



BARTOW - PELL MANSION MUSEUM

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BARTOW-PELL MANSION MUSEUM ANNOUNCES SPRING EXHIBIT OF 19th-CENTURY SCHOOLGIRL ART FROM FEMALE ACADEMIES

Bronx, NY, January 20, 2015— Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum (BPMM) will exhibit a unique selection of early 19th-century American schoolgirl embroideries and watercolors from the collection of William and Sally Gemmill starting March 1st. The exhibition, *Accomplished Women: Schoolgirl Art from Female Academies in the Early Nineteenth Century*, offers a special opportunity for the public to see beautiful and rare works from a major private collection. Twelve pieces in total will be included in the exhibition, among them a mourning embroidery by Abigail Walker—part of Bartow-Pell’s permanent collection—which will be viewed in a rich new context in the spring show.

William and Sally Gemmill are collectors and independent researchers of American schoolgirl art during the first quarter of the 19th century, focusing primarily on the academies of New England and the mid-Atlantic. They are the authors of a recently published article in *Antiques and Fine Arts* magazine on their discovery of the Charlestown Academy as the source of several previously unidentified silk embroideries and have been speakers at symposiums at the American Folk Art Museum and at Bates College as part of the Maine Folk Art Trail.

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, exclusive female academies for well-to-do young women began to sprout up all over New England. While reading, writing, and arithmetic were all part of the regular curriculum at these schools, a strong emphasis was placed on embroidery, drawing, and other arts, not only as an outlet for artistic expression, but also as material testimony to the young women’s accomplishments and their families’ social standings.

Memorials, family registers, historical scenes, allegories, maps, heraldry, and grisaille compositions based on engravings provided the subject matter for many of the fine pictorial silk embroideries and watercolors made in these schools in the early part of the 19th century. These precious artworks, many of which will be on view for the first time in the spring exhibition, were often placed in handsome gilt frames with eglomise (reverse painting on glass) mats and were an expensive and labor-intensive version of the student art projects that parents proudly display today.

“We are delighted that the Gemmills have agreed to share some of the pieces from their extraordinary collection with Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum,” said Margaret Highland, Education Director and Curator at BPMM. “Our 19th-century Greek Revival historic house is an ideal setting for an exhibition of this nature, and we are looking forward to opening the show to the public this spring.”

Accomplished Women: Schoolgirl Art from Female Academies in the Early Nineteenth Century will be on view from March 1 to June 21, 2015, and is free with museum admission. The museum is open to the public Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday from noon to 4:00 p.m.

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ABOUT THE BARTOW-PELL MANSION MUSEUM

A New York City Landmark listed on the National Register of Historic Places, Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum (BPMM) is owned by the City of New York Department of Parks & Recreation and is a member of the Historic House Trust of New York City. It is operated by the private, non-profit Bartow-Pell Conservancy. The Bartow-Pell Conservancy, originally known as the International Garden Club, was formed in 1914 by a group passionate about horticulture. That year, New York City gave them permission to use the Bartow family mansion on Pelham Bay in the Bronx, as their headquarters in exchange for restoring it, creating public gardens and programs, and preserving it for generations to come. The International Garden Club officially changed its name to the Bartow-Pell Conservancy in 2008 as well its membership model to that of a typical cultural organization. BPMM is located at 895 Shore Road, Pelham Bay Park, Bronx, New York. The mansion and carriage house are open to the public for guided tours on Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday from noon to 4 p.m. The gardens and grounds are open daily from 8:30 a.m. to dusk. For more information about Bartow-Pell, visit www.bpmm.org.