



# Annual Report 2024



THE PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF NEWPORT COUNTY



## 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

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 of Newport County  
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NewportMansions.org

## 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.

## PRESERVATION SOCIETY PROPERTIES

Arnold Burying Ground (1675)  
 Hunter House (circa 1748)  
 Kingscote (1839-1841)  
 Chateau-sur-Mer (1851-1852)  
 Green Animals Topiary Garden (circa 1860)  
 Chepstow (1860-1861)  
 Isaac Bell House (1881-1883)  
 Osgood-Pell House (1887-1888)  
 Marble House (1888-1892)  
 The Breakers (1893-1895)  
 The Breakers Stable & Carriage House (1895)  
 The Elms (1899-1901)  
 Rosecliff (1899-1902)  
 The Chinese Tea House (1914)  
 Rovensky Park (1959)

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Front Cover: George Gray, Isaac Bell House

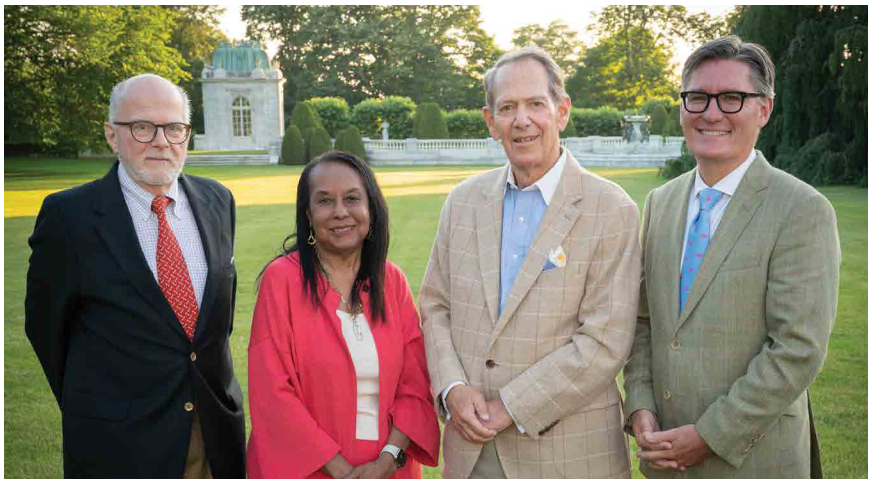
Back Cover: Dave Hansen, Green Animals Topiary Garden



Holiday Member Appreciation Night



Sparkling Lights at The Breakers



Trustees Eric Hertfelder, Beverly Ledbetter, Donald Steiner & Jack Murphy



Student volunteers from Bristol County Agricultural High School decorating The Breakers for the holidays.





## Chairman's REPORT

*Presented by William F. Lucey III  
From the Annual Meeting  
June 13, 2024*

**I**t's inspiring to see so many people in attendance here today. Our membership represents the foundation upon which everything we do is built, and your support remains the invaluable lifeblood of this organization.

I want to take one moment to remember once again my predecessor, Monty Burnham, whose influence and leadership continues to resonate throughout the Preservation Society today. She is remembered, and missed, every day.

Without the leadership and commitment of dedicated preservationists like Monty, our Board of Trustees, Trudy Coxe and her leadership team, and all of the Preservation Society's staff and volunteers, we would be simply just another cultural heritage destination.

But because of the dedication that stretches across the entirety of the Preservation Society, we continue to build our reputation as one of the finest collections of house museums in the world.

This is not easy work, nor inexpensive work. It requires dedication, expertise and a focused, intentional plan to guide us along the way.



Trustee Beverly Little & members of the Gewirz family at the Annual Meeting

*"...We continue to build our reputation as one of the finest collections of house museums in the world."*



Eleanor & William Emby, Member Appreciation Night at The Elms



Trustee Janet Robinson & Chairman Bill Lucey at Annual Meeting



John Lippert and Dawn D'Aluisio of Foreground Conservation & Decorative Arts cleaning and conserving the ceiling mural above the grand staircase in The Elms, "Queen Tomyris with the Head of Cyrus," painted c. 1750 by Francesco Salvator Fontebasso.

*"Your continued support makes what we do possible and helps us fulfill our mission to protect, preserve and present some of the finest examples of architecture and horticultural design in the world."*

I want to take a moment to thank the Chair of our Strategic Planning Committee, Janet Robinson. Her leadership and vision helped create our strategic path forward and these efforts will be remembered for decades to come.

In June 2022, the Board adopted the Strategic Plan, outlining and prioritizing six areas of focus through 2028. For those of you familiar with strategic plans, implementation can be tricky, and the greater cultural landscape is littered with half-measures due to uncertainty of mission and capabilities, inefficiencies, resistance to change and misunderstanding of the competitive landscape.

Fortunately, the Preservation Society does not suffer any of those ills – nor have we been idle. We have been active across all six pillars of our plan since day one. We are focused, intentional, motivated and excited for the future. And as Trudy will discuss in a moment, we enter our 2024 season with continued momentum.

So, what are those pillars?

- The mindful stewardship of Newport County's priceless historic assets.
- Introducing and incorporating meaningful stories to current and new audiences in impactful ways through technology and innovative storytelling.
- Strengthening our curatorial profile and elevating our reputation as an AAM-accredited organization.

- Building and defining all our brands for deeper visitor engagement and worldwide awareness.
- Continued investment in smart, modern governance and management.
- And currently, strengthening our already strong financial situation by identifying new sources of income and reaching our Capital Campaign goal of 36.5 million dollars.

These are not just words. It all translates into purpose and action. The exhibits, the restoration work on view all along Bellevue Avenue at Isaac Bell, Chateau, Rosecliff and The Elms, the lectures, the research, the special events, our elevated media presence, our knowledgeable and committed front line staff, our community events and commitment to the City of Newport – none of it would be possible without the support of our members and patronage of our visitors. Your continued support makes what we do possible and helps us fulfill our mission to protect, preserve and present some of the finest examples of architecture and horticultural design in the world.

Thank you for joining us on our strategic journey toward 2028. We are honored to call you our members, our partners in preservation and our friends.

Thank you.









# CEO & Executive Director's REPORT

*Presented by Trudy Cox  
From the Annual Meeting  
June 13, 2024*

When I was getting ready for tonight, I looked back on the speech that I gave last year and, surprisingly, it was a very simple message. And the message was: We want to be the best historic house museum in America. That's what we want, that's what we're aiming for.

And if you look at the last year, I think you've heard the momentum has been fantastic. I defy anybody in this room to identify an organization anywhere in this country that has made so much progress in such a short period of time.

In the next month, we'll have, thanks to Pat Fernandez, the chairman of our Flower Show, the best floral designers in the country gathered here showing off their exhibitions. We will be opening up the third floor of The Breakers, as you've heard, for the first time in 130 years. We will be hosting a beech tree forum on ways to protect our beech trees into the future. We will be welcoming 26 elephants [sculptures] to the oceanfront yard of The Breakers. Denée Benton – Peggy Scott from the TV show "The Gilded Age" – will be here along with Dr. Erica Armstrong Dunbar, who collaborated with Julian Fellowes on historical aspects of the show.

Now, that's just in the next 30 days! I mean, that's a lot of stuff. This is a lot of heavy lifting, and I hope, as members, you appreciate the number of rapid-fire, fantastic, exciting opportunities we provide you throughout the year.

The momentum really comes from all of you. I want to thank Chairman Bill Lucey and all of our trustees. Every single one of our trustees works very hard in helping us. I want to thank our staff; our senior management team is here, and there are other members of the staff here. I also want to acknowledge our volunteers; we have more than 350 volunteers who do all sorts of things for this organization, so I think they deserve a round of applause. Would you all stand, members of the board? Come on, volunteers, show yourselves off. Bravo, thank you so much.

So, the momentum really comes from you, and we have two things underway which Peter [Harris] alluded to. Two initiatives need momentum and have required a lot of brain power: the creation of a collections storage facility and collections care.

Whenever I talk about collections care, I see people's eyes glaze over. I'm sorry about this, but this is important. The good thing about museums is that museums save things. The bad thing about museums is that museums save things. Behind the scenes of every one of our houses, there are thousands of objects. They are stuffed into drawers, closets, the attic and the basement. These are important papers, letters, textiles, beautiful paintings, and odd objects like the antique mousetrap and the chamber pot in the shape of a dog. You name it, we have it in our collection, and because we are the stewards of the past, we want to hold on to these things. They help us understand our history.

Now, when we were trying to get people to appreciate and understand the need for a Welcome Center at The Breakers, Bill Wilson, then a member of our board, came up with the mantra of the three T's: "We need the Welcome Center for tea, tickets and toilets." Do you remember that? And that's what we sold: tea, tickets and toilets, the three T's.

Well, now we have a new mantra: Why do we need a collections care facility? Because of the three M's. I know you're going to find this corny, but you won't forget it. We need a collections care facility for the three M's, which are mildew, mold and moths.

Anyone who has ever had a favorite sweater and reached in at the beginning of the winter to pull it out and find that your favorite sweater has been eaten up by a moth knows what I am talking about. The professionals on our staff are in a constant battle against the three M's: mildew, moths and mold. So that's what this job is all about. That's why signing the lease for a 17,500-square-foot building is really important for us. It will give us a chance to get organized, guarantee that our collections are protected in a state-of-the-art, high-quality,



climate-controlled building, and assure anyone thinking about leaving their collection to the Preservation Society that we are going to take very good care of it. And that is important.

Now, on to example number two: reimagining the Elms, which Peter mentioned a bit. We've got wonderful stories to tell, great things to see, lots to learn from our houses. However, the way that people learn is changing. People rely far more on technology than they did in the past. This is very hard for people my age to appreciate and understand, but for the younger people in the audience, you know what I'm talking about. So, we have to think progressively and try to imagine a different way of telling our stories.

Think coffee before Starbucks, hotels before Airbnb, encyclopedias before Google, phone booths before smartphones, taxis before Ubers. That's where we are right now, trying to find imaginative, creative ways to use technology to tell our stories better. We've signed a contract with a company called Digital Kitchen. Can you imagine working with imagineers and creatives every day? It is a new world, and the thing that is so exciting about this project is that if we find a way to do this — use technology in a historic house setting without mucking up that setting — we will really be setting a trend for the country.

