Roman Holiday, Alumni Association Style
Kathleen Murphy Skolnik

This past June, Victorian Summer Schools alumni traveled to Italy for the 2011 Summer Schools Alumni Association’s study trip. Escorted by architect and Alumni Association Board Member John Martine, AIA, who organized the trip, alums enjoyed ten days in Rome, Como, and Milan studying Italy of modern times, the period between that country’s unification and World War II.

The initial phase of the trip, “Rome 1920: Tradition and Modernity for a New National Capital, 1870-1940,” began in the Italian capital. First on the agenda was an evening lecture and reception at the headquarters of the University of Notre Dame Rome Studies Program, where tour participants met Steven M. Semes, academic director of the program and our guide in Rome. The next day, our adventure began with a walking tour (a seven-mile walking tour according to Hank Dunlop’s pedometer—this was like being back in Newport!!) that began at the Piazza Venezia and the Vittorio Emanuele II Monument and ended on the terrace of the Castel Sant’Angelo on the Tiber, where we enjoyed some much appreciated liquid libation.

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

November 2011

Thanks to your generous support of the Alumni Association Scholarship Fund through your member renewal dues and scholarship donations, we presented the Summer Schools Committee $22,000 for 2011 scholarships. Even better news is that our Membership Secretary Bob Chapman worked up figures that show we are in the position of being able to commit to providing $22,000 for scholarships for now and going forward.

The Alumni Association is run by a committed, volunteer board. The Alumni would not be able to function without their hard work and dedication. I’m pleased to welcome our newest board member, Keith MacKay, who stepped in as treasurer after Mary Miller resigned. It saddens me that two board members are stepping down after years of service: Sibyl Groff and Jill Marie Lord. Thank you both for all your efforts to support the Alumni and the Summer Schools. You will be missed. The Nominating Committee, so capably headed by Sheila Donahu and supported by Jana Karokin and Jeff Sholein, is diligently working on a slate of officers to be elected in November for a two-year term starting January 2012.

I’m thrilled to report that Sandy Jenkins volunteered to become the editor of this newsletter and Angela Voulangas did the graphic design. I urge you to send your news to Sandy at sandy@dcfwv.org for the November 2012 newsletter.

The Alumni recruiting events co-sponsored by the Washington DC Chapter and by Dick Reutlinger, Hank Dunlop, and Stephen Haigh in San Francisco were well attended by prospective students. We’d like to expand our recruiting efforts, as we feel the word is just not out there about what a fabulous experience both Summer Schools are. If you are able to put on a recruiting event, please get in touch with me. The Alumni offers $250 to help cover the costs of a recruiting event.

The 2011 Annual Meeting and Dinner was held in the home of Ellin and Fletcher Johnson, thanks to Sibyl Groff, who was a college classmate of Ellin’s. It was a beautiful evening with perfect weather to enjoy the Johnson’s lovely gardens.

The Alumni co-sponsored receptions for both the Newport and London Summer Schools. Richard Guy Wilson was presented a special President’s Award by Victorian Society President Tina Strauss. Many thanks go to Pauline Mottal for hosting the Newport reception at her family’s home in Exeter, RI. And thanks to Liz Lecki, who organized the London reception at the Chelsea studio of artist Julian Barrow.

The Alumni sponsored other events, which are described on page 6-7.

Thank you again for your continuing support of the Summer Schools. Please continue to be the best ambassadors for the Summer Schools by sharing your experiences with your friends and colleagues. All best wishes for 2012.

NANCY MCALEER GOLDEN

President
For the next three days, Steven guided us through Rome and beyond to see the work of architects who were new to most of us. We learned about Armando Brasini, who designed the Church of the Immaculate Heart in Parioli, a modern adaptation of the classical vocabulary, and Marcello Piacentini, whose Casa Madre dei Mutilati, with its Art Deco-influenced frescoes, sculpture, and furniture, was among the highlights of our time in Rome. Another memorable stop was our stroll through the Quartiere Dora, a whimsical residential enclave of homes and apartment buildings designed by Gino Coppedè and his family members in the Art Nouveau, or Liberty style as it was known in Italy.

Our final day of touring took us outside of Rome to the Esposizione Universale Romana, or EUR, with a plan developed largely by Piacentini in the late 1930s to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of Italy under Mussolini. The complex includes the Palazzo della Civiltà, or “Square Colosseum,” and the Palazzetto dello Sport designed for the Olympic Games of 1960 by Piacentini and Pier Luigi Nervi. Lunch was atop the futuristic Il Fungo, or Mushroom, which gave us a panoramic view of the site.

After saying arrivederci to Rome, we boarded a spacious motor coach and headed to Como for the second phase of the program, “Giuseppe Terragni & Friends: The Great Hope that Fascism Could be Good for People and Architecture.” Our leader was architect Antonino Saggio, professor at Sapienza University of Rome. Terragni (1904–1943), who defined himself as a “Rationalist” architect, was the leader of a group of young Italian architects, Gruppo 7, who promoted modernist principles.

