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NEW YORK

# PANORAMA

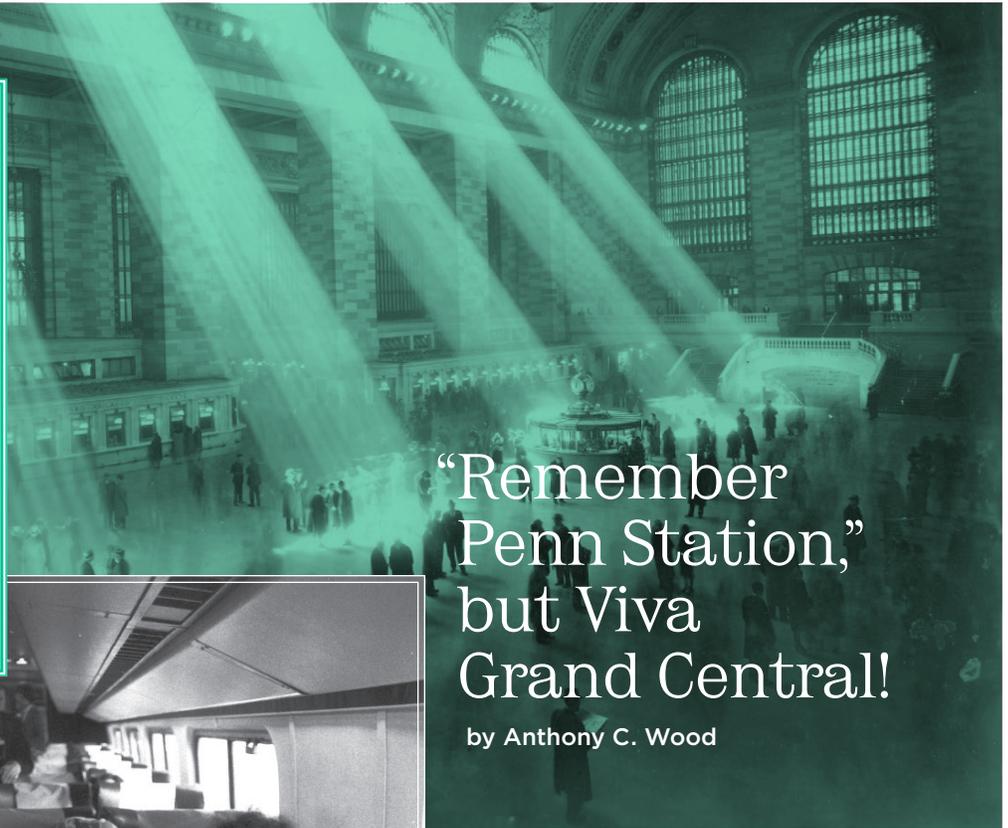
SPRING 2013

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THE NEW YORK METROPOLITAN CHAPTER OF THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY IN AMERICA

THE VSNY JOINS ALL OF NEW YORK CITY IN CELEBRATING THE CENTENNIAL OF GRAND CENTRAL TERMINAL. WE ARE DEVOTING THIS ISSUE TO GRAND CENTRAL, WITH AN ARTICLE BY GUEST CONTRIBUTOR ANTHONY C. WOOD ON THE TERMINAL'S HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND A PIECE ON THE CELEBRATION BY BOARD MEMBER ANTHONY W. ROBINS, AUTHOR OF *GRAND CENTRAL TERMINAL: 100 YEARS OF A NEW YORK LANDMARK* (STEWART, TABORI & CHANG, 2013). GRAND CENTRAL IS ALSO THE SOURCE OF THIS ISSUE'S EMBELLISHMENTS.



## “Remember Penn Station,” but Viva Grand Central!

by Anthony C. Wood

ABOVE: Courtesy of New York Transit Museum

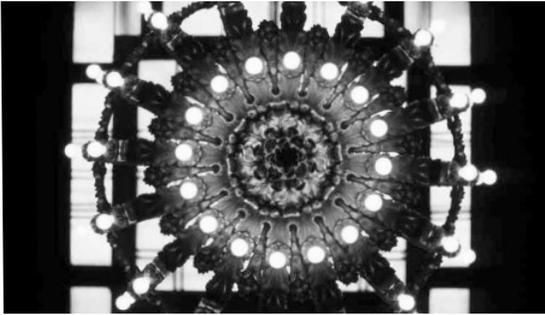
RIGHT: As part of the advocacy effort around Grand Central Terminal, the Municipal Art Society organized a special “Landmark Express” train to Washington, D.C., to help focus national attention on the case before the Supreme Court. Seen here on the train are Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, Henry Geldzahler, and the children of two preservation advocates: Nancy Menapace (left), daughter of Municipal Art Society president Ralph Menapace, and Ariel Hyatt, daughter of Gordon Hyatt. Photograph courtesy of Anthony C. Wood Archive



The New York City train station that receives top billing in most accounts of the history of preservation in New York City is the late, great, Pennsylvania Station. There is, however, compelling evidence to suggest that Grand Central Terminal has played an equal, if not greater, role in that history than its long-lamented, martyred cousin.

