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.rememberthetriangelfire.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 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

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
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.

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!

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.

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!

JOIN THE NEW YORK 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
Same benefits as Sponsor, plus admission for one to a special annual event
• Senior (over age 65) $30
• Student (with copy of student ID) $30

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 the Preservation of Victorian Heritage $ ______

Total Enclosed: $ ______

Please make checks payable to:
New York Metropolitan Chapter, VSA
232 East 11th St., New York, NY 10003

Mail this form to:
info@metrovsa.org
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.