

## **The Wayside Historic Furnishings Report, 2003 Clarifications**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this document is to help the interpretive staff understand why 1904 was chosen as the date for furnishing The Wayside, to discuss specific furnishings in the house about which confusion exists, and to dispel some misunderstandings. In 2000 the revision of the 1983 Historic Furnishing Report for The Wayside by Doris Fanelli began. A curator from the NPS Northeast Museum Services Center (NMSC), who was experienced in developing historic furnishings reports, was selected for the project. The park Chief of Interpretation, the ranger responsible for The Wayside, the NMSC curator, and the park curatorial staff had numerous discussions about the revised plan. All were in agreement that 1904 would work well for the interpretive program and could be supported by the available documentation, which includes room by room inventories of the house from 1914 and 1915 and historic photographs of the rooms and their contents. In the course of the project, it was transferred from the NMSC to Carol Petravage, Curator with the Department of Historic Furnishings, NPS Harpers Ferry Center.

The 2003 plan produced by Carol Petravage is primarily a list of the furnishings appropriate for each room with the documentation cited that supports the inclusion of an item. The majority of the furnishings in the 1983 plan are also in the 2003 plan. The 2003 plan should be used in conjunction with the 1983 report which provides more information about individual objects. Both the 1983 report and the 2003 historic furnishings plan are available in electronic versions on the park g drive (public) in the folder called Historic Structure Reports. The reports can be copied to CDs as needed. Paper copies are available in The Wayside Barn break room and can be borrowed from the park library.

### **Why 1904?**

Park staff in consultation with the NMSC curator chose 1904 because the date would allow the interpretive program to highlight Hawthorne, the most important author who had lived at The Wayside. July 4, 1904 was the centennial anniversary of the birth of Hawthorne. Harriett Lothrop had planned a special anniversary celebration that lasted several days. It included speakers, the dedication of the Hawthorne plaque that is to the west of the house and publication of the proceedings. The house was the focus for many of the activities. 1904 can serve as an introduction to the discussion of Hawthorne. Choosing 1904 was not meant to restrict an interpreter to speaking only about 1904 or only about the celebration or only about the Lothrops.

The 1983 furnishings report states on page 3, "The Wayside is restored to its appearance in 1924, the year of Harriett M. Lothrop's death. The house is interpreted to the Lothrop period of occupancy, 1883 – 1924, with reference to the earlier occupations of the Alcotts and of the Hawthornes." The 2003 plan offers as much flexibility for an interpreter to discuss the Hawthornes and the Alcotts as the 1983 report did. Tours of The Wayside are not furniture tours. With both plans the challenge remains interweaving the stories of the Alcotts, Hawthornes and Lothrops while surrounded by Lothrop furnishings.

Page 24 of the 1971 Interpretive Prospectus, which was the interpretive plan that was current when the 1983 Historic Furnishings Report was developed and is referenced on page 3 of the 1983 report, states, “Because of the 1924 restoration date, the visitor will necessarily view the building through Lothrop eyes. This can be the unifying thread for interpretation.” Choosing 1904 sharpened the focus slightly, when compared to the 1983 report, but did not drastically change the interpretive approach to the house.

In addition, page 23 of the 1971 Interpretive Prospectus states that, “The Wayside will be interpreted not as a house but rather as a home, altered by the needs of successive family occupations.” The existing Long-Range Interpretive Plan, 1999 on page 10 echoes this idea when it states that the visitor will “experience the site as a home and not a museum”. While The Wayside was home to all the families who lived in it, the Lothrop furnishings are what make the house a home today.

More telling is the following observation on page 8 of the 1983 furnishings report: “By setting the Wayside in the Lothrop period of occupancy, we are doing more than interpreting the lifestyles of individuals at a particular point in time; we are interpreting to visitors an interpretation of history. We are seeing the Hawthornes and Alcotts through the eyes of Harriett and Margaret Lothrop, and showing the public an important stage in the development of historic site management.” Using the 1904 Lothrop celebration of Hawthorne’s birth as an interpretive focus is a slightly more direct way to see the Hawthornes through the eyes of Harriett and Margaret.

