

# Alumni Newsletter

Issue 68  
Dec. 2025

## **VICTORIAN SOCIETY IN AMERICA FALL STUDY TOUR OF ROCHESTER, NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 24–27, 2025**

**Written by David Lamdin (Newport '16, London '17, and Chicago '18), VSA Alumni Association President. Unless otherwise noted, photos by Liz Melanson, VSA Study Tour Director.**

My own personal trip to Rochester started a few days before the VSA Study Tour began. I drove from my home in Arlington, VA to Altoona and State College, PA to take care of some personal business. Then, onto Niagara Falls and a walk down memory lane from about 35 years ago. Nothing much has changed except now the *Maid of the Mist* is an all-electric boat driven by a battery-operated motor so there was no noxious exhaust as we went right smack up to the Falls. Interestingly, they need to recharge the battery for seven minutes after each trip.

I took a leisurely drive along the banks of Lake Ontario to Rochester, where I arrived in plenty of time at our hotel to meet up with the group for the start of our tour. For the opening reception, we walked several blocks to the Inn on Broadway located in the old University Club building in Rochester's East End Theatre District. It was designed by architect Leon Stern and completed in 1929. We enjoyed adult refreshments in Tavern 26 before moving into a private room, which had previously been the ladies dining room. There, we enjoyed heavy hors d'oeuvres and settled in for a fantastic, slide-illustrated lecture by Cynthia Howk, former Architectural Research Coordinator for the Landmark Society of Western New York. Filled with fascinating insider highlights of the history of

Rochester, her lecture was the perfect introduction for us to Rochester.

Among the many things I learned, Rochester was named after Col. Rochester of Maryland who was a prominent citizen of the time. On November 8, 1803, three men from Hagerstown, MD, Major Charles Carroll, Colonel William Fitzhugh, Jr., and Colonel Nathaniel Rochester, purchased land along the Genesee River, recognizing the potential of the water power from the three falls. Beginning in 1811, and with a population of 15, the three founders surveyed the land and laid out streets and tracts. In 1823, the Erie Canal aqueduct over the Genesee River was completed, connecting the city to the Hudson River to the east. New commerce from the canal turned the village into America's first "wild west" boomtown. By 1830, Rochester's population had grown to 9,200, and in 1834, it was rechartered as a city.

Rochester was first known as "the Young Lion of the West," and then as the "Flour City": by 1838, it was the largest flour-producing city in the United States. During the mid-19th century, as the center of the wheat-processing industry moved west with population and agriculture, the city became home to an expanding nursery business, giving rise to the city's next nickname, the "*Flower City*." Nurseries ringed the city, the

most famous of which was started in 1840 by immigrants George Ellwanger from Germany and Patrick Barry from Ireland.

In 1847, Frederick Douglass founded *The North Star*, an abolitionist newspaper, in Rochester. Around the same time, the nearby Finger Lakes region was the birthplace of the women's suffrage movement. A critical suffragettes' convention was held in 1848 in nearby Seneca Falls, and Rochester was the home of Susan B. Anthony along with other notable Suffragettes such as Abigail Bush and Amy Post. The Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, which guaranteed the right of women to vote, was ratified in 1920. It was known as the Susan B. Anthony Amendment because of her work toward its passage, which she did not live to see.

Rochester has its own Frank Lloyd Wright property, the Boynton House (1908), one of the few Frank Lloyd Wright creations still functioning as a private, single-family residence instead of a museum. This two-story, approximately 5,500 square foot home, was originally situated on a one-acre lot. Seventeen pieces of original Frank Lloyd Wright furniture remain in the house.



*Edward E. Boynton House.*

*Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog, Digital Image LC-DIG-highsm-52722.*

Bausch and Lomb, George Eastman's Kodak, and Xerox were among the several iconic companies founded in Rochester. By 1950, the population reached a high of 332,488. By 2022, the city's population had declined to 209,352.

Rochester greeted us on Day 2 with a pretty good rain storm. But by the time Cynthia Hawk arrived to lead us on a walking tour of some of the fabulous Victorian-era homes still surviving on East Avenue, the rain had substantially subsided. Though many of the homes have been repurposed in the last 15 years, they still stand as a testament to a bygone era.

Our walk ended at the George Eastman house, museum, and gardens. Cynthia took leave of our group only to be replaced by another Cynthia who guided us through the spectacular home and decorations. George was single and of sound mind in his early 80s. But his physical health was rapidly deteriorating. So as carefully planned out as he had done his entire life, George went into his bedroom and committed suicide.



