ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OF THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY SUMMER SCHOOLS

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A 501(c)(3) nonprofit Chapter of the Victorian Society in America, dedicated to supporting the Summer Schools through scholarships, fundraising, and engagement with alumni.

Alumni Newsletter

Lori Thursby
Editor

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THE VSA APPOINTS ANNE MALLEK AS NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

On October 8, 2026, the Victorian Society in America announced the appointment of **Anne Mallek** as its new Executive Director. In announcing the appointment, Jackie Spainhour, the Board President of the VSA, said:

> "Anne brings a deep commitment to education and appreciation surrounding 19th-century history, decorative arts, and architecture. We are thrilled to welcome her as Executive Director to lead this organization after her many years as a familiar and respected face for our summer schools and lecture series programs. We are excited to engage our vibrant community of members and usher in a new era for the society under her leadership."

In her new role, Anne will serve as the primary administrative leader and public voice of the VSA. Working in close partnership with the Board of Directors, she will help drive strategic growth, expand member engagement, and oversee the organization's flagship educational offerings in North America and Europe.

As Executive Director, Anne takes an active role in strategies governing the VSA's acclaimed summer school programs, overseeing the annual online lecture series, and supporting historic study tours. Additionally, she will play a vital role alongside board and committee leadership to launch the VSA's new certificate program set for completion by late 2027.

Anne earned her B.A. in English Language and Literature from the University of Oxford, and an M.A. in Nineteenth-Century British and French Art from the Courtauld Institute of Art. Previous to her time with the Victorian Society in America, Anne spent 15 years in Southern California, first at The Huntington Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens working with their William Morris Collection, and then from 2004 to 2015 she served as Curator of The Gamble House (1908), a National Historic Landmark in Pasadena.

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May 25, 2026

WELCOME! As members of the 2026 Class of the Victorian Society Summer Schools, you are now members of the Alumni Association of the Victorian Society Summer Schools. The Alumni Association is a membership organization whose primary purpose is to raise funds for scholarships for the three schools. For over a quarter of a century, the Alumni Association has helped provide student scholarships. We were able to provide $24,000 in scholarship funds to qualified students in the Classes of 2023 and 2024 who would not otherwise have been able to attend; and we were also able to donate $30,000 in scholarships for students attending the Newport, Chicago, and London Summer Schools in 2025. This year, we are able to provide $32,500 for scholarships. We raise money for these scholarships through our annual dues, from the net profit from Alumni Association sponsored foreign study tours, and especially from generous contributions from our alumni members.

As a Chapter of the Victorian Society in America (VSA), the Alumni Association is a 501(c)(3) organization managed by a separate, independent, member-elected, all-volunteer Board of Directors. There are separate annual dues for each organization. The Alumni Association exists to support and encourage the VSA as it fosters public appreciation and understanding of the artistic expression of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the United States by promoting the programs of the VSA Summer Schools; by providing opportunities for professional, educational and social interaction of the Summer Schools alumni through study tours, seminars and other activities; by providing consistent scholarship funds for the Summer Schools; and by encouraging participation in and scholarship through the Summer Schools.

As a member of the Alumni Association, you will receive periodic eNewsletters with information on the activities and status of the Summer Schools, articles by students on their summer school experience, updates on student activities as you continue your professional career, invitation to events supported by the Alumni Association, etc. For additional information, please visit our website at www.vsaalumni.org or contact me at dalamdin@gmail.com

Your current free membership will continue through 2026, at which time we will contact you to become a dues-paying member of the Alumni Association, with dues starting as low as $35 annually. Your membership and generous contributions will help us to continue to fulfill our mission to provide support for future Summer Schools students.

Best wishes for an incredibly happy and healthy summer, and a Summer School experience that will prove beneficial to you in the years ahead.

President

VICTORIAN SOCIETY SUMMER SCHOOLS 2026 REPORTS

2026 Summer Schools Overview

By Anne Mallek (London '02; Newport '09), VSA Executive Director and Summer Schools Administrator

The 2026 VSA Summer Schools welcomed 47 participants to Newport (15), Chicago (13) and London (19), ranging in age from 24 to 75, hailing from all over the United States as well as Canada, Mexico, Uruguay, the United Kingdom, the Czech Republic, and the Netherlands. They included graduate students, professionals in art, architecture, preservation and design, as well as summer schools alumni and retirees. All three programs introduced new staff in 2026, with directors **Dr. Willie Granston** (Newport '17) and **Dr. Joshua Mardell** (London '15) in Newport and London respectively, and new assistant director Sarah Holian in Chicago.

Currently, it looks like the overall financial picture for the three programs is one of a net income over $12,000, though this also includes scholarship funds and grants received. Tuition in 2026 was set at $3,700 for Newport, $3,400 for Chicago, and $7,000 for London. Over half of the participants in each program received scholarship funds — 11 for Newport ($34,325), 7 for Chicago ($17,500), and 9 for London ($52,850). As a result of the rising costs of travel, accommodation, food, etc., and the need to guarantee air-conditioned hotels on the London program given the severe heat waves in recent years, it is anticipated that tuitions may need to be reviewed for 2027. Attingham, a program of comparable length to the London Summer School, raised its tuition from $7,000 in 2025 to $7,575 in 2026.

In terms of content, all three programs saw the addition of new sites and new lectures, many related to efforts to ensure that the programs reflected new scholarship in the field, and a more equitable representation of class, gender and social histories of the period. Each of the programs also offered archives visits this year, which were very positively received by participants. As well, each program made an effort to offer more opportunities for group discussion, which many praised in their evaluations. While traffic and weather are ever unpredictable, despite a few such hiccups all three programs ran smoothly, with participants widely praising the quality of program content.

