



WOODLAWN
MUSEUM
The Black House

MAINE'S PREMIER HISTORIC ESTATE

Winter 2004

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History in Houses: Woodlawn in Ellsworth, Maine

We are grateful to author William Nathaniel Banks and the editors of THE MAGAZINE ANTIQUES for allowing us to reprint this article, published in the January 2003 issue.

Woodlawn, a splendid house in the neoclassic style, was built in the 1820s on a commanding site on Bridge Hill, overlooking the town of Ellsworth, Maine, and the Union River. The elaborate furnishings reflect the tastes of two men – the builder John Black, a self-made potentate, and his grandson George Nixon Black Jr., a wealthy aesthete and collector.

Little is known of John Black's background. He was born in Whitehaven, England, on July 31, 1781, and while still in his teens was employed as a clerk by Hope and Company, a London banking house with close ties to the affluent Baring family. In 1797, when Black was sixteen, the Hopes and Barings sent him to the United States and in the District of Maine, then owned by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the young Englishman came to play an increasingly significant role in land speculation and high finance.

In the early 1790s General Henry Knox (1750-1806), George Washington's secretary of war, had acquired some three million acres in the District of Maine. However, he was unable to meet the payments he owed

to the Massachusetts Land Committee and appealed for help to his friend William Bingham (1752-1804), a wealthy Philadelphian. In 1793 Bingham assumed obligation for the payments and signed an agreement with Massachusetts for the transfer of title to the tract. In 1796 the twenty-one-year-old Alexander Baring (1774-1848), acting on behalf of the Barings and the Hopes of London, arrived in Philadelphia and negotiated the purchase of a million of Bingham's three million acres.

It was the following year that John Black came from London for a brief stay in Philadelphia, where he was employed by a financial house that was a correspondent of the Barings. Alexander Baring kept an eye on him, and in 1797 he wrote to London:

He appears to be a very steady young man.... He writes good hand and may superintend the counting house work with a little instruction.... If Black behaves well we may be able to place him very comfortably sometime hence.'

In the spring of 1798 Baring sent Black to Gouldsborough on the northeast coast of Maine to represent the Baring and Hope interests and assist Bingham's agent General David Cobb (1748-1830), who had been an aide to General Washington during the Revolution. Before the war, when Cobb had been a student at Harvard,

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Curving front staircase at Woodlawn Museum.



The Director's Desk

Joshua Campbell Torrance,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Since starting our Membership program in 2000, there has been some confusion between the Membership program and our Annual Appeal. I hope the following explanation will clarify the issue.

When you purchase a Woodlawn Museum Membership, you make a strong statement about your belief in the importance of maintaining Woodlawn (both the Black House and the Grounds) for public use. By becoming a member, you also receive benefits. These include: free admission to Black House tours, a subscription to our quarterly newsletter, Woodlawn

News, a discount in the Museum Gift Shop and for program fees, an invitation to the Annual Members Reception held yearly in August, and advanced notification of programs. There are four levels of membership: Student (\$5), Individual (\$25), Household (\$40), and Supporter (\$100). If you are not currently a member, but would like to join the museum, you may use the form on page 11 of this newsletter. For more information, please call the museum at 207-667-8671, or visit our website at www.woodlawnmuseum.com/member.

The revenue we collect from yearly memberships is a significant portion of our yearly operating budget. However, to preserve the house, maintain the grounds, and expand our educational outreach, each year we ask for an

additional yearly contribution during our Annual Appeal. A portion of the Annual Appeal comes from our members, but we also receive significant support from non-members. The Annual Appeal Campaign starts in the fall and ends June 30th of the following year, and money collected is used to fund the following year's operating budget. So, money collected in the fall of 2003 through June of 2004, will be used for the 2004 operating budget (Woodlawn's yearly budget follows the calendar year).

Regardless of how you choose to support Woodlawn (through purchasing a Membership, Annual Appeal Support, or both), your contributions truly make a difference. Thank you! 🍷

Ms. Nicole Cox: Rev. Dr. Oscar E. Remick Fellow in Museum Studies



This summer, Woodlawn was pleased to have Ms. Nicole Cox as the first Rev. Dr. Oscar E. Remick Fellow in Museum Studies.