*Interior, George Eastman House*

With that, we departed by motor coach for a nice lunch at the 1873 Cafe. After lunch, we went on a tour of the Susan B. Anthony Museum and House. We were very fortunate to have two excellent guides with deep



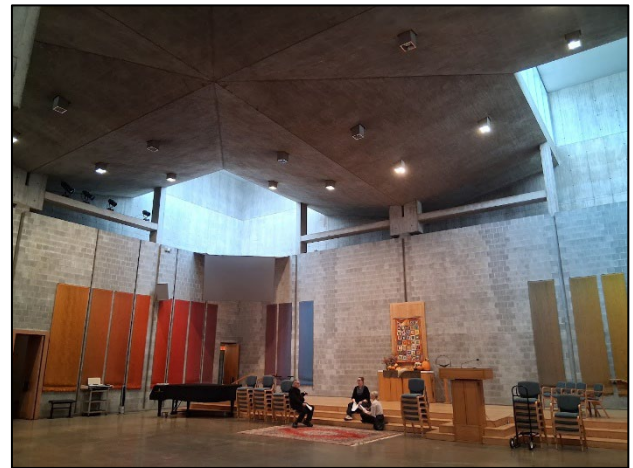
knowledge of the subject matter. While touring the house, we learned much about her childhood, her family, and her commitment to social justice. She was singularly focused on righting the wrongs in her society and her efforts were successful.



*Susan B. Anthony Museum and House*

Following that tour, we drove to the First Unitarian Church of Rochester (1962), designed by Louis Kahn. What a remarkable building! Devoid of any typical religious symbols, the holy grounds of the church stand in its simplicity as a magnificent reflection of the faith of its congregation. It is certainly not for everyone, but I was blown away by its spirituality as a house of worship.

Dinner was on our own on Day 2. During our walking tour earlier in the day, Cynthia pointed out the Genesee Valley Club, the most exclusive private club in town, located directly across the street from our headquarters hotel. As luck would have it, I discovered that I had access to the Club through a reciprocal club arrangement. And as my luck continued to hold, the Club was hosting an old world Oom-Pah Band for an Octoberfest dinner...jacket and tie not



*First Unitarian Church interior*

required! While I skipped the buffet line, I was able to get seated in a small, quiet, elegant dining room where I enjoyed a delicious grilled shrimp dinner. The staff at the club could not have been any nicer to me. They even packed up some great cookies for me to take back to my hotel room for a little midnight snack!

A beautiful morning greeting us for a short bus ride outside of town to Mt. Hope, a classic Victorian cemetery with lots of rolling hills and grave markers. Our guide led us over hill and dale visiting the graves of Susan B. Anthony, Frederick Douglass, and several



*Frederick Douglass grave site*



other prominent local leaders. She explained some of the iconography on the tombstones as well as the stories of the prominent individuals.



***Susan B. Anthony  
grave marker***

Following the cemetery tour, our day continued with a bus ride to Lake Canandaigua for lunch seated outside on the patio of the New York Kitchen. Then, it was back on the bus for a short ride to Sonnenberg Gardens and Mansion. We did a walking tour of the gardens and mansion while the guide gave us great insights into the family history.



***Sonnenberg Gardens***

The Granger Homestead was our next tour sight. We were given an excellent guided tour of the Granger home and grounds, including a wonderful, extensive collection of carriages and sleds. Following the tours, we were served an excellent dinner in the dining room

of the main house. During dessert, the Program Director, an incredibly energetic and well-informed young lady, engaged in conversation with our group, giving us many insights into the house museum as well as her personal journey.



***Granger Homestead***

At this point, I should mention that all of our guides throughout our trip were most pleasant, well informed, and anxious to share their information. Moreover, every individual I encountered on this trip from hotel desk clerks to housekeeping, to wait staff, store clerks, bus drivers, etc., were all incredibly kind, pleasant, and helpful.

On our last day on tour in Rochester, we were again presented with a beautiful day. We boarded our bus and headed to the historic Corn Hill Neighborhood, located on the banks of the Genesee River and a short walk from the city's business district. Corn Hill is a showplace of historic architecture, manicured streets, and inviting parks. Our guides from the Corn Hill Community Association could not have been any more pleasant, enthusiastic, knowledgeable, and accommodating. We were invited inside several of the homes and we had a wonderful surprise presentation from a long-time resident. The congenial and diverse community of Corn Hill is committed to

protecting the character of the area and nurturing goodwill among its members.