Only about a dozen of Terragni’s many projects were realized during his relatively short career, and several of them are centered in Como. During our time there, we visited Terragni’s own home and studio, now the Fondazione Terragni, as well as several Terragni-designed buildings, including the Novocomum apartment building, the Casa del Fascio, the Monument to World War I on the shore of Lake Como, and the Monument of Death in nearby Erba Incino.

After two nights in Como, we left for Milan. En route, we stopped in Ivrea, the headquarters of Olivetti, the office machines company whose owner, Adriano Olivetti, was a believer in rational town planning and architecture. His convictions are reflected not only in the company’s office buildings, but also in the housing designed for Olivetti employees.

Once in Milan, our final destination, we visited Terragni’s Casa Rustici, where we toured one of the apartments, was among the highlights of this phase of the trip.

As usual, John Martine made sure we were well fed—and watered (wined would be a far better word). Our sumptuous multicourse lunches gave us the energy to keep up with our tour guides, and the receptions that typically ended each day’s program gave us a welcome opportunity to relax, socialize, and reflect on what we had seen and heard.

Thanks again to John Martine for another memorable, and educational, experience.
Alumni Events in 2011

The Alumni had a busy year of wonderful events

2011 Annual Meeting & Dinner in Portland, Oregon

The 2011 Annual Meeting and Dinner was held on May 28 in Portland, Oregon, in the home of Ellin and Fletcher Johnson. They went out of their way to provide a warm welcome in their lovely home. It was thanks to Sibyl Groff that the Fletchers opened their house to us. Sibyl and Ellin were college classmates. When Sibyl called her to let her know she was coming to Portland, Ellin quickly offered to host the Alumni meeting. On the day of the meeting, Ellin had worked in the garden for hours, and it was a glorious sight, which all enjoyed. At the event, Nancy Golden presented the Fletchers with a framed copy of a detailed line drawing by Joseph Stern of a Victorian house from Sibyl’s book New Jersey’s Historic Houses: A Guide to Homes Open to the Public.

Reception at the Home of Judy and Max Foote

Last fall thanks to the great effort of Hank Dunlop, Judy and Max Foote hosted a reception in their home outside of New Orleans with its astonishing collection of Herter Brothers furniture. The Foote hosted a reception in their home outside of New Orleans with its astonishing collection of Herter Brothers furniture. The Footes opened their house to us. Sibyl and Ellin were college classmates. When Sibyl called her to let her know she was coming to Portland, Ellin quickly offered to host the Alumni meeting. On the day of the meeting, Ellin had worked in the garden for hours, and it was a glorious sight, which all enjoyed. At the event, Nancy Golden presented the Fletchers with a framed copy of a detailed line drawing by Joseph Stern of a Victorian house from Sibyl’s book New Jersey’s Historic Houses: A Guide to Homes Open to the Public.

London and Newport Summer Schools Receptions

In addition to the recurring events in Washington, DC and San Francisco, CA (see pages 8-9), the Alumni hosted receptions for the students of both the London and Newport Summer Schools. Thanks to Liz Lecki for organizing the London Alumni Reception at Julian Barrow’s studio in Chelsea, formerly used by Sargent, Whistler, and Augustus John. And, many thanks go to Pauline Metcalf for opening her family’s home in Exeter, Rhode Island to the students. The students of both schools reported that the receptions were one of the highlights of the schools.

Lecture on Budapest by Dr. József Sisa

In October 2011, thanks to the heroic efforts of Sibyl Groff, a lecture, “Budapest: A Model City of the 19th Century,” was presented by Summer Schools alumnus Dr. József Sisa. The event was co-sponsored by the Alumni and the Hungarian Cultural Center in New York. Dr. Sisa is a noted architectural historian in Hungary and head of the Department of New Art at the Research Institute for Art History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and senior lecturer at Pécs University. He is the co-editor (with Dora Wieberson) of The Architecture of Historic Hungary (MIT Press, 1998). He is an alumnus of both the London (1996) and the Newport (1999) Summer Schools.

József Sisa and Victorians

Photo by Stephen Carlson

József provided this summary of his talk:

Thanks to propitious historical circumstances, the formerly modest towns of Pest, Buda, and Öbuda were united into a single city in 1873 under the name of Budapest, which soon developed into a major European metropolis. The lecture examined various aspects of the new Hungarian capital, such as urban planning, the types and construction of apartment buildings, the proliferating and increasingly magnificent public structures. The cue was often taken from Vienna, Berlin, and Paris, but the result is not simply an amalgamation of (Central) European big city architecture, but something specifically and undeniably typical of the place. Budapest is not only a compact late-nineteenth-century city, it is one that has managed to retain more or less its original aspect until the present day.