The fellowship was established in honor of the late Rev. Dr. Oscar E. Remick. As a trustee, he dreamed of filling the museum with interns to take advantage of Woodlawn Museum's seemingly limitless scholarly resources while providing for the further preservation of one of Maine most important historic homes.

A second year student at the Cooperstown Graduate Program in Museum Studies (Cooperstown, New York), Ms. Cox completed an impressive amount of credible and useful work for the Museum during her 12-week fellowship experience. Her

work included organizing several public relations projects and serving as a museum guide. However, her chief contribution to the Museum was the completion of a major research project in which she discovered the stories of a previously unknown group at the estate: the servants. Searching through the Museum's archives, county probate records, and newspapers, Ms. Cox identified over 100 people who worked at the Woodlawn estate during the period from 1824-1928. By uncovering these people, Ms. Cox has added a new dimension to our interpretive tours and will be developing an educational program. Ms. Cox also completed a research article, to be published in an upcoming issue of the Museum's newsletter. Most importantly, Ms. Cox connected the Museum with the relatives of Woodlawn servants, broadening the Museum's circle of

friends and building new audiences in the community. She has set the bar by which future Remick Fellows will be judged.

The Rev. Dr. Oscar E. Remick Fellowship is made possible through the generous contributions from the Museum's Members and Donors. The goal of this program is to mentor a young person and encourage excellence, just as Dr. Remick did for many people. Dr. Remick was a great Trustee, visionary leader, volunteer, mentor, and friend to many at Woodlawn. He gave us much, but above all, he gave us the confidence to make our dreams a reality.

Contributions are needed for next year's Remick Fellow. If you would like to contribute to the Rev. Dr. Oscar E. Remick Fellowship Fund, please mail your donation to Remick Fund c/o Woodlawn Museum, P.O. Box 1478, Ellsworth, ME 04605. 🍷



Col. John Black in a portrait circa 1840 now located in the front parlor.

he frequented the Blue Anchor tavern in Cambridge, where he became infatuated with the tavern keeper's daughter, Eleanor Bradish (1748-1818). A precipitate marriage legitimized the birth of their first child, and Eleanor subsequently bore Cobb ten more children. In 1795 Cobb moved his large family from Taunton, Massachusetts, to Gouldsborough, where he built a "comfortable"² house with funds provided by Bingham.

When John Black arrived in General Cobb's house, and four years later, in 1802, he married Mary Cobb (1776-1851), the only one of the Cobb's five daughters who was unwed. Hardworking, shrewd and ambitious, Black assumed many of his father-in-law's duties. Realizing that Maine's prosperity was contingent not on farming, as Bingham and Cobb had hoped, but on lumbering, he aggressively promoted the lumber industry. In 1810 he moved to Ellsworth, some twenty-three miles west of Gouldsborough to become the local agent for the Bingham holdings.

A mercantile business and shipping interests, as well as lumbering, made Black a wealthy man. In 1820, the year that Maine became a state, General Cobb retired to Taunton, Massachusetts, to spend his remaining years in the house on the green he had inherited from his father. Black became the general agent for all the Bingham and Baring lands in Maine.

In the mid-1820s he built Woodlawn, and in 1827 the family moved into their spacious new house. In Maine, Woodlawn's only rival for domestic splendor was Montpelier, the handsome Federal style house that Cobb's friend the extravagant and gluttonous General Knox had built in 1795 in Thomaston and where he had choked on a chicken bone and died in October 1806.

Woodlawn is brick, a building material rarely used in mid-nineteenth-century Maine where lumber was so plentiful. The two-story central mass is crowned by a low hipped roof with four large windows in each story of the principal facade, which is flanked by two almost identical one-story wings. The entrance door is an inconspicuous feature of the south wing. A design

source for Woodlawn was Plate 54 from Asher Benjamin's *American Builder's Companion*.³

The builder of the house is thought to be Seth Tisdale (1803-1875) of Taunton, who came to Ellsworth as a joiner in 1823. He would almost certainly have been known to General Cobb, who may have recommended him to his son-in-law. In any event, the builder made significant changes to Benjamin's design. Most notable is a one-story porch that extends the length of the central block, its roof supported by five slender columns with Ionic capitals. The roof is adorned with an ornamental balustrade, as are the roofs of the central block and the wings. Unlike the Benjamin design, the windows on each story of the central block extend to floor level, so that on a fine day one has easy access to the porch from the parlor and dining room.