*Guide from Corn Hill Community Association*

We concluded our walking tour of Corn Hill at the Hervey Ely House (1837). It is one of the few surviving Greek Revival mansions in the city and has been the headquarters of the local Irondequoit chapter of the DAR (Daughters of the American Revolution) since the 1920s. The historic 1830s interiors remain intact and feature some of the most impressive decorative plaster work/ceilings in the region.

We had lunch at the Genesee Brew House, the pub-style restaurant of the Genesee

Brewery, which is one of the largest and oldest continually operating breweries in America. The Brew House and the building itself were, in fact, part of the original Genesee Brewery campus more than 100 years ago as the packaging center. It now has been transformed into a special place that tells the story of brewing beer in Rochester, NY. After lunch, it was a fond farewell to old and new friends alike.



*Roof top dining at the Genesee Brew House*

Information on this and other past VSA study tours can be found at the [Study Tours and Symposia page](#) on the VSA website.

Source of supplemental information on the history of Rochester:  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rochester,\\_New\\_York](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rochester,_New_York)



# SUPPORT THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OF THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY SUMMER SCHOOLS

## Membership

The Alumni Association of the Victorian Society Summer Schools is now in the midst of our annual membership renewal drive. Many thanks to those of you who have already renewed.

If you have ever received a Summer School scholarship, you know how transformative that opportunity can be. This is your chance to pay it forward. Even if you were not a scholarship recipient, your membership still ensures that the next generation of preservationists, historians, and designers has the same opportunity to explore, learn, and grow.

**In 2025, the Alumni Association contributed \$30,000 in scholarship funding as part of over \$90,000 awarded across all Summer School programs.** Membership dues directly support this effort—and the need for scholarships is expected to increase in 2026. We need the support of all alumni. This year, we are making a special appeal to the alumni of Summer Schools 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025, including those who received scholarships to attend. Your participation in the Alumni Association is vital to our ability to continue to provide scholarships to the students of the 2026 class and beyond.

Your membership helps sustain the programs and people who shaped our shared experiences. You'll also enjoy:

- Access to the Alumni Association newsletter—now expanded and beautifully redesigned
- Invitations to exclusive tours, study trips, and events
- Ongoing connection to fellow alumni through our Facebook page and member network

You can help in two ways. First, please take a moment today to Renew Your Membership for 2026 with the form on the following page, or through the PayPal link. There is a special reduced membership fee of only \$30 a year for those 35 years of age and younger. Second, be sure to tell your friends, classmates, and colleagues about the Summer Schools. Word of mouth is the best advertising!

Thank you for your enduring support and commitment to preserving our shared heritage. Together, we keep the spirit of the Summer Schools alive.

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OF  
THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY  
SUMMER SCHOOLS  
A Chapter of the Victorian  
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*A Chapter of the Victorian Society in America supporting the Summer Schools through scholarships, fundraising, and engagement with alumni.*

☐ **RENEWAL**      ☐ **ENROLLMENT**      **DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

☐ \$60 Individual      ☐ \$125 Household

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☐ \$250 Sponsor      ☐ \$500 Supporter      ☐ \$1,000 Benefactor

Individuals donating above the basic membership levels are recognized in our eNewsletter unless you opt-out by checking here. ☐

☐ I am including support for Scholarships. Partial amounts are encouraged.

☐ Gwen Koch Memorial Newport Scholarship \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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☐ Professor Richard Guy Wilson Newport Scholarship \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
(Full Newport Scholarship - \$3,700)

☐ Gavin Stamp Memorial London Scholarship \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
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**ONLINE PAYMENT** at [www.vsaalumni.org](http://www.vsaalumni.org) (PayPal). To make it easier than ever, use this QR code to donate.

**PLANNED GIVING** Please contact the Alumni Assoc about including it in your estate plan. (dalamdin@gmail.com)

**MY NEWS:** Email news about your new position, publication, honorarium, move, advanced degree to:

[newsletter@vsaalumni.org](mailto:newsletter@vsaalumni.org)



## Stock Donation

A donation of long-term appreciated stocks directly to the Alumni Association of the Victorian Society Summer Schools can help you save on capital gains taxes. At the same time, you can deduct the full market value of the gift, subject to certain annual limits, potentially saving on the net investment income tax. Compared with donating cash, or selling your appreciated stock and contributing the after-tax proceeds, you may potentially increase your gift and tax donation.