In 1954, it was the threatened demolition of Grand Central Terminal that helped spur Albert Sprague Bard (1866–1963), New York City civic champion and nationally recognized advocate for aesthetic regulation, to put pen to paper to draft the New York State authorizing legislation (the Bard Act) empowering cities across the state to regulate private property

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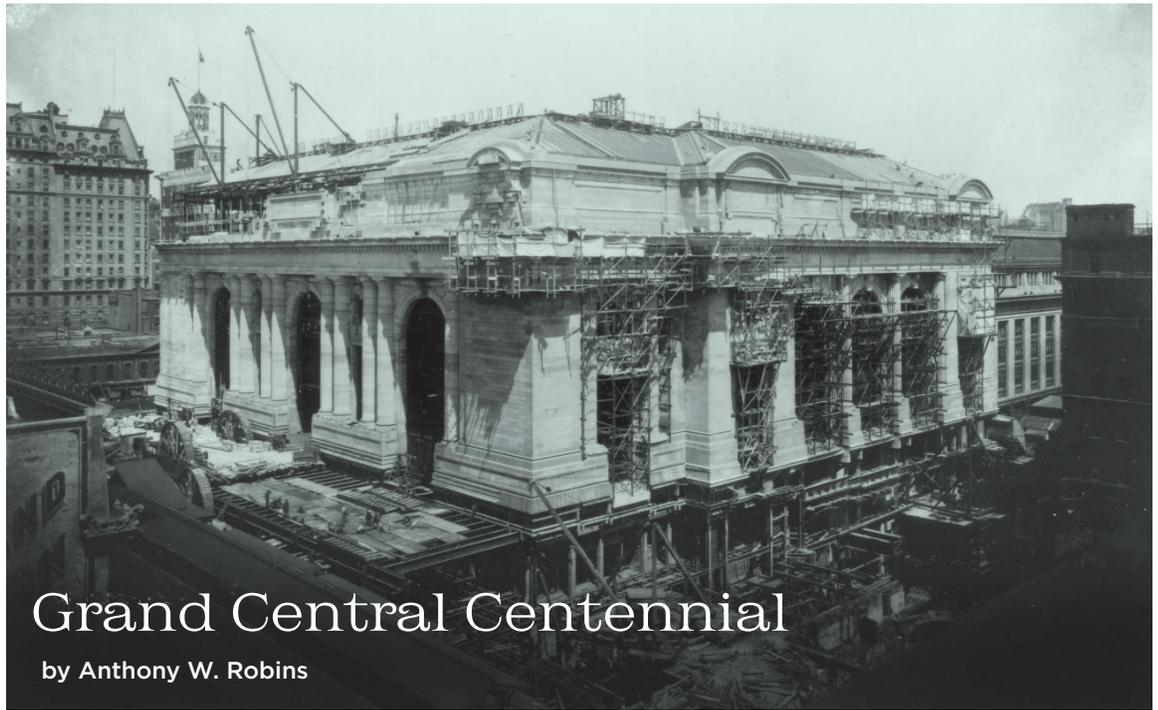
## Embellishments: Grand Central's Acorns

This issue's Embellishments derive from the acorn and oak leaf ornamental motifs, designed by sculptor Sylvain Salières, found throughout Grand Central Terminal. Acorns and oak leaves were the chosen symbols of the Vanderbilt family, owners of the New York Central Railroad and prime movers behind the terminal. Although the Vanderbilt name today connotes "old money," the dynasty's founder, "Commodore" Cornelius Vanderbilt (1794–1877), came from a modest background in Staten Island, where he worked on his father's New York Harbor ferry as a boy after leaving school at the age of 11. (His nickname came from his experience with commercial vessels.) The family had no coat of arms, so he selected the acorn as the family symbol and adopted the saying "great oaks from little acorns grow" as a motto, suggesting the family's rise from humble roots. Alva Vanderbilt, the first wife of Cornelius Vanderbilt's grandson William K. Vanderbilt, later incorporated acorns into a family coat of arms that she designed.

