

NEW YORK METROPOLITAN CHAPTER OF THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY IN AMERICA

Spring 2011

VSA Summer Schools Scholars

Did you know that each year our Chapter provides tuition scholarships for New Yorkers to attend the Victorian Society in America's summer schools? In 2010 we supported two outstanding individuals: Olivia Klose, who attended the London school, and Alexandra Anderson, who went to Newport, Rhode Island. Their discoveries, expressed in their individual reports, underline the value of these programs for students, professionals, and enthusiasts of the Victorian and Edwardian periods.



Olivia Klose, 2010 London Summer School Metropolitan New York Scholar, at Ironbridge in Shropshire. Photograph by Lois C. Watts.

Klose, recently appointed Landmarks Preservationist at NYC's Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), noted "the differences and similarities between British and American preservation practice" in her report. Through a lecture by Ian Dungavell of the British Victorian Society and discussions with program leaders Ian Cox, Gavin Stamp, and Alan Crawford, she came to a better understanding of "architectural conservation on a national level." This fueled her inquiry into municipal preservation, which she found to have a "generally higher level of architectural integrity" in the UK. London's Conservation Areas, which are akin to NYC Historic Districts and the LPC, are part of the city's planning agency. This administrative structure, Klose speculated, may contribute to "stricter regulation and enforcement" of preservation standards than are the norm here. These higher standards also extend to historic interiors—something that is quite rare in New York City.

For Anderson, studying in Newport with Richard Guy Wilson offered a unique opportunity to focus on the early work of architects McKim, Mead & White. As a decorative arts and design history graduate student in the Parsons/Cooper-Hewitt MA... *Continued on next page >*

Hands On History

Lesley Doyel reports that Hands On History: Preserving the Past in the Present, the Chapter's educational initiative, got underway this fall at the NYC LAB School for Collaborative Studies (see Spring 2010 newsletter). The after-school sessions included informative presentations by Frampton Tolbert of the Historic Districts Council and Melissa Baldock of the Municipal Arts Society (both board members), and a memorable visit by Chapter president Joyce Mendelsohn. During an extensive tour of the High Line—the West Side's repurposed elevated railway—course participants learned about this notable example of adaptive reuse up close, and took in amazing views of neighborhood places they will be learning about in future sessions, including Chelsea Piers, Chelsea Market, and both the Chelsea and West Chelsea Historic Districts. The 15-week course is open to 9th– through 12th-grade LAB students. 🌟



High Line School and Youth Program Manager Emily Pinkowitz leads the Hands On History class during a tour of the park on December 2, 2010.

Remembering the Triangle Fire

The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire centennial will be observed on March 25, 2011, commemorating the deadliest fire in Manhattan before September 11, 2001. The Triangle Fire took the lives of 146 workers and galvanized a movement for social justice. Thanks to a grant from the New York Chapter's Margot Gayle Fund, the Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition has assembled a digital repository for future research. Ruth Sergel, founder of the Coalition, will speak about the fire and the group's activities on March 8 (see page 3 for details).

The Coalition wants to create ways for people to contribute to the project, and to inspire conversation through social media such as Twitter and Facebook that can be added through the organization's website, www.rememberthetrianglefire.org. Starting in January 2011, there will be open hours at the Coalition's monthly meetings for people to bring relevant material to be digitized and uploaded. These developments will ensure that memories endure as the horrific events of that day become ever more distant in time. 🌟

My Newport Stained Glass Odyssey

Visiting Newport with the expert lecturers, tour guides, and welcoming hosts of the Victorian Society's Summer School was an experience I'll never forget. Having never been to Newport, I was excited to be visiting places I'd known about because of my interest in 19th-century American stained glass, but had never seen.

In the churches and homes we visited, I was overwhelmed by the presence of stained glass; we saw beautiful and interesting glass everywhere we went, including highlights such as Louis Comfort Tiffany's opalescent glass wall for the McKim, Mead & White dining room at Kingscote, and windows in St. Columba's Chapel designed by Maitland Armstrong for Tiffany Studios.

John La Farge is one of my heroes, and I now understand that an appreciation of his work is not complete without going to Newport. Everywhere I turned I was surrounded by La Farge: by his windows and interior decoration at the United Congregational Church; at a lecture by La Farge author-

ity James Yarnall. My complete immersion came during a wonderful reception hosted by Bill and Alison Vareika at their Bellevue Avenue gallery, where the space was filled with more La Farge drawings, paintings, and sketches than I had ever seen in one place. Bill Vareika's long career, collection, and his involvement with rescuing La Farge's work were a revelation and a great inspiration.

