

# FRIENDS OF *Florham*

Winter 2003

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## *Shirley Carter Burden: An Appreciation*

Turn left after walking into Lenfell Hall from the Twombly Mansion's Great Hall, then left again to face a painting depicting two rather



*The "Front Gate" with gatehouse to the right.*

well-fed boys. These two sons of Florence Burden, daughter of Florence Vanderbilt Twombly, were probably 11 and 14 at the time of this

unsigned, undated painting. The older son, George William (1906-1984) chose a career in finance and spent much of his life as benefactor of public and private institutions as well as serving as president of the Museum of Modern Art. The younger, Shirley Carter (1909-1989), "chose art." In 1926, at the age of 17, Shirley was invited to come west to Los Angeles by his cousin, William Douglas Burden. The purpose behind the invitation: to join in the production of a documentary of Anishnabe life, "The Silent Enemy" (released in 1930), starring Chauncey Yellow Robe (Lako-

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## *Restoration of the Mansion*

Step by step the restoration of the Great Hall of the Mansion at the College at Florham is nearing completion. Phyllis Conway and Barbara Keefauver, from the Friends of Florham board, started the project in December 2000. Mary Beth Brown, New Jersey representative of Scalamandré, N.Y.C., assisted in the decorating and furniture selection process. This is same the team that orchestrated transformation of Lenfell Hall in 1999.

Prior to the start of both projects, the committee visited former Vanderbilt homes in Newport, R.I.; Tarrytown, N.Y.; Ashville, N.C.; and New York City. Conway and Keefauver also studied the original records of the 1955 auction of the contents of the Mansion. In addition, through Ms. Brown they accessed the Scalamandré records and fabric archives.

Before the construction phase of this project, color schemes and drapery material were selected that were consistent with the historical context of the Mansion.

Three of the paint colors chosen for Lenfell and Great Halls were from the British National Trust selection, and the fourth color came from the Hammond Harwood house in Annapolis, Md.

The prototype of the fabric for the Great Hall drapes comes from a historic print

*continued on page 2*



## President's Letter

Since our newsletter last spring, the Friends of Florham have not been idle. Although our activities may not be immediately visible, we finally finished our restoration projects in the Mansion, i.e., Lenfell Hall and the Great Hall,



Clowney Gardens

and have put the finishing touches on the latter. It all looks splendid! The Mansion's attraction for special occasions and everyday pleasure is tremendously enhanced by the beauty of the restoration.

We are proceeding with the completion of our work in the Italian garden by replacing the peripheral walk, which will match the walk surrounding the central floral area; replacing the missing balusters; and, hopefully, getting new heads for the statues! The donor plaque has been damaged, presumably by "mischievous students," and we will be replacing it. So in the late spring all are invited to come and see the completed Italian garden.

Our big worry this past summer was that our next project, the designation of the only remaining untouched Frederick Law Olmsted area on the campus — the magnificent Cutleaf Maple Area, inside Danforth Road entrance — would become a parking lot for the new residence hall

which is being built across the street. But, fortunately, thanks to the dedication of a couple of our members, the help from University President J. Michael Adams and several members of the University administration and the involvement of the landscape planner of the new residence hall, the present parking lot that is near the entrance will be expanded and beautifully landscaped and will basically adjoin the Cutleaf Maples. Unfortunately, the road to incoming cars from Danforth Road is closed temporarily for construction of the residence hall, but by next fall you should be able to come in and marvel at the beauty of these glorious trees.

We are presently discussing another lecture and will invite you all as soon as one is decided. There are several campus improvements that we are considering and hope that with your support and contributions we can get to work on them. Won't you please join us in our projects by sending in a year-end membership gift? There are membership forms at the end of this newsletter.

I can't begin to thank the members of my committee for their help and dedication, and last, but not least, we are thrilled that the Florham-Madison Campus has now been renamed Fairleigh Dickinson University's College at Florham.

*Emma Joy Dana*

*Restoration of the Mansion, continued from page 1* appropriate to the period. The drapery and upholstery fabrics were woven especially for the Great Hall by Scalamandr .



The Friends of Florham raised the money for the restoration of the Great Hall. The cost, which includes painting, draperies and furniture currently amounts to \$76,692. Funds primarily come from

the five annual Gala Balls given since 1997, as well as many individual community donations and several in-kind donations. The Friends greatly appreciated funding from several foundations including Kirby, Hyde & Watson, Tomlinson, and Dreyfuss. The cooperation of people who worked on these projects, e.g.,

Scalamandr , and Carmine Toto & Son, Madison, N.J., the painting contractor, made it possible to complete the project on time and on budget.