Many thanks to Sibyl Groff, who made all the arrangements for the lecture and the reception that followed.

Reception Honoring Christopher Forbes

On November 15, 2011, the Alumni Association, The Victorian Society in America, and its Summer School Committee hosted a fundraising reception honoring Christopher (Kip) Forbes for his more than forty years of contributions to The Victorian Society and the Summer Schools. The event was held at the Bonhams Galleries in New York in connection with their exhibit, "The Gentleman’s Library." Many thanks go to Peter Trippi for working with Bonhams, who offered the use of their space on Madison Avenue and Fifty-Sixth Street at no fee. The proceeds of the event went to The Victorian Society Summer School Fund managed by Fidelity. Further details of the event will be in the next newsletter.

2012 Annual Meeting & Dinner

The 2012 Annual Meeting and Dinner will take place on Saturday, May 17, 2012, in a private, Victorian home in San Antonio, Texas, in connection with the VSA’s 2012 annual meeting there. Many thanks go to Alumnae Anna Nau and Jane Kanerkin, who are making all the arrangements. The proceeds of the dinner will benefit the Alumni Scholarship Fund.

Max & Judy Foote Collection

Hank Dunlop

The Alumni experience last year in New Orleans at the Foote’s home is not to be forgotten. Not only was their hospitality and generosity over the top, but also their outstanding collection of nineteenth-century furnishings and decorative arts is of National importance. Bob Chapman’s DVD covers this collection well. It includes most of the collection.

For movie buffs the stars are there, giving even greater performances. These “movie career” bedroom sets were featured in Psycho and The Unlinkable Molly Brown. Now carefully restored and preserved, their performances glow with great beauty.

For furniture buffs, the collection includes furniture by the Herter Brothers, with examples by both Gustave and Christian. The collection includes pieces from both “Thuolow Lodge” and “Happy House” in Millbrae, California, and the Vanderbilt house in New York. The collection includes work by other important American furniture makers, including Forbber & Stymus, continued, page 8
Alumni Association
Summer School Recruiting Events

San Francisco Recruiting Event

Richard Reutlinger once again opened his historic Burnet/Reutlinger Mansion in San Francisco on January 21, 2011, for an Alumni Association of the Victorian Society Summer Schools recruiting event, co-sponsored by Dick, Hank Dunlop, and Stephen Haigh. Paul Duchscherer took many of the attendees on a special tour of Dick’s house, pointing out the Bradbury & Bradbury wallpaper and other details that he worked with Dick on. Christopher Pollock gave a thoroughly professional PowerPoint presentation on the London Summer School. Stephen talked about the typical day in Newport and showed his video of Newport. Meryl Easton also talked about Newport and passed around a copy of a book on Newport “cottages.” Paul, Hank, and Stephen shared their Summer Schools experiences and fielded questions from the many people who attended. Alumni President Nancy Golden encouraged the attendees to apply to what she called a “life changing” experience.

Summer School Reception in Washington, DC

The VSA Washington Metropolitan Chapter and the Alumni Association of the VSA Summer Schools hosted a reception on February 2, 2011, for prospective students to attend the 2011 VSA London and Newport Summer Schools. The event was held at a conference room in the S. Dillon Ripley Center at the Smithsonian Institution. Access was provided by the director of the Smithsonian-Corcoran MA in the History of Decorative Arts program. Chapter Treasurer Darrell Lemke and his wife, Maryellen Trautman, donated the wine and Vice-President Jerry Peters, and his wife, Helena, donated the food. Rebecca Robinson, alumna of the 2009 Newport Summer School and of the 2010 London School, and Amy Poff, alumna of the 2010 Newport Summer School, kindly agreed to share their experiences with illustrated talks and information. The Washington Metropolitan Chapter provides funds for scholarships to the VSA Summer Schools. Prospective Summer Schools applicants from George Washington University, Catholic University, and the Smithsonian-Corcoran MA in the History of Decorative Arts program attended the reception. Numerous other alumni of the Summer Schools also attended.

Rebecca Robinson is currently a graduate student in the Smithsonian-Corcoran MA in the History of Decorative Arts program, and she is also the assistant to the chief at the Renwick Gallery, Smithsonian American Art Museum. Rebecca received her BA in Art History and Archeology from the University of Maryland, College Park, and is originally from Bethesda, MD. Amy Poff is a second-year student in the Smithsonian-Corcoran MA in the History of Decorative Arts program. Amy received her BA in American Studies from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, and has added courses in fine art, curatorial studies, and building preservation. She taught historic preservation courses at Harford Community College and worked as a museum educator and arts administrator, most recently as the deputy director of the Howard County Arts Council in Maryland. Amy also teaches art history and works as a studio artist specializing in mixed media jewelry and construction.

