



# MEAD

Winter 2008

Volume III



An annual publication  
of the Friends of Mead Hall  
Drew University

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## A Passion for Thoroughbreds: Gibbons Breeds a Champion

By Alice Glock

William Gibbons's primary motivation in piecing together his large estate and building his mansion—now known as Mead Hall of Drew University—was not only to settle and raise his young family, but also to pursue his passion for horse breeding and racing. In 1826 William inherited the vast fortunes of his father, Thomas, which included plantations in Georgia and a steamboat enterprise between New York and New Jersey. William sold the steamboat operation in 1829, three years after he married and the first of his four offspring had arrived. When the youngest child was one year old in 1836, the family moved into their newly built Greek revival mansion named “The Forest.”

In this new stage of his life, William Gibbons settled into the life of a wealthy gentleman of his time. In the relative peace of the nation-defining and expansion period of U.S. history between

wars, he pursued his interest in horse breeding and racing with the same meticulous and shrewd planning that he used to skillfully manage his southern plantations from afar.

At the same time Gibbons was building his mansion in the mid 1830s, he was occupied with planning and establishing his horse breeding operation by building stables, barns and race tracks on farm land he had purchased south



*A Currier lithograph of Gibbons's Fashion racing Peytona on May 13, 1845*

of The Forest in nearby Chatham Township. Although no traces of it remain today, old maps show an oval track and structures on a more than 200-acre site (near

*continued on page 6*

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## Friends of Mead Hall Lecture Series

This winter, the Friends of Mead Hall are proud to present two outstanding lecturers who will take you on very different and very special trips to the 19th-century Forest. From a discussion of dining styles and Mrs. Gibbons's menus to a rousing reminiscence of the glory days of Mr. Gibbons's triumphs at breeding and racing thoroughbred horses, this year's series is one you won't want to miss.

**Sunday, January 27, 4 p.m.**

### *At Table with the Gibbonses*

Imagine being a dinner guest at a beautiful mansion in 1838! In our first lecture, Jennifer Scanlan, assistant curator at the Museum of Arts and Design in New York City, uses clues from the archived Gibbons papers as well as other period sources to reveal early 19th-century dining practices. This event will be held in William and Abigail Gibbonses' actual dining room in Mead Hall.



Jennifer Scanlan

Courtesy of Jennifer Scanlan

Ms. Scanlan, who also teaches in Drew's certificate program in historic preservation, graduated from Vassar with a B.A. in art history and Italian. She has a master's degree in the history of decorative arts, design and culture from Bard Graduate Center in New York.

Her lively talk will be followed by tours of Mead Hall and light refreshments. Cost of admission is \$20, payable at the door.

*In the event of inclement weather on the day of this event, please call 973/408-3201 for cancellation information.*



**Sunday, March 9, 4 p.m.**

### *Fashion, Queen of the Turf*

#### *Spring Lecture and Mead Benefit*

One of the most famous American racehorses of the 19th century was a horse called Fashion, born in 1837 at the Madison farm of her owner and breeder, William Gibbons.



Anne Peters

Courtesy of Three Chimneys Farm

Fashion became a brilliant race mare, winning two nationally famous races, pitting her as the best runner of the North against the best of the South. Noted authority on the breeding and history of thoroughbred horses, Anne Peters, will recount Fashion's stellar career and familiarize us with the nature of thoroughbred horseracing during her time.

A native of Pennsylvania, Ms. Peters has worked in the thoroughbred industry since receiving her degree in animal science from the University of Massachusetts in 1979. She is the seasons and matings adviser at Three Chimneys Farm in Kentucky, current home to Smarty Jones and former home of Triple Crown Winner Seattle Slew. In 1995, she co-authored, with Alan Porter, *Patterns of Greatness II: the Americans*. Ms. Peters's articles have appeared in numerous journals such as the *Mid-Atlantic Thoroughbred*, *The Blood-Horse*, *The Blood-Horse's MarketWatch* and *The*



*Thoroughbred Record*. She currently is a partner, with Patricia Erigero, in the website, [ThoroughbredHeritage.com](http://ThoroughbredHeritage.com).

