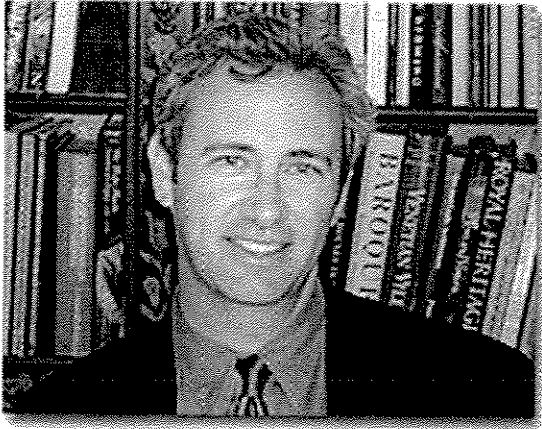


"A Beaux Arts Transformation: A Case Study of the
History and Preservation of the Ochre Point District in
Newport, Rhode Island"

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In the period between 1890 and 1920, the leading architects in the United States created an enclave of Beaux-Arts inspired houses and landscapes for the nation's most powerful families in the section of Newport, Rhode Island known as Ochre Point. The small, seaside town of Newport was the country's elite resort, a gathering place for the rich, the powerful and the fashionable.



John Tschirch

The leaders of the architectural establishment, such as Richard Morris Hunt, who was the first American to attend the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, Henry Hobson Richardson, who followed Hunt as the second American at the Ecole, Charles Follen McKim, Stanford White, Robert Swain Peabody, John Goddard Stearns, Charles Adams Platt and John Russell Pope, achieved professional fame and financial fortune building houses on Ochre Point, which was a veritable laboratory for experimentation with domestic design. Their clients included the Lorillards, Vanderbilts, VanAlens, and Goelets, all socially prominent with vast industrial, financial and real

estate fortunes. These families embraced beaux-arts architecture as the expression of their preeminent position in social, economic, artistic and cultural spheres.

The Newport summer colony brought an urban sensibility to Ochre Point, creating a manicured and luxurious enclave on what had been the windswept meadows along a rugged coastline. The construction of opulent Beaux-Arts style houses in Newport elicited immediate commentary from architectural critics, leading literary figures, and the popular press. The idea of the millionaire and the mansion entered American culture during the 1890's and was the subject of debate, interpretation and general fascination.

Newport, specifically the great houses of Ochre Point, instantly became the nationally recognized landmark of a new American architectural and cultural transformation in the years around 1900. The creation of the Ochre Point enclave, its important role in the literary dialogue in American architecture in the early years of the 20th century, and the preservation efforts to save it in the last half of the century provides a case study in the history and preservation of American architecture. The Ochre Point district in Newport possessed the ideal physical conditions for the creation of an enclave of summer houses. Comprised of 230 acres of land perched along thirty foot high cliffs overlooking the Atlantic Ocean, the district has spectacular natural scenery and a flat topography well suited to the cultivation of rare specimen trees, gardens and extensive lawns as settings for (1) grand houses.

Located at the southern end of Aquidneck Island, the city of Newport and its environs has a south facing coast warmed by the waters of the Gulf Stream. This mild coastal climate and pleasure seeking inhabitants gained the area the title the "Eden of America" as early as (2) the 18th century, when Newport first attracted summer visitors. During the early 19th century, the town continued to grow as a resort attracting the socially prominent as well as the artistic and

literary. Ochre Point was a windswept meadow until the mid-19th century, when a building boom began in the construction of cottages for Newport's burgeoning summer colony.

During the years between 1850 and 1890, Ochre Point was divided into house lots, streets were established and the district was filled with villas according to the dictates of fashion. The planning of the district was urban from the start. Cliff Walk, a public right of access established in the 17th century, extended along the entire eastern side shoreline of Ochre Point. Roads intersected the cliff walk at several points, thus, Ochre Point was intended to be an open landscape, accessible by foot traffic, carriages and horses, where villas were designed for display and an active social life of an urbane elite who formed the Newport summer colony. This primary social function would dominate the district regardless of changes in architectural tastes. Italianate, Stick Style, and Queen Anne Revival style summer houses were built by leading architects such as Richard Morris Hunt, Henry Hobson Richardson, Peabody and Stearns and McKim, Mead and White. Newport architects such as George Champlin Mason and Dudley Newton also played a crucial role in promoting the development of the district as a site for summer villas and began to build substantial houses for old New York families such as the Schermerhorns and Van Alens. This group of architects was shaping the course of the architectural profession in the United States and their Newport work was central in establishing their national reputations. The architectural establishment and the architectural press, both in their infant stages, viewed Newport as central to American architectural discussion, debate, and patronage.

