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PRESS RELEASE
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For Immediate Release
Contact:
Melissa Groppe
202-337-2288
Dumbarton House

Dumbarton House exhibition serves up view of early American food and etiquette



WASHINGTON, DC - September 17, 2009 -
"Pease porridge hot, Pease porridge cold, Pease porridge
in the pot Nine days old..." Hidden in the meaning of this
familiar Mother Goose nursery rhyme lies the age old
challenge people once faced in keeping food hot and cold
in bygone days. This theme will be one of the focuses in
Dumbarton House's upcoming exhibition: ***Fran, Have
You Supplied the Table? Food, Service, & Etiquette in
the Federal Era.***

The historic Georgetown house museum is bringing
nineteenth-century dining traditions to the twenty-first century with this exhibit, complementing
regular docent-led tours of the museum.

On view from Sept. 18 to June 12, 2010, the exhibit showcases the upper-class perspective on
dining in the context of preparation, presentation and manners. Visitors gain a greater
understanding of early American foodways and proper table manners through this unique collection
of silver, porcelain, serving ware and letters.

"In this period of eating on the run, complaining when we have to wait more than five minutes for
our food and consuming more and more 'finger foods,' this is a great time in history to take a closer
look at foods, service and etiquette to see where we may learn a bit more gentility," said Scott
Scholz, museum curator at Dumbarton House.

The title of the exhibit comes from a letter written by Joseph Nourse, first resident of Dumbarton
House, to his wife Maria. On Aug. 5, 1804, he wrote that their resident cook, Fran, "has supplied the
Table daily with Cabbage, Potatoes, occasionally Corn, 2 Eggs." The exhibit will demonstrate that
consuming food was only a small part of a complex system of nineteenth-century dining.

OBJECT SAMPLES: An object in Dumbarton House's collection used to keep food hot is a porcelain hot-water plate in the Quaker Farmer pattern (Jingdezhen, China), c.1810 (above left). A hot-water plate looks like a normal plate, however the base is double walled resulting in a hollow space accessible by a spout where hot water can be poured in and corked off, ensuring a hot surface on which to place hot food.

Among the exhibition items used to keep food cold will be a Paris porcelain icecream pail, c.1820 (right). This ice cream pail consists of an outer vessel that would hold ice, an interior liner to hold the ice-cream, and a lid also able to hold ice.



Tours are offered Tuesdays through Saturdays (some Federal holidays excepted), hourly 10am to 1pm. The tour cost is 5 dollars for adults and free for students and children. Reservations recommended for groups of five or more guests. Call 202-337-2288, or e-mail Info@DumbartonHouse.org for more information.

Dumbarton House is located in Georgetown, Washington, DC, 2715 Q Street, NW, Washington, DC 20007. Limited parking and ADA-access is available behind the Museum via 27th Street at Q. Metrorail: Red Line, DuPont Circle. For additional information, www.DumbartonHouse.org or 202-337-2288.

The mission of the Dumbarton House museum, a Federal Period home, ca. 1800, is to preserve the historic structure and its collections and to educate the public about life in Washington, DC, during the early years of the Republic. The museum features a significant collection of Federal-era decorative arts, paintings and furniture, and is one of only a few such properties open to the public in the Washington metropolitan area. Dumbarton House is also the headquarters of The National Society of The Colonial Dames of America (The NSCDA), a women's organization that actively promotes our national heritage through historic preservation, patriotic service and educational projects. The NSCDA is comprised of 45 state societies that own or administrate 80 other properties around the country of architectural or historic value.

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FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OR EXHIBITION PHOTOS CONTACT:

Melissa "Missy" Hoggan Groppe
Marketing & Events Manager
Dumbarton House
Headquarters, The National Society of The Colonial Dames of America
2715 Q Street NW ■ Georgetown ■ Washington, DC20007
phone: 202-337-2288 x230 ■ fax: 202-337-0348
MissyGroppe@DumbartonHouse.org ■ DumbartonHouse.org



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