# Annual Report

A PUBLICATION OF THE PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF NEWPORT COUNTY 2012 - 2013

## An American Story

The Campaign For The Preservation Socirty Of Newport County Protect Preserve & Present

## The Chairman's Report

By Donald O. Ross

Remarks delivered to the Preservation Society's Annual Meeting, June 13, 2013

ood evening and welcome to the 68th annual meeting of The Preservation Society of Newport County.

My focus this evening is on the future–planning for it and ensuring that the Preservation Society remains the significant force for Newport that it has been. And the City of Newport is NOT just an important part of America's past–but also of its present and its future.

Newport, as I am sure you will agree, is a microcosm of an American story or as we will call it: the American *Story*. For 68 years, the Preservation Society has been protecting, preserving and presenting the American story that Newport represents–the stories of our legacy landscapes, buildings, furnishings, and collections, and of the people who created them.

Two years ago, thousands of voters from all over the world told us that THIS PLACE MATTERS. While the voters were specifically referring to The Breakers, we believe it applies to all our properties and to Newport, and we believe that that this place matters profoundly.

That's why it is so important that we ensure that the legacy of Katherine Warren and the other founders of the Society lives on. They ensured that these magnificent properties and landscapes were saved. It's up to us to ensure that they continue to live on for future generations. That means ensuring the sustainability of the Preservation Society itself. And that is why over the last several years, the Board of the Preservation Society has developed a strategic plan that calls for critical investments in the Society's future, to make sure that we can continue to protect, preserve and present this American *Story*.



First, let me say something about our very dedicated Board and tell you who is on it. With only two exceptions, everyone has a home here on Aquidneck Island. Every Board member is dedicated to our mission, conscious of preservation issues and thinking as stewards of the buildings, landscapes, and collections, and very involved with shaping policy and direction. The talents are diverse and we have specialists for various components of our operation. Angela Moore has played a major role in shaping the direction of our museum stores. Mary Van Pelt, with her event planning knowledge, played a big role with the Winter Antiques Show exhibition. Bill Wilson is our architect par excellence. David Ford, Tim Berkowitz and



Kaity Ryan and Alice Dickinson are among the young scholars who have contributed to the Preservation Society's research and advocacy projects. Photo by Andrea Carneiro

Duncan Chapman are among our investment pros. Janet Robinson and Bill Lucey, our media experts. And all of our other talented team—not meaning to leave anyone out. And of course, Angela Brown Fischer, our Vice Chair, who has preservation running in her DNA.

Strategic planning is an ongoing effort, and this Board has carefully crafted a series of initiatives that need to be accomplished over the next several years. Under consideration, in addition to preserving the properties, landscapes and collections has been:

- our tie-in with the City,
- our role in preservation advocacy,
- the satisfaction of our visitors, who we want to be absolutely enthralled with their visit to Newport,
- the spirit and sense of accomplishment of our fabulous employees who are carrying out the objectives and policies of this Board of Trustees,
- maintaining a reputation for scholarly research on the various fields that are relevant to us, and
- assuring the financial viability of the organization.

At the core is the inescapable fact that we are managing a group of museums that have 900,000 visits annually.

The Board has prioritized these initiatives, and I'd like to briefly discuss the top four:

1) The first is The Elms Scholars Center and a Fund for Fellows which goes with it. We have thousands of stories to tell, many of which have been discovered and brought to light by young scholars who were on fellowships-scholars like Alice Dickinson and Kaity Ryan, who have been with us for the past year.

As a Decorative Arts Fellow, Alice has been researching the collections at Hunter House and learning more about the Colonial craftsmen who lived and worked in Newport's Point section. In the role of Public Policy Fellow, Kaity has worked on a number of advocacy projects that advance the Preservation Society's leadership in the community - projects like the inventory of historic

gates and fences along Bellevue Avenue and the landscape enhancement project around Sachuest/Second Beach. Caitlin Emery, who is the Museum Affairs Department's Research and Interpretation Coordinator, began her career with the PS as a research fellow.

In order to support and expand this ongoing research effort, we will restore The Elms Carriage House to create living and work space for visiting scholars. The Carriage House itself is an architectural gem; built just after the turn of the century, it housed five grooms for the Berwind family. Today, while structurally sound, it is in serious need of restoration; repointing outside and replastering, wiring, plumbing, etc. inside. We are proud that this project is an adaptive re-use of the structure.