The interiors of Woodlawn are finished in elegant neoclassical style. The entrance in the south wing gives onto John Black's office on the left, and on the right is an impressive doorway with an elliptical fanlight that is a slight variation on a Benjamin design. This door leads into the main



Front facade of the mansion.



house. Opening off a long hall are the adjoining dining room and parlor in an arrangement duplicating Benjamin's floor plan. Both rooms have imposing mantels with Doric columns. The mottled gray marble was probably quarried at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. The mantels in the less formal rooms are wooden.

Both bills are dated September 12, 1827, and include bedsteads, fancy chairs, a bureau, a pair of Grecian card tables, a hat tree, and washstands. Some of these pieces in the house today are labeled by their makers.

In the dining room is a fine mahogany pedestal table with gilt-brass paw feet that cost fifty dollars and was

Jr. (1782-1854) was a silversmith and importer from whom Mary Black bought, in September 1827, soup ladles and dessert spoons as well as the lamps. In 1835, Jones formed a partnership called Jones, Lows and Ball. The brass label on one of the twin-burner lamps on the dining room mantel is embossed "JONES, LOWS & BALL/BOSTON," while the label on the other reads "MANUFACTURED BY/H.N. HOOPER & CO/BOSTON." Apparently the lamps were made by Henry N. Hooper and Company and sold by Jones, Lows and Ball. Since that partnership was dissolved in 1840, it is evident that between 1835 and 1840 the Blacks were still patronizing the Jones shop.

The silver-gilt Argand lamp on the parlor mantel, one of a pair, has labels on both arms embossed "MESSENGER & SONS/LONDON & BIRMINGHAM/MANUFACTURED FOR JONES, LOWS & BALL/BOSTON." The round empire table with a marble top and the pianoforte labeled by Thomas Tomkison, Dean Street, Soho, London, both in the parlor, and the resplendent girandole looking glass in the hall may all have been acquired during the Blacks' expedition to Boston in 1827. The painted rush-bottomed side chair next to the pianoforte is probably one of the "6 light fancy chairs" each listed at \$2.75 on the Furniture Warehouse bill from Boston.

One of the Blacks' most impressive acquisitions is the bed in the principal bedroom, which is listed on the Furniture Warehouse bill as "Mahogany highpost Bedstead" costing twenty-six dollars. The posts are beautifully carved with acanthus leaves and feathers, and the bed is elaborately draped with the original hangings of ribbed dimity trimmed with tassels and caught up above the frame on brass mounts.



Front dining room view from the early twentieth century.

Across the hall from the parlor and dining room a graceful curving staircase ascends to the second story. On Benjamin's plan there are five bedchambers on what he calls the "chamber floor." Woodlawn also has five bedrooms. The elegant small bathroom with a porthole window was installed about 1910.

In September 1827 John and Mary Black went on a shopping spree in Boston to furnish their house appropriately. Among the Black family papers at Woodlawn are a bill to John Black from the Furniture Warehouse, 6 Milk Street, Boston, for \$438.80, and a bill to his wife for Samuel Beal at his furniture warehouse on the corner of Hanover and Elm Streets for \$195.99.

made by William Fisk, who has been described as one "of the most prolific of first-class Boston cabinetmakers."⁴ Black paid twenty-six dollars for the brass andirons stamped "John Molineaux/Boston," and the matching, but unstamped, shovel and tongs. An unsigned portrait of John Black hangs over the massive sideboard, which cost forty-five dollars. On the opposite wall between the windows is a portrait of Mary Cobb Black, probably painted by the same artist who painted her husband.

The Argand lamps in the dining room and parlor are especially interesting. The pair on the table to the left of the dining room mantel both bear a brass label embossed "JOHN•B•JONES/BOSTON." John B. Jones



Among the mementos of Mary Black's father, General Cobb, is a miniature of George Washington on the round table in the parlor. It is thought to have been painted by Charles Willson Peale (1741-1827), and is inscribed on the back, "Presented to General David Cobb by General Washington 1789." In the butler's pantry Cobb's late eighteenth-century oak wine chest contains a vast assortment of glasses and decanters with delicate gilt decoration.

