



*Historic Hampton, Incorporated*

## *HAMPTON HIGHLIGHTS*

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### *Thank You*

A thank you to all who have supported Historic Hampton, Inc. this past year through membership and our annual giving campaign. Your contributions have helped us promote our mission to provide resources for the preservation and interpretation of this local, regional, and national treasure. Your continued involvement - in attending events, offering financial support, being a volunteer, and especially in telling others about this important site - is critical so that current and future generations will have the benefit of learning about our country's multi-faceted heritage through Hampton, the Ridgely family, and those who lived and worked on the estate.

### *Contract Awarded*

In June, the National Park Service (NPS) awarded the long-awaited contract to install environmental controls and a fire suppression system in the Mansion. The project is being carried out by Baltimore's Constellation Building Systems and is expected to take about nine months to complete.

After the Mansion closed to the public in January 2005, National Park Service staff and volunteers carefully inventoried, packed, and stored all the furnishings and decorative objects. NPS facilities staff then worked diligently over several months to prepare the rooms in the Mansion for the systems installations. HHI members who attended the Mint Julep Party in June 2006 were able to tour the entire empty house and see the careful work that has been done to protect walls, floors, painted surfaces, and wallpaper in preparation for the next stage of the project. Some ceilings, installed at a more recent date, have been removed to allow easier access for needed duct work.

If you visit Hampton and the grounds around the Mansion, you will see that digging for the geothermal wells has begun. When the environmental controls are finished, this process will regulate the humidity in the Mansion, thereby protecting the priceless collections, as well as the architectural fabric of the Mansion itself. Once the installations are complete and the systems tested, NPS staff will prepare the rooms for reinstallation of the collections. HHI then plans another tour for one last look at the empty house before it regains its grandeur.

*Watch for notice of a grand reopening of the Mansion next fall!*

## *Preservation Maryland Gives Grant For Historic Structures Report*

With the Mansion empty for the first time in over 200 years, later modifications in the cellar removed, and openings made in the interior for the installation of the new systems, there is a brief window of opportunity in which to undertake a Historic Structures Report (HSR) of the house. Thanks to a \$25,000 grant from Preservation Maryland (PM), HHI has contracted with Mark Wenger, principal architectural investigator for Mesick-Cohen-Wilson-Baker Architects in Albany, NY, to begin the project. He has previously worked at the Farmhouse and Mansion and has extensive knowledge of 18<sup>th</sup> century houses. Under this grant from PM, Mr. Wenger will conduct physical and scientific investigation and research on the construction features of the Mansion and any architectural changes that have occurred over time. His written report and photographic record will be an important resource for the NPS and others interested in historic architecture and construction. HHI will be seeking additional funds to complete this important project.

## *Hampton Says Goodbye To Its Curator*

Lynne Dakin Hastings, the Curator of Hampton National Historic Site for more than 25 years, left this position in July to become Curator of Historic Interiors at Colonial Williamsburg.

During her tenure as Curator at Hampton, Lynne was the leader in restoring many of the rooms in the Mansion to the historically correct settings we see today. She played a key role in researching the Ridgely family, as well as the social, economic, and architectural history of the site. Lynne also led the acquisition of many significant original furnishings, including the Hampton painted armchair, Lafayette silver wine ewer, Builder's telescope, and the Ridgely Federal bed in the Master Bedchamber. In addition, she instituted professional-quality museum storage for the site and established an active conservation program. Her knowledge of historic interiors in general, and at Hampton in particular, made her a sought-after speaker in many venues. She was involved in teaching several undergraduate historic preservation classes at Goucher College, introducing students to Hampton and its resources. Lynne also mentored countless interns and volunteers, infusing them with her interest in and enthusiasm for the decorative arts and historic preservation.

It will be difficult to match immediately the depth and scope of this longtime connection. Nevertheless, Gay Vietzke, General Superintendent of Hampton and Fort McHenry, will be seeking a new curator to carry on the high standards that have been set for preserving and interpreting Hampton's multi-faceted story. We are fortunate that Gregory Weidman, HHI's Furnishings Project Coordinator and a close colleague of Lynne, will ensure that ongoing and planned projects relating to the Mansion's period rooms are carried out and completed.

Historic Hampton, Inc. will miss Lynne's extensive knowledge of Hampton and curatorial expertise, as well as our frequent and varied contacts with her, but we are very proud that she will have a wider professional stage on which to display her knowledge and talents.

## *The Marquis de Lafayette and Eliza Ridgely*

Eliza Ridgely, the third mistress of Hampton, was an heiress, an arbiter of fashion and style, and an international traveler. One of her acquaintances was the Marquis de Lafayette, who presented her with the French Empire silver wine ewer, which is featured in the Drawing Room. Thanks to Margaret R. White Bennett, a direct descendant of Eliza Ridgely, Hampton now has added four letters from Lafayette to Eliza to its archives. These letters include Lafayette's invitation to Eliza to visit LaGrange, his country estate in France (which she did in 1834), and his best wishes on her marriage to John Ridgely.

Earlier this year, Mrs. Bennett also contributed a second gift to begin microfilming the Hampton archives, beginning with the papers of Henry White (1850-1927), her grandfather and Eliza's grandson. Henry White was an internationally renowned United States diplomat, whose notable career included ambassador to Italy and France and signer of the Treaty of Versailles. HHI is grateful to Mrs. Bennett for these outstanding contributions, which will enable scholars to access more easily the extensive archival resources at Hampton.