Coupled with this will be the creation of an endowed Fellows Program to provide the funding for up to five emerging scholars to come to Newport to work each year. This initiative has already won a ringing endorsement from the highest levels. Richard Guy Wilson, Commonwealth Professor of Architectural History at the University of Virginia, and a member of our International Council, has written:

"There is a tremendous treasure trove of materials in various archives and collections in Newport that is available if the means can be found for bringing scholars and students to the town....I urge support of the center."

Brock Jobe, Professor of American Decorative Arts at Winterthur, has also endorsed the plan, calling The Elms Scholars Center "the perfect vehicle to stimulate serious work." The program has also received a \$500,000 Challenge Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Out of 99 applications submitted nationwide, ours was one of only 15 to be funded, and it was described as an "excellent" project by all five independent reviewers.

2) The second initiative is to build our endowment. Every year we face a critical challenge: maintaining our properties and landscapes (which, incidentally, have been valued at \$1 billion) on an annual budget of just \$19 million. By building a strong endowment, we can ensure our ability to meet that challenge for generations to come.

Currently, our endowment is \$33 million and is well diversified as is standard investment practice among modern foundations and endowments. The endowment is overseen by a committee of Trustees who are experienced in a variety of investment management fields. We are fortunate to have their talents on our Board.

Frankly, the Preservation Society's endowment is woefully small in comparison to other similar museums and historic institutions in the Northeast. With a standard practice of a 5% draw on the average balance of the endowment at the end of the last three years, you can see that we tap the endowment for roughly \$1.7 million towards the annual budget. Thus less than 10% of our budget comes from endowment draw, well below what our peers can do.

The largest component of our budget is an annual payroll of \$9 million, and we believe we have the best staff of any historic organization. Historic New England, with a payroll 1/3 smaller than ours at \$6 million, has an endowment more than 3 and a half times larger, at \$111 million. Winterthur, whose payroll of \$10 million is on a par with ours, has an endowment more than ten times larger than ours, at \$328 million.

We must build our endowment to guarantee a steady source of income into the future, so that we can continue to fulfill our mission. In the last dozen years, the Preservation Society has invested \$42 million in historic preservation at its properties. Some of the projects we've undertaken include:

- putting a new roof on The Breakers and restoring its magnificent gates,
- a new roof at The Elms and restoration of its spectacular sunken garden,
- a complete exterior restoration of Chateau-sur-Mer,
- · restoring the terraces at Marble House and Rosecliff,
- replacing the siding at Hunter House,
- repairing the roof of the Brayton House out at Green Animals, and
- the currently ongoing exterior restoration of Kingscote.



Work continues on the exterior restoration of Kingscote. Photo by Andrea Carneiro

We are justifiably proud of the quality of the work we do to protect, preserve and present these magnificent properties to the public. The size of our staff working on our properties is smaller than the size of the staff that would have been working on just one house at the turn of the century. I am personally very proud of our team! The quality of our preservation and maintenance work is second to none. And we have heard from our sister organizations in the US and around the globe — they ask how we do it and do it so well.

3) The third initiative involves investing in collections and the conservation of our collections. We oversee a collection of more than 55,000 objects–furniture, paintings, textiles, decorative arts and more. Together, all of these objects represent three centuries of American cultural and artistic evolution.

Some of the best pieces from our collections were showcased at the Winter Antiques Show in New York City in an exhibition that was critically acclaimed in *The New York Times* and elsewhere. It was a unique opportunity to see these objects outside of their usual setting inside one of the houses, or in our archives. Putting all of these disparate objects together in one room for the first time told a remarkable story of Newport's history.

In order to continue telling that story–an American Story– we must not only maintain our collections in accordance with the best practices in the museum field, we must continue to intelligently build upon them. With your support, we will grow our Collections Fund, so that we can continue to re-acquire objects original to our properties, to return the interiors as closely as possible to their original splendor. Or we may acquire an item that might very well have been of the type that would have occupied a place in a house.

We want more successes like the re-acquisition last year of the last of the Venetian paintings from The Elms dining room. Reuniting that painting series allows our visitors to experience the room as the Berwinds did when they moved into the house more than a century ago. And it enhances the story of The Elms itself.