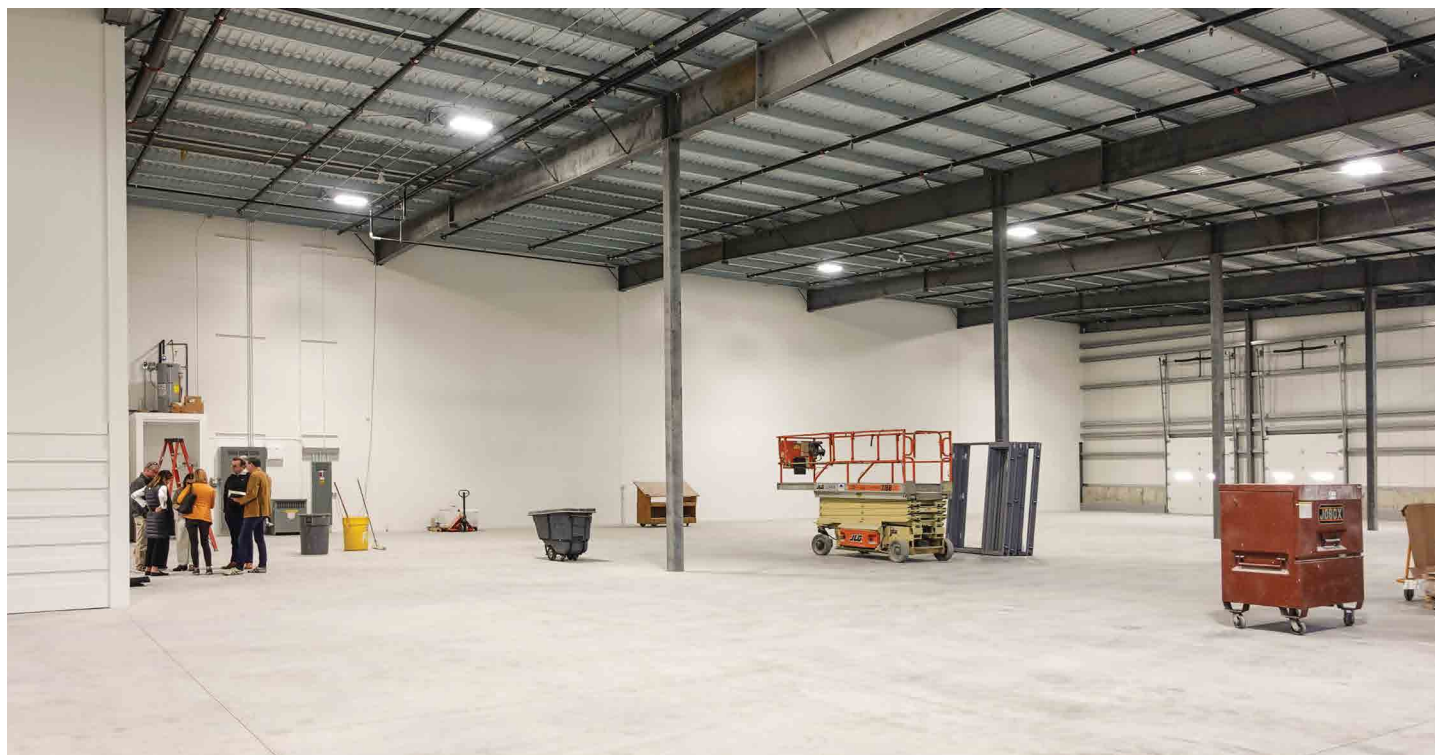
I am very excited about that. I think we can do it. I think there is an opportunity for immersive learning, and it can be done right here. This is a new, imaginative way to go.

I want to finish by reflecting on a trip that the Preservation Society led to Cuba in February. Some of you were on that trip, and it was incredible. Havana is a 500-year-old city with elegant buildings like The Elms, beautiful historic buildings, but because of the economic and political challenges facing that country — you know all about them — the city is literally crumbling in front of your eyes. We learned in Havana that three buildings a day collapse on their own — that's 1,100 buildings a year, 5,500 buildings every five years. It's mind-boggling. You walk away from an experience like that with one impression: It is very easy to lose your historic and cultural background. It's very, very easy, and it can happen almost overnight. Once you do, it's not just the building you lose; you lose the memories, the stories, the family connections and the artistic details. They are gone forever and cannot be brought back.

Our job is to be vigilant, to protect these buildings like nobody's business. That is what we do, and as Bill and Peter have said, it is expensive but so worthwhile. For that reason, I am so grateful for all of you being here with us tonight, and for the other 35,000 members of the Preservation Society. The only way that we are going to be the best historic house museum in America is with your momentum. The only way that we're going to fight those three M's is with your help. And the only way that we are going to reimagine the way stories can be told in historic houses is with you.

So, thank you all very, very much for your support.

*"We want to be the best historic house museum in America.  
That's what we want, that's what we're aiming for."*



New Preservation Society Collections Care Facility





## Treasurer's REPORT

*Presented by Peter W. Harris  
From the Annual Meeting  
June 13, 2024*

**T**his year I thought I'd do something a little different. I know you're all waiting with anticipation for the numbers. I thought I'd do a PowerPoint presentation, bubble gum for the eyes, and keep it light. The good news is we had a very good year, and it's very easy to come up here and give good news, so I'm absolutely delighted.

Looking at the year in review, we are looking backwards for fiscal year 2024. We started on April 1st, 2023, and ended on March 31st, 2024.

Now I'm going to give you some highlights.

We had a record-setting year!

- The total revenue for the year was over \$30 million, which is 10.5 percent over budget.
- Our admissions revenue, from people who walked in, was \$14.2 million, about 8 percent over our budget.
- All our houses were open for the first time since the pandemic.
- Store sales, which have been a bit of a challenge, also set a record at \$4.1 million.
- We kept our operating expenses under control and were able to spend \$9.2 million on our houses.

To give you some perspective, pre-pandemic we were spending about 500,000 dollars a year on our buildings. Just after COVID went away, we were spending between 2 to 3 million dollars. So, we're really stepping up and helping these houses with their maintenance.

Looking ahead, this year we're going to continue to invest in our properties. We leased a new building and we're going to put our new collections care facility there. At 17,500 square feet, for those of you who have some notion of how many objects we have, 60,000, they're going to be stored or presented in our 11 houses.

We're also exploring new ways to tell our stories. I asked our marketing director what that really means, and he said we're trying to reinvent the visitor experience. When you go to our houses now, quite frankly, that resonated with me because when I go to The Breakers, I put the headphones on and listen to Don Ross talk about the billiard room, and I don't know, it just didn't do it for me. Anyway, we're going to look at virtual reality and spend some money on that, which I think is very exciting.

Additionally, we're going to continue our capital campaign. As my minister in Florida says, the church always likes a cheerful giver.

In terms of the budget for fiscal year 2025, we're targeting another increase to about \$33 million. You might ask, "How are we going to get there?" Good question. We've got new exhibits, the elephants coming, The Breakers, HBO, and a lot of things going on. We've got 18 percent more cruise ships in the harbor. Whether you like them or not, they're good for us, and all the houses are open again.

Let's take a breather from the numbers. Our outgoing CFO, Jim Burress, has a favorite quote which I really like: "Keeping a billion dollars' worth of century-old houses in excellent shape is not inexpensive." So, why do we do it?

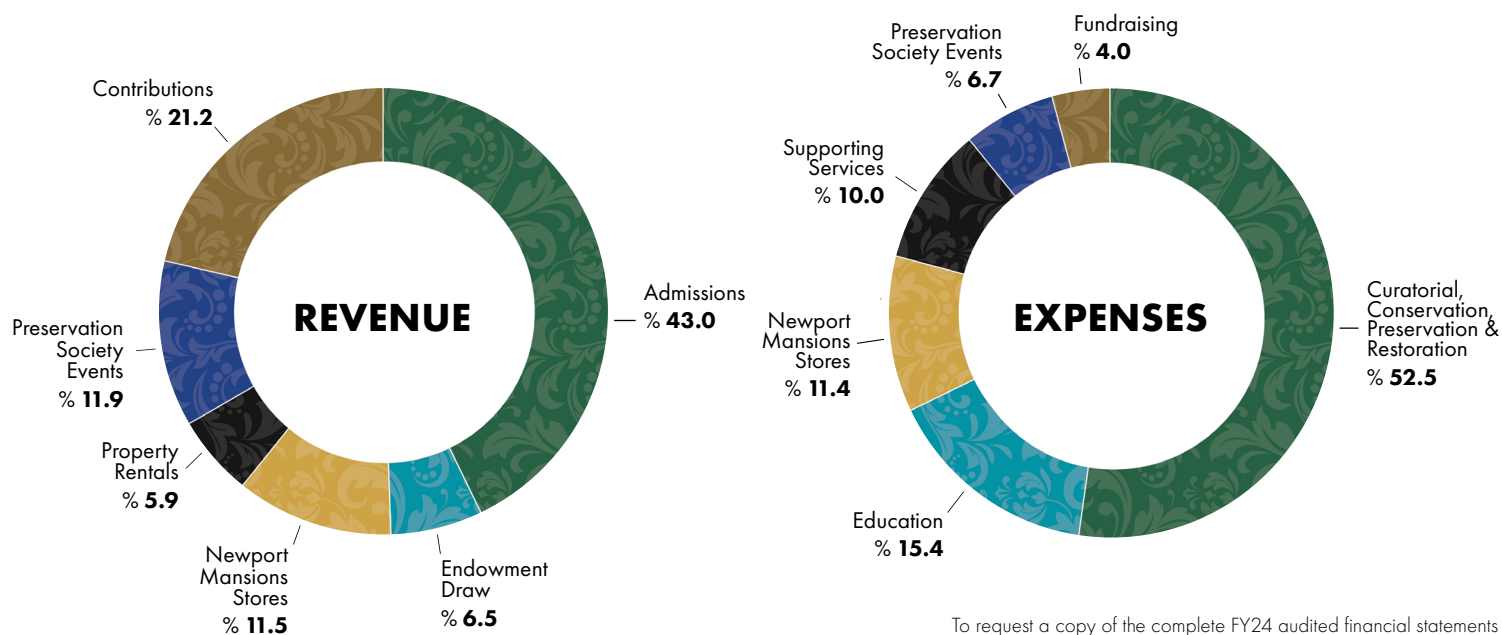
Our houses carry exceptional historical and cultural value. They provide indelible insights into architectural styles, art collections and lifestyles of the past. They also contribute to the unique character of Newport. If you don't believe it, just ask any visitor who comes to Newport; in many cases, the only thing they remember is the Newport Mansions.

In closing, our job as trustees is to ensure that the Preservation Society's mission is fully executed. For those who've been around, you know it's the three P's: preserve, protect, present. We can't do it without your help. We have become the economic engine for Newport. We thank you for all your support.

I would be very remiss if I didn't recognize a gentleman who is retiring after 30 years as our CFO, Mr. Jim Burress. For a nonprofit, Jim is a world-class CFO, not only for his financial acumen but also for his operational know-how of everything it does here. He will be sorely missed. We've got a very good search going for his replacement, and I hope they come close to filling his shoes.

So again, thank you for your support. It gives me great pleasure to introduce another world-class CEO, Trudy Coxé.





To request a copy of the complete FY24 audited financial statements for The Preservation Society of Newport County, please contact Clifford Rust, Chief Financial & Operating Officer, at [crust@NewportMansions.org](mailto:crust@NewportMansions.org).

*"Our houses carry exceptional historical and cultural value. They provide indelible insights into architectural styles, art collections and lifestyles of the past."*



Jack Murphy, Jim Burress, Don Ross, Patrick Kerins, Xay Khamsyvoravong & Stephen Huttler



# The Year In Review

- Installing a 21st-century geothermal system in a 38,000-square-foot National Historic Landmark built in the 19th century requires careful planning, a delicate touch and plenty of imagination and ingenuity to work around precious woodwork and textiles. At Chateau-sur-Mer, our staff and contractors devised creative solutions to place machinery and piping throughout the house without compromising the historic structure's integrity. Existing spaces within the walls were found and explored; unused closets and bathrooms were repurposed. The project took nine months and cost \$1.2 million. When the system went live, however, the reduction in humidity was palpable. This helps protect the house and its contents, in addition to making it more comfortable for visitors. There is another benefit. Formerly, Chateau-sur-Mer used 350 to 400 gallons of heating oil per week during the winter. This past winter, there were days when almost no oil was used. Geothermal systems at The Breakers, Chepstow and the Berwind-Stautberg Scholars Center at The Elms have yielded fuel savings of up to 80 percent.



