



MEAD

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Mead Painting May Be Original to the House

By Alice Glock

While Mead Hall's architecture and related furnishings and fixtures have been studied for the restoration project following the fire, we have no inventories or lists of Mead Hall's art and furnishings before the 1970s. Like the antique furniture left in the building, the provenance of period art is guesswork, helped by few clues.

Most of the paintings in Mead Hall today have no connection with the original Gibbons mansion. Now, the first floor rooms and halls are filled with portraits related to the history of Drew, from the imposing seated portraits of Daniel and Roxanna Mead Drew that greet visitors from their perch on either side of Founders Room at the end of the entrance hall, to the gallery of ten presidents that line the main first floor hall. In other first floor rooms are hung portraits of an assortment of bishops and professors important to the early success of the seminary, some painted in

regal full-length standing poses. But in the style of the pre-Civil War period of Gibbons' time, Mead Hall would have more likely been decorated with history paintings and prints, landscapes, still lifes, and family portraits.

The landscapes and still lifes in Mead Hall today well postdate



A detail from "Cows in Pasture"

Gibbons' time and were gifted to the University over the years.

There is just one painting, however, a large well-preserved but unsigned and undated landscape hang-

ing in the second floor hall, given a simple descriptive title "Cows in Pasture", that may possibly have belonged to the mansion that William and Abigail Gibbons called home. Its massive gold-leaf frame, close in style to the original entrance hall mirror frames, also suggest it could have hung in the Gibbons' Greek revival house.

We know that the Gibbons family moved into the mansion in 1836 and that purchases for

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1857 Map Reveals a Surprise about Mead Hall's Past

By Cathy Messmer

In 1992, archaeologists working on the Mead Hall restoration project discovered a map of Madison drawn in 1857 by mapmaker Thomas Hughes. In addition to carriageways, paths and garden features, the map clearly shows the William Gibbons mansion, now known as Mead Hall, with its familiar T form and magnificent front steps. But the map also depicts a large rectangular structure attached to the rear of Gibbons' country home.

Today, this structure no longer exists; instead, the building's expansive back porch looks out over open lawn dotted with oak trees. What was this strange addition to the family home? Archaeologists search underground for answers to questions like this and it is in the trenches dug in the grassy area behind Mead Hall that they found the evidence to help solve the mystery. Just one foot below the surface, archaeologist Joel W. Grossman and his team discovered

the first clue—fragments of earthenware flowerpots. Further digging revealed a great quantity of broken window glass. Continuing on, they found evidence of a brick and stone foundation and could even determine that the quality of workmanship and materials in the foundation equaled that of the Gibbons mansion itself.

Careful analysis of the site and the materials found within it led the archaeologists to the conclusion that the structure had been an "elaborate and extensive greenhouse which was built prior to the 1850s as an addition

immediately to the south of the primary residential structure." Their analysis of the remains of the foundation helped them to determine that the greenhouse was 107' x 92' in size, with an open interior and that it was built in two stages. The south facing Gibbons greenhouse was sited to gain the maximum benefit of the sun's warmth. This natural warmth may have

Collecting and cultivating plants was a popular pastime for wealthy 19th-century men and women.



The Gibbons mansion with its greenhouse as shown in the 1857 map by Thomas Hughes.



been supplemented by warm air supplied by the furnace in the house or by a stove installed in the greenhouse.

For many prominent families of the period, a greenhouse was an important addition to their estate. Collecting and cultivating plants was a popular pastime for wealthy 19th century men and women. At first, these activities were the particular province of men but as the century progressed, the ladies joined in, encouraged by such notables as Andrew Jackson Downing and British author Jane Loudon, the wife of horticulturalist John Claudius Loudon. Grossman and his colleagues speculated that the Gibbons family cultivated medicinal plants in their greenhouse. Marta McDowell, a horticulturalist and writer who teaches with Drew's certificate program in historic preservation, believes that it is more likely that the family used their

greenhouse to grow and protect tender ornamental plants during the cold New Jersey winters. In addition, it is probable that annual and biennial flowers used in the mansion's flower beds were started in the greenhouse. The greenhouse may have also allowed William Gibbons to grow exotic fruits such as bananas, figs or pineapples.