Many thanks to Richard for so generously opening his house, to Stephen who helped organize the event, and to Hank for donating the food and wine.
IAN COX
Director, London Summer School
September 2011

When planning the London Summer School each year there is usually a property which is unavailable for our annual visit for one reason or another. So it has been with the Watts Gallery in Compton, Surrey for the last couple of years. Due to leaking roofs and general neglect, so much so that it had been placed on English Heritage’s “at risk” register, the gallery closed for major renovations in 2008 and only reopened to the public earlier this year. I am equally sure that many of you, as former London Summer School students, will remember your visit to the gallery with pleasure, but if you get the opportunity to go there again soon you are in for a shock – the results of the renovations and redisplay of the major collection of works by late Victorian artist George Frederick Watts (1817-1904) are stunning and now present to the world an entirely fresh and invigorating approach to his work.

The ‘arts and crafts’ gallery was built between 1904 and 1906 at a time when Watts’s reputation was at its peak. It was, and still is, the only purpose built art gallery for a single professional in Britain. Its importance as a building was recognized immediately when it opened by the press and then again much later when it was listed Grade II. After it opened in 1904 and then again after it was extended in 1906, it housed the collection of one of the most important painters of the late nineteenth century. Sadly, due to lack of funding, the building had fallen into disrepair by the early twenty-first century and many of the paintings were at risk. Additionally, the gallery had parts of it totally inaccessible to the public and general amenities, such as car parking, were in short supply. The “Hope Project,” first conceived in 2005, sought to put all these matters right and now the viewing public can see the results for themselves. The building has been transformed by being made watertight and secure, there is better access to all of the galleries and public areas and the addition of new spaces now enables 80% of the collection to be shown at any one time. In interior decoration terms the gallery has been beautifully restored to how it would have looked when it first opened in 1904. The rich red wallpaper, the high green ceramic hanging rail and the paintings in their original and restored Watts frames, now provide the visitor with a much more ‘authentic’ experience of how the gallery would have appeared at the beginning of the twentieth century and it is a delight.

On the 26th May 2011 the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall visited the gallery to officially re-open it and were welcomed by Alexander Cresswell, the internationally acclaimed artist currently working in Watts’s Great Studio. They had the opportunity to meet representatives of everyone who’d been involved in the regeneration and redevelopment of the site, including benefactors, volunteers, craftsman and Trustees. After performing the ceremony the Prince and the Duchess visited Limnerslease, the nearby home of George and Mary Watts, and therein lies the beginning of the next chapter in the story of this remarkable Surrey village.

Designed by Sir Ernest George and completed for George and Mary Watts between 1890 and 1891, Limnerslease provided a haven, a seasonal workplace and a comfortable home for the pair away from the capital. It has been in private hands since Mary Watts died in 1938 and it is currently in the ownership of two lots of people as the house was divided some time ago. Recently the Trustees of the Watts Gallery have been given a once in a lifetime opportunity to purchase the house and studios from the two lots of owners. Currently attempts are being made to raise the necessary funding and if successful the house will become a centre for exploring Victorian art and crafts, an interpretation centre for the arts and crafts movement and a retreat and innovation centre for contemporary artists. If the project is successful then Compton will become even more important than it already is as a place of pilgrimage for anyone interested in the English arts and crafts movement.

If you would like to find out more about the Limnerslease project, or possibly even make a donation, then contact Perdita Hunt, Director, at director@wattsgallery.org.uk or phone 01483 810582. The Watts Gallery also has a website: www.wattsgallery.org.uk.
The Summer School was one of the outstanding experiences of my life. As a National Trust Curator I have responsibility for three large Victorian houses and three smaller houses restored and remodelled in the Edwardian period. I have always been passionately interested in Victorian architecture, art, and design. I had high expectations of what I would learn and see and experience, and all those expectations were far exceeded.

Tyntesfield and Knightshayes, two of the houses I work on, are important examples of High Victorian Gothic. Many of the lectures and visits were particularly relevant for developing my understanding and knowledge of them. Rosemary Hall’s wonderful lecture on Pugin hugely enhanced my understanding of his work and influence, and made me think afresh. I had visited the Houses of Parliament before, but the tour with Malcolm Hay gave me the opportunity to learn much more about the building and its contents.

Tyntesfield, built by the Gibbs family, is a testimony to the influence of the Oxford Movement, especially in its Chapel. The lecture on the Oxford and Tyntesfield, built by the Gibbs family, is a testimony to the influence of the Victorian and Edwardian period defies neat classification.

The concentrated approach of the school, learning in lectures quickly followed by visits, seeing many things in a short period of time—Philip Webb’s first house, Red House, and his last, St. Alban’s, within two days of each other—is one of its great strengths. It made it possible to absorb new knowledge and understanding and apply it while it was still fresh. We visited places I thought I knew well, but with fresh insights from our guides and from each other. We saw places I should have visited and had never got around to, such as the Geffrye Museum. There were collections I hadn’t visited for many years and others I didn’t know at all, such as Sudley House in Worcestershire. There were famous places and others entirely unknown to me: of course Brighten Pavilions was enjoyable, but the Regency Town House—very much a project in progress—was even more relevant to the work I’m currently doing.

