	\$20,000.00		
Kellogg Foundation	\$5,000.00		
Elizabeth B. Noyce Charitable Lead Trust	\$10,000.00		
Maine Community Foundation <i>(donor directed grant for endowment portion of campaign)</i>	\$200,000.00	TOTAL:	\$969,229.85
The Elizabeth F. Cheney Foundation	\$2,000.00		
The Cleveland H. Dodge Foundation	\$500.00		
The Felicia Fund, Inc.	\$10,000.00		
Anonymous Foundation	\$10,000.00		
The City of Ellsworth	\$50,000.00		
Individuals	\$187,880.05		
Business Community	\$81,845.00		
Bequests received by the Museum	\$7,465.00		



Preservation Campaign Donations \$969,229

www.woodlawnmuseum.org

Preservation Campaign - Every Gift is a Welcome Gift!

Woodlawn holds a special place in our shared past and we must plan for its continuing place in our future. No matter how large or small, every gift, which can be made as a three-year pledge, is welcome in this community-wide effort to preserve and protect Woodlawn for generations to come.

I/We pledge to give \$ _____ over the next _____ year(s) to the Woodlawn Museum Preservation Campaign. The final payment will be paid on or before _____. Payment schedule as follows:

\$ _____ on _____ (date)
\$ _____ on _____ (date)
\$ _____ on _____ (date)

Name (individual, foundation, corporation) _____
Corporate or Foundation Contact _____
Address _____
City/State/Zip Code _____
Telephone _____ Fax _____
Signature _____ Date ____/____/____

It is the Museum's intent to recognize all donors in a manner appropriate to the ambiance of Woodlawn.

I/We grant permission for my/our name to be listed in various campaign reports and acknowledgment publications and wish to be listed officially as: _____

For information on donations of stocks, bonds, real-estate or other assets, call the Museum at 667-8671.



**Please mail completed form to:
Woodlawn Museum
P.O. Box 1478
Ellsworth, Maine 04605**

Please make checks payable to the Woodlawn Museum.

Your contribution is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Thank you!



Preservation Campaign Approaches Goal

Stephen C. Shea, PRESIDENT

If Col. John Black were to look down on his former home, the present day Woodlawn Museum, I am certain he would be pleased to see what is happening there. For the past 76 years the Hancock County Trustees of Public Reservations have faithfully and lovingly cared for the property according to the terms of the will of his grandson, George Nixon Black Jr. operating it as a historic house museum and a public park. Every year thousands of visitors to our region enjoy the many and various experiences the estate has to offer. Countless other local full-time and seasonal residents enjoy hiking the several miles of nature trails, some on a daily basis, and others participate in diverse educational programs about topics such as caring for heirloom furniture and garden composting in conjunction with the community garden. The Board of Trustees has spent the last year preparing a forward-thinking plan for Woodlawn, that when fully implemented will greatly increase its contribution to the quality of life in Hancock County. Because of all of these things Col. Black would say his former estate has become a community asset of immeasurable value.

Col. Black would also be happy about the current preservation project that the Trustees are undertaking. The restoration of the estate's main house has been underway for the past two years, and upon its completion the carriage house is slated for complete restoration. It is the most extensive preservation project on the estate's buildings since the Trustees assumed ownership in 1929. When complete, if all goes as planned, the buildings will have been restored to their original condition; ready to instill the sense of place and community pride in future generations as they have for nearly eight decades.

Three years ago the Hancock County Trustees of Public Reservations launched an ambitious campaign to raise one million dollars to fund the preservation project. Knowing

that it would be a difficult challenge to raise this much money with so many other worthwhile public projects competing for local charitable donations, the Trustees quickly pledged 20 per cent of the million dollar goal from among their own membership. They also searched the nation for foundations that focused on preserving important historic properties

and enlisted the support of local philanthropists. Those efforts resulted in the receipt of several significant major grants and gifts. The Maine Community Foundation was instrumental in convincing an anonymous individual that the preservation of Woodlawn was important enough to warrant a donation of \$200,000. On top of this a large number of local residents and businesses have generously participated bringing the current total campaign gifts including pledges to over \$969,229.

In October, an anonymous donor issued a generous challenge grant whereby the donor would contribute \$1 for every \$3 we raised, up to \$50,000. In response, we have raised over \$136,435 and the donor has generously extended this

challenge until the end of January. If we raise an additional \$13,565 by Jan. 31 we will receive the entire \$50,000.

I believe we can reach our million dollar goal if everyone who has an interest in seeing Woodlawn survive and continue to serve the people of Eastern Maine is made aware of the unique opportunity that they now have to invest in the future of one of the regions great treasures. There is a pledge form on page 6 of this newsletter. I urge people to use it and join the growing list of donors who have shown that they care deeply for Maine by assisting in the preservation of one of the Nation's most significant historic treasures.

I invite the people of the area to visit Woodlawn and see first hand the great work that has already been accomplished through the hard work and generosity of many. 🍷



Trustees Jeffrey Dow, Jacqueline Dearborn, and Gregg Hannah help remove one of the badly deteriorated front columns.

Preserve Maine's Premier Historic Estate - Become a Member Today!

Yearly basic membership benefits include: Free admission per member per year, a subscription to the award-winning Woodlawn newsletter, a 10% discount in the Museum Store for purchases over \$10.00, notification of the annual members reception, a Woodlawn Museum window decal, and notification of special events as designated by the Museum. Additional benefits are specified below:

Basic Membership Levels

Student \$5: All basic membership benefits for a student in grades K-12.

Individual \$35: All basic membership benefits for one person.

Household \$50: Individual membership benefits for two adults and household members under 18, a 25% discount on designated events for which there is a fee, and 4 free tickets for Black House tours during the season.

Supporter \$125: Household level membership benefits plus 8 free tickets for Black House tours during the season.

Sustaining Membership Levels

Sponsor \$250: Supporter level membership benefits plus 10 free tickets for Black House tours during the season and a 20% discount in the Museum Store.

Patron \$500: All Sponsor level membership benefits plus a behind-the-scenes tour with curatorial staff arranged by appointment.

Benefactor \$1,000: Patron level membership benefits plus a special tour and reception with the Executive Director for 4 adults arranged by appointment.

President's Club \$2,500: Benefactor level membership benefits plus an invitation to the President's Dinner with the Executive Director and members of the Board of Trustees. The President's Dinner will occur in the autumn of each year and will be served at the Museum.

I enclose \$ _____ for Membership Dues at the _____ Level

Dr. _____ Mr. _____ Mrs. _____ Ms. _____ Miss _____

Name(s) _____ Street _____

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I would like to charge my membership on _____ Visa _____ Mastercard

Card Number _____ Expiration Date ____/____/____

Card Holder's Signature _____

In addition, I would also like to make donation to the Museum's Annual Fund in the amount of \$25 _____ \$50 _____ \$75 _____ \$100 _____ Other _____

Membership dues and other contributions are tax deductible as provided by law.



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