A wine and cheese and sweets reception will follow the lecture. Tours of Mead Hall will be available. Tickets to this Mead Hall benefit event are \$80, and invitations will be sent in February.

*Additional invitations for those not on our mailing list may be obtained by contacting Patricia Schwartz at 973/408-3201. Also call this number in case of inclement weather on the day of the event.*

## Special Offer!

Purchase a ticket to both of our winter lectures at a combined rate of \$90! Special offer tickets will be on sale at the first lecture on January 27. Take advantage of this opportunity to enjoy both events while also contributing to the care of this extraordinary building.



## ALUMNA RESTORES MEAD WALLPAPER

**M**arlene Raedisch C'87 combines her Drew art major, her love of Mead Hall ("my favorite campus building") and her training and experience as an art restorer to touch up damaged wallpaper in Mead Hall Room 104.

Residing in Manhattan, Ms. Raedisch works as a painting restorer for Lowy Framing and Restoring Company on East 80th Street in New York City.

Funding for this project was made possible through donations to Friends of Mead Hall.



Courtesy of Alice Glock





## Dinner's at Noon

### *À La Mode* Dining Graced Gibbons Table

By Jennifer Scanlan

A stroll through the cookbook section at your neighborhood bookstore will reveal hundreds of titles, featuring superstar chefs, exotic cuisines and recipes for every palate and budget. America's passion for cookbooks may seem like a recent phenomenon, but it actually began just around the time the Gibbons family moved into The Forest in 1836. Spurred by improvements in technology that made book printing cheaper, along with rising literacy rates, 19th-century publishers churned out a number of these books, keeping many of them in print through several editions.

So, like many of today's home cooks, Mrs. Gibbons might have consulted one of these cookbooks when deciding on menus for her family and guests. While no records have been discovered that describe the exact menus served in the Gibbons household, we can use these books, together with contemporary accounts and the record books from the Gibbons archives, to imagine what might have been served up at their table on a typical day.

For wealthy families in the early 19th century, daily meals consisted of breakfast, dinner and a light meal in the evening that might have been called tea or supper. Breakfast was generally hearty, resembling English breakfasts of the period, and might have included fish such as the shad or codfish that show up in William Gibbons's account books, along with truly American dishes such as buckwheat cakes and tea or coffee. The British writer Frances Trollope described the breakfast of a typical

Philadelphia gentlewoman of this time as consisting of fried ham, salt fish and coffee, and she also noted the widespread use of hot rolls and cornbread. Robert Roberts, who worked for many years as a servant to wealthy families in Boston, described a breakfast similar to that of the British aristocracy of eggs or meat, toast and tea. William Gibbons's accounts list both coffee and tea, so his breakfast beverage might have been either.

Dinner was the most important meal of the day, served between noon and 3 p.m. A particularly elegant dinner for company might have consisted of several courses, each one brought in by servants who removed

*The first course  
might have been soup  
made with game,  
oysters or turtle.*



the plates of the previous course. This method of service, called *à la russe*, was just beginning to come into fashion, replacing *à la française* presentation in which all of the dishes were placed on the table at once. The first course might have been soup made with game, oysters or turtle. The second course was often fish, for example salmon that Mr. Gibbons bought in New York. The third course was a roast, and might have been pork, the most popular meat in America at the time. Since pigs matured quickly, they were an efficient source of meat, and pork kept well in the days before refrigeration in the form of ham or salt pork.