The School gave us access that would never have been granted to us as individuals, made possible by the school’s impeccable organisation, by the generosity of owners and staff, and by the knowledge of our guides and leaders. I will never forget going through the roof spaces and out onto the roof of Westminster Cathedral on a bright sunny afternoon, or visiting the Reform Club and seeing the comparisons with Bredsworth Hall.

Above all, the school was about people. Our leaders, Liz, Ian, and Gavin shared their knowledge and enthusiasm with us in so many ways. They looked after us, kept us to time and together, and supported us when we flagged. The city walking tours were packed with exciting buildings—and exhausting in equal measure. Our guides and lecturers were constantly surprising and inspiring—

I won’t forget Alan Crawford’s amazing lecture on the Arts and Crafts Movement, which went ahead despite the complete failure of the projector, or his tour of Birmingham buildings, another place I thought I knew before, but not as well as I do now. My fellow students were a wonderful group of people to be with. We learned from each other’s knowledge, experience, insights, and questions. I have never had so many stimulating conversations in such a short time.

I returned from the School exhausted but absolutely enthralled by the whole experience. Professionally, my knowledge and skills have been enhanced. On a personal level the School has enriched my life.
John Frederick painted Beacon Rock several times and even Albert Bierstadt put in an appearance. Kensett is sometimes labeled a "Luminist" with his careful attention to sky and light, and his various pictures capture the compelling nature of Newport.

A major event occurred in 1856 when William Morris Hunt purchased a house, "Hill Top Cottage," and shortly thereafter built a studio. The house stood on the site of the present-day Viking Hotel at the head of Bellevue Avenue across from the Touro Cemetery. Hunt was the older brother of Richard Morris Hunt, the architect who would build so many of Newport’s great houses. Hunt had studied in Paris in the studio of Thomas Couture and then landscape painting with Jean-François Millet. Hunt can be credited with bringing the Barbizon School—or its direct approach to nature—to the United States. Hunt in the next several years would paint a variety of scenes around the island in the Barbizon manner. In 1859 Hunt decided to set up a painting school in Newport, and his second student was John La Farge, and shortly thereafter William and Henry James joined the group.

The James boys although born in Albany, had been raised in Europe; their father, Henry James (Senior) despised the nature of American culture and wanted his large family to know the better things of life. By the later 1850s though the father decided that they should return to the United States and he selected Newport as the most "idyllic." In Hunt’s studio William James excelled, he possessed real talent and produced a number of paintings. Of course he did not pursue the artistic career. He went off to Harvard where he studied philosophy and then taught for many years both philosophy and psychology, the last of which he in a sense is the American father. He wrote much, perhaps his most famous work being Varieties of Religious Experience (1902).

His younger brother Henry James, Jr. lacked the talent for drawing and painting but he developed a very close relationship with John La Farge that would remain for the rest of his life. The Hunt studio experience gave the younger Henry an appreciation of visual art that appears with great frequency in his various writings along with a love of Newport. And it is John La Farge who told Henry one day that while he had a “painter’s eye” his talent lay with the written word. Hence it is La Farge we can either praise or blame for the voluminous writings of Henry James. La Farge and other later nineteenth century painters will be covered in my installment for next year.

Among the many who have helped with this short essay I wish to thank William (Bill) Vareika, of Vareika Fine Arts in Newport for his knowledge and assistance. Everybody who has attended the summer school knows Bill and his wife Alison. They very kindly open their house to us each year and also host a reception where we can see many outstanding works by Newport and other artists. ✦

**Newport and American Art II**

RICHARD GUY WILSON  
Director, Newport Summer School  
October 2011

Throughout the nineteenth century Newport continued to be a major center of American art. Well known for its great architecture, which ranges from houses of the seventeenth century to the grand “cottages” of the Gilded Age, Newport also occupied a central place in the development of American painting. As outlined in my last article, John Smibert, the first professionally trained artist, arrived in 1729 and set in motion Newport’s prominence as a center of art production. He was followed by many major figures including Robert Feke, Louis Sandis, and Gilbert Stuart.

Although the British occupation of Newport during the Revolutionary War led to Newport’s demise as a major shipping center, still artistic production continued in Newport with the furniture of the Townsend-Goddard shops and also artists such as Charles Bird King, who was born there and became a leading portrait and still life painter. Leading artists such as Thomas Doughty, John Vanderlyn, and Washington Allston were attracted to Newport and created some paintings there.

