



# PANORAMA

— SPRING 2012 —

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THE NEW YORK METROPOLITAN CHAPTER OF THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY IN AMERICA



Kip Forbes (right) with  
VSA Executive Vice President  
John Simonelli.

*Photograph by Frederic Golden*

## KIP FORBES HONORED

Few people know of the many contributions Christopher “Kip” Forbes—Vice Chairman of the eponymous media company founded by his grandfather in 1917—has made to the VSA. A national board member for 25 years and actively involved with the Society’s journal, *19th Century*, since 1976, Forbes has also hosted popular charitable “teas” over the years to benefit the annual summer programs in Newport and London, raising considerable funds for much-needed scholarships. Forbes’s last tea took place in

*continued page 3*



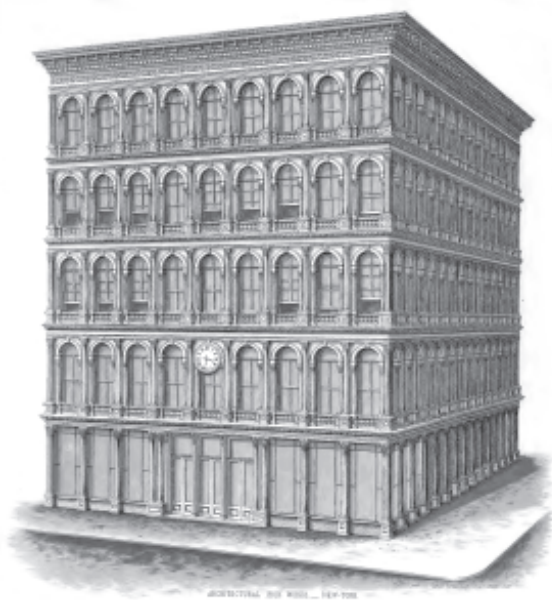
TOP RIGHT: The living room, centered around a stone fire-place, still has its original birch log railings (foreground).  
INSET: General Custer and Onteora Colony memorabilia on a side table. ABOVE: Perched on a steep mountain slope, the home has sweeping views of the Catskills (see also page 6).

*All photographs by Edward Addeo*

## Mrs. Custer's Catskills Cabin

For many today, the name “General Custer” evokes the image of a fearless hero who sacrificed his life for his country at the Battle of Little Big Horn. As in so many cases, however, the man fell short of the myth. Last in his class at West Point, George Armstrong Custer had been court-martialed and nearly kicked out of the Army for leaving his post one afternoon to visit his wife, Elizabeth (Libbie). At Little Big Horn in 1876, he was killed after he ignored strategic advice from his staff, leaving his wife nearly penniless. In order to support herself, Mrs. Custer began writing books about what she knew best—her late husband and his career—fictionalizing his life and creating a hero he had never really been.

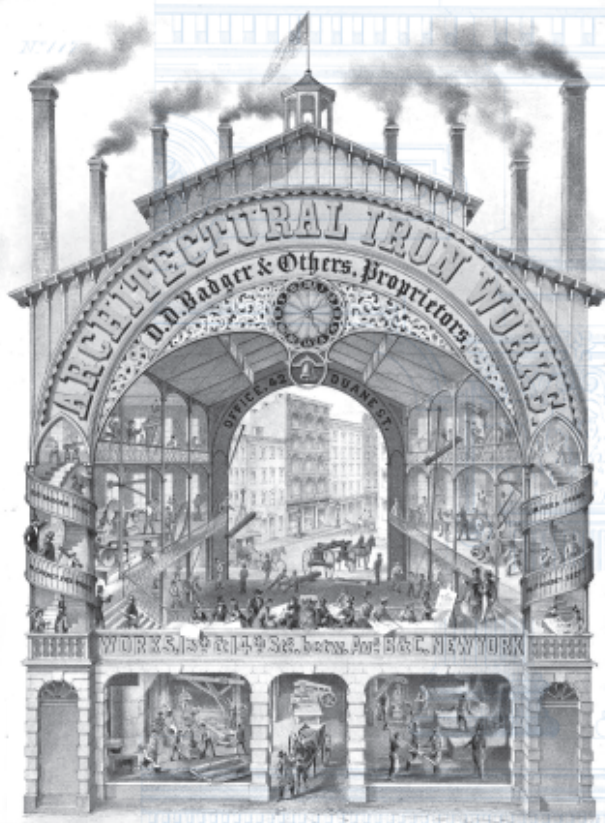
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## Embellishments

