TRULY A WARNER HOUSE TREASURE

By BARBARA ENGELBACH AND RONAN DONOHOE

What a lucky day it was for the Warner House when Deb Richards chose to pull up stakes in her native Connecticut and move to Portsmouth, New Hampshire. As an artist, flower arranger, charming hostess with expertise at colonial hearth cooking, and a very creative fundraiser, Deb became a vital part of Portsmouth culture. Almost immediately upon Deb's arrival, the Warner House Association would find itself blessed with an enthusiastic volunteer, a Rhode Island School of Design trained designer and decorator, a charming and generous hostess, and a gifted guide and educator.

Deb's childhood in Connecticut included summers in an old cottage, without electricity, where her skills for open hearth cooking began to bud. Her flower-arranging talents flourished as she helped her mother with arrangements for the local garden club, and her interest in colonial history came to life at her grandparents' 18th century home.

Looking for excitement, her first career choice was to work as a flight attendant with United Airlines, undaunted by the fact that she had never flown before. Deb married her handsome 6 ft. 6" husband, Rob, and they had two children, Mark and Beth. After Rob's untimely death, Deb took her son Mark's lead and relocated to Portsmouth in the early 1990s.

When Deb joined the Warner House Board, she brought to it the idea of raising much-needed funds by opening private houses to a ticket buying public. These house tours and later the attendant Patrons' Parties were the major source of board raised funds for twenty years. Deb knew the territory well. Her parents had opened their home to benefit local history sites and later Deb would follow their example by opening her own home to raise funds to benefit museum houses and historical societies. Needless to say, the management of the Warner House house-tours was flawless.

Over the past twenty-some years, Deb has been involved in all aspects of Warner House affairs. She has sifted dirt in the

\[ Continued on Page 7 \]
A mysterious reference to a “branch” appears in both Jonathan Warner’s and his brother Samuel’s estate inventories. Jonathan had one, a branch with cups, while Samuel had two, one valued at five shillings in the best parlor, and the other, described as a green pickle branch with a value of three shillings, was in another room with earthenware dishes. No surviving examples of green pickle branches have been found in collections or reference works, but the archaeology done on the grounds by Martha Pinello yielded a possible connection.

Green glazed earthenwares in naturalistic forms were popular in the mid 1700s, and the Warner excavations had produced many related shards, among which were pieces of two small green glazed leaf dishes. While leaf dishes for relish or pickles were quite common for decades, these were unusually petite, and seemed to be a perfect size to sit on a “branch”.

Thanks to the generosity of a Massachusetts collector, the Warner House now has two complete examples of green leaves to display with the shards. Although they are a match in color, shape and size, there is one difference: the whole objects have footrims, which would have been applied separately.

Since these are so rare, it’s impossible to attribute them to a specific pottery or to know with certainty that the shards were part of Samuel’s pickle branch, but the little leaves are a welcome addition to the house collection of objects that match the archaeological evidence. They are displayed in the inner kitchen cupboard with other 18th century wares.
Cadet, one spouse, and a Warner House board member. Of the nine people involved, whose average age was 64, the oldest was 90 and the youngest (cadet) was 19. In spite of that, we finished thirty minutes ahead of schedule.

The Jaffrey material, however, made us feel young, though not while we were carrying it. Its age is measured not in decades but in centuries, and it’s in very good shape. Deaccessioned by the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, it was donated to Warner House because of its connection through Sarah Wentworth Macheadris, who married George Jaffrey and moved into that house, a stone’s throw away, after Archibald died.

In the early 20th century, the house was dismantled and the paneling sold to the MFA. It is stunning in its excellent condition with very few paint layers. A surprise find, not shown in pictures of the room, was three pieces decorated with pine trees or leaves in relief.

While it would be inappropriate to install the Jaffrey Room in the Warner House itself, it would be an exciting addition to the proposed new building in the rear of the grounds, where a large warehouse/stable once stood. The Building and Grounds committee will be working on those plans, hoping that the basement will be a very temporary home for this awesome artifact.

One large element, the fireplace surround, has been placed in the rear kitchen/gift shop, where all members and visitors may admire it.
A Tale of Two Cockerels and an Eagle
By JEFFREY HOPPER

The murals on the first flight of stairs at the Warner House may form a series of lessons rather than a continuing story. Ronan Donohue wrote earlier this year about the possible connection between Homer's *Odyssey* and the mural images. If the spinner and the dog, that start the series, represent Penelope and Argos, then the wall begins with a reference to fidelity. Penelope and Argos are two of the four characters in the *Odyssey* linked to the idea of fidelity; for reference the other two are Eumaios, Odyseus's swineherd, and Philoiotis, Odyseus's cowherd. These four characters remain in Ithaca awaiting the return of Odyseus.

