

ART MUSEUMS *of Colonial Williamsburg*

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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE JOSEPH H. AND JUNE S. HENNAGE COLLECTION BEQUEST TO THE COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG FOUNDATION

Williamsburg, VA (January 12, 2021)—Of the more than 400 objects that comprise the extraordinary collection of American decorative arts amassed by Joseph and June Hennage, which they bequeathed to the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, the following are among the most significant pieces from the four areas that will be most transformed by this gift: furniture, furniture miniatures, silver and ceramics.

FURNITURE



High Chest, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, ca. 1770

This elegant mahogany high chest, also made with sabicu, yellow pine, and tulip poplar, descended in the Bache family from Sarah (Franklin) and Richard Bache, daughter and son-in-law of Benjamin Franklin. While it is unknown if the piece was originally purchased by Franklin (likely his wife Deborah, as Benjamin was abroad from 1765 until 1775) or Bache, the younger couple lived in Franklin's Philadelphia home from the time of their marriage in 1767 until shortly after Franklin's death in 1790. With a household that in time grew to include seven children and three to four adults, a storage piece for clothing and linens would have been quite useful as well as elegant. High chests were typically paired with a matching dressing table for a home's bed chamber.



Bureau Table, Providence, Rhode Island, 1760-1780

Blocked facades and carved shells such as those found on this bureau table were typical of the most elegant furniture produced in Rhode Island during the second half of the 18th century. The undulating façade, which may be what cabinetmaker John Goddard described as a “sweld front,” was “costly as well as ornamental.” While primarily associated with Newport production today, cabinetmakers in Providence produced versions as well. This bureau table, made of mahogany, white pine and chestnut and which has some construction details associated

with Massachusetts craft traditions including the valence drawer above the kneehole section, may indicate a Providence origin for this piece. Due to familial ties and migration, Massachusetts traditions were more strongly felt in Providence than Newport. While the maker is currently unknown, an inscription that appears to read “[J]onathan” may provide a clue.



Sideboard, Baltimore, Maryland, 1790-1810

One of the many new, highly specialized furniture forms introduced into dining rooms during the neoclassical era was the sideboard. Made in Baltimore, Maryland, this example, made of mahogany, yellow pine, white pine, tulip poplar, holly and other lightwood inlays, displays both the English influence on the overall form and the high level of inlaid ornamentation that was typical of elite Baltimore work during this period. The pictorial inlays at the tops of the front legs depict exotic, tulip-like flowers with striped and pointed petals. The same inlaid design appears on other pieces of Baltimore furniture but is otherwise unknown in America, suggesting that one of that city's several professional inlay makers produced it. Early national Baltimore was unusually cosmopolitan. Relatively young yet commercially successful, the city was growing dramatically. The large, sophisticated cabinetmaking community was drawn not only from other urban centers on the American coast but from Great Britain and continental Europe. These factors help to explain the singular nature of this sideboard and many other examples of neoclassical Baltimore furniture.

SILVER



Pepper Box, John Blowers (1710/11-1748), Boston, Massachusetts, ca. 1741

This diminutive object has an unusual legacy; it is engraved “Given to D:Russell/in Remembrance of her/Nephew Sam: Eliot/Who Died upon the Coast of Africa 1st Jan/1741 Æ 24.” Long presumed to honor a mariner lost at sea, new research has shown a very different story. The pepper box was given to Dorothy Smithson Russell (1698-1755) of Guilford, Connecticut, in honor of her nephew Samuel Eliot (1716-1741). A physician, Eliot was a 1735 graduate of Yale College; he had taken a sea voyage in hopes of restoring his own failing health but perished a few months before his 25th birthday on the coast of Africa. Dorothy Smithson Russell was Samuel Eliot’s only maternal aunt and given that Samuel’s parents owned a home and farm nearby she likely played a role in his life, perhaps even nursing him during illness. As Samuel died unmarried and left no will, it is probable that the pepper box was a gift from his parents to his aunt.



