

The Alice Curtis Fish Room

The room is personally furnished with antiques and heirlooms from the home of Mrs. Fish.

The sofa is a Sheraton design dating from 1810 and is a treasured piece of furniture. The chairs are early 20th century with fabrics of velvet and an unusual rose floral Indian crewel material.

The occasional tables are all inlaid mahogany tilt-top designs. The pair of rugs in the Fish Rooms are oriental-Turkish designs.

The earliest photograph of Mrs. Fish shows her at the age of 4 years and is near a photograph of her mother. The family home in Bridgeport, Connecticut is on a nearby table. At either end of the Room are two marble-topped Victorian tables upon which the visitor can see two photographs of Mrs. Fish, in her twenties and late forties.

Other photographs show Mrs. Fish in the library of her present home, receiving a doctorate degree in literature and a degree from M.I.T. for her photographic work.

A favorite portrait of Mrs. Fish's father, Louis Beers Curtis, hangs over the sofa. At one end of the Room is another portrait, that of Eliza Beers Curtis (1804-1835), the great-grandmother of Mrs. Fish. Eliza Curtis died in the Great Fire of New York in 1835, giving birth to Mrs. Fish's grandfather, Lewis Auger Curtis (1835-1909). His portrait, painted by Samuel Waldo, in 1815, hangs in the main room of the library. Incidentally, the young man is shown at the age of 15 years.

Mrs. Fish is a direct descendant of Governor William Bradford, founder of the Plymouth Colony and three Connecticut governors. Several genealogical certificates which attest to this heritage are to be seen.

The central glass case contains a collection of figures, idols and art objects which Mrs. Fish collected during her several trips around the world. They are made of ivory, jade, enamels with semi-precious stones and bronze. Many are Japanese, Chinese, Indian, Tibetan and Indonesian. The pair of "Horn of Plenty" vases with a griffon design are on the top shelf and have been in her family for several generations. There are several unusual "pots" made of cloisonne enamel with flowers made of jade and metal. On the second shelf, one may see a very small, round photograph of Mr. and Mrs. Fish on the Occasion of their wedding in 1976.

To the right of the center case are a number of leather-bound sets of books from her personal library. The case to the left contains a

collection of the books written by Mrs. Fish. Some have been bound in leather by her publisher. A number of her books are available in the library's general collection. The cases contain a number of African wood-carvings collected by Mrs. Fish while in Kenya. On other shelves, there is a collection of books about "Women in History," a subject about which Mrs. Fish has written several books.

The purpose of her Room is to provide a place for her heirlooms, books, and personal papers to which the interested reader may have access in a comfortable setting. In the future, her collection will contain a number of scrapbooks concerning her family, professional and public life.

We are planning to have various exhibits, in the future, which will focus on her activities in politics, writing and photography.

The Hamilton Fish Room.

The Hamilton Fish Room is furnished with antiques, heirlooms and personal memorabilia from the Fish family home.

It is intended to be a repository for his political papers, family and historical papers, books and pictures which Mr. Fish has collected for many years. The Room is arranged so that visitors may comfortably read and study. The historical collections are so extensive that only a portion will be on view at any given time. The library plans to periodically exhibit the many diverse parts of the Hamilton Fish Collection.

The Room is dominated by the large painting of the Marquis de Lafayette. The original of this painting is in the collection of the Order of Lafayette in the U.S. - an historical and patriotic organization to which Mr. Fish belongs.

The central glass case contains a number of autographed pictures to Hamilton Fish from General Pershing and Marshall Foch (Mr. Fish was instrumental in forming a black infantry unit in W.W. I. and received the Silver Star for valor); and other autographed photographs from Herbert Hoover, Warren Harding and Calvin Coolidge. There are three documents concerning Colonel Nicholas Fish, dating from the 1780's. The silver ink-well stand belonged to Colonel Fish and was used to sign many Revolutionary War documents. Of interest to the visitor will be the 18th century mahogany cradle used by Nicholas Fish and later, Hamilton Fish. It is located in the Children's Room.

The highly decorated silver bowls and drinking cup were given to Hamilton Fish as a baptismal gift by W.W. Astor, his godfather, in 1889. There are several honorary awards, medals and a silver pitcher in the case as well. Mr. Fish has a large collection of military awards and medals which will be placed in several exhibition cases in the future.

To either side of the central case, the visitor may see a number of historical documents and photographs relating to Nicholas Fish, Hamilton Fish and Peter Stuyvesant (a small engraving with signature), W.T. Sherman, U.S. Grant and Zachary Taylor.

While at Harvard University, Mr. Fish captained an all-American football team and there are a number of trophies, photographs and books to be seen.