Acorns and oak leaves abound in the terminal's interior. They can be found under the lunette windows of the Main Concourse, in the ornament atop the four-faced clock above the information desk, in the elaborate sculpted ornament above the fountains and in the chandeliers, as well as above each departure track entrance.



Photographs by Frank English. Courtesy of New York Transit Museum



# Grand Central Centennial

by Anthony W. Robins

RIGHT: Grand Central Terminal under construction, May 10, 1912. Courtesy of New York Transit Museum

On February 1, 2013, one century to the day since it first opened its doors to an enthusiastic public, Grand Central Terminal celebrated its 100th birthday. In the coming months, the New York Transit Museum will mark the occasion with panel discussions, multimedia exhibits, concerts, art exhibitions, poetry readings, a new book—*Grand Central Terminal: 100 Years of a New York Landmark*—and of course, a “Parade of Historic Trains.” The centennial finds Grand Central in perhaps the best shape of its long history. Following a lengthy battle to protect the terminal from disfigurement or demolition (see Anthony C. Wood’s article in this issue), an enormously ambitious restoration has brought the complex back to its original Beaux-Arts splendor.

That splendor, of course, certainly catches the eye of VSNY members. The grand, formal composition, including the terminal’s axial placement astride Park Avenue; the vast and airy spaces; the heroic statuary atop the Tiffany clock; the luxuriant sculptural ornament based on acorns and oak leaves (see “Embellishments,” this issue)—these are the wonders that we all admire. But equally Victorian are the marvels of engineering, planning, and finance: the electrification of the trains; the train yard sunk below a newly created stretch of Park Avenue; the innovations in circulation, including the first extensive use of gently sloping ramps to route passengers; and the brilliant realization of the real estate potential of 16 brand-new blocks of Midtown Manhattan.

Grand Central is more than just a train station—it is the lynchpin of Terminal City, an entirely new section of town that rose in the same years above the terminal’s train yards and tracks, supported by steel girders beneath Park Avenue. In architectural design, the Terminal City buildings were all of a piece, either designed by Warren & Wetmore or designed

by other architects with their approval. Most have been replaced with post-World War II office towers, but several survive, notably a largely intact grouping along Vanderbilt Avenue, including the Yale Club and the Roosevelt Hotel.

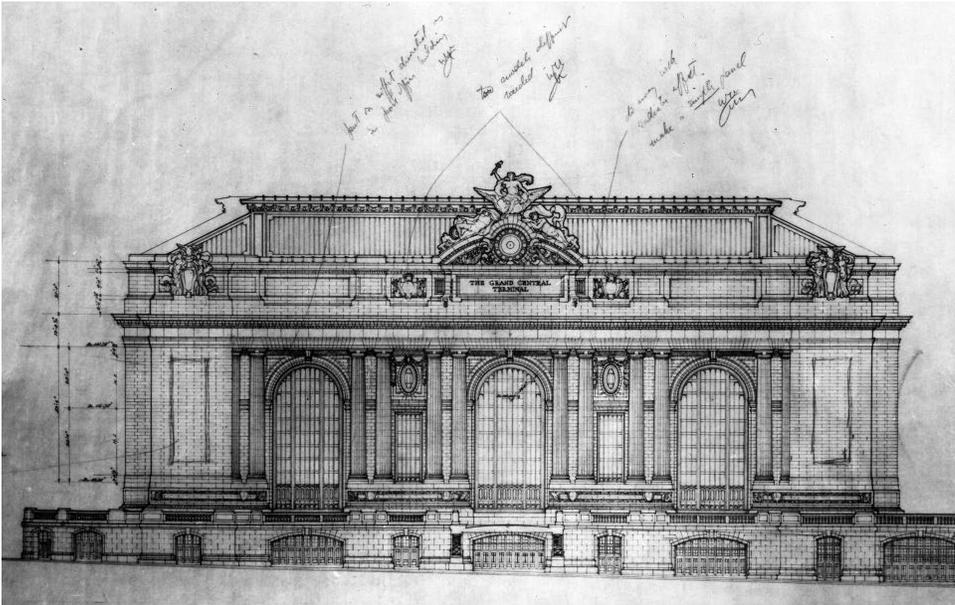
A team of uneasy rivals created the terminal. Engineer William Wilgus masterminded the electrification and the real estate deal (and bequeathed New York City the term “air rights”). Wilgus’s preferred architects, Reed & Stem, who were experienced railroad station planners, created the circulation patterns for passengers inside the terminal and automobiles outside on elevated platforms. And architects Warren & Wetmore, unexpectedly brought in at the last moment, draped the entire creation in the latest French fashions.