Stock gifted to the Alumni Association will go into our Endowment Fund, which is managed by eCIO. To donate stock from your current custodian to the Alumni Association, please share the following information with your broker in order to complete the electronic transfer successfully:

**Charles Schwab Delivery Instructions:** Delivery to DTC Clearing 0164

**Client Name:** THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY IN AMERICA

**Custodial Account Number:** 4159-0651

Please notify Alumni Association President David Lamdin at [dalamdin@gmail.com](mailto:dalamdin@gmail.com) when a stock donation is being made. If you have any questions on how to make the donation, please contact eCIO (Investment Advisor) at (608) 291-4646.

## Planned Giving: The Heritage Society of the Alumni Association

The **Heritage Society of the Alumni Association** supports our efforts to provide student scholarships for future Victorian Society Summer Schools. The Alumni Association is humbled to have an extraordinary group of supporters who feel so strongly about our primary mission to raise funds for student scholarships that they have generously included the Alumni Association in their estate planning. You are invited to join this special group of Alumni by making a planned gift such as a bequest in your will or beneficiary designations of IRAs or retirement plans.

**Hank Dunlop** (Boston '78; London '81, and Newport '88) has joined the Heritage Society of the Alumni Association with a Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) designation from his IRA. **John C. Freed**, a longtime VSA and Alumni Association supporter, made provisions for a \$10,000 bequest to the Alumni Association in memory of his partner, **Paul Duchscherer** (Newport '91). **Paul Duchscherer** very thoughtfully made provisions in his trust for a \$10,000 bequest to the Alumni Association as well as designating the Alumni Association as the beneficiary of all future royalties from his many books and other publications. The **Bob and Carole Chapman Fund** very generously awarded a grant of \$10,000 to the Alumni Association Chapter in memory of **Carole Chapman**. **Robert Rettig** (London '06) recently advised us that he had made provision in his estate planning documents for both the VSA and the Alumni Association. These very generous alumni members have made thoughtful gifts and designations to help ensure that current and future generations of students will be able to attend the educational opportunities presented by the VSA Summer Schools.

You can join these members of the Heritage Society of the Alumni Association and support the mission of the Alumni Association while maximizing the benefits of a deferred gift. Your gift becomes part of your estate planning to protect valuable assets from income, capital gains, and/or estate taxes.



## Requests by Will or Living Trust

This common estate planning technique allows you to retain control of your assets during your lifetime and avoid estate taxes. GIFTS OF LIFE INSURANCE, CHARITABLE GIFT ANNUITIES, CHARITABLE LEAD TRUSTS, CHARITABLE REMAINDER ANNUITY TRUSTS, CHARITABLE REMAINDER UNITRUSTS, and a POOLED INCOME FUND are some of the other estate planning techniques you can discuss with your financial advisor to provide funds to the Alumni Association for scholarships to future Summer School students.

To include the **Alumni Association** in your will or trust, the following is suggested wording to take to your attorney: "After fulfilling other provisions, I give, devise and bequeath \_\_\_\_\_% of the residue and remainder of my estate (or \$\_\_\_\_\_ if a specific amount) to the Alumni Association of the Victorian Society Summer Schools, a 501(c)(3) organization, to benefit the Alumni Association (tax ID # 23-1710978), located at 24 Wilkins Ave Fl 1, Haddonfield, NJ 08033.

It is crucial that the **Alumni Association** be identified as your gift will, otherwise it will go to the national VSA organization with whom we share EIN **23-1710978**.

Please let us know about your estate plans if you decide to join the **Heritage Society of the Alumni Association** by contacting Alumni Association President David Lamdin at [dalamdin@gmail.com](mailto:dalamdin@gmail.com).

## DONORS TO THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OF THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY SUMMER SCHOOLS

The Officers and members of the Alumni Association Board are very appreciative of all alumni who help support our mission. We are pleased to acknowledge the following members whose contributions over and above the basic membership amount this fiscal year<sup>1</sup> enable us to continue to provide significant financial assistance for scholarships to deserving students of the Victorian Society Summer Schools.

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<sup>1</sup> Contributions during the period October 1, 2024, through September 30, 2025. If you see any errors, please email Alumni Association President David Lamdin at [dalamdin@gmail.com](mailto:dalamdin@gmail.com).