The shelves and walls show the political, historical and patriotic interests of Mr. Fish: photographs and engravings of George Washing-

ton, Abraham Lincoln, Teddy Roosevelt and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier (W.W. I) for which Mr. Fish's efforts were largely responsible; and 2 bronze busts of Benjamin Franklin and George Washington by Jean Antoine Houdon in 1778.

Of great interest is the Indenture, located on the central panel, dated 1818, concerned with the Last Will & Testament of Peter Stuyvesant, signed by 12 ancestors of Hamilton Fish.

Mrs. Alice Curtis Fish, who enjoys needlecraft, made the Livingston family coat of arms and the seal of Harvard University for Mr. Fish.

Throughout the Room, the shelves contain many rare and unusual books. They are concerned with American history, New York state and local history, genealogy, world Communism and other subjects.

As the book collections and historical documents are received and processed, they will be made available to the public.

The Hamilton Fish Room

The Hamilton Fish Room is furnished with antiques, heirlooms and personal memorabilia from the Fish family home.

The room is dominated by the large painting of the Marquis de Lafayette. The original of this painting is in the collection of the Order of Lafayette in the United States. Mr. Fish was one of the original founders of the Order whose historical and patriotic purpose is to encourage a deep and abiding relationship with France. The Order was formed at Von Steuben's home, in Fishkill where the famous Society of the Cincinnati, established in 1783 was also founded. The Cincinnati was the outgrowth of the desires of the disbanding American Revolutionary Army members to sustain their comradeship. Mr. Fish, through his ancestors, is a retired hereditary member. His son, Congressman Hamilton Fish, presently belongs.

There are three historical documents concerning the Military rank of Nicholas Fish. In 1776, the President of the Convention of the Representatives of the State of New York wrote a letter affirming his appointment as a Major of Brigade to the Detachment of (New York State) Militiamen. In 1785 he was appointed as a Major in the Service of the United States. In 1786, he was commissioned as Adjutant General of the New York State Militia.

The highly decorated silver bowls and drinking cup were given to Hamilton Fish as a baptismal gift by W. W. Astor, his godfather, in 1889. There are several honorary awards and a silver pitcher in the case as well. Mr. Fish has had an active Military career, especially in World War I: he received the Silver Star for gallantry and a large number of campaign ribbons and medals. His political life has also been recognized through a large number of civilian awards from the English, French, German and Russian governments.

To either side of the central case, the visitor may see a number of historical documents and photographs relating to Nicholas Fish, Hamilton Fish and Peter Stuyvesant (a small engraving with signature), W. T. Sherman, U. S. Grant and Zachary Taylor.

While at Harvard University, Mr. Fish captained an all-American football team and there are a number of related trophies, photographs and books.

The shelves and walls show the political, historical and patriotic interests of Mr. Fish: photographs and engravings of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Teddy Roosevelt and a copy of the legislation establishing the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier (W.W. I) drafted by Mr. Fish. Bronze busts of Benjamin Franklin and George Washington were cast by Jean Antoine Houdon in 1778. Houdon was a French sculptor famous for his animated, vigorously conceived yet delicately executed busts. Often, he made actual, direct anatomical measurements of the subject from life.

The Hamilton Fish Room

Of great interest is the Indenture, located on the central panel, dated 1818, concerned with the Last Will & Testament of Peter Stuyvesant. Signed by 12 ancestors of Hamilton Fish, they were enjoined to legally pursue and support the Will's intent for the sale of Stuyvesant's property and land.

Mrs. Alice Curtis Fish, who enjoys needlecraft, made the Livingston family coat of arms and the seal of Harvard University for Mr. Fish.

Throughout the Room, the shelves contain many rare and unusual books. They are concerned with American history, New York State and local history, genealogy, and world Communism.

The Gallery

The central gallery contains antique furnishings and family portraits from the home of Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton Fish.

The large, ornate covered vase, at the end of the gallery, is a Royal Sevres porcelain, dating from 1757. It was made during the reign of Louis XV and Madame Pompadour. The vase is placed on a french Consul table, marbled-topped and mirrored to give a sense of space. The table dates from the 1830's.

On either side of the gallery, two pairs of Gaming tables are seen. They are of unusual design: one is a rare american eagle carving; the other, of an intricately, inlaid brass floral and scroll pattern - both pairs date from the early 19th century. A pair of Louis XV candelabra in gilt and red marble and a pair of two-branch girandoles have been placed on the tables.

The walls of the gallery are hung with family portraits.