Vegetables were locally grown and served in season and well cooked. The Gibbons account books list the purchase of seeds for vegetables that were probably grown on the grounds. Carrots, parsnips, beets, spinach and salsify all would have



been sturdy vegetables that could have been eaten throughout the winter. Not mentioned in the accounts, but extremely popular in the northeast, were potatoes and corn. Eliza Leslie, in her book *The Lady's Receipt-Book; a Useful Companion for Large or Small Families*, published in Philadelphia in 1847, footnotes her list of menu suggestions for inexpensive dinners: "There is no necessity for repeating the mention of potatoes. It will of course be understood that potatoes should constitute a portion of every dinner." Potatoes also were mentioned as the only vegetable accompanying two courses of an elegant hotel meal in *The Hotel Keepers, Head Waiters, and Housekeepers Guide*, published in 1848.

Dessert might have been pies, puddings or preserves made with fruit produced on the grounds of the Forest. Mr. Gibbons's accounts from this period demonstrate that their orchard and conservatory contained a number of fruit trees, including apples, plums, peaches, pears, apricots, oranges, lemons, figs and nectarines. This fruit would not generally have been eaten fresh, as most fresh fruit was considered unhealthful in the early nineteenth century.

Contemporary cookbooks offer a number of recipes for using fruits in pies or puddings, as well as preserving them in syrups or jams. Fruit preservation was a costly undertaking at this time, as it

required large amounts of sugar, which was an expensive commodity; a great variety of desserts would have been a true luxury.

After such a rich dinner, the evening meal would have been a light affair. Roberts described a meal in which mostly cold plates were laid out on the table all at once. This might have included the salted beef mentioned in the Gibbons account books, as well as pickles and savory preserves that appear frequently in contemporary cookbooks. In addition to cucumbers, perhaps the only form of pickles that are common today, *The Frugal Housewife* lists recipes for pickling asparagus, cabbage, beans, melon, mushrooms, onions and walnuts, along with plants that we no longer use in the kitchen, such as samphire, barberries and nasturtium seeds. Eliza Leslie suggested an "Oyster Supper," in which this hugely popular shellfish was featured roasted, fried, stewed and, of course, pickled.

We can imagine that a cookbook might have helped Mrs. Gibbons as she managed a large, fashionable household, allowing her to feed her family and entertain her guests in the finest gustatory fashion possible. To us, they offer insights into daily life for the first family of The Forest.

### *Resources for further reading about 19th-century dining practices:*

Frances Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (originally published 1834, reprinted Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1974).

Robert Roberts, *Roberts' Guide for Butlers and Household Staff* (originally published 1827, reprinted Bedford, Mass.: Applewood Books, 1993).

Elaine N. McIntosh, *American Food Habits in Historical Perspective* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1995).

Eliza Leslie, *The Lady's Receipt-Book; a Useful Companion for Large or Small Families* (Philadelphia: E.L. Carey & Hart, 1840).

Waverley Root and Richard de Rochemont, *Eating in America: A History* (New York: Ecco Press, 1995).





## Thoroughbreds

*continued from page 1*

present day Shunpike Road and Noe Avenue) which Gibbons called Sandy Hill.

About two miles southwest of the The Forest, next to Loantaka Brook on what was known as Carter Farm, Gibbons built a brick barn. Placed on the National Register of Historic Sites in 2005, it is uniquely well-preserved today on a farm landscape viewed from Loantaka Way and still used for horses. The simple rectangular, two-and-one-half-story, gable-roofed structure is similar in dimensions—100 by 40 feet—to the brick stable he built near The Forest mansion for the family's transportation horses. It was constructed of the same red brick as the mansion and nearby stable (now Asbury Hall) and granary (now Embury Hall).

