

FRIENDS OF

Florham

FLORHAM: THE LIVES OF AN AMERICAN ESTATE

By Carol Bere, Samuel Convissor and Walter Cummins
Friends of Florham, 2011,
FDU: College at Florham

Right from the start, the projects of the Friends of Florham never fail to amaze, each accomplished with an unerring sense of beauty and style, each adding new luster to the history of Florham and to Fairleigh Dickinson University. *Florham: The Lives of an American Estate* is the latest dazzling addition to the legacy of the Friends of Florham.

Researched and written by Friends' trustees Carol Bere and Sam Convissor and Walter Cummins, professor emeritus of English at FDU, *Florham*, through text and vintage photographs, takes the reader past the imposing entrance gates of the estate, through the stone

railroad tunnel and along the long drive, up to the front of the mansion and then inside, right into its history. Through meticulous research and some good luck that often graces the work of diligent historians, the authors located a veritable treasure trove of never-before-published photographs of Florham.

All of us who love Florham are well familiar with all the known photographs of the estate, which many of us have studied time and again, sometimes with a magnifying glass. In *Florham* we are treated to the most incredible collection of never-before-seen photographs from the 1930s and early 1940s when the estate was at its peak. We see the lower terrace gardens behind the back of the mansion; inside the Orangerie and the garden next to it; and the gardener's quarters. We look out from the second floor of the mansion after a blizzard with the shrubs protected by wooden enclosures; the luscious cherry-paneled rooms inside Miss Ruth's Playhouse; a



REAR OF MANSION (NOW HENNESSY HALL).
JUNE 1939. PHOTO BY JOHNSTON STEWART.
COURTESY OF ROBERT DELAGE

peek inside Mrs. Twombly's private sitting room on the second floor of the mansion; inside Ruth Twombly's bedroom; and Miss Ruth's Rolls Royce.

With these photographs and many more, the authors tell the story of Florence and Hamilton Twombly and their children, their lives at Florham, the tragedies which struck the family and the long decades in which Mrs. Twombly and her daughter, Ruth, presided over the great estate. Other documents that help bring the story alive: a copy of a letter from Hamilton Twombly to Frederick Law Olmsted, one of the checks for the construction of the mansion, copies of menus and Mrs. Twombly's handwritten notes to her head butler and chef and copies of pages from expense ledgers. In *Florham*, the authors have given

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TWOMBLY FAMILY DRAWING ROOM (NOW
LENFELL HALL). PHOTO BY SHIRLEY BURDEN

SPRING 2012

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

It was a very good year for the Friends of Florham. Our renovations to the interior spaces turned out spectacularly, and our events were well attended and incredibly successful! Thank you all so very much!

In addition to our renovation and restoration, we printed our first book, *Florham: The Lives of an American Estate*. Thank you to the authors for all their amazing efforts!

In September, Friends of Florham finished their work on the Great Hall. The freshly reupholstered furniture welcomes students, faculty and guests. Mirrors reflecting the earlier grandeur of the mansion now hang on either side of the magnificent fireplace adding the symmetry that complements the décor. A new, more elegant Directory is another upgrade to the Great Hall.

Additionally, Friends of Florham, with a donation from Edward L. Hennessy, Jr., commissioned artist James Patrick Reid to do a portrait in oil of Mr. Hennessy. As we were working in the Great Hall, it was the opinion of our designer, Suzy Moran, that the current photo wasn't the right scale or media for the space. We appreciate the cooperation of the Hennessy family in supporting our design and restoration plan with this painting.

The portrait, dedicated in December, joins a number of other very fine paintings in Hennessy Hall — both those left by the Twomblys and others donated to the University over the years. One of these, "George Washington Reviewing the Troops at Cambridge, Massachusetts," was recently reframed and rehung in the Great Hall.

Another project is the renovation of the President's Office. The office was repainted, and a new room-size carpet was selected. Then Suzy Moran chose fabrics to re-cover the furniture and for new draperies. The fabrics were selected both for their appropriateness to the architectural period and for their functionality. The results, in rich blues and reds, are warm and inviting, provide a more auspicious environment for meetings or entertaining.

The next Friends of Florham's project is the renovation of Hartman Lounge, located next to the President's Office. Formerly Mr. Twombly's billiard room, this paneled space is heavily used for classes, meetings and University entertaining. It has not been updated in years, so we are looking forward to the restoration and refreshment of this special room.

Most exciting of all is the arrival of *Florham: The Lives of an*

American Estate. Published by the Friends of Florham, the book is a well-documented photo history of the Vanderbilt-Twombly estate — from its beginning as a home for a young married couple to its final repurposing as a campus for a global university.

