



For Immediate Release

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PRESS RELEASE

Historic Deerfield Announces Significant Acquisition and New Arts and Crafts Exhibition

Rare Wedding Chest Crafted by Deerfield Woman Recently Discovered

(Deerfield, M.A.) – [Historic Deerfield](#) is very excited to announce its acquisition of the remarkable *Garden of Hearts*, a bridal chest crafted and constructed by Madeline Yale Wynne, who restored the grandest 18th-century house in Deerfield and spent her summers there starting in 1886. This chest, with finely crafted, forged, hammered, carved, and painted elements, was made in 1903 and is an important example of Arts and Crafts furniture by a groundbreaking female artist. It will be on display in the Flynt Center at Historic Deerfield beginning April 15, 2023.

Last photographed in 1903 before it was shipped to an unknown owner in England, the chest was lost for much of the 20th and early 21st centuries. It is in an excellent state of preservation, with the colors and gilt paint of the carved inner lid still bright and intense, and all of its hammered copper panels and inset cabochons, or semi-precious stones, intact.

“This is an exquisite example of creativity and historically informed craftsmanship by the leader of an important circle of local women who combined Colonial Revival precepts with Arts and Crafts aesthetics to put Deerfield on the map in the late 19th and early 20th centuries,” said John Davis, President of Historic Deerfield. “In doing so, they reinvigorated the town’s struggling economic fortunes and enabled dozens of women living on farms to bring some extra earnings into their families.”

In 1903, Madeline Yale Wynne (1847-1918), a leader in the American Arts and Crafts movement, constructed an oak bride’s chest and proudly carved “MADE IN AMERICA” on its back panel in rounded, flowing capital letters. Known as the *Garden of Hearts* for its low-relief painted scene of three inverted heart-shaped trees standing alongside a winding river, the chest is a tour-de-force of Arts and Crafts design—which favored hand craftsmanship over mechanized production—and showcases Wynne’s many talents as a painter, metalsmith, jeweler, and woodworker. **Wynne’s *Garden of Hearts* chest will be exhibited for the first time at Historic Deerfield’s Flynt Center of Early England Life from April 15th through March 3, 2024, in an exhibition entitled “Garden of Hearts: Madeline Yale Wynne and Deerfield’s Arts and Crafts Movement.”**

According to Suzanne Flynt, lead curator of the exhibition, author of *Poetry to the Earth: The Arts & Crafts Movement in Deerfield*, and Historic Deerfield Trustee, “Wynne’s creativity and artistry, at their best in her extraordinary Garden of Hearts, inspired her Deerfield neighbors to share her ‘joy in labor’ through self-expression in crafts. Through Wynne’s knowledge of Arts and Crafts ideals—honest materials, simple designs, and hand craftsmanship—and an abundance of manual skills, Deerfield residents created crafts that were exhibited and sold nationally.”

Dan Sousa, assistant curator at Historic Deerfield and co-curator of the show says, “We are proud to have acquired Wynne's Garden of Hearts masterpiece. Not only is it a stunning example of Arts and Crafts furniture, but it is also the museum's first piece of furniture made by a woman woodworker. Its acquisition is significant, and will allow the museum to further strengthen and diversify its extensive collection of American furniture, as well as to share new narratives involving women's contributions to Arts and Crafts furniture design.”

The chest will be featured alongside important examples of her metalwork such as hand-hammered bowls, jewelry, and belt buckles, as well as other handcrafted baskets, textiles, and ironwork produced in Deerfield at the time. Many of the objects in the exhibition are on loan from the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association’s Memorial Hall Museum.

Wynne, who divided her time between Deerfield and Chicago, founded the Deerfield Society of Arts and Crafts in 1901 and served as its president throughout her life. Her charismatic leadership, prolific writing, and advocacy for Arts and Crafts principles resulted in Deerfield becoming highly regarded as one of the nation’s earliest craft communities. Inspired by 17th- and 18th-century Connecticut Valley joined chests, known as Hadley chests, Wynne considered the *Garden of Hearts* her greatest artistic accomplishment. This exhibition will celebrate the return of Wynne’s masterpiece.

Historic Deerfield’s acquisition of the Garden of Hearts chest would not have been possible without the generous support of the Deerfield Collectors Guild. Donors who contributed \$500 or more toward the acquisition of the chest are recognized as members of the Deerfield Collectors Guild, a group of supporters who are committed to Historic Deerfield’s acquisition of significant objects of art, culture, and history made or owned in Old Deerfield from the 17th to the early-18th centuries. 100% of contributions from Guild members provide financial support to help the museum secure important Deerfield objects that might otherwise escape preservation. Approximately 100 individuals contributed the funds that allowed Historic Deerfield to acquire the chest and mount the related exhibition.

Historic Deerfield opens for the season on Saturday, April 15, 2023. More information on the exhibition may be found here, historic-deerfield.org/events/gardenofhearts.

To learn more about Historic Deerfield, visit the website, historic-deerfield.org.

About Historic Deerfield. Historic Deerfield is a museum of early American life situated in an authentic 18th-century New England village in the Connecticut River Valley of Massachusetts. Its historic houses and world-famous collection of early American decorative arts open doors to new perspectives that inspire people to seek a deeper understanding of themselves, their communities, and the world.