Coffeepot, Richard Humphreys (working ca. 1771-1791), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, ca. 1775

Made for the Taggart family of Pottstown, Pennsylvania, of silver and wood, this statuesque coffeepot was Mr. Hennage's favorite piece of silver. As Elizabeth Stillinger wrote in *American Antiques: The Hennage Collection* (1990, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation), "For [Joe], acquiring an object owned by a distinguished American family establishes a link with the colonial—or particularly desirable in his eyes—the Revolutionary—period of our history. This superb rococo coffeepot...embodies the three requirements for the most desirable antiques: outstanding craftsmanship, its maker's mark and a solid history of descent in an American family."



Tea and Coffee Service, John McMullin (1765-1843), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, ca. 1795

The elegant, fluted pattern of this tea and coffee service by John McMullin, made of silver and wood, represents the best of neoclassical Philadelphia silver with its tall, slender, oval shape and shallow, shimmering engraving. Although the owner of the initials *SSJ*, which each piece in the set bears in bright-cut monogram enclosed in a wreath of crossed branches, is unknown, this bold statement of the newly fashionable style was clearly made for a highly discerning buyer.

CERAMICS



Five-piece Garniture, Jingdezhen, China, ca. 1785

The decoration on this garniture made of hard-paste porcelain is often referred to as the "tobacco leaf" or "pseudo-tobacco leaf" pattern by modern day collectors. More likely, however, the decoration is derived from flowers and foliage in Southeast Asia or the Pacific. The pattern was owned by a number of early Americans and was a popular motif in post-Revolutionary America. Archaeological evidence and intact survivals with histories of ownership bear testament to pieces being owned in Virginia, Maryland, and South Carolina. Even George Washington owned a variation of this vibrant pattern that was used at Mount Vernon. This garniture graced the parlor fireplace mantel at Mr. and Mrs. Hennage's Williamsburg home for many years. Although small at only around six inches tall, it had a special significance for the couple beyond its history: it was among the first pieces of Chinese porcelain the couple added to their collection of decorative arts and set them on a path to many more heartfelt purchases—this was a gift from Mr. to Mrs. Hennage—and the development of lifelong relationships with legendary dealers such as Elinor Gordon.



Small Dish and Two Plates, Jingdezhen, China, ca. 1785

The plates and small dish made of hard-paste porcelain are decorated with the Angel Fame holding the badge of the Society of the Cincinnati. The pieces are part of a large service ordered by George Washington and Henry Lee during the young United States' first involvement in the global China trade network and is the earliest that bears the Society's insignia.

The Society of the Cincinnati was founded by American and French officers who served in the American Revolution, and it represented the alliance of the two nations. The Society takes its name from the Roman story of Cincinnatus, a farmer soldier who returned from war triumphant, but declined the offer of a crown in order to return to his home and continue to farm. George Washington was frequently likened to Cincinnatus.



Teapot, Jingdezhen, China, ca. 1790

This teapot, made of hard-paste porcelain, is from one of nine tea sets ordered by Samuel Shaw for members of the Society of the Cincinnati. Each tea service bears the eagle insignia of the Society and the initials of its respective owner, this example with the gilt monogram "WE" for William

Eustis. Eustis was a surgeon during the American Revolution, was elected to the House of Representatives and also served as Secretary of War under Presidents Jefferson and Madison and as Governor of Massachusetts.

FURNITURE MINIATURES



Miniature High Chest of Drawers, Connecticut, 1770-1800

Americans in the 18th century favored various woods due to their color and/or their grain pattern, and tiger and curly maple, such as the highly figured woods found on this piece, were quite popular in New England. This miniature high chest, which also contains white pine, chestnut and tulip poplar woods, echoes the larger form produced in Connecticut, southeast Massachusetts and Rhode Island with its tall, shapely legs and boldly scalloped skirt. It differs, however, by its use of engaged columns on the corners rather than the quarter columns found on larger examples.



Miniature Tall Case Clock, New England, ca. 1800

During the late 18th and early 19th centuries throughout New England, variations of the Boston/Roxbury tall case clock form, which was popularized by the Willard family of clockmakers, appeared. They were easily identifiable by their arched hoods surmounted by pierced frets, quarter columns on the trunk and use of string inlay and banding to ornament the

cases. This miniature version, with a brass movement that was intended to tell time, echoes that model with a slightly unusual treatment of pierced holes for the hood fret.



