These are a few of my Favorite Things
Letter from Stephen Myers to John Jay II

December 17, 1860

Paper, Ink

JJ.1959.145

SELECTED BY: Melissa Vail

AFFILIATION: Trustee of Friends of John Jay Homestead, and Chair of the Scholars Lectures Committee

THIS IS ONE OF MY FAVORITE THINGS

BECAUSE: Stephen Myers was an abolitionist born in slavery around 1800, based in Albany, active on the Underground Railroad from the 1830s - 1850s. I chose this letter because it shows a particularly close example of relationships between John Jay II and members of various factions of the antislavery movement, relationships that were often complicated even without racial lines. And don't we wish we had a photo of that "smart and spritely grandson"?
Toy Stove
19th Century
Iron
JJ.1962.354

SELECTED BY: Barry Abisch
AFFILIATION: Volunteer

THIS IS ONE OF MY FAVORITE THINGS BECAUSE: As a museum, the house is frozen in time, presented as much as possible as it was in 1820. But as a home to the Jay family for more than 150 years, the house underwent many changes. This toy stove connects us with the first big alteration: in 1818, an extension was added to the north side of the house. Included was a “modern” kitchen – complete with a cast iron stove, possibly not too different from this one in
Toy Wind-up Cat
Unknown Date
Metal
JJ.1962.613

SELECTED BY: Heidi Stryker
AFFILIATION: Office Manager, Friends of John Jay Homestead
THIS IS ONE OF MY FAVORITE THINGS BECAUSE: I love cats! I have never seen anything quite like this among the toys of this particular era and found it unique and charming.
Bird Whistle
Unknown Date
Earthenware
JJ.1965.359

SELECTED BY: Heather Iannucci
AFFILIATION: Director, John Jay Homestead

THIS IS ONE OF MY FAVORITE THINGS BECAUSE: My grandmother had a very similar bird whistle. When I would visit her as a child, she would let me play with it. My mother inherited it, and when they were younger, my children loved to play with that same bird whistle.
Hedgehog Bulb Pot  
Josiah Wedgewood & Sons  
c.1780  
Earthenware  
JJ.1968.215

SELECTED BY: Meaghan McClure  

AFFILIATION: Meaghan has spent many years actively involved with the Homestead: first as a participant in its summer camps, then as archival intern, and finally as an estate Docent. She loves John Jay and looks forward to many more fun years here!  

THIS IS ONE OF MY FAVORITE THINGS BECAUSE: The words cute and antique aren’t usually paired together. But, at Jay, anything is possible! Where else can you find such an adorable, old, and colorful hedgehog?
Letter from John Jay to Sarah Jay
October 12, 1783
Paper, Ink
JJ.1986.23

SELECTED BY: Katherine Frawley
AFFILIATION: (Former) Visitor Service Coordinator

THIS IS ONE OF MY FAVORITE THINGS BECAUSE: It is a simple but sweet letter from John Jay to his wife, discussing typical topics for a married couple and wishing she kiss their “sweet little girls” for him. I also love that it is addressed to Mrs. Jay during her stay at Benjamin Franklin’s home in Passy, France.
SELECTED BY: Heather Iannucci
AFFILIATION: Director, John Jay Homestead
THIS IS ONE OF MY FAVORITE THINGS BECAUSE: I was looking through this book one day, trying to find and image to use in a program. When I came across these beautiful sketches of women’s fashions of the day, I was struck by the vibrant colors.
Colonel William Jay’s Staff & Field Officer’s Sword

C.1850
Steel, brass
JJ.2002.8

SELECTED BY: Meaghan McClure

AFFILIATION: Meaghan has spent many years actively involved with the Homestead: first as a participant in its summer camps, then as archival intern, and finally as an estate Docent. She loves John Jay and looks forward to many more fun years here!