2026 also marked the 50th anniversary of the London Summer School, for which its director Dr. Mardell created a special hardbound book of the program notes as a keepsake for all participants, as well as booking a celebratory supper and concert at Wigmore Hall. These additional costs were approved for this year only and will not be included in 2027. That said, many London participants noted the value of having a physical copy of the program notes, something that has long been offered for London and for Newport, as well as for Chicago until 2023. Given online access to much of the relevant information, it is a question for the Summer School Committee and directors as to the value of a curated and printed booklet for each of the programs, especially in light of the proposed VSA Certificate Program.

Newport Summer School Report

By Peter Trippi (London '92; Newport '05), Assistant Director

The VSA's 2026 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 15 individuals enjoyed meeting like-minded people and sharing their enthusiasm for architecture, decorative arts, fine art, history, and preservation. As ever, the program afforded them a chance to hear from scholars in the field who collectively bring to bear decades of knowledge and expertise.

This was the first year the program was led by **Willie Granston**, PhD (who teaches at Trinity College, Hartford), and it was a joy and honor to assist him as he got off to an excellent start as Director. (Willie attended the program as a student in 2017 and eight years later "shadowed" the program's founding Director, Prof. **Richard Guy Wilson**.) I was excited by Willie's additions to the curriculum, among them legendary Hammersmith Farm with its breathtaking vistas, a look inside the 1877–78 house known as Snug Harbor being lovingly restored by its young owners, and a walk focused on efforts to ameliorate flooding risks in The Point neighborhood, led by the Newport Restoration Foundation's Gina Tangorra and Margaret Back.

Speaking of legendary, it was an extra privilege to welcome back **Richard Guy Wilson** (London '76), who spent two days with us. His first day focused on — what else? — the early achievements of McKim, Mead & White, including his brilliant lecture and then visits to two extraordinary private houses that the firm designed in the 1880s. On the following day Richard brought us to Providence and Pawtucket, a sunny day that concluded, as it has so often before, with a festive reception sponsored by the Alumni Association at Philmoney, the family home of our lecturer and supporter **Pauline Metcalf** (London '80 and Newport '05). Another day was spent exploring the Massachusetts towns of North Easton and Fall River, offering further context for how Newport relates to, and differs from, its neighbors in New England.

Our other lecturers included Akeia de Barros Gomes, Leslie Jones, Paul Miller, and John Tschirch, whose talks contributed significantly to participants' understanding of key events, artistic trends, and people who had an impact on the unique culture of Newport. I myself was honored to present a lecture focused on the influence of British architects and thinkers on 19th-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.

Accommodated in historic Ochre Lodge at Salve Regina University, this year's participants were engaged and thoughtful in their reactions to the visits Willie had scheduled. As ever, the calendar was packed and the pace demanding, and I dare say most of us fell into bed exhausted but happy. The participants bonded well, making new friends who will surely keep in touch for years to come, as my own 2005 cohort has. Two afternoons were left open so that participants could visit sites not already in the curriculum that interested them particularly.

As usual, there was an impressive amount of partying. Many of our hosts laid on drinks and nibbles for us, and we remain especially grateful for the lavish annual reception hosted by Bill, Alison, and Hope Vareika at their wonderful gallery on Bellevue Avenue, William Vareika Fine Arts. (Bill also gave us a tour of Salve Regina's chapel designed by Robert A.M. Stern.) Additional kudos to Anne Fairfax and Richard Sammons for hosting the farewell dinner at their impressive home, Bois Doré, and to Leslie Jones of the

Preservation Society of Newport County, who hosted a reception on the porch of the Isaac Bell House after her insightful tour of its unique interiors. Gazing across its green lawn toward Bellevue Avenue on a mild summer evening, we drew as close to Gilded Age conviviality as modern people possibly can.

Eleven scholarships were awarded for the 2026 Newport Program: 9 full, 1 three-quarter, and 1 half. The total amount of the 11 scholarships was $34,325.

Chicago Summer School Report

By Sarah Holian, Assistant Director

The Chicago Summer School 2026 welcomed a cohort of 13 students to the Windy City, 11 from the United States and two international members. Led by Director Diane Dillon, Assistant Director Sarah Holian, and Founding Director **John Waters** (Newport '07; London '13, '22), the program followed an established framework of lectures, tours, and visits developed during the past 11 years of the school.

The group was introduced to one another and to many speakers during a cocktail hour at the Cliff Dwellers Club. Two additional days were allotted to exploring downtown Chicago. The mornings included lectures at the Union League Club by Carl Smith, John Waters, Anne Sullivan, Diane Dillon, and Sarah Holian to create a rich historical context to begin exploring the city. The first two days also included afternoon walking tours of the Loop area, an in-depth tour of the Rookery led by Gunny Harboe, and visits to Jane Addams Hull-House, the Driehaus Museum, and the Art Institute of Chicago.

The following three days allowed for the group to explore sites further afield from the Loop using a rented coach. Each day focused on a group of different neighborhoods and/or suburbs. The first day concentrated on Chicago's West Side and Oak Park (Columbus Park, Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio, Unity Temple, a Prairie Style walking tour led by John and Sarah, a pre-Prairie walking tour with **Andrew Elders** (Newport '17), visits to George Maher's Pleasant Home and architect Frederick Schock's own home, along with short stops at Frank Lloyd Wright's Walser House and William Drummond's First Congregational Church). The group also spent a day to tour the Charnley-Perskey House on the Gold Coast with Anne Bird, a walking tour of Graceland Cemetery led by John, and a visit to the Arts and Crafts collection at Crab Tree Farm in Lake Bluff, Illinois. On the final day, we took the bus to the South Side of Chicago visiting Hyde Park (Robie House and a University of Chicago walking tour led by Diane Dillon), followed by a walking tour of Jackson Park and Wooded Island led by Diane and John, before driving farther south to the town of Pullman, where Bill Tyre and the Pullman House Project hosted the group.