An economic revival began in the 1830s when wealthy Southerners—who had come prior to the Revolution—began to return during the summer months to escape the heat of Savannah and Charleston. Houses such as the Nobel Jones cottage (today Kingscote) by Richard Upjohn marked a new era. Along with the economic recovery Newport increasingly became an intellectual center with major writers and thinkers arriving for portions of the summer, and clubs such as the Town and Country sprang up. This coincided with the growing awareness of American landscape painting, or what is commonly called the “Hudson River School.” Although no record remains of Thomas Cole or Frederick Church ever coming to Newport most of the other leading landscapists did visit. They frequently focused on certain locations such as Beacon Rock, Second Beach, Spouting Rock, the Viking Tower, and Bishop Berkeley’s Rock.
I have been captivated by architecture and its history all my life. As a graduate student at Savannah College of Art and Design in the MFA Photography program, I am able to pursue my passion for architecture through my class work as well as other opportunities. Exhausted from finishing finals the day before arriving at The Victorian Society Summer School in Newport, I was reinvigorated by our first meeting with Richard Guy Wilson, the man I had been hearing so much about. I had heard he was an amazing professor, a kind man, and a captivating person, which would unfold over the next week. He made us feel welcome, introducing himself as “Richard,” and sharing with us an introduction to the prominent figures, concepts, and movements we would learn about over the course of ten days. His passion and enthusiasm spread through each student as we sat in the audience, overwhelmed by the fact we were finally in Newport.

As the hours passed and the students began to get to know one another, the underlying link that we shared was not only our passion to learn, but our love of “looking at buildings.” As part of the Thirty-First Annual American Summer School, we started out on our first day of tours spreading across the Newport terrain with wide-eyes and eagerness to learn and see. After a long day, we ended with a reception at the home of James Michael, Jr. and Richard Nelson. It was a proper Victorian affair at their home, which they had purchased and restored, complete with refreshing beverages, lovely hors d’oeuvres and captivating conversation.

The moment I knew that our days would not only be filled with house tours and lectures, but also with excitement, was on our way to Chateau-sur-Mer, where Richard climbed atop the “Moon Gate” and professed from this height what we should know about the William Wetmore House where we were to travel to next, and the purpose of this gate for pedestrians. Along with Richard, who guided us through this historically important town and its architecture, other experts, such as Paul Miller, provided their own perspective. Mr. Miller led us through the Isaac Bell House, which is now owned by the Preservation Society of Newport County, revealing a home in the process of being preserved. As students, we were able to observe a different type of preservation example compared to the pristine mansions exhibited along with their furniture and artwork. The Bell House displayed the purity of the architectural forms and details with no distraction of decoration. As Mr. Miller pointed out the wooden features of the home, the light streaked through the windows spilling over the central stairs.
LAURA PURVIS
Student
Newport, 2010

In a car brimming with a motley assortment of suitcases, the dense fog veiled our first view of Newport. Quiet murmurs of thanks for making it through New York City unscathed turned into exuberant shouting and pointing as the fog revealed houses that we had only seen projected on classroom screens. The street lamps cast a hazy yellow light as we passed the Isaac Bell House, The Elms, and eventually The Breakers, which glittered like a myriad of mosaic pieces when framed by the imposing black gate. We drove by The Breakers twice.

That foggy introduction to Newport and The Victorian Society in America Newport Summer School marked a transition in my educational and professional careers. Revisiting sites became part of my short stay in Newport, as each mansion visit or exploration along the Cliff Walk revealed connections not only to the material we were studying in class, but also to my previous education in both art and architectural history. The most distinct connection came while visiting the Vernon House for a second time. The vaguely corporal and somewhat abstract forms of the wall decoration were surprising, but not unfamiliar. While touring the house, I dismissed the similarities that I saw between those paintings and the forms used by sixteenth-century Dutch artist Hieronymus Bosch. There is little existing research on the house, so such comparisons remain only intriguing (or one might say foggy!) guesses. While I dismissed the comparison early on, that moment has become a reference point for me during my first semester as a teacher.

Within a month of returning from Rhode Island, I was offered my first teaching opportunity as an adjunct at the School of Art and Art History at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia. While the material covered in the summer school and the survey-level topics for my courses rarely overlap, my experience in Newport prepared me to become a teacher while not leaving behind my role as a student. In formulating the comparison between the wall decoration at the Vernon House and Bosch’s painting, I realized that indeed I had absorbed and maintained some information from my varied studies. While I will always have the reassuring fact that there is more to learn and more to read, studying in Newport became the opportunity to reference information from my education in art history and apply it in an unlikely setting. It would not have occurred to me that I could make a formal connection between two very different art worlds on the chance recognition of similar characteristics. Thus, when asked during my interview if I could teach about both architecture and art, I said “yes” definitively and without qualification. Had I not come to Newport, I would have not answered so pointedly, likely changing the outcome of my interview.

