

FRIENDS OF

Florham

TREASURES OF NEW JERSEY PREMIERE



FLORHAM CAMPUS PROVOST PETER WOOLLEY ADDRESSES THE AUDIENCE.

More than 60 people — faculty; students; and guests including FDU President Christopher A. Capuano, Florham Campus Provost Peter Woolley, NJTV General Manager John Servidio and Executive Producer Sally Garner — attended the exclusive screening of NJTV’s documentary, *Treasures of New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University, Florham*. on May 8, in the Hassan Orangerie of the Monninger Center for Learning and Research at the Florham Campus.

The well-received 30-minute program, which is the first of NJTV’s new documentary series, *Treasures of New Jersey*, premiered on NJTV on May 10, was broadcast on PBS (Ch. 13) on June 18, and can be seen any time online at <http://www.njtvonline.org/programs/treasures-of-new-jersey>. As Woolley commented, “The program is a long-overdue recognition that Florham is a treasure. I am delighted that PBS gave us this acknowledgment in such a refined production.”

Past and present come to-

gether in *Treasures ...*, a beautifully photographed, well-researched documentary which effectively situates Florham as a major “player” in the historic Gilded Age period. At the same time, through a variety of interviews, photographs of the rooms, family portraits, memo-



THE TWOMBLYS

orable halls of the mansion and the estate and some rare archival photographs, the program effectively captures the stories of the Vanderbilt-Twombly family, the evolution of Florham into a major university campus, the

continued preservation of the historic buildings and grounds, and Florham’s acknowledged significance in the history of the Morris County area.

We wanted to know about the production itself, about the various components — the prodigious research, the various interviews and the photography — that collectively contributed to the memorable *Treasures ...* documentary. Sally Garner, who also wrote the program, worked with a small core staff including Associate Producer Rachel Kahn Taylor, Cameraman Mark Andersen and Editor Julia Kots, provided some “history” of the production. “We began taping in May 2016 at the commencement and senior honors event. Additional research located archival photographs in the University’s collection, and at libraries in Morristown, Madison and Newark. We also used materials from the New York Public Library, the Library of Congress and many more archives.” Of course, we would be remiss

(continued on page 4)

SUMMER 2017

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

So much has happened since I wrote last, and this newsletter captures the highlights for you. Our 25th anniversary year was feted at our Fall Soiree, the Portrait Project is nearing completion and the historical marker was replaced on Madison Avenue. NJTV premiered its new series, *Treasures of New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University, Florham* on May 8 in the Hassan Orangerie of the Monninger Center at the Florham Campus. Since the launching of this show by NJTV on May 10, there has been a noticeable increase in requests for visits to the Hamilton-Twombly Estate by organizations and individuals having an interest in the Gilded Age. This, of course, delights us!

The Friends also welcomed two new trustees to our board —

James Howard and Ed Zimmermann. Both bring wonderful skills and unique connections related to several projects that are in the planning stage for next year and into the future.

Many thanks to the Friends board for their hard work on our projects and events this year. Of particular note, we hosted our first Gilded Age Luncheon and Tea with the Cosy Cupboard Tea Room in Convent Station in May. We want to thank the Luncheon Committee — Valerie Adams, Susan Garrubbo, Karin Hamilton, James Howard, Jenn Johnson and Lisa MacNair — whose continued work and diligence ensured the success of the Luncheon.

As you read the newsletter, please remember how much we truly appreciate every member

of the Friends. Give yourselves a hearty round of applause for all that has been accomplished this year. As you head off to summer activities, please take a few minutes to renew your membership, AND, if you have not already done so, please order a copy of our new book, *Florham: An American Treasure*. The membership renewal form and the book order details are on the back page.

As autumn approaches, I invite you to share Florham with friends and family. Out-of-town guests and local neighbors alike will enjoy the grounds and the mansion. A self-guided audio tour of the mansion is available at www.fdu.edu/mansiontour.

Enjoy your summer,

— Dawn Dupak

A VANDERBILT SCENARIO: BUILDING, MONEY AND RIVALRIES IN THE GILDED AGE

EDIFICE COMPLEX: THE VANDERBILTS AND THE ARCHITECTURAL RIVALRIES OF AMERICA'S GILDED AGE



GARY HELM DARDEN

Join the Friends on Thursday, October 5, at 5 p.m., for a reception in the Hassan Orangerie at the Monninger Center for Learning and Research, followed by what promises to be **a provocative talk at 6 p.m. by Gary Helm Darden** titled "Edi-

ficie Complex: The Vanderbilts and the Architectural Rivalries of America's Gilded Age."