Gibbons's most famous championship horse was Fashion. Her birth on April 26, 1837, was recorded in his "stud book," which is preserved in the university archives and can be viewed at [www.drew.edu/depts/library.aspx?id=23975](http://www.drew.edu/depts/library.aspx?id=23975). Her carefully recorded pedigree shows the

meticulous attention that was given to breeding race horses from blooded stock imported from England. The lineage of Fashion's dam, Bonnets O'Blue, can be traced to Diomed, one of the four stallions imported from England after the Revolutionary War and responsible for the majority of thoroughbreds that sustained American racing in this time period. Diomed had sired Sir Archy, who was considered the first great stallion bred in America, and whose offspring included many successful thoroughbreds, Bonnets O'Blue among them. Gibbons chose to mate Bonnets O'Blue with Trustee, an English horse imported by Robert Stockton of Princeton as a stud in 1835, resulting in the filly Fashion.

Unlike today, race horses were bred for stamina as well as speed. Horses ran four-mile-long races, with more than one heat deciding the contest. For this kind of endurance, horses such as Fashion generally did not race before they were mature at four years old, contrasting with races of



*A current view of the Gibbons barn on Loantaka Brook*

Courtesy of Alice Gluck





today, which are decided in one, much shorter run between much younger, “teenage” colts. Fashion was sent to Samuel Laird in Monmouth County for training in June 1840 when she was 3 years old. Laird’s son was her jockey throughout her career.

Colorful stories and legends fill the newspapers and memoirs of the pre-Civil War period, a distinctive segment of American horse-racing history in which William Gibbons played an important role. Fashion’s race against Boston, one of America’s first great race horses, was an astonishing upset event in 1841. A mare defeating a stallion at a rematch a year later in 1842—setting a four-mile record of 7:32 1/2 that stood for more than 13 years—was a feat that earned Fashion the title, “Queen of the American Turf.”

Gibbons’s Fashion played a prominent role in the top competitions billed as “North-South” races, which were a reflection of the pre-Civil War political climate, largely orchestrated by William Ransom Johnson—also highly respected for his objective authority on breeding and racing. These races, begun in the 1820s, further built up the frenzy surrounding the pastime that was becoming more and more popular with the American public. It was Johnson who issued the next challenge to Fashion, with a race against a new Southern star, the mare Peytona.

A Currier lithograph by C. Severin (see page 1) memorializes the Peytona-Fashion



*Fashion, bred by William Gibbons, Folio engraving by A.B. Dick*

University Archives  
 race of May 13, 1845. It was acquired at auction in 1979 by the university and now hangs in Mead Hall. The race’s great anticipation and Fashion’s loss on the Union Course in Long Island overshadowed the fact that Fashion defeated Peytona in a rematch two

weeks later on May 28 at another race track in Camden, New Jersey. Fashion’s comeback win over Peytona was unfortunately marked by tragedy when the viewing stands collapsed, injuring and killing spectators.

The rich detail illustrated in the print of the Peytona-Fashion race depicts the historical accounts of chaotic scenes; it reminds us of the differences and changes that occurred in the developments in horse racing in America, such as the promotion of organized betting, admission tickets and safety accommodations for the crowds.

Newspaper accounts and Gibbons’s letters note a decline in Fashion’s performance in 1847, and she ran her last race in 1848, bringing a total of \$41,500 in winnings over her nine-year career. Significantly, 1847 is the same year Gibbons built his brick barn on Carter Farm. This suggests that Gibbons, in planning for Fashion’s breeding—and with his penchant for using the finest building materials—built the magnificent brick barn as a “mansion in the pastures” for his most famous champion horse.

Fashion was elected to the National Racing Hall of Fame in 1980.



## A Methodist Seminary Takes Root in The Forest

By Cathy Messmer

In May of 1867, a small contingent of prominent Methodist ministers and laymen passed through the gates of The Forest and approached the imposing and utterly quiet Gibbons mansion. They must have been immediately impressed with the size, quality and beauty of the building. As they climbed the steps to the portico, entered the elegant hallway and peered into the elaborately furnished family rooms, they began to consider if these rooms could serve a new and very different purpose. These visitors were in search of a site for an important new seminary for the training of Methodist ministers. Could this abandoned property suit that purpose?