Today it is hard to imagine such an elaborate greenhouse attached to Mead Hall. However, the discovery of the 1857 map and the work of the archaeologists have opened a window onto the horticultural activities of the Gibbons family and others like them.

To learn more about 19th-century American horticulture, join the Friends of Mead Hall for a lecture on this fascinating subject by Ms. McDowell on Sunday, January 28th. More information about the event is below.

Treat Yourself to a Vicarious Visit to 19th-Century Gardens in January

What better way to spend a cold Sunday afternoon in January than envisioning the gardens of the past? Plan to join The Friends of Mead Hall to hear noted author and teacher Marta McDowell's lecture on American gardening practices of the 19th century. Ms. McDowell will guide us through the development of an American landscaping style, from formal to romantic to Victorian. She will explore how new ideas about landscapes replaced the 18th century dedication to formal, geometric gardens and will introduce us to the garden "tastemaker" of the period. We will also consider how William Gibbons who built Mead Hall in 1836 may have approached the gardens and landscape surrounding his mansion.



Marta McDowell

courtesy of Marta McDowell

Marta McDowell teaches landscape history at the New York Botanical Garden and in Drew University's certificate program in historic preservation. She is frequent lecturer at local garden clubs and arboreta, including the Horticultural Society of

New York and the Chautauqua Institution. She is the author of the recently published *Emily Dickinson's Gardens* as well as numerous gardening articles which have been published in *The New York Times* and *Woman's Day*.

The lecture will be held at 4 p.m. on Sunday, January 28th in Mead Hall on Drew University's campus. Refreshments will be served. The cost of admission is

\$20, payable at the door. Questions may be directed to Cathy Messmer via e-mail to cmessmer@drew.edu or by calling 973/408-3646.



A Winter Workshop on Preserving Family Documents and Artifacts

Do you collect family and personal memorabilia? Are you a member of an historical society or a do you work at a house museum which has a collection of materials in need of preservation? Are you wondering how and where to store a wide variety of items that, if properly cared for, will connect future generations to the past?

The care and conservation of historic documents and artifacts is a perplexing aspect of historic preservation for many of us. This winter Drew's Historic Preservation Certificate Program is offering a one-day workshop designed to help. Taught by Cheryl Oestreicher, manager of the University Archives, this workshop will provide a broad and practical introduction to the care, storage, handling and proper preservation techniques for a variety of artifacts and paper items. These materials

can be family photographs, scrapbooks, newspaper clippings, books, personal letters and papers, clothing, and an array of keepsakes. Various collection formats (photographs, newspapers, digital images, documents, etc.) will be examined, with resources provided for further reference.

The workshop entitled "Preserving Family Documents and Artifacts" is open to anyone interested in helping to preserve the past and the present to make it accessible in the future. It will be held on the Drew University campus on Saturday, February 3rd from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. The cost is \$110 which includes lunch and course materials.

For further information or to register, visit Drew's Office of Continuing Education website at <http://depts.drew.edu/cue/certificate/historic/> or call Angelica Honor at 973/408-3185.

NEWARK MUSEUM CURATOR REVEALS MEAD HALL AS HOME AT 2006 SPRING GALA

Ulysses Grant Dietz, curator of decorative arts at the Newark Museum, entertained more than 100 people at the March Gala for the Friends of Mead Hall with a lecture in the historic building's Founders Room. Dietz, an expert on silver and furniture, delighted his audience with his insights about Mead Hall's function as a mid-19th century family home. In a

presentation of examples of furnishings and decorative elements, he demonstrated the movement of interior decoration, once the purview of men, to the domain of women with the introduction of French and romantic influences.

Guests enjoyed wine, hors d'oeuvres and confections in Mead's beautifully restored first floor common rooms. Friends of Mead Hall provided guided tours and historic information to guests.





A Very Special Occasion

Art Expert Stuart Feld to Speak at 2007 Mead Hall Benefit

Stuart P. Feld, President of Hirschl and Adler Galleries in New York, will be the featured speaker at the Annual Spring Gala to benefit Mead Hall. He plans to speak on the topic "A Broadening of Taste: American Art after 1825."