The Breakers, The Elms and the other houses were private homes once, but today they are museums, and the public loves to see collections, and additions to the collections, as well as the architecture itself. The maintenance and conservation of our collections, as well as the



Visitors enjoy listening to the audio tour in the billiards room of The Breakers. Photo by Roskelly.com

houses, will always be at the top of our priority list. The quality of our conservation work is gaining an international reputation with projects like the conservation of the lacquer panels from the Breakfast Room of The Elms.

4) Our next priority is to enhance the visitor experience for the hundreds of thousands of people who come to our houses every year. To do that, we will convert the current welcome center at The Breakers, that is a seasonal structure, and related facilities into a single, enhanced structure that can be used all year round, and provide a far better experience for our visitors to Newport. We must set the very highest standards in treating our visitors.

This Board has studied this issue for more than a decade following the construction of the current welcome center, and taken all of the factors into consideration. The architect we have chosen, Epstein Joslin Architects, Inc. of Cambridge, MA, has created a remarkable design. I want to reiterate that this is a Board-driven initiative and a very important strategic decision for the Preservation Society.

The design meets sound historic preservation criteria while providing for the comfort and orientation needs of our visitors, and provides a far more hospitable work environment for our staff members. The current work environment is just not acceptable to the Board.

Some 400,000 people from around the world visit The Breakers every year. Right now they are greeted by a seasonal tent, a vending machine shed, and a trailer with rest rooms. That's not a very good first impression of a National Historic Landmark. This new welcome center will create an appropriate, positive first experience for our visitors. It will give them a place to learn about our properties and other attractions in Newport, plan their day's activities, as they do currently, and purchase tickets or memberships. However, this facility is not designed to answer all the questions that visitors may have. It will be too small for that. Visitors will also be able to enjoy light refreshments in a modest sitting area and use clean and accessible restrooms.

The location, programming and design of the welcome center are all fully consistent with the Preservation Society's mission to present Newport's historic houses and gardens. The current visitor center has been a successful experiment, and has proven to be financially very important, not by increasing visitors to The Breakers, but by increasing visits to the other houses and by substantially increasing the number of Preservation Society members.

Since we began using the current welcome center as a place to sell tickets and memberships in 2001, it has generated \$16 million in additional revenue for the Preservation Society. That's more than 1/3 of the \$42 million that the Preservation Society has invested in historic preservation at its properties since 2001.

The structures that greet visitors today-the old wooden ticket booth, the restroom trailer, the vending machine shed and the seasonal tent-will be removed.

A major feature of the project is to recover some of the original character of the landscape at the entrance of The Breakers. For that we have commissioned the landscape design firm of Reed Hilderbrand of Watertown, MA.



Artist's rendering of the new welcome center at The Breakers.

I am pleased to announce that yesterday the Preservation Society received unanimous preliminary approval of the Welcome Center Project from the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission. The Commission found that, (and I quote) "The proposed Welcome Center can be developed in such a way that it does not cause an adverse effect on the Breakers Property."

Further, the Commission also concluded, "The architectural design of the proposed new pavilions, which references park pavilions and greenhouses of the 19th century and features largely transparent walls, curved forms and complex massing, is compatible with the architectural character of The Breakers and its landscape setting." We appreciate the thoroughness of the review by the Commission and staff and their finding of preliminary approval for this project. We will now be submitting final design plans to the Commission and responding further to a few questions. [Editor's Note: The welcome center received final approval from the RIHPHC in July. In August, the Newport Historic District Commission rejected the plan. As this Annual Report went to press, an appeal to the Newport Zoning Board was pending.]

Creating an improved visitor experience with a year round welcome center is an investment in the sustainability of the Preservation Society. It is these visitors who provide a substantial portion of the funds that allow us to continue to protect, preserve and present our properties. Actually, 40% of our budget comes from our visitor admissions. But it's not just the Preservation Society alone that will benefit. This plan has been enthusiastically received by a broad crosssection of the Newport business and hospitality community. They recognize it as an investment in the sustainability of the Newport economy as a whole, because our visitors are critical to the economic vitality of Newport. They stay in the hotels, buy gas for their cars, eat in the restaurants and shop in the stores.

Protecting the historic fabric of Newport is an expensive proposition. It takes everything from hammers and nails to the latest in hardware and software technology. As a community of people who understand and appreciate Newport's unique role in America's history and culture, it is imperative that we join together to invest in its future and support the Comprehensive Campaign.