The final day of Chicago's 2026 Summer School began with an in-depth visit to Adler & Sullivan's Auditorium Theater and Hotel Lobby (now Roosevelt University), tours of Café Brauer and Alfred Caldwell Lily Pond in Lincoln Park, before a walking tour of Prairie Avenue, the Second Presbyterian Church and Glessner House. A celebration dinner was held at the Glessner House to conclude the 2026 program.

<u>Changes to the 2026 Schedule</u>

New additions to the 2026 itinerary included the following: a visit to Jane Addams Hull-House Museum, a guided visit to the Ryerson and Burnham Art and Architecture Archives at the Art Institute of Chicago with Archivist Jessica Smith, a tour of the American work at the Art Institute by Curator Elizabeth McGoey, an excellent walking tour of Columbus Park by Jens Jensen scholar Robert Grese, a pre-

Prairie architecture tour led by Andrew Elders, a visit to the privately owned Frederick Schock Home, and an interior tour of Dwight Perkin's Café Brauer in Lincoln Park.

While all participants responded enthusiastically to the reorganized visit to the Art Institute, some felt that they would like to have had more free time to spend at the museum. Most students reported enjoying the rest of the newly scheduled visits, though there were surprisingly strong feelings about the Hull House visit. Two students felt that it was a highlight of the program, while two others found it to be among the least engaging. If the program visits Hull House in the future, providing a stronger context for the importance of the site during lectures would better support the visit.

Lectures and Tours

The lectures and tours went smoothly and were received well by the students. One of the few issues we faced as a group was when inclement weather forced our walking tour of McCormickville into the Murphy Auditorium at the Driehaus Museum before the scheduled independent visit. One of the attendants was upset that we had congregated as a group for the last part of the walking tour lecture and wanted to be sure that we were not leading a group tour of the entire museum. The situation was calmly resolved and everyone was able to visit the museum and stay as long as they liked. In the future, we would need to either visit the Driehaus earlier in the day to have a scheduled group tour or to conclude any discussion before entering the museum.

The only other minor change to the itinerary was the hour-plus traffic delay on the interstate as we returned on the coach bus from Lake Forest and we were unable to visit the Caldwell Lily Pool as it closed early for a private event. Fortunately, we were able to combine the visit with Café Brauer for another day. When we met to recap after the Summer School, we discussed the possibilities of another visit in Lake Forest for the afternoon knowing that we would return later in the day, or, alternately, scheduling the Crab Tree Farm visit earlier in the morning so traffic would not be as troublesome.

Accommodations and Transportation

This was the first year that the Victorian Society in America hosted the group at the Union League Club. All the participants found the accommodations to be comfortable, though a few were disappointed by the lack of refrigerators in the rooms to store food and/or medicine. The club was able to accommodate the refrigerator for medication, but there were not enough appliances for the entire group to each have one in their room. Breakfast was not included in the room rate and was an additional expense for the participants. A benefit of contracting accommodation with the Union League Club was the on-site use of a convenient and well-equipped seminar room for lectures during the first two days.

The 2026 program also marked the first time that students were supplied with a seven-day transit pass for travel within Chicago. While most participants found this to be a terrific perk and easy alternative to taking ride-share services, others felt a bit intimidated to navigate public transportation in the evening.

As in previous years, coach buses were contracted from Chicago Classic Coach. By contracting three rather than four days with the bus company and supplying participants with the transit passes, the transportation budget was reduced.

Meals

In the tradition of changes from the previous year's program, the Chicago Summer School provided a welcome cocktail hour, a picnic lunch at Crab Tree Farm, and a celebratory closing dinner for the 2026 cohort. One student had a very restricted diet due to recently diagnosed medical issues that were successfully negotiated through the course of the program.

The program received unanimous positive feedback about the closing dinner at Glessner House. People commented on the Victorian setting, festive atmosphere and enjoyable conversation, and the delicious meal. The lunch at Crab Tree Farm also earned high marks, with the one exception of one person's lunch containing an unexpected ingredient. Everyone also enjoyed the atmosphere and relaxed social setting at the Cliff Dweller's Club cocktail hour, though some mentioned that more formal introductions or a seated meal would encourage members to establish closer social bonds earlier in the program.

Scholarships

Seven scholarships totaling $17,500 (3 full, 2 three-quarter, 2 half) were awarded for the 2026 Chicago Program.

London Summer School Report

By Anne Mallek, Assistant Director

Although it was a hot summer in Great Britain, this year's class of 19 participants was an engaged, thoughtful and very prompt group. Led by **Dr. Joshua Mardell** in his first year as program director, the group covered over 900 miles together, visiting the Charles Brooking Collection of historic architectural elements in Whitchurch, the Shah Jahan Mosque in Woking, Oxford, Liverpool, Manchester, Surrey, and Sussex, England, and Cardiff, Wales. Class members, ages 24 to 75, represented students in interior design, material culture, art history, as well as archivists, architects, professors, conservators, and preservation professionals. They came from eight states, as well as from England and the Netherlands, with three returning alumni from the 1980s and 1990s.

