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FRIENDS OF

December 1997

Florham

Restoration of Lenfell Hall

Historic restoration involves a generous amount of detective work and a substantial level of funds. As the Friends embark on another major project, the restoration of Lenfell Hall, chaired by committee member Barbara A. Keefauver, they have

been consulting with historic preservationists, fabric designers, and architects in an effort to produce a historically sensitive restoration of the former elegant drawing room of the Twombly family.

ing following his attendance at a meeting of the group. Working in cooperation with Dr. Peter Falley, acting provost of the FDU Madison campus, and Dr. Charles R. Dees, Jr. senior vice president for institutional advancement at FDU, the committee has set forth a five-stage plan for restoration of Lenfell Hall: renovation of the current air-conditioning system; restoration of the windows and doors; and removal of the large stepped platform to create more open space, greater room flexibility, and showcase the fireplace and windows more effectively.

Lenfell Hall will also be repainted in a color approximating the original shade of green, which was determined through a paint analysis done by Acroterion Historic Preservation Consultants. Finally, original window treatments will be restored. The actual Lenfell Hall draperies pur-

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(l-r) Barbara Keefauver, chair of Lenfell Hall restoration committee, and Phyllis Conway, committee member, show reproduction of a John Singer Sargent portrait of Florence Vanderbilt Twombly.

FDU executive vice president Carl Viola provided the initial impetus when he asked the Friends to become involved in this significant undertak-

Florham - A Hotbed of Horticulture

Florence and Hamilton Twombly's greenhouses, mainly devoted to the cultivation of chrysanthemums and orchids, were well known in horticultural circles in the early 20th century. The Twomblys' amazing horticultural center, said at the time to consist of "24,000 running feet of greenhouse," was overseen by Arthur Herrington, an Englishman lured from the Royal Botanical society in 1896. Herrington, who died in 1950, managed the gardens and flower culture until Hamilton Twombly's death in 1910. In the following years, he went on to become one of America's leading horticulturists.

Recently, the Friends of Florham received an inquiry from the Reynolda Gardens of Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem regarding the existence of a day lily called "Florham," noted in

Reynolda's original planting lists. Research on the flower now shows that Arthur Herrington developed this cultivar in 1899. Experts in the day lily community have stated that the "Florham," described as having "petals four inches long, one and one-quarter inches broad and of a clear canary-yellow color," played an important role in the development of other cultivars.

The search for the Florham day lily has led to discussions with leading lily authorities, including a grower of "antique" day lilies in Tennessee. The latter party reports that she had "Florham" in stock up until a few years ago, but that it unfortunately died out. A search is now under way for its surviving descendants.

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Friends' Lecture Draws Area Residents

The Friends' lecture series initiated in 1991 continues to generate enthusiastic support. On May 18, 160 people attended the Friends' most recent presentation, "The Vanderbilts and the Twomblys at Home: a Look at Life in the Gilded Age," organized by committee member, Barbara A.

Keefauver of New Vernon. The program was moderated by FDU distinguished professor emeritus and committee member Walter T. Savage, and included presentations by historians and committee members Richard C. Simon of Morristown and John H. Fritz of Gladstone, also a former FDU faculty member.

Mr. Fritz reviewed the Vanderbilt/Twombly family history, including the death of two of the children, Alice and Hamilton, Jr., and evoked the lavish events at Florham during the Twomblys' residence. With his description of the homes built by the extensive Vanderbilt family in New York City, Newport, the Hudson Valley, Vermont, Maine, Asheville, N.C., and "Florham," among others, Mr. Simon re-created a sense of the grand scale of living that characterized the so-called Gilded Age. As Mr. Simon demonstrated clearly, this grandeur was epitomized by the scope, minute attention to

detail, and sheer cost of "Florham," designed by famed architects McKim, Mead and White, with landscape design by Frederick Law Olmsted.