It appears that John Black, who became an American citizen in 1804, was, as Alexander Baring surmised, an exemplary gentleman. He was active in community affairs, serving as a justice of the peace in Ellsworth from 1824 to 1845. For many years he was commander of the Ellsworth company of volunteer militia, becoming its colonel in 1816.

To his eight children he was a loving but not overly indulgent parent with a steadfast concern for their welfare and especially their education. A letter of December 31, 1829, to his son George Nixon Black at school in Jamaica Plain near Boston, contained, besides warm wishes for the new year, a rebuke to the boy for having omitted the date on a letter to his father: Black wrote: "In itself, it is of no material consequence. I notice it, my dear boy, to show you the necessity of doing everything properly & correctly."⁵

Of all his children, Henry (1807-1884), the second of six sons, caused him the greatest sorrow. Dismissed from Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine, in his sophomore year for injuring college property and absenting himself from prayers and recitation, Henry ran away to sea in February 1832. The following December his father wrote him a poignant letter:



Master bedroom showing the "Mahogany highpost Bedstead" shown in the early twentieth century.

My dear boy, in your wanderings, remember the home, and friends you left behind you, and rest assured that while I live, it shall always be a home for you.... And likewise be assured and keep in mind, that during your absence your mother and I can never enjoy such pleasure, as you can ensure us, by returning to our arms, and by conducting yourself as you so well know how to do.⁶

Henry returned to Ellsworth in 1834, but his behavior was always erratic. The year after his father's death in 1856 he was committed to the Maine Insane Hospital, where he died many years later.

Mary Black died in 1851, and thirteen months later John Black married Frances Wood, a niece of Mary's and the widow of one of his business associates. In 1853 John, who was almost blind, transferred control of the family enterprises to his son George Nixon. After John's death in October 1856, George and his family moved from their house on Main Street into Woodlawn, where they lived for a few years with his stepmother until

sometime in the 1860s, when George moved to Boston, returning only occasionally to Ellsworth. When Frances Wood Black died in 1874, George came into possession of Woodlawn. At his death in 1880, it was inherited by his son George Nixon Black Jr. (1842-1928).

George Black Jr. had entered Harvard in the class of 1864. However, trouble with his eyes obliged him to leave college after his freshman year, and in the fall of 1865 he sailed for Europe to spend a year in extensive travel. A lifelong bachelor, he maintained a house at 57 Beacon Street in Boston, and in 1882 he commissioned the prestigious Boston architects Robert Swain Peabody (1845-1917) and John Goddard Stearns Jr. (1843-1917) to build a shingle style "cottage" called Kragssyde in Manchester, Massachusetts. The architectural historian Vincent Scully has called the house a masterpiece and stated that the two architects "never again...created a house of such quality."⁷



Photograph of George Nixon Black Jr. (1842-1928) circa 1898. Original photograph hangs at the Ellsworth Public Library. Mr. Black donated the Library (first called the Black Memorial Library) to the City of Ellsworth in 1898.

George Black Jr. took immense pride in his grandfather John Black's achievements and in his great-grandfather General Cobb's exploits during the American Revolution. George Black Jr. came of age when fairs held to raise money for soldiers wounded in the Civil War featured so-called New England kitchens. Inaccurate and idealized as they were, these kitchens stimulated the burgeoning interest in antiques of the colonial period. The Centennial Exposition of 1876 in Philadelphia also exhibited a New England kitchen "furnished with a mix of old tables, cradles, Windsor chairs, and a spinning wheel."⁸ George Black Jr. virtually duplicated this kitchen, on a smaller scale, in the north wing of Woodlawn. His preference for the colonial revival reflected the taste of his era, inspired by books like Irving Whitall Lyon's *Colonial Furniture of New England* (1891) and Ester

Singleton's *Furniture of Our Forefathers* (1901). Indeed, until the mid-twentieth century most collectors disdained American decorative arts of the classical period for being too nouveau and gaudy. It is not surprising then that at Woodlawn Black mixed Windsor chairs, an eighteenth-century dropleaf table, a spinning wheel, Queen Anne side chairs, eighteenth-century high chests and dressing tables, and a seventeenth-century blanket chest with his grandfather's 1820s furnishings. His bias is evident in his description of the architecture and decor of Woodlawn: "The furniture of the house is mostly Queen Anne and Georgian periods,"⁹ eliminating from his account his grandfather's classical objects. Fortunately, whatever his description of them, he left most of them in situ.