Rather than being part of a single cartouche, the eagle and birds that lie so close to the spinner and dog may represent a separate lesson. With the references to the *Odyssey* at one end of the wall and to the the *Bible* at the other end, it seems likely that the birds might come from the classic myths or fables known by the reading public of the early eighteenth-century. The search began with the myths involving the Greek and Roman gods, but this proved to be fruitless. However, checking mid-eighteenth-century printings of Aesop's *Fables* led to the story of the fighting cocks. Two important versions of the fable circulated in the English-speaking world of the early eighteenth-century. The first version by Roger L'Estrange (1616-1704) was published in 1692. L'Estrange is credited with including the first 'reflection' in an English language version of Aesop at the conclusion of each of the fables. This addition aided the contemporary reader by incorporating the lessons or morals into the seventeenth-century experience. Samuel Croxall (1690-1752) published his versions in 1722. He enhanced his volume with a wood cut print to illustrate the lesson and used the term 'application' rather than 'reflection' at the termination of each of the fables.

While the fable of the fighting cocks speaks primarily to the notion of pride going before the fall, each generation or epoch puts its own spin on the tale. The modern interpretation is, "pride goes before the fall," while in the classical period it is, "pride goes before destruction." Both L'Estrange's and Croxall's reflections/applications are particularly interesting in this transitional period between Stuarts and Hanoverians. It should be noted that L'Estrange was a Tory who supported the Stuarts, while Croxall was a Whig who supported the Hanoverian ascension. Without further delay the two versions with their reflections/applications follow in chronological order.

**Aesop's Fables: Sir Roger L'Estrange (1692)**

**122. Two Cocks Fighting**

**The Fable**

*Two Cocks fought a Duel for the Mastery of a Dunghill. He that was worsted slunk away into a Corner, and hid himself; t'other takes his Flight up to the Top of the House, and there, with crowning and clapping of his Wings, makes Proclamation of his Victory. An Eagle made a stoop at him in the middle of his Exultation, and carry'd him away. By this Accident, the other Cock had a good viddance of his Rival; took Possession of the Providence they contended for, and had all his Mistresses to himself again.*

**THE MORAL.** A wise and a generous Enemy will make a modest Use of a Victory; for Fortune is variable.

**Reflection**

*This Combat of two Cocks for a Dunghill, may be moraliz'd by an Application of it to the Competition of the greatest Princes, for Empire and Dominion. For what's the World more than a Mass of Dirt on the one hand, as to the Subject of the Quarrel; and there's the fame Thirst of Blood too, betwixt the Combatants, on the other. We have again, the various chance of War exhibited on both sides; for 'tis with King's, as with these Cocks. He that's a Victor this Moment, may be a Slave the next: And this Volubility of human Affairs, what is
It is a question, which shows people in their most contemptible light, exulting immoderately upon a fresh accession of good, or being too abjectly cast down at the sudden approach of evil. We are apt to form our notions of the man from the stability of his temper in this respect; and account him a brave or wise man, according to the proportion of equanimity, which he exerts upon any change of his condition. But though our reputation were no ways concerned in the case, and a man were not to be reckoned a coxcomb for being elated, or a coward for being dejected with the vicissitudes of life, yet the true regard of our own private satisfaction should incline us to play the philosopher, and learn to keep our spirits calm and even; because life would be a labyrinth of perplexities without it. One Hidden, turn would come so thick upon the back of another, that we should be bewildered in the quick succession of joys and terrors, without having so much as a quiet moment to ourselves.


L’Estrange’s insertion of the duel into the fable adds a touch of the Restoration court of Charles II to the tale, an inclusion that is not present in Croxall’s version thirty years later. In L’Estrange’s version the ‘reflections’ speak to the upheavals of the seventeenth-century and the vagaries of fate in regards to the individual, to families and to the kingdom. L’Estrange expounds upon the chance nature of events—fortune is fickle. Croxall shifts his application to the mastering of emotions. Croxall proposes that there are highs and lows and that is best to maintain an even keel. Despite these differences, the central part of the tale remains the same in both versions, two cockerels fight, one leaves and the other is taken by an eagle, then the surviving cockerel returns to take his place in the farmyard, or in these versions a dunghill.

Both versions of Aesop’s Fables sold well within the time-period that corresponds to the painting of the murals. If either of the written versions influenced the painting of the mural, then using L’Estrange’s publication the mural could have been painted as early as 1718. If Croxall’s publication was used then the earliest date for painting was 1722. A simple fable, but how the message is received depends upon the viewer. An obvious statement, but in this case the same lesson of pride goes before the fall means two different things to L’Estrange, a Stuart Tory, and Croxall, a

......Continued on Page 6
Hanoverian Whig. As a man on the make, both commercially and politically, was Archibald MacPhaedris straddling the fence with this tale? It is certainly a tale with ramifications to the political events of 1640-1680 as well as 1700-1714. Perhaps this fable was chosen for the very reason that it could be read as a lesson by either side—a universal lesson with several meanings.