The estate's former owner, William Gibbons, had died 15 years beforehand. With his death, the mansion essentially ceased to serve as the family home. His son Heyward inherited the estate but was an absentee owner, preferring to live instead at the Georgia plantation also inherited from his father. Only Heyward's sister Caroline continued on at The Forest, probably part time, until her death in 1857. Soon after, Heyward closed and shuttered the mansion, leaving a few staff in place as a safeguard, and returned once again to Georgia.

Ten years passed with Heyward losing most of his fortune and property as a result of his ardent support for the Confederate cause in the Civil War. He returned to New Jersey and shortly thereafter received what he must have viewed as a very providential offer. Daniel Drew, an enormously wealthy New York capitalist, wanted to

buy The Forest—not to serve as his own country estate but for an entirely different purpose. Drew was acting on behalf of the American Methodist Episcopal Church, which had decided to celebrate the centenary of Methodism in this country with the establishment of an important theological school.



*Mead Hall, as it appeared in the early years of the Drew Theological Seminary, circa 1885*

Drew had become involved in this project through his association with the Reverend John McClintock who was his pastor at St. Paul's Methodist Church in New York City. McClintock also was the chairman of the committee that had been formed by the General Conference to determine how to celebrate American Methodism's centennial year. When the committee agreed to do so with the establishment of a seminary, McClintock asked the wealthy Drew if he could provide financial support for the project. Drew agreed, eventually providing over \$500,000.

In late May of 1867, the seminary planners learned that the Gibbons estate in Madison was available and decided to visit it. It appears they quickly agreed that it





could be readily adapted for use as an educational institution. As later reported in the October 4, 1873 issue of *Harpers Weekly*, "...the stately Gibbons mansion was found to be as well suited for the purposes of the seminary as if expressly built for it." Drew then offered Heyward Gibbons \$140,000 for the furnished mansion and its surrounding buildings on just under 100 acres. Gibbons and Drew worked out the details and struck a deal.

John McClintock then set the ambitious goal of opening the seminary's doors to students in the fall of 1867, just four months after acquiring the property. Much had to be done, including the creation of a curriculum, the hiring of faculty and the renovation of the former estate's buildings for their new use.

It seems likely that the new owners would have taken steps to dampen down the mansion's interior opulence, perhaps by removing some of the furniture, carpeting and drapes. With other minor modifications, the family rooms were transformed to serve as the library, lecture rooms and faculty offices. The former Gibbons dining room, now known as Founders Room, became the seminary's first chapel. And finally, the west wing of the building was converted into an apartment and made available as housing for the seminary's first president, John McClintock, and his wife. The students were

to be given rooms that first fall in the former caretaker's cottage, now Sycamore Cottage; but work began immediately on converting the Gibbons stable (now Asbury Hall) and granary (now Embury Hall) into residence and dining halls.

John McClintock was successful in achieving his goal. The first class of 12 students registered on October 16, 1867, with classes beginning immediately afterward. On November 6, 1867, the opening of the Drew Theological Seminary was celebrated at a day-long dedication ceremony. Daniel Curry, the editor of the *Christian Advocate*, a Methodist weekly newspaper, described the event in the November 14, 1867, issue as being attended by "...a large and so select a gathering of the chief men, and women too, of the denomination." He continued, "...all felt and confessed that it marked very distinctly a stage in Methodist progress."

A new and continuing purpose had been found for the old William Gibbons estate. A few months after the dedication ceremony, the institution's Board of Trustees honored its generous benefactor by naming the mansion after his wife, Roxanna Mead Drew. As of April 1868, the students and faculty of the Drew Theological Seminary began to call the building Mead Hall, just as we do today.

Professors Upham, Strong, Buttz, Miley and Crook pose for this 1880s photograph with the Mead Hall steps as a backdrop.