Darden, associate professor of history, chair of the social sciences and history department and Friends of Florham Board member, has provided some background to what will no doubt be a fascinating discussion, in part, of building on a major scale generated by sibling rivalries.

Upon the death of William Henry Vanderbilt in 1885, his four sons and four daughters inherited his \$200 million fortune — one which William (Florence Vanderbilt Twombly's father) had doubled since the death of his legendary father, Cornelius "Commodore" Vanderbilt in 1877. With what amounts to an esti-

mated \$230 billion in today's U.S. economy, these eight heirs and heiresses commenced a building spree that epitomized the excesses of the Gilded Age, and drove the sheer scale of American residential architectural to unparalleled heights. A family fortune made possible only by America's breakneck industrialization enabled these eight siblings to build — within one generation — urban palaces, country estates and summer villas that rivaled and emulated the best of European aristocracy. To this day, these include six of the 20 largest homes ever built in the United States, with Florham the eighth largest. No other single family then or since then has left such an architectural legacy.

NEW HISTORIC MARKER DEDICATED AT FLORHAM



THE UNVEILING OF THE MARKER.

The Morris County Heritage Commission dedicated a new historic marker at the Madison Avenue entrance to the Florham Campus on April 27, replacing a previously damaged marker. A brief ceremony included remarks by Madison Mayor Robert Conley, Morris County Freeholder Kathy DeFilippo, Morris County Heritage Commission Archivist Peg Schultz, Florham Campus Provost Peter Woolley and Friends of Florham Trustee Lisa MacNair. The new marker, which briefly encapsulates the history of Florham, was proudly unveiled.



PETER WOOLLEY

LISA MACNAIR

ROBERT CONLEY

PEG SHULTZ

KATHY DEFILIPPO

WELCOME TO TWO NEW TRUSTEES

The Friends are delighted to welcome two new Trustees, who will bring their unique experiences and talents to the Board.

JAMES HOWARD

James Howard is a college professor, entrepreneur, inventor and restaurateur. He currently owns and operates one of the region's top-niche food establishments, Cosy Cupboard Tea Room. Howard brings more than 20 years of experience as a design professor. His course on Design History, which he authored, explores the impact of design on architecture, interior design, fashion and industrial design. For more than 12 years, Howard has served as a docent at Acorn Hall, Morris County Historical Society.

Howard has volunteered his design talents toward many of Morris County's notable sites

including the Morris County 911 Memorial in Parsippany, Greystone Dog Park in Morris Plains, and the Denville Beautification Project.

Howard's passion for history and architecture is what encouraged him to open the Cosy Cupboard, designed to reflect an upscale Edwardian interior, similar to those found in England at the turn of the 20th century.

EDWARD ZIMMERMANN

Edward Zimmermann, has a background in forestry from Paul Smith's College and later attended Rutgers University, studying professional golf turf management and athletic field construction and management. He has been in the landscape industry in various capacities since 1981. Self-employed for 10 years, Zimmermann has worked on corpo-

rate campuses throughout northern New Jersey installing and maintaining residential landscapes. He also rebuilt athletic fields for two high schools in the area. Since May 2001, Zimmermann has worked for The Davey Tree Expert Co. on the Florham Campus. His expertise in tree management and horticulture is peerless.

Zimmermann's passion for the Vanderbilt-Twombly Estate has led him to conduct significant research on original documents pertaining to the estate. Many of these documents were found in the archives of Frederick Law Olmsted in Boston, Mass. He has been studying these documents and sharing with the Friends and the University Honors Program his unique understanding of the development of the property.



JOHN SERVIDIO



SALLY GARNER

if we didn't mention that photographs and historic information included in the two books published by the Friends: *Florham: The Lives of an American Estate* (2011) and *Florham: An American Treasure* (2016) were also valuable resources for the researchers.

Individual interviews with Woolley; Arthur T. Vanderbilt II, author of *Fortune's Children: The Fall of the House of Vanderbilt* and honorary trustee of the Friends of Florham; Gary Helm Darden, associate professor of history and chair of the social sciences and history department; and Eleanor Friedl, reference librarian at the Monninger Center, added varied and interesting perspectives to the "story of Florham." In fact,

all of the interviewees spoke of the spontaneity and ease of their interviews with Garner — and in some cases, the "quest" continued beyond the interviews.

