

A Look At American China

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Lincoln, Obama Plates On Display In Harrisonburg

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Harrisonburg resident Jamie Marsh checks out the Lincoln state china plate on Monday in the Hardesty-Higgins House on South Main Street. The Lincoln piece and a plate created to commemorate President Obama's inauguration will be on display from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. through Feb. 16.

Photo by Thomas J. Turney

HARRISONBURG - Two pieces of china, one a plate made to honor President Obama and another plate from a setting first chosen by Abraham Lincoln's wife, will be on display in downtown Harrisonburg until Feb. 16.

According to a release, a "Lincoln state china dinner plate" - a design first ordered by Mary Todd Lincoln and reordered twice in the late 1800s, during the Ulysses S. Grant and Chester Arthur presidencies - was used as the "official dining service" at the White House.

The plate comes from one of these reorders, although officials at the Hardesty-Higgins House don't know which one.

The Lincoln plate and an Obama inaugural commemorative plate will be on display from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Hardesty-Higgins House until Presidents Day.

The Plates

According to the National First Ladies Library, the Lincoln china was the first State Dinner service to be chosen entirely by a first lady.

The china has a purple-red border called "solferino" with the U.S. Coat of Arms and the American bald eagle in the center of the plate. The plates have since become known as the "Royal Purple" set. One of the Lincoln plates eventually made its way to New Jersey, where June Hosaflook's mother owned and shelved it in her home "for as long as she can remember."

Hosaflook, who is Harrisonburg's commissioner of revenue, and her husband, Myron, now own the plate and are lending it to Harrisonburg Tourism for the display.

The Obama plate was decorated and donated by Silver Lake Mill, located outside Dayton. According to Harrisonburg Tourism, the design honoring the 44th president was printed as a transfer using ceramic pigments and 22 karat gold suspended in a printable fluid, and applied to the plate by hand. The plate features a dark blue band, a gold inscription of the inauguration and a central gold image of the White House.