Chateau-sur-Mer

- The Preservation Society delivered 871,683 tours in 2024, up from 797,750 in 2023.
- On January 2, the staircase at The Breakers normally used by visitors was closed for a few weeks so work, including stabilizing plaster and painting walls, could be completed. During the closure, visitors had the rare experience of using the Grand Staircase, where members of the Vanderbilt family once made their entrances to high society events in the Great Hall.
- During Martin Luther King Jr. Day on January 15, 4,182 visitors enjoyed free admission at The Breakers and Rosecliff.
- Also in January, the ceiling mural over the grand staircase of The Elms, a mid-18th-century work by Francesco Salvator Fontebasso, was meticulously cleaned and conserved. The 500-square-foot painting depicts "Queen Tomyris with the Head of Cyrus" and was moved from a palazzo in Venice to Newport by Jules Allard in 1901.
- Late in January, workers repointed and repaired the 13 masonry chimneys at The Breakers. One chimney was rebuilt. The Breakers remained open daily throughout.
- On March 15, the Preservation Society debuted an exhibition in partnership with the Rhode Island Black Heritage Society (RIBHS) titled "Gilded Age Newport in Color" (see pages 28-29 for details).
- On March 18, our Spring Online Auction began. It ran through March 24, with participants bidding on 21 exclusive experiences.
- Edward J. Berwind's original bed and dressing commode, sold at auction in 1962 and donated to the Preservation Society in 2021, were returned to his bedroom in The Elms on April 11. The curatorial and conservation teams also removed the non-original wall fabric and are researching the original fabric, the repeat for which has been found by Prella, the Lyon-based company that produced it, circa 1900.
- A self-guided audio tour for Kingscote was introduced in early June, giving visitors insights into the Gothic Revival landmark's extensive history.





Visitors to The Elms

- In May, the first-floor lighting project at Hunter House was completed with custom lighting design and fittings created to enhance the visitor experience, highlighting important collections and architectural elements defining the house's significance as a National Historic Landmark.
- During the weekend of June 21-23, thousands visited the 28th Newport Flower Show at Rosecliff. The theme "At Home" celebrated the return of this traditional summer event to Rosecliff, closed for eight months in 2023 for restoration, after a one-year sojourn to Marble House.
- June 24 was a milestone date for the Preservation Society as the third floor of The Breakers – a private family space occupied by generations of Vanderbilts – was opened to the public for the first time in the 129-year history of the house.

- Beginning in July, visitors to The Breakers Stable & Carriage House could see the latest addition to our collection of coaches and other vintage vehicles: a 19th-century landau once owned by George Peabody Wetmore of Chateau-sur-Mer. The coach was inherited by Wetmore's daughters, Edith and Maude, who donated it to the New-York Historical Society in 1938. The Preservation Society acquired it in September 2023 as a donation from the historical society. An original travel trunk owned by Wetmore was also acquired at auction and is on view with the landau.
- From July 2 through September 2, a "herd" of 26 life-size elephant sculptures was stationed on the back lawn of The Breakers, part of "The Great Elephant Migration" (see page 33 for details).
- Tony Award-nominated actress Denée Benton and co-executive producer and historical consultant Dr. Erica Armstrong Dunbar shared insights on the creation of Benton's character in HBO's "The Gilded Age" during the David B. Ford Lecture entitled "Becoming Peggy Scott," on July 9.



Actor Denée Benton and historian Dr. Erica Armstrong Dunbar discuss "Becoming Peggy Scott: The Creation of the Character on HBO's 'The Gilded Age'" at Rosecliff.

- On June 27, we hosted "The Iconic Trees of Newport: Past, Present & Future," a forum exploring the city's landscape history, the cause and treatment of beech leaf disease and strategies for preserving our citywide treescape. Two years after beech leaf disease arrived in Newport, a treatment applied by Bartlett Tree Experts seemed to be mitigating its effects. Of the close to 300 beech trees in our accredited arboretum, 60 percent are in good condition.

*"Hunter House, a fascinating glimpse of Newport life 150 years previous. Our guide took us back to Colonial times, and it was exciting to see how the history of the house was, in many ways, a history of the country."*

*Tripadvisor Traveler Review*



# The Year In Review *continued*



Isaac Bell House

- On July 27, Isaac Bell House reopened to the public following a \$3.3 million restoration and preservation project that began in November of 2023. The work included replacing all exterior shingles, restoring the shutters and windows, repointing the lower-level brick and chimneys and much more. Isaac Bell House is an architectural masterpiece with its blend of English Queen Anne, New England Colonial and Asian influences. A National Historic Landmark, Isaac Bell House is one of the best surviving examples of Shingle Style architecture in the country.
- In August, Preserve Rhode Island announced the Preservation Society was one of 10 recipients of 2024 Rhody Awards for Historic Preservation, recognized with a Preservation Project Award for the \$7.4 million restoration of Rosecliff.
- The Summer Dinner Dance, La Fête du Jardin, was held at The Elms August 10. A total of 575 guests enjoyed a dinner prepared by The Catered Affair and the music of the Bob Hardwick Sound. Later, world-famous DJ Mad Marj packed the dance floor. Reproductions of vintage images of the original gardens at The Elms were displayed around the tent. The theme and décor were developed by Dinner Dance Chairs Meg Braff, Kate Gubelmann and Ala Isham, along with Zak Events from New York.

- On August 17, the Preservation Society commemorated the 50th anniversary of "Monumenta," the groundbreaking 1974 contemporary outdoor sculpture exhibition in Newport (see page 32 for details).



"Windtotem" by David Smith at The Elms during "Monumenta", 1974

- Over 80 players and sponsors took part in the annual Golf Outing at Newport National Golf Club on August 19. The event was supported by Patron sponsors Donovan & Sons Plumbing and Kirby Perkins Construction, along with Event sponsors Grande Masonry and National Trust Insurance.
- A crowd of over 500 attended Members Appreciation Night on August 25 at The Elms, sampling food and beverages from various food trucks while enjoying acoustic music from the duo of Jill Tereshka and Ross MacAndrew.



Green Animals Topiary Garden

- The Preservation Society donated 50 percent of the proceeds from paid admission to Green Animals Topiary Garden on August 26, a total of \$2,260, to the Four Hearts Foundation of Portsmouth.
- For the first time in over 20 years, the fountain in The Elms Conservatory began running again in late August after a \$205,000 restoration project. Supported by James Berwind, the conservation team directed the project which included new plumbing hardware and the repair of deteriorating original marble.





The Elms

- On August 30, a new landscape audio tour of The Elms was launched on the free Newport Mansions app. This GPS-enabled tour leads visitors through one of the most fascinating landscapes in Newport, highlighting various aspects, including statues and fountains, the Grand Allée and the Sunken Garden.
- The exhibition “Wild Imagination: Art and Animals in the Gilded Age” opened Aug. 30 at Rosecliff (see page 30-31 for details).
- Saturday, August 31, a short-term art happening at The Breakers was presented by Art&Newport featuring the work of Hadi Falapishi. The artist held a dinner the evening of August 31 which resulted in the final installation of two and three-dimensional works exhibited on the second-floor loggia.



- The Newport Mansions Wine & Food Festival – featuring celebrity chef, television personality, author and educator Jacques Pépin – returned to Rosecliff Sept. 19-22. This sold-out event included a Connoisseur’s Dinner, Vintner Dinner, Sunday Jazz Brunch and 18 food and beverage seminars.
- The “Inside The Gilded Age” Tour ran successfully for 21 days throughout May, June and September, with 250 people enjoying an upgraded experience including new filming locations and behind-the-scenes information. The tour generated \$57,850 in net sales.



Relief sculptures by Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney

- On September 5, two bronze relief sculptures by Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney were permanently mounted on a wall in the circular service area of The Breakers, where visitors exit after touring the house. The reliefs were kept at Whitney’s Long Island studio for decades until the Preservation Society acquired them from her estate last year.
- The Mid-Autumn Festival (Zhongqiu Jie), also known as the Moon or Mooncake Festival, returned to the Chinese Tea House for the second straight year on September 17. This Chinese tradition dates back more than 3,000 years.

*"Amazing! I'm a preservationist and all of the Newport Mansion tours are very well interpreted and preserved. Every detail of The Breakers was carefully designed by the Vanderbilts and Hunt but it still feels like a home and even the staff spaces feel respectful to those who worked there. Highly recommended and be sure to download the app!"*

*Tripadvisor Traveler Review*



# The Year In Review

*continued*

- A major renovation of The Elms Carriage House began in October, following a successful effort to obtain city zoning approval to enable food and beverage service. The new venue is scheduled to open in June 2025, offering visitors and members a unique experience in the historic Carriage House, overlooking the Sunken Garden of The Elms.
- The Breakers Landscape Revival project continued in the northeast quadrant adjacent to the Children's Cottage, and all new plantings were completed along the Shepard Avenue fence. After five years of work, the Serpentine Path from the northeast gate of the Cliff Walk to the southeast gate along the entire perimeter of the property is finished.
- During October and November, HBO filmed scenes for the third season of "The Gilded Age" at The Elms, Chateau-sur-Mer, Marble House and The Breakers. Preservation Society staff worked 2,544 hours in support of this project.



HBO filming in the Great Hall in The Breakers

*"I am so happy I decided to make the trip for this tour. It was absolutely worth it! Our guide was entertaining and very knowledgeable. The tour was filled with many behind the scenes glimpses as The Gilded Age show came to life before our eyes."*

*Tripadvisor Traveler Review*

- On October 25, Trick or Treat at The Breakers returned for the fifth straight year. A total of 673 attended in two sessions. Visitors were asked to bring a non-perishable food item for the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center. A total of 244 pounds of food was collected while 350 goodie bags were donated to the MLK After School program.
- On November 22, Holidays at the Newport Mansions returned, including Sparkling Lights at The Breakers for the fifth year. For the first time in 25 years, Chateau-sur-Mer was open and decorated for the first two weeks of the holiday season along with The Breakers and Marble House while The Elms was closed during filming of "The Gilded Age." The Elms eventually opened December 7.
- With assistance from Peckham Bros. Co. Inc., T.J. Brown Landscaping and Bartlett Tree Experts, as well as volunteer Ray Gomes, the Preservation Society's Gardens & Landscapes Department continued a holiday tradition, setting up the Christmas tree in Washington Square. The tree was generously donated by Beverly Poirier of Tiverton.
- The Preservation Society hosted Newport Police and Firefighter's Nights on Dec. 19 and Dec. 29. First responders and their families enjoyed free admission to Sparkling Lights at The Breakers.
- Museum Affairs organized 12 lectures, including Historic Music of Newport's Gilded Age Orchestra. Speakers included the Tony Award-nominated actress Denée Benton with historical consultant Dr. Erica Armstrong Dunbar, Frick Collection Director Ian Wardropper, and Dr. Philip Rylands, President and CEO of The Society of the Four Arts. A total of 2,336 viewed these lectures either in person or via Zoom.
- Over 30,881 tickets were sold for Sparkling Lights, generating \$1,010,780, an 8.2% increase in tickets sold and a 7.5% increase in revenue.



