

COMMUNITY

All about Jane

Hard life for America's First Lady from Hampton



WOMAN OF HISTORY — Wednesday, March 12, marked the birth of Jane Pierce, the Hampton-born First Lady and wife of Franklin Pierce.

— Atlantic News Courtesy Photo

BY SCOTT E. KINNEY
ATLANTIC NEWS STAFF WRITER

HAMPTON | Last Wednesday, March 12, marked the birth of Jane Means Appleton Pierce, former First Lady and wife of Franklin Pierce.

But before she was all of those things, Jane Pierce was a Hampton resident.

Carl Anthony, author and historian with the First Ladies' Library in Canton, Ohio, says Pierce's life was both reflective of her contemporaries of the mid-1800s as well as political wives of the modern age (most recently Silda Spitzer, wife of former New York Governor Eliot Spitzer).

"She's very indicative of the people of her era," says Anthony, "and yet her life also serves as a sort of cau-

suffered with tuberculosis, as well as had an eating disorder. Her husband exacerbated her illness because Jane hated politics.

Anthony says even today, letters are surfacing that shows the duality of Jane Pierce's personality.

"A lot of what's been written was done so without the privilege of access to her letters and writings," he says.

While Jane once wrote of hosting an event at the White House as something "to be endured rather than enjoyed," she also attended several Supreme Court arguments on slavery and was a staunch abolitionist. She even went so far as to convince her husband to release Dr. Charles Robinson, an ardent republican and abolitionist from a Kansas prison. The Pierces were also friendly with Mr. and Mrs. Jefferson Davis.

To add to Pierce's mental and emotional woes she also suffered through the death of all three of her young children.

Franklin Pierce Jr. died just three days after his birth. Frank Robert Pierce would die seven years later at the age of four from epidemic typhus. Ten years later, the third son, Benjamin died at the age of 11 in a tragic railway accident witnessed by his parents. The accident occurred a mere month prior to Franklin's inauguration.

But Anthony contends that Jane's suffering began much sooner, as the daughter of Congregational minister and president of Bowdoin College, Jesse Appleton. He is a man Anthony identifies as a "religious zealot."

"She was made to feel

responsible for the things that happened to her family," he says. "Her father would starve himself and by doing so became closer to God. He essentially starved himself to death. Jane's upbringing could be described as a very severe situation."

But there was even a duality in Jane's upbringing as well.

"She was unusually well-educated while being raised in an extraordinarily wealthy family," Anthony says. "She had the benefit of being raised in a family that valued an intelligent and well-educated woman as much as a man."

Anthony says a look into the life of Jane Pierce sheds a light on a very dark era in American history.

"It was a dark era, shadowed by strife and the abolitionist movement," he says. "In a sense she served her times well."

LOCAL NOTES

FLASHLIGHT EGG SCRAMBLE RESCHEDULED

NORTH HAMPTON | Due to Mother Nature's stormy weather last weekend, the third annual Flashlight Egg Scramble Egg-stravaganza hosted by the North Hampton Recreation and Police Departments had to be postponed.

However, students in grades 5-8 will be happy to hear that the event has been rescheduled for Friday, March 21 at 7:45 p.m. on Robbie's Field at North Hampton School.

"Come on down and join us to seek and find candy and toy filled eggs [and] search for the Golden Egg!" says Rec Director, Diane Wheeler. "Goodie bags for all participants and various prizes will be hidden inside 'Magic Eggs' — only one Magic Egg per person please."

Wheeler adds that participants should remember to bring their own basket and flashlight and have "egg-cellent time" looking for the Golden Egg. For more information, call the rec department at (603) 964-3170.

LIBRARY PROGRAM FOCUSES ON ENVIRONMENT

NORTH HAMPTON | The Rev. Dr. Mary E. Westfall will present a program entitled "Environmental Stewardship as Spiritual Practice" on Wednesday, March 26 at 7 p.m. at the North Hampton Public Library, located on Atlantic Avenue. Currently serving as the minister of the Durham Community Church (UCC), Rev. Westfall is co-author of the book "The Greening of Faith: God, the Environment, and the Good Life." This book of interdisciplinary and interfaith essays explores the religious and spiritual implications of human interaction with nature and the environment.

Through her ministry and doctoral studies, Rev. Westfall has focused extensively on the environment as a moral and spiritual issue. During her program she will provide the opportunity to explore ways to reawaken a sense of awe and wonder at the natural world in order to better connect environmental commitments with spiritual practice.

This presentation is the fourth in a series of programs on local issues and the environment, sponsored by the North Hampton Public Library. The program is free and open to the public. For more information, call the library at (603)

Easter by the Sea

Ashworth Hotel
on Hampton Beach

Breakfast Buffet

Our scrumptious all-you-can-eat breakfast buffet in the Ashworth Main Dining Room is the perfect place to celebrate Easter with your family and friends. Served Easter Sunday from 8:00am-11:00am.

Holiday Menu

Enjoy the Ashworth's specialty holiday menu featuring seasonal favorites such as Honey Baked Ham and Roast Leg of Lamb. Our specialty menu is served Easter Sunday in the Ashworth Main Dining Room from 12:00pm-8:00pm.

Dinner Buffet

Indulge in our Easter Sunday dinner buffet served in the Ashworth Ballroom. Our all-you-can-eat dinner buffet features assorted salads, delicious entrees, and an extravagant dessert table. Served Easter Sunday from 11:30am-4:00pm.

For Reservations Call
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