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Delaware Historical Society Names New Director of Read House & Gardens

Wilmington, Delaware, April 11, 2024 – The Delaware Historical Society has selected Laura Earls, Ph.D., as the new Director of the George Read II House & Gardens in New Castle, DE.

Earls, a museum professional and historian of gender and material culture in early America who most recently served as lead researcher and associate producer for an upcoming history podcast, has worked in collections management and interpretation at institutions including the Nemours Estate, the Museum of the American Revolution, and the Winterthur Museum. She formerly served as a graduate assistant and contractor at Delaware Historical Society’s Research Library.

The National Historic Landmark Read House & Gardens was built for George Read II, the son of a Delaware signer of both the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution. This historic house museum, located on the riverfront in the heart of Old New Castle, features twenty-two rooms that tell the stories of the three families who occupied the house and those who worked there, making it invaluable for the study of early American social, cultural, and architectural history.

The Read House & Gardens had formal gardens installed in 1848, and the organization is poised to embark on extensive reimagination and renovation of the grounds. According to Delaware Historical Society Executive Director Ivan Henderson, “We are delighted to welcome Dr. Earls at this important juncture for the Read House & Gardens. Her expertise will spur our continued efforts to raise the profile of this magnificent and historically significant home. We look forward to her vision and leadership as we further the garden restoration project.”

Earls holds a Ph.D. in the History of American Civilization and a Graduate Certificate in Museum Studies from the University of Delaware. As a speaker, teaching assistant, and instructor of record for history and museum studies courses at the University of Delaware, she encouraged students of all ages to engage critically with the past.

Earls has been passionate about the interpretation and outreach possibilities for historic houses since beginning her museum career in Delaware.

“As the new Director of the Read House & Gardens, I’m excited to guide the stewardship and promotion of this incredibly special place as part of the Delaware Historical Society. I’m looking forward to bringing some of the lesser-known stories to the forefront of a cohesive interpretation plan that includes the gardens, the programming, and the tours. Most important, I want the house and grounds to continue to be a highlight of Historic New Castle and a place for the community to gather and engage with the past,” she said.

About the Delaware Historical Society

The Delaware Historical Society is a non-profit organization that preserves, promotes, and shares Delaware's history in a welcoming environment to educate, inspire, and empower people and communities. The Delaware Historical Society owns and operates the Delaware History Museum; the Jane and Littleton Mitchell Center for African American Heritage; a nationally recognized Research Library; Old Town Hall; Willingtown Square, four 18th-century houses surrounding a picturesque urban courtyard located in downtown Wilmington; and the National Historic Landmark Read House & Gardens located in New Castle. For more information, call (302) 655-7161, email deinfo@dehistory.org, or visit www.dehistory.org.

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