On Sunday, November 6, The Victorian Society New York and the Municipal Art Society co-sponsored a tour of “Margot Gayle’s Tribeca.” VSNY board member Anthony W. Robins—who learned the tour guide’s craft under Margot’s tutelage in the mid-1970s—led a group of 35 cast iron devotees on a walk focusing on the district’s cast-iron architecture, paying particular attention to the work of James Bogardus as well as the facades cast by D.D. Badger’s Architectural Iron Works.

The group gathered at the small triangle at Chambers Street and West Broadway where Margot’s Friends of Cast-Iron Architecture tours used to meet—and which later, thanks to Margot’s efforts, officially became “James Bogardus Triangle.” The Bogardus trail led to the narrow 1857–58 cast-iron facade of 75 Murray Street. Although No. 75 was an early designation by the Landmarks Commission, the LPC’s report did not name its creator. Margot, however, was convinced it was a Bogardus product, and was vindicated by the discovery of his foundry mark hidden under peeling layers of paint.



Next stop was the 1856–57 Cary Building, designed by Gamaliel King and John Kellum with facades cast in iron by Badger’s foundry. The group compared the facade to its rendering as “Plate VII” in Badger’s catalog—the only New York foundry catalog known to survive. Although Robins lugged the reprinted catalog on the tour, he told participants they could also see it at home online at:

[www.archive.org/details/illustrationsofioobadger](http://www.archive.org/details/illustrationsofioobadger)

thanks to a 2011 grant from the Chapter’s Margot Gayle Fund to the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum Library. The catalog is the source of this issue’s “Embellishments.”

Other stops included A.T. Stewart’s 1846 “Marble Palace,” later home to the New York Sun. In 1966, Margot organized a successful campaign to get the Sun Building’s enormous corner clock running again. Not one to give up a cause—ever—a quarter-century later she cajoled the city into appointing a clock master to maintain a half dozen of the most important historic clocks on city-owned buildings.

Two hours and a dozen cast-iron buildings later, the walk concluded at 254 Canal Street, built in 1856–57—another Bogardus design identified by, of course, Margot. Noting that she had passed away at the age of 100 just a few years ago, Robins suggested Margot might even now be sitting down with James Bogardus, getting the full story on all his buildings.

FAR LEFT: Plate III from Daniel Badger, *Illustrations of Iron Architecture made by The Architectural Iron Works of the City of New York* (New York, 1865), showing the Haughwout Store; the building still stands at Broadway and Broome Street in SoHo.

LEFT: Frontispiece from Badger’s *Illustrations of Iron Architecture*; the foundry catalog is now available digitally thanks to a grant from the Margot Gayle Fund.

BACKGROUND: Plate VIII, facade detail for the Cary Building, from the same catalog.



## KIP FORBES

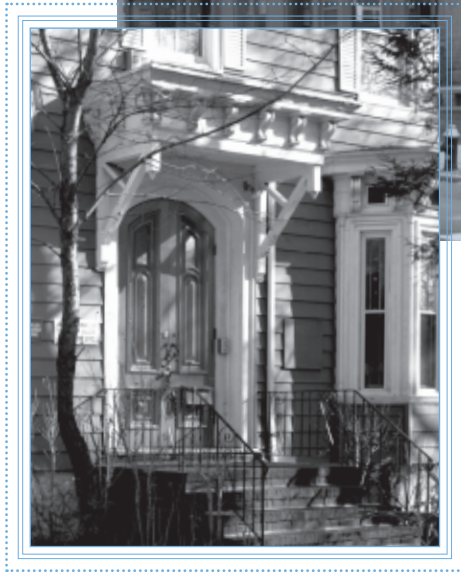
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2008 on the family yacht, *The Highlander*. That year, the scholarship fund established by Forbes—by then totalling nearly half a million dollars—was turned over to the VSA. On November 15 the national VSA, together with the Summer Schools Committee and the Alumni Association, honored Kip Forbes for his longstanding support with a reception at Bonhams's New York outpost in the IBM building. Some 100 attendees—including members of our Chapter—were greeted by the Forbes family bagpiper and enjoyed the antiques and curiosities on view. The event raised \$17,500 for the Summer Schools scholarship fund.