A graduate of Princeton University, he received a master's degree from Harvard, where he was one of the first graduate students to specialize in the various arts of the United States—painting, architecture, and the decorative arts. In 1962 Mr. Feld joined the curatorial staff of the Department of American Paintings and Sculpture at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and co-authored the first definitive catalogue of early American paintings in The Metropolitan's collection.

In 1967 he joined the firm of Hirschl & Adler Galleries, and established its pre-eminence in the field of American art of the past. During 15 years as a partner in the firm, and as exclusive owner since 1982, Mr. Feld has organized dozens of exhibitions at Hirschl & Adler and has written many catalogues that have set the pattern for much of the collecting that has gone on in the American field. In 1991, Mr. Feld organized *Neo-Classicism in America,*



Stuart P. Feld

courtesy of Stuart P. Feld

Inspiration and Innovation 1810-1840, the gallery's first survey exhibition of American Neo-Classical fine and decorative arts, which was documented by a fully-illustrated catalogue. In 1999, Mr. Feld wrote *Boston in the Age of Neo-Classicism, 1810-1840*, and in 2001, in collaboration with his daughter, Elizabeth, he wrote *Of the Newest Fashion: Masterpieces of American Neo-*

Classical Decorative Arts, both of which accompanied exhibitions at Hirschl & Adler Galleries. Just published is *In Pointed Style, The Gothic Revival in America, 1800-1860*, a collaboration with Elizabeth and others, which documents the first exhibition of the Gothic Revival in New York. At present, Mr. Feld is working with Kathleen Burnside on the definitive catalogue raisonné of the work of the American

Impressionist painter Childe Hassam.

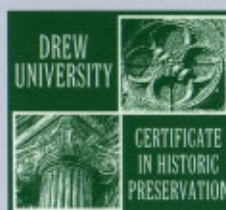
This is a unique opportunity to hear an icon in the field of American art. The invitation-only benefit will be held on Sunday, March 11 at 4 p.m. in Mead Hall. A wine reception will follow the lecture.

Invitations will be sent in February. Additional invitations may be obtained by contacting Cathy Messmer at 973/408-3646 or cmessmer@drew.edu.

PRESERVATION EDUCATION THRIVES AT DREW

Drew University's unique Certificate in Historic Preservation program draws from a wealth of resources in the Garden State. Designed for a wide range of participants, the program provides the tools needed to understand the discipline and language of architecture, historic landscapes and furnishing styles, and preservation practices. A variety of ten-week courses and one-day workshops are taught by faculty who are active professionals in the field of preservation. Students are welcome to take courses individually or may work towards the certificate.

For a brochure, course list and further information, contact Angelica Gonor in the Office of Continuing Education at 973/408-3185.





Cows

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furnishing the home continued, as revealed in archival records. Decorating purchases probably stopped with Abigail's death, a short eight years later, in 1844, and certainly ended at the time of William's passing in 1852. When the mansion was sold to Daniel Drew in 1867, furniture, particularly large pieces, such as the large wardrobe in the second floor hall—and probably much more now scattered and lost, was left behind. Certainly it is possible that some artwork remained too, especially large pieces such as "Cows in Pasture" (44" x 61" unframed).

If the collection of artwork that was inventoried in the 1970s was reviewed from an art historical point of view in order to find art possibly belonging to the Gibbons mansion, "Cows in Pasture" would be the best example to fit the criteria that we know. While we are not certain it was acquired by Gibbons, it is otherwise consistent with the kind of painting that would have hung in a well-appointed mansion of the early 19th century.

Just as in architecture, a national expression in American art emerged in the late 18th and early 19th century. The emphasis shifted from portraiture and classical history painting to landscape painting which became dominant when its own aesthetic grew out of the belief in the inherent sanctity of nature. Its unifying and uplifting effects, shown in the detailed descriptions of natural forms, leaves, branches, and cloud structures, made for a new definition of beauty. For a new nation in search of its own identity in art, the landscape offered a universal, more democratic artistic



expression that could be displayed in any parlor and admired by any viewer. Economic expansion by the mid-19th century provided artists with wealthy collectors who hung inspiring landscapes in their huge new parlors.

