MAYMONT ACQUIRES RARE SILVER OWNED BY DOOLEYS

Maymont acquired a rare, coin silver fruit bowl last month, a piece once owned by James and Sallie Dooley who lived at Maymont, an American estate in Richmond, Virginia, from 1893 to 1925. The bowl will go on exhibit this summer in the Maymont Mansion dining room. This important addition to Maymont’s museum collection was produced by the well-known Philadelphia silversmith Peter L. Krider and retailed by the 19th century Richmond jeweler and silversmith Mitchell & Tyler. The acquisition was made possible through grants from two private foundations and through donations to the Maymont Council, Maymont’s preservation affinity group which is celebrating 30 years of stewardship in 2013.

According to family tradition, the bowl was originally owned by the parents of James Dooley, John and Sarah Dooley, who became very prosperous in the decades before the Civil War. Maymont Mansion historical records indicate that it was passed down to relatives in 1925. The quality of the impressive piece demonstrates the wealth and status of the Dooley family in 19th century Richmond and beautifully complements the sumptuous character of the Maymont dining room.

“We are thrilled to have this opportunity to add this splendid Dooley-owned object,” said Dale Wheary, Maymont Curator and Director of Historical Collections & Programs. “Occasions such as this are very important for Maymont. The Maymont Mansion is rare among historic house museums in that nearly all of the furnishings displayed in the upper floors were acquired by the Dooleys and left as part of their bequest. Continuing to acquire Dooley pieces builds upon the richly-layered authenticity of this unusually intact and well-preserved example of Gilded Age design, taste, and lifestyle. Maymont is one of very few historic properties in Virginia representing this distinctive era of America’s past.”

The fruit bowl, measuring approximately 12 inches in height and diameter, is an excellent example of the work of Peter L. Krider who established his business around 1850 and produced large amounts of silver flatware and hollowware as well as society and exposition medals. It was made between 1850 and 1860. Ornamented with repoussé flowers, fruit, and scrolling foliage, the footed bowl is a lively expression of Rococo Revival style. The finial, formed by a cluster of finely cast strawberries, lends a particularly winsome character to the piece.
The original retailer of the piece, Mitchell & Tyler, catered to the city’s elite and was the largest business of its kind in Richmond in the years leading up to the Civil War. The company operated between 1845 and 1866 at 108 Main Street (later re-numbered 1312 Main Street). According to Catherine B. Hollan, author of “Virginia Silversmith, Jewelers, Watch and Clockmakers, 1607-1860,” the quantity of silver retailed by Mitchell & Tyler that survived among old Richmond families attests to the standing of the firm. Strikingly similar to the Dooley-owned piece, a covered fruit bowl, also made by Krider and retailed by Mitchell & Tyler, was owned by the Wickham family and became part of the Valentine Richmond History Center museum collection in 2012.

The new Maymont acquisition takes its place among a collection of 1,000 original furnishings and works of art left in 1925 to the City of Richmond by James and Sallie Dooley. Since assuming responsibility for the estate in 1975, Maymont Foundation has acquired nearly 100 additional Dooley-owned objects for the collection. The subject of an award-winning, three-decades-long restoration and conservation effort, the opulent interiors of the 1893 Maymont Mansion combine with authentically furnished belowstairs service rooms to give an unusually complete depiction of life in America’s Gilded Age.

Maymont is a 100-acre American estate, an extraordinary gift given to the community by James and Sallie Dooley. Whether strolling in the gardens, touring the mansion or watching river otters play, there is something for everyone to enjoy. Maymont Mansion is located at 1700 Hampton Street in Richmond, Virginia. For more information on the estate, call 804-358-7166, ext. 310 or visit www.maymont.org.

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