Ian Wardropper delivers "The Frick Renewed" lecture at Rosecliff

- The Holiday Dinner Dance at The Breakers was held December 14. This black-tie event drew 270 guests. Hors d'oeuvres and cocktails were followed by a four-course dinner from Blackstone Catering. Later, guests danced in the Music Room to the band Sounds of Newport.



- Group Tours had a banner year, hosting 2,137 groups representing 95,027 visitors, a growth of nine percent from 87,000 visitors in 2023. There were also 333 Exclusive Experience Visits/Personal and Private tours in 2024, up 71 percent from 195 in 2023.
- Media exposure continued a strong upward trend, accounting for 4,585 mentions in 2024, up 31 percent from 2023 (3,501 mentions). Sentiment tracked at 38.7 percent positive and 58.4 percent neutral with just 1.8 percent negative. The positive sentiment was up nine percent from 2023 (29.7).
- Our social media saw record-breaking growth in 2024, with a 60% increase in followers and 52 million video views across Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and YouTube. Influencer content drove 45 million views, including YouTuber Erik Van Conover's feature on The Breakers, which alone reached 15 million views. This unprecedented digital reach has elevated our brand awareness and engagement.



- A total of 6,811 Newport and Portsmouth residents received free admission in 2024. A combined 2,144 visitors were admitted free during Newport County Days on April 6-7 and October 26-27, and Newport County Days/Hospitality Days on June 8-10. A total of 4,264 visitors utilized the Museums for All discount while 764 used the Library Pass program. This resulted in \$110,933 in ticket sales donated by The Preservation Society of Newport County.
- There were 62 weddings hosted at Rosecliff in 2024, and a total of 93 rental events.



- Substantial progress was made on a state-of-the-art, climate-controlled collections care facility. The 17,500-square-foot space will elevate the storage standards of collection items not on display in the mansions. The space will include areas for conservation treatment and collections study.
- The Properties Department completed a number of other important projects in 2024. These included paving The Breakers greenhouse driveway, adding new lighting to The Breakers parking lot, painting the trim and porch decks at Chateau-sur-Mer and installing three new boilers at Rosecliff and one at Chepstow. A total of \$6.8 million was spent on preservation projects in 2024.

- The Garden and Landscapes team finished restoring the north border of the Marble House back lawn, the last piece of a six-year project that began with the front lawn and continued with tree removals and work along the right side back to the Tea House. The cutting garden at Green Animals – original to the site – has also been restored. This garden once provided the main house with cut flowers. This spring and summer, a mix of perennial and annual flowers will be planted.

- Throughout 2024, Museum Affairs hosted an array of youth and family programming, including "Traveling Tuesdays" and "Thursdays in the Garden," the second annual "Mid-Autumn Festival," and story time reading and related craft activities during Winterfest. Drop-in programs also offered an opportunity to create art inspired by the history and landscapes at The Breakers and Marble House. Additionally, local students were invited to contribute artwork to The Newport Flower Show while music students and their teachers attended programs with the Gilded Age Orchestra of Newport.

*"The Preservation Society of Newport County has done a magnificent job maintaining all the mansions. This is the best self guided audio tour app I have experienced yet. So easy to download and follow. Love it!"*

*Tripadvisor Traveler Review*



# The Year In Review

*continued*



Amy Smith, Kathleen Brown, Tenley van der Wal & Kate Petrie

- Retail numbers grew 16.6 percent in 2024 (\$4.5 million) compared to 2023 (\$3.8 million). The Newport Flower Show was the largest grossing in Preservation Society retail history (\$60,000), topping the 2023 record (\$52,000). Tea service/fine dining guests also grew by 22 percent (11,220 in 2024 compared to 9,189 in 2023).
- We enhanced cybersecurity defenses, upgraded our corporate boardroom for seamless virtual meetings, improved our Accesso Siriusware ticketing software and transitioned to a cloud-based CRM system called Raisers Edge Nxt, enabling better customer service. Our network infrastructure was scaled out, ensuring reliable connectivity at various properties. The Elms' network was upgraded with a new direct connection, our server monitoring software was upgraded, and we have made continuous improvements to our WiFi infrastructure, enhancing stability and coverage across our properties. Collectively, these measures improved our security posture, operational efficiency and overall user experience.

Gold Room in Marble House



Story Time at Green Animals



Employee Toy Drive





Trudy Cox, Janet Robinson & Donna Hoyt



Newport Mansions Wine & Food Festival Connoisseur's Dinner at The Elms





Doug Braff, Christine & Steve Schwarzman



Evelina & Mark Taber



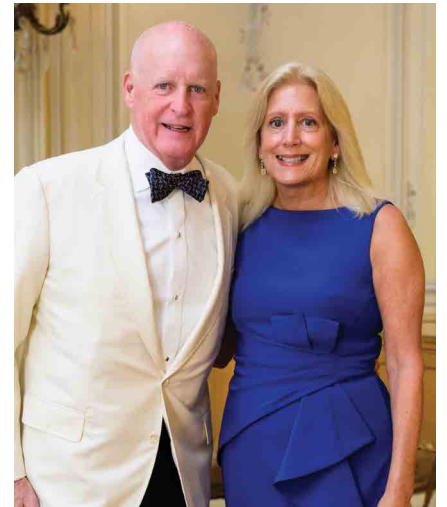
Dwight & Sue Sippelle



Sofia Tonelli, Avery Coleman & Adeliza Grace



Nicole Limbocker, Diana Prince & Marianna Baker



Jim & Debbie Eagan



Ted Sanderson & Lark Mason



Alice Hamilton & granddaughter Annie at Colonial Kids Program

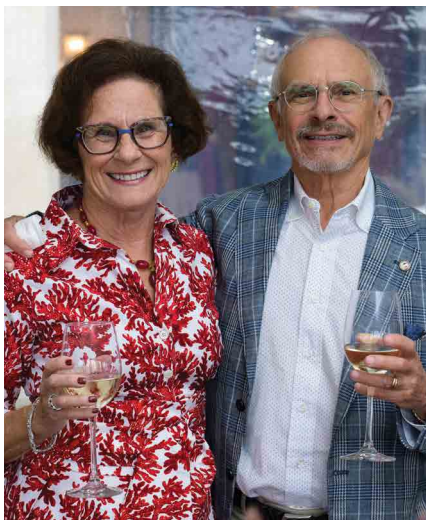




Falguni & Snehal Shah



Lynette & Trey Snider & Guests



Karen Piacentini and David Mirkin



Lydia & Bob Walsh



Amanda & Walter Eays



Guests at The Newport Flower Show



The "Portrait of Jules Celestin Allard" is reinstalled in The Elms library after conservation work.





Dr. Christopher Abhulime, Keith Stokes  
& Simon Goudiaby



Ian & Lorrie Huschle



Seated: Carol & David Bazarsky with family & friends



Katy & Elijah Duckworth-Schachter



Jack & Sherri Grace, Wendy & George David



Steve Schwarzman & Bill Lucey



Objects Conservator Carola Schueller working on an owl-shaped humidor that was part of the  
"Wild Imagination: Art & Animals in the Gilded Age" exhibition. See page 30.



Guests attend La Fête du Jardin.





Heather Gaffney-Hsu & Justin Hsu



Ala Isham, Kate Gubelmann & Meg Braff



Kim & Glenn Darden



Evelina Taber, Christine DiTullio & John Danieli\*



Attendees at the Newport Mansions Wine & Food Festival



Visitors on The Elms Servant Life Tour



Lisa & Paul Perrault

\* We remember.





Linda Purdy, Sherry & Mark Brice & Jack Purdy



Bill Kahane, Ala & Ralph Isham & Elizabeth Kahane



Chef Jacques Pépin and Claudine Pépin with Johnson & Wales University students at the Newport Mansions Wine & Food Festival



Jim Gaffney & Betsy Vitton



Collections Care Specialist Dagan Farancz repairs the sundial at Hunter House.



Betsy & Wally Turner & Victoria Mele





Julia Mann, Piper Wood Prince & Cole Custer



Mary Van Pelt & Mark Gilbertson



Bonnie & Philip Cabaud



David Oakley & Trudy Cox



Kate & Robert Bartlett, Megan & Ryan Kacenski & Pat Fernandez



Whitney Clay & Sherri Grace



Preservation Society members attend a production meeting for WGBH's "The Culture Show."  
Jorg Bagehorn, Ulrike Bagehorn, Karen Lloyd & (seated) Susan Beckers,  
with WGBH's Jared Bowen, Callie Crossley & (seated) Edgar B. Herwick III.





Dede Wilsey & Janis Buchanan



Eddy & John Taylor



Hilary & Lawrence Slocum



Kate & Bill Lucey



Linda Hickox, Craig & Tara Primis



jae French & Elizabeth Leatherman



Patrick Wood Prince, Pierre duPont Irving & Hank Bell



Carolann Kummis, Tara Flynn, Shirley Lee & Lisa Wise



Jim Donahue

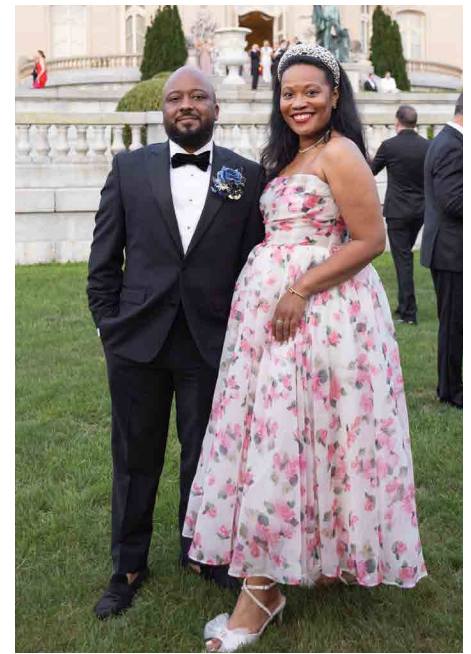




Alfie von Auersperg & Anna von Auersperg



Sue Petrovas, Harriet Harris & Patrick Kerins



Ed Sanders & Amanda Rodrigues Smith



Pamela O'Connor, Allison Gulbrandsen, Trudy Coxe, Toby & Janet Pell



Leslie Jones & Rebecca Bertrand



Participants in Winterfest kids' craft activities



Andrew Jones



Terry Morgenthaler, Kari Shapero & Sue Sipprelle





Katie Gewirz, Cleo Gewirz, Rita Gewirz, Bernie Gewirz\*, Steven Gewirz, Jonathan Gewirz & Michael Gewirz at The Elms, June 13, 2024

# ANTIQUARIAN AWARD

## Awarded to Bernard “Bernie” Gewirz

Bernard Gewirz is a man of strong character, deeply held values, generosity, and profound conviction. He is a patriarch of the real estate development industry in Washington, D.C., and a philanthropist for an array of causes including The Preservation Society of Newport County. He believes in the importance of family, hard work, community involvement, and faith. With these guiding principles, Bernie strives to make this world a better place.