The University long needed a comprehensive book to give to guests and those interested in the estate's history. Authors Carol Bere and former executive and volunteer Sam Convissor, along with FDU professor emeritus Walter Cummins took on the task. Arthur Vanderbilt wrote the foreword. Profits from the book sales will fund the ongoing work of preserving and restoring the estate. A second, more scholarly book, focusing more on the life of Florence Twombly, is in the planning stages.

Our annual Gala moved to the fall for a "change of season" and was a great success. It remains one of the prettiest events in Morris County, and is always reminiscent of the estate's earlier grandeur. This year, it will be held on September 29, in order to take advantage of the last of summer's warmth. We invite you all to join us on the garden patios! Again, thank you for your continued support.

— Linda Meister

UPCOMING EVENTS

SUNDAY, MARCH 18, Lecture

The Life of Frederick Law Olmsted, Justin Martin, author of *Genius in Place*, Hartman Lounge, Hennessy Hall, 3–5 p.m., includes reception and book signing.

SUNDAY, APRIL 29, Book Signing Party

Florham: The Life of an American Estate, and Recently Uncovered Information on Twomblys, Discussion by authors of book, Lenfell Hall, Hennessy Hall, 3–5 p.m., includes reception and book signing, including short tours of mansion and gardens.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, Friends of Florham Gala

Lenfell Hall, Hennessy Hall, 7–11 p.m.

ART COLLECTION AT HENNESSY HALL



LEFT: ARTIST JAMES PATRICK REID AND BETH HENNESSY WITH THE PAINTING OF EDWARD L. HENNESSY, JR.
RIGHT: FRIENDS PRESIDENT LINDA MEISTER, LEFT, AND BOARD MEMBER SUZY MORAN

Recently, Friends of Florham commissioned local artist, James Patrick Reid, to paint a portrait of University trustee emeritus, Edward L. Hennessy, Jr. Mr. Hennessy is a 1955 graduate of Fairleigh Dickinson and a generous donor to the University for more than 40 years. In May 2007, the University community celebrated his outstanding generosity and 16 years of service with the dedication of “the Mansion” as Hennessy Hall.

Mr. Reid is a member of the faculty at New York’s Fashion Institute of Technology and has lectured at the Art Students League, Parsons School of Design, the New York Academy of Art and other schools around the country.

The portrait, which now hangs in the entrance of Hennessy Hall, is a fine representation of Mr. Hennessy. His daughter, Beth Hennessy, accepted the painting for her father at a small reception held by the Friends in December.

When the Twomblys were in residence at Florham, oil paintings, tapestries and sculptures hung on every wall. The University has a number of Twombly family portraits, and over the years others have generously bequeathed additional works of art to the University.

This summer, Friends of Florham reframed a “monumental” painting by 1930s Pennsylvania artist, Claxton Moulton. The painting, “George Washington Inspecting the Troops at Cambridge, Massachusetts,” was given to FDU by former Morristown mayor, E. Parsons Todd.



WORKMEN REHANGING “GEORGE WASHINGTON INSPECTING THE TROOPS AT CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS”

WALTER SAVAGE MEDITATION AREA AND ORCHARD DEDICATED



HARRY KEYISHIAN, FRANK LANG, WALTER CUMMINS, KENNETH GREENE, GEOFFREY WEINMAN, CHRISTINE FERRAIUOLO, MADELEINE MCMAHON, AND ROBERT GREENFIELD (FROM LEFT).

Members of the FDU administration, present and former faculty members and Friends came together on October 24, 2011, to dedicate the Walter Savage Meditation Area and Orchard. Located on the walkway between the Library at Florham and the Ferguson Recreation Center, the lovely

area is a permanent remembrance of Walter, who was an original faculty member at the Florham campus, former acting president of the University and longtime member of the Friends of Florham. Walter’s contributions to the Friends, in some ways, were difficult to separate from his long-term commitment to the University. His knowledge

of the history of the buildings and grounds and of the lives of the Twombly family, which he generously shared with new faculty, and tours of the Friends events were enormous and invaluable.



THE WALTER SAVAGE MEDITATION AREA AND ORCHARD

FLORHAM-BILTMORE CONNECTION

The Friends literally made new friends at Biltmore in 2011 as they pursued assistance with two of their diverse research projects. Biltmore, a magnificent French Renaissance-style mansion, with historic gardens and grounds is located on 8,000 acres in the mountains of Asheville, N.C. It was built by Florence Twombly's younger brother, George W. Vanderbilt, and completed in 1895. Biltmore today employs many curators, conservators and archivists, and it was here that the Friends looked for assistance and answers to their questions.