To either side of the entrance of Mrs. Fish's room, the portraits are of Joseph Davis Beers (1780-1863) and Mary Chapman Beers (1776-1849), the great-great-grandparents of Mrs. Fish. Joseph Beers came from Connecticut to New York in 1815 and became a wealthy, Wall Street banker.

Both portraits are oils painted on mahogany panels by Waldo and Jewett. It is of interest that Samuel Waldo (1783-1861) was an american portrait painter in partnership with a former student and enjoyed a long collaboration. Samuel Waldo, a student of Benjamin West, would do the portrait head while Jewett would usually complete the body, hands and background.

The family portraits of Hamilton Fish are on the opposite wall. They are: Govenor Peter Stuyvesant, an early ancestor and Dutch administrator in New York; Nicholas Fish, Adjutant General and Colonel in the Revolution - his great-granfater; Hamilton Fish, member of Congress, Govenor of New York state and U.S. Secretary of State - his grandfather; and Hamilton Fish, Sr., Speaker of the New York State Assembly, member of Congress and Asst. Secretary of Treasury - hisfather.

These portraits are modern copies based on reference materials supplied by Mr. Fish.

PRESS RELEASE FROM MRS. HAMILTON FISH AT GARRISON, NEW YORK,
ON TUESDAY, OCTOBER 21, 1980.

Hamilton Fish and I have two rooms in our Garrison Library filled with our family heirlooms. In order to explain to you the background of these heirlooms that I have given to the Alice and Hamilton Fish Library, let me tell you briefly about my Curtis and Beers ancestors.

I, Alice Curtis Fish, came from a New England family that migrated from England to America in 1620. I am directly descended from Governor William Bradford, who founded the Colony of Plymouth, Massachusetts, in 1620. I am also descended from three Connecticut governors-- John Steel and Thomas Wells, who helped to found Hartford, Connecticut, with the Rev. Thomas Hooker in 1636. John Steel became the first secretary of the Colony of Hartford in 1636 and governor 1637-1639; Thomas Wells financed the Hooker settlement in Connecticut and became Governor of Connecticut 1634-1659; and from a later Governor of Connecticut, Nathan Gold. While among my English ancestors who helped to found colonies in New England are Robert Champman, who helped to found Saybrook, Connecticut, in 1635; and the John Curtis family, who came to Massachusetts in 1632, then migrated to the north shore of Long Island Sound in 1639 and founded Stratford, Connecticut.

I have nothing unfortunately that came down from these early ancestors. The paintings and furniture that I am giving to our Garrison library dates from the time of my great-great-grandfather, Joseph Davis Beers (1780-1863), who moved from Connecticut to New York City in 1815 and became a wealthy Wall Street banker. His portrait and that of his wife, Mary Chapman Beers (1776-1849), painted by Waldo & Jewett, famous 19th century painters, hangs in the hallway outside of my room.

The portrait of my great-grandmother, their daughter Eliza (1804-1835),

who married Lewis Curtis, a prominent New York merchant and banker, hangs to the right as you enter my room. Eliza Beers Curtis died in the Great Fire of New York City in 1835 giving birth to my grandfather, Lewis Augur Curtis (1835-1909). His portrait, painted by Samuel Waldo in 1815 when Grandfather was fifteen, hangs in the main room of the library.

The portrait of his son and my father, Lewis Beers Curtis (1863-1938), faces you as you enter my room. He was a well-to-do banker and manufacturer in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Also a collector of antiques and a great traveler. It is due to my father and mother that I have been able to give so many beautiful things (antique furniture, rugs, and object d'art) to the Alice and Hamilton Fish Library. Some of these pieces are family heirlooms. Others are things that my parents bought while on their world-wide travels. For instance, the Sevres vase in the hallway between Mr. Fish's room and mine, Father purchased in Paris. The console table on which the vase stands stood in Joseph Davis Beers' New York home in 1820.

Most of the objects d'art in the cabinet in my room I picked up in Europe and Asia. I have traveled widely and been around the world three times. Also in my room are copies of the 23 books that I have written; translations from them in 8 foreign languages; and the jackets and original illustrations from many of my books.

My Fish and I are fortunate to have a place now, where the public can enjoy with us these family treasures that mean so much to us. We are happy to pass them on to future generations.

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STAFF:

Geraldine S. Mahoney - Library Director
Barry Bruce - Special Collections Librarian
Sue Forson - Circulation Desk Clerk
Claire Ruckel - Clerk - Typist

Statement by Alice Curtis Fish

"When I married Hamilton Fish in October 1976, four years ago, we wanted to create something together that would benefit all of our contemporaries and would be of service to those who came after us. I am a writer, the author of 22 published books. What project could Mr. Fish and I undertake together, I thought, that would be more suitable than to build a public library? And where could it be more suitably situated than in Garrison, New York, where Mr. Fish was born - a community which did not have its own library.