While the extreme heat, both at the beginning and end of the program, made for some discomfort, the program ran incredibly smoothly (no illnesses, no delays!), with the usual full days. Our coach drivers were uniformly professional, prepared and friendly, and deft at dealing with any issues (one in Cardiff where the coach lost power during the group's transfer from Cardiff Castle to Castell Coch — while the coach was being serviced, the coach company called cabs to ferry all participants back to the hotel at the end of the day). Our hotels were clean and adequate (though the London hotel is without AC), tour guides excellent, lectures both relevant to the itinerary and engaging. As Royal College of Art faculty, Dr. Mardell was able to secure their lecture auditorium for our group one morning, and on another to negotiate a visit to the Paul Mellon Centre for a day with their Gavin Stamp archive as well as an evening of free public lectures (which were also live-streamed on Zoom).

As always, we had a wonderful reception at the Victorian Society headquarters in Bedford Park, supported generously by the Alumni Association. Participants always enjoy the opportunity of meeting staff and members of the organization, and its director James Hughes gave a lovely speech in tribute to the relationship between the Victorian Society and the VSA, and the significance of marking the 50th anniversary of the London Summer School. Additionally, to mark the 50th anniversary, Dr. Mardell negotiated the special addition of a concert of Victorian

music at Wigmore Hall with an accompanying supper.

This year offered many new and diverse additions, from the group's first afternoon spent at the London architectural archive of Drawing Matter (each participant chose a work to speak about by way of introducing themselves to the group), the inclusion of the oldest purpose-built mosque in the UK and Princes Road Synagogue in Liverpool, to lectures addressing Women and Victorian Architecture, Queering the National Trust, and a Muslim History of Victorian Architecture. Dr. Mardell established the arc of the program with an introductory talk on the first day, and continued to weave together the various sites with shorter lectures delivered on the coach. Participant evaluations were strong in their praise of the quality of the speakers, sites, and structure of the program, as well as the opportunities for discussion, which were more numerous than in previous years.

The one consistent complaint this year was largely to do with lack of air-conditioning in some of the places we stayed, including our London hotel (which alone accounted for nine nights of the program) — this in light of the heat waves sweeping through England and the Continent, both at the start of our program and at its conclusion (over 90 degrees in London). Remarkably, we encountered absolutely no rain this year throughout our travels — even Liverpool was over 80 degrees.

Tuition this year remained at $7,000 (although Attingham raised their tuition in 2026 to $7,575). We may consider booking a London hotel with air-conditioning in 2027, which will likely necessitate a higher overall charge for accommodation. With regard to funds received and distributed, six full scholarships, one three-quarter scholarship, and two half scholarships were awarded for London (for a total of $52,850 — $23,250 LESS than in 2025). There were eight full-pay participants. Dr. Mardell successfully applied to the Albert Dawson Trust for a full scholarship for the program, which in the end was awarded to participant Max Livesey. We will be applying again to the Trust for 2027, and hoping that they will support one, or possibly two, full scholarships (as they do for Attingham).

All evaluations suggest that participants will be recommending the summer school to their colleagues and friends with great enthusiasm, and for the second year in a row we have had a larger contingent of graduate students on the program.

VSA CHICAGO SUMMER SCHOOL 2026 OPENING RECEPTION

By Diane Dillon, Chicago Summer School Director

The 2026 Chicago Summer School held its opening reception at the Cliff Dwellers Club on Tuesday, June 9, 2026. We enjoyed drinks and snacks supplied by the club on the terrace overlooking Grant Park, Millennium Park, and Lake Michigan. The weather was perfect and the clear skies enabled us to see from above many of the sites that we would tour in the coming days.

This was the first year in which we held the opening reception before any of the formal course sessions had taken place. In previous years, we staged the reception after the first full day of lectures and tours. Our motivation in holding the reception a day earlier this year was multiple. First, we wanted to give participants the opportunity to meet each other and the faculty in advance of the formal

start of the course. Most participants traveled to Chicago on Tuesday, so scheduling the reception that evening welcomed them to the city and added a festive focus to their first night in town. Staging the party on Tuesday also freed up Wednesday evening for our visit to the Driehaus Museum, enabling us to take advantage of that museum's extended Wednesday hours. We felt that this schedule change worked well. Next year, we plan to refine the plan by adding a brief introductory gathering at the hotel before we walk over to the Cliff Dwellers' Club. This will allow us all to begin to learn each other's names and go over some of the logistical details for the upcoming week before we dive into the reception.

The 2026 Chicago class on the terrace at the Cliff Dwellers' Club during the opening reception. Everyone appreciated the great weather and the fabulous views from the terrace. Photo courtesy of VSA

In addition to the refreshments and the views, participants enjoyed seeing the historic, art-filled Cliff Dwellers' Club. Summer school faculty member and former assistant director **Andrew Elders** (Newport '17) gave a brief talk about the history and current acuities of the club. Andrew and another faculty member, Anne Sullivan, are members of the club and so served as our official hosts.

The reception also provided an occasion for the participants to meet the founding directors of the Chicago Summer School, **Tina Strauss** (Newport '05) and **John Waters**. John told the group about the history of the program and its evolution over its first decade.

Tina Strauss, Andrew Elders, and John Waters (L to R) on the terrace at the Cliff Dwellers' Club during the opening reception for the 2026 Chicago Summer School. The Pritzker Pavilion at Millennium Park (designed by Frank Gehry) appears behind Andrew's right shoulder and the East Randolph Street skyline is behind it. Lake Michigan is visible over John's left shoulder. Photo courtesy of Diane Dillon.

Because the refreshments were so delicious and generous, some participants did not feel the need to have dinner afterwards. But those who were still hungry were invited to dine at the Cliff Dwellers' club with Andrew and others that evening, or go out to a nearby restaurant in the company of new-found friends. Because the club is only a few blocks from the hotel, no one got lost on their way back to their summer school digs.