Bernie and his late, beloved wife of 59 years, Sarah Myers Gewirz, raised three children – Michael, Jonathan, and Steven – who in time gave their parents three wonderful daughters-in-law and six grandchildren. As parents, Bernie and Sarah worked to ensure that their children would make wise decisions for their futures and their children's, for the communities in which they live, and for the interests that would inspire each of them.

For more than three decades, Bernie and his family have been steadfast supporters of the Preservation Society. Sarah served on the Board of Trustees and their son Steven is currently a Trustee. In 2003, Bernie and Sarah became sponsors of the Annual Golf Outing, of which Bernie is now the Honorary Chair.

Bernie's commitment to the Preservation Society has been unwavering. He was our rock during the years of controversy surrounding construction of the Welcome Center on the grounds of The Breakers, taking a resolute stand in support of the project and keeping us focused on quality and cost. He provided the judgment and wisdom to ensure we took the best course of action.

Bernie is devoted to philanthropy, giving to educational institutions, medical research, and historic landmarks. In 1984, he and his wife established The Bernard and Sarah Gewirz Foundation. To guide his philanthropy, Bernie encourages family involvement, develops firsthand knowledge of the community, and operates with integrity, intelligence, and imagination.

In 2019, Bernie established The Bernard and Sarah Gewirz Endowment at the Preservation Society to ensure that we present a remarkable collection of house museums and landscapes, and offer educational programs in support of this mission, far into the future.

In addition to Bernie's generous support of the Preservation Society, the Foundation has supported the rehabilitation of Touro Synagogue and the Redwood Library in Newport, as well as many other worthy causes.

At the age of 97, Bernie with his sons continues the family business of developing, owning, and operating major office and apartment projects primarily in Washington, D.C. He is an innovator and teacher for those who work for him and brings people of various needs together for their mutual benefit, taking pride in ensuring that all parties in a transaction are winners.

Certainly, our relationship with Bernie has been a winner for the Preservation Society. The Board of Trustees of The Preservation Society of Newport County is pleased to award Bernard “Bernie” Gewirz the Antiquarian Award, our most prestigious honor.

\* We remember.





Gerry Campbell, Jane Cary, Jane Gamber & Chris Fletcher at The Elms, June 13, 2024

# Laurel Awards

*Presented in recognition of outstanding service, leadership and artisanship.*

## Artisanship

**Gerry Campbell**

*Newport Window Restoration*

In recognition of Newport Window Restoration's dedication to impeccable craftsmanship in flawlessly restoring 482 original windows and doors at the Preservation Society's historic properties.

## Volunteerism

**Jane Cary & Jane Gamber**

In recognition of the time and expertise you have devoted to ensuring the smooth execution of the judging process at The Newport Flower Show over many years, thereby contributing significantly to its success, excellence and national reputation.

## Horticulture

**Chris Fletcher**

In recognition of your 28 years of dedicated service as a Bartlett Tree Experts representative helping the Preservation Society protect and nurture its inventory of 1,700 specimen trees amid 88 acres of landscapes.





Executive Committee, Women's League Newport.  
c. 1900. Collection of the Rhode Island  
Black Heritage Society.

Exhibition:

## Gilded Age Newport in Color

The exhibition "Gilded Age Newport in Color," at Rosecliff March 15 through June 30, 2024, highlighted the experiences of the dynamic African heritage community that flourished in Newport from the late 19th through the early 20th century.

The exhibition was presented by the Preservation Society in partnership with the Rhode Island Black Heritage Society.

During the Gilded Age, Newport offered rare opportunities for persons of color to experience uninhibited social exchange. This exhibition explored a largely unknown but important chapter in American history when African heritage families could promote their economic and social well-being through self-reliance, entrepreneurship, political advancement and cultural interchange.

Doctors, dentists, teachers, business owners and elected officials of African heritage lived, worked, played and



Barclay Children at Easton's Beach,  
Newport. c. 1913.



Carol Sanderson and Sarah Hertfelder.





R.I. Supreme Court Judge Melissa Long &  
U.S. District Court Judge Melissa DuBose



Exhibition Guest  
Below: Thomas Downing Pickled Oysters Jar, c. 1840.  
Collection of The Preservation Society of Newport County



Collage of Gilded Age Women. Frank Jackson,  
c. 2022. Lithograph.  
Collection of the Rhode Island Black Heritage Society.



Exhibition Guests



Exhibition Guests

worshiped in Newport. They hosted numerous African heritage social and political gatherings that helped lay the foundation for the later 20th-century civil rights movement.

Visitors to "Gilded Age Newport in Color" learned about significant historical figures like Dr. Marcus Wheatland, a pioneer of the medical use of X-rays whose clients included many of the city's elite; George T. Downing, a hospitality entrepreneur and civil-rights leader; Rev. Mahlon Van Horne, an influential pastor and politician who became the first person of color elected to the Rhode Island state legislature; and Sissieretta Jones, a soprano who performed in Newport before becoming the first African heritage singer to take center stage at Carnegie Hall.

The exhibition included more than 150 objects ranging from photographs, handbills, business cards and news clippings to furniture, clothing, jewelry and ceramics. These artifacts came from the Preservation Society and RIBHS collections as well as several lending institutions and the Stokes family collection.



Dr. Kim Bullock



# Exhibition:

## Wild Imagination: Art and Animals in the Gilded Age



Edith Wharton with Dogs. Unknown photographer, 1898.  
Edith Wharton Collection, Yale Collection of American Literature,  
Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library



Left: Sea Turtle Infant Cradle, Bowditch and Son, 1866.  
Mystic Seaport Museum.

Right: Narwhal Tusk Coat and Hat Rack, John Orin Spicer, 1874-1878.  
Mystic Seaport Museum.

During the Gilded Age, Americans' relationship with animals transformed in lasting ways. As millions moved from farms to cities, they left behind the close relationship with rural animals that had defined American life for generations. Instead, they engaged in newly popular pursuits like pet keeping and bird watching. At the same time, many were encountering new, "exotic" species through a boom in foreign travel, marine exploration and imperial expansion. And while captive animals thrilled spectators at zoos and circuses, which both had their heyday in the Gilded Age, activists launched the nation's first animal rights movement.

This multi-faceted transformation of the relationship between Americans and animals in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was the theme of the exhibition "Wild Imagination: Art and Animals in the Gilded Age," at Rosecliff from August 30, 2024 through January 12, 2025.

"Wild Imagination" brought together a menagerie of more than 100 animal-themed artworks and other objects, from paintings, sculptures, photographs and fashions to fancy dog collars and sea creatures blown in



Horned Owl from the New York Herald Building. Jean-Antonin Carles, 1893-1895.  
New York University Art Collection.



glass. Popular animal-themed prints, statuettes and other decorative objects satisfied newly urbanized Americans' nostalgia for the lost connections with nature. They also reveal the stories of individual creatures that continue to capture our imagination.

The exhibition showed how Newporters played a vital, though often contradictory, part in the evolution of Americans' relationship with animals. Newporters fought at the vanguard of the animal rights movement yet set the era's fashion for furs and feathers as residents of its most stylish summer resort. They pampered their pets but expanded industries like the railroads that ravaged wildlife habitats.

The objects in the exhibition were drawn from the Preservation Society's collections and from the following lending institutions: John Hay Library at Brown University, Castle Hill Inn, Columbus Museum of Art, Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard University, Historic New England, Maryhill Museum of Art, The Mount, Museum at the International Tennis Hall of Fame, Mystic Seaport Museum, National Museum of American Illustration, Newport Historical Society, Newport Restoration Foundation, New-York Historical Society, New York University, and the Watkinson Library at Trinity College.



Karen &amp; Alan Dawes



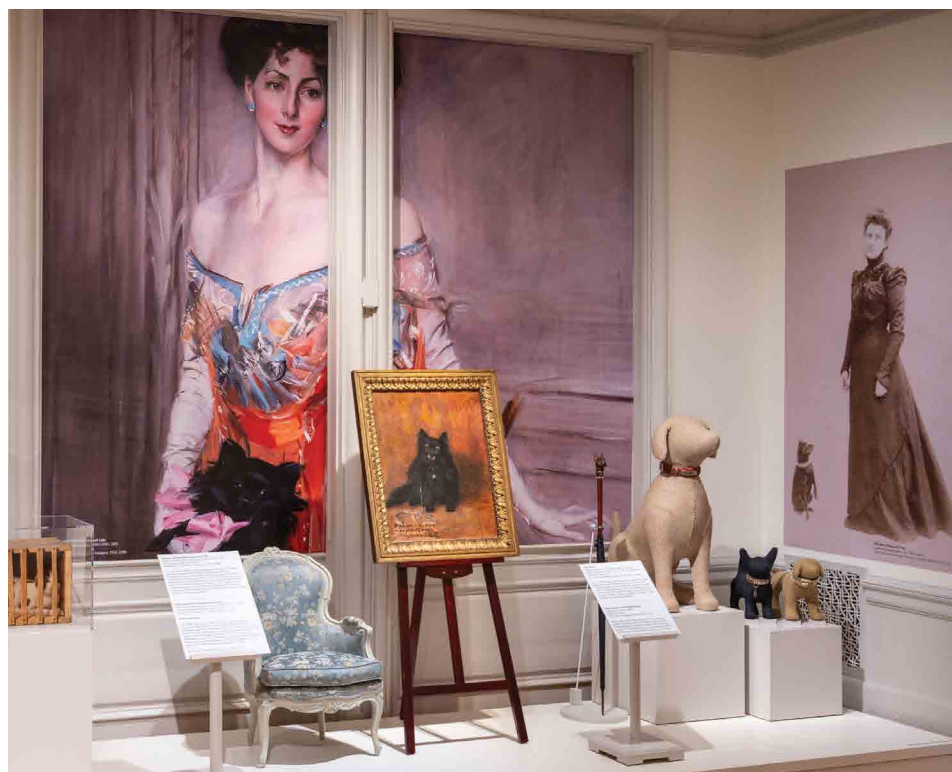
Gary Lawrance &amp; Dr. Nicole Williams



Butterfly Costume, c. 1910. Silk, Gift of Ms. Jane A. McManus.

Background: The Menace of the Hour.  
George Luks, 1899.

Ohio State University, Billy Ireland Museum and Library

Foreground: The Monster Monopoly.  
Joseph Keppler for Puck Magazine, 1882.  
Watkinson Library, Trinity College, Hartford, CT.

Gallery Display, "For the Love of Animals: Petkeeping and Animal Activism."





# Symposium: Monumenta at 50



Trudy Coxe, Hugh Davies, Nancy Rosen, Ron Onorato, Dodie Kazanjian, Jonathan Lippincott & Danielle Ogden

Exactly a half-century after the exhibition “Monumenta” opened in Newport, an audience of roughly 250 packed the Rosecliff ballroom to celebrate the anniversary of the groundbreaking exhibition of large-scale outdoor sculptures that forever changed how the public interacts with contemporary art.

Opening on August 17, 1974, with a symposium entitled “Sculpture in the Environment,” “Monumenta” showcased 54 pieces by 40 artists, including Willem de Kooning, Louise Nevelson, Henry Moore, Barnett Newman, Richard Fleischner, David Smith and Christo. Twenty-nine pieces were positioned at either The Elms or Chateau-sur-Mer.