Newport was a showcase for the newest trends in domestic design, which were duly reported in the architectural press. For example, H.H. Richardson's Queen Anne Revival style house for William Watts Sherman on Ochre Point appeared in *The New York Sketchbook of Architecture* in 1875. By the 1880's, an architect working on a Newport villa was assured of publication in the growing architectural press. The villas built by the Boston based architectural firm of Peabody and Stearns for the Lorillard family, *The Breakers* (1877) and *Vinland* (1884), and McKim, Mead and White's Shingle style villa for Robert Goellet of 1883 were all published in George Sheldon's *Artistic Country Seats* of 1886. These publications were primarily aesthetic, elaborately illustrated with photographs and confirming Newport as a place to look for good examples of domestic architecture.

Thus, by 1890, Ochre Point was a fully developed and fashionable district. It was a respectable Victorian enclave of picturesque houses and landscape gardens forming a harmonious landscape. The arrival of Beaux Arts inspired houses in the early years of the 1890's heralded a new architectural order and cultural climate. By the 1890's, American industrial fortunes had increased to immense proportions. The construction of Newport's palatial Beaux Arts houses in the years between 1890 and 1920 coincided with the United States' rise as a world economic power.

In the early 1900s, the United States began to rank first in world production of coal, steel and oil. The builders of Newport's houses controlled these resources and their summer resort became a place for social and financial power brokering in addition to the usual seaside pastimes of bathing and sailing. Newport was subject to a building boom on an unprecedented scale. The city's social and architectural reputation was well established. Architects, such as Richard Morris

Hunt and McKim, Mead and White, had been building in the community for decades. The stage was set for monumental change in the architecture of Newport and its perception in American culture. It was about to acquire the architectural landmarks that would make it a legendary place.

The creation of great American fortunes based on industry, finance and commerce were integral to the advent of Beaux Arts architecture. The fortunes provided the private patronage for a generation of architects trained at the Ecole des Beaux Arts. The American millionaire came to dominate the cultural and educational institutions of the nation offering sought after commissions for private houses, clubs, business headquarters, train stations, museums, libraries and university campuses, all built on a scale in America that architects could only dream about on their student drawing boards at the Ecole.

The role of the millionaire in American society elicited the usual concerns. The prominent magazines, such as *The Nation*, had feature stories on millionaire lifestyles and *New England Magazine's* article "Expensive Living, the Blight on America" expressed divergent views on millionaires and their opulent building programs ranging from moral (3) condemnation to high praise for bringing a new architectural importance to America. One point was common to all articles; the millionaire and his or her mansion were part of the cultural landscape of America. American architects established strong personal relationships with their powerful patrons and, again, Newport played an important role in this story of patronage.

As the social resort of choice for the rich and powerful, Newport was a place where artists, writers and architects met and mingled with potential patrons. Richard Morris Hunt had a summer house and architectural studio in Newport and was an active member of the Town and Country Club, whose members included the writer Julia Ward Howe and the art collector and benefactor to the Metropolitan Museum of (4) Art, Henry Marquand. Charles Follen McKim lived in Newport in summer for a time, studying its colonial town. Stanford White studied painting and moved in the circles of the Newport artist David Maitland Armstrong. All of these architects were known in Newport and New York social and cultural circles, which led to architectural commissions and acknowledged roles in the cultural atmosphere known as the American Renaissance.