UPDATE ON ACHP'S PROPOSAL TO WEAKEN PROTECTIONS FOR HISTORIC PROPERTIES

This past August, the Alumni Association and the VSA informed its members and friends of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's (ACHP) proposal to change key aspects of the regulations that implement Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). Section 106 of the NHPA has been vitally important to identifying and protecting historic properties throughout the United States the law was enacted in 1966. The Alumni Newsletter no. 73, distributed on August 11th, includes an overview of Section 106 and the ACHP's proposed changes to its implementing regulations. On August 20th, the VSA Board of Directors sent an organization-wide email that highlights how Section 106 of the NHPA would be weakened, and asked each of us to join them in expressing concern and objection to the proposed revisions.

As of this writing, the 30-day public comment period has not yet opened, as the ACHP's proposed revisions are still undergoing an interagency review. The ACHP will hold its next meeting on Tuesday, November 10th, so new information may become available subsequently. The ACHP will provide updates on its website: https://www.achp.gov/news. For additional information, resources, and suggested actions, consult the websites of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers. Furthermore, in addition to the ACHP's proposed regulatory changes to Section 106 of the NHPA, a recent NPR news report ("U.S. historic preservation law faces the most serious threat in its 60-year history," October 25, 2026) also describes a Senate proposal that would substantially alter and weaken Section 106, and the coalition of organizations and Tribal Nations that is fighting to protect Section 106.

2027 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

The Alumni Association of the Victorian Society Summer Schools has begun our annual membership renewal drive. Thanks to your continuing generous donations, **the Alumni Association contributed $32,500 towards Summer School Scholarships in 2026.** Membership dues directly support this effort—and the need for scholarships is expected to increase in 2027. We need the support of all alumni. Your participation in the Alumni Association is vital to our ability to continue to provide scholarships to the students of the 2027 class and beyond. Your membership helps sustain the programs and people who shaped our shared experiences. You'll also enjoy:

- Receive and contribute to the Alumni Association newsletter
- Invitations to exclusive Alumni study tours and other events
- Ongoing connection to fellow alumni through our Facebook page and member network

Please take a moment today to **Renew Your Membership for 2027**. Be on the lookout for a renewal notice in the mail. For those who do not receive the renewal notice by mail, you can use the form on the following page or through the PayPal link to renew. The renewal form and PayPal link are also available on the Alumni Association website. Alternatively, feel free to email Alumni President **David Lamdin** at president@vsaAlumni.org, and he will provide you with the renewal form.

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

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James Russiello, Treasurer, Alumni Association of the Victorian Society Summer Schools
316 East 88th St, New York, NY 10128-4909

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The History Of the VSA: Share *Your Part* of the Story!

James Russiello (Newport '12 and London '13), Alumni Association Treasurer, is researching the history of the Victorian Society in America and its associated summer schools. He would appreciate hearing from any early members, especially if you are willing to share any photos or ephemera. James wrote a short article published in the Victorian Society New York's Spring 2026 issue of Panorama on page 16, and is looking to interview others and gather more information about the Society in the 1960s through the early 1980s. If you have any information you would like to share with James, please contact him at membership@vsaAlumni.org.

VSA SUMMER SCHOOL APPLICATIONS

Applications are now open for the VSA 2027 Summer Schools! Join a VSA Summer School next summer to explore Gilded Age Newport, the roots of American Modernism in Chicago, and British architecture, design and culture across the 19th century. Full and partial scholarships available! For more details about the programs and online applications, visit **https://victoriansociety.org/summer-schools/**

2026–2027 VSA ONLINE LECTURE SERIES

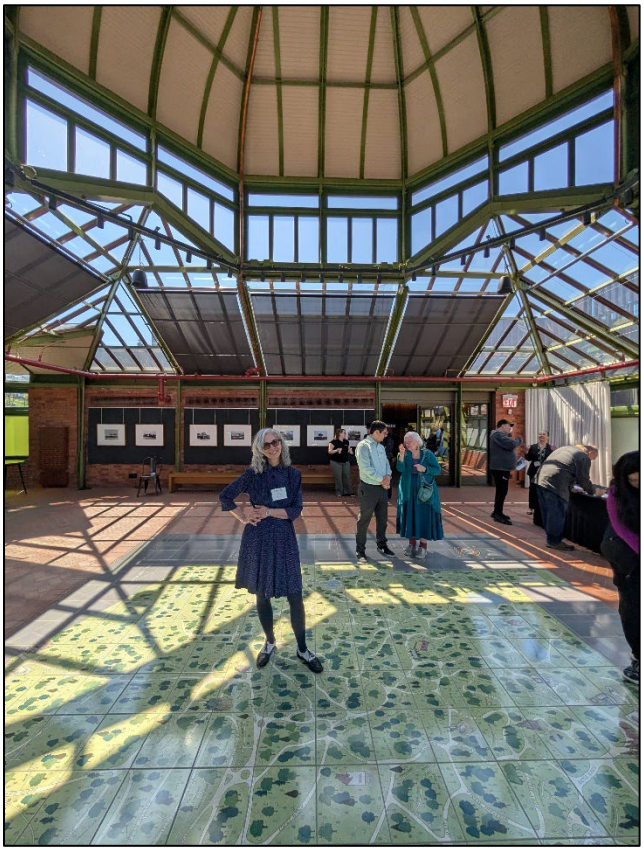
The seventh season of the VSA online lecture series begins in November. Lecture topics include the work of Victorian architect Bruce Price, the story of the Mark Twain House, and the factory town of Pullman in Chicago, as well as new publications on subjects ranging from the archives of architect H. H. Richardson, to Women Pioneers of the Arts and Crafts Movement and Standen, the last great domestic commission of English architect Philip Webb (and an essential site visit for the London Summer School). To view details and register visit **https://victoriansociety.org/lectures-7/**.

