



# Florham

A Truly Gala Evening Coming...  
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*Great Hall of the Mansion Transformed*

Elegant, welcoming, with a true sense of history, the restoration of the Great Hall of the Mansion, the Friends' most recent project, is almost completed. Work began on the restoration during the Christmas break, with the firm of Carmine Toto & Sons once again bringing their expertise in restoration to the project. With newly painted walls, gilded moldings, freshly washed fireplaces, and new drapes on the way, the Great Hall has been returned to the original splendor of the days of the Twomblys' residency.

Under the aegis of Phyllis Conway and Barbara Keefauver, Friends Board members, the Great Hall restoration is a story of extensive research, attention to detail, and aggressive fund raising by the Friends. As part of their research efforts, Mrs. Conway and Mrs. Keefauver made trips to other Vanderbilt homes in the Hudson Valley, Newport, and to the renowned Biltmore in North Carolina. The soft, graceful "stone green" colors of the walls are from the British National Trust historic colors palette. The fabric for the cotton damask draperies, a shade of rose, will be made by Scalamandré and will replicate



*Carmine Toto III applies finishing touches to Great Hall ceiling*

a pattern used at Rosemont, a Vanderbilt home in Newport.

Restoration cannot be done without cost, however, and the overall tariff for the Great Hall will be about \$45,000. The Friends raised a substantial amount at their gala last spring, expect to bolster this amount with proceeds from this year's gala (see article), and will also undertake an active, external fundraising campaign to help complete this significant project.

*A "Florham" Workman's Memories—Part II*

*In this issue, we offer another of our periodic conversations with area residents who worked at "Florham." Mayor John J. Dunne of Madison graciously sat down with us recently and recalled his schoolboy's job as a youthful member of "Florham's" garden and grounds crew during what were to be virtually the last days of the legendary estate.*

Years before he began his thirty-one years of service as a Detective-Patrolman in Madison and later as a Deputy Chief of Detectives in the Morris County Prosecutor's Office, "Jack," as the Mayor is widely known, started his four-year career of after-school and summer-time "Florham" labors in 1947. That was the year in which Mrs. Twombly was seriously in-

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## A "Florham" Workman's Memories (continued from page 1)

jured and permanently disabled in an auto accident. He therefore never saw the grande dame who for approximately five decades presided over "Florham" and its extravagant and elegant social events that were a celebrated distinction of one of the most acclaimed of America's greatest country homes.

Jack, however, often saw "Miss Ruth," as Ruth Twombly, the third of the Twomblys' four children was known among the estate's employees. "We weren't really supposed to see her," he remembers. "One of the first instructions I got when I began work was not to look at Miss Ruth. We were supposed to turn our backs if she came into view."

He recalls a similar sort of prohibition about the behavior of workers entering the Mansion. "We were required to enter the building only through the service door at the rear. The one time I actually did enter the Mansion through the front door, the men I was with and I all stood stock still as soon as we stepped into the hallway, looking around wide-eyed." Half a century later, he still feels, he admits, some of that teenage awe, whenever he revisits the Great Hall of the Mansion.

His work related mostly to the grounds and greenhouses, as an assistant to painters and greenhouse and gardens workers. With the former, he painted the inside of the large green wooden fence that once ran around the perimeter of the estate. He joined the latter group in numbers of chores. At the approach of winter, they carried boxwood bushes and fig trees into the tree shed, where, he still recalls, he was tempted to violate a cardinal rule by sampling one of the nectarines ripening on the branches.

He participated in two special Saturday morning duties: helping to rake the gravel path running from the railway stop on which "Miss Ruth" would walk upon her weekend arrivals and assisting a gardener by bearing large numbers of potted plants from the greenhouses to the Playhouse swimming pool. There, they were arranged in 6-foot by 6-foot pyramidal banks for "Miss Ruth" to inspect and enjoy in the building created especially for her. The Playhouse area was the site of another of his randomly assigned tasks: spreading and patting down cotton seed on the surface of the putting green once located beside the building that was recently torn down and replaced by a new academic building.

The approach of the annual flower show in Madison Square Garden, Mayor Dunne also remembers, was a time of great activity for those responsible for the greenhouses and gardens. All

members of the sizable crew began preparing for the show two months in advance by lavishing attention upon whatever plants might have been considered possible entries in that most prestigious contest. "For those two months, everything was aimed at the show," he said. On rainy days, the entire grounds crew repaired to the greenhouses to wash plant pots. Two women, he added, were regularly busy year-round in the greenhouses, tying up, potting, and trimming plants.