Although initially apprehensive, "once Sally began talking (in the President's Office lit with camera lights and filled with equipment) "it was as if the two of us were just chatting," said Vanderbilt. Sally suggested that we try some different scenes, i.e., going up the grand stair and looking at some photos outside Mrs. Twombly's bedroom [which were filmed]. We had lunch at Snax downstairs (near Chef Donon's old kitchen), and when someone suggested the existence of a sub-basement — and with permission from Peter Woolley's office, and accom-

panied by a public safety officer — the hunt was on."

Friedl provided valuable examples of the extensive listing of individual costs of maintenance of the Twombly homes in ledgers in the archives and gave some examples of employee wages. "I had not anticipated that anyone would want to film me, nor was I given any preparation ahead, but Sally prompted me by asking questions. What you [the audience] saw was ad-libbing in the moment."

Darden noted that working as the historian consultant and the chance to be an expert "talking head" on the episode was a very special marker for any history professor. "Sally Garner and her team were most professional — yet so much fun, and I walked them around all the nooks and crannies of the mansion, to include the former butler's pantry, a double-story room with wooden cabinets and brass rails, which is now the Office of the Business College Dean."

What the film and interviews suggest is that the quest for new information and new sites continues at Florham.

— Carol Bere

PRESIDENTIAL PRAISE FOR FLORHAM AUTHORS

FDU President Christopher A. Capuano recently sent the following letter of appreciation to each of the authors of Florham: An American Treasure—Carol Bere, Samuel Convissor, Walter Cummins, and Arthur T. Vanderbilt, II.

February 9, 2017

I recently had the opportunity to enjoy your new book, *Florham: An American Treasure*. As

I heard from others, the photography is very distinctive and the story highly engaging. A copy of your book now resides on the coffee table in the reception area of the Metropolitan Campus President's Office so that visitors can appreciate this book as much as I do.

You and your co-authors are to be commended for your dedication to the task of carefully documenting the extraordinary history of the Vanderbilt-Twombly Estate

and, through this lens, providing a glimpse of life in the Gilded Age.

On behalf of the entire University community, I thank you for creating a book that is certain to evoke memories for some and generate pride in so many of its readers both now and in future years.

Sincerely,
Christopher A. Capuano, Ph.D.
President

To order the book go to the back page

FORGOTTEN FLORHAM: THE MYSTERY OF CHEF DONON'S MUSHROOM CAVE

Mrs. Florence Twombly's beloved Florham is now a thriving University. Yet on a beautiful spring or fall day, the kind when she would have been in residence, it's not hard to see behind the bustle the estate as it once was. And even today there are still clues here and there which can lead to new discoveries of how life was lived in the Gilded Age.

In his unpublished memoirs, Joseph Donon, Mrs. Twombly's famous French chef for 38 years, describing how all of his ingredients came from the Florham Farm, the Orangerie, the greenhouses and the vegetable gardens, wrote: "I asked them to build me a cave where we could grow mushrooms and other special things. I had them grow celery there — it was about half the size you see in the market now, but it was white as snow and very crisp. All of Mrs. Twombly's guests loved it and asked where she bought it. They couldn't believe that we grew it right there on the property."

This fleeting reference to a mushroom cave intrigued us. Exactly where was Donon's mushroom cave? Was it a hole dug into a hill? What, if anything, remained of it now?

So began our expedition to try to solve another mystery of Florham. We searched everything ever written about the estate and found nary a reference to this cave. We asked anyone familiar with the early days of the campus: nothing. In talking with Campus Provost Peter Woolley about the urban legend of a network of tunnels crisscrossing the campus, he explained that there was only one tunnel, the one that brought the steam from where it was generated behind the Hassan Orangerie to the mansion. Upon reflection, he said that he did know of one other tunnel, but that it was a short one that led nowhere.

Hmmm. Might that short tunnel to nowhere have been Donon's mushroom cave? The campus provost told us we were more than welcome to take a look, and graciously arranged for a member of the maintenance staff to meet us at the Public Safety Building to show it to us.



CHEF DONON'S MUSHROOM CAVE

Paul Palladino, campus property manager, met us there, and we proceeded past the Black Box Theater, past the greenhouse, and there, set in the north-facing hillside, was a structure that looked like the front of a small chapel, made of a brownstone type of stone, and over the door, inscribed in the stone, the date: 1927.

"There's really nothing here," Paul explained, unsure why anyone would want to see this.