ALUMNI NEWS

Dr. András Jeney's (London '18, Newport '22) research paper "The Roman Cement and Its Usage in Hungary: The History of a British Invention in the Heart of Central Europe" was published in the Hungarian journal *Építés – Építészettudomány*, which is an academic peer-reviewed journal focused on engineering and architecture that is published by the Hungarian publishing house Akadémiai Kiadó in cooperation with the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The paper examines the characteristics and history of hydraulic Roman cement and explores the usage of this material in Hungary during the 19th and 20th centuries. The online version of the paper was published in March 2026, and the 2026 volume of this journal was officially released in September.

Dr. Jeney also wrote a book review of *A.W.N. Pugin* by David Frazer Lewis (2021) that was published in September 2025 in *Acta Historiae Artium*, an art history journal published by Akadémiai Kiadó. His article on the Pugin book was well-received. Consequently, Dr. Jeney received a request to rewrite it for the *Journal of Historic Buildings & Places*, which is published annually by the organization Historic Buildings & Places to promote the study of architectural history and conservation. Dr. Jeney's book review appeared in this year's edition (Volume 5, 2026).

Sara Durkacs (Newport '16), former membership secretary of the Alumni Association of the Victorian Society Summer Schools and Victorian Society New York, has retired after more than 12 years of service as Vice President of Lot Holder Relations at the Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn, where she also served as Secretary of the Board of Trustees. She is now consulting for the Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx. Both cemeteries are National Historic Landmarks. As she cheerfully announced on her retirement card: "*I've retired from The Green-Wood Cemetery! I'll go back when I'm dead.*"



Sara Durkacs seen here standing on a tiled map of the cemetery at the opening of the adaptively reused 1895 Weir Greenhouse Individual Landmark, which was restored in 2018–2025, and expanded with a welcome and education center as the The Green-House at Green-Wood.
Photo courtesy of James Russiello.

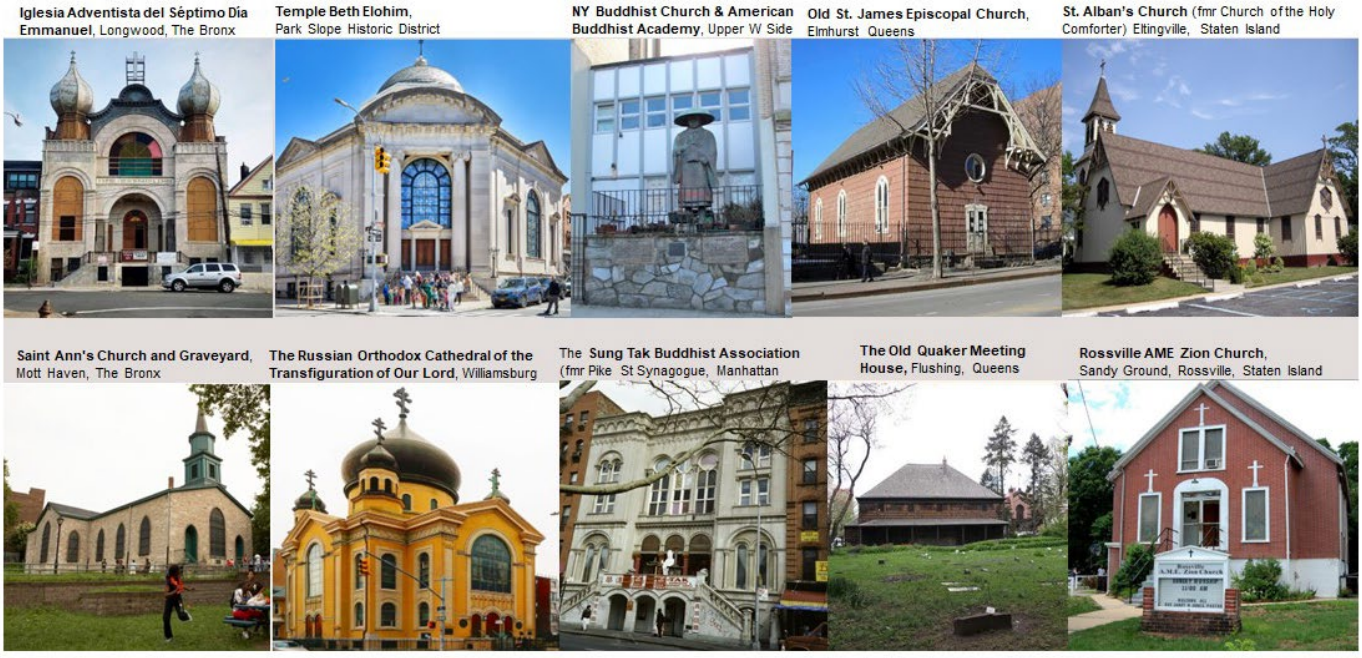
As part of the fifth and final class in a free series on New York City Faith-Based Organization Housing Development, organized virtually on Zoom by the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development, **James Russiello** (Newport '12 and London '13) and his agency counsel presented this past April on the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission and the interest in developing affordable housing on

land owned by faith-based organizations (FBOs) and other mission-driven organizations (MDOs). They will be repeating this free presentation on Zoom on October 29th at 6 pm. Click here to register.

