

METROPOLITAN CHAPTER OF THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY IN AMERICA

Fall 2008

LECTURES MOVE TO MURRAY HILL CHURCH



Classical details of the New York New Church built and expanded in the Victorian era are revealed in a 1996 sketch by Anna Rich Martinsan.

The sanctuary seats 200 and has modern audio-visual equipment installed during a renovation/restoration that was completed last October. The renovation made the building accessible to the handicapped and included installation of an elevator. Overseen by architect Simon Thoresen of Thoresen & Linard, the project took about a year. During that time, the congregation continued to meet in an upstairs room and missed only two Sunday services, reports the minister, Rev. Ronald Brugler.

The church was built during the Victorian era in 1858-59. The congregation began in Lower Manhattan in 1812. In 1853, James Chesterman, a bookseller and early member, offered the congregation three lots on East 35th Street on the condition that a church be built there. The offer was declined because the site was thought too inaccessible. Chesterman died soon after making his offer. In his will he deeded the 35th Street property to the congregation but specified that it must be used as the site of a church. For four years the trustees argued about doing so, but in 1858 they voted to build on the site. One trustee, James C. Hoe, a builder, offered to construct the church at cost and also donate \$500 toward the project. Built in an Italian Renaissance style, the church was

continued on next page

Beginning in September, because of redevelopment of the Donnell Library, the Metropolitan Chapter's free lectures will be at The New York New Church (Swedenborgian) at 214 E. 35th St. in Manhattan's Murray Hill Historic District between Park and Lexington Avenues.

Lectures will continue to be open to the general public at no charge, with no reservations required. Post-lecture receptions for members will be in a room in the church. Public transportation options are the cross-town 34th Street bus and the No. 6 subway to 33rd Street. Lectures for this fall are listed in this issue's calendar.

AWARDS GIVEN AT GALA

The Margot Gayle gala on May 14 was the setting for the Annual Awards Ceremony of the Metropolitan Chapter of the Victorian Society in America. Lindsay Parrot, chair of the Awards Committee, made the presentations.

The evening began by recognizing **Robert C. Kaufmann** with the **Lifetime Achievement Award**. Kaufmann, a librarian, has devoted his career to preserving and caring for books on architecture and the fine and decorative arts as well as facilitating scholarly research on the Victorian era. For the past 25 years he has been the reference librarian at the Thomas J. Watson Library at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. He has also overseen collections at the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum Library, Yale University Library, New York Public Library and Columbia University Libraries. An early member of the Metropolitan Chapter, he was a board member for many years and continues to serve unofficially as the Chapter's institutional memory.

This year's **Exhibition and Catalogue Award** went to **Louis Comfort Tiffany and Laurelton Hall – An Artist's Country Estate**, organized by the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Laurelton Hall was designer Louis Comfort Tiffany's Long Island estate, built between 1902 and 1905 and destroyed by fire in 1957. The ambitious exhibition and scholarly publication document Tiffany's city and country houses

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CHAPTER LAUNCHES EDUCATION INITIATIVE

This fall the Metropolitan Chapter is launching an education initiative to support high school teaching of historic preservation. Spearheaded by Board Member Lesley Doyel, the project will begin in a single location, The New York City LAB School for Collaborative Studies, a public high school on West 17th Street in Manhattan, and will be integrated into its 11th grade history curriculum.

The project involves having students map and explore the evolution of the Chelsea community from the 1800s to the present. "We will supply support in terms of project organization, locations and specialists in historic preservation, landmark designation and the creation of historic districts," Doyel explained. The mapping will likely begin in her family home, the oldest dwelling in the Chelsea Historic District built in 1829-30. ☺

HAVE YOU MET THESE NEW BOARD MEMBERS?

The elections at the Chapter's Annual Meeting on May 13 brought four new members to the Board of Directors.



