

# Cherished Possessions

## A New England Legacy

THE BARD GRADUATE CENTER FOR STUDIES  
IN THE DECORATIVE ARTS, DESIGN, AND CULTURE

MARCH 2 THROUGH JUNE 5, 2005





Left: *Mrs. Harrison Gray (Sally Foster) Otis*. Edward Greene Malbone.  
Boston, Massachusetts, 1804. Gift of Miss Sophia H. Ritchie.

Right: **Cornelian necklace and cross pendant.**

Possibly Boston, Massachusetts, 1800–04. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. William Platt Hacker.



From March 2 through June 5, 2005, The Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design, and Culture is presenting *Cherished Possessions: A New England Legacy*, a major exhibition covering four centuries of New England history from the mid 17th century to the end of the 20th.



The artifacts are drawn from the collections of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA), a museum of cultural history with 35 historic house museums. The holdings count among the most notable collections of American fine and decorative arts in the United States. Now, for the first time in its 95-year history, the collections are being seen outside New England. They illuminate the cultural and domestic history of one of this country's most interesting and best-loved regions.

Perhaps more than any comparable organization, SPNEA has collected objects contextually, retaining related documents, historical photographs, genealogical evidence, family traditions, and the like, so that the objects survive intact with their history of use and manufacture. Therefore, the more than 100 objects in the exhibition have been chosen not only for their artistry, but also for the stories they tell. They range from paintings and furniture to needlework, ceramics, costumes, photographs, and textiles.

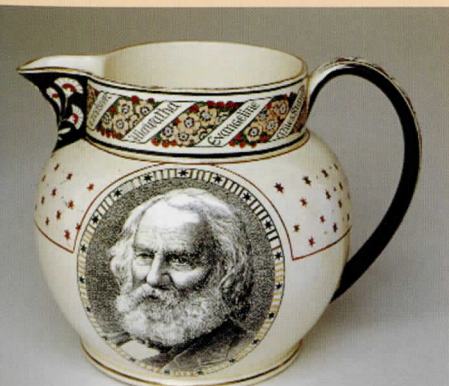
The exhibition has been organized by the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, the oldest, largest, and most comprehensive regional preservation organization in the country. It offers a unique opportunity to experience the lives and stories of New Englanders through their homes and possessions. (For more information, visit Historic New England online at [www.HistoricNewEngland.org](http://www.HistoricNewEngland.org).) The curator of the exhibition is Nancy Carlisle, a graduate of the Winterthur Program in Early American Culture and curator at SPNEA for more than 16 years.

**The exhibition** is based on the following topics: *Cherished Possessions*; *New England's People*; *New England Climate and Landscape*; *Before the Revolution (1650–1775)*, *Revolution (1775–83)*, *Early Nation (1790–1820)*, *Growth, Innovation, and Reform (1820–1930)*, and *Modernism and Antiquarianism (1930–70)*.

The range of items is as broad as the history of both the region and the nation and includes furniture, ceramics, historic photographs, costumes, jewelry, paintings, and textiles. Among the highlights, and illustrating the range of the exhibition, are a high chest (1735–45), painted, gessoed, gilded, and heavily varnished, a magnificent and very rare 18th-century example of the style known as japanning; a 1793 portrait by John Singleton Copley of Richard Codman; a magnificent lacquer Pembroke table (ca. 1800); micromosaic vest buttons and a gold cameo set; and a fascinating photograph (ca. 1858) of a building

in India, part of a remarkable album of early photography brought back by Ogden Codman, serving as a record of his journey to that exotic culture. Codman is best known today for the seminal book he wrote with Edith Wharton, *The Decoration of Houses*, which changed forever the way Americans look at house interiors.

It should be noted that every object in the exhibition was selected for its ability to tell a story, as well as to address the larger historical context of the region and the nation. The japanned high chest belonging to the Quincy family, for example, is the survivor of two fires, while Richard Codman, whose portrait appears in this brochure, had to be called back from his sojourn in France because of his many extravagances—although, as the family maintained, “he had nice taste in pictures and statuary.”







Above: **High chest.** Decoration possibly by Robert Davis or Stephen Whiting. Boston, Massachusetts, 1735–45. Gift of Edmund Quincy.

Opposite: **Vest buttons.** Rome, Italy, 1855–65. Gift of Ellen F. Mason.

**Charger.** China, 1755–63. Gift of the heirs of Elizabeth Cheever Wheeler.

**Pitcher.** Josiah Wedgwood and Sons; decoration by George Wolliscroft Rhead. Etruria, Staffordshire, England, 1880. Gift of Capt. Lester S. Couch.



*Richard Codman (1792–1806)*. John Singleton Copley. London, England, 1793.  
Bequest of Dorothy S. F. M. Codman.

A fully illustrated color catalogue published by SPNEA in association with Antique Collectors' Club accompanies the exhibition. The contents, written by SPNEA curator Nancy Carlisle, a nationally recognized expert in the study of American material culture, present more than 175 objects, examine their roles in people's lives, and show how they give us a nuanced perspective on the past. All are selected from the collections of fine and decorative arts belonging to SPNEA.

An array of lectures, panels, and other offerings will be presented in conjunction with *Cherished Possessions: A New England Legacy*. For further information, please call 212-501-3011 or e-mail [programs@bgc.bard.edu](mailto:programs@bgc.bard.edu).

Group tours of *Cherished Possessions: A New England Legacy* may be scheduled Tuesday through Friday between 11:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. and on Thursday until 7:00 p.m. Reservations are required for all groups. For further information, please call the Bard Graduate Center Gallery at 212-501-3023 or TTY 212-501-3012, or e-mail [gallery\\_assistant@bgc.bard.edu](mailto:gallery_assistant@bgc.bard.edu).

The Bard Graduate Center is located at 18 West 86th Street, between Central Park West and Columbus Avenue, in New York City. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Thursday from 11:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Admission is \$3 general, \$2 seniors and students (with valid ID). Free admission Thursday evenings. For further information about the Bard Graduate Center and upcoming exhibitions, please visit our website at [www.bgc.bard.edu](http://www.bgc.bard.edu).



**Velvet ensemble.** Camille Lipman.  
Paris, France, 1883. Gift of Nance Olive  
Morison Allis.





This fish was found  
in the jewel box of  
Mrs. Reginald Allen  
& was said by her to  
date Mrs. Dowd's visit  
to have belonged to their mother  
Mrs. Elizabeth Phillips

Above: **Sewing kit.** England, 1765–90. Gift of Mrs. Reginald Allen.

Cover: **Cameo set.** Diego d'Estrada. Rome, Italy, 1855–65. Gift of Miss Ellen F. Mason.

## BGC

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Images: Courtesy of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities

Photos: Peter Harholdt