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## VSA SUMMER SCHOOL APPLICATIONS



This is an exciting year for the VSA's Summer Schools, with new directors in all three programs, and with the London Summer School celebrating its 50th anniversary! Do not forget that the VSA offers full and partial scholarships for qualified applicants! Visit our [Summer Schools pages](#) for more details, and online summer school and scholarship applications. All application materials are due by **March 2, 2026**. Any questions about the programs can be directed to Summer Schools Administrator Anne Mallek at [admin@vsasummerschools.org](mailto:admin@vsasummerschools.org).

## 2026 SUMMER SCHOOLS

NEWPORT  
May 29-June 7

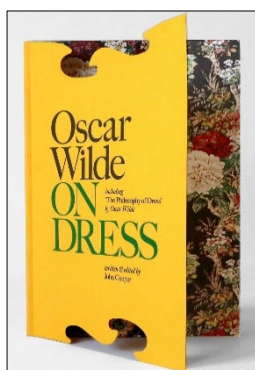
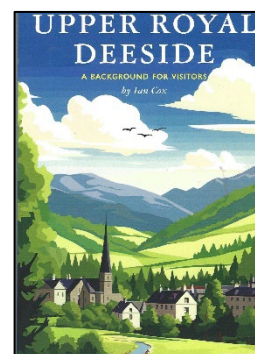
CHICAGO  
June 9-16

LONDON  
June 27-July 12

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## NEWS

**Ian Cox** (London '91), a past director of the London Summer School, authored a new book titled *Upper Royal Deeside: A Background for Visitors*, a guide highlighting all that is special and interesting to this area of Scotland. Published on August 1, 2025, the book provides a background on the geological, geographical, and social history of the beautiful Upper Deeside river valley, giving visitors invaluable information in interpreting the landscapes and settlements to be found there.



**John Cooper**, who was the VSA business manager from 2003–2006 and attended a portion of the Newport Summer School in 2018, recently published a new edition of his book, *Oscar Wilde on Dress*. The original volume, published in 2013 as a limited hardback edition, contains Oscar Wilde's essay 'The Philosophy of Dress' (1885), which had been unrecorded by historians and bibliographers until John rediscovered it the year before. The new edition is a softcover version of the original volume, and it has been expanded and updated with a new collection of associated articles, letters, and essays from the period. For additional information on the book, please go to: <https://www.oscarwildeondress.com/>.

John will speak about 'The Philosophy of Dress' and Oscar Wilde's views on fashion on Saturday, December 6th, as part of the VSA's Online Lecture Series. Click [here](#) to register for this free online lecture.

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## INVITATION

The Society to Preserve H. L. Mencken's Legacy extends an invitation to their holiday party on **Friday, December 12, 2025, 8 pm**, at the home of H. L. Mencken, 1524 Hollins Street, Baltimore, Maryland. The National Historic Landmark is an Italianate-style row house in the Hollins Market/Union Square neighborhood of Baltimore. Designed by W. Claude Frederic and built in 1883, it was the lifelong residence of renowned journalist and social critic H. L. Mencken (1880–1956), and was the recipient in 2021 of a Victorian Society in America Preservation Award. H. L. Mencken's *Christmas Story*, a delightful story about good tidings at Christmastime, will be read by preservation advocate Elizabeth Waters. Light refreshments and free on-street parking. For more information, please contact [info@menckenhse.org](mailto:info@menckenhse.org).



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## VICTORIAN SOCIETY IN AMERICA SUMMER SCHOOLS 2025 REPORTS

### Victorian Society Summer Schools Overview

**By Anne Mallek, Summer Schools  
Administrator**

This was a busy and exciting year for the VSA's three summer schools. While by February applications numbers appeared low, there was a last-minute influx of excellent applicants for the three programs. Ultimately, and due to a few late withdrawals, there were 16 participants for Chicago, 24 for Newport, and 16 for London. Newport received the largest number of applicants, largely attributable to 2025 being Richard Guy Wilson's final year as director of the summer program. After a search and interviews over last winter, the Selection Committee recommended the hiring of two new directors for Newport and London, respectively (please see biographies at the end of this report): Dr. David W. ("Willie") Granston III for Newport, and Dr. Joshua Mardell for London, both architectural

historians and alumni of their respective programs. Both incoming directors also shadowed their programs this summer in preparation for leading the programs in 2026.