Elizabeth Broman has been reference librarian at the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum Library since 1999. She is a graduate of Pratt Institute Master's Program in Art History and Library Science and received her B.A. from City College of New York. She lives in a building that is located across the street from where she grew up in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, the same building her mother and grandparents moved into in 1941. Elizabeth loves traveling and has climbed Mt. Fuji. An early interest in photography led her to become a cemetery historian; her favorite types of cemeteries are Victorian and Egyptian revival.



Alta Indelman is an architect who has maintained her own architectural practice since 1995; prior to that she was an associate at Davis, Brody & Associates (now Davis Brody Bond LLP). She earned her B.Arch. from Cooper Union and her B.S. from NYU. Her firm's work comprises projects for both public and private-sector clients, including the adaptive re-use of a 1908 school building into the Red Hook Community Justice Center, a courthouse and community center in Brooklyn and work in residential buildings and private homes. Alta lives and works in SoHo. She first became involved in historic preservation when she joined Friends of Cast Iron Architecture as a walking tour guide in 1975.



Laura Handlin is an instructor at Parsons The New School for Design and an independent museum consultant. Her consulting projects have included work for the Historic House Trust of New York City and research for a book on art related to the Great Dismal Swamp in Virginia and North Carolina. She received her M.A. in history of decorative arts and design from the Cooper-Hewitt/Parsons Masters Program, her J.D. from NYU, and her A.B. from the University of Chicago. Before changing careers she practiced law in NYC government. She became interested in design history when she took a class in the early 1990s taught by Jeff Sholeen, current president of the Metropolitan Chapter. Laura lives in Battery Park City.



John Metcalfe is the owner of Antiquarian Horologist, a clock restoration business located near City Hall. Before that he was conservator of a clock museum in Lancaster County, PA. He is a graduate of the British Horological Institute in London, and has worked at the British Museum in the Horological Students Room. He is a Craft Member of the British Horological Institute and was very active in the Victorian Society of Great Britain before moving to the United States 22 years ago. He previously served on the Metropolitan Chapter's Board for 10 years, chairing the Tour and Hospitality Committees. He lives in Jackson Heights and serves on the boards of the Opera Index and the Teatro Grattacielo and is the clerk of the Vestry of St. Ignatius of Antioch Church in Manhattan.

This issue's embellishments are drawn from The New York New Church, the new site of the Chapter's lecture series.

The Italian Renaissance style used by builder James C. Hoe in 1858-59 was retained in renovations by architects Charles D. Gambrill and George B. Post in 1866 and by York & Sawyer in 1901. Classical elements such as capitals ring the ceiling of the sanctuary. Christian symbols, including a lily, decorate the sanctuary's baptismal font.

The York & Sawyer renovation created a new entryway. The banner on the front page of this issue shows a wrought iron support for its portico roof.

York & Sawyer also replaced the building's clear window panes with glue-chip glass. The opaque glass has swirling patterns. No two panes are identical. The sanctuary windows are more elaborate than those in other parts of the building, featuring diamond-shaped pieces banded by double rows of leading. In other areas, the pattern relies on simple diamond shapes.

The glue-chip glass in the church was made in Germany by a process still used today by several companies. After the polished surface of clear glass is removed by grinding, a thick coating of glue that has been dissolved in water is applied. The room temperature is raised to 95-100 degrees, and the glue-coated glass is left to dry for up to 24 hours. As the glue dries, it shrinks and draws away chips of the glass, creating the varying patterns.

Photographs by Joyce Mendelsohn

Lectures Move to Murray Hill Church, continued from first page

dedicated on February 6, 1859. The total cost of the building and furnishings was \$18,150.