My idea appealed to my husband for he had been wondering what to do with the mass of documents, letters, and family portraits that he had inherited, dating back to an early ancestor, Governor Peter Stuyvesant of New Amsterdam. My founding ancestor, Governor William Bradford of Plymouth, Massachusetts, came to America in 1620. So I too had an accumulation of family portraits and heirlooms in my home dating back through my ancestral line - the Curtises and Beers families of New York and Connecticut - for three centuries.

My husband and I had feared that our heirlooms would be scattered after our deaths. But in this library that we have built in Garrison, they will be preserved long after we have passed away. And the public will be able to read copies of my 22 books, that have been translated into 6 foreign languages. We will die, but our library will live on."

ALICE AND HAMILTON FISH LIBRARY
PROJECTED SERVICES

The expenditures as outlined on the Financial Data Sheet have provided funding for the basic books, materials, and audiovisual equipment upon which to build fine free library service for the community of Garrison and the surrounding area.

A book collection of 8000 volumes is roughly half the American Library Association standard of two books per capita recommended for the Library's New York State Charter area. The needs and interests of the range of people found in the community have been reflected in developing the collection. A wide range of fiction and nonfiction has been selected to serve potential patrons from preschool through adult. The collection is rooted in the finest standard reference works available - general and special encyclopedias, periodical indices, biographical and historical resources, etc.

The Miscellaneous Statistics show that the Library meets A.L.A. standards of 50-75 periodicals and 150-200 recordings from its inception. Back files of periodicals are stored on microfiche with a microfiche reader/printer available to provide copies of articles for individual use.

In order to tap nonprint resources, the Library has purchased a variety of audiovisual equipment. To facilitate the use of the cassette recording collection, cassette tape players are available for loan. Filmstrip sets may circulate with a portable sound filmstrip previewer. The Mid-Hudson Library System's collection of approximately 1400 16mm films is made available for home or community group use with a projector available through the Library. The MHLIS and NYS collections of videotapes is open to use and/or duplication with a videotape player/recorder.

All of the equipment is available for both individual and group use in Library programming. Such programming will be geared to children, young adults, or adults and will be aimed at their recreational or informational needs. Preschool story hour; "classic" film series for adults/young adults; and after school or weekend film or video programs for children are a few of the programming possibilities.

In addition to the audiovisual capabilities mentioned, we hope to encourage the public to utilize the Library as a cultural center. In surveying the community, a strong interest was found in concerts and lectures. We would like to develop programming in this mode as well as encouraging public use of the building (in a controlled manner) as a meeting area. As a meeting room was not provided in the building, the furnishings in the Main Reading Room will be predominantly moveable resulting in a maximum seating capacity of 100 persons.

For the casual visitor, the Library should be a comfortable place to stop and read the day's news, a recent periodical, or a current novel. Comfortable chairs as well as seating at tables will be plentiful for the occasional reader as well as the researcher or student, adult and child.

The Fish Collections also provide an interesting area of inquiry as we hope to develop the concentration on New York State and Revolutionary War history and emphasize local, Hudson Valley history as a corollary service.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of the Alice and Hamilton Fish Library is to provide and organize expertly selected materials and to give guidance in their use; to help people in their search for greater understanding, in their quest for reliable information, and in their exploration of a more secure and creative pattern for living. The Library realizes that its major concerns must be positive contributions toward the development of the individual as a citizen and the removal of ignorance, intolerance and indifference.

The Library is both an educational and recreational agency. Toward these ends it seeks to provide books and non-print materials conducive to the creative use of leisure time. Programs of educational content (lectures, films, etc.) are provided to direct the individual toward a continuous learning process.

The Library, recognizing its responsibility to develop adult citizens for whom the use of books and other media of communication is a necessary and natural part of intelligent living, provides special service to young people. It seeks to direct and stimulate young readers by making available well-selected collections and skilled individual and group guidance.

In provision of special services for children, the Library strives to guide the child toward a love of reading and an awareness of books as a means of satisfying his mental, emotional, and activity interests.

To help realize these goals, the Library seeks to cooperate with other area service agencies. Similarly, the Library wishes to cooperate with Libraries and special collections in the area and across the State that provide information resources to the community.

The Library is also dedicated to the preservation and development of an historical collection as provided by Alice and Hamilton Fish. The Library is charged with the organization of this resource on New York State History and with the arrangement of the papers and correspondence of the Fish Family dating back to Colonel Nicholas Fish. The historical works written by Alice Curtis Desmond Fish will be a highly valued permanent collection.