THIS IS ONE OF MY FAVORITE THINGS BECAUSE: The Jays weren’t only intimately involved in just the founding of our nation, they too experienced the unrest that came with the following decades. This sword is a potent reminder of that. Overall, it’s a piece with serious gravity to it, and commands respect.
SELECTED BY: Koran Terry
AFFILIATION: Maintenance
THIS IS ONE OF MY FAVORITE THINGS BECAUSE: Living on site has provided me daily views of the beautiful landscape here at John Jay Homestead. I love having the opportunity to meet new people and make new friends who come to explore and learn about the history. I chose this painting by Eleanor Jay because it is a reminder of the local wildlife I see here every day; and also the fact that my closest neighbor is a coop of chickens.
Wine Bottle
c.1820s
Glass
JJ.2013.7.9

SELECTED BY: Ariana Scecchitano
AFFILIATION: Education Coordinator

THIS IS ONE OF MY FAVORITE THINGS BECAUSE: It impresses me that such a family heirloom was passed on for so many generations and although the wine itself has not been preserved, the bottle is singularly unique, hand blown, and bears an uncommon finish which is not found in factory-made bottles.
Augustus Jay’s Book of Common Prayer
c.1724
Paper, ink, cardstock
JJ.2008.4

SELECTED BY: Heather Langham
AFFILIATION: Trustee, Friends of John Jay Homestead

THIS IS ONE OF MY FAVORITE THINGS BECAUSE: This Book of Common Prayer dated 1724 belonged to John Jay’s grandfather, Augustus, and is a tangible symbol of the religious freedom the new world offered. A family of French Huguenots, the Augustus Jay family immigrated to this country seeking religious freedom and freedom from persecution. This Book of Common Prayer represents the Augustus Jay family’s right to be practicing Protestants in the Church of England in their new homeland. I also found the book compelling because it is a beautiful and charming family treasure dated and signed by Augustus.
Letter from William Jay to Reuben Turner
William Jay
March 20, 1837
Paper, Ink
JJ.2017.225

SELECTED BY: Katherine Frawley
AFFILIATION: Visitor Service Coordinator

THIS IS ONE OF MY FAVORITE THINGS BECAUSE: It provides a glimpse into William Jay’s character and beliefs while showing how respected and involved he was in the abolition movement. In the letter, he rejects helping or writing anything for the Recolonization Society because he doesn’t believe in their mission— but he does so in a stern yet sassy way, going as far as to tell them they are wrong and explain why.
A Collection to Irish Folk Song for Piano
c.1850
Paper, ink, cardstock
JJ.2017.460

SELECTED BY: Meaghan McClure

AFFILIATION: Meaghan has spent many years actively involved with the Homestead: first as a participant in its summer camps, then as archival intern, and finally as an estate Docent. She loves John Jay and looks forward to many more fun years here!

THIS IS ONE OF MY FAVORITE THINGS BECAUSE: This book gives us the ability to really imagine how one’s leisure hours would be spent in the mid-19th century. You can almost see the Jays, seated in the Front Parlour, enjoying this music together as a family. Quite a lovely thought!
Letter from Alexander Crummell to William Jay
August 8, 1853
Paper, Ink
JJ.2017.570

SELECTED BY: Melissa Vail
AFFILIATION: Trustee of Friends of John Jay Homestead, and Chair of the Scholars Lectures Committee

THIS IS ONE OF MY FAVORITE THINGS BECAUSE: Alexander Crummell was a leading abolitionist, pan-African activist, scholar, and minister in the Episcopal Church. Educated at the African Free School (co-founded by John Jay), he was denied admission to General Theological Seminary in New York, ordained in Massachusetts, and then became the first black student ever to graduate from Queens College, Cambridge. He was not successful in his several attempts to gain equal standing for black congregations in the Episcopal Church. He was deeply admired by WEB DuBois. I chose this letter because of all the elements of the antislavery movement it illustrates, and the mutually respectful and egalitarian relationship it shows between Crummell and John Jay II.
SELECTED BY: Domenick Gasparro

AFFILIATION: Former Museum Associate / Volunteer

THIS IS ONE OF MY FAVORITE THINGS BECAUSE: I discovered this chemistry book owned by Col. William Jay while doing a survey of the historic book collection in the summer of 2018. So often we find ourselves removed from figures of the past because we feel that they are very different than we are. In many cases, they were. However, occasionally, we see that perhaps they weren’t so different after all. For instance, in the front of this book, we see a doodled ‘W’ Jay’ on the first few pages. Many of us have doodled our initials in the front pages of textbooks or notebooks, and I found this commonality to be quite interesting, and a bit humorous.
Mamie Whisk Broom
19th Century
JJ.2020.12

SELECTED BY: Bethany White
AFFILIATION: Interpretive Programs Director

THIS IS ONE OF MY FAVORITE THINGS BECAUSE:
Material culture and how it relates to the political and social climate of a time period has always fascinated me. The mammie archetype ties back to the period of southern slavery where African American women worked in the homes of white families caring for their children. This is a period of time that we do not often cover in our interpretation here, but there is a rich story to tell. This mammie whisk broom is a great example of the views on race, its exploitation and representation in early 20th century America.
News article by Eleanor Jay Iselin, offering Jay Homestead to U.N. to use as their headquarters