## Save the Date!

### VSNY ANNUAL MEETING AND AWARDS CEREMONY

Members are encouraged to set aside the evening of May 22 for the annual meeting of The Victorian Society New York, to be held at the Church of St. Francis Xavier on West 16th Street. Come and enjoy firsthand this magnificently renewed interior, recipient of a 2011 VSNY Award for Interior Restoration. Our thanks go to Father Joseph Costantino, who continues a tradition begun by previous award winners by donating reception space for this special event.



LEFT: The Italianate Eldridge House, c. 1870, in Queens.  
ABOVE: Romanesque houses at 124 to 132 New York Avenue designed by Charles Infanger, c. 1892, in the Crown Heights North II Historic District.

*Photographs by Christopher D. Brazee, LPC*

## New Victorian Landmarks & Historic Districts

Since our annual meeting in May 2011, the Landmarks Preservation Commission has designated 13 Victorian landmarks and historic districts. The following list includes summary explanations taken from LPC press releases:

### BRONX

**P.S. 102**, 190 Fordham Road, City Island, C.B.J. Snyder, 1898: "The former school building, part of which now serves as the home of the City Island Historical Society and Nautical Museum, was completed the same year as the consolidation of the five boroughs into the City of New York....The exterior features a pedimented central pavilion with a prominent Palladian window and an oculus window, a segmental-pedimented entry porch, and entrance doors with sidelights and a fanlight."

### BROOKLYN

**St. Casimir's Roman Catholic Church** (now The Paul Robeson Theater), 40 Greene Avenue, 1864: "Its Rundbogenstil design, which derives from the Romanesque

Revival style, is attributed to Rembrandt Lockwood, an artist who became an architect."

**Borough Hall Skyscraper Historic District:** "A collection of 21 architecturally distinctive office buildings constructed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in the vicinity of Brooklyn's Borough Hall."

**Wallabout Historic District:** "Encompasses 55 wood and masonry buildings that were constructed during the mid-to-late 19th century in the Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, Italianate styles, and mainly owned by ship captains, pilots, ferry masters and boat builders."

**Crown Heights North II Historic District:** whose 600 buildings are composed "largely of rowhouses, freestanding residences and apartment houses that were constructed between the 1870s and the 1920s and designed by a number of prominent Brooklyn architects in the neo-Grec, Queen Anne, Art Deco and Art Moderne styles, as well as the Romanesque, Colonial, Gothic and Medieval Revival styles."

### MANHATTAN

**Fisk-Harkness House**, 12 East 53rd Street: "An 1871 brownstone...transformed into a grand, neo-Tudor Gothic style townhouse in 1906 by Raleigh Colston Gildersleeve."

*continued page 7*



## Lectures

Presented at The New York New Church (Swedenborgian) 114 East 35th Street, between Park and Lexington Avenues, New York City

Admission is FREE; no reservations required. For VSNY Members only: meet the speakers at our post-lecture receptions.

### THE CHAIR AS SCULPTURE

TUESDAY, FEB. 14, 6:00 PM

Andrew VanStyn, designer and co-creator of *The Art of Seating: 200 Years of American Chair Design*—a traveling exhibition featuring 40 chairs, including a painted 1810 side chair and an opulently fringed and tasseled Victorian Hunzinger seat—will share his insights on finding and collecting great seating as well as its conservation and upholstery. VanStyn studied architecture at Cornell University and is a collections consultant focusing on the period 1860 to 1920.