The patronage of the millionaire and the work of these architects would make Ochre Point one of the most famous sites of the day, a place where picturesque wooden houses shared space with Beaux Arts villas creating a fitting princely image expressing the power of the new America. The princely image was central to the creation of architecture and its criticism in the period 1890 to 1920. By the 1890's, Richard Morris Hunt was known as the "dean" of American architecture, a proponent of the French classical tradition and a purveyor of the most opulent Parisian taste.

In 1888, Hunt was commissioned by Ogden Goelet, a New York real estate developer, to build Ochre Court, the family summer residence on Ochre Point. Hunt created a French Renaissance style chateau in limestone with delicately rendered Mannerist style decoration. Working in the manner of a master artist with an group of artisans, Hunt coordinated the efforts of the Parisian decorators Allard and Sons, who crafted an opulent French Baroque dining room, a Rococo library and ballroom and a Neo-Classical drawing room. The quality of the wrought iron and steel metal work, stone carving, and gilded woodwork was the finest of the period because of

Hunt's reliance on European craftsmen. As a product of the Ecole, Hunt was committed to the integration of sculpture into his architectural program, and the Austrian sculptor Karl Bitter was engaged to produce the decorative sculpture in Caen limestone for the great hall. The three story great hall was the center of the plan, all axes extending from it. The hall opened onto porches, terraces and a series of interlocking paths all directing attention to a central axis extending to a view of the ocean beyond the cliffs at the edge of the estate. Hunt established the architectural imprint of the house, main drive, forecourt and the system of footpaths for the relatively small site. The planting schemes were left to the landscape firm of Olmsted, Olmsted and Eliot, who provided elaborate potted trees for the drives and paths in the classical French manner.

The house altered the skyline of Ochre Point with its towering Mansard roofs, and its limestone and wrought iron fence cut the estate off visually from its neighbors, creating a private garden for the Goelets with the primary view to the ocean. Ochre Court set a new standard in Newport houses for the Beaux Arts historicism and opulent interiors. It was the beginning of the transformation of Ochre Point. Critic Montgomery Schuyler wrote in 1895, "Ochre Court, the house of Mr. Ogden Goelet at Newport, nominally a "cottage," by its situation and surroundings a villa, by its sumptuousness and elaboration a palace, is by its architecture a true chateau. Here it will not be disputed the architect has risen to the new opportunity that was furnished to him by the extent and detachment of the building and by the power of conforming and subordinating the immediate surroundings to the architecture."(5)

Although Schuyler also wrote that Newport's lots were not large enough to accommodate chateaux, he commended Hunt for his refined approach to architectural massing and the rendering of historic ornament. Schuyler referred to the garden front of Ochre Court as, "... a scholarly, rich (6) and tasteful performance, an excellent 'example' of the architecture of the chateaux." For the next twenty years, the palatial villa would dominate the Newport architectural scene. Hunt was a master at creating such visual drama, providing the same effect only acres away to the south on Ochre Point for his next commission, the rebuilding of The Breakers for Mr. and Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt.

The Breakers was the crowning achievement of Hunt's Newport projects. Cornelius Vanderbilt engaged Hunt in 1893 to rebuild his family's summer house, "The Breakers," which had been destroyed by fire in 1892. The original Queen Anne Revival style house was built for the tobacco heir Pierre Lorillard in 1877 by the Boston firm of Peabody and Stearns. Between 1882 and 1884, the architects also built a Romanesque Revival house known as "Vinland" on the adjacent parcel of land to the north of The Breakers for Mr. Lorillard's cousin Catherine Lorillard Wolfe.

Both estates were landscaped by the civil engineer and landscape gardener Ernest Bowditch, who wrote of his vision for the two estates as part of one harmonious landscape, "if the two places could be arranged to act as foils for each other the joint result could scarcely fail to be most satisfactory...When built, the Lorillard place, The Breakers, was undoubtedly considered the best at Newport, and Miss Wolfe's (Vinland) was unquestionably superior, (giving) Ochre Point the name that has remained with it ever since, of being the most attractive part of Newport's summer colony." (7) Ernest Bowditch also created the landscape for "Wakehurst," an Elizabethan Revival style house built between 1884 and 1888 for the Van Alen family on the estate across Ochre Point Avenue from The Breakers and Vinland. Bowditch was a Boston based landscape designer

who worked for several powerful families of the Gilded Age, including the Lorillards and the Morgans.