Today, the only piece still in place is Fleischner’s “Sod Maze” on the grounds of Chateau-sur-Mer.

To commemorate this event, the Preservation Society gathered original “Monumenta” organizers Hugh Davies – Director Emeritus of the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego – and Nancy Rosen – founder of

Nancy Rosen, Incorporated – author Jonathan Lippincott and Art&Newport founder Dodie Kazanjian for a panel discussion moderated by Ron Onorato, Emeritus Professor of Art and Architectural History at the University of Rhode Island.

“Monumenta” was spearheaded by Newport residents William and Gael Crimmins, and it was championed by Preservation Society co-founder and President Katherine Warren. The exhibition was directed by acclaimed art historian Sam Hunter and a team of his graduate students from Princeton, including Davies, Rosen and Sally Yard.

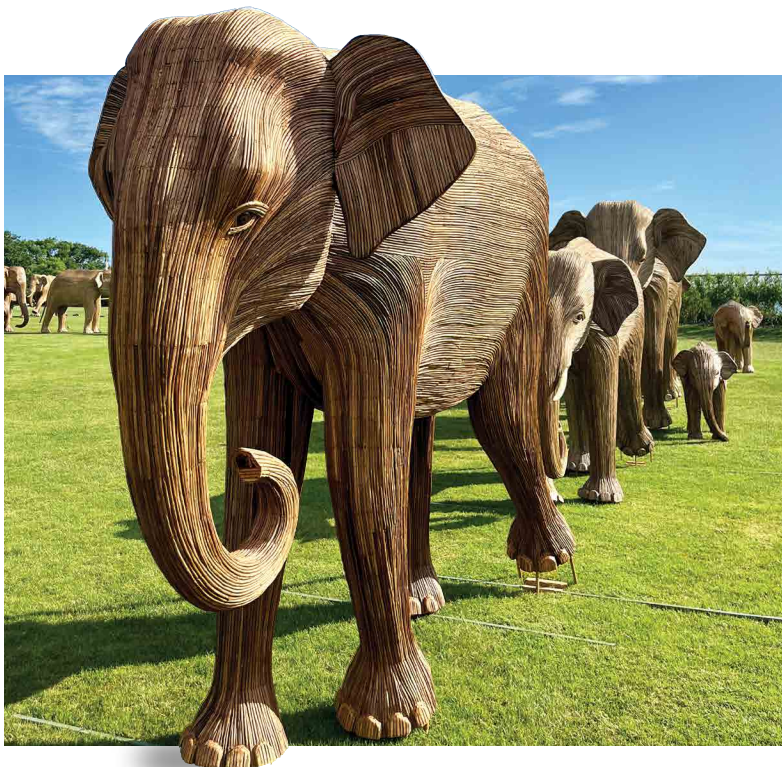
The legacy and inspiration of “Monumenta” can be seen today at places like Storm King Art Center in New Windsor, NY, deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum in Lincoln, MA, Socrates Sculpture Park in Queens, NY, and, of course, “The Great Elephant Migration,” an outdoor exhibition of life-sized elephant sculptures that has been displayed at various locations around the country, beginning with Newport on July 1.





Exhibition:

## The Great Elephant Migration



The grandeur of The Breakers was matched last summer by the striking image of 26 life-sized Indian elephant sculptures lined up on the great lawn overlooking the Atlantic Ocean.

This was “The Great Elephant Migration,” an exhibition featuring 100 sculptures positioned at various locations around Newport, including The Breakers, Salve Regina University, Rough Point and Great Friends Meeting House, from July 1 through September 3.

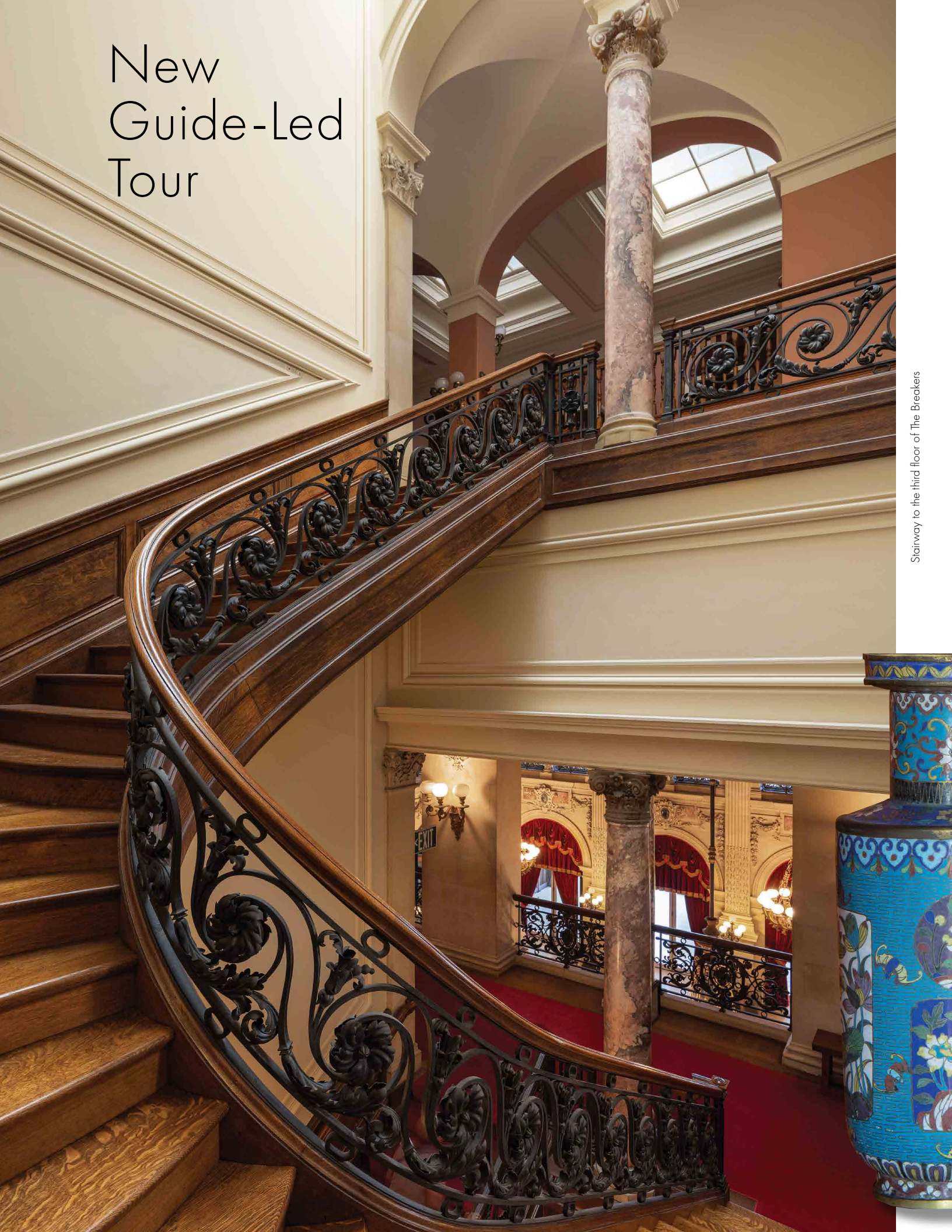
Newport was the first stop for “The Herd,” which was scheduled to move on to stops at the Meatpacking District in New York City, Miami Beach, Houston, the National Museum of Wildlife Art in Jackson Hole, WY, Blackfeet Nation Buffalo Pastures in Browning, MT, and Los Angeles.

Crafted by the Conservation Collective, a community of 200 indigenous artisans and conservationists from Southern India, the sculptures are made from lantana camara, an invasive plant whose removal from India’s protected areas has the potential to increase available habitat by 154,000 square kilometers.

The elephant sculptures proved to be a popular attraction for visitors of all ages throughout the summer, regularly drawing crowds of admirers who posed for photos. A total of 147,606 visited The Breakers during “The Great Elephant Migration.”



# New Guide-Led Tour

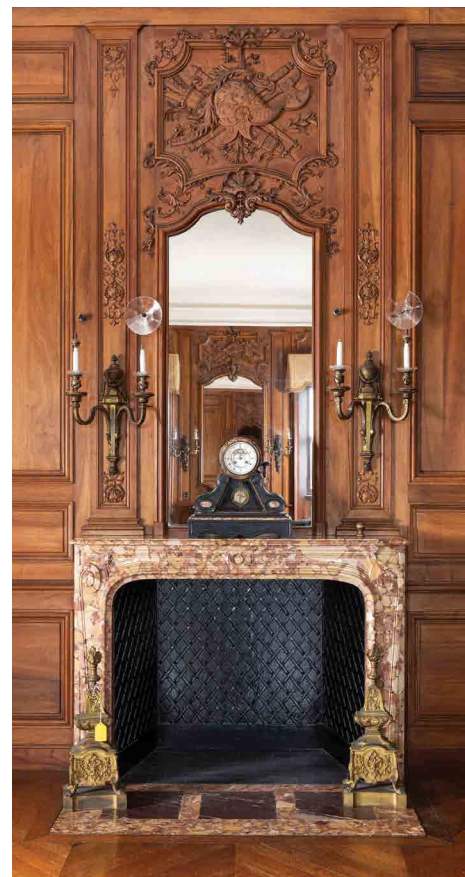


Stairway to the third floor of The Breakers





Countess Gladys Széchenyi's Bathroom



Fireplace in Reginald Claypoole Vanderbilt's Bedroom

## The Breakers Third Floor Preservation in Progress Tour

Launched in June 2024, The Breakers Third Floor Preservation in Progress Tour is a guide-led experience of private bedrooms, bathrooms and recreational spaces used by the Vanderbilt family and household staff for more than a century.

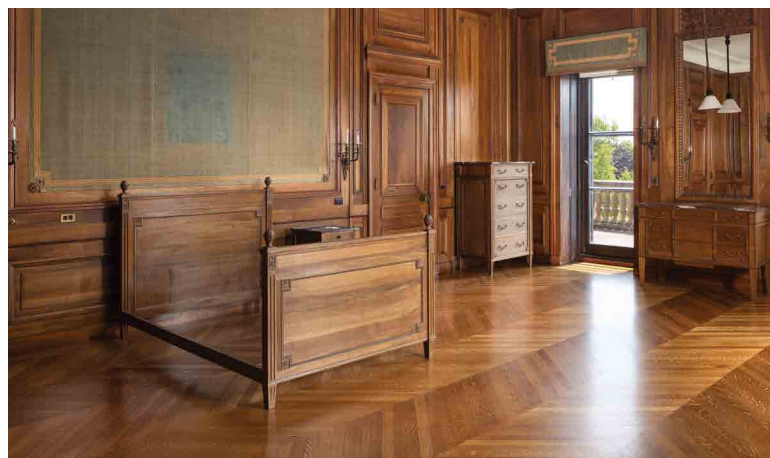
But it's also much more than that. Visitors witness preservation work in action, as the research, planning and physical work to restore these spaces is ongoing. Some floors and walls have been restored while others have been left untouched to show the effects of time and the elements. The décor ranges from the 1890s to the 1940s and later, reflecting the family's changing uses of the third floor. The tour will evolve as the preservation work progresses.