A striking illustration of the generational difference in taste is found in the bedrooms. George Black Jr.'s small bedroom and adjoining guest room are furnished with chaste Sheraton style beds with plain canopies, while

his grandfather's capacious bedstead with its extravagant hangings, in the principal bedroom, might be described as sumptuous.

After his death his devoted housekeeper at Woodlawn, Irma Eliason (d. 1970), wrote: "The late George Nixon Black Jr. was a kind soft spoken gentleman, *never* saw him any other way. He loved the old house dearly."¹⁰ He bequeathed to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston some 170 objects: silver, ceramics, tapestries, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English and American furniture, and paintings, including a Gilbert Stuart portrait of Washington and a self-portrait by John Trumbull (1756-1843). He left the house in Ellsworth and the surrounding 180 acres to the Hancock County Trustees of Public Reservations with the proviso that "Woodlawn, including the land, buildings, furniture, and pictures therein [be kept] as a public park."¹¹

Today the park at Woodlawn provides a pleasure ground for the community of Ellsworth, and the house



Bedroom of George Nixon Black, Jr.



itself offers the public the opportunity to inhabit, for an hour or so, an evocative, treasure-filled abode created by three generations of a remarkable family.☺

I am grateful to the staff at Woodlawn for their help in preparing this article, with special thanks to Joshua Campbell Torrance, Executive Director; and Rosamond Rea, Collections Manager.

All photographs taken from the Woodlawn Museum Photograph Collection unless otherwise noted.

¹ Quoted in *William Bingham's Maine Lands, 1790-1820*, ed. Frederick S. Allis, Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts (Boston, 1954), vol. 2, p. 906.

² Robert C. Alberts, *The Golden Voyage: The Life and Times of William Bingham, 1752-1804*, (Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1969), p. 288.

³ See Walter Knight Sturges, "The Black House, Ellsworth—an Asher Benjamin house in Maine," *THE MAGAZINE ANTIQUES*, vol. 65, no. 5 (May 1954), pp. 398-400.

⁴ Page Talbott in her preface to Stuart P. Field, *Boston in the Age of Neo-Classicism, 1810-1840* (Hirschl and Adler Galleries, New York, 1999), p. 24.

⁵ John Black, Ellsworth, to George Nixon Black, December 31, 1829 (Black papers, Woodlawn, Ellsworth, Maine).

⁶ John Black, Ellsworth, to Henry Black, December 1, 1832 (ibid.)

⁷ Vincent J. Scully Jr., *The Shingle Style and the Stick Style: Architectural Theory and Design from Richardson to the Origins of Wright* (1955; Yale University Press, New Haven 1971), pp. 99-100.

⁸ Edgar deN. Mayhew and Minor Myers Jr., *A Documentary History of American Interiors: From the Colonial Era to 1915* (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York 1980), p. 258.

⁹ The six-page, undated, handwritten description is among the Black papers at Woodlawn.

¹⁰ Undated handwritten note, ibid.

¹¹ In his will, dated February 3, 1900, Black bequeathed Woodlawn to the city of Ellsworth. In a codicil dated August 23, 1911, he designated the Hancock County Trustees of Public Reservations instead of the city as the recipient of Woodlawn. The mission of the trustees is "to acquire...for free public use, lands in Hancock County, Maine, which by reason of scenic beauty, historical interest, sanitary advantages, or for other reasons, may be available for the purpose" (certificate of incorporation of the Hancock County Trustees of Public Reservations).

Woodlawn Museum Receives \$3,500 in Grants for Education Programs

The Woodlawn Museum recently received two grants totaling \$3,500 from the Maine Community Foundation. The funding will be used to develop new educational outreach programs. "We are very excited and grateful that the Maine Community Foundation has agreed to partner with us on expanding our educational



outreach" remarked Joshua Campbell Torrance, Executive Director.

