



The Hampton Gazette

Here Come the Holidays Yuletide Preparations Begin in the Mansion

This holiday season, Hampton National Historic Site is continuing its tradition of past years with elaborate holiday-themed displays at Hampton Mansion. View the mansion in its authentic holiday finery and learn about the Yuletide traditions practiced in the United States by families like the Ridgelys. These decorations will last through January, but Hampton NHS is also organizing three special days of holiday fun for your enjoyment. Whether you plan to come for the special events or not, get a sneak peek of what to expect at Hampton this holiday season.

Holiday Decor

Each of Hampton's historic rooms reflects a different era in the history of the Mansion, and the holiday preparations will present the authentic celebrations and decorations of two centuries of Yuletides past. Each room will highlight different periods from 1790 to 1948. Hampton staff have undertaken a great deal of research into holiday traditions as they evolved over this time, and the decorations in each room will accurately reflect the customs of each period.

Hampton staff will be assisted by Federated Garden Clubs, District III. The Garden Clubs will provide historically accurate arrangements in several of the exhibit areas at the mansion. The greens (mostly faux to protect the surfaces of Hampton's valuable museum collections) will reflect what was both historically accurate and readily available in Maryland at the respective periods. For example, Hampton's earliest room, the Federal Parlour, will be decked with holly, a centuries old English tradition.

(continued on page 3)



A Christmas tree and other holiday greens liven up the Music Room, decorated for Yuletide 2008.

The Parlour Reinstalled

On October 9th, ladies in colorful dresses filled the Great Hall, a scene reminiscent of Hampton's earlier days but in fact a herald of change. The Colonial Dames of America Chapter I visited the site to preview the newly redecorated Parlour. They and the Dorothy Wagner Wallis Charitable Trust funded the transformation. Members of Historic Hampton Inc. also received a preview of the Parlour at their annual meeting on October 13th.

The next day, the Parlour officially reopened to the public after closing only two months before. In a stunning and seemingly swift transformation, the bare wood floors and white painted walls received an historically authentic makeover, creating a room more true to its use as Priscilla Dorsey Ridgely's Parlour between 1790 and 1810.

Despite the quick installation, the research



The new carpet, curtains, and wallpaper transform the Federal parlour.

devoted to the transformation was in depth. Everything from the reproduction carpet to the window cornices, which are copies of Hampton's originals, resulted from a detailed study of the Ridgely accounts and the Federal style.

This room is a celebration of the time and talents of Hampton's talented staff and partners, and a chance to bring the site closer to its historic appearance.

The Hampton Gazette.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 1876.

Superintendent's Welcome

The holidays are always a special time - a time to reflect on the positive things in our lives, remember the importance of family, and think over the past year and the one before us.

Two thousand and nine has been a remarkable year at Hampton NHS. Important restoration work has been completed, from historic structures on the grounds to the new parlour installation, to the formal garden. It's been an incredible year for public programming with attendance up almost 300% at Second Sunday events and overall at the park, reaching well over 40,000 visitors. Our partnership with Historic Hampton, Inc. is thriving, and a new potential partnership with Baltimore County has tremendous possibilities. And Hampton's staff continued to produce remarkable results both as stewards of this remarkable place and storytellers of the American experience.

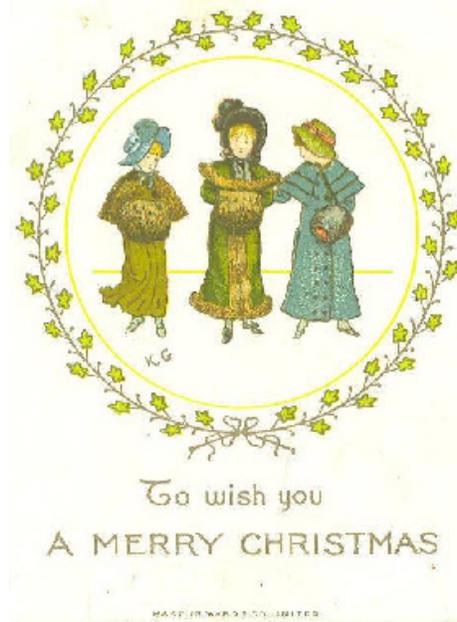
I am so thankful for this remarkable year and cannot wait to see what 2010 brings!