The Board and the staff of the Preservation Society are united in support of these initiatives and the Campaign. As we move forward on all these fronts, we have three tremendous supporters who have stepped up to co-chair the effort: David Ford, Dayton Carr, and Pierre Irving. We thank you all for your past support, and hope that you will continue to support us in this endeavor.



George Quincy Thorndike. That's why working with our friends at the Aquidneck Land Trust, the Norman Bird Sanctuary, Preserve RI, St. George's and the town of Middletown, we will bury the power lines.

We've been able to do this because of the research done by Kaity Ryan, our first-ever Public Policy Fellow. Kaity has not only kept our collaboration with others going (because it is hard to organize people) but she has helped articulate the rationale for rehabilitating the historic landscape of Paradise Valley.

I'm telling you this story because it illustrates several things: first, that for 68 years the Preservation Society has made a difference in this community; second, because we frequently collaborate with others to get things done–not just Second Beach, but helping to beautify Newport by planting daffodils, helping to pay for the July 4th fireworks, and providing free tours of our houses for all school children in Newport, to name just a few examples; third, because what Kaity is doing for Paradise Valley is the reason we want to create a permanent, endowed Fellows program.

It's been a fantastic year for the Preservation Society, on so many fronts. From the Winter Antiques Show where we got the chance to show off the best in our collection, which landed us on the covers of

## CEO & Executive Director's Report

By Trudy Coxe

#### Remarks delivered at the Preservation Society's Annual Meeting, June 13, 2013

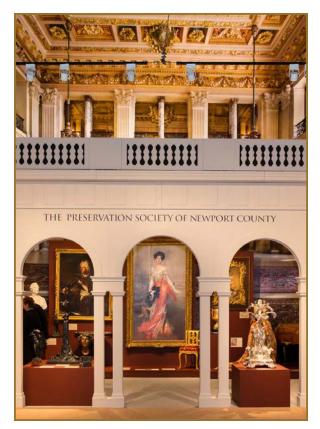
Good evening, everyone, and thank you all for being here. We all have our own images of why Newport and Aquidneck Island mean so much. Think about yours for a moment.

Your image might be that somewhat hidden view of Rosecliff through the trees, sparkling white. Or, what the Great Hall at The Breakers evokes upon first entering, or the wall of Tiffany glass blocks in Kingscote. We all have our favorite things.

One of mine is descending down Purgatory Road and Paradise Avenue, St. George's School on the left and Paradise Valley and Hanging Rock and Second Beach and Sachuest Point and the tip of Little Compton miles away. I've walked that route, driven it, bicycled it, viewed it in devastating storms, been mystified by it in fog banks, and watched it when it's been so calm it looks like a picture frozen in time. I've experienced this view for decades and it still lifts my spirits and takes my breath away.

It's this kind of emotional love affair with the place and the objects around us that drives an organization like the Preservation Society forward.

That's why we're trying to save the Paradise Valley landscape– the one captured over the centuries in paintings by William Trost Richards and John LaFarge, and by John Frederick Kensett and



The Winter Antiques Show was a valuable opportunity to show off the quality and variety of the Preservation Society's collections. Photo by corbettphotography.net



A dinner in The Elms dining room celebrated the return of the last two Venetian paintings. Photo by corbettphotography.net

*The Magazine Antiques* and *Antiques & Fine Art*; to the research we have done to better understand servant life and our new tour at The Elms; to the acquisition of paintings for The Elms – paintings that disappeared in the early 1960s; to a highly successful and colorful Weekend of Coaching that returns us all to another era; to the records we have set in attendance and in store sales, and on the membership front.

All of this is important because it has allowed us to concentrate on one of our primary missions: to preserve our houses. In the last dozen years, we have invested more than \$42 million in historic preservation. Our deferred maintenance, which was about \$13 million, is down to almost zero, demonstrating that we have stayed on course, put our mission first, and accomplished things that we set out to do. But there are a multitude of projects that

go on every day that don't make news, but are just as important. Projects like:

- rebuilding the caretaker's cottage at Green Animals,
- rehabilitating the garden there,
- rebuilding the wall at The Elms,
- repairing the skylight at The Breakers Stables, and
- replacing the floor in the Rosecliff library.

The Preservation Society became a \$19 million organization this year. Our goal is to reach the \$20 million mark soon because there are so many projects that still need attention. At a place like the Preservation Society, the work is never done. Newport has always been a place where there is freedom to dream, to imagine, to create. It is a microcosm of the American Story. We are the custodians of that story.