During the summer of 2011, Walter Cummins, professor emeritus of English at FDU and one of the authors of the recently published book by the Friends,

Florham: The Lives of an American Estate, contacted Biltmore to attain permission to reprint a photograph of an early painting of the entire Vanderbilt family by Seymour Guy, "Going to the Opera" (1874). The painting now hangs at Biltmore. In the course of Walter's correspondence with archivist Jill Hawkins, she mentioned some photographs they had of the Vanderbilt-Twombly family, which had not been published previously. Look to the Friends new book for photographs of Florence Twombly with her three young daughters, and another of daughters Florence and Adele in a pony cart.

And on October 14, 2011, members of the Friends of Florham, Millicent Knight and her husband, Elliot, who share an interest in antique linens, met with cura-

tor Leslie Klingner at Biltmore. Biltmore houses a considerable textile collection, and the purpose of their trip was to examine some linens donated to the Friends in 2011 by Wendy Burden, great-great-granddaughter of Florence Twombly. The eight pieces included unusual monograms and coats of arms that the Friends were unable to identify. They were looking to the experts at Biltmore for some possible answers (see photo). It was determined that the pieces were dinner napkins of French origin, but no further information was added.

Nevertheless, the Friends established connections with Biltmore, which they hope to continue. We are also most grateful to Millicent Knight for making this connection for us with another Vanderbilt family mansion.

FLORHAM

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us an extraordinary glimpse into how life was lived in the Gilded Age.

The historic on-premises auction of the contents of Florham in 1955 after the deaths of Mrs. Twombly and Miss Ruth marks the transition to a new life for this

estate; it was purchased in 1957 by Fairleigh Dickinson University and the hard work and dedication of its administrators and faculty turned the fabled Gilded Age estate into its College at Florham. These two lives of the estate have been connected by the many projects undertaken by the Friends of Florham to help preserve and protect the mansion and grounds in ways compatible with University use.

Here is a book to be enjoyed and treasured by every student and alumnus(a) of FDU, by everyone interested in Morris County's and New Jersey's history, by anyone fascinated by an inside look at the Gilded Age of American history. For decades to come, this book will be a key resource about Florham and the Twombly family.

Can it get any better? Yes, it can! The proceeds from the sale of each copy of *Florham* will be

used by the Friends of Florham to help fund future projects to restore the McKim, Mead & White mansion and the Frederick Law Olmsted grounds. Here is a wonderful book to savor again and again, to add to your Florham library and to give to friends who may have an interest in becoming part of the Friends of Florham family.

— Arthur T. Vanderbilt, II

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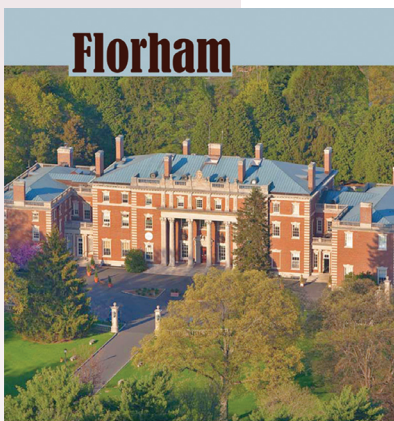
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FRIENDS MEMBER MILLICENT KNIGHT (RIGHT) WITH BILTMORE CURATOR LESLIE KLINGNER



The Lives of an American Estate

GENIUS OF PLACE: THE LIFE OF FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED

By Justin Martin

Da Capo Press (member of Perseus Group), 2011

"I am thinking that of all the young men that you knew I was the last to have been expected to lead such a life as I have," Frederick Law Olmsted wrote in a letter in 1890 when he was 68, describing his life and his achievements to a woman whom he had been in love with in his youth. No understatement, even a cursory look at Olmsted's early career — sailor, surveyor, scientific farmer, publisher and director of a mining operation in California that ultimately collapsed — would not have suggested that he would become the pioneering landscape architect in America in the second half of the 19th century.

There was also no indication in Olmsted's early years that he would ultimately be responsible, among many other commissions, for the landscape design of more than 30 city parks, including Central Park and Prospect Park (with Calvert Vaux); and provide designs for the Capitol grounds in Washington, D.C., and the renowned 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago; for several universities including Stanford and Yale; and for private homes such as Florham and Biltmore in Asheville, N.C., the estate of George



AUTHOR JUSTIN MARTIN

Vanderbilt, Florence Twombly's brother. More surprising, in what Martin refers to as Olmsted's "big life," he was also an inherent reformer and an early environmentalist, who led efforts to preserve Yosemite and Niagara Falls, and addressed environmental concerns in his own work.