The accompanying exhibits added a personal, tangible dimension to the lecture. Family pictures taken before the Mansion was dismantled in 1955 were reproduced and displayed in the Great Hall. Original portraits of Florence and Hamilton Twombly, which are now in the President's office at Columbia University, were reproduced by the Friends and used as a backdrop to the tableaux of family furnishings and artifacts on display in Lenfell Hall. This grouping, loaned by Macculloch Hall Historical Museum, included the original French draperies, Chinese Chippendale chair, Chinese-style Lowestoft urns, and engravings from *Cries of London* by Francis Wheatley, which had been purchased at the auction of Mansion furnishings in 1955 by Parsons Todd, former mayor of Morristown, and founder of the Museum.



(l-r) Committee members John H. Fritz and Walter T. Savage view late nineteenth century Lowestoft urn, originally owned and displayed in the Mansion by the Twombly family. (Loaned by Macculloch Hall Historical Museum.)

("Florham," continued from page 1)

Other cultivars were apparently introduced by the Twombly greenhouses. One of them brought out in 1901 by Herrington was a new Gerbera, the "Barbarton Daisy," once said "to be the most unique and beautiful plant that has been placed before the public during the past ten years." It received the first prize at the Grand Horticultural Exhibition at the New York Botanical Gardens that year as the best horticultural novelty in America. Another flower that was quite likely developed at Florham was a chrysanthemum listed in a 1903 catalogue of Peter Henderson & Co. of New York. Given the name "Mrs. H.McK. Twombly," it is described as a "white shaded pink; a fine early variety." Though the fact is not positively established, the "Mrs. Twombly" plant is in all probability an Arthur Herrington creation.

The discovery of these Florham-based flower developments has added an exciting facet to the Friends of Florham garden restoration activities, and the Friends confidently hope that additional research will uncover not only other Twombly cultivars but actual plant specimens.

("Restoration," continued from page 1)

chased at the Mansion auction in 1955 by Macculloch Hall have deteriorated, and committee member Phyllis Conway has been consulting with Scalandre and Schumacher in New York about the possibilities of reproducing the pattern of the original fabric.

The Friends have mounted an aggressive fundraising campaign to ensure that the restoration of Lenfell Hall becomes a reality. They are talking to foundations, are soliciting individual donors, and will hold a festive Holiday Ball in the Mansion on December 13, with proceeds directed to the restoration (see "Holiday Ball").

Committee members include Emma Joy Dana, chairman of Friends of Florham; John H. Fritz; Richard C. Simon; Dr. James Fraser, director, Florham-Madison Campus library; and Gretchen Johnson, director, public relations, FDU. Committee member and professional decorator Phyllis Conway and architect Peter Dorne, A.I.A., are volunteering their professional services.

Dinner Dance Benefit to Commemorate Centennial of "Florham"

In recognition of the 100th anniversary of the opening of "Florham" in 1897, the Friends have scheduled one of their most ambitious and exciting events ever - "Holiday Ball," an elegant black-tie dinner dance preceded by a cocktail reception with musical accompaniment. The date is December 13. The place is the former Twombly Great Drawing Room, now Lenfell Hall in the Mansion at Fairleigh Dickinson University. Proceeds will be dedicated to the Friends' latest "Florham" project, the historically sensitive restoration of the Twomblys' impressive drawing room, renamed Lenfell Hall in gratitude for the Leonard Dreyfuss family's generous underwriting of the room's extensive 1958 refurbishing. Mrs. William Y. Dear, the daughter of Mrs. Dreyfuss and step-daughter of Mr. Dreyfuss, is, quite fittingly, the Honorary Chairperson of the Committee composed of Mrs.

William L. Keefauver, Mrs. Granville E. Conway, and Mrs. Karl H. Meister.

The reception will begin at 7:00 p.m. in the Great Hall. A buffet dinner will be served at 8:00 p.m. Dancing, to music provided by a four-person ensemble drawn from New Jersey Pops, will continue until midnight.

