

**Ladies Work Table**

**American**

**c.1780**

**JJ.1982.18**



This four-legged, Federal style screen table was made in America between 1780-1790. The table is one of a pair made from either cherry or rosewood; the fabric is reproduction. They were purchased for John Jay's two eldest daughters, Maria and Nancy. Each table has a screen that slides up and down. When raised, the screen allows one to work near a fire and protects the face from any discomfort or injury, such as embers coming from the fire, or light burns from overexposure. There are two drawers on each table; one in the front and another in the back. The drawers are designed to hold pins, strings, and other sewing sundries.

It was custom throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century for young ladies to learn sewing, embroidery and needlework during childhood. Practice sheets, called samplers, were a common way for girls to learn to sew their numbers, letters, and small figures. The Jay daughters were educated at the Moravian Female Seminary in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. They would have learned writing, history, foreign language, and arithmetic, along with household management.

The tables were donated to the Homestead at two different times. The first, (JJ.1982.18) was donated by Mrs. Julia Jay Pierrepont, a seventh-generation Jay descendant through John Jay's son, Peter Augustus. The second table (JJ.1988.30), was donated six years later by Mrs. Dereke Jay Harvey. Mrs. Harvey is also a seventh-generation Jay descendant through the Peter Augustus line.