Some of his most vivid recollections of his "Florham" days are of the people with whom he worked. "Florham" employees came to work wearing shirts and ties," he recalls, noting that the paint-



*John J. Dunne, Mayor of Madison, recalls "Florham" of 50 years ago*

ers even kept their ties on at work, after having pulled overalls on over their clothes. To this day, he looks back fondly upon two of his immediate superiors, Basil Fillipone and Charles Massiello, responsible respectively for guiding the work of the greenhouse staff and overseeing the vegetable garden that once flourished where the Hamilton Park Executive Conference Center now stands.

His experiences at "Florham" have left the Mayor with a still-strong regard for a place that provided him with his very first gainful employment. "I remember one day in particular," he recently told a listener. "I was walking to work as a kid. It was a fairly long walk that took me by the

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## Founding Father Becomes Member of the Family



Dr. James H. Fraser, who with Emma Joy Dana created the Friends of Florham nearly eleven years ago, has at last officially joined the Friends Board of Trustees. As an advisor to the organization since its beginning and a continuously active participant in its work, Dr. Fraser has contributed significantly to its programs and plans. He has, however, been ineligible for board membership owing to a clause in the Friends By-laws excluding all Fairleigh Dickinson University officers, faculty, and staff from such service. As soon as Dr. Fraser, who earned his Ph.D degree at Columbia University, retired after thirty years as Librarian at the Madison campus last December, the Friends trustees voted at once and with enthusiastic unanimity to make him one of their number.

Their eagerness to have Dr. Fraser formally installed as a trustee was due not only to their gratitude to him for his valuable counsel as an advisor during his years as an ex officio member but also to their awareness of the impressiveness of his scholarly and administrative accomplishments. Those accomplishments are, indeed, considerable.

Dr. Fraser's leadership of Friendship Library was distinguished by his development of a superb staff, the creation of a number of extraordinary special collections, approximately 100 literature- and graphics-related exhibitions and receptions, and workshops focused upon book arts, cal-

ligraphy, wood engraving, and bookbinding. He has authored many books, highly regarded both for their scholarship and their graphic exquisiteness, including *Cattle Brands in Arizona* (1968), *Early Printing in Morristown* (1970), *The American Billboard* (1991), *The Rebel Image As a Requiem for the Soviet Empire: Posters of Perestroika and Glasnost* (1992); *Musee Imaginaire* (with Tayo Shima, 1991); *Japanese Modern: Graphic Design Between the Wars* (1996); and others that he compiled on Russian and Japanese posters. In addition, he has edited works like *Society and Children's Literature* (1978) and, for 15 years, *Phaedrus*, a journal of children's literature.

For such publications, he has received numerous prestigious awards: recognition in 1990 with 35 other individuals at a White House ceremony, presided over by then First Lady Barbara Bush, for special contributions to furthering literacy and publishing for children; the Obelisk ("Obie") Award, at the annual convention of the Outdoor Advertising Association of America in 1991, for his contribution to the history of outdoor advertising; and the Brothers Grimm Award, presented by the Osaka Institute for Children's Literature in 1991.

Dr. Fraser's expertise and wide-ranging interests have led to his participation in and recognition by the sponsors of many, many international projects. His work in children's literature and poster art involved him, for instance, in conferences, exhibitions, and consultations in far-flung venues like Mongolia, East Germany, Sweden, Latvia, Lithuania, and Japan. He has received requests for appraisals of books and art collections from entities in the U.S. and from others in Germany, Sweden, England, the USSR, and Japan. Closer to home, his international perspective led to his attracting to the Madison campus a large contingent of scholars and students from many lands.

According to his family, however, the only award of which he is ostentatiously and immodestly proud is the blue-ribbon prize he received as a 12-year old boy for the Nubian goat he entered in a Washington County, Oregon, annual livestock show.

Obviously, the Friends Board has gained a new member who is multi-talented.

## Speaking of Books

Barbara J. Mitnick, *Geraldine Rockefeller Dodge* (Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation: Morristown, NJ) 2000

The generosity and innovative approach to grant-making of the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation has achieved national recognition, while far less has been known about Geraldine Rockefeller Dodge, whose extensive wealth made the Foundation possible. This is no longer the case. In a recent, well-researched biography commissioned by the Foundation to celebrate its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Dr. Barbara J. Mitnick, art historian, adjunct professor at Drew University, and Morristown resident, offers a full portrait of “Gerrie”: daughter, wife, mother, serious art collector, renowned expert on canines, and ultimately philanthropist.