After his work on the Ochre Point estates, the district was characterized by a series of picturesque parks of specimen trees, connecting serpentine drives and walks, and low boundary walls, giving the separate estates the image of one park with open views to the sea. The new "Breakers" would transform this setting. The Lorillards' Queen Anne Revival style villa was purchased by Cornelius Vanderbilt in 1885, the year he inherited a fortune of 75 million dollars and became President and Chairman of the (9) New York Central Railroad upon the death of his father. Richard Morris Hunt had just completed Marble House in Newport for Cornelius' brother William in 1892, and Hunt enjoyed good relations with the entire Vanderbilt family.

In addition to lavish French Renaissance style houses in New York City for Cornelius and William, Hunt was working on the vast Biltmore estate for their younger brother, George Washington Vanderbilt, in Asheville, North Carolina in the early 1890s.

Hunt was preoccupied with Vanderbilt projects and was the likely choice for The Breakers project. The Vanderbilts created a mystique in American culture through lavish building, just as the Medici, Valois and Bourbon monarchs before them in architectural history. Hunt provided them with princely settings to reinforce the image of legendary wealth and social preeminence. The Vanderbilt fortune also allowed Hunt to exercise, with few limitations, his architectural imagination. The historical fantasies of the Beaux Arts required only the restraints of classical proportion, not those of the purse.

Hunt provided two versions of The Breakers, one French Renaissance, one Italian Renaissance. The Vanderbilts opted for the Italian Renaissance version and Hunt built the 70 room palazzo inspired by those of 16th century Genoa. The sculptural richness of the facades and the arrangement of the plan around a central hall modeled after an Italian courtyard reflects the influences of the Genoese models Hunt referred to in the design process. Hunt's library included a copy of Peter Paul Rubens's engravings of (10) Genoese palaces. The building was a rectangular block of four stories.

As with Ochre Court, The Breakers is planned with a series of axes intersecting in the two story great hall at the center of the house. The hall, as at Ochre Court, opens onto two story loggias and a great terrace overlooking the ocean. Allard and Sons of Paris crafted the luxuriously appointed the hall and the first floor reception rooms, including the morning and music rooms made in Paris and shipped to (11) Newport for reassembly, the library and the dining room. The first floor rooms integrated gilded woodwork, stone carvings, marbles and semi-precious stones, wrought iron and bronze light fixtures in a series of interiors that recalled the spaces of Second Empire Paris, particularly Charles Garnier's Opera and renovations to the Louvre, Hunt had remembered from his student days in Paris and in his employment by Hector Lefuel in the 1840s and 50s.

The plan and interior decoration of The Breakers is hierarchical, reinforcing the social preeminence of the family. The visitor entered a dark vestibule with reception rooms at

either side for ladies and gentlemen. One was then directed to enter the two story great hall with views over the ocean. The ceiling and walls displayed the acorn and oak leaf motif, selected by the Vanderbilts for their family crest, and ubiquitous as a decorative motif throughout the interior and exterior of the building.

Hunt directed the efforts of the 30 contracted artisans and craftsmen and reserved some special projects for himself, such as the design of Mr. Vanderbilt's billiard room in blue Cippolino marble, alabaster and precious stones complemented by mosaic floors and ceiling. The material richness of the room and its smooth finish reflect the bravura of Hunt's design aesthetic for his great houses and his mastery of the art of stonework. Karl Bitter produced ten reclining female figures for the loggia which formed the focal point of the ocean facade. Hunt was the subject of a relief in the great hall celebrating the spirit of classical architecture. The architect is depicted dressed as Renaissance architect supported by cherubs holding a level and a Corinthian column capital. To the left of the architect is a classical arch; to the right the dome of Hunt's Administration Building, the centerpiece structure for the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Across the hall from Hunt over the door to the music room was the image of Mercury, to the left the image of a cherub holding an anchor and a train behind it. These images celebrated the Vanderbilt triumphs in transportation in steamships and the New York Central Railroad.

