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2006 Winter Antiques Show Loan Exhibition

Treasures of Historic Mount Vernon Reveal Washington's Interest in Design

New York, NY– George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate & Gardens is steeped in American history, with the richest and most comprehensive collection of George Washington-related artifacts and works of art in the world. The historic home of the nation's first president will display dozens of significant treasures at the 52nd annual Winter Antiques Show from January 20 to January 29, 2006. This year's special loan exhibition, *George Washington's Mount Vernon*, will feature exceptional objects prior to their debut at the Donald W. Reynolds Museum & Education Center currently under construction at Mount Vernon. Designed by Stephen Saitas, the Winter Antiques Show loan exhibition is underwritten by the Chubb Group of Insurance Companies for the tenth consecutive year.

Although primarily remembered for his contributions as general of the Continental Army and first president of the country, Washington was also a farmer, inventor and architect. The artifacts exhibited in the 2006 Winter Antiques Show represent Washington's awareness and interest in 18th century style and design and offer a glimpse into how the Washingtons lived over 200 years ago.

Objects featured in the exhibition include:

- *George Washington After the Battle of Princeton*, 1780, by Charles Willson Peale. Charles Peale painted several versions of this painting; this particular version was painted for Elias Boudinot who served as president of the Continental Congress and was a friend of both Peale and Washington.
- Chinese export teapot with insignia of the Society of the Cincinnati, c. 1785-1786. The Society of the Cincinnati was founded by General Henry Knox in 1783; the Society derived its name from the story of the Roman farmer and soldier, Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus, who laid down his arms and returned to his fields as the close of the battle. The motto of the Society was "He

gave up everything to serve the republic,” Washington who embodied this maxim, served as the president of the Society from its founding until his death in 1799.

- *Dove of Peace* weathervane, c. 1787, by Joseph Rakestraw. Washington commissioned this weathervane, as a symbol of peace and prosperity, to crown his mansion’s cupola.

- *Argand lamp*, c. 1790. This lamp indicates that Washington was aware of the most innovative technologies of his time. Argand lamps were of great interest to Washington, as they were said to “consume their own smoke, do no injury to furniture, give more light and are cheaper than candles.”

- *Set of four candlesticks*, c. 1774. Martha Washington’s son, John Parke Custis was given a quantity of silver items including this set of four candlesticks upon his marriage to Eleanor Calvert. The decoration of these candlesticks represents the growing popularity of classical antiquity as a source of inspiration during the latter half of the eighteenth century.

- *Mary Ball Washington easy chair*, c. 1740-1760, attributed to Robert Walker of Virginia. This chair descended in the family from Washington's mother, Mary Ball Washington, and is the only known easy chair from the eighteenth century to have rear cabriole legs with ball and claw feet.

- *Small sword* (also known as the State sword), c. 1767. It is believed that George Washington wore this sword on several occasions, including when he resigned his commission in 1783 and during his Presidential inauguration in New York in 1789.

- *The West Front of Mount Vernon*, c. 1791, attributed to Edward Savage. This painting is notable for its portrayal of daily life at Mount Vernon and is one of the earliest known depictions of the plantation.

Most of these objects are not currently on display at Mount Vernon. In fact, the vast majority of the thousands of treasures owned by Mount Vernon are stored out of the public eye. In October 2006, these objects will join hundreds of others to be displayed in their new home at Mount Vernon in a 66,700 square foot education complex currently under construction. The **Ford Orientation Center** and **Donald W. Reynolds Museum & Education Center**, designed by GWWO Inc./Architects of Baltimore, Maryland, are the major components of a \$95 million campaign by George Washington’s Mount Vernon Estate & Gardens to create a state of the art facility that will help illuminate the life and legacy of the “Father of Our Country.”

The **Ford Orientation Center** will introduce visitors to the personality and character of George Washington, as his contemporaries knew him, with a dramatic 15-minute film and “Mount Vernon in Miniature,” an authentic, one-twelfth scale version of the Mansion. The

Donald W. Reynolds Museum & Education Center, constructed primarily underground, will feature 23 galleries and theater experiences that will stress the importance of Washington's military and presidential careers, including the historic events and actions that are not covered by the usual tour of his Mount Vernon estate. The Museum is not meant to be a generic decorative arts museum but instead a refreshing and insightful look into the taste, style, and personalities of George and Martha Washington through artifacts most closely associated with life at Mount Vernon, the Revolutionary War and the presidency. The Center also will serve as Washington's presidential library.

A new book on the fine and decorative arts of Mount Vernon, written by Curator Carol Borchert Cadou, will be published by Hudson Hills Press to coincide with the Museum's opening. Visitors to the Winter Antiques Show in January will enjoy a preview of Washington's design bequest before these treasures reside in their "new" home on the Potomac next October.

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About the Winter Antiques Show

The Winter Antiques Show celebrates its 52nd year as America's most prestigious antiques show, featuring 74 renowned experts in American, English, European, and Asian fine and decorative arts. The fully vetted show was established in 1955 by East Side House Settlement, a social services institution now located in the South Bronx. All net proceeds, including admissions, from the show benefit East Side House Settlement. The Winter Antiques Show will run from January 20th to January 29th, 2006 at the Seventh Regiment Armory, 67th Street and Park Avenue, New York City. Show hours are 12:00 noon to 8:00 p.m. daily; Sundays and Thursday, the show is open from 12:00 noon to 6:00 p.m. Tickets to the Opening Night Party on Thursday, January 19th or the Young Collectors' Night on Thursday, January 26th are available by calling 718.292.7392 or by visiting the Show's website at www.winterantiquesshow.com. General admission to the show is \$20, which includes the show's award-winning catalog.

About George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate Gardens

Since 1858, millions of visitors have made George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate & Gardens the most popular historic home in America. Through thought-provoking tours, entertaining events, and stimulating educational programs on the Estate and in classrooms across the nation, Mount Vernon strives to preserve George Washington's place in history as "First in War, First in Peace, and First in the Hearts of His Countrymen." Mount Vernon is owned and operated by the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, America's oldest national preservation organization, founded in 1853. A picturesque drive to the southern end of the scenic George Washington Memorial Parkway, Mount Vernon is located just 16 miles from the nation's capital.

Hours of operation: April-August, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.; March, September, October, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.; November-February, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Regular admission rates: adults, \$11.00; senior citizens, \$10.50; children age 6-11, when accompanied by an adult, \$5.00; and children under age 5, FREE. Admission fees, restaurant and retail proceeds, along with private donations, support the operation and restoration of Mount Vernon. Public Information: 703-780-2000; 703-799-8697 (TDD); www.mountvernon.org