> Tonight, I want to pay tribute to many of you. Our Board, under the leadership of Don Ross, works harder than any Board I know. Our volunteers, the people who organize

events like Coaching Weekend and the Flower Show and lead projects like our comprehensive campaign or our welcome center planning, many of you in this audience, are tireless and indispensable. And our staff is the best-the gardeners, the carpenters, the guides, the special events organizers, the store sales people.

Most of you know our senior staff team, but I want to introduce you to the newest member of the team, our new Director of Museum Affairs, Dr. Laurie

Ossman. Laurie has a Ph.D from the University of Virginia in Architectural History, she's served as a curator at the Ringling, the Flagler, and Vizcaya. But it all started at the Preservation Society, when she came here as an intern in 1991 to study Alva Vanderbilt. We're thrilled to have her back.

So, we've accomplished a lot. There's still much more to be done. Your involvement is important and we thank you. I started out by asking you to recall your favorite images of why this place matters to you. Hold onto those images, because that's why together, we do what we do.



Rob Raffa of the Properties Department works on removing blocks from the north wall of The Elms, which was rebuilt. Photo by Andrea Carneiro



## Treasurer's Report

By Monty Burnham

#### Remarks delivered at the Preservation Society's Annual Meeting, June 13, 2013

At the end of last year's Annual Report, I spoke of momentum. The first two and a half months of the 2013 fiscal year had started very strong, and we hoped that this trend could be maintained through the balance of the year. In short, it was!

The Preservation Society had a truly banner year in fiscal 2013! Operating revenues totaled \$19.38 million, 9 percent over budget, and nearly 12 percent over the prior fiscal year. We saw improvements in virtually every category. Against both budget for the year, and against the prior fiscal year, percentage improvements ranged from between single digits to significant double digits.

This stellar performance was driven by a number of our departments. Admissions revenue alone totaled \$8.3 million, or \$573,000 over budget. This was thanks to 886,963 visitors, 56,626 more visitors in FY2013 than in FY2012. Note well: This number is the highest number of visitors in a decade and we continue to be one of the most visited cultural tourist sites in New England.

Visits to our properties increased 2.7 percent during FY2011, 1.5 percent in the course of FY2012, and 9.1 percent in FY2013, a truly remarkable accomplishment. Our marketing efforts are noticed not only by our visitors, but also by the non-profit industry as a whole. On July 16, John Rodman, our Director of Museum Experience, will be recognized as the non-profit marketer of the year by the American Marketing Association. The Institutional Advancement and Special Events offices also contributed to this dramatic revenue increase. Institutional Advancement (formerly known as the Development Office and led by Mary Kozik, who joined us last July) raised \$6.7 million in FY2013. Through event rentals and the Society's own fundraising events, our Special Events and Institutional Advancement departments were jointly responsible for raising nearly \$3.3 million, almost \$500,000 more than budgeted. Coaching Weekend, the Victoria's Secret photo shoot, and the events surrounding the Winter Antiques Show all contributed to this success, as did the valiant efforts of our many volunteers, and the generosity of our donor friends.

As an aside, if you are trying to make the math in that last paragraph work, please stop. The way that Finance and Institutional Advancement professionals count donations is entirely different. So different in fact that a course on this topic, and helpful hints on how to bridge the communications gap, is offered every year by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants.

Membership numbers have held steady. We ended the year with 26,000 members. Related revenue totaled \$924,000, a 4.7 percent increase over FY2012. You may remember that membership numbers and revenue both increased in FY2012 also.

Operating expenses totaled \$17.8 million, which was just 3.8 percent over budget. As you may recall, our largest category of operating expense is salaries and wages. During calendar year 2012, the Society paid over \$7.8 million in compensation to 399 individuals, an increase of \$427,000 over 2011. Counting the hours worked rather than individuals, we had 210 FTEs, or full-time equivalent employees, last year, an increase of 14 over the prior year.

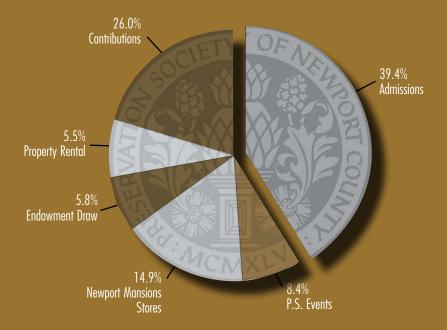
We spent just under \$700,000 on capital projects, including certain unbudgeted expenses. These included putting a new roof on The Breakers Stable, beginning the renovation of the Green Animals Caretaker's Cottage, and buying five new vehicles for the grounds, properties, sales and special events departments.