Montgomery Schuyler referred to The Breakers as, "...an entirely decorous and correct 'villa in the Italian style,' and in the Italian rather than in the American sense of the word, by reason of its extent and its sumptuousness...it suffers undoubtedly from the restriction of space entailed upon even the finest and most extensive sites upon the cliffs at Newport. But for this misfortune does not prevent the villa from being a very successful and imposing work. Each of its principal fronts has its own leading motive, which gives it a unity and physiognomy of its own...Each is a true architectural composition, and the whole gives forcibly the impression of a gentleman's mansion, in which the enrichment is accessory to the architectural idea, and in which the massive and monumental workmanship are merely the fitting presentation of that idea." (12) The appearance of Ochre Court and The Breakers on Ochre Point transformed Ochre Point from a collection of wooden Victorian villas surrounded by open picturesque parks to a more assertively private enclave of Beaux Arts houses designed for display and subordinating the landscape to architecture. The arrival of such grand houses represented a change that elicited much comment and attention.

In 1895, the world was coming to call at Newport, filled with curiosity for the great houses and their powerful builders. James Gordon Bennett, the heir to the New York Herald Tribune and founder of the International Herald Tribune in Paris, sent the French writer Paul Bourget to America in 1895 to observe the American scene. Bennett had been a summer resident of Newport for years and had been a founder of the Newport Casino. Bourget spent time in Newport and published his thoughts in *Outre-Mer: Impressions of America* shortly after his visit in 1895.

Bourget was a member of the French Academy and a part of the literary salons of Paris. He brought a European's perspective to the Newport scene, writing, "I am very sure that any one who has eyes to see may discern the American spirit-the real interest and the chief reason of my

journey-behind the ostentation of Newport...here is a bundle of sketches from life taken on the spur of the moment in response to the first questions which one naturally asks in making a study of the people of the world. How are they housed, and with what furniture do they surround themselves?...Detached villas, very near the street...twenty, thirty, forty different styles of construction...and so on along Bellevue Avenue, Narragansett Avenue, all the streets of the new Newport which, within a few years, the caprice of millionaires has built upon the cliff: for this part of town has only yesterday become fashionable." (13) Viewing Newport architecture as a window to understanding the power elite of American culture, Bourget chose to interpret the inhabitants through their houses.

Of the houses themselves Bourget wrote, "One of these men has spent some time in England, and it has pleased him to build for himself on one of these Rhode Island lawns, and English abbey...Another man loves France, and he has seen fit to possess in sight of the Atlantic a chateau in the style of the French Renaissance. Here is the chateau; it reminds you of Azay, Chenonceaux, and the Loire...a third has built a marble palace precisely like the Trianon with Corinthian pillars as large as those of the Temple of the Sun at Baalbeck. And these are not real imitations, pretentious and futile attempts. No. In detail and finish they reveal conscientious study, technical care. Evidently the best artist has been chosen and he has had both freedom and money." (14)

Bourget expressed the general opinion of the period that the houses were well executed even if the lots were seen as too small and the stone and metalwork required the patina of age. Bourget did capture one important idea underlying the development of Ochre Point, which was the desire by architects and patrons to create a romantic landscape with references to the great houses of the past with all of the technology and luxuries of the present and future. Montgomery Schuyler, the renowned architectural critic, assessed the work of Richard Morris Hunt shortly after his death in 1895, noting of his Ochre Point houses, "It seems to me that the brilliant success of these buildings, which undoubtedly constitute the most fruitful part of Mr. Hunt's long professional labors, would itself sustain my contention that he is essentially a romantic and not a (15) classic.

"Schuyler's comments reinforce the idea that the Beaux Arts houses rising along Newport's cliffs were not intended to integrate with the landscape as the earlier brick and shingle houses, but to impose themselves on the site creating a romantic fantasy as formal architecture and landscape met rugged cliffs and ocean. The palatial quality of Newport's houses came to define them in the larger context of American architecture. The construction of country houses and resort villas became so numerous after the completion of Hunt's Newport houses that there soon followed publications devoted to the great houses of America.

