

**Historic Furnishings Report
The Wayside
2003**

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By

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Introduction

The *Collections Management Plan (CMP)*, 1994 after reviewing *The Wayside Historic Furnishings Report*, 1983 by Doris Fanelli recommended that the furnishings report be revised. The CMP states, “There are several problems with the recommendations made in the furnishings plan. The most serious is the recommendation to furnish the house as it appeared in 1924, the year that Harriett Lothrop died. By 1924, the house had been vacant or rented for almost 15 years, while Harriett traveled or lived in California with her daughter. The 1924 appearance is very different from the house’s appearance when Harriett lived there full time.” The plan further states, “The furnishings plan should be revised to emphasize the world that Harriett created at The Wayside. There is solid evidence of the house’s appearance and use between 1890 and 1914.”

A closer reading of the furnishings report may not have resulted in the recommendation. The 1983 plan states, “The Wayside is restored to its appearance in 1924, the year of Harriett M. Lothrop’s death. The house is interpreted to the Lothrop period of occupancy, 1883 – 1924, with reference to the earlier occupations of the Alcotts and of the Hawthornes.” The plan further states that, “Mrs. Lothrop’s acquisitions of furnishings, her room arrangements, and her interpretation of the Wayside are very important activities. They show us a nineteenth-century American’s view of the past through a conscious recreation of history. By setting the Wayside in the Lothrop period of occupancy, we are doing more than interpreting the lifestyle of individuals at a particular point in time; we are interpreting to visitors an interpretation of history. We are seeing the Hawthornes and Alcotts through the eyes of Harriett and Margaret Lothrop, and showing the public an important stage in the development of historic site management.”

The 1983 report, while acknowledging that the house is restored to its 1924 appearance, also clearly emphasizes that the house is interpreted to the Lothrop period of occupancy, 1883 – 1924, not just 1924. The plan frequently cites a room by room inventory completed by the Lothrops in October 1914, and another inventory completed on May 1, 1915, when justifying the selection of furnishings for each room. Copies of the inventories are included as Appendices C and D in the plan. The original inventories are in Box 80-A of the Harriett M. Lothrop Family Papers.

Despite the fact that the 1983 furnishings report does “emphasize the world that Harriett created at The Wayside”, the park, based on the CMP recommendation, sought funding to have the furnishings report revised. The revision of the furnishings report began in 2000 and was completed in 2003. The project was begun by a curator with the Northeast Museum Services Center and completed by Carol Petravage, Curator with the Department of Historic Furnishings, Harpers Ferry Center.

The curator from the Northeast Museum Services Center and the park Division of Interpretation, after much discussion, chose 1904 as the period of interpretation. 1904 was chosen because that year Harriett Lothrop had organized a three day celebration at The Wayside in honor of the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Nathaniel Hawthorne. A memorial dedicated during the celebration stands in the yard and commemorates the event.

Focusing on the celebration offered a way to discuss, in the words of the 1983 furnishings report, Hawthorne as seen “through the eyes of Harriett and Margaret Lothrop”. Nathaniel Hawthorne is the most significant author, who lived at The Wayside, but the furnishings for the house are almost wholly associated with the Lothrops. Using the 1904 celebration offered a unique way to bring Hawthorne to life amid the Lothrop furnishings and to understand what Hawthorne meant to the Lothrops and why Harriett would undertake an elaborate celebration of his life. The Lothrops purchased The Wayside specifically because it had been Hawthorne’s home. The anniversary celebration, planned by Harriett, reflected the continuing esteem the Lothrops had for Hawthorne.

Carol Petravage assumed the project, when the Northeast Museum Services Center could not continue it because of staff changes. The 1904 period of interpretation remained. *The Wayside Historic Furnishings Report*, 2003, as developed by Petravage, consists of a short Summary of Findings, which serves as an overview of the project, and a List of Furnishings for each room. The List of Furnishings has a short statement, describing the documentation used to create the list, and three columns: object and location, documentation, and recommendation. Petravage relied on photographs taken between 1889 and 1905 and on the 1914 and 1915 room inventories completed by the Lothrops.

In the Summary of Findings Petravage makes it clear that either 1914 or 1915, rather than 1904, would have been the preferred period of interpretation. She states, “The best evidence for most of the rooms consists of inventories taken in 1914 and 1915, ten years after the period of interpretation.” The Summary of Findings also notes which rooms cannot be furnished to 1904 because of the lack of evidence for the 1904 period.

When the project was transferred from the Northeast Museum Services Center to Harpers Ferry Center, although the period of interpretation remained 1904, the original vision of using the Hawthorne celebration to guide the furnishing of the house was lost. Despite this change, the furnishings report provides valuable guidance on how to furnish The Wayside for the 1904 period. Based on the conclusions drawn in the Summary of Findings for *The Wayside Historic Furnishings Report*, 2003, however, any future furnishings report for The Wayside should consider 1914 – 1915 as a possible period of interpretation.

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