### AESTHETIC AMBITIONS:

Edward Lycett and Brooklyn's Faience Manufacturing Company

TUESDAY, MARCH 13, 6:00 PM

Barbara Veith, guest curator of the exhibition that comes to the Brooklyn Museum in May, will explore the Faience Manufacturing Company (1881–1890). This leading Brooklyn-based art pottery earned praise for its bold and eclectic Aesthetic Movement wares, which synthesized Chinese, Near Eastern and Japanese influences. It owed its artistic and commercial success to Edward Lycett, a British china painter who became its artistic director. Veith teaches in the Parsons/Cooper-Hewitt MA Program in the History of Decorative Arts and Design and has worked as a research associate at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

### QUEENS VICTORIAN

TUESDAY, APRIL 10, 6:00 PM

Jack Eichenbaum, historian for Queens County, New York, will discuss the 19th-century transformation of the borough from an agricultural landscape to a commuter suburb with a diversified economy including horticulture, piano manufacturing and heavy industry. Dr. Eichenbaum is a professor of urban geography at Hunter College and an assessor for the NYC Department of Finance who leads geographically oriented historical tours of Queens.

### THE DESIGN AND CREATION OF AMERICAN STAINED GLASS WINDOWS CIRCA 1900

TUESDAY, MAY 8, 6:00 PM

Donald Samick, owner and president of J&R Lamb Studios, will discuss specialized techniques, such as opalescent and drapery glass, used by three major American stained glass studios at the end of the 19th century. Established in 1857, Lamb Studios, which Samick took over in 1970, is the oldest continuously operating stained glass studio in the United States.

Thomas E. Warren's "Centripetal Spring" Chair, patented on September 25, 1849, and manufactured by the American Chair Company.  
*Photograph by Michael Koryta*

Circa 1900 stained glass window by J&R Lamb Studios. Church of the Pilgrims, Brooklyn Heights.  
*Photograph courtesy of J&R Lamb Studios*

Flushing Town Hall.  
*Photograph by Jim Henderson*

1887 covered vase designed by Edward Lycett and made by the Faience Manufacturing Company, Greenpoint, Brooklyn.  
*Photograph by Taylor Dabney*





## Tours

We encourage prompt registration as tours fill up quickly. Call 212-886-3742 or email [events@vicsocny.org](mailto:events@vicsocny.org) to reserve.

### GRACIE MANSION

SATURDAY, MARCH 31, 11:00 AM

COST: FREE FULLY BOOKED

Curator Diane Toole will lead a private tour of Gracie Mansion, a NYC landmark and the official mayor's residence. The tour will focus on life in 19th-century New York, when the mansion was the home of the Wheaton family.

### STANFORD WHITE'S LONG ISLAND

SATURDAY, APRIL 14, 8:30 AM-5:30 PM  
(BUS TOUR)

COST: \$130 MEMBERS; \$150 NONMEMBERS  
Stanford White (1853-1906) was one of America's most creative and well-known architects of the Beaux-Arts movement. He designed many important homes and public buildings, including the Washington Square arch. Join us for a specially arranged and rare tour of Box Hill, his Long Island country house, still owned and occupied by his descendants today. We will also visit two nearby churches of his design and have lunch at the Long Island Museum, where we will tour the Carriage Museum and current exhibitions.

### PROSPECT PARK

SATURDAY, MAY 5, 1:00 PM (WALKING TOUR)

COST: \$25 MEMBERS; \$35 NONMEMBERS

Join tour guide Kate Papacosma for a 90-minute tour through one of the world's greatest Romantic-Victorian landscapes. American landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted and English architect Calvert Vaux designed Prospect Park starting in 1865 while they continued their initial collaboration, Central Park. We will walk through pastoral fields and picturesque woods, along winding brooks, and past waterfalls designed to evoke Catskills retreats. Learn about the public health initiatives that led to the construction of the park and the psychological and physiological benefits it was designed to provide.

### VICTORIAN ADDITIONS IN YONKERS

SATURDAY, JUNE 9, 9:15 AM-5:30 PM  
(BUS TOUR)

COST: \$110 MEMBERS; \$135 NONMEMBERS

Led by architect Stephen F. Byrns, we will visit St. John's Church Getty Square, which has a Victorian addition that is considered the first Colonial Revival design in the U.S., followed by a tour of the Gothic Revival chamber at Philipse Manor Hall, an 1868 renovation of a 1755 wing of the historic mansion. After a buffet luncheon, we will explore the impressive statuary at Untermeyer Gardens (c. 1914).