A report last year from NYU's Furman Center found that FBOs own more than 84 million square feet of land in New York City (equivalent to around 13 percent of Manhattan land area). Approximately 70 million square feet of this unused floor area, and 5.5 million square feet of land consists of vacant or surface parking lots, which alone could yield around 22,000 units of housing. As part of the mayor's agenda to assist FBOs and increase the supply of affordable housing, the series was developed with input from the city's churches, temples, synagogues, mosques, and more, on better understanding how to develop their properties. Since its creation in 1965, the Landmarks Preservation Commission has designated more than 700 FBO-owned buildings out of the more than 38,500 buildings and sites (approximately 4 percent of New York City's building stock), including more than 1,473 individual landmarks and 159 historic districts across the five boroughs. The Commission has approved additive alterations and adaptive reuse at these structures for residential use and/or mixed use with the FBO retained on site since the early 1970s, often with supportive testimony from the Victorian Society.

The series of classes, which was offered in April and October, is designed to walk participants step-by-step through the development process and help them establish necessary connections within relevant government agencies. The goal is to educate FBOs about the housing development process, explain how City agencies are involved, outline what to expect when working with various city agencies, and provide support and available resources. What regulations must I abide by as I carry out my project? What is the permitting and construction monitoring process for multifamily, mixed-use buildings?

James was the agency staff member responsible for handling the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) for St. Mark's Church-in-the-Bowery, approved by the Commission in July, which will fund ongoing



maintenance work at the individual landmark church complex over the next decade. The approval is the first for an FBO under new zoning changes. By making it easier for landmarks like St. Mark's Church-in-the-Bowery to transfer development rights to nearby sites, the City is helping property owners, including religious institutions, fund essential maintenance while supporting new residential development nearby.

Additionally on October 17th, **James Russiello** presented on Fonthill Castle, a Gothic Revival-style castle on the Hudson River in the Riverdale neighborhood of the Bronx, New York City. Fonthill Castle was built in 1848–1852 by New York architect Thomas C. Smith as the Edwin Forrest House to house his library, possibly to designs by Alexander Jackson Davis, and features a well-preserved Norman-style interior. James presented on the history and architecture of the NYC individual landmark from within the rarely opened historic site, located at the heart of the University of Mount Saint Vincent campus.

James Russiello presenting at Fonthill Castle. Photo courtesy of James Russiello.

IN MEMORIAM

Peter Howell (1941–2026), architectural historian, classicist, and former Chairman of the British Victorian Society (1987–1993), passed away on August 15th, at age 85. Howell's six-decade crusade to defend 19th-century architectural heritage began in 1962 when, as a Balliol College undergraduate at Oxford University, he rallied against a proposal to demolish Alfred Waterhouse's Broad Street front. His petition brought him into contact with Victorian Society founder John Betjeman, and in 1965 Sir Nikolaus Pevsner appointed him to the organization's Buildings Committee—a post he held continuously for nearly 60 years.

Howell joined the British Victorian Society in 1962, a few years after its founding, and was involved with their Anglo-American summer programs in the late 1960s, and was a lecturer and organizer at the first London Summer School run in 1975 by the Victorian Society in America, a tradition that he continued to take part in for half a century, as recalled in Gavin Stamp's short history of the London Summer School on its 40th anniversary: "certain

Peter Howell while lecturing to the Victorian Society in America's London Summer School on July 2013 at Keble College Chapel, Keble College, Oxford University. Photo by James Russiello

visits which continue, such as...a visit to Oxford (not Cambridge) always led by Peter Howell, took place in that first year." His involvement in the VSA's summer program was the longest in the program's history, and the longest continuous official involvement with the Victorian Society in America, itself. Many summer school alumni fondly remember his beaming enthusiasm as Howell displayed unearthed archival drawings at Oxford's Pusey House, or walks through the college quads of Worcester, Keble, and Balliol.

A leading authority on 19th-century ecclesiastical architecture, Howell brought equal parts erudition, outrage, and wit to preservation battles. Alongside his work for the Society, he contributed extensively to both the Buildings of England and Buildings of Wales series, served for years on the Westminster Cathedral Art and Architecture Committee, the Roman Catholic Bishops' Conference for England and Wales Department of Art and Architecture Liturgy Commission, English Heritage's Churches Committee, the Archdiocese of Westminster Historic Churches Committee, and the Roman Catholic Historic Churches Committee for Wales and Herefordshire. Howell's extensive number of publications included articles for the Victorian Society's magazine *The Victorian*, distinguished books on the Roman poet Martial, travel guidebooks on Wales, and a number of scholarly works on churches and ecclesiastical architects. His most recent publications include *John Francis Bentley: The Architect of Westminster Cathedral* (Victorian Society, 2020), *Triumphal Arches: From the Roman Empire to the Modern Age* (2021, Unicorn), and the architectural monograph on *George Edmund Street* in 2024, which he completed following the death of Victorian Society members and authors Geoff Brandwood and Peter C.W. Taylor.

The UK Victorian Society and *The Guardian* newspaper ran excellent obituaries.

Source: Stamp, Gavin. 2014. "The Victorian Society in America London Summer Schools, 1974–2014: A Short History of the London Summer School," *Nineteenth Century* 34, no. 2 (Fall 2014):32–33.

2026 VICTORIAN SOCIETY SUMMER SCHOOLS STUDENT ESSAYS

Newport Summer School 2026 Essay
—Haley Barber

Newport Summer School was recommended to me by a colleague at a Gilded Age house museum. When I discussed the trip with others in my professional circles, I learned that many had attended in the past and had wonderful things to say about the program. After completing the program myself I can now join their ranks as an advocate for the Newport Summer School and will certainly

Haley Barber has worked in historic house museums for seven years and is currently the Collections and Exhibitions Manager at Maymont, a Gilded Age estate in Richmond, Virginia. She oversees the day-to-day care of collections including conservation and preservation projects, and supports museum operations. Haley has an undergraduate degree in history from Durham University, UK.

recommend it to anyone working in a historic house museum or similar field.

