



NEWS RELEASE

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“You’re Painting the Homestead?!? Why?!?” at Emily Dickinson Museum July 22

AMHERST, Mass.- This summer the Emily Dickinson Museum in Amherst, Mass., will paint the poet’s Homestead. The masonry structure, painted throughout Dickinson’s lifetime, will once again look as it did when she wrote here. On Thursday, July 22 at 10 a.m., Myron Stachiw, the lead consultant for the investigation of the Homestead’s architectural and paint history will present “You’re Painting the Homestead?!? Why?!? Preservation in Action” at the Homestead.

Stachiw will give an insider’s view of the detective work involved in revealing the secrets of historic houses, their construction, decoration and alteration. In an illustrated slide lecture and walking tour of the Homestead exterior to observe the project work in progress, he will focus on the project to paint the exterior of the poet’s home in the colors it sported in the second half of the 19th century, when the poet was engaged most deeply in her work. Space for the program is limited to 15 people, and pre-registration is required. The program fee is \$10. To register, please contact Cindy Dickinson at 413/542-8429 or csdickinson@emilydickinsonmuseum.org.

In 1870, a visitor calling on poet Emily Dickinson at her Amherst home described “a large county lawyer’s house, brown brick, with great trees & a garden.” Recent paint analysis has shown that the brick was actually a light ochre (or mustard) color popular in the 19th century. Architectural trim was painted off-white with dark green shutters and charcoal window sash.

This was the house Emily Dickinson knew in her adult years-and the historic color scheme to which it is being restored. The Homestead has stood in bare brick only since 1916, when new owners removed the color and painted the woodwork white in accord with colonial revival tastes. Over the years, wear and tear on the unprotected masonry has led to deterioration of the mortar; repair of the wood architectural elements also has become an urgent matter.

Samuel Fowler Dickinson, Emily Dickinson’s grandfather and a founder of Amherst College, built the Homestead in 1813 in the fashionable Federal style. Reputed to be one of the first brick structures in the modest agricultural community, the Homestead was painted red. Subsequent changes to the house converted its Federal appearance to a Greek revival one, in keeping with contemporary tastes of the 1830s. At that time, the house was painted white except for the façade facing away from the public street, which remained red.

Emily Dickinson’s father, Edward, made extensive alterations to interior and exterior in 1855, including the addition of an Italianate cupola, veranda and other architectural detailing. He finished the house in an ochre and off-white paint scheme. At the same time as these renovations were underway, Edward Dickinson also built The Evergreens next door as a full-fledged Italianate villa for his son Austin and future daughter-in-law Susan according to their specifications. Once completed, the two Dickinson houses on Amherst’s Main Street made an impressive presentation to the town at large.

The Homestead is part of The Emily Dickinson Museum, created last year when the poet’s house and The Evergreens merged into one institution under the ownership of Amherst College. The exterior of The Evergreens has already been returned to its historic color scheme of 1856. Paint analysis completed for the Homestead in 2001 provided the detail needed to cover the house in the authentic color scheme in use at the time of poet Emily Dickinson’s residence. With masonry and carpentry repair already underway, it is expected that the Homestead will be wearing its new robe by the end of the summer. The Homestead and The Evergreens will once more offer a unified appearance to the town so closely identified with the Dickinson family.

From June through August the Emily Dickinson Museum is open Wednesday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday 1 to 5 p.m. The Museum is located at 280 Main Street in Amherst. For more information about visiting, please see the Museum’s Website at www.emilydickinsonmuseum.org or call 413/542-8161. The Emily Dickinson Museum: The Homestead and The Evergreens is owned by the Trustees of Amherst College. This project is made possible in part by a federal grant from Save America’s Treasures, a federal grant program administered by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior.

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