A grant of \$2,500, from the Maine Community Foundation's Hancock County Fund, will fund the Woodlawn Family Learning Initiative, which aims to make the historic and educational resources of Woodlawn more accessible to families. This will be accomplished by developing activities specifically for families that are both fun and educational. A Family Adventure Activity Backpack, Hands-On Learning Kits (containing touchable reproduction artifacts), and Games on the Lawn (historic games with instructions) are some of the activities that will be developed.

An additional grant of \$1,000, from the Holt Family Fund of the Maine Community Foundation, will help fund the Woodlawn Curriculum Project. As part of the Curriculum Project, a database of curricular materials tied to the Maine Learning Results will be placed on the Museum's website. The

Curriculum Project will provide a model for teachers to use in developing their own lesson plans based on artifacts in the Museum's collection. The Museum hopes to hold a training workshop for teachers to show them how to use the database and the collection as they develop curriculum aligned with the Learning Results. Additional funding is still needed for the Curriculum Project, which the Museum hopes to raise through a combination of grants and private donations.



Founded in 1983, the Maine Community Foundation makes grants and provides leadership to strengthen Maine Communities. For more information, visit the Foundation's website at ww.mainecef.org or call toll-free 1-877-700-6800.☺



Third Annual Autumn Festival Draws Hundreds, Despite Weather

Cold and rainy weather didn't keep people away from the Woodlawn Museum's third annual Autumn Festival, held on the grounds of the Museum on Saturday, October 18.



Parents and children alike participated in the many fun activities that were planned, including a bouncy castle house, pumpkin carving, face painting, and the wet sponge toss, as well as donkey and tractor hayrides. There were also many games to play and prizes to win.

Musical entertainment was provided by the Saint Andrew's Pipe and Drum Band, and an art exhibit of works by area school children was held in the carriage barn. Players of all ages joined members of the Ellsworth Rotary Club in an exhibition game of Town Ball, the 19th century version of



baseball. Maine Coast Memorial Hospital and the Ellsworth Rotary Club provided KidCare child identification service free of charge. Hotdogs and chips, popcorn, sweet treats, and beverages were available for purchase throughout the afternoon.

Special thanks go to the First National Bank of Bar Harbor, the main sponsor of the Festival. 🍁





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President's Letter: The Vision of Richard Hale

Stephen C. Shea, PRESIDENT

On August 20th, 1929, Woodlawn was opened to the public as a historic house museum, under the management of the Hancock County Trustees of Public Reservations. With its magnificent federal mansion situated on 180 acres, Woodlawn was immediately recognized as one of the nation's most important historic estates. An article in the August 24, 1929 edition of the Boston Evening Transcript, titled "Boston Loses, and Maine Gains," praised Woodlawn for its fine collection and lamented that it would not go to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

Mr. Richard Hale, a principle in the Boston law firm Hale and Dorr, and the first Chairman of the Museum's House Committee, led the early efforts to preserve Woodlawn and organize it as a public museum. He spearheaded an amazing effort by countless volunteers, over nearly 75 years, to care for Woodlawn. Hale's larger vision was for Woodlawn to become the center of education and research for the history of Downeast Maine, including the construction of a building able to store the significant archives and provide exhibition space. He understood that achieving this goal meant a significant endowment to keep the estate in good repair and strong annual support from the region's population. However, various factors prevented Mr. Hale from fully achieving his vision for Woodlawn.

In recent years Richard Hale's dream has been rekindled. Significant steps have been taken which make Woodlawn more responsive to community needs, help it celebrate the rich cultural heritage of our region, and to better preserve this unique community asset for future generations. Numerous events and educational programs were offered this past year. Also, The Board of Trustees has adopted a revitalized mission and vision statement that identifies 5 key strategic goals. This vision is our blueprint for the next 75 years of growth at Woodlawn.