On a simple reading, Aesop's fable and the painted images remind the reader or viewer to be mindful of extravagant behavior, or excessive pride—the repercussions can be dramatic. Placed within the iconography of the wall, the lesson of fidelity (Homer) anchors the wall while the lesson of pride (Aesop) holds the middle section and lesson of Abraham (The Bible) finishes the highest section of the wall at the landing.

By separating the images, a series of lessons may be 'the story' behind this section of mural. The incorporation of the two lessons, that of the lunging dog and the spinner's look of surprise with the cockerels and the eagle into a single cartouche may have been part of an artistic device to engage the viewer with the section of the mural that sits below the ceiling of the upper hallway. What the modern viewer sees as a single incident may have been viewed in the early eighteenth-century as two easily understood, but separate thoughts. Additionally, in the early eighteenth-century the murals may have provided a visual rendering for the educated classes who read the lessons, as well as those members of the community who knew the lessons but could not read them.

Letter from our Intern

Greetings!

Over the course of the spring academic semester, I had the opportunity to intern at the Warner House in fulfillment of part of the requirements for the MA in Museum Studies at the University of New Hampshire. The last several months have been both challenging and rewarding, as I broke into a completely new area of research for myself while uncovering the exciting history of this small corner of Portsmouth.

There is a new look on the second floor, where an exhibit on architecture has been installed. Visitors will be able to catch a glimpse of what 18th Century Daniel Street may have been like. Included is an new panel highlighting homes that once shared the street with Archibald MacPhaedris and Jonathan Warner which I had the pleasure to research and design.

You will also be able to view a case of archaeological artifacts excavated from the area, as well as interior paneling that once belonged to the Jaffrey House. I hope you enjoy the results of this project as much as I did being a part of it.

Thank you for the opportunity, and I look forward to a great 2015 season.

Sincerely,
Angela Costello, Spring Intern, MA Student, UNH

BUSINESS MEMBER SPONSORS

Piscataqua Bank • 15 Pleasant Street, Portsmouth, NH

Richardson's Realty • Court Street, Portsmouth NH

Comprehensive Implant Dentistry, Dr. Paul E. Harvey Jr. • 610 Islington St., Portsmouth, NH

Phineas Graphic Design/Printing Solutions • 108 Penhallow St., Portsmouth, NH

Leetes Island Enterprises, LLC • P.O. Box 7, Kittery Point, ME

Dovetail Kitchens • 126 Daniel Street, Portsmouth, NH

Gravestone Artwear • P.O. Box 141, York Harbor, ME 03911
Her contributions are especially valuable..... always managing to connect with the visitor, to discover common interests and share her love of our house, its stories and its collections.


Photo: Carol Seely

hot sun to retrieve archeological remnants; she has provided gracious hospitality, catering, and delightfully imaginative floral arrangements for innumerable lectures, receptions, committee meetings, and public events. Her contributions are especially valuable as one who receives guests and guides them though the Warner House, always managing to connect with the visitor, to discover common interests and share her love of our house, its stories and its collections. She has always been willing to step in as guide or greeter and when doing so will often remark, “It’s no problem. I love doing it. I love this house.”

Although the Warner House is the luckiest as Deb’s clear favorite, it should be said that this remarkable lady has also found it possible to share her time and talents with other organizations such as Strawberry Banke Museum, The Portsmouth Athenaeum, The Seacoast Science Center, Historic House Associates, The Discover Portsmouth Center, et alia. Amazing, is it not?

Oftentimes, when a group of Warner House enthusiasts are gathered together and talking about our favorite three hundred year old house, Deb will repeat what our august curator, Joyce Volk, has often said of the Warner House: “The Warner House is a house that just keeps on giving. We are always learning something new.”

Deb Richards is a sterling example of a gift that keeps on giving—and may her tribe increase.
WARNER HOUSE ASSOCIATION BOARD OF GOVERNORS, 2015

Sandra Rux, Chair
Carol Seely, Vice-Chair
Deborah Richards and Ronan Donohoe, Immediate Past Chairs
Lorn Buxton, Treasurer
Sandy Phelps, Secretary
Hollis Brodrick
Jane Clarke
Robert Cook
Russell Cox
Mary Crane
Barbara Engelbach

David "Lou" Ferland
Caroline Fesquet
Philip Kendrick
Richard Nylander
Martha Pinello
Tara Vose Raiselis
Louise Richardson
Carolyn Roy
James Smith
Clinton Springer
Kerry Vautrot

Honorary Governors
Eve Barrett
Richard Candee
Lawrence Kent
Joyce Volk

HOURS: Open June through October. Daily except Tuesdays, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.