Prior to the work on the interior of the Mansion, the Friends were responsible for the restoration of the Clowney Gardens behind the Mansion at a cost of more than \$14,500 and the Italian Garden to the side of the Mansion at approximately \$42,000 to date. Planning for the completion of this garden is presently under way. Other projects undertaken by the Friends include the restoration of some of the portraits of the Twombly family in Lenfell Hall; the planting of two large holly trees in front of the Mansion; new chairs and a portable stage for Lenfell Hall; and, most recently, the furniture for the Great Hall.

The Friends of Florham are grateful to all of the artisans who helped restore this beautiful building and to all who have contributed funds to support these projects.

## *The Friends' Man for All Seasons*

Intelligence, wit, exceptional teaching gifts and persuasive leadership capabilities are some of the external praises that generally accompany after-dinner tributes or the introduction of the speaker himself. The words assume meaning, however, when attributed to Walter Savage, distinguished professor of English emeritus, active trustee of the Friends of Florham and perhaps one of the busiest volunteers in the Morris County area.

Walter's story begins in Haddonfield, N.J., where he spent his early years, and moves quickly to his service in World War II, where he was wounded in action in Chiunzi Pass, Italy, and awarded the Purple Heart. Cut to Middlebury College where Walter graduated Phi Beta Kappa, earned an MA in English at the University of Pennsylvania, taught at Middlebury College and completed doctoral studies at University of Pennsylvania.

Hired initially to teach at FDU Teaneck, N.J., Walter made history of sorts when he taught Great Books, the first course offered at the Madison Campus in September 1958. He remembers that "there were about 185 students in the class, one of two required of all entering students. The class was the only one offered at the assigned hour because there were not enough students left over to fill any of the half dozen or so other courses." From then on, until he retired in 1988, there were few areas of FDU life that escaped the Walter Savage touch. He was director of Wroxton College, FDU's beautiful historic campus in Wroxton, England, during the first full year of the program in 1966-67, and again in 1985.

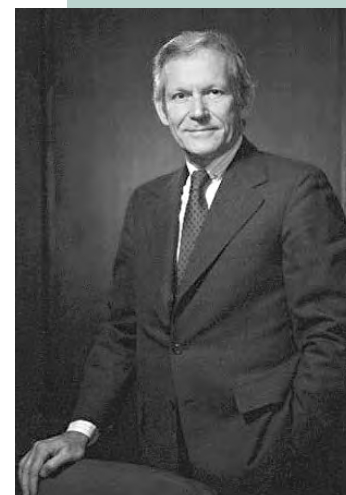
He is quick to note that his "most important assistant and entire academic staff" was his wife, Patty. He's also been chairman of the English department; twice elected faculty speaker; faculty representative to the board of trustees; president, Madison Chapter of Association of University Professors (AAUP); and was a highly effective acting president of FDU during his tenure (July 1983–September 1984).

Lest this read like a straightforward list of impressive academic accomplishments, a quick poll of some of his former colleagues suggests that the journey was also characterized by Walter's irrepressible humor. Harry Keyishian, professor of English, recalls that "when Walter had a back problem, he was advised to stretch his back by hanging from a bar, and he would come to my office while I was in conference

with a student and hang by the lintel for a period of time, without explanation. Then he would move on to the next office. Students were perplexed, and if I felt in a mischievous mood, I didn't explain why a senior professor was hanging by his fingers in my office doorway."

This was not an isolated incident. When Walter Cummins, professor of English and another long-time colleague, roasted Walter at his retirement dinner, he told the story of the time when a student came into an office where a group of professors were talking at the end of a semester: "Walter was lingering in hat and coat. The student had a paper for another professor, Chris Hewitt, who was not in the building at the time. Walter took it and said, 'I'll put it under my hat, so I won't forget to give it to Dr. Hewitt.' He proceeded to semi-crumple the paper and literally stick it under his hat. The next day the student's mother called Dr. Hewitt to complain: 'Who was that mad man who destroyed my daughter's paper?' Hewitt, also chairman of the department, said, 'I assure you that man won't be back in the department next fall.' And he was right, because Walter was going to England to direct the Wroxton program."

The gymnastics may have subsided, but the wit and good humor continue as we segue to another chapter in the story — Walter's substantial service to the community. As a trustee of the Friends, he was co-editor of the newsletter for four years. In fact, there's very little about the lives of the Twombly family or the history of the Mansion that he doesn't know, and his tours at the Friends' special events and galas are generally oversubscribed. Walter has also been a trustee of the N.J. Shakespeare Festival, trustee and vice president of Macculloch Hall Historical Museum, former president of the Washington Association; and reportedly he is the most knowledgeable, articulate, volunteer, historical walking tour guide at the Midlantic Center for the Arts in Cape May, N.J., his other area of residence. He exercised statewide influence as a member and chairman of the New Jersey Council of the Humanities (NJHC), and is currently a member of the Ad hoc Book Awards Committee for the NJHC. That said, this mere listing gives little hint of Walter's valuable contributions to these organizations or of his remarkable ability to effect judicious compromise — or of the sheer pleasure of his company.