Born during the Gilded Age into the Rockefeller family, one of the nation’s wealthiest families, and married to Marcellus Hartley Dodge (1881–1963), heir to the Remington Arms Company, Geraldine Rockefeller Dodge’s long life (1882–1973) was one of extreme wealth and privilege. In 1916, the young Dodes became neighbors of the Twomblys of “Florham,” the Scribners, Frelinghuysens, and other well-connected families in the area when they purchased Onunda, the estate of Daniel Willis James in Madison, with its 35-room Elizabethan Revival mansion situated on 240 acres. They made substantial improvements to the mansion, renamed the estate, Giralda, after the Spanish patron saint of orphans, St. Geraldo, and with additional purchases over the years, the estate eventually comprised 370 acres.

On the surface, Dr. Mitnick’s biography describes a way of life that is more legendary than lived these days. The well-reported auction exhibition handled by Sotheby’s at Giralda in 1975 following Gerrie’s death in 1973 provided those attending (estimated at some 60,000) with a glimpse of the furnishings and accoutrements of this life: period furniture, jewelry, rare paintings, bronzes, and expensive attire. Yet while there is little doubt that Gerrie and Marcie capitalized on the advantages of wealth, what seems to distinguish the Dodes from many other wealthy couples of the time—and what makes the biography well worth reading—is the growing seriousness with which they pursued their interests, their philanthropy, and the often quiet ways in which these activities were accomplished. The Rockefeller family, in general, had already established a standard for creative as well as practical philanthropy, which Gerrie no doubt had absorbed.

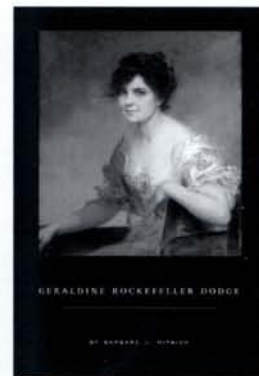
Geraldine Dodge was able to translate her lifelong interest in dogs, for example, into tangible, progressive advancements in the care of these ani-

mals. She contributed substantially to research dedicated to improving the health of dogs; maintained arguably the finest kennels in the country at Giralda, widely known for the breeding of purebreds; and established the internationally renowned Morris and Essex Kennel Club Dog Show in 1927, which was held there annually until the 1950s. Gerrie’s most lasting contribution in this area, perhaps, and a major beneficiary in her will, was St. Hubert’s Giralda, an animal welfare organization that she founded in 1939, which today is still devoted to the adoption, rescue, training, and education of animals.

Geraldine Dodge’s philanthropy, to some extent, was galvanized by the major tragedy in her otherwise peaceful existence, the death of her only child and son, Hartley, of injuries sustained in an automobile accident shortly after his graduation from Princeton. With the loss of their only heir, the Dodes reevaluated and embarked on a more concerted program of philanthropy. Gerrie funded playgrounds in the area, gave substantially to Morristown Hospital, and in one of her more visible acts, commissioned the building of the impressive municipal building, the Hartley Dodge Memorial, begun in 1932, and dedicated to the memory of her son in 1935. Less known is that during this Depression era, Gerrie asked that as many Madison residents as possible be employed in the building of the memorial.

Gerrie did not live to see the growth and wide impact of her major act of philanthropy, the creation of the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation in 1974, established one year after her death, and funded in accordance with the mandates of her final will executed in 1962.

Today, with assets of over \$355 million, the Foundation is one of the largest in NJ, with grants given in four major areas: education, arts, critical issues, and Morris county projects. For name recognition alone, the Foundation may be best known nationally for the Geraldine R. Dodge Poetry Festival, held biennially at Waterloo Village. Finally, assessing Geraldine R. Dodge’s legacy in this highly readable biography, Dr. Mitnick concludes that she managed to turn “her great loss into an enduring civic memorial and a foundation that continue to benefit us all.”



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## President's Letter

It's so nice to greet you all again by way of this newsletter and to tell you about some of the current as well as future activities of the Friends of Florham.

During this beautiful snowy winter, our major project has been the restoration of the Great Hall of the Mansion. The Friends have been raising the funds for this restoration, and under the expert guidance of our Board members, Barbara Keefauver and Phyllis Conway, the Hall is near completion (see related article). I can only say that the Great Hall restoration is spectacularly beautiful, and is a perfect complement to Lenfell Hall, the Friends' initial restoration project.

Led by Board members Shannie Doremus and Jack Fritz, the Friends are also in the early stages of our historic tree project. The overall objective of this program is "to restore the historic elements of the campus," and we welcome your support in helping the Friends preserve and promote the importance of this historic site. We'll have more details in the next newsletter.