Happy Holidays from Hampton.

Gay Vietzke
Superintendent

The Hampton Gazette is inspired by the small family newspaper written and published by the Ridgely children of Hampton in the 19th century. The original "Hampton Gazette" included family stories and satire, prose and poetry, and everything the Ridgelys' creativity could invent.

Above is the banner from a September 1876 issue.



Above and to the left, Christmas cards given to the Ridgely family during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The details around the main headline on the **front page** are also taken from a Christmas card.

In This Issue

Here Come the Holidays	1
Parlour Redecorated	1
Superintendent's Welcome	2
Volunteer Spotlight	3
My Favorite Things	3
Upcoming Events at Hampton	4

Yuletide (cont'd from p 1)

For example, Hampton's earliest period room, the Federal Parlour, will be decked with holly, a tradition which goes back in England for many centuries.

In contrast, the high Victorian Music Room, which reflects the 1870 to 1890 era, will be garlanded with ivy and have a Christmas tree. All around the tree, which will stand in the corner of the Music Room, will be presents (mostly unwrapped) for the children. Decorated trees at the holidays did not become widespread in America until after the Civil War, and the custom of wrapping gifts in decorative paper post-dates the invention of wrapping paper in the early 20th century.

Other rooms will feature other types of holiday festivities. The Federal Parlour will be dressed for a fashionable ladies evening tea party of c. 1800. The display in the Drawing Room will depict another

important holiday tradition at Hampton from the pre-Civil War era. A remarkable surviving list written by Eliza Ridgely records the names of the enslaved children and the presents they were given (dolls, toys, games, musical instruments, etc.). Eliza's daughter "Diddy" writes in her diary about fixing the room and presenting the presents, and the Drawing Room will be rearranged to show this unusual custom. Perhaps the most striking display will be a full Christmas dinner in the Dining Room, to show how Governor Charles Carnan Ridgely would have entertained. The dining table will be extended to accommodate the feast.

Special Events

Just as the decoration of the mansion reveals the holiday past of the Ridgelys, the events of Yuletide weekend allow you to create memories of your own. Join the staff at Hampton NHS for three days of special Yuletide activities. On December 11, the

mansion will be open after hours from 6:00 p.m. to 8:45 p.m. for a holiday open house. Then, on December 12, from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. children's holiday crafts will be available in the Orangery and sing-a-longs to traditional holiday music will be held. That night, the mansion will again be open to display its holiday decor in the evening light. Finally, on December 13, join us for free carriage rides in front of the mansion from 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. These three days of family fun are not to be missed!

Yuletide is an exciting time, a mix of familiar and unusual holiday traditions and decorations. The decor and the events, from songs to family fun, transform the Hampton estate into a vision of the Ridgely holidays gone by. Join us for this special chance to peek into the past and experience the holidays at Hampton.

This article was contributed by Curator Gregory Weidman and Ranger Carol Van Natta.

My Favorite Things

The museum collection at Hampton NHS includes a variety of furnishings, tools, and toys which add to the ambiance of the Mansion. Naturally, members of the staff and volunteers become particularly fond of certain items.



Ranger Kirby Shedlowski thinks the row of servants' bells in the East Hyphen is worthy of note. Of the original sixteen bells, eleven still hang in their place in the passage between the Kitchen and the Butler's Pantry. Wires ran from each bell through the walls into the mansion's different rooms where bell pulls rang the bells.

Thus, these bells are an example of the early technology employed in the Ridgely household. Yet, they are also the representation of the Ridgely family's enslaved African Americans who answered the bells. The Ridgelys owned more than three hundred enslaved African Americans, many of whom worked inside of the mansion at the beck and call of the Ridgelys.