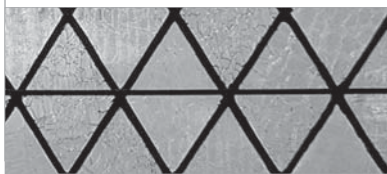
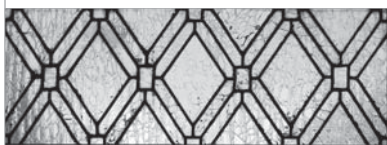
The building was expanded with an 1866 addition designed by Charles D. Gambrill and George B. Post. In 1901, York & Sawyer were the architects for a renovation that moved the entrance from the front to its current side location. The windows in the sanctuary were changed in that renovation from clear glass rectangles to more elaborate leaded geometric panels with glue-chip glass. In the recent renovation, about 100 of these panes needed replacement. An old door and window stored in the basement supplied the needed pieces.

Writings of Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), a Swedish scientist who authored numerous theological volumes, were the inspiration for organizations that became The New Church (Swedenborgian). Ironically, Swedenborg did not wish to found a new denomination. Instead, he hoped his insights would be integrated into existing Christianity, mak-

ing it "The New Church." The name "New Church" refers to a new understanding of the Bible, explains Rev. Brugler. The Bible is viewed as containing a historical account and, within that story, to reflect individuals' spiritual journeys. "We believe that people are essentially spirits clothed with material bodies," states a pamphlet available at the church.

Prominent congregants of The New York New Church have included Helen Keller, William Seward, George Inness and Daniel Burnham. Dr. Mehmet Oz, professor and vice chair of surgery at Columbia University, is a current member.

The sanctuary is heavily used. On Sundays, Rev. Brugler's congregation, two Korean New Churches and a Spiritualist Church meet there. The Chelsea Opera rehearses in the space, and now the Chapter's lecture series will be there as well. ☺





CELEBRATING MARGOT GAYLE'S CENTENNIAL

An overwhelming crowd of family, friends and colleagues gathered to wish Margot Gayle a happy 100th birthday during the 2008 Annual Awards Presentation on May 14 at the Century Association. Stephen Gottlieb, Joyce Mendelsohn, Frances Eberhart and Margot's daughters, Carol Gayle and Gretchen Gayle Ellsworth, charmed the attendees with personal reminiscences of Margot while Robert B. Tierney, chairman of the New York City Landmarks Commission, presented her with a letter from the mayor.

After the ceremony, guests gathered for an elegant reception and joined in a rousing rendition of "Happy Birthday." For those members of the Metropolitan Chapter of the Victorian Society who were unable to attend the once-in-a-lifetime event, the editors of this newsletter decided to include pictures from the evening as well as photographs of Margot included in the program, depicting her over the past 100 years in her various roles as mother, advocate, preservationist, politician, tour guide, cheerleader, supporter and friend.

Photographs by Hunter Armstrong

Simeon Bankoff, executive director of the Historic Districts Council, Civil Court Judge Kathryn Freed and Metropolitan Chapter Board member Lesley Doyel ▼



Edward Mohylowski, Metropolitan Chapter treasurer, and Columbia University Professor Dorothy Miner ▼



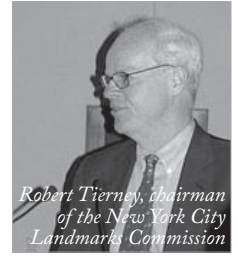
◀ *Melissa Baldock, Metropolitan Chapter board member, with Sean Sweeney, executive director of the SoHo Alliance*



The Jefferson Market clock tower was replicated in the birthday cake.



▲ *Jefferson Mansell, chair of the committee that organized the gala, with Lindsey Parrott (l), chair of the Awards Committee, and Hilda Regier, Metropolitan Chapter Board member*



Robert Tierney, chairman of the New York City Landmarks Commission



Carol Gayle



Metropolitan Chapter members Alicia Kebr (l) and Patricia Riccio



◀ *Margot Gayle with architectural historian Tony Robins*



▲ *Metropolitan Chapter Board members Alta Indelman (l) and Joyce Mendelsohn (c) with Frannie Eberhart*



Jeffery Sholeen, president of the Metropolitan Chapter, presents a birthday bouquet to Margot Gayle.