Studying in Newport has had positive ramifications well beyond the personal realizations detailed above. My survey-level art history courses are intended not only for majors, but also for those satisfying general education requirements. The challenge of appealing to diverse interests is a direct result of the wide variety of students that enroll in these classes. My goal is to develop in each student an understanding of the visual vocabulary of our surroundings. Visual literacy has interdisciplinary applications from understanding the relationship between artistic and medicinal pursuits of anatomical study, to reading the development of a town grid by housing types. Field- and museum-based classes, like the VSA Newport Summer School, have been the inspiration for moving outside the classroom to learn architectural terms by viewing campus buildings and testing methods to implement discussion within the traditional lecture format. Newport was a timely reminder that some of the best learning experiences can come in unexpected forms.

Original murals uncovered under later panelling, VERNON HOUSE, Newport
Photo by Laura Purvis

Unexpected Benefits

STAY IN TOUCH

Please help the Alumni Association maximize our funding for Summer Schools scholarships while saving trees and postage. The Alumni Association will communicate with members by e-mail as much as possible to reduce the cost of mailings. Make sure you receive our e-mails by adjusting your browser(s) so that they do not block the following address:

bob_chapm@msn.com.

Also, please be sure Membership Secretary Bob Chapman has your current e-mail address.

SAVE THE DATES!

The Victorian Society in America 2012 Annual Meeting will be in San Antonio, Texas May 16–May 20, 2012

The 2012 Alumni Association Annual Meeting & Dinner will be held in San Antonio, Texas on Saturday, May 17, 2012.
Alumni News

Gibson Craig (London 2008) graduated from University of Minho; Guimaraes, Portugal and Czech Technical University; Prague, Czech Republic, receiving an MA in Structural Analysis of Monuments and Historical Constructions. The program fosters international consensus on the correct preservation/conservation protocols and techniques of culturally important structures. He also works as an engineer for the structural engineering firm, Deloitte Consulting Engineers, in its New York office.

The Directors and Board of Trustees of The Newark Public Library held a reception honoring Bill Dane (London 1982, Philadelphia 1984) and celebrating the exhibition: “A Lifetime of Giving, The William J. Dane Fine Print Collection at The Newark Public Library” on June 8, 2011. The exhibition was on display from April 13–June 25, 2011.

Margaret Denny (London 2009) received a PhD in Art History in August 2010 from the University of Illinois, Chicago. Dissertation: “From Commerce to Art, American Women Photographers 1850-1900.”

Christine Madrid French is the director of the Modernism + Recent Past Program with the National Trust for Historic Preservation at the Western Office in San Francisco.

Gwen Koch, an alumna of both the London and Newport Summer Schools, and an active member of The Victorian Society’s Summer Schools Committee, recently celebrated her ninetieth birthday in September. This occasion was properly celebrated at The Victorian Society Study Tour of Springfield, Ohio. As Victorian buildings began falling down in Evansville, Gwen started her own preservation movement by buying and restoring them. When Gwen met Sam Dornsife (donor of The Samuel J. Dornsife Collection of The Victorian Society in America at the Philadelphia Athenaeum), he urged her to attend the meeting of the Victorian Society in Indianapolis. It was here that she met Brenda Gill, the architectural historian and co-founder of the VSA, and Ruth Emery, the founder of the VSA Summer Schools. Ruth and Gwen became close friends and the two attended the London Summer School for a number of years. Gwen also attended the Newport Summer School in Richard Guy Wilson’s second year as director, thirty-one years ago. Gwen continues to attend the Newport Summer School every June where she is a fixture at the reception at Pauline Metcalf’s house that’s co-sponsored by the Alumni Association.

John Martine’s architectural firm, Strada, completed the Pittsburgh office for Google in an old Nabisco cookie factory. A video of the project can be found at http://stradallc.com/show_project.php?id=94.


Pat O’Connell (Newport 1991, London 2002) has taken a job with the U.S. Treasury’s Office of Technical Assistance as advisor to the Mongolian Ministry of Finance. He moved to Ulaanbaatar in January, and his family followed in June. He suspects that “there won’t be a study tour to the steppes anytime soon!”


In May, Laura Purvis completed her second semester teaching in the Art History Department at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia. She was hired as a member of the adjunct faculty shortly after completing the 2010 Newport Summer School to teach survey-level courses, which cover the Renaissance to the present. In 2009, Dr. Sarah Whittingham’s (Newport 2006, London 2001) book, The Victorian Fern Craze was published by Shire Publications. The first edition sold out, and it has been reprinted. Also in that year, she wrote and produced The University of Bristol: A History, and curated an exhibition: “The University of Bristol’s Buildings: Past, Present and Future” at the Architecture Centre, Bristol. Both projects were part of the celebrations to mark the university’s centenary. In May 2011, her major book Sir George Cayley, Architect of Bristol was published by Redcliffe Press, and in February 2012 Frances Lincoln Publishers is publishing Fern Fever: The Story of Pteridomania. As well as lecturing on the fern craze, Sarah has appeared on television talking about Pteridomania, and has written articles on it for a number of publications, including the Victorian Society’s Journal, the National Trust magazine, Country Life, The English Garden, and Heritage.