In 1904, Barr Ferree produced the lavishly photographed *American Estates and Gardens* with a section devoted to Newport palaces. Newport's exceptional place in American architecture for grand building required a separate introductory essay. The writer noted, "A community of wealth and pleasure, Newport is the chief city in the United States in which these characteristics are thoroughly dominant. The social aspects of this summer capital are known to all men...this great social activity needs and necessitates an architectural background, a habitat, a scene and setting commensurate with its splendid pleasures...Splendid building is a fundamental principle of

Newport building....The architectural thought that lay behind the creation of Versailles is identical with the ideas that have brought the great houses of Newport into existence. It is true that Versailles was a single palace, built by a despotic monarch for his own delight, while Newport is an aggregation of palaces, built not by a despot but by free Americans...the palace of Versailles was a vast architectural background for court fetes and festivities...Just so the palaces of Newport are architectural backgrounds for the pleasures and sports of its inhabitants...Newport illustrates splendid living in the most splendid fashion it has yet attained in America, so far as a group of houses and a group of people are concerned. It is only from this point of view that its houses can be appreciated."(16)

Ochre Point was a theatrical backdrop with overt historical references borrowed from the classical heritage of the west, which the social and power elite of America viewed as its rightful inheritance at the dawn of the 20th century. The extremes of the setting created the theatrical quality, from the height and ruggedness of the cliffs to the close proximity of one lavish historically inspired palace to another all softened by rich plantings of specimen trees. Cliff Walk allowed individuals to pass by the ocean fronts of the houses, while street traffic had views of grand entrance drives and forecourts framing the houses at their dramatic best.

While each house was, and may still be, critiqued individually as works of architecture, it is essential to understand Barr Ferree's admonition that the area must be viewed as a whole with a specific social and architectural function that served a specific place, time and a socially cohesive group of people. Barr Ferree's comments on Newport reflected a popular fascination with the construction of the houses and the life within. From the moment the first stones were laid, Newport's merchants sold postcards of Newport's houses.

Thematic postcards were developed depicting the "Vanderbilt Houses" of Ochre Point, and the companies that produced the stone work, such as Batterson and Eislie used photographs of the interiors of The Breakers and other villas in their advertisements to assure the buying public of the inherent high standards of artistic and technical (17) excellence of their firm's work. The image of a Newport mansion on any product was the seal of approval.

While the architectural press, building trade journals and post card makers gave Newport's houses generally favorable reviews and popular notoriety, there was a literary response that was not as positive. Henry James viewed the Beaux Arts houses perched on Newport's cliffs with dismay in the American Scene of 1907, when he wrote of the Newport shoreline, "...The place itself...was more than ever, to the fancy, like some dim pillared ghost of a small Greek island, where the clear walls of some pillared portico or pavilion, perched afar, looked like those of temples of the gods...and where Nature...might have shown a piping shepherd on any hillside or attached a mythic image of any point of rocks. What an idea, originally, to have seen this miniature spot of earth, where the sea nymphs on the curved sands, at the worst, might have chanted back to the shepherds, as a mere breeding ground for white elephants...They look...lumpish...while their averted owners, roused from a witless dream, wonder what in the world is to be done with them. The answer to which, I think, can only be that there is absolutely nothing to be done; nothing but to let them stand there always, vast and blank." (18)

Henry James gave eloquent expression to the reaction to Beaux Arts houses that would increase in the early 1900s with the advent of the aesthetics of modernism. James was prophetic, for the age that produced and supported the Beaux Arts houses of Newport would end with the income tax of 1913 and the social changes brought about by World War I. Although Henry James's sense of proportion was affronted by Ochre Point's opulent villas, the districts romantic appeal, heightened by the variety of villas and its natural scenery, did not succumb easily to the pressures of a changing world as the author thought. Many of the houses could no longer function as private houses, but they did not stand vast, blank and empty.

In 1945, at the conclusion of World War II, a new phase began in the life of Ochre Point's houses focused on their preservation and the transfer of these great properties from the private to the public sphere. In 1945, the private enclave of Ochre Point was forever changed when the Goelet family chose not to live at Ochre Court. Hunt's first house, which started the transformation of Ochre Point in 1891, was the centerpiece of a scheme to make Newport the headquarters of the United Nations.