With regard to the participants in 2025, we saw a rise in younger applicants, especially for London, but participants in all programs demonstrated the same diversity in age, profession and location that we have come to expect, representing 20 states as well as Turkey, India, Poland, and Canada, and ranging in age from 21 to mid-70s. Professionally, participants hailed from the fields of historic preservation and conservation, architecture and architectural history, engineering, art history, photography, museums, academics, interior design and design history, and from graduate school to early and later career professionals, to retirees. I can testify that our London group was an especially young, curious, and engaged group – always on time, supportive, and up for any and all challenges!

Special events this year included the Alumni Association-sponsored reception hosted at the Victorian Society headquarters in London for our London program participants and alumni, where we toasted the final year of Kit Wedd as director, and welcomed Josh Mardell as incoming director. In Newport, the Preservation Society sponsored an evening event at the Bell House, honoring the career and contributions of Richard Guy Wilson. In Chicago, the program began with a reception at the Cliff Dwellers Club and concluded with a dinner at the Glessner House.

In 2025, scholarships were awarded for the Chicago and London programs, totaling \$88,900. With tuition increases across the three programs this past year, and with international travel especially expensive, we have seen the highest scholarship application numbers for London (\$76,100 in scholarship funds were awarded for London in 2025). For the record, tuition prices for 2025 were \$3,700 for Newport (10 days), \$3,400 for Chicago (7 days) and \$7,000 for London (15 days). In support of the Chicago program, we were awarded another \$25,000 grant from the Driehaus Foundation for 2025–26 -- this will be our second award from the Foundation. The Decorative Arts Trust also sponsored a full scholarship once again for the Chicago program.

2026 promises a good (and thoughtful) degree of change for our Newport and London programs with their new directors currently at work shaping the program itineraries. We hope to have new descriptions up on the website by [September] with applications going live in the first week of October. For Chicago, Dr. Diane Dillon, previously Assistant Director, will (also) be succeeding Tina Strauss as Program Director (please see her biography below).

**Dr. David W. ("Willie") Granston III** is an architectural historian with a PhD in history of art and architecture from Boston University, MA from the Winterthur Program in American Material Culture, and BA in Art History and French from Trinity College, where he is currently serving as Visiting Assistant Professor of Fine Arts, and where he has taught a course on "The Architecture of Leisure," inspired by his PhD dissertation "'As if it had Grown?? There': Resort Architecture and the New England Landscape, 1875–1915." He is devoted "to contextualizing buildings in order to more fully understand them as works of architecture and as products of their time."

**Dr. Diane Dillon** is Director of Scholarly and Undergraduate Programs at the Newberry Library. Her research fields include American art, architecture, and visual culture; world's fairs; the history of cartography; and Chicago's history and culture. She has co-curated exhibitions on the 1909 Plan of Chicago, the history of cartography, and the 1933–34 Century of Progress International Exposition. In 2010 and 2011 she co-directed National Endowment for the Humanities summer seminars focused on mapping and art in the Americas. She has also taught undergraduates and graduate students at George Mason, Rice, Northwestern, Roosevelt, the University of Illinois at Chicago, and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Dillon holds a PhD in the history of art from Yale University.

**Dr. Joshua Mardell** is an architectural historian and Research Tutor at the Royal College of Art in London, where he teaches courses in their PhD and M Res programs. He holds a Doctor of Sciences from ETH Zurich, where he completed a dissertation on the Buckler dynasty, and has his MPhil in Architecture from the University of Cambridge and a BA in Historical



Archaeology from the University of York. He is “dedicated to promoting and protecting Victorian architecture for posterity, and demonstrating how the Victorian period can continually speak to present-day issues.”

## **Newport Summer School Report**

**By Peter Trippi, Assistant Director**

The VSA's 2025 Newport Summer School once again provided participants with a unique opportunity to explore one of America's most historic and best-preserved cities. This year's cohort of 24 individuals — one of the largest in the program's history — enjoyed meeting like-minded people and sharing their enthusiasm for architecture, decorative arts, fine art, history, and preservation. As ever, the program afforded participants a chance to hear from scholars in the field who collectively bring to bear decades of knowledge and expertise.

