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The Eustis Estate parties like it's 1899

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MILTON — Visitors to the Eustis Estate on Sunday were cordially invited to a birthday party for Mary Eustis. However, she wasn't there, because it was to celebrate her turning 133 years old.

The party for the daughter of William and Edith Eustis was mostly a way for visitors to see what life was like for children in the 19th century.

"We wanted to have something to give people a taste of what life was like in the 19th century, especially for kids, because that's not usually covered in historic house museums so much," said Karla Rosenstein, the property's site manager, "It's sort of like, 'And they had three kids, moving on,' but they were there. They played games, they had birthday parties. They did the kinds of things that kids do today, but things were different too, so it's kind of a nice way to include them in the history."

Owned by Historic New England, an organization that preserves historic homes, farms and landscapes, the Eustis Estate was built in 1878 for William Ellery Channing Eustis and his wife, Edith, who had just welcomed twin boys. Located on more than 100 acres of land, the mansion was built of stone in the late Victorian style. Also on the property are other houses associated with the Eustis family, a gatehouse and a stable.

The estate was owned by the family until 2012, when it was sold to Historic New England, which opened it as a house museum last year.

In the spirit of the estate, the party included lawn games straight out of the 1800s. Carolin Collins of Beverly, runs Historic New England's school and youth programs and she demonstrated the games with her 10-year-old son, Xander.

"This is a Victorian birthday party, so they're different pastimes that children would have played within that time period," said Collins.

Children and adults played croquet on the lawn, hit large wooden hoops with sticks to keep them moving and enjoyed wooden toys, such as Jacob's Ladder and cup and ball.

Ruth Levin, who works with Historic New England, taught a variety of vintage dances, including the Virginia Reel and the New Castle Circle. Dancing around on the lawn outside the front door of the house were partygoers of all ages, from children who were just a few years old to grandparents.

Inside the house, party favors, which included paper hats and fans, were being made upstairs, while ice cream making demonstrations took place in the kitchen.

Chris Skillin, owner The Ice Creamsmith in Dorchester, discussed how ice cream was made without electricity and freezers. Using an old-fashioned hand crank, he mixed cream and sugar inside of a container that was surrounded by ice.

Visitors enjoyed ice cream samples, cake and lemonade while sitting on rocking chairs on the house's porch.

Just being there was the highlight of the afternoon for Mary Waelen of Milton, who attended the party with her son, Patrick.

“It’s just a beautiful place to come and sit and walk around,” said Waelan, “It’s so beautiful, just being here and sitting on those rocking chairs, with the wildflowers and the awnings. The charm is great.”