Participants will enjoy a 3-D opportunity: a chance to dine, dance, and donate - to a restoration of genuine historical importance. The price of each ticket, including the usual tax-deductible portion, is either \$150 for Donors or \$250 for Patrons. Dinner seating being limited, early responses to the invitations are advisable, the Committee members suggest.

Italian Gardens Restoration Moving Vigorously Forward

Emma Joy Dana, President of the Board of Friends of Florham, recently announced that the Friends' effort to restore Florham's once-remarkable Italian Gardens has been noticeably energized by three recent developments. First, a late fall planting of nine lavender-blue wisteria vines and ten rose bushes - five pink and five carmine - in the easternmost area of the gardens will put the finishing touches on the pergola restoration completed several months ago. The plantings will be directed by Friends' Board member Ann Granbery (ASLA) of New Vernon, who has pointed out that in keeping with the group's commitment to historical accuracy the roses will be the "Old Rose" type, unlike the heavily hybridized modern plants.

In addition, Mrs. Dana reported, Frances Mantone of Madison has agreed to chair the Garden Committee the Board has created to give wider publicity to the restoration project and coordinate a fundraising campaign. That campaign will stress the three major goals of those working to achieve the restoration: to re-create an important and visually splendid element of "Florham" in its heyday, to have that re-creation pay tribute to the memory of the many anonymous local workers whose labor helped make the estate a reality, and to have the restored gardens serve as a permanent example of the gardening genius of landscape designers and gardeners like Alfred Parsons and Arthur Herrington.

Finally, the discovery in early autumn of the "Florham Day Lily," the subject of a separate article in this issue of the newsletter, has increased the Friends' enthusiasm for their garden-restoration endeavor. When the dwarf-boxwood-and-perennial parterre and the perimeter paving are completed as the final phase of the project, board member Richard C. Simon's search for descendants of the lily at such places as the New York Botanical Garden may result in the return of that historic plant to the site where it was first developed. That final goal of the Friends' work, Mrs. Dana added, is dependent upon the success of the fundraising now beginning in earnest.



Committee member Ann Granbery (ASLA), who will spearhead the effort, with diagram of planned restoration of Italian gardens.

Friends Visit 'Sister' Mansion

On June 13, the Friends hosted a benefit bus trip to the Vanderbilt mansion in Hyde Park, N.Y.

Chaired by committee member Kim Dougherty of Morristown, the group toured the Mansion--also designed by McKim, Mead and White--and the estate's beautifully restored Italian garden as well as Rose garden. Appropriately, the proceeds from the trip will support the Friends' own project to restore the Italian gardens at FDU.

Become a Friend

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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Historic Florham Brochure

A brochure detailing the early history of the Vanderbilt-Twombly estate, now Fairleigh Dickinson's Florham - Madison Campus, is hot off the press. A Friends of Florham publication, the pamphlet answers persisting requests for concise historical information about the campus' original architecture, grounds, owners, and colorful past as "Florham."

Florence Vanderbilt Twombly, granddaughter of steamship and railroad baron, Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt, moved with her husband, financier Hamilton Twombly, into their grandiose 1200-acre English-style country estate in 1897. Blending the first syllables of their first names, they called it "Florham." The grounds were designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, premier 19th century landscape

architect. The Mansion and related buildings were built by the prominent architectural firm, McKim, Mead and White. Their collaboration resulted in the creation of one of this country's finest Gilded Age estates.

The brochure, researched and written by Friends of Florham board member Sharon Doremus, is a convenient four-fold format, featuring striking black and white archival photos of Florham. Additional contemporary photographs were taken by Friends president, Emma Joy Dana. The accompanying text traces the estate's first fifty years from 1897 to 1958. Copies of the brochure may be obtained at no charge from the FDU Admissions Office and Library or by calling (973) 443-8532.



Fairleigh Dickinson
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