### Terms and Conditions of Tour Participation

Meeting places will be provided in the confirmation of registration. Participants in our tours must be in excellent health and be able to participate safely in all activities. The sites we visit may have challenging stairs; if you have any doubt about your ability to participate fully due to health conditions or disabilities, please contact [events@vicsocny.org](mailto:events@vicsocny.org) or call 212-886-3742. The Victorian Society New York reserves the right to decline to accept or to refuse to retain any person as a member of our tours at any time.

View of Binnen Falls in  
Prospect Park.  
*Photograph by Kate Papacosma*

Untermeyer Gardens,  
Yonkers, New York.  
*The Photography Chronicles*

Stanford White, c. 1890  
*Photograph courtesy of  
Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site*

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Lifetime \$1000  
(no longer offered);  
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VICTORIANS  
ALL A-TWITTER

Members with an eye for detail may have noticed the icons on the back page of the fall newsletter, signaling The Victorian Society New York's first steps into the age of social media. Now we can proudly announce that along with the Flickr photo-sharing site launched last year, VSNY boasts a Facebook page with a growing number of "fans" and a Twitter feed that "tweets" breaking news. The latter two are the initiatives of board member Sara Durkacs, who says "building an online presence helps VSNY educate new audiences about our city's rich 19th-century cultural heritage." These innovations form part of President Frampton Tolbert's agenda, which includes a website redesign when funds are available. Websites cost money, but Facebook posts and tweets are free. If you are on Facebook, be sure to "like" us. You may also follow us on Twitter @VicSocietyNY.

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Mrs. Custer, continued from page 1

The books became bestsellers, and in 1899 Libbie Custer was able to build a home at Onteora, the artists' colony her friend Candace Wheeler had established in the Catskills. She called it "The Flags," a patriotic name with a double meaning. Flags play an important part in the Custer story—Mrs. Custer was often seen honoring her husband by waving flags at public events—and mountain irises called "flags" grow wild in the area. The home's wide front parlor and porch took in sweeping views of the surrounding mountains. Befitting a mountain cottage retreat, the home was simply furnished: walls and ceilings were covered with beadboard panels, and golden birch logs, their bark still intact, were used for banisters and stair

railings. Mementos of General Custer were scattered throughout the house—his canteen and copper mess kit held a place of honor on the mantel and horns from a bull he shot hung above the archway leading into the dining room. Mrs. Custer sold her house in the middle of the Great Depression, shortly before her death at age 91, and it changed hands only once more before the current owners bought and restored it in 2000.

BRIAN D. COLEMAN

In October 2011, Victorian Society New York members visited this charming private home during a tour of the northern Catskills. Be sure to see the exciting opportunities planned for this season in this issue's calendar.

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Founded in New York City in 1966, the Victorian Society in America is dedicated to fostering the appreciation and preservation of our nation's 19th-century heritage as well as that of the early 20th century (1837-1917). The Victorian Society New York (VSNY), the oldest of numerous chapters now flourishing throughout the U.S., is an independent nonprofit organization affiliated with the national Society.

Membership contributions at any level help to provide the foundation for all that we do—from our lecture series, walking tours and excursions to our grant and awards programs honoring worthy preservation projects in New York. Members also help provide scholarships to the Victorian Society in America Summer Schools for advanced study. Donations to the Margot Gayle Fund make possible monetary grants for preservation and conservation of Victorian material culture in our region.

*New Landmarks, continued from page 3*

**154 West 14th Street Building**, Herman Lee Meader, 1913: "This eclectic, 12-story loft building was completed in 1913 to house the manufacturers and distributors of various goods and equipment. Partially clad in multicolored, glazed terra cotta...."

**Bell Telephone Laboratories Complex** (better known today as "Westbeth"), at West and Bethune streets, including:

445-453 West Street: "A four-story, Italianate style red-brick structure originally built as a speculative steam-powered factory and completed in 1860."

455-465 West Street: "A 10-story, rectangular neo-Classical style tower completed in 1899 and designed for the Western Electric Co., Bell's manufacturing unit, by Cyrus L.W. Eidlitz.... The building housed Western Electric's telephone equipment and parts manufacturing operation and the research arm that developed technology that made possible long-distance and international telephone transmission."

**Hotel Wolcott**, 4 West 31st Street, John H. Duncan, 1904: "The hotel illustrates the exuberance of the early 20th century in New York City, and serves as a graceful and solid anchor in one of Manhattan's busiest neighborhoods.... It's as eye-catching today as it was when it opened 107 years ago."

