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MEDIA ADVISORY

American Ancestors/New England Historic Genealogical Society Wins Award for *Family Treasures: 175 Years of Collecting Art and Furniture at the New England Historic Genealogical Society*

June 30, 2021 – American Ancestors/New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS)—a national center for family history, heritage, and culture—has won the **New England Society in the City of New York (NES) Book Award** in the Art & Photography category for *Family Treasures: 175 Years of Collecting Art and Furniture at the New England Historic Genealogical Society* (2020) by Gerald W. R. Ward. Given annually, the NES awards recognize books of merit that celebrate New England and its culture and will be presented on September 14 in New York.

This year's winners examine a diverse range of subjects, from looking at historical events through a new lens to examining life and creativity. Our winning authors are all marked by excellence and achievement. The winning books evince both great talent and outstanding mastery of the writer's craft.

–Ellen Scordato, 101st NES President

Overview

Published in 2020 to coincide with the 175th anniversary of American Ancestors/NEHGS, *Family Treasures* examines some of the organization's most intriguing objects, many of which tell fascinating stories about American, English, and Native American history, among other topics.

Written by American decorative arts expert Gerald W. R. Ward, Katharine Lane Weems Senior Curator of American Decorative Arts and Sculpture Emeritus at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA), *Family Treasures* includes a foreword by D. Brenton Simons, President and CEO, American Ancestors/NEHGS, and a preface by Curt DiCamillo, Curator of Special Collections, American Ancestors/NEHGS, both of whom aided the author in the selection of items for study and inclusion.

Collection Background

The first acquisition into the collection, in 1846, was the mahogany Pierpont study table—a piece previously owned by J. P. Morgan's grandfather and namesake, the Reverend John Pierpont. This elegant and practical choice by the founders added a touch of distinction to the fledgling organization's otherwise modest quarters in Boston's Court Square.

Over time, many objects—most frequently portraits, furniture, and associated family materials—found their way into the collection, usually by gift or bequest. Some collections were immense, or contained large or elaborate pieces of furniture, such as the Atkinson-Lancaster Collection, donated to NEHGS in 1933, which formed a small museum at Ashburton Place on Beacon Hill, another former home of NEHGS.

For many decades, NEHGS paid scant attention to its fine art collections, especially after its move to Newbury Street in the Back Bay in the 1960s. Finally, in the 2000s, the organization fully re-embraced its identity as a cultural organization and a comprehensive family history center.

In 2016, NEHGS hired its first Curator of Special Collections, Curt DiCamillo, to help organize and catalog these collections. Today the visitor experience at American Ancestors/NEHGS, and through its virtual presence at AmericanAncestors.org, has been greatly enriched by his proactive approach to the collections.

By Gerald W. R. Ward; foreword by D. Brenton Simons; preface by Curt DiCamillo; published 2020; 7 x 10 hardcover, 176 pages, 123 full color illustrations; \$59.95.

About American Ancestors and New England Historic Genealogical Society

American Ancestors is a national center for family history, heritage, and culture. It is the global brand of New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS), America's oldest and largest genealogical society (founded 1845). American Ancestors serves more than 350,000 members and millions of online users engaged in family history nationally and around the world through its website AmericanAncestors.org with more than 1.4 billion names in its databases. Its national headquarters, located in Boston's Back Bay, is home to a world-class research library and archive, an expert staff, and the Wyner Family Jewish Heritage Center. It maintains a publishing division which produces original genealogical research, scholarship, and educational materials, including the *Register*, the flagship journal of American genealogy since 1847; *American Ancestors*, its award-winning magazine; and *Mayflower Descendant*, a quarterly journal of Pilgrim genealogy and history.

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