



Guide to Winterthur Museum & Country Estate (Winterthur Decorative Arts Series)

Pauline Eversmann

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Winterthur offers a rare combination of beauty, history, art, and learning. Nestled in the scenic Brandywine Valley of Delaware, the estate is the former home of three generations of du Ponts, including Henry Francis du Pont, a scion of the family whose industrial achievements played a significant role in American history. Entering the estate, visitors encounter tangible reminders of its past. Rolling meadows, freshwater ponds, stone bridges, greenhouses, dairy barns, a vast garden, workers' housing, and an imposing mansion all remind us of the days when Winterthur figured prominently in the American country estate movement. In the 1920s, the property encompassed more than 2,600 acres and housed some 250 resident workers. It consisted of numerous farms; the finest dairy herd of Holstein-Friesian cattle in America; an expansive, wooded landscape with a naturalistic garden; and a family manor house that provided the perfect setting for country-house weekend entertaining.

While developing the family home as a country estate and collecting the finest American decorative arts, H. F. du Pont was also beginning to envision a wider role for his Winterthur--one that would eventually include opening the mansion and grounds to the public, offering all a glimpse of life in the past: "My idea of Winterthur is that it is a country estate museum, to show Americans of the future what a country place and farm were like." Since 1951, its guests have enjoyed just that experience.

Today Winterthur's thousand-acre estate offers much for visitors to explore: a world-class museum of decorative arts that celebrates the best in style and craftsmanship; a romantic landscape of incomparable beauty that imparts the peace and great calm of a country place; a naturalistic garden that combines the art of horticulture and landscape design; and a superlative research library that supports Winterthur's graduate programs in early American culture and art conservation.

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