Pre-eminent in this gathering of kindred spirits was, of course, Prof. Richard Guy Wilson, whose 40+ years of association with the VSA, along with his sparkling personality, always delivers knowledge that is deep, broad, and engaging. A highlight of this year's edition was the festive reception hosted by the Preservation Society of Newport County (PSNC) inside the Isaac Bell House, the saving and study of which Richard has guided for decades. PSNC CEO & Executive Director Trudy Coxe saluted Richard's founding of the VSA's Newport Summer School and wished him well as we transition to the 2026 Directorship of Willie Granston III, PhD, who had attended the program in 2017 and “shadowed” it once again this summer. At the reception, PSNC presented Richard with a handsome album of photographs taken through the years of his Directorship; a related compilation was

distributed via PDF to all members of the VSS Alumni Association in October.

Other lecturers including John Tschirch, Paul Miller, and Pauline Metcalf contributed significantly to participants' understanding of key events, artistic trends, and people who had an impact on the unique creative culture in Newport. I myself was honored to present a slide lecture focused on the influence of British architects and thinkers on 19<sup>th</sup> century Newport's development. Outside the lecture hall, we encountered dozens of private home owners and site curators or caretakers who generously explained their properties to us in great detail.

This year's cohort was engaged and thoughtful in their reactions to the many site visits Richard had scheduled. As ever, the calendar was packed and the pace demanding. Another standout event was a presentation at the newly restored Belmont Chapel in the Island Cemetery; there the team that achieved this herculean task told us exactly how they did it while also highlighting Richard's invaluable assistance and encouragement over the years. Happily, the chapel's restoration team will also be receiving a National VSA Award at the annual meeting this autumn.

The program participants bonded well with each other, making new, fast friends. Especially spirited was the cohort of several individuals who had studied architectural history with Richard Guy Wilson at the University of Virginia and reunited for his final year directing the Newport program.

No scholarships were awarded for the 2025 Newport Program because there were so many applications from full-paying participants. Scholarship applicants were warmly encouraged to re-apply for the 2026 program, when funds will again be available. If there was any recurring complaint about

the program, it was simply that the main hall of residence—Ochre Lodge—was not being cleaned regularly, an oversight that will be rectified for 2026.

NOTE: Many thanks to Pauline Metcalf, a longtime, generous supporter of the VSA Summer Schools and the Alumni Association for once again inviting the 2025 Newport students and alumni to a lovely reception at her family home, Philmoney. We also remain grateful for the lavish annual reception hosted by Bill and Alison Vareika at their gallery on Bellevue Avenue, William Vareika Fine Arts.

## **Chicago Summer School Report**

**By Diane Dillon, Assistant Director**

The 2025 edition of the Chicago Summer School went very well. We welcomed a very engaged and congenial group of students from many parts of the world to the city for our intensive six-day program. The 2025 school followed a revised version of the outline that founding co-directors Tina Strauss and John Waters created in 2015 and we have refined over the past 10 years.

Several of our tours, honed over the years, have truly become classics of the Chicago Summer School. These include tours of the Rookery with Gunny Harboe, Crab Tree Farm with Tom Gleason, and the communities of Pullman and Prairie Avenue with Bill Tyre. The group very much appreciated our tour of the Laura Gale House in Oak Park, where homeowner Andy Mead shared his experiences of living in a Frank Lloyd Wright home. Our museum tours were also big hits with the group and at the Driehaus Museum our visit happily coincided with a temporary exhibition of Rory McEwen's botanical drawings. We were very pleased to welcome Anne Lazar, Executive Director of the

Driehaus Foundation, as a guest for Friday morning's lectures.

Complementing the exhibition of horticultural drawings were our tours of several important landscapes in Chicago, including Columbus Park, the southern end of Lincoln Park, Jackson Park, and Graceland Cemetery.

In general, the 2025 program seemed more cohesive than those in some past years because we aimed to stay within the temporal boundaries of the Victorian Era (although we stretched it a bit into the 20th century.) We also added to the cohesion by exploring several key areas of study in multiple contexts. These areas included the Richardsonian Romanesque style; Beaux Arts architecture, sculpture, and planning; the Prairie style; the Arts and Crafts movement; evolving approaches to landscape design; and the history of historic preservation in Chicago.

The Congress Plaza Hotel and Cliff Dwellers Club served as convenient and comfortable home bases for the program again this year. Our new bus company, Chicago Classic Coach proved very reliable. The bus was comfortable, and we experienced no transportation problems.