He unlocked the door, turned on a light and, we entered with all the anticipation of the explorer Howard Carter entering the long lost tomb of King Tutankhamun. And we were just as amazed.

Paul was quickly infected with our enthusiasm and the three of us explored the mushroom cave. Far from being a muddy hole, this was an elaborate structure, fitting of the way Mrs. Twombly did everything. It was approximately 60 feet in length, an enormous room, a good 12 feet wide and the walls of stone perhaps

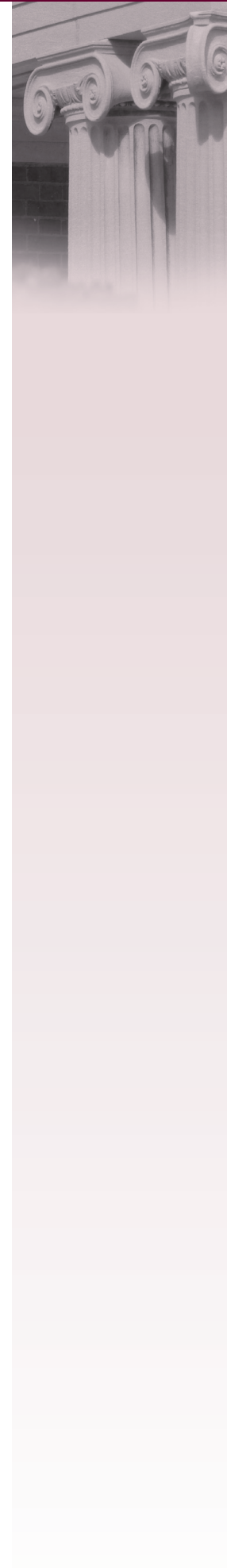
three feet thick. The structure is now used for storage of house-keeping supplies and nothing seemed to remain of the days of growing mushrooms and celery when perhaps there were planting tables. But Paul pointed to the ceiling, a good 12 feet above the concrete floor, where there was a structure that looked like it might have been an air vent with a very old fan inside. "Should we go take a look and see where it comes out?"

The three explorers were outside instantly, climbing up the hillside, passing rusting earth-tilling farm equipment from the Florham days, reaching a small structure on top of the hill where the air would enter or be taken out, depending on the conditions needed.

More mysteries. Chef Donon in his draft memoirs had written that the "vegetable gardens were on the Florham side, on the hill near Convent Station." Ed Zimmermann, Friends Trustee and branch manager of The Davey Tree Expert Co., which looks after all of the campus trees, found in his collection of aerial photographs before 1955 of the area — currently the Hamilton Park Hotel and parking lot — then truck paths, which would have harvested the produce to bring to Chef Donon's kitchen. Here were the vegetable gardens to which Donon referred.

Yet for each mystery of Florham solved, more remain. When FDU took over the campus were any of the vegetables still growing? Still more questions: Chef Donon in his memoirs speaks of the "servants' dining room." Where was that? One has images of the servants' dining room in "Downton Abbey" with Carson at the head of the table. If only the walls of the Florham servants' dining room could talk!

— *Walter Cummins and Arthur T. Vanderbilt II*





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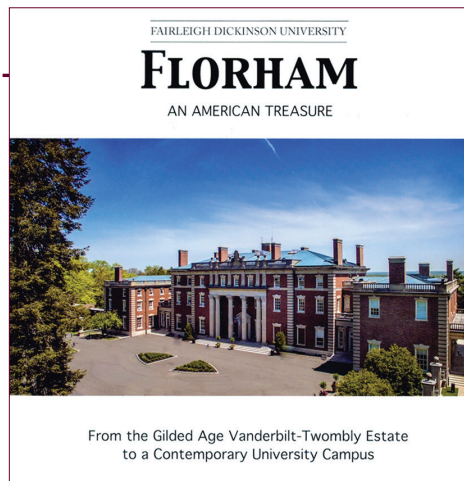
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ORDER THE BOOK

Copies may be purchased at the Florham Campus bookstore and online through Amazon.com. through the Fairleigh Dickinson University Alumni Association website at www.myfdu.net/fofbook or by sending a check for \$25.00 (includes shipping) to Barbara Dawson, c/o Friends of Florham; FDU, 285 Madison Avenue, M-MS1-04, Madison, N.J. 07940
For questions concerning your order, please contact Barbara Dawson at dawson@fdu.edu.

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Join the Friends of Florham. Participate directly in our efforts to preserve the architectural history of Florham, and support our informative program series. Your support will make a difference.

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