Launching this tour was one of the highlights of 2024 at the Preservation Society. It allows us to provide a more complete story – not only of this iconic property, but also of the family who built it and lived there for generations.

*For the first time in the 129-year history of The Breakers, the private third-floor family space occupied by generations of Vanderbilts opened for public tours.*



Closet in Staff Quarters



Bedroom of Cornelius Vanderbilt III

A Chinese Cloisonné Enamel Vase, Chinese, 19th century.  
Gift of Gladys R. Thomas; Cornelia Coudenhove-Kalergi; Eugene Roberts, 1972



# In Their Own Words



**Paulette Carr**  
*Tour Guide*

The year 2024 brought new experiences for guests visiting the Newport Mansions, including the much-anticipated unveiling of The Breakers Third Floor Preservation in Progress Tour.

For years, staff were asked, “When can we see the third floor?” Well, 2024 was the year and visitors quickly booked it out weeks in advance, necessitating the addition of a second daily tour. As a guide who gives the tour, I am always intrigued to see how visitors react when they reach the top of the stairs and take their first steps onto the third floor. I hear a lot of “Wows” and “I didn’t expect this!” They are also happy for the chairs, provided in Neilly’s bedroom, to catch their breath after climbing 77 stairs!

Guests are very interested in the wall coverings and the color scheme. They are amazed that the fabric on the walls of the boys’ bedrooms dates to when The Breakers was completed in 1895. And they are amused to see the tiny 1950s-era kitchen used by the Vanderbilt family when the third floor became the summer “apartment.” Many say, “Oh, I remember a stove like that!”

They remark at how different the décor is from the first floor. No gold leaf. No elaborate carvings. A quieter space designed by Ogden Codman Jr. for the sons of Cornelius Vanderbilt II and his wife, Alice.

What is really appreciated is the opportunity to see the third floor as it is now, before any extensive restoration is complete. I explain that what they see now will evolve through the days and months ahead. Already since starting the tour, wall coverings are being removed, furniture relocated and the tour route changed to accommodate work.

At the end of the tour, I ask if they will be back to see the changes. It is always a resounding “Yes! When will it be finished?” I tell them to stay tuned. The Preservation Society has more exciting things ahead!



**Eve Loftus**  
*Curatorial Research Assistant*

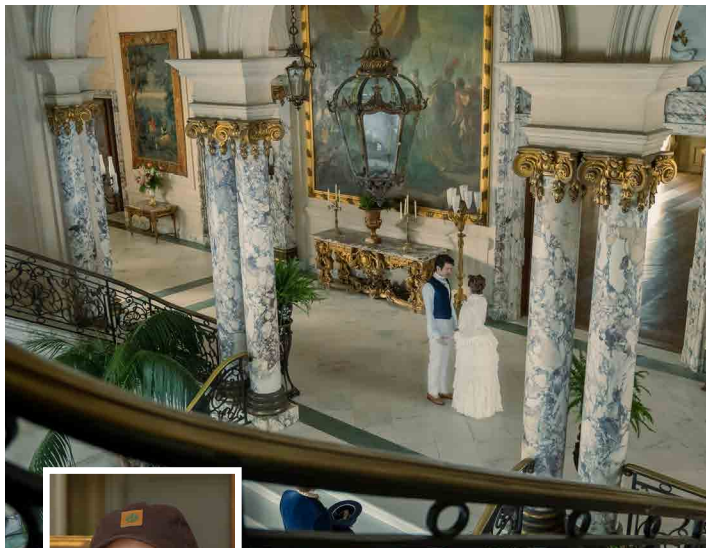
I joined the team at the Preservation Society in February 2024. I spend my workday researching and documenting our houses, the objects that are and once were inside, and the people who lived and worked here, so it is a rare day that I don’t learn something new. Perhaps my favorite subject to research is the staff who worked in Newport’s summer cottages, as they present fascinating histories of labor, immigration and class during the Gilded Age.

My first deep dive into this subject was at The Breakers as we were developing the new Third Floor Preservation in Progress tour. We are lucky to be able to share such a wonderfully rich history of the Vanderbilt family and their descendants at The Breakers, but we know relatively little about the individuals who worked there under Cornelius II and Alice Vanderbilt.

A major obstacle in this endeavor is the lack of census records from the 1890s. But when I traced the Vanderbilt household in the 1885 Rhode Island state census, I noticed a name that recurred in later census documents: Elizabeth Perkins, housekeeper. Once I knew her name, it suddenly felt like she was everywhere. An appraiser’s report on Cornelius II’s will listed Mrs. Perkins as a beneficiary; I found several newspaper reports on the Vanderbilts in which Mrs. Perkins featured; I even found notes about her in a Newport gardener’s diary when I was researching something else entirely. I learned that each summer for 25 years, Mrs. Perkins was quietly the first to arrive and last to leave The Breakers. She not only managed the household alongside Alice Vanderbilt for all those years but also cultivated professional relationships with working people in Newport to facilitate the Vanderbilts’ time here.

Research of this kind gives us the opportunity to understand Gilded Age Newport in more detail, and I am excited to see these small seeds of research blossom into new stories we can soon share with the public.





## Harold Mathews

### *Elms Caretaker*

I am very proud to have been the guardian of The Elms for over 40 years.

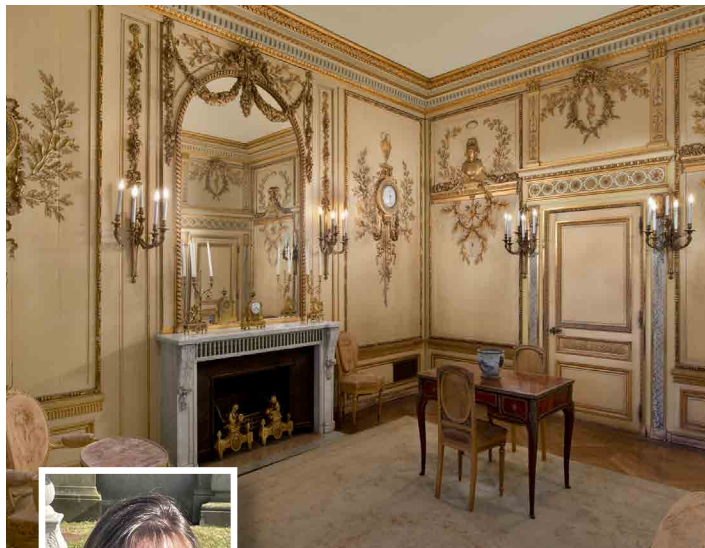
Reflecting on my career, I smile thinking about the many interesting “characters” I worked with over the years. Many have moved on – sadly, some are no longer with us – but I treasure the time spent with past employees, and of course the people I work with at The Elms today.

When I started in the early 1980s, tours were limited to the first and second floors. Opening the rest of the house to the public in the mid-’90s was a major undertaking. It required clearing out the basement-level kitchen, vegetable cellar, pastry room, ice plant, drying room and sub-basement and relocating the gift shop.

The Servant Life Tour – originally called the Behind-the-Scenes Tour – began in 2000 and received great reviews. The next year, I moved from The Elms’ third floor to make way for guests to visit the servants’ quarters. I think it’s awesome that we show the entire house, from the underground coal tunnel to the rooftop (with one of the best views in Newport) and everything in between.

I have enjoyed working with the HBO crew shooting scenes at The Elms for “The Gilded Age.” There is a lot of work to do before the various crews arrive, but it’s gratifying to see The Elms featured prominently, first with the kitchen used as a gathering space for the Russells’ staff in their fictional New York mansion, and then when they made The Elms the Russells’ summer cottage in Season 2. Watching the show can be strange! In one scene, Church – the Russells’ butler played by actor Jack Gilpin – is shown in his office, and I find myself thinking, “Hey, that was my old living room on the third floor!” It really hits home.

While it’s great to host camera crews and actors, I never forget the guests who visit us every day. I always want to be sure they enjoy their experience.



## Miranda Prescott

### *Group Specialty Tour Coordinator*

I’ve been in the Group Tour Department for three years, scheduling both large motor coach groups and our more intimate Exclusive Experiences.

Exclusive Experiences offer private or personal tours led by specialty guides and have grown immensely in popularity. It’s easy to forget our workplace is a “bucket-list” destination for visitors around the world. Guests range from CEOs entertaining clients to a husband arranging a surprise for his wife, or a grandmother treating her family to something unforgettable. One of my favorite stories involves a Texas woman who reserved solo tours of two mansions. It was her dream, but she felt awkward booking just for herself. I assured her I thought it was inspiring that she wanted to treat herself.

Our Specialty Guides provide unforgettable experiences, catering to the unique interests of our guests. Their passion for sharing history, decorative arts and family legacies ensures guests leave satisfied and educated.

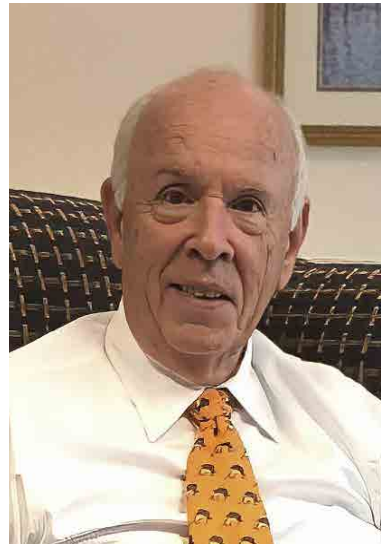
Another exciting part of my job has been working with Membership to design and execute day trips to visit cultural treasures like the Mark Twain House, Wadsworth Athenaeum and Austin House in Hartford and the Boston Athenaeum, Boston Public Library, Trinity Church and a viewing of WGBH’s “The Culture Show.” We are working with a luxury tour operator for a longer exclusive tour of public and private homes in the Hudson Valley.

I firmly believe travel is both an educational opportunity and a tool for preservation. When people experience historically significant places, they are more likely to want to help protect them. Experiential travel offers an opportunity to understand history from many angles. I’m so proud to work for an organization that preserves national landmarks and makes them accessible, ensuring future generations can learn and appreciate history.





Bernie Gewirz



John R. Danieli

## *In Memoriam*

### Bernard “Bernie” Gewirz

1926-2025

The Preservation Society of Newport County lost a cherished friend on March 14, 2025, when Bernard “Bernie” Gewirz passed away peacefully at his home in Palm Beach, Florida, at age 98.

Born September 8, 1926, in Washington, D.C. Bernie graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy on July 4, 1945, and served on the USS Noble before attending Georgetown University Law School. Recalled to active service during the Korean War, he worked in naval intelligence while continuing his legal education at Columbia University. He passed the bar in 1953.

Bernie and his wife Sarah established the Bernard and Sarah Gewirz Family Foundation while supporting causes in Washington, DC, Newport, R.I. and Palm Beach, FL, focused on education, medical research and historic landmarks. Contributions included the Gewirz Center at George Washington University Hillel, Georgetown University Lombardi Cancer Center, and the lead gift for the 12-story Bernard and Sarah Gewirz Building at Georgetown University Law Center in 1993. Other beneficiaries included the Kennedy Center, Redwood Library, National Gallery of Art, Adas Israel Synagogue, Sibley Memorial Hospital, Touro Synagogue and The Preservation Society of Newport County.