*Walter Savage*

## *‘McKim, Mead, and White: The Reinvention of the Classical Ideal’ Presented at Lenfell Hall*

Friends of Florham and the general public filled The Mansion’s Lenfell Hall on March 17, for architect and author Samuel G. White’s illustrated talk, “McKim, Mead, and White: The Reinvention of the Classical Ideal.”

White, the great grandson of Stanford White, one of America’s most renowned and influential architects and the most famous member of the firm, returned to Florham to discuss McKim, Mead, and White’s great commercial, governmental and institutional buildings.

As America became the leading industrial nation of the world and a major player on the world stage, Charles Follen McKim, William Rutherford Mead and Stanford White drew on classical, Italian renaissance and Georgian revival models to create an architecture of wealth and power. Important exponents of the City Beautiful Movement of the turn of the last century, they transformed the look of America’s newly great cities, especially New York City. McKim, Mead, and White found a city of brownstone; they helped leave one of “white marble and tawny brick.”

Sharing newly created illustrations from his forthcoming book *McKim, Mead, and White Masterworks* (Rizzoli, 2003), speaker White followed the evolution of the firm’s style and strength. Beginning with an important commission for The Great White City, Chicago’s 1893 Columbian Exposition, the firm went on to build the Boston Public Library; Low Library at Columbia University; the Pierpont Morgan Library; the Metropolitan, Century, University, Harmonie, and Harvard Clubs; The Rhode Island State House; the Brooklyn Museum; Madison Square Garden (demolished 1925) and many buildings for Columbia’s Morningside Heights campus, as well as that of New York University’s Bronx Campus, now Bronx Community College. Their Pennsylvania Station, modeled on the Baths of Caracalla (demolished 1963), was a monumental entrance to an imperial city.

White died, notoriously, in 1906, and McKim, suffering a nervous breakdown, followed in 1909. But between 1893 and their deaths, they

changed the face of America. Paralleling the professionalization of America in science, medicine, law, academia and engineering, Mead, who lived on to 1928, changed the business of architecture, creating a major firm to carry on their work.

McKim and White’s attention to detail, exterior and interior, was extraordinary. Stanford White, discouraged from becoming a painter, transferred his painter’s eye to collaborative work with leading artists of the day: John LaFarge, Louis Comfort Tiffany and Augustus Saint-Gaudens.

Lecturer White also took the audience into Box Hall, the family home, and to less familiar churches and banks on the East Coast.

The Friends of Florham and Samuel G. White have enjoyed a long relationship. In the mid-1990s he delighted audiences here with a hypothetical exchange of letters between the tight-fisted owner of Florham, Hamilton M. Twombly, and Frederick Law Olmsted, whose firm planned much of the grounds. White’s own architectural work was subsequently exhibited in the Florham-Madison Campus Library. At the September 1998 opening reception of that exhibition, White spoke to the Friends on McKim, Mead, and White’s domestic architecture based on his well received book, *The Houses of McKim, Mead, and White* (Rizzoli: New York, 1998).

Samuel G. White, a graduate of Harvard College and the University of Pennsylvania, is a fellow of the American Institute of Architects and a national academician. His firm Buttrick, White & Burtis has merged with Platt, Byard, Dovell to form Platt, Byard, Dovell, White. White continues there with his work specializing in new designs and preservation projects for institutions and owners of significant and historic properties. He is also an adjunct professor of fine arts at New York University and a member of the advisory board of the New York School of Interior Design.

Emma Joy Dana, our indefatigable president, arranged and introduced the lecture.

*Carol Selman, public member, New Jersey Historical Commission, guest contributor*



## *Shirley Carter Burden: An Appreciation* continued from page 1

ta), Buffalo Child Long Lance (unknown ethnicity), and Molly Spotted Elk (Penobscot). While these boys may have retrospectively earned good marks for Native American casting, a life producing general-audience films did not seem to be compatible with Shirley's sensibilities, and in the late 1930s he used a portion of his inheritance to establish Tradefilms, Inc., a company mainly concerned with producing training films for several branches of the U.S. military.

At war's end, Burden decided to stay in California where he opened a photo studio and began a new career in architectural photography, interior and exterior. From the mid-1950s and into the early 1960s his work appeared regularly in *House and Garden*, *Arts and Architecture* and *McCalls*, among other popular periodicals. During this period Burden also began producing thematic collections of art photography for his own pleasure. But as early as 1953 his work came to the attention of Edward Steichen, curator of photography at New York's Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) resulting in the inclusion in 1955 of an example of Burden's work in the museum's turning-point photo exhibition, "The Family of Man." Steichen also included a selection of Burden's work in the 1956 "Diogenes" group show of professional, but lesser known photographers. The mid-1950s was also a turning point not only for Burden but for U.S. art photography in general.