The Wayside is unique among historic house museums. There are few instances of houses where the occupants from a later period actively tried to interpret the lives of earlier occupants, who were unrelated to them, as the Lothrops did with the Hawthornes. What other family put up signs in the rooms of their home to explain how the rooms were used by a family from an earlier period?

Noted historian, Robert Gross, in his paper, “External Evaluator’s Report on Site Visit to Minute Man National Historical Park, Oct. 29 – 31, 2009”, recommends on page 10 that the interpretation of The Wayside should be refocused to 1852 – 1854, the time when Hawthorne acquired the house from Alcott. The problem with the recommendation is that it totally ignores the reality of the house today. An interpreter can certainly discuss the themes Gross suggests in his paper but to ignore the environment created by the Lothrops is to turn The Wayside into a mere lecture hall. The Wayside of the 1850s exists only in whispers today while The Wayside of the Lothrops speaks more clearly, though also muted by time.

### **The Pine Boughs.**

No, it is not Christmas 1904 at The Wayside. See page 233 of the 1983 Historic Furnishings Plan which discusses the recommended furnishings for the Tower and states, “HML’s [Harriett Mulford Lothrop’s] association of historic interpretation with euhemerism is obvious from the shrine-like room arrangements in the early photographs of the Wayside. Whether she valued pine boughs for the symbolic aspects of coniferous plants, i.e. always green, full of life and

longevity, or merely as useful ornaments, this room would be incomplete without pine bough decorations at least on important anniversaries. The green display is seen in illustrations 28 and 33.”

Page 185 of the same report, when discussing the recommended furnishings for the Dining Room, states, “For special occasions pine boughs should be placed here [on the mantel]. HML saw pine boughs as important to historic interpretation of the house (See Illustration 9).” Information in brackets added.

### **The Piano.**

The piano in the Sitting Room is not associated with the Lothrop's. However, it is the type of piano that they owned as determined by the two curators who prepared the 2003 historic furnishings report and analyzed historic photographs showing the furnishings in many of the rooms. The piano had been in a back room of the Hartwell Tavern. To whom the piano had belonged and why it was in the Hartwell Tavern is unknown. Vose & Sons of Boston manufactured the piano in 1895. Each curator independently looked at the piano in the tavern and recommended that it replace the Chickering piano that had been in the Old Room of The Wayside.

The Concord Art Association in 1967 donated the Chickering piano to the park. In December of 1830 the Jonas Chickering factory in Boston had sold this piano, serial number 898, to T. Prescott of Littleton, Massachusetts. There is no documentation that the piano was ever associated with the Alcotts, the Hawthornes or the Lothrop's. The Orchard House owns a similar piano, serial number 1454, which dates from 1833.

See “The Square Pianos of Jonas Chickering”, a dissertation at Washington University by Mary Ellen Patnaude Hauptert, May 1989.

### **The Signs.**

The large paper signs located in the Piazza Room and the Old Room are copies of signs used in the rooms by the Lothrop's. The originals are in the park museum collection. Both the 1983 and the 2003 plans recommend adding the signs to the rooms.

The sign for the Old Room is described on page 203 of the 1983 report.

Signs were also used in the Dining Room and the Tower but the park does not have the originals. The 1983 report on page 89, while describing the Dining Room furnishings, states, “After 1900, HML put up label copy (signs) in this room which designated it (wrongly) as the Hawthorne’s dining room.” On page 182 of the report the content of the sign is noted: “This was Hawthorne’s Dining Room until Julian was at Harvard College when it was given to him. Hawthorne speaks of it as the ‘room where the sunshine lingers lovingly the best part of a winter day’.”