Bernie was predeceased by Sarah, his wife of 59 years, in October 2019. He is survived by his sons Michael (Cleo) and Steven (Katrina) of Washington, DC; Jonathan (Rita) of Providence, RI; and grandchildren Lillian (Stephen Grosso), Graham, Stella, Jack, Malcom and Levi. He will be dearly missed.

### John R. Danieli

1943-2025

John R. Danieli, a dedicated and loved supporter of the Preservation Society, passed away at his home in West Palm Beach, Florida on April 4, 2025.

An avid golfer, John began participating in the Preservation Society’s golf outing over two decades ago. He was always an ardent and generous supporter of the Golf Outing Auction, and his support grew over the years through extensive charitable donations, including his final contribution in memory of his late wife, Cheryl.

John was an accomplished businessman. In 1980, he founded The Computer Merchant, Ltd. (TCM) to service the temporary IT and engineering staffing needs of businesses and government agencies. As a former Marine Corps programmer, he instilled military values in the business. TCM continues to be a leader in Veteran-Led IT staffing excellence and is one of the largest privately-held IT staffing solutions providers in the U.S.

Prior to forming TCM, John worked in on-line systems development and database administration at IBM Corporation and Howard Johnson. He began his career in technology while serving in the U.S. Marine Corps during the Vietnam conflict. He held a B.A. from Pace University and served on Pace’s Advisory Board for the Seidenberg School of Computer Sciences and Information Systems.

John was preceded in death by Cheryl, his wife of 54 years. He is survived by his son Andrew Danieli, Andrew’s wife Catherine, and cherished granddaughter Madelynne.







# *Advancing Our Strategic Priorities: Leadership Contributors*

*The Preservation Society gratefully recognizes the generosity of friends who have gone above and beyond to demonstrate their support for our ambitious goals for the future. We express our deepest thanks to those steadfast ambassadors of our bold vision and enduring mission to protect, preserve and present a world-class collection of historic properties.*

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Left: Detail of mosaic ceiling, Billiard Room, The Breakers  
Right: Dining Room Panel, Chateau-sur-Mer



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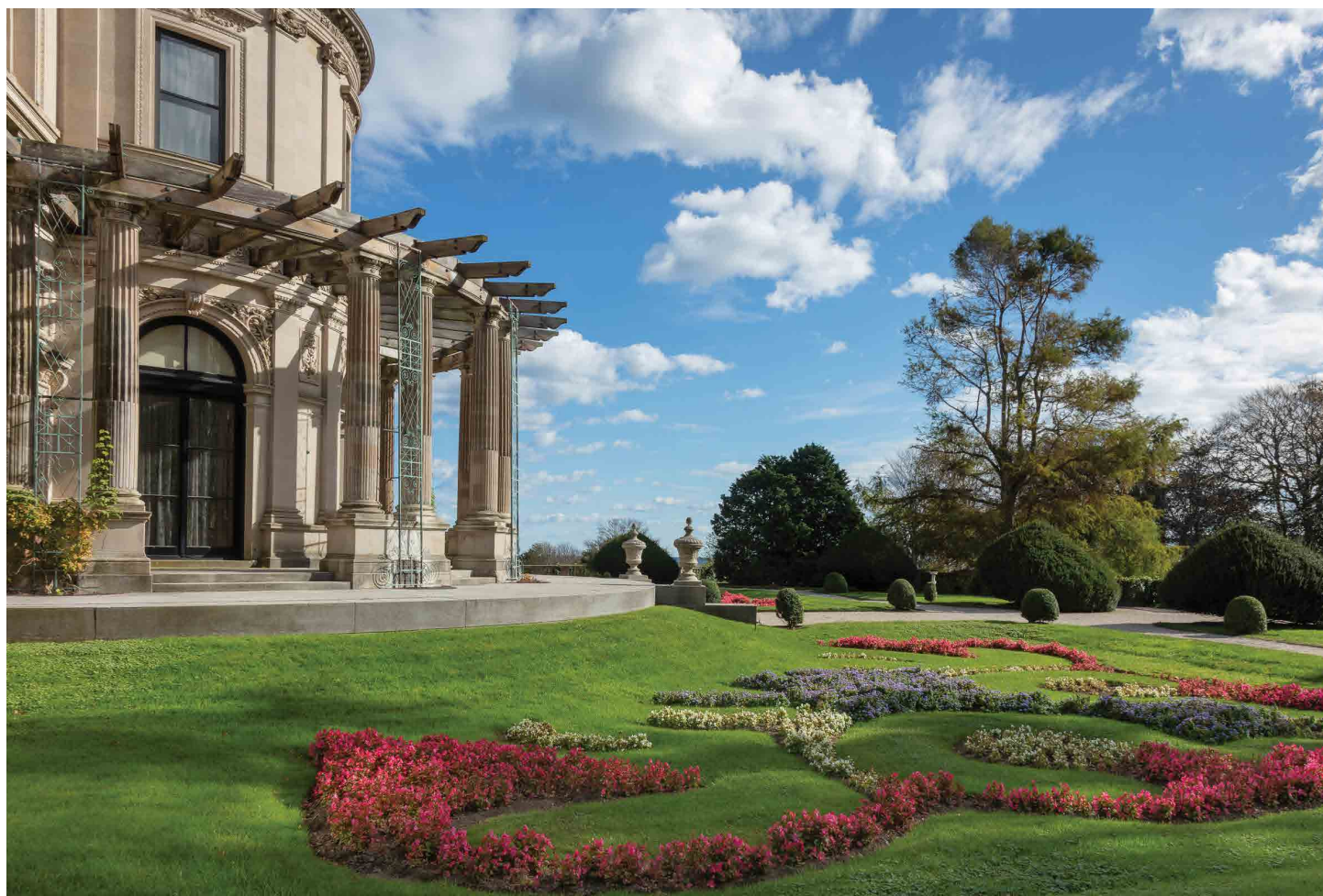
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## Young Patrons

*The Young Patron program represents the future of preservation. Young Patrons are enthusiastic supporters of our mission, ages 21-39. We are so glad to include them in our growing circle of friends.*

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Our inaugural Young Patron event was a Kentucky Derby party held on race day, May 4, at The Breakers Stable & Carriage House. Attendees enjoyed learning about coaching, watching the race and witnessing a photo finish for themselves!





# Event Benefactors and Patrons



*Unforgettable events like La Fête du Jardin at The Elms and the Holiday Dinner Dance help underwrite the work of the Preservation Society. We gratefully recognize the following individuals who enhanced their level of support for our event offerings in 2024.*

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*Partners in Preservation are supporters whose significant generosity advances important preservation initiatives, supports special events and programming, and ensures these extraordinary historic properties will continue to be enjoyed by future generations of visitors.*



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*Stewards of Preservation include local businesses whose support of the Annual Fund maintains our historic properties for the good of our community.*

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*We gratefully acknowledge those who have thoughtfully included The Preservation Society of Newport County in their estate plans.*

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January 1 – December 31, 2024

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Lorraine Starr  
Susan Stautberg  
Donald Steiner  
David Stetter  
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Evelina Taber  
Mike Taber  
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Michael Taylor  
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Angela Von der Lippe  
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Laura Willson  
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William F. Wilson  
Jean Wood  
Kathleen Wood  
Patrick Wood Prince  
Sharon Wood Prince  
William N. Wood Prince  
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Amy Yozura  
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*If you would like to volunteer,  
we'll welcome you with open arms.  
Kindly contact Debra Hunt,  
Volunteer Coordinator,  
dhunt@NewportMansions.org  
or 401-847-1000, ext. 126.*





Top Row: William J. Corcoran, Peter C. Erichsen, Beverly Ledbetter, Eric Hertfelder, Edward F. Sanderson, Evelina Taber, Snehal Shah, Lark E. Mason, Jr., Donald Steiner, Patrick Wood Prince, Keith Stokes & John F. (Jack) Murphy  
Bottom Row: Steven B. Gewirz, Hank Bell, Cynthia Stewart Reed, Stephen Huttler, Dale J. Venturini, William F. Lucey III, Anne Ford, Sherri Grace, David Bazarsky, Peter W. Harris & Patrick Kerins  
Not Pictured: Meg W. Braff, Kim Darden, Ala Isham, Susan C. Petrovas, R.Ph., Earl A. Powell III

# Board of Trustees

The following individuals were elected to the Preservation Society’s Board of Trustees for 2024-2025 at the Annual Meeting held on June 13, 2024 at The Elms.

*We gratefully acknowledge Beverly Y. Little and Janet L. Robinson for their outstanding service to the Board of Trustees.*

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Donald Steiner  
Dale J. Venturini  
Patrick Wood Prince

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Richard N. Sayer, Esq.





International Council members and guests at the Hotel Diplomat during their October 2024 visit to Sweden.

Bottom Row: Trudy Coxie, Pauline C. Metcalf, Theresa Elmore Behrendt, Constance T. Haydock, Debra Del Vecchio, Comte Denis de Kergorlay, Deborah G. Royce, Lynn Allen, Leslie B. Jones & Terry Dickinson  
 Middle Row: Kim Darden, Queta de Santa Cruz, El Marques de Santa Cruz, Andrea Berthoud, Henrietta Spencer-Churchill, Armin B. Allen, Charles M. Royce & William G. Allman  
 Top Row: Glenn Darden, Dr. Johan Cederlund, Hermes Mallea, Jean Berthoud & Stephen Lash  
 Not Pictured: Comte Philippe de Cossé-Brissac

## International Council

The International Council is a group of internationally recognized leaders in the fields of arts, culture, horticulture and historic preservation. They provide insight and guidance on global issues that affect cultural heritage institutions and help the Preservation Society identify the best practices in preservation, conservation, education, development and museum management.

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*Co-Chair*  
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*Board of Trustees Liaison*  
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# Full-Time Employees



Sitting: Philip Pelletier,  
Director of Special Events,

Standing: Beverly Ware,  
Patrick Surber, Katherine Lewis,  
Nicholas Hafner &  
Victoria Papp.

Not Pictured: Megan Kenney-Pharo

## OFFICE OF THE CEO & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Trudy Coxe,  
*CEO & Executive Director*  
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Priscilla Adam

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Jennifer Milburn  
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Ashley Bard  
Daniel Fryer  
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Barbara Shea  
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Brooke Borsberry  
Genna Duplisea  
Dagan Farancz  
Cassandra Fraley  
Heather Hodge  
Cara Kaminski  
Lauren Landi  
Eve Loftus  
Isabella Margi  
Mackenzie Maron  
Patricia Miller  
Victoria McKenna-Ratjen  
Kathryn Petterson  
Amanda Quink  
Carola Schueller  
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Beverly Ware  
Nicholas Hafner  
Katherine Lewis  
Victoria Papp  
Megan Kenney-Pharo  
Patrick Surber

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Theresa Downing  
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Tara Flynn  
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Alva Vanderbilt's Study, Marble House











The Preservation Society of Newport County  
424 Bellevue Avenue  
Newport, RI 02840

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The Preservation  
Society of Newport  
County

# 2024 Annual Report

THE PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF NEWPORT COUNTY