The city of Newport authorized a Committee of Citizens under the chairmanship of John Nicholas Brown to create formal invitation and report to establish Newport as the permanent home of the United Nations. The invitation and report was presented to Mr. Gladwyn Jebb, Executive Secretary for the Preparatory Commission of the United Nations by Newport's Committee of Citizens on November 28, 1945. Ochre Court and Sea view Terrace, both on Ochre Point, were offered to the United Nations and a strong case made that Newport had been the summer residence of many diplomats for most of the 19th and early 20th centuries. In addition, the report stated, "The city government of Newport stands ready to turn over to the United Nations Organization virtually the whole southernmost section of the city for its use. This includes many of the large estates and tracts of land in the Bellevue Avenue-Ocean Drive Area...There are many stately mansions in Newport that are available and which would provide ideal(19) accommodations." The city of Newport and the residents of Newport's great houses were seeking ways to avoid Henry James's prophecy that the houses would stand vast and empty. The United Nations chose New York City as its headquarters, and Ochre Point evolved in another direction. In 1947, the Goelet family presented "Ochre Court" to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Providence for use as Salve Regina College operated by the Sisters of Mercy.

In 1948, Countess Laszlo Szechenyi, the youngest daughter of Cornelius Vanderbilt, opened The Breakers to the public as an historic house museum to raise funds for The Preservation Society of Newport County, a non-profit educational organization founded in 1945. Both events were significant for the future preservation of Ochre Point and how it would function as a living historic district for the remainder of the 20th century. The college grew over the years, was reorganized as a university, and eventually acquired 18 architecturally significant properties on Ochre Point, including Peabody and Stearns' "Vinland," H.H. Richardson's Watts Sherman House and Dudley Newton's "Wakehurst." The university now recognizes its campus as one of the most unique architectural ensembles in the world and has taken steps towards the scholarly study and restoration of its buildings.

Ochre Court, which functions as the administration building and centerpiece of the university is now the subject of an historic structures report. Although the university functions for a student

body and the various historic buildings are linked with paths, the original street plan of Ochre Point and system of sidewalks are still used in their original 19th and early 20th century function. In essence, Salve Regina University is an urban campus where the street scape of historic houses and gardens is preserved. The buildings of Salve Regina are adjacent to The Breakers, which has become the flagship property of the Preservation Society of Newport County. Opened with the permission of Countess Laszlo Szechenyi, a founder and trustee of the Preservation Society, The Breakers now attracts 450 thousand visitors a year and its one of the most popular historic sites in the United States.

The opening of The Breakers made it economically viable to maintain the house and it provided the funds to support and further the work of the Preservation Society, which is dedicated to preserving Newport's architectural heritage. The financial success of The Breakers as an historic house museum allowed the Preservation Society to acquire ten significant historic properties in the vicinity of Ochre Point, such as Richard Morris Hunt's Beaux Arts masterpiece "Marble House," McKim, Mead and White's Shingle Style Isaac Bell House, and Richard Upjohn's Gothic Revival villa "Kingscote." Working in affiliation with academic institutions, such as the Rhode Island School of Design, the Cooper-Hewitt/National Design Museum and Parson's School of Design, and Boston University, the Preservation Society's houses are the basis of an educational program in architectural history, social history, the fine and decorative arts and landscape design for scholars, graduate students and the general public.

The Preservation Society supports scholarly research and craftsmanship for the conservation of its historic houses, fine and decorative arts collections, and landscapes, and its properties are integral to the maintenance of the historic character of Newport County. These historic houses attract over 900,000 visitors annually, creating the foundation for a thriving economy in heritage and cultural tourism in Newport and the State of Rhode Island. During the past fifty years, Beaux Arts houses have been popular with the visiting public, but their reputation has fallen and risen in popularity in architectural criticism. During the late 1970s, renewed interest and a reassessment of the role of Newport's Beaux Arts houses in American art and architecture became evident in several exhibitions, such as the Brooklyn Museum of Art's The American Renaissance in 1979, Rhode Island School of Design's Buildings on Paper: Rhode Island Architectural Drawings, 1825-1945 in 1982, and in the Metropolitan (20) Museum of Art's The Architecture of Richard Morris Hunt in 1986.