*Aperture*, a magazine featuring art photography, skillfully reproduced, was founded in 1952, but its first two decades, despite

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*View of the Italian Garden with the southeast corner of the Mansion porch in the foreground.*



*The railroad overpass on the entrance road leading from Madison Avenue.*

*Interior of the Orangerie, possibly taken in the late 1940s or early 1950s.*



*Entrance gate (now awaiting restoration) leading from the William Clowney Gardens to the former Rhododendron-Azalea Garden.*



*Continued from page 5*

providing a new voice for art photography, were years noted for uncertain financial health. *Aperture* was to become a cause for Burden who, early on, saw its potential for continuing to foster contemporary art photography. For many years he served as chairman of the *Aperture* Foundation's board of trustees. In 1985 *Aperture*'s Burden Gallery (20 East 23rd Street, Manhattan) was formed and named in his honor as a testimony to his years of support for the journal and fine photography in this country. Still, *Aperture* was only a part of this mild-mannered man's life. While serving for years as chairman of *Aperture*'s board of trustees, he also served as a trustee of the Museum of Modern Art (N.Y.C.) from 1974 to 1989 as well as chairman of its photography committee from 1975 to 1983. During this period Burden's photos continued to be widely published and acquired by major institutional photography collections throughout the country.

Burden's edited collections of photographs are in content and presentation a witness to the reflective nature of this gentle man whose reticence in the face of public acclaim was as well-known as his photography. He consistently advanced others rather than himself. In content, his works also reflect his deeply held Christian beliefs, a source of some embarrassment to the community of committed secular photographers and curators. Among them was one notable exception, Edward Steichen, who, from his position at MOMA, encouraged Burden, and it was Steichen who suggested that Burden undertake a photographic study of the Trappist community in Trappist, Kentucky. The result was a photo compendium, *God Is My Life*, with an introduction by Thomas Merton (New York: Reynal, 1960).

In the early 1970s Burden began to feel somewhat nostalgic about Florham, his grandmother Florence Vanderbilt Twombly's country home and a place he often visited as a child and in his teen years. In his autobiographical



Front view of the Orangerie as seen from the Italian Garden. This photo was taken by Burden on a visit in the late 1930s before the planting of the Atlas Cedars now at the far left and the Linden now to the right and currently obscuring a portion of the Orangerie.

photo album, *The Vanderbilts in My Life* (New Haven, Conn.: Ticknor and Fields, 1981), he admits to being awestruck by Florham as a child. In the autumn of 1971 or possibly 1972 (neither I nor James Griffio [then College at Florham campus provost] can remember precisely), Burden appeared on occasion, walked around the campus, and responded in conversation in one instance: “... thought I’d just take a few notes ... refresh my impressions ... might be a book someday.” His courtliness and disarming manner were in sharp contrast to the ways of the mass of students then swirling through the grounds and buildings that had once echoed a quite different way of life.

The somewhat melancholy tone of *The Vanderbilts in My Life*, with its photos taken shortly after the auction of the estate’s contents in 1955 combined with his reflections of the 1970s, was the result of Burden’s last visit to Florham.

Burden continued to write and compile. *Presence* (Millerton, N.Y.: Aperture, 1981) was followed by *Chairs* (N.Y.: Aperture, 1985); *The Many Faces of Mary* (Millerton, N.Y.: Aperture,

1989); and, with others, *Ellis Island: Echoes From a Nation’s Past* (N.Y.: Aperture, 1989).

In 1973, Shirley Burden sent us a number of vintage prints taken here at Florham on his visits in 1955. We have printed a selection of the outtakes from *The Vanderbilts in My Life*.\* In this only photo memoir, Burden wrote:

“I’ll never forget my first visit to Florham. I must have been seven or eight. We drove through a wonderful tunnel with trains on top, and down a driveway to the biggest house I had ever seen.”

*Bibliographic note: The sources consulted in preparation of this appreciation have been Shirley Burden’s books and are cited in the text. All photos are courtesy of the Library, College at Florham, where the campus archives are housed under the supervision of Eleanor Friedl, curator, special collections, who assisted in the preparation of this appreciation.*

**J.F.**

\*These images are published here for the first time.



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### *Friends of Florham 2003 Spring Gala*

The fifth annual Friends' Spring Gala is planned for May 10, 2003. The black-tie ball will begin with the cocktail hour at 7 p.m., followed by dinner and dancing at 8 p.m. Proceeds of the Spring Gala are used for restoration projects at the Mansion.

The Gala is co-chaired by Barbara Keefauver, Phyllis Conway and Dawn Dupak. Thelma Dear is the honorary chairman of the Benefit Committee.

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