Page 232 of the 1983 report notes the text for the Tower's sign: "HAWTHORNE TOWER. After his return from Italy, Hawthorne wanted a tower room that reminded him of Monte Auto, and where he could work undisturbed. He built this in 1856 where surrounded by the waving pines he could look off to the quiet country he loved as he paced to and fro. The standing desk in the corner was built by his own hand."

The signs, though tacky and at times inaccurate, reinforce the uniqueness of the house where the occupants of one period, the Lothrop, actively tried to interpret the life of a former occupant, Hawthorne. The signs are another way of seeing *The Wayside* through the eyes of the Lothrop and can provide the opportunity to discuss the Hawthornes. The misinformation conveyed by the signs can become part of the discussion of the Hawthornes' lives at *The Wayside*.

### **The Chair.**

The red leather chair that has been associated with Hawthorne is not displayed because the photographs and room inventories do not support its placement in any of the rooms. The lack of such documentation is curious since the Lothrop were so enamored with Hawthorne.

In contrast, in her book, *The Wayside: Home of Authors*, Margaret Lothrop mentions on page 166 a red leather chair that she associates with Hawthorne. "Curled up in Mr. Hawthorne's comfortable red leather armchair, I would drift off to sleep, with the odor of Father's Havana cigar and the gentle flow of voices my last memory."

The 1983 furnishings report on page 119 discusses the chair that is in the museum collection and quotes Margaret. "All my life I have been told that it had been (Mr. Nathaniel) Hawthorne's and that Daniel Lothrop and Harriett Lothrop had bought it from Mrs. Rose Hawthorne Lathrop when they bought the house in 1883. In a diary of Mrs. Hawthorne's written at the Wayside, September 1852 (now at the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York City) she mentions his 'red chair'." Doris Fanelli, the author of the 1983 report, comments that, "This chair certainly displays the 'Moorish' style popular in the mid-nineteenth century; MML's provenance is quite possibly correct." It is interesting that Fanelli says "quite possibly correct" but does not totally endorse Margaret's assertion.

A park volunteer who has a M.A. in the History of Decorative Arts from the Parsons School of Design is currently undertaking research on the chair.

### **Closed Rooms.**

The rooms that are not open to the public are closed because there is no adequate documentation, as determined by Carol Petravage, showing how the rooms should be furnished for circa 1904. They are not closed because they are damaged. The small furnishings in each room have been moved to the Squash Court, the park's primary museum collection storage facility. The large pieces of furniture have been consolidated into the Terrace Bedroom, Hawthorne Bedroom and East Bedroom because there is no space in the Squash Court to store large items. Because the rooms serve as museum collection storage areas, they are alarmed separately from the main house as required by NPS museum collection regulations. Two of the rooms are equipped with

the same type of cooling and dehumidifying units as used elsewhere in the house so the environment in the rooms can be controlled for the preservation of the furniture. These units remain in the rooms when they are not in use in the fall, winter and spring.

The 2003 historic furnishings plan discusses the Terrace Bedroom. The park interpretive staff in 2000 had decided not to include the room on the tour so the recommendations have not been implemented, and the room is closed.

The park also ignored the recommendations from the 2003 plan concerning the Piazza Room. In 1904 the room would have been divided into two small rooms. The park chose not to erect a partition to create the rooms. The room is furnished as it had been before the development of the 2003 plan.

### **Margaret's Errors**

Margaret Lothrop in her book *The Wayside: Home of Authors* on page 70 asserts that a hiding place for a fugitive slave may have existed in “the space near the chimney of the southeast bedroom.” On page 98 and 99 she discusses when Frank Sanborn had to be hidden from arrest and writes, “It is possible that she [Mrs. Mann] may have discovered the space near the chimney of the east bedroom, and gained access to it by removing attic floor boards.” Orville Carroll, the NPS historical architect responsible for the restoration of The Wayside, in a phone conversation on February 24, 1997 explained that the area near the chimney and closet in the East Bedroom could never have been used to conceal a person as Margaret maintained.

Terrie Wallace  
Curator  
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