We were lucky to be in Newport in time to see the momentous completion of one of Bill's most significant rescue projects—the restored La Farge windows from the Caldwell House (demolished 1931), installed only days before in a new chapel at Salve Regina University. It was a great joy to see in person all the stained glass and decorative interiors that make the 19th century so fascinating to me. ☺

~ Elizabeth Broman



One of the spectacular Tiffany Studios stained glass windows at St. Columba's Chapel. Photograph by Edward Heimiller, 2009 Newport Summer School Alumnus.

Scholars, continued from first page



program, she reported that it was the legendary firm's interior decoration that delighted her most. When visiting the Samuel Tilton House, Kingscote, and the Isaac Bell House, she marveled that a single room could exhibit an "eclectic mix of motifs inspired by some combination of Colonial Revival, Classical, Japanese, Moorish, French Provincial, Queen Anne, and Arts and Crafts Movement styles."

We salute these scholars! For information on applying to the summer schools see Metro Matters. ☺

Alexandra Anderson, 2010 Newport Summer School Metropolitan New York Scholar. Photograph by Caren Litherland.

Savoring the Lower East Side: Streit's Matzo

Manhattan's Lower East Side (LES) is one of the last neighborhoods in New York where it's possible to catch a glimpse of immigrant life at the end of the 19th century—not only at the Tenement Museum, but by walking through streets still lined with the hastily-built housing erected as waves of immigrants came to New York in the mid- to late 19th century. Covering an area of four square miles from 14th Street south to Catherine Street and the Bowery to the East River, the LES was at the time one of the most densely populated places on earth. There, immigrants from across Europe, many of them Jews escaping persecution, practiced their own traditions and adapted others, creating a vibrant neighborhood that remains unique today.

Traditional foods are part of the LES experience, and a visit to Streit's Matzo factory on Rivington Street is a must. Aron Streit, who himself emigrated in the 1890s, established his first business in 1916 on nearby Pitt Street, and today Streit's is the last family owned and operated company in the country to make matzo, the unleavened bread that is part of Passover tradition for many Jews, and is also eaten year-round. Public tours of the factory, now in operation for more than 70 years, show how production adheres to strict Kosher requirements under rabbinical supervision and offer samples of matzo hot out of the oven. A store on the premises sells other foods from the Streit's line. (To book a tour, call 212-475-7000 or email info@StreitsMatzos.com.) ☺ ~ Brian Coleman



Rabbi Israel Clapman supervises matzo production. Photograph by Edward Addeo.



The embellishments in this issue are details from the architecture of Leopold Eidlitz and Henry Hobson Richardson. In the recent monograph, *Leopold Eidlitz: Architecture and Idealism in the Gilded Age*, Kathryn E. Holliday describes Eidlitz as "one of the great architects of the 19th century in America, but...one of the least known." Richardson, contrastingly, is one of the 19th century's most famous architects.

Eidlitz designed the original portion of the West Park Presbyterian Church on the Upper West Side, which was recently designated a NYC landmark. Another New York City landmark partially designed by him is the Tweed Courthouse at 52 Chambers Street (now the home of the NYC Department of Education), where he was responsible for the south wing and the recently restored rotunda.

In 1876, Eidlitz, Richardson, and Frederick Law Olmsted took over the design of the New York State Capitol, which was already under construction. Eidlitz and Richardson worked amicably on the interior, with Eidlitz designing the Assembly side of the building as well as the Senate staircase, and Richardson the Senate side and the western staircase. Richardson also designed the exterior facades in the French Renaissance Revival style. On January 1, 2011, newly elected Governor Andrew M. Cuomo extolled the building's glory and importance in his inaugural address, illustrating the enduring legacy of these 19th-century visionaries.

To learn about tours of the Capitol, call Visitor Assistance at (518) 474-2418.

For tours of the Tweed Courthouse call 311, or 212 NEW YORK if outside the city. ☺

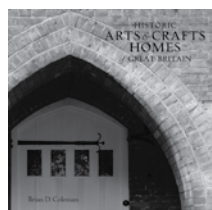


Photographs of New York State Capitol by Tim Schapker

NEW YORK METROPOLITAN CHAPTER CALENDAR

LECTURES

Presented at The New York New Church (Swedenborgian), 114 E. 35th St. between Park and Lexington Avenues, Manhattan
Admission is **FREE**; no reservations required. For VSA members only: Meet the speakers at our post-lecture receptions!



ACROSS THE POND: ICONS OF ENGLISH ARTS & CRAFTS AND AMERICAN INTERPRETATIONS

Tuesday, February 8, 6 PM
Brian D. Coleman, MD,

author of fifteen books on the decorative arts, including *Historic Arts & Crafts Homes of Great Britain* and *Classic Cottages*, will address the influence of British Arts and Crafts architects on American design and the use of Arts and Crafts elements in contemporary interiors.