Eleanor Jay Iselin
February 7, 1946
Paper, Ink
JJ.2020.11

SELECTED BY: Bethany White
AFFILIATION: Interpretive Programs Director

THIS IS ONE OF MY FAVORITE THINGS BECAUSE: The history of this house has so many fun stories that we are rarely able to share. In 1946, Eleanor Iselin wrote an opinion piece in the New York Herald Tribune offering up Bedford House as the home of the newly formed United Nations. She wrote: “This is not a time when personal sentiments or convenience should interfere with what would appear to be the one hope of the world in solving the international problems with which it is confronted.” As we know, the U.N. ultimately settled on a home in New York City and the home of John Jay became a museum. But it is interesting to imagine what might have happened in the United Nations Organization took Eleanor Iselin up on her offer.
Statue of John Jay
Edward A. Kuntze (1826-1870)
c.1850
Plaster

SELECTED BY: Arthur Benware
AFFILIATION: Collections Manager

THIS IS ONE OF MY FAVORITE THINGS BECAUSE: This sculpture of Jay is based on his image in the Benjamin West painting The American Peace Commissioners, I find it interesting that the artist chose this depiction of Jay for a posthumous sculpture.
SELECTED BY: Linda Wang
AFFILIATION: Volunteer
THIS IS ONE OF MY FAVORITE THINGS BECAUSE: Although grapes were never grown on the Homestead, this book provides a detailed look at New York's history with grapes, as well as a glimpse into the Jay family's continued interest in agriculture.
Letter of the Secretary of the Treasury Relative to the Nominations of Collector and Naval Officer in the New York Custom House
John Sherman
1879
Paper, ink, cardstock
JJ.2020.14

SELECTED BY: Linda Wang
AFFILIATION: Volunteer

THIS IS ONE OF MY FAVORITE THINGS BECAUSE: John Jay II, best known for being an ardent abolitionist, also helped fight corruption within the government. This book was gifted by John Sherman, the Secretary of the Treasury during the Hayes Administration, for leading the investigation into the New York Custom-House.
**Lady Washington’s Reception**

Daniel Huntington  
c.1860  
Paper, Ink  
JJ.1958.632

SELECTED BY: Michael Deller  
AFFILIATION: Tour Guide  

**THIS IS ONE OF MY FAVORITE THINGS BECAUSE:** while the focus of this piece clearly revolves around the esteemed Martha Washington, there is a remarkable amount of prominence given to John and Sarah Jay among the crowd of party attendees. John Jay can be seen standing in his flowing chief justice robes on the far-left side of the portrait, with his back and right shoulder turned toward the viewer. His gaze across the room can be traced to another equally prominent figure, a dark-haired lady with pearls in her hair and a fan in her left hand. This lady is John’s beloved wife Sarah Livingston Jay. What I find so remarkable about the composition of this piece is that, among the crowd of notable dignitaries, the Jay couple quietly share a fond glance across the room. Yet, in a way, they almost steal the scene.

This colored engraving was made by Alexander Hay Ritchie after Daniel Huntington’s original painting, The Republican Court (Lady Washington’s Reception Day) in 1861. Huntington was commissioned to paint it for the expressed purpose of mass producing it as a marketable print. It was created on the eve of the American Civil War as a nostalgic (if not romanticized) memory of a more honorable time in the nation’s young history.
Portrait of Eleanor Kingsland Field Jay
Giovanni Battista Canevari
c.1833
Oil on Canvas
JJ.1958.295

SELECTED BY: Heather Langham
AFFILIATION: Trustee, Friends of John Jay Homestead

THIS IS ONE OF MY FAVORITE THINGS BECAUSE: Mrs. John Jay II was what we might call today an influencer...In keeping with the architectural style of her times she added a Victorian façade to Bedford House, and while abroad when John Jay II was serving as ambassador to Austria-Hungary, she acquired decorative and fine arts that are part of our collection today. Eleanor was a Victorian swan and her contributions are noteworthy part of JJH cultural history. Because this lovely portrait is outside of our interpretive time period it is a not on permanent display; These Are a Few of My Favorite Things is the ideal opportunity to showcase this charming portrait and Eleanor Field in all of her loveliness.