Though I have always been in support of classroom learning, being able to study architecture as a primary source and study the historic structure in person adds another layer to any educational experience. The structure of the Newport Summer School was immersive and detailed. Each day was full from start to finish with a variety of instruction that allowed us to both learn about and experience the architecture, history, and design that Newport has to offer.

The scope of content that was offered was a great asset to the program. Beginning with Colonial Newport and working through eras provided the background and context needed to fully understand how the architecture of the Gilded Age came to be. Newport is the perfect backdrop for this progression through history and design, as so many styes and developments are represented. The diversity of architectural styles and building functions also allowed for better understanding of the history and evolution of the city. Visiting the diverse homes, summer cottages, churches, and public buildings gave a sense of how the city functioned in the past, and how it values its history and preservation now.

The variety of individuals that taught us was also an invaluable aspect of the program. Being able to hear from preservation professionals, tour guides, homeowners, and enthusiasts gave different perspectives on historic architecture and the ways that it can be used and interpreted today. These distinct viewpoints provided a wonderful perspective of how and why these structures were preserved, adapted, and maintained over the years and through different challenges. It was beneficial to hear about the adaptive reuse in many of the private homes that we visited, just as it was to hear about historic preservation in the historic house museums. The common thread through all these varied properties and individuals was the appreciation of and passion for the architecture and design of these historic structures, and the desire to see them preserved for the future.

I have worked in historic house museums for several years, and I am currently the Collections Manager at Maymont, a Gilded Age house museum in Richmond, Virginia. My focus, therefore, is on late 19th and early 20th century decorative arts and their place in a formerly private collection. One of the greatest benefits of the Newport Summer School in relation to my current work was putting a Southern Gilded Age estate in context with the rest of American architecture. Richmond has many other buildings of the era, but Maymont is the only example that is well-preserved and open to the public. Newport, with so many wonderful examples of significant architecture concentrated in such a small area, is an incredibly valuable resource that was shared with this program.

What I have learned through this program has contextualized the era both in history and in the history of architecture and design, which will be crucial to me in my line of work. Seeing comparable sites to my workplace has been incredibly valuable to my understanding of the Gilded Age and its place in history. Observing the differences between a suburban home like Maymont and a seaside cottage like the Breakers has also been helpful to understanding the diversity of the period as well as the similarities. The scope, organization, and volume of what was explored at the Newport Summer School has already been, and will continue to be, beneficial to the work that I do now, and the work that I hope to continue doing in historic house museums.

Newport Summer School 2026 Essay
— Xiao Yang

Xiao Yang is a PhD student in Design Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She is interested in children's material culture, American design history, and cross-cultural object circulation.

I still remember on my first afternoon at Hunter House, our guide pointed to a small mother-of-pearl tea caddy and explained why it was fitted with a lock: tea was so costly that colonial households kept it under guard. The tea itself came from China, the sugar from the Caribbean, and the porcelain cups, fitted with handles, since American and European drinkers, unlike their Chinese counterparts, insisted on them, were made to order for this very trade. I had spent the morning thinking about 18th-century Newport as a story of American cabinetmakers and English pattern books. Standing in front of that tea set, I was reminded that the "local" objects I study are rarely only local; they are knots in much longer threads of exchange.

The Summer School gave me that kind of moment again and again, because its method is to put you inside the object rather than in front of a slide of it. For instance, standing in the ballroom at Marble House, I learned that its trophies and boiserie were, in several cases, salvaged fragments of demolished Parisian townhouses, smuggled past customs inside upholstered furniture and reassembled into new rooms decades later. The room was not a copy of the 18th century; it was the 18th century, cut apart and reconstituted, jigsaw-like, to serve a 19th-century fantasy of continuity. This distinction between "restoration" and "reassembly" has redefined the way I think about "authenticity" in the objects I study, since these objects themselves are often the products of similar acts of transformation and reassembly.

From a professional standpoint, this program has helped me think more critically about evidence. Watching conservators and curators walk us through the physical layers of a house — paint stratigraphy at the Vernon House, and the discovery of a shoe hidden in a hearth for luck — showed me a kind of close material reading that complements, rather than replaces, the archival work at the center of my own research on 20th-century children's material culture and transnational design history. I came away wanting to be more patient with objects themselves, not just with the paper trail around them.

In addition to the professional insights I gained, the week gave me something harder to name but just as valuable: nine days among scholars, curators, and preservationists who had each come from a different corner of the field, but who shared the same appetite for 19th-century architecture, decorative arts, and the layered history of a single American city. As someone trained in design history rather than architecture, I found their enthusiasm contagious, and they were generous enough to let me ask untrained questions about their own fields. It wasn't until I was immersed in the experience that I truly appreciated just how delightful it was to spend a week with such a group of people.

I left Newport with a much fuller sense of what "immersive" scholarship can mean, a stack of course materials and a few small souvenirs, and new friendships and a genuinely happy set of memories from a summer of learning. I am very grateful to the Victorian Society in America and to the Summer Schools Committee for making the week possible.

DONATIONS TO THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OF THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY SUMMER SCHOOLS

Thanks to your continuing generous donations, the Alumni Association was able to donate $32,500 towards Summer Schools Scholarships in 2026, which was about one-third of the total scholarships awarded to 2026 students. Requests for 2027 scholarships are expected to exceed 2026 levels. In order for the Alumni Association to try to keep pace with the increasing demand, and with stock market valuations reaching all-time highs, now is the perfect time to start seriously thinking about making a **Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD)** to meet the **Required Minimum Distribution (RMD)** for 2026 from your **Individual Retirement Account (IRA).**

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