University Archives





## Enroll in an Historic Preservation Course this Spring

If you find the topics explored in this newsletter intriguing, consider taking advantage of the courses offered through Drew's certificate program in historic preservation. The program is offered to the community through the Office of Continuing Education and covers subjects as diverse as the history of interiors, preservation advocacy, preserving family documents, architectural history, lighting historic interiors and the role of archaeology in preservation.

The 10-week spring term begins the week of March 24. The offerings this spring will include a course on New Jersey's vernacular architecture focusing on the buildings all around us—from 18th-century houses and barns to contemporary commercial buildings. This course will be taught by Janet Foster. Also to be offered this spring is a course on the preservation of historic landscapes, taught by Marta McDowell. Through a case study of The Willows at Fosterfields in Morristown,

participants will learn the principles of preserving and recreating gardens for historic sites. A third course will address preservation advocacy and the steps necessary to incorporate it into the planning processes in our communities. Taught by Wayne McCabe, this is one of the courses required for the certificate.

The program also offers one-day courses. On Saturday, February 9, learn how to "research your house's history" with Jennifer Scanlan. And, on May 3, the program will sponsor a course on mortar. Participants will even have an opportunity to get their hands dirty while working with various mortar products.

These courses are open to anyone interested in these topics. They also provide an opportunity to network with others who have similar interests. Contact the Office of Continuing Education at 973/408-3400 for a brochure and further information or visit the program's website at [drew.edu/cue/preservation/asp](http://drew.edu/cue/preservation/asp).

### FRIENDS OF MEAD SCRAPBOOK

*Spring 2007 Feld Lecture on 19th-Century American Art*



*Stuart P. Feld, president of Hirschel and Adler Galleries, answers questions after his lecture.*



*Our guests enjoy sweets and conversation in the Wendel Room.*





## Gibbons Records Reveal History of Ferry Industry, Details of Domestic Life

By Cheryl Oestreicher

- *On June 26, 1818, Thomas Gibbons and Cornelius Vanderbilt signed an employment agreement for Vanderbilt "to serve as Master and Commander" of one of Gibbons's steamboats.*
- *An account statement from January 19, 1849, noted a total of \$90.60 for hanging draperies, sewing fringe on curtains, hanging a mirror and other decoration expenses incurred by Gibbons's son William.*
- *Documents dating from 1760-1815 offer insight about indentured slaves and servants, including names and terms of agreement.*

How do we know these factoids about the members of the Gibbons family? It's due to the fact that their personal papers have survived for nearly 200 years. As well as providing a plethora of information about daily domestic life, the Gibbons Family Papers (1767–1881) contain the largest known collection of correspondence with Cornelius Vanderbilt, as most of Vanderbilt's papers no longer exist. Thomas Gibbons, and later his son William, it seems, saved everything. The correspondence between the senior Gibbons and Aaron Ogden, a competitor of Gibbons in the steamship business, provides significant historical insight into the steamship industry. These letters are especially important because the 1824 court case, *Gibbons v. Ogden*, arguably one of the top 10 most important Supreme Court cases in U.S. history, marked the change in the regulation of the steamship trade from the state to the federal level.

The Gibbons Family Papers also open the door to a glimpse of day-to-day life in the mid-19th century. Account books, receipts, ledgers and journals offer an eye-

witness account of the daily decisions made to run a plantation: what food to purchase, how to decorate a home and so forth.

These kinds of domestic documents take on even greater value as time goes on. Had these papers not been stored in the attic of Mead Hall and discovered around 1900, a precious aspect of history would have been lost forever. Often, as people go through their papers, photographs and other materials, it is easy to think that they no longer are important. But imagine how much of this material could impact the work of historians, archivists, sociologists, anthropologists, students and enthusiasts in the year 2107, when trying to piece together what life was like in the 20th and 21st centuries.

Besides future historical studies, family descendents also may be interested in this kind of documentation. What about a great-grandparent's wedding photo, a grandmother's prom dress, a father's report card? Having such memorabilia creates closeness to unknown, and known, relatives, giving us a place in our own personal history.





## 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

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