In this historical context, it is not difficult to imagine William and Abigail Gibbons' enthusiasm for the emerging art of a new nation showing in New York City, where the family shopped for finer things. American artists, later grouped together and called the Hudson River School, all had well-appointed studios in New York City where landscapes were painted in beautiful compositions, the elements of nature taking on symbolism from sketches and from memory.

"Cows in Pasture" shows a tranquil country scene, the upper half filled with sky and an expansive sweep of cloud formations. The viewer is positioned on a hillock, allowing several distinct horizontal layers of scenery in the lower half of the painting. In the foreground is a farm scene of about a dozen cows being herded by young men on a road, in the hot summer, indicated by the clothing and nearly full grown corn behind them. A log fence separates the road from a middle ground of cornfields and a stand of expressively painted trees.



In the background of the hilly countryside, removed and separate from the farm scene, is the skyline of one or more towns whose main road seems to transverse the canvas, and accommodates three different churches each defined by a spire and different architecture. The artist varies the sizes of each church and cluster of buildings around it to indicate distance.

A close look at the architecture of the churches shows them painted cursorily, but still distinct enough to distinguish styles that belong to the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The white church barely visible in the far distance can still be identified as a typical colonial church of the Gibbs style of the late 18th and first decade of the 19th century, with the strong pediment, colonnaded entrance of the neoclassical style, and cupola spire. In the center middle distance is two-story brick church also with a strong pediment but with a pointed spire typical of early 19th century New England. The side view of the church at the right

edge of the painting reveals a one-story front gabled brick church with a plain rectangular plan, the spire shape partially obscured behind a tree.

These outdoor scenes were typically painted in the studio, and weren't necessarily accurate to a particular place. From the architecture, the setting could be New Jersey or almost anywhere in the northeast.

It is easy to overlook the indistinct skyline of colonial architecture in this landscape, but clearly the view of new towns and new American architecture was a source of pride and beauty in the landscape setting. The lack of fine detail, in the architecture as well as in the young men herding the cows, points to a studio hand, or lesser known and less skilled artist who apparently did not sign his work, and who perhaps was filling the demand for such pleasant parlor paintings at this relatively prosperous, tranquil and hopeful time between the Revolutionary and Civil Wars.

Drew to Host 2007 State Historic Preservation Conference

The University is pleased to announce that it will host New Jersey's annual historic preservation conference on May 23, 2007. Titled "Our Towns, Our Land, Our Heritage: Sustaining NJ's Legacy," the conference will mark the fortieth anniversary of the creation of the NJ Historic Sites Council and the NJ Historic Trust and celebrate one of the earliest and most successful statewide preservation programs in the country. The conference participants will also discuss strategies for charting a comprehensive course for the future protection of New Jersey's historic and environmental resources.

For the first time ever, conference organizers are planning two pre-conference events: On May 22nd: a bus-tour of Morris County resources and a reception to honor

forty years of volunteer stewardship. The reception will be held at Fosterfields, the 19th century home of Caroline Foster located just west of Morristown.

Conference workshops at Drew the following day are designed to focus on collaborative partnerships between the historic preservation and environmental communities to ensure the long-term stewardship of our state's irreplaceable natural and historic resources. The conference will culminate in a reception hosted by the Friends of Mead Hall which will be held in our beautifully restored signature building.

The conference is open to anyone with an interest in historic preservation and/or the protection of the natural environment.

For up-to-date conference info and registration materials, visit www.state.nj/dep/hpo. Join us for this important conference next spring!





Become a Friend of Mead Hall

If you have ever visited historic Mead Hall or just have seen photographs of it, you will recognize outstanding examples of restoration throughout the building, from detailed reproduction wallpapers, to antique furniture, lighting and decorative art.

Much of the maintenance of this nationally significant example of American Greek revival architecture relies on support from dedicated friends in the community. When you become a Friend of Mead Hall, your membership helps to ensure the building is preserved for the enjoyment and edification of so many people, inside and beyond the University's front gates. Join us and become a Friend of Mead Hall today!

Friends of Mead Hall

Enclosed is my/our gift at the level of:

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