



Holiday Tours & Traditions – Oyster Plates and Cracker

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During the month of December, guided tours through the decorated rooms within the Morven Park mansion discuss the history of many of our society's beloved holiday traditions. One of the favorite rooms for both guests and our staff is the Dining Room, where for this month only an assortment of Marguerite Davis' oyster plates are on display.

A Victorian household of the upper-class ate from fine porcelain and elaborate dinner services, including specialized serving plates and flatware for many favorite foods, oysters among them. Marguerite Davis amassed an impressive collection of oyster plates to serve this delicacy on special occasions. During your visit to the Morven Park mansion, be sure to look at the highly ornate oyster plates at the head of the table, they are replicas of the china used by President and Mrs. Rutherford B. Hayes in 1879 in the White House. On the back of each plate is the presidential seal.

You may also notice the bright red festive packages on the table. Some of you might recognize them as holiday crackers. For traditional Christmas meals in the early 20th century, holiday crackers would be placed at each setting to be opened before the first course began. Crackers became popular in the late 19th century and originally contained a small candy. By the turn of the 20th century crackers more commonly held a small toy, and by the 1930s a paper crown. Crackers are still popular at many Christmas meals today.

Go to MorvenPark.org/calendar to choose a day for your tour of the mansion during this festive holiday season. Guided tours are offered every weekend in the month of December through the 23rd. December 26th – 30th is Open House Week and rolling admission will be offered from noon – 5:00 p.m. in the mansion. During that week you may explore each room at your own pace with guides available to answer questions. The weekend guided tours and Open House week are both great opportunities to learn about the origins of many popular holiday traditions, take photos, and find your favorite decoration.