### Changes to the Schedule

A few minor changes to the schedule proved necessary over the course of the week. On Saturday, our tour of Crab Tree Farm lasted longer than anticipated, so we were late in reaching our next stop, the Kenilworth Assembly Hall. We had planned for Richard Guy Wilson to give his lecture about Prairie School Architecture there, but the hall failed to provide the A/V equipment we had requested. So, we will arrange to share that lecture with the students via YouTube. We had also planned to visit the Kenilworth Historical

Society to see an exhibition about architectural styles in Kenilworth, but the curator who had promised to open the galleries for us did not show up. This was disappointing, but gave us more time for our walking tour of Kenilworth. In this endeavor, we were aided greatly by VSA summer school alumnus Brent Hoffman, who often leads tours of Kenilworth.

On Sunday, our lunch on the Wooded Island took a little longer than expected, so we decided to skip the stop at the Statue of the Republic and go straight to Pullman instead. On Monday morning, we decided to stop at Columbus Park before our appointment at the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio. This worked out very well, allowing us to take a mini hike to the water fall designed by Jens Jensen while the air was still cool and the group's energy level was high.

On Tuesday, the Alfred Caldwell Lily Pool in Lincoln Park did not reopen as projected after a long renovation, so we were not able to visit that site. Instead, we visited the southern end of Lincoln Park. This enabled us to view the Couch Tomb and discuss the origins of the park as a cemetery. It also allowed us to view the Standing Lincoln Monument by Augustus Saint-Gaudens. At the statue, Richard Guy Wilson spoke about the relationship between Saint-Gaudens and Charles McKim, who designed the exedra for the statue.

Scheduling all the lectures for the mornings during our two days at the Cliff Dwellers is the best strategy and will be our plan going forward. Late afternoon lectures after walking tours do not work out as well, because the group tends to be tired and their attention fades.

All of the tours proved successful. Visiting sites that involve considerable walking, such as Graceland Cemetery and Columbus Park, at the beginning rather than the end of the

day allowed participants to enjoy these sites while their energy level was high.

The walk to the Wooded Island in Jackson Park at lunchtime on Sunday provided the opportunity for the group to see the sites of some important buildings from the 1893 world's fair, but the trek seemed like too much walking for some participants, so in the future, we will tour Jackson Park by bus. The driving tour of Austin in the late afternoon on Monday added an important dimension of the program, introducing the participants to one of Chicago's less affluent neighborhoods, which nonetheless boasts significant architecture worthy of study and preservation.

Bookending the program with an opening reception at the Cliff Dwellers Club on Thursday evening and a closing dinner at Glessner House on Tuesday evening has worked well for the past few years. This was a very festive and relaxing occasion, with Glessner House providing a quintessentially Victorian environment.

## **London Summer School Report**

**By Anne Mallek, Assistant Director**

This year's London program was an especially curious, keen and prompt group of 16 (15 of whom were women), ages 22 to 68, and representing 11 states as well as the country of Poland. Six members of the class were graduate students — in Art History, Historic Preservation, Electrical Engineering, Decorative Arts, and Architecture. Professionally, the group comprised academics in Architecture, Photography and Visual Culture, Historic Preservation executives, curators, architects and retired teachers.

2025 marked Kit Wedd's last summer as Director of the London Summer School, and



despite some early and late heat, the program ran smoothly (and largely on time!), with no major illnesses or injuries. White's, a new coach company that we tried on the recommendation of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust, worked very well, and we hope to use them again next year. All hotel and site bookings were completed by the Assistant Director and Director. Dr. Joshua Mardell, the incoming director for 2026, was also able to attend the central part of the program out of London, and to join us in London for our final days.

The tour of 15 days covered over 700 miles, five cities (London, Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, Oxford), 11 house museums, 11 churches and cathedrals, six other significant historic sites (including the Palace of Westminster and Highgate Cemetery), 19 lectures and site/city tours, and seven art museums. Evaluations for the program were universally happy with their experience, celebrating the quality of the lectures and guides, and most appreciated the packed

schedule and the diversity of sites and structures visited. As always, there were some complaints about some long days of standing/walking, and the lack of air-conditioning in the London hotel. However, all mentioned that they would still strongly recommend the program and wished to stay involved with the VSA and the Alumni Association.

Given the higher tuition of the London program (\$7,000), there was also a higher demand for scholarships, and not just from younger graduate students. In all, 11 full scholarships and one, half scholarship were awarded for London (for a total of \$76,100). That said, I would argue that especially for this year's class it was a very worthwhile investment by the VSA and SSC, as this was one particularly engaged group – always prepared with questions for speakers, site managers and docents, exchanging information and professional advice with one another, etc.