Woodlawn's recent success would not have been possible without you. Thank you for your support and for being a Member. And now we seek your continued help to preserve the heritage of our unique region and bring its history alive. The Board of Trustees is hopeful that a community that stands to gain so much from Woodlawn's success will generously respond to this appeal for annual support. In addition to the income from our modest endowment and a growing earnings stream, the Annual Appeal must raise \$35,000 to meet the operating expenses for our 75th Anniversary year.

Please help us continue our success and carry on the work of Richard Hale and others who have lovingly cared for Woodlawn. Enclosed with this newsletter you will find a self-addressed envelope. I hope that you will chose to use it to help guarantee that the 75th year of Woodlawn will set the standard for its future.

On behalf of the Board and Staff I thank you for your continued generosity and I look forward to meeting you at Woodlawn Museum during the coming year. ☺



Collections Corner

Rosamond Rea, Collections Manager

Think about your most recent visit to “Woodlawn” and recall the Butler’s Pantry where the shelves are filled with china and glass, and the drawers contain the Black family silver flatware. You, along with many others may have wondered how many items are in this one room of the museum. Now that the accessioning project is nearly finished I can report that the Butler’s Pantry contains just over 1150 objects!

With the recording of the Butler’s Pantry in September and the horse tack in the barn in October, the major portion of our accessioning project has been completed.

Although objects stored in drawers and closets still have to be measured and numbered, the bulk of the initial work is done. In the coming months we will continue the process of putting numbers on each object as well as adding a photograph of each object to our written records.



This past winter, volunteer Katharine Thompson began the formidable task of typing all of our handwritten accessions text into the PastPerfect museum software system. She has rapidly become our expert having entered approximately 1800 objects into the database thus far. PastPerfect is a cataloging database system designed for small and medium sized museums and is easy to use. Nevertheless, it will take some time for all the measurements, descriptions and condition reports that have been recorded by hand since we began this project in January 2001 to be transferred into the computerized catalog. The many hours that Katharine has donated to the museum by doing this for us is extremely valuable and we thank her for every minute of it.

In addition to the ongoing cataloging project Woodlawn Museum undertook another important collections project this summer. In July, appraiser Robert Croul spent three intensive days reviewing the entire collection before preparing an updated appraisal.

Following the outline of an appraisal completed nearly 25 years ago made the task proceed quickly although it did become quite evident that many objects in the house have moved about over the years. The market value of most of the objects has changed, in some cases significantly, and most, but not all, have increased. Having an up-to-date appraisal on record is essential for the proper stewardship of the collection by the Board of Trustees and the staff of Woodlawn.

As Woodlawn Museum closes to the public for the Winter season, it is gratifying to reflect again on how much pleasure our visitors get from seeing this house and all its contents still displayed essentially as George Nixon Black, Jr. left it. The collections continue to fascinate and to reveal new information to those of us who work with it everyday. As new details are discovered the information is added to the record and to the interpretation of the house. 🍷



A Spot of Tea at Woodlawn...

Explore the exciting benefits of a Museum Membership and help preserve the Black House and Public Park for Future Generations!

Individual \$25 (18 or under \$5): All members receive free admission to the museum, invitations to special member events, a subscription to the Museum's quarterly newsletter, a 10% discount in our gift shop for purchases over \$10.00, an invitation to the Annual Members Tea, and notification of other special events at the Museum. All memberships expire one year from the anniversary date.

Household \$40: Membership benefits for two adults and all household members under 18, plus a 25% discount on events for which there is a fee, and 4 free guest passes for Black House tours.

Supporter \$100: Membership benefits for two adults and all household members under 18, plus a 25% discount on events for which there is a fee, and 8 free guest passes for Black House tours.

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

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In addition to my Membership, I would also like to make donation to the Museum's Annual

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



Please mail completed form with your membership dues to:

**Membership
Woodlawn Museum
P.O. Box 1478
Ellsworth, Maine 04605**

Please make checks payable to the Woodlawn Museum.



**Woodlawn:
Where History
Comes Alive!**



Visitors of all ages gathered on Saturday, August 9, 2003 to enjoy the 3rd Annual Living History Day at the Woodlawn Museum. Live demonstrations were held in horse & carriage driving, sheep shearing, blacksmithing, yarn spinning, archery, and much more. Historic games such as stilt-walking and Town Ball encouraged participation by young and old historians alike. 🍷



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