Miniature Tea Table, Newport, Rhode Island, 1740-1760

Tables with rectangular tops and projecting rounded corners are known today as “porringer-topped.” This miniature porringer-topped tea table, made of mahogany, descended in the Brown-Ives family of Providence, Rhode Island, and typifies a form popular in the mid-18th century in New England.

These selected objects are but a few of the nearly 400 objects in the Hennage bequest. Many will be on view in the exhibition, *A Gift to the Nation: The Joseph and June Hennage Collection*, which will open in the spring at the DeWitt Wallace Decorative Arts Museum, one of the recently expanded Art Museums of Colonial Williamsburg.

Additional information about the Art Museums and Colonial Williamsburg as well as tickets are available online at colonialwilliamsburg.org, by calling (855) 296-6627 and by following Colonial Williamsburg on [Facebook](#) and [@colonialwmsburg](#) on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

About the Art Museums of Colonial Williamsburg

The Art Museums of Colonial Williamsburg include the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Museum and the DeWitt Wallace Decorative Arts Museum, both of which are housed in their newly expanded building that offers an additional 65,000-square-feet of space, 25-percent more gallery space and numerous enhancements to the visitor experience. The Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Museum is home to the nation’s premier collection of American folk art, with more than 7,000 folk art objects made up to the present day. The DeWitt Wallace Decorative Arts Museum exhibits the best in British and American fine and decorative arts from 1670–1840. The Art Museums of Colonial Williamsburg are located at 301 South Nassau Street in Williamsburg, Va. Open daily from 9:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M.

About The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

Colonial Williamsburg operates the world’s largest living history museum, preserving Virginia’s 18th-century capital as a fully functioning city. Fun, engaging experiences transport guests back in time and highlight the relevance of America’s founding era to contemporary life. The Colonial Williamsburg experience includes more than 600 restored or reconstructed buildings, historic trade shops, renowned museums of decorative arts and folk art, extensive educational outreach programs for students and teachers, lodging, culinary options from historic taverns to casual or elegant dining, the Golden Horseshoe Golf Club featuring 45 holes designed by Robert Trent Jones Sr. and his son Rees Jones, a full-service spa and fitness center managed by Trilogy Spa, pools, retail stores and gardens. Philanthropic support and revenue from admissions, products and hospitality operations sustain Colonial Williamsburg’s educational programs and preservation initiatives. The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation is a 501

(c)(3) nonprofit organization; philanthropic support and revenue from admissions, products and operations sustain its educational programs and preservation initiatives.

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Images: High Chest, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, ca. 1770, mahogany, sabicu, yellow pine, and tulip poplar, bequest of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph H. Hennage, 1989-450; Bureau Table, Providence, Rhode Island, 1760-1780, mahogany, white pine, and chestnut, bequest of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph H. Hennage, 1991-61; Sideboard, Baltimore, Maryland, 1790-1810, mahogany, yellow pine, white pine, tulip poplar, holly and other lightwood inlays, bequest of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph H. Hennage, 1990-302; Pepper Box, John Blowers (1710/11–1748), Boston, Massachusetts, ca. 1741, silver, bequest of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph H. Hennage; Coffeepot, Richard Humphreys (working ca. 1771–1791), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, ca. 1775, silver, wood, bequest of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph H. Hennage; Tea and Coffee Service, John McMullin (1765–1843), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, ca. 1795, silver, wood, bequest of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph H. Hennage; Five-piece Garniture, Jingdezhen, China, ca. 1785, hard-paste porcelain, bequest of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph H. Hennage; Small Dish and Two Plates, Jingdezhen, China, ca. 1785, hard-paste porcelain, bequest of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph H. Hennage; Teapot, Jingdezhen, China, ca. 1790, hard-paste porcelain, bequest of Joseph H. and June Hennage; Miniature High Chest of Drawers, Connecticut, 1770-1800, maple, white pine, chestnut and tulip poplar, bequest of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph H. Hennage, 2020-161; Miniature Tall Case Clock, New England, ca. 1800, mahogany, white pine, glass, brass and steel, bequest of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph H. Hennage, 2020-162; Miniature Tea Table, Newport, Rhode Island, 1740-1760, mahogany, bequest of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph H. Hennage, 1990-277.