Placed within the architectural and cultural context of their time, the Beaux Arts houses of Newport began to be appreciated again as works of architectural merit and cultural importance. Today, the streets of Ochre Point and its famous Cliff Walk are filled with students, tourists, and local residents. Two institutions; one a university; the other a historic house museum organization, were the foundation for the preservation of the district. Ochre Point was designated a National Historic Landmark District by the National Park Service in 1976, raising its national profile. Private homeowners have also maintained several estates on the northern and southern perimeters bordering Ochre Court and The Breakers, the preservation of these two great landmarks of the area ensuring the value and desirability of the adjacent smaller properties as private residences.

Although the original social function of the district has been altered, Ochre Point survives as an architectural ensemble set in a spectacular natural setting where the work of America's leading architects produced works that defined American architecture and culture in 1900. In 1912, Lauriston Bullard articulated the place of Ochre Point in America's cultural image when writing "... the building of the palaces give [sic] the Cliff Walk a sky line as impressive in (21) its way as that of lower Manhattan." Ochre Point is a powerful image in the American mind and landscape. It is a visual symbol of architectural, cultural and economic forces that shaped America in 1900.

The evolution and preservation of the Ochre Point district is a case study in the adaptation of architecture and its environs to changing cultural and economic conditions with the progress of time.

Notes:

1. Rhode Island State Historic Preservation Commission, Providence, Rhode Island: Ochre Point-Cliffs Historic District National Register Nomination, Frederick C. Williamson, 1974, 1.
2. Jedediah Morse, *A Geography of the United States*, 1789.
3. David Chase, "Superb Privacies: The Later Domestic Commissions of Richard Morris Hunt, 1878-1895," *The Architecture of Richard Morris Hunt* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), 153.
4. Maude Howe Elliott, *This Was My Newport* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Mythology Company, 1944), 106.
5. Montgomery Schuyler, "The Late Works of Richard Morris Hunt," *Architectural Record* 5 (October-December): 165.
6. *Ibid.*, 168.
7. Ernest W. Bowditch, "The Year 1883 at the Office," *Office Work--Personalities*, vol.2, p.10, Bowditch Family Papers, The Peabody-Essex Institute, Salem, Mass.
8. Obituary for Ernest W. Bowditch, *Milton(Mass.)Record*, 25 May 1918.
9. William Croffut, *The Vanderbilts and the Story of Their Fortune* (New York: Bedford, Clark & Co., 1886), 299.
10. Ruben's book *Palazzi de Genova* is in Richard Morris Hunt's library in the Hunt Collection of the American Architectural Foundation, Washington, D.C..
11. Richard Howland Hunt to Cornelius Vanderbilt, 26 June 1896, The Preservation Society of Newport County, Newport, R.I..
12. Schuyler, 174.
13. Paul Bourget, *Outre-Mer: Impressions of America* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895), 44-45.
14. *Ibid.*, 46.
15. Schuyler, 170.
16. Barr Ferree, *American Estates and Gardens* (New York: Munn and Company, 1904), 66-67.
17. Postcards and magazine advertisements in the collection of the Preservation Society of Newport County.

18. Henry James, *The American Scene* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1907), 16-17.
19. An Invitation to the United Nations Organization to Establish Permanent Headquarters in Historic Newport, Rhode Island on the Island of Aquidneck--"Isle of Peace," 28 November 1945, Collection of the Preservation Society of Newport County.
20. The catalogues related to the three exhibitions are as follows: Richard Guy Wilson, Diane H. Pilgrim, and Richard Murray, *The American Renaissance, 1876-1917* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979); Willilam H. Jordy and Christopher P. Monkhouse, *Buildings on Paper: Rhode Island Architectural Drawings, 1825-1945* (Providence, Rhode Island: Brown University, Rhode Island Historical Society and Rhode Island School of Design, 1982); Susan R. Stein, ed. *The Architecture of Richard Morris Hunt* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986).
21. F. Lauriston Bullard, *Historic Summer Haunts from Newport to Portland* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1912)