After these expenses and capital expenditures, we had a net surplus of \$857,000. These funds were all required to pay down loans taken out in previous years for various purposes, including The Breakers audio tour and the \$1.8 million loan we took to pay our participants in the terminated pension plan. Our success this past year and in recent years has been vital in ensuring that we remain on track in paying off these various loans.

Finally, a quick look at the coming year, now at the familiar two and a half month mark. April was down, May improved, and you are all aware of the weather over the past several weeks. Accordingly you will not be surprised to learn that total visits to date, compared to the similar period in the prior fiscal year, are down not quite 6 percent.

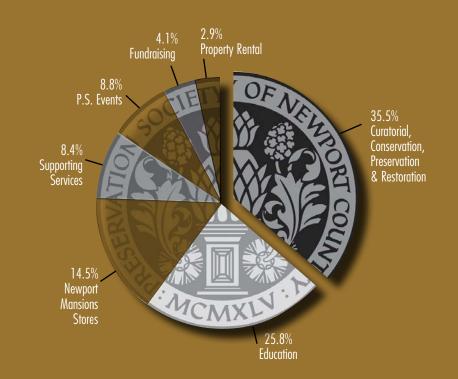
Even though it would be easy, after such glowing numbers, to succumb to gloom....actually this is not a bad performance. The comparatives are (truly) unusually large. The first two and a half months of last year showed a 20 percent increase over the same period in 2011, and a 15 percent increase in 2010. Thus a modest "sawtooth"-like decline this year is not a huge surprise.

'Though of course, we would prefer the same outcome as Lucy, in the old comic strip with Charlie Brown. Lucy explained to Charlie Brown, "I don't like ups and downs. I just want ups and ups and ups." She was, of course, referring to revenues and not expenses.



## Revenue

Admissions	39.4%
Contributions & Interest Income	26.0%
Newport Mansions Stores	14.9%
Pres. Society Events	8.4%
Endowment Draw	5.8%
Property Rental	5.5%



### **EXPENSES**

Curatorial, Conservation,	
Preservation & Restoration	35.5%
Education	25.8%
Newport Mansions Stores	14.5%
Pres. Society Events	8.8%
Supporting Services	8.4%
Fundraising	4.1%
Property Rental	2.9%

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Tn Recognition of Outstanding Vervice, Artisanship or Leadership





Donald Ross, Jeff Daly and Ala Isham

### Jeff Daly For Artisanship

In recognition of his inspired and visionary design of the Preservation Society's exhibit at the New York Winter Antiques Show.



Donald Ross, Robert & Wini Galkin, and Angela Brown Fischer

#### Bob and Wini Galkin For Volunteerism

In recognition of their outstanding support and eloquent advocacy on behalf of the Preservation Society's work and programs.



Norey Cullen and Eaddo Hayes Kiernan

### Norey Cullen For Horticulture

In recognition of her dedicated leadership of the Preservation Society's Gardens & Grounds Committee and passionate advocacy for Newport's gardens and landscapes.

Photos by corbettphotography.net



## **Donors** April 1, 2012 – March 31, 2013

The Preservation Society of Newport County is grateful to its many members and friends for your ongoing support. Your generosity makes it possible for us to preserve Newport's architectural and cultural heritage.

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#### OUR MISSION

Great Houses connect people to a nation's heritage and open windows to another age. The Preservation Society of Newport County is a non-profit organization whose mission is to protect, preserve, and present an exceptional collection of house museums and landscapes in one of the most historically intact cities in America. We hold in public trust the Newport Mansions which are an integral part of the living fabric of Newport, Rhode Island. These sites exemplify three centuries of the finest achievements in American architecture, decorative arts, and landscape design spanning the Colonial era to the Gilded Age. Through our historic properties, educational programs, and related activities we engage the public in the story of America's vibrant cultural heritage. We seek to inspire and promote an appreciation of the value of preservation to enrich the lives of people everywhere.

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Front Cover: Roof Detail, The Elms Photo by Gavin Ashworth

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The Elms & Marble House Gold Room Photos by Gavin Ashworth



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