**Mutual Reserve Building**, 305 Broadway, William H. Hume, 1894: "The Mutual Reserve Building is one of New York City's most significant examples of a tall, late-19th-century office building designed in the Richardsonian Romanesque Revival style.... The building is one of the city's earliest steel cage-framed structures, which were precursors to skyscrapers."

**R.H. Macy & Co. Store, 14th Street Annex**, 56 West 14th Street, William Schickel and Isaac Edward Ditmars, 1897: "The tall, slender 14th Street Annex of

the R.H. Macy & Co. was built in 1897, the last phase of the expansion of the famed department store, which commanded Sixth Avenue between 13th and 14th Streets from 1858 until 1902, when it moved to Herald Square."

#### QUEENS

**Daniel and Abbie B. Eldridge House**, 87-61 111th Street, c. 1870, architect not determined: "Designed in the Italianate style, the 2 1/2-story villa was constructed c. 1870 in a largely undeveloped area that was known as Clarenceville. ...The residence was constructed for Daniel Eldridge, a clerk in New York City's Water Department who allegedly had ties to William Marcy Tweed, the notorious political boss."

#### STATEN ISLAND

**29 Cottage Place House**, 29 Cottage Place, Port Richmond, c.1848, altered 1920: "The two-story vernacular structure is a rare example of a saltbox house on the North Shore, and combines elements of the Greek Revival and Craftsman styles."

#### PASSINGS

WE NOTE WITH SADNESS THE DEATH ON MAY 1, 2011, OF VSNY MEMBER **SONDRA BLEWER**, A SIXTH-GENERATION NEW YORKER AND THE FORMER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE SOCIETY OF MAYFLOWER DESCENDANTS IN THE STATE OF NEW YORK. SHE IS SURVIVED BY HER BROTHER, FOUR DAUGHTERS AND THEIR FAMILIES.



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VSNY Tuxedo Park tour, September 2011. Photograph by Deborah Harmon

## Tuxedo Park Tour

On September 24, a group of 30 VSNY members (in the photograph, left) toured the private community of Tuxedo Park in Orange County, New York. Tuxedo Park was founded in 1886 by tobacco manufacturer Pierre Lorillard IV on his family's land and designed by Ernest Bowditch and Bruce Price as a resort that attracted the financial, industrial and social leaders of the day.

The group, led by Jeff Sholeen and accompanied by Christian Sonne and Deborah Harmon of the Tuxedo Historical Society, visited the historic Tuxedo Club as well as several private homes. Fine weather gave everyone the opportunity to enjoy a glorious day in early fall, traditionally the "high season" in Tuxedo Park.

## How They Spent Their Summer Vacation

Each year The Victorian Society New York funds scholarships for the VSA's summer programs. In 2011 the Chapter helped three students with the cost of tuition to study in Newport, Rhode Island. Here is some of what they took away from their experiences.

Independent scholar Jean Arrington came to realize that the term Beaux Arts was "an attitude and an approach, not a style, that its philosophy underlies many styles." As she explains in her program report, it embraces the notion "that architecture is a great art, which can be taught and which works in unity with painting and sculpture [to] provide grand civic monuments." These discoveries helped her understand the subject of her research, NYC public schools architect Charles B.J. Snyder, in a broader context.

Bard Graduate Center student Jay Lemire also came to see his research, which focuses on the dealer and decorator Arthur Stannard Vernay, in an enhanced

light. "The most important thing I took away from the trip," Lemire writes, "was an understanding of Vernay's built environment and social milieu while [he interacted with clients] in Newport."

Diane Wulff of Staten Island's Fort Wadsworth—a fortification that guarded New York harbor for 200 years and is now part of Gateway National Recreation Area—approached the program in terms of the Fort's interpretation. "An important part of the learning experience was what I took back to the National Park," she writes, including "practical ideas...for future programs." For Wulff, "access to parts of museums and houses not open to the public" and special lecturers were paramount.

**Applications for the 2012 Newport and London (UK) programs are due March 1 and can be found at [www.victoriansociety.org](http://www.victoriansociety.org).**

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VSNY  
NEEDS YOU!

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