



THE BREAKERS

The Breakers was built by America's pre-eminent architect for one of the richest families in the world. It is the grandest of Newport's summer "cottages" and a symbol of the Vanderbilt family's social and financial pre-eminence in the Gilded Age.

OWNERSHIP AND ARCHITECTURE

Built by Cornelius Vanderbilt II, one of the richest men in America, The Breakers was everything a millionaire of the Gilded Age could want in a summer getaway. A classic Italian palazzo design, the finest American and European craftsmanship, views of the sea, and modern technology combined to make the ideal setting for luxurious living and entertaining.

The Breakers was built from 1893-1895 to replace a smaller, wooden house that had been destroyed by fire. To reduce the risk of another fire, Vanderbilt and his wife, Alice, commissioned architect Richard Morris Hunt, a leading architect of the Gilded Age, to design the new structure of steel, brick and limestone; utilities such as the boilers were placed underground and away from the house.

In keeping with the Italian Renaissance style, classical Roman influences are seen in the exterior columns and arches. The breathtaking central Great Hall, with its 50-foot-high ceiling, was inspired by the open-air courtyards of Italy but exudes the grandeur of the Gilded Age. The exquisite tile mosaics in the Billiard Room and double loggia were hand-set by European artisans. The Music Room was constructed by Allard & Sons in France then disassembled and shipped to the United States for reassembly inside the house. The Breakers décor includes the finest materials in the world, including Baccarat crystal for the chandeliers in the Dining Room and platinum leaf in the Morning Room.

Allard and Sons of Paris assisted Hunt with furnishings and fixtures, Austro-American sculptor Karl Bitter designed relief sculpture, and Boston architect Ogden Codman decorated the family quarters. The mansion covers nearly an acre of the 13-acre property and has 70 rooms including 48 bedrooms for family and staff. There are 27 fireplaces. It was equipped with electricity – still a novelty in houses during the Gilded Age – as well as gas for lighting.

In 1948, Countess Széchenyi, a daughter of Cornelius and Alice Vanderbilt to whom ownership of The Breakers had passed, allowed the fledgling Preservation Society of Newport County to begin offering tours of the first floor to the public. In return, the Preservation Society agreed to pay \$1 per year and cover operating expenses and maintenance. In 1972, the Preservation Society purchased the house and property from her heirs. The Breakers was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1994.

The Breakers has entertained presidents, royalty and guests from across the world for more than 125 years and today is visited by hundreds of thousands of people each year. It is the flagship of the Newport Mansions and a world-famous iconic image of the City-by-the-Sea.