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Content type: Facebook Page - Timeline posts

Record ID: 20130109South-Carolina-State-ParksTimeline-posts52748_10151336125463166



South Carolina State Parks

at 15:20:01 on 1/09/2013 UTC · 🌐

REDCLIFFE'S ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH! Learn more about the mysterious Egyptian Jar that sits on the mantel in the library!

Artifact of the Month - Egyptian Jar

One of Redcliffe's most inquired after artifacts is a rather unique jar which sits atop the sycamore fireplace mantel in the mansion's library. Many assume from its shape that it is an urn. This Egyptian-style, turquoise jar is, however, nothing more than a custom made curio given as a gift to John and Frederica Billings. The jar is ceramic, 10 inches tall with a domed lid that is topped by a seated figure of the Egyptian cat goddess Bastet. The names "John and Frederica" are inscribed along the upper circumference of the jar.

We know that the jar was given as a gift, but know very little beyond that. It might have been given as an anniversary gift since it has both names inscribed on it. John Shaw Billings and Frederica Wade were married in Beech Island on April 19, 1924. Both came from prominent Beech Island families, although John grew up in New York. They were married for 39 years until Frederica's death in 1963. They had a single child, a daughter, also named Frederica, who died at age three in 1929.