▲ *Gretchen Gayle Ellsworth and Jay Shockley, Metropolitan Chapter Board member*



▲ *Peg Breen, president of the New York Landmarks Conservancy, and Lewis I. Haber, Metropolitan Chapter Board member*



Margot Gayle Timeline



1959 Elegantly dressed and determined to succeed.

1908

Sarah Margaret McCoy born in Kansas City, MO. During childhood “moved from one automobile city to another.” Adopted French name Margot in high school in Windsor, Ontario



1915 Margot (left) with younger sister Edith and mother, also named Edith.



1924 Margot as a teenager.

1930

Graduated from University of Michigan

1932

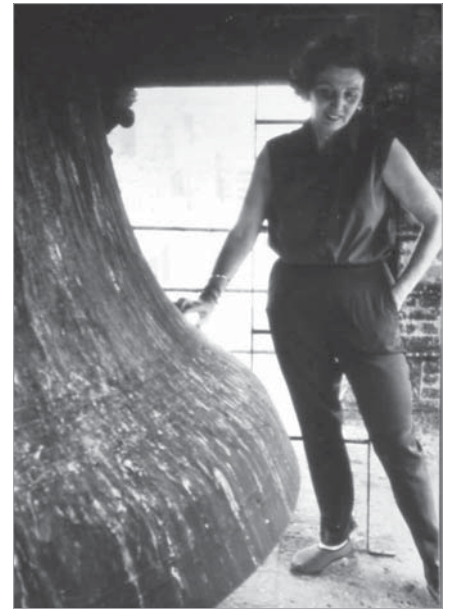
Married William Thomas Gayle, Jr.

1933

Earned master’s degree in bacteriology from Emory University

1934-37

Worked with League of Women Voters in Atlanta to eliminate the poll tax



1960 Margot inspecting the bell in the tower of the Jefferson Market Courthouse.

1941-45

Director, Civil Defense Volunteer Office, Washington, D.C.

1945-48

CBS scriptwriter, New York City

1953-56

Director of public relations, New York City Department of Commerce and Public Events

1953-61

Democratic state committeewoman, Manhattan district leader

1956

New York delegate to Democratic National Convention

1956-58

Public information officer, New York City Planning Commission

1957

Candidate for New York City Council

1959

Chairwoman, Village Neighborhood Committee to Save the Jefferson Market Courthouse

1965

Active in creation of New York City Landmarks Law, took the only photograph of the bill signing

1966

One of the founders of the Victorian Society in America

1970

Founder of Friends of Cast Iron Architecture, instrumental in drawing attention to SoHo

1974

Author, *Cast-Iron Architecture in New York: A Photographic Survey*, with Edmund V. Gillon, Jr.

1975-92

Columnist, “Changing Scene,” *New York Daily News Sunday Magazine*

1981-84

Member, New York City Art Commission

1988

Author, *Guide to Manhattan’s Outdoor Sculpture*, with Michele Cohen

1998

Author, *Cast-Iron Architecture in America: The Significance of James Bogardus*, with Carol Gayle

1998-99

Co-chair, Neighbors Restoring the Historic Yorkville Clock



1961 Alan Burnham and Margot present plans for preservation and reuse of Jefferson Market



1976 Margot leading a tour of Tribeca.



1957 Mayor Robert F. Wagner with Margot in his campaign headquarters



1998 Margot with Philip Johnson.



1968 Margot with daughters Carol (front) and Gretchen.

METROPOLITAN CHAPTER CALENDAR

LECTURE SERIES

All lectures are at *The New York New Church, 114 E. 35th St., New York City, admission is FREE; no reservations required*

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 6 PM

Delectable Drinking: New York During the Golden Age of the Cocktail
DAVID WONDRICH, author of *Imbibe!* (2007) and *Killer Cocktails* (2005).