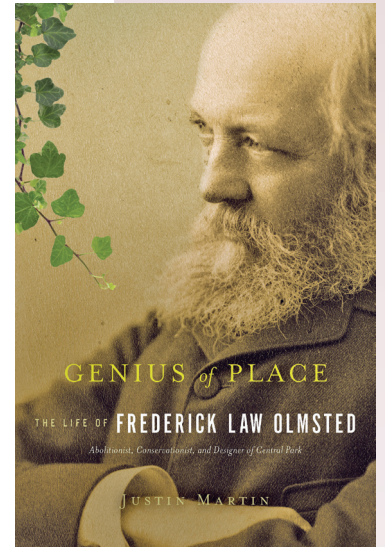
Was Olmsted simply unfocused early on, or were there actually connecting themes in his work, significant ways of being and thinking about the world that were not apparent in his early years? Moreover, was Olmsted initially seeing more in these undeveloped landscapes than had previously been assumed of these areas? And how much of Olmsted's work was determined by the frontier psychology prevalent at the time in America? These are some of the questions that Justin Martin explores in his well-researched, highly readable biography of Olmsted, *Genius of Place*, as he looks to persuade readers that Olmsted's influence is still felt today — that "Olmsted matters." Here, Martin succeeds.

There is little question that Olmsted's views were changed by his tours of the South in the early 1850s. The publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) had generated much interest about the South, and Olmsted persuaded *The New York Times*, then a relatively new publication, to let him report his "observations." He was a formidable journalist, and filed many dispatches, which were published in *The Times*, and later collected in an anthology. As Martin notes, Olmsted began these tours as a gradualist where slavery was concerned and later became an ardent abolitionist and reformer. There is also an apparent connection between Olm-

sted's writings about slavery and his recognition of the link between landscape and the variations in the socioeconomic order in the U.S., and ultimately on his convictions regarding the purposes of parks. As Olmsted wrote in one of his proposals, parks should provide a "feeling of relief ... to those entering them, on escaping from the cramped and controlling circumstances of the streets of the town; in other words, a sense of enlarged freedom ... to all, at all times. ..."

Still, the questions of Olmsted's particular or unique talents remain. Referring to the work of Vaux and Olmsted together, Martin concludes that "Vaux was supremely gifted; Olmsted was simply in another realm." Olmsted was neither an engineer nor a professionally trained architect, but as Martin suggests, he "had an intuitive sense of design ... a fine sense of the narrative to these park creations, and a flair for the dramatic." Moreover, while Olmsted may have lacked professional training, he could recognize talent in others and was a superb administrator in all of his undertakings — whether working with partners or in his own firm. And while previous critics have referred to Olmsted's "discontinuous career," Martin suggests that when he did become a landscape architect exclusively, his success, and what set him apart, was that he was able to bring to his work "the sum of all the wildly varied experiences that had come before."

Yet by his later years, it was clear in a letter to his son written
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PRESIDENT'S OFFICE REDECORATED

One of the greatest recent pleasures of Friends of Florham was the opportunity to redecorate President J. Michael Adams' offices. The offices had not been repainted in many years, and the furnishings were tired hand-me-downs from past administrations. We felt that the space not only needed freshening, but it also needed to represent the mansion and the University better. The rooms have beautiful architectural details and with the new and upgraded furnishings, the suite of offices is transformed.

Suzy Moran found a remarkable rug for a very reasonable price and used that color palate for the fabric and paint choices. Carmine Toto and Sons painted the office "Buckland Blue" with "Linen White." In

addition to traditional mahogany blinds, an impressive blue-and-red-stripe drapery was hung in the President's Office, and additional window treatments were hung in the outer office. An Italian velvet foulard on the two



THE BOOKCASE FLANKED BY SAMMARTINO PORTRAITS

wing chairs makes them richer and more important than before. Shawn Gallic of Plunkett Fleeson managed the upholstery and drapery installations.

Storage in this repurposed 1896 mansion has always been an issue. The addition of a substantial cabinet now supplements the pre-existing credenza and hutch. Suzy located and coordinated the donation of a large bookcase to house President Adams' mementos and book collection. The portraits of Sally and Peter Sammartino were reframed, properly labeled and now hang on either side of the bookcase — a location befitting the founders of a University.