Finally, look for announcements of the return of our well-attended lectures starting in the Fall. Before then, however, we hope that you will visit the restored Great Hall. As always, we thank you for your interest and encourage you to continue to support the Friends' activities.

*Emma Joy Dana*  
*President, Friends of Florham*

## Friends Host Fourth Annual Gala

*The lights grow brighter as the earth lurches away from the sun, and now the orchestra is playing yellow cocktail music...*

Step back in time with the Friends for "An Evening at Florham with Mrs. Twombly." May 19 is the date. Enter the historic Mansion through the newly restored Great Hall, have cocktails on the gracious terrace overlooking the Mansion, move to the recently restored Lenfell Hall for a feast of carefully selected period food, and dance to the music of the renowned John Johnson Trio. Complete the evening with a renewed sense of the period, of the lives of the Twombly family, and of the history of the Mansion itself via tours led by Walter Savage and Richard Simon, Friends Board members and experienced guides.

What becomes a legend most? Once again, Mrs. William Y. Dear will be the Honorary Chairman of the Benefit Committee. The generosity of Mrs. Dear's stepfather, Leonard Dreyfuss, made possible the initial redecoration of Lenfell Hall in 1958. The gala will be chaired by the indefatigable Barbara Keefauver, Phyllis Conway, and Dawn Dupak, with the assistance of a 23-person committee.

Plan to participate in the Friends fourth black-tie ball on May 19, 7:00 pm. Proceeds of the gala will be directed toward completion of the restoration of the Great Hall, the Friends' most recent major project. Ticket prices are \$150 per person, or \$250 for Patrons, with the usual tax-deductible portion. Seating is relatively limited, so the Friends advise early responses to the invitations to "An Evening at Florham with Mrs. Twombly."

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## Memories of a "Florham" Workman's Son (continued from page 2)

Dodge estate across from the Twomblys' property. As I walked along, I looked down and saw a \$20 bill on the path. I felt like a millionaire on my way to work for one!" The small treasure he happened upon was the equivalent of more than a week's wages when he began his four years at "Florham at \$3.00 per day. Those daily wages rose to \$6.00 by the time he left in 1950 to serve in the Korean War. "But I didn't get the increase without some resistance," he is prone to say with a nostalgic nod of his head. "Mr. Tyson, my boss in the paint crew, responded to my request for a raise with a playfully sarcastic question intended as a put-down of me for my being short: 'Why? Can't you reach the top of

the fence?'"

Two years after Mr. Dunne left, Mrs. Twombly was to die, in April of 1952. Two years after that, Ruth Twombly was also to die, as the result of a fall at the Ritz Hotel in Paris. In the next year occurred the storied auction that was to mark, officially, the departure of the Twomblys from the magnificent house and grounds that, like the town that abutted the estate's northern border, bore a title representing a blending of the first names of its two founders, Florence and Hamilton Twombly.

The "Florham" that Mayor Dunne and his fellow workers knew would live on only in memory.

## 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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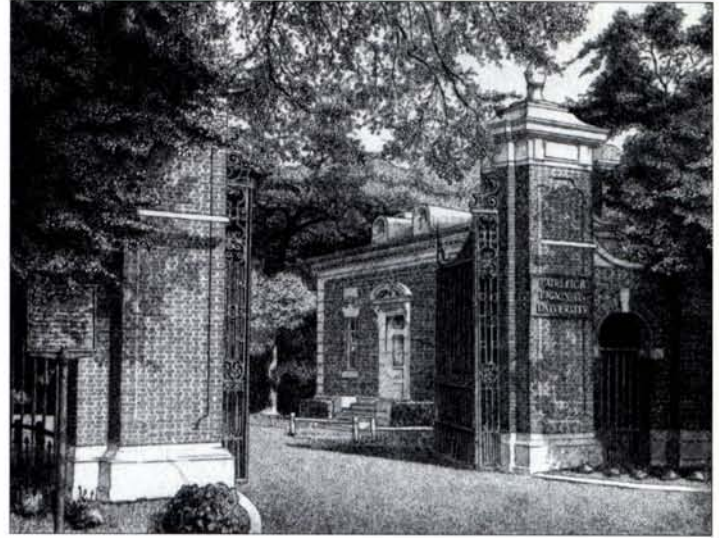
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**Madison, NJ 07940**



*This drawing of the Gatehouse at FDU is one of a series of the historically important structures on the campus drawn by Professor Floyd Gellerman, Department of Visual and Performing Arts, FDU-Madison.*

### Friends of Florham

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### Co-editors:

**Carol Bere and  
Walter Savage**