In the decades after the Civil War, New York City had the most elegant bars, skilled bartenders and sophisticated mixed drinks the world has ever seen. At Jerry Thomas's, Harry Johnson's Little Jumbo, Rogers' Chop House and bars of such hotels as Hoffman House, Holland House and Waldorf Astoria, bartenders were celebrities and patrons rich and famous.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14, 6 PM

Heavenly Secrets: About Swedenborg and American Art
BAILEY VAN HOOK, Ph.D., professor of art history, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

Although Emmanuel Swedenborg, a Swedish

scientist and mystic, founded no church, he had an immense influence on the spiritual life of England and America in the 19th century. Among his American followers were sculptor Hiram Powers, landscape painter George Inness and illustrators Howard Pyle and Jessie Willcox Smith. Each tried to convey the reality of the spiritual world and the process of spiritual growth described in Swedenborg's writings.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 6 PM

From Newport to the North Shore: Warren & Wetmore's Architecture of Opulence
PETER PENNOYER and ANNE WALKER, co-authors of *The Architecture of Warren & Wetmore* (2006)

During the first three decades of the 20th century, the architectural practice of Warren & Wetmore produced more than 300 major projects, including Grand Central Terminal (designed in association with Reed & Stem) and the New York Yacht Club. Whitney Warren (1864-1943) and Charles D. Wetmore (1866-1941) also designed grand man-

sions and estates, luxurious apartment buildings, hotels and resorts and distinctive office towers.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 9, 6 PM

"Gothamtime"—New York's Contributions to Creating the Victorian Christmas
SIBYL McCORMAC GROFF, NBC Rockefeller Center historian and tour guide

"Gothamtime" describes secular and universal holiday traditions that started in New York in the 19th century and continue to impact modern culture. Development of urbanism, transportation and print media furthered the contributions of Washington Irving, John Pintard, Clement Clarke Moore and Thomas Nast. Also affecting holiday celebration were department stores, cards, gifts, music, charity, Santa Claus, the tree and festal family activities. "Gothamtime" decorations and activities in 2008 will continue and build on traditions begun in the 19th century.

TOURS

Members receive detailed flyers before events, nonmembers please contact us at (212) 886-3742 for flyers. Advance prepaid reservations are required.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 4, 7:45 AM

Tiles Along Mercer Mile



Fonthill

The Moravian Pottery and Tile Works and two museums built by the eminent tile maker Henry Chapman Mercer will be featured in an all-day bus tour to Doylestown, PA. Fonthill, built in 1910, has elaborately decorated rooms adorned with handcrafted tiles. The Mercer Museum, completed in 1916, displays the founder's collection of early American objects, including agricultural tools and whaling boats.

Tour limited to 57 participants.

\$100/Chapter members; \$110/nonmembers
Reserve by September 18.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 10:30 AM

Surveying the Madison Square Area



Farragut Monument

Walking tour will explore the area where Samuel F.B. Morris and Edith Wharton grew up. A park since the 1840s, Madison Square drew a wide range of activities to its periphery over the years. Around it rose townhouses, hotels, the monumental marker of a grave, entertainment venues and office towers. Among buildings from the Victorian era to be seen on the tour are the church where Edith Jones married Edward Wharton and Gilsey House, a hotel favored by Oscar Wilde.

Tour limited to 30 participants \$25/Chapter members; \$35/nonmembers. Reserve by October 31.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13

Christmas in Connecticut: Celebrating Theatricality



Goodspeed Opera House

Planning for the Annual Holiday Tour is in progress. A highlight of the all-day bus tour to the Nutmeg State will be the 1877 Goodspeed Opera House in East Haddam, where a visit to backstage areas has been arranged. Tentatively planned is exploration of Castle Gillette, also in East Haddam, once the home of a noted actor.

Tour limited to 55 participants

Fees, further details and reservation deadline to be announced.