## *Grants To Complete Mansion Room Plans*

HHI has been the recipient of two generous grants for the reinstallation of two major rooms on the first floor of the Mansion. The Middendorf Foundation continued its commitment to Hampton, begun in 2000, toward the research, design, fabrication, and installation of vital elements in the Drawing Room. Of particular importance is the funding for the recreation of John and Eliza Ridgely's original 1850 "tapestry velvet" carpet, which requires forty shades of yarn and the carpet factory to adapt its current machinery to recreate accurately. As firms that can produce such items are rapidly disappearing, even in England, it has been especially critical to be able to move forward with the design and manufacture of this rare and intricate carpet. The new Middendorf grant enables us to move toward completion of the Drawing Room's furnishing plan, and HHI is seeking other donors to sponsor the final pieces of the project in preparation for the reopening of the Mansion.

The final room to be refurbished on the first floor of the Mansion is the Parlour, which will reflect the early Federal style of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century at the time of Charles Ridgely, "the Builder," and his wife Rebecca. Thanks to a multi-year grant from the Dorothy Wagner Wallis Charitable Trust, HHI will be able to continue to support the position of Furnishings Project Coordinator, already funded since 1999 by the Wallis Trust. Gregory Weidman, who holds this position, has now been able to begin research on the furnishing plan for the Parlour, and funds in future years will assist in fabrication of the carpet, fabrics, and other items needed to recreate this room used by Hampton's earliest master and mistress. HHI is seeking funds to complete this room from additional donors, as requested by the Wallis Trust, which urges partnerships with other sponsors.

These grants are particularly gratifying to HHI because the reinstallation of these two rooms will mark the completion of the four principal first floor period rooms of the Mansion to varied time periods in which the Ridgely family lived in them: the late 18<sup>th</sup> century Parlour, the early 19<sup>th</sup> century Dining Room, the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Drawing Room, and the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Music Room. HHI is proud to have assisted the NPS by securing the funds needed to recreate these rooms, as well as the Master Bedchamber on the second floor, with historic accuracy. We are grateful to the Middendorf Foundation, the Wallis Trust, the France-Merrick Foundation, the Women's Committee of HHI, and individual donors, who have supported this effort. Their contributions have made possible the beautiful and authentic museum installations, greatly enhancing our visitors' experience in the Mansion, and setting the standard for accuracy and excellence for house museums and historic sites across the country.

## *Fun At The Farmhouse*

The Farmhouse, whose oldest section dates to the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, has been a welcome center for Hampton visitors this year, telling an important story about the work and workers of this once vast agricultural and industrial estate. The site has hosted several well-attended events sponsored by the National Park Service, and HHI has been pleased to assist by offering lemonade and cookies to visitors. Activities on these afternoons included camp cooking and soap making demonstrations; 19<sup>th</sup> century music; Victorian games, in which visitors could participate; and an African American storyteller.

The Farmhouse was also the final destination for the Hampton Improvement Association's annual Fourth of July Parade, with the Fife and Drum Corps from Fort McHenry leading the procession through the Hampton neighborhood. NPS Ranger Kirby Shedlowski, from Hampton, and Chief Ranger Vince Vaise, from Fort McHenry, dressed in historic costumes to greet the crowd at the Farm property. Ranger Vaise gave a rousing reading of the Declaration of Independence.

NPS Rangers continue to plan special events at the Farmhouse to interest visitors of all ages. Future programs include "Happenings at Hampton During the Civil War" on October 8; "Victorian Controversy" on November 12; and "Stories at the Quarters" on December 10. Please call the NPS at 410-823-1309 x-228, or visit their website at [www.nps.gov/hamp](http://www.nps.gov/hamp) for more information.

## *Gift Shop*

Don't forget that the HHI Gift Shop is open, with modified scope of merchandise, in the Farmhouse. HHI members still enjoy a 10% discount on purchases. A grand reopening of the Mansion will be accompanied by a grand reopening of the Gift Shop in its former premises. If you have experience in merchandising and/or would like to volunteer in this enterprise, please call the HHI office at 410-828-9480 or e-mail [historichampton@verizon.net](mailto:historichampton@verizon.net)

## *Upcoming Events For HHI*

Please hold these dates and watch for your invitations:

***October 16, 2006 – Annual Meeting of Historic Hampton, Inc., 4 P.M. at the Farmhouse*** (see enclosed invitation).

Join the HHI Board of Directors and members for the annual meeting and refreshments. Hear an update about the National Park Service by Gay Vietzke, General Superintendent of Hampton and Fort McHenry, and an informative talk by Greg McGuire, Facility Manager, on the installation of the geothermal wells and new systems in the Mansion.

***November 3, 2006 – The Squire's Dinner, 7 P.M. at the Maryland Club.***

The Women's Committee of HHI will again host the elegant Squire's Dinner, which will highlight the 1812-era of Governor Charles Carnan Ridgely and his wife, Priscilla.

***November 13, 2006 - Tea and Talk with Guest Speaker Gregory Weidman, HHI's Furnishings Project Coordinator, 4 P.M. at the Farmhouse.***

When the Mansion reopens next fall, the Drawing Room will be the most elegant and "eye-popping" room yet refurbished. Learn more about the behind-the-scenes research and see samples of the recreated carpet, wallpaper, fabrics, and design for this mid-19<sup>th</sup> century room.