Gertrude de G. Wilmers wrote a book with co-author Julie L. Solan about the stained glass and mural designer, Frederic Crowninshield, a contemporary of Tiffany and La Farge. He also happens to be her great-grandfather. Frederic Crowninshield: A Renaissance Man in the Gilded Age was published in December 2010 by University of Massachusetts Press.

Richard Guy Wilson (Newport School Director) Last February, Richard lectured in Boston at Historic New England’s “Program in New England Studies.” In September, he lectured in Denver in “At the Frontier’s Edge: The Arts & Crafts Movement in Denver & Environs.” He received a special President’s Award on June 8, 2011, from The Victorian Society in America President Tina Strauss for his tremendous contribution to the success of The Society’s Newport Summer School; for his excellence in teaching, guiding, coordinating, and creating camaraderie among the Newport students; and for his unfailing dedication, grace, support, and commitment to the Society for more than thirty-one years.*
VSA Summer Schools Alumni are among the best recruiters of Summer Schools applicants. Please encourage your colleagues, friends, students, or fellow classmates to apply for the 2012 sessions and consider posting Summer Schools brochures at your institution, speaking about the Summer Schools at local universities, or hosting a recruiting event.

For additional copies of brochures and applications, please contact:

JENNIFER CARLQUIST
Administrator
VSA Summer Schools
vsasummerschools@gmail.com
(612) 280-7823

Please contact Nancy McAleer Golden if you would like to host a recruiting event. The Alumni Association will provide $250 for recruiting events and will help with sending the invitations.


Join The Victorian Society in America and receive many outstanding benefits including subscriptions to the society’s semi-annual journal Nineteenth Century and newsletter, The Victorian Quarterly, as well as invitations to symposia, members-only tours. Members also gain the satisfaction that comes from being involved with the only national nonprofit organization committed to the historic preservation, protection, understanding, education, and enjoyment of our nineteenth-century heritage.

It’s easy to join online at www.victoriansociety.org. For further information on membership, publications, upcoming events, preservation resources, and local Victorian Society in America Chapters contact:

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We’re eager to keep in touch with all our graduates. Unfortunately we’ve lost contact with these alumni.
Please let us know if you’re privy to their whereabouts and do let us know if you move, by contacting

Bob Chapman
111 S. Mountain Avenue
Montclair NJ 07042-1737
(908) 746-0965
bob_chapm@msn.com

Lost Alumni Photos by Angela Voulangas
The Alumni Association is run by volunteers. Our continuing success depends on the dedication and special skills of those who are eager to pitch in and help with various projects. Please contact Nancy Golden at goldendirect@aol.com or (805) 563-2315 to volunteer or for further information.

We need fellow alumni to volunteer to help:

1. Revitalize the FACEBOOK PAGE.
2. Conduct a major re-design of the ALUMNI WEBSITE.
3. Manage the new REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE program.

The goal is to have at least one alumna/us in each state help recruit students and host local events. Duties also include identifying and contacting recent alumni in each state.

Call for Papers: Nineteenth Century, The Journal of The Victorian Society in America

Submissions in both hard-copy and electronic form (on disk, Microsoft Word) should be mailed to:

WILLIAM AYRES
Editor Nineteenth Century
P.O. Box 403
Stony Brook, NY
11790-0403

Nineteenth Century, the semi-annual, peer-reviewed journal of The Victorian Society in America, invites Summer Schools alumni to submit articles relevant to the social and cultural history of the United States, c. 1837-1917. The journal encourages submissions of 3,000 to 6,000 words, with illustrations and notes as necessary, in the fields of history, art and architectural history, landscape architecture, interior design, costume, photography, social issues, and biography. Manuscripts should be prepared following the latest edition of the Chicago Manual of Style.

RENEW Your Alumni Association Membership Today!

Join or renew today and receive invitations to exclusive events, seminars, study tours, and more...and help provide scholarships to deserving students. Your membership will extend to December 31, 2012.

Alumni Association of The Victorian Society Summer Schools
Membership Enrollment: [ ] Renewal [ ] New Membership

[ ] $25 Student or Young Professional (under age 35)
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I would like to provide additional scholarship support for a full or partial scholarship to:

[ ] LONDON ($4,300 full scholarship) $ ___________
[ ] NEWPORT ($2,300 full scholarship) ___________
[ ] UNRESTRICTED Scholarship $ ___________

Enclosed is my check in the amount of $ ___________ made payable to the Alumni Association of The Victorian Society Summer Schools.

Name __________________________

Company _________________________

Company Address

City ____________________________ State ______ Zip Code ___________

I have included personal or professional news for the November 2012 issue of the Alumni newsletter.

I no longer wish to receive information from the Alumni Association.

RICHARD GUY WILSON atop the “Moon Gate”, Newport
Photo by Shannon N. Schaefer