JOIN THE METROPOLITAN CHAPTER OF THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY IN AMERICA

MEMBERSHIP LEVEL:

- Individual \$40
- Household (two adults) \$60
- Sponsor \$75
Acknowledgement in newsletter, annual meeting presentation and website
- Patron \$150 / Lifetime \$1,000
Same benefits as Sponsor, plus admission for one to a special annual event
- Senior (over age 65) \$25
- Student (with copy of student ID) \$25

Name(s) Please print clearly

Address, including apartment designation and zip code

Phone

Email

ADDITIONAL SPECIAL CONTRIBUTION(S):

VSA Summer School Scholarships \$_____

Margot Gayle Fund for Preservation of Victorian Heritage \$_____

TOTAL ENCLOSED: \$_____

PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO:
Metropolitan Chapter VSA

MAIL THIS FORM TO:
Metropolitan Chapter, VSA
232 East 11th St.
New York, NY 10003

Annual Awards Given at Gala, continued from first page

as well as his establishment of a foundation to inspire future generations of artists and secure his own artistic legacy. Alice Cooney Freylinghuysen, the Anthony W. and Lulu C. Wang Curator of American Decorative Arts at the Metropolitan Museum, was the curator of the exhibition and principal author of the catalogue. Richard Guy Wilson, Julia Meech, Elizabeth Hutchinson, Jennifer Thalheimer and Barbara Veith also contributed essays to the catalogue.

A **Preservation Award** was given to the **Central Park Conservancy** to honor the restoration of the Bethesda Terrace Arcade, a project that took over 20 years to complete. The Arcade was intended by Calvert Vaux and Frederick Law Olmsted to be the architectural centerpiece of Central Park. The restoration included the repair and reinstallation of the Arcade's original Minton encaustic tiles as well as restoration and waterproofing of its wrought-iron infrastructure.

A second **Preservation Award** recognized the restoration of the **Eldridge Street Synagogue**. Since its inception in 1986, the Eldridge Street Project has been engaged in restoring and preserving the synagogue, which was built in 1887 and was the first great house of worship in America constructed by Eastern European Jews. The restored synagogue was rededicated as a museum on December 7, 2007, exactly 120 years after the official opening of the synagogue. The museum now offers tours, exhibits and programs that tell the story of the synagogue and its founders and

celebrate America's broad cultural traditions.

The **Publication Award for Biography** was given to **Hermione Lee** for *Edith Wharton*. Lee presents a new profile of Wharton as a tough, startlingly modern woman whose life was as brilliant and complex as her fiction. Lee insightfully integrates the events of Wharton's life with the evolution of her writing and shows her to be far more daring than her stereotypical image as a snobbish chronicler of America's Gilded Age.

The **Publication Award for Cultural History** went to *The Shakespeare Riots: Revenge, Drama and Death in Nineteenth-Century America* by **Nigel Cliff**. The book tells the story of the fateful night of May 10, 1849, when an angry mob of more than 10,000 New Yorkers faced off against police in a riot ignited by a long-simmering rivalry between the two leading Shakespearian actors of the day. The bloody event, which left 20 people dead, led directly to the arming of American police forces. Cliff, former theater critic for *The London Times*, thoughtfully explores the political and social currents that fueled the violence and vividly recreates details of nineteenth-century stage life.

The **Publication Award for Infrastructure** went to *Conquering Gotham: A Gilded Age Epic: The Construction of Penn Station and Its Tunnels* by **Jill Jonnes**, which details the Pennsylvania Railroad's determination to run its trains directly into Manhattan. (Passengers in the 1890s had to disembark in New Jersey and take ferries to New

York.) Jonnes tells of political machinations and feats of civil engineering as well as the development of electrified locomotives that could travel underground, all of which led to the construction of tunnels under the Hudson River and Charles McKim's design for the first Pennsylvania Station, which was demolished in 1963. 🌱



Robert C. Kaufmann accepts the Lifetime Achievement Award. Photo by Hunter Armstrong