It is these complex stories of the people on the Hampton estate, the stories of a changing America, that keep visitors and staff engaged at Hampton NHS.

Volunteer Spotlight: Carl Peppersack

Volunteers are essential to the National Park Service! Over 145,000 people of all ages and backgrounds bring their talents and skills to 391 National Parks. This month, we would like to honor a history teacher who could not give up his passion, **Carl Peppersack**.

Carl started volunteering at Hampton NHS a little over a year ago, after his second retirement. After receiving degrees from Towson State and Johns Hopkins, Carl spent forty-one years teaching history. He first taught for Baltimore County, tried to retire, and was called back three years in a row. He also taught at a private school, Beth Tfila Dhahan Community School. With so much of his life invested in history, one would think he could finally relax in retirement. Not so.

Why He Volunteers

Carl admits to a "lifelong interest in history" and says the first book his father bought for him was a National Geographic printing titled *Everyday Life in Ancient Times*. His love of Hampton, although not so deep rooted, grew through his life as well. He enjoys old houses and had been to Hampton several times before he began volunteering. In fact, during a visit to Hampton Carl and his wife purchased an etching of the mansion that now hangs in his family room.

His Favorite Room

Carl, like most volunteers, was reluctant to name one place over the others, stating that the entire mansion is "fascinating." He determined that the Dining Room is his favorite, stating, "Number one, I like to eat...and I like the chance to identify with the Governor." He also said that the style of the Dining Room and the newly restored Parlour are more his taste than the uptight and overly patterned Victorian Drawing Room.

Thanks Carl for giving your time and talents to Hampton NHS!

And thanks to all National Park Service volunteers; your hard work makes everything possible.



Our smiling volunteer, Carl as he completes a tour of the mansion.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Hampton National Historic Site
535 Hampton Lane
Towson, MD 21286

First Class Mail
Postage and Fees
PAID
Towson, MD
Permit number

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™

The Hampton Gazette is the official news bulletin of Hampton National Historic Site. It is produced quarterly and distributed to park friends, supporters, and visitors.

Editor

Carol Van Natta

Superintendent

Gay Vietzke

Chief of Interpretation

Vince Vaise

Contributors

Curator Gregory Weidman

NPS Photographers

Carol Van Natta

Comments? Write to:

The Hampton Gazette
Hampton National Historic Site
535 Hampton Lane
Towson, MD 21286

Upcoming Events at Hampton NHS



Even as the temperature cools, things are heating up at Hampton NHS. Changes inside and out match the coming holiday season. Take some time to visit Hampton and learn how our current holiday traditions developed.

Second Sunday Events

**Yuletide Weekend
December 11, 12, 13**

Join us for a Yuletide celebration at Hampton. With tours of the mansion, activities for children, family friendly programs, and holiday music this will be a memorable weekend. On Friday and Saturday the mansion will be open from 6:00 p.m. to 8:45 p.m. for a holiday open house. For a more detailed schedule, visit the park website at www.nps.gov/hamp.

Winter Merriment

New Years Traditions at Hampton

January 10; 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Join the staff at Hampton to enjoy winter pastimes including free carriage rides, duck hunting demonstrations, and indoor parlour games. Bring the family and have a great time enjoying the holiday pastimes.

Special Events

Come Home for the Holidays!

Take a Holiday Tour of Mount Clare, Hampton, Homewood, and Evergreen

December 15, 2009; 9:15 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Visit four of Baltimore's premiere historic house museums decorated in their holiday finest. The tour will include bus transportation and lunch at the Mount Clare Stable. The cost of this tour is \$55 per person or \$50 per person for members of participating institutions. For more information, call Abby Burch of the Homewood Museum at 410-516-5589.

All events are subject to change. Call the park at 410-823-1309 x251 or visit the park website at www.nps.gov/hamp for more details.