REMEMBERING THE TRIANGLE FIRE: MEMORY, MEMORIAL, AND PERPETUAL REVOLUTION

Tuesday, March 8, 6 PM

Ruth Sergel is a director, activist, and interactive technology designer whose films have aired on



PBS and IFC and whose public art work includes *Chalk* and *Voices of 9.11*. As the founder of the Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition (recipient of a 2010 Margot Gayle Fund grant), she will discuss preparations for the March 25th centennial of the Triangle Fire and the establishment of a permanent public memorial.



McKIM, MEAD & WHITE: TRANSMITTERS OF THE OLD TO THE NEW WORLD

Tuesday, April 12, 6 PM

Mosette Broderick, PhD, who leads NYU's Urban Design and Architecture Studies Program

and its Historic and Sustainable Architecture program in London, will present a talk based on her recent book, *Triumvirate: McKim, Mead & White*, an exploration of the work of the prominent early 20th-century American firm as it pursued its goal of shaping the nation through architecture.



KITCHENS OF THE VICTORIAN ERA

Tuesday, May 10, 6 PM

Franklin and Esther Schmidt, writer/photographers and contributors to *Victorian Homes* magazine and other

publications, will draw on research from their 2005 book *Victorian Kitchens & Baths* to describe how early Victorian cooking rooms became today's kitchens, emphasizing elements that gave 19th-century kitchens their character and ways of recreating this atmosphere in restored or new Victorian-style kitchens.

METRO MATTERS

TOURS

The Spring Tours schedule, which usually appears here, was not finalized by press time. Rest assured, some good ones are in the works. Look for the schedule and registration forms in a special mailing in the coming weeks.

MGF DEADLINE NEARS

The Margot Gayle Fund application is now available online! Please direct potential applicants to the MGF section of our website, www.metrovsa.org. The deadline is February 14.

SUMMER SCHOOLS

The 2011 Victorian Society in America Summer Schools will take place in Newport, June 3–12, and in London, July 2–17. Applications for both are due March 1 and may be requested from the Summer Schools Administrator at vsasummerschools@comcast.net.



SAVE THE DATE

We are pleased to announce that our **Annual Meeting and Awards Presentation** will be held on **Tuesday, May 17**, at the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland, 233 Madison

Avenue at 37th Street. Built for mining entrepreneur Joseph Raphael De Lamar in 1902 from designs by C.P.H. Gilbert, the building's grandeur and imposing scale make it one of the city's finest Beaux-Arts mansions. Please mark your calendars for this special event!

KEEPING UP-TO-DATE WITH EMAIL

Recently the Chapter started using email to alert members to special events. Although we sometimes publicize these opportunities in our mailings, email is

often the only way to quickly inform members about an event on short notice. In the past few months, members on our email list received free electronic passes to the IFAA Dealers Show at the Park Avenue Armory, learned about the last few performances of a stage comedy set in Victorian England, and got reminders about monthly lectures. If you wish to receive these alerts, please send your email address, with your name, to info@metrovs.org. We will not share your information with other organizations without permission.

FAREWELL BUT NOT GOODBYE

Board member Melissa Baldock recently moved to Nashville, Tennessee, to become Historic Preservationist at that city's Metro Historic Zoning Commission. A stalwart member of the Preservation Committee who spearheaded www.castironnyc.org (see Fall 2010 newsletter), Melissa will be sorely missed. We wish her well with her new job and her April 2, 2011, wedding!

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• VSA Summer School Scholarships \$ _____

• Margot Gayle Fund for the Preservation of Victorian Heritage \$ _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED: \$ _____

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NEW YORK METROPOLITAN CHAPTER OF
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Meet our newest Board Member

Heather Jane McCormick is a design and decorative arts historian, writer, and teacher, with a special interest in 19th-century New York furniture and craftsmen. Born in Nova Scotia, Canada, Heather Jane made brownstone Brooklyn her beloved second home in 1994, when she moved to New York to attend the Bard Graduate Center, where she works today. HJ's projects with the BGC have included research and editorial work, notably on the 1999 E.W. Godwin and 2003 Thomas Jeckyll exhibitions, and in 2004 she co-authored *Vasemania*, produced jointly by the BGC and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Her current projects are coordinating the publication of a comprehensive survey of world design history, 1400–2000, and the completion of her doctoral dissertation on the wood-carvers of 19th-century New York City.

What's this? The Victorian Radio Hour?



No, it's board member Jeff Sholeen interviewing founding VSA board member Bill Dane for the Chapter's new oral history program. The recording session took place at Lyrichord Discs, Inc., located in Chelsea's oldest townhouse, which is also the residence of board member Lesley Doyel and her husband Nick Fritsch, who lent his professional audio expertise to a very rewarding day.

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