The offices now reflect the importance of the position of president of a global university. To quote President Adams, "The Friends created a welcoming environment for me and for all those who visit my office. It is grand and presidential, with wonderful functionality."

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPE SURVEY



WALKWAY NEXT TO THE ITALIAN GARDENS WITH HENNESSY HALL IN THE DISTANCE



FRIENDS BOARD MEMBER SAM CONVISSOR (CENTER) WITH FDU ALUMNUS JOHN SULPY (LEFT), WHO WORKED WITH CONSULTANT ANN GRANBERY, AND HALS (HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPE SURVEY) REPRESENTATIVE MIKE HARRISON

On November 17, 2011, at the suggestion of Ann Granbery and John Sulpy, who have been documenting Florham's landscape history, Chris Stevens and Mike Harrison, representatives of HALS (Historic American Landscape Survey), met with board members Carol Bere, Sam Con-

vissor, Linda Meister and Associate College at Florham Provost Marilyn Rye. College at Florham Research Librarian Eleanor Friedl also joined the session.

HALS is a "cousin" of HABS (Historic American Building Survey) which began in 1933 to record significant American build-

ings. In 2000, it was felt that great American landscapes should also be recorded. Using laser technology, landscapes can now be "shot" more accurately than by earlier civil engineering techniques. The data is then placed in the Library of Congress. Mr. Stevens and

Mr. Harrison were impressed with the material available in Florham's archives and by the way the estate, now a university campus, has been preserved. They strongly encouraged Friends of Florham to consider recording the campus for posterity. The board is waiting for their proposal.

FANTASTIC FIRST FALL GALA

For the first time, the Friends of Florham held their annual Gala in the autumn. Always an elegant affair, this Gala “swung” to the music of legendary jazz musician, Bucky Pizzarelli, and featured an autumnal feast selected by co-chair, Kathy Atencio, and created by Gourmet Dining’s Executive Chef Jeff Gourley.

Guests first mingled for cocktails in the newly refurbished Great Hall and were treated to a

viewing of the recently renovated Sarah Sullivan Lounge. Dinner was served in Lenfell Hall, Mrs. Twombly’s former music room, where tables were decked with rich brown taffeta and silver bowls were filled with white lilies, all coordinated by co-chair Suzy Moran.

The Gala is an iconic event at the College at Florham, where we celebrate the progressive renovations, enjoy the ambience of a

beautiful place and the company of gracious guests while raising funds for the continued restoration of the Twombly estate. Many thanks to the co-chairs, Kathy Atencio, Suzy Moran and Dawn Dupak, and the hostesses who work to make this event a success. Next year’s Gala will take place on September 29, again with music by the Bucky Pizzarelli Trio. Mark your calendars and join us!



Fall Gala

ABOVE: JOE FALCO, RON PONDER, CYNTHIA FALCO, GRANT PARR, HELEN PARR AND CAROL PONDER (FROM LEFT)

RIGHT: LIZ MCREYNOLDS, IRENE SCIALES, CHRIS MCREYNOLDS, JOE ATENCIO, BETH HENNESSY AND CHRIS SCIALES (FROM LEFT)

BELOW: ANN WELLBROCK, BONNIE VATH, FRED VATH AND DICK WELLBROCK (FROM LEFT)





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GENIUS OF PLACE

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in 1890, Olmsted had reached a degree of self-awareness: "I have all my life been considering distant effects and sacrificing immediate success and applause to that of the future." He was still very active, but affected by the deaths of close friends and his own illnesses, Olmsted was feeling hints of mortality. He was also affirming his longer-term perspective on his life and his work as he mentioned that, "in laying out Central Park we determined to think of no results to be realized in less than 40 years." Olmsted was also looking to the future realistically and wanted to ensure that his young son, who had decided to become a landscape architect, would be prepared to succeed him as "leader of the band."

Finally, Martin's discussion of Olmsted himself is particularly ef-

fective. While he suggests that Olmsted "may well be the most important historical figure that the average person knows least about," he certainly doesn't glorify him — as some writers have in the past — but speaks of his illnesses, his depressions, his obsessive approach to his work, his rather distant personality and his absences from his family. Still, it is difficult not to feel sympathy for Olmsted as he gradually becomes aware that he is probably suffering from dementia, and in one poignant letter writes that, "he has been dreading that it would be thought expedient that I should be sent to an institution." Olmsted's final years, as Martin writes, were "isolated and apparently empty," and he died in 1903 after a five-year residency in McLean Hospital — ironically, the same place for which he had designed the grounds years earlier.

— Carol Bere

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