Whitney Warren, trained at the École des Beaux-Arts, copied no particular French prototype, but did model the Main Concourse’s grand staircase on the equally grand staircase at the Paris Opera, while deliberately recreating Paris’s Alexander III Bridge in the Pershing Square Viaduct that lifts Park Avenue traffic over 42nd Street. Then he brought in French talent to handle the ornamental flourishes—Jules-Félix Coutan for the huge statuary group of Mercury flanked by Hercules and Minerva, Sylvain Salières for the sculptural encrustation inside and out, and Paul-César Helleu—better known as a portraitist of socially prominent young women—to sketch out the starry sky on the ceiling of the Main Concourse.

As Grand Central embarks on its second century, supporters of historic preservation can take pride in the knowledge that this beautifully restored monument will continue to anchor the center of New York City into the foreseeable future.

For details on the Transit Museum programs, see [www.grandcentralterminal.com/centennial/events.cfm](http://www.grandcentralterminal.com/centennial/events.cfm).





ABOVE: Grand Central Terminal, final elevation drawing by Warren & Wetmore and Reed & Stem with handwritten notes by Whitney Warren, c. 1910. Courtesy of New York Transit Museum

## Viva Grand Central!

*continued from page 1*

on aesthetic grounds. Passed in 1956, it provided the long-missing essential legislative foundation for New York City's Landmarks Law.

It took almost a decade for New York City to take advantage of this new power to protect its landmarks. One key reason for the delay was the ultimately successful, multi-year effort to revise New York City's zoning resolution, which concluded in December of 1960. At that moment, triggered by an ill-conceived proposal to create the "Grand Central Bowl," a three-floor bowling center to be built in the space above Grand Central's waiting room, came a renewed call for action to create some mechanism to protect New York City's landmarks. The proposed "shocking desecration" of the terminal spurred concerned civic groups to remind the Wagner administration of its promise to address the landmarks issue after the zoning revision. By June of 1961, Mayor Wagner appointed the Committee for the Preservation of Structures of Historic and Esthetic Importance and thus set in motion the series of governmental actions ultimately leading to his signing the Landmarks Law on April 19, 1965.

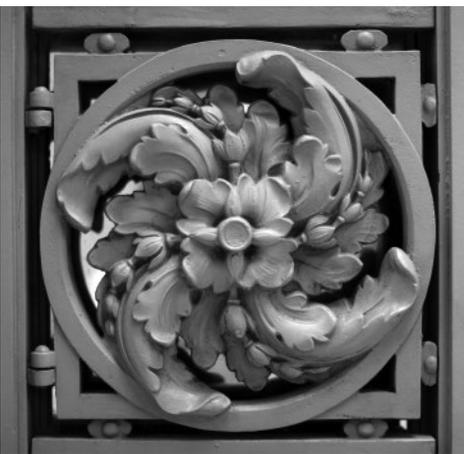
Clearly, Grand Central played a key role in the pre-Landmarks Law history of preservation, and it would go on to play an even more central role in succeeding decades. From the designation of Grand Central Terminal as a landmark in 1967 to the Supreme Court decision upholding both its designation and the Landmarks Law in 1978, the uncertain future

of Grand Central Terminal and the untested Landmarks Law hung over preservation. On the desk of the executive director of the Landmarks Preservation Commission sat a sign that read, "This law raises great constitutional questions." The commission did its best to avoid legal challenges that could force the wrong answers to those questions. However, as the commission's chair, Harmon Goldstone, would recount years later in an interview, "When it came to Grand Central, I said, 'We may well be torpedoed, but let's go down with all the flags flying.'" After years in the courts, the law was not torpedoed, and its long-awaited vindication energized preservation efforts in New York City and across the country.

The highly visible public battle to save Grand Central Terminal and the Landmarks Law helped propel preservation into the national consciousness. With Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis lending her magic to the cause, the battle received national attention. Securing her role as the "First Lady of Preservation," she rode from New York to Washington, D.C., on the "Landmarks Express," generating literally hundreds of press stories from Bangor, Maine, to Waco, Texas, and from Spokane, Washington, to Homestead, Florida, and most places in between. With a star-studded Committee to Save Grand Central Station, a storefront in the terminal itself (which helped inspire the later creation of the Urban Center), and a range of compelling advocacy events, the Grand Central campaign would establish the Municipal Art Society as the leader of preservation advocacy in New York City, a position it would occupy until the mid-1990s.

Today, Grand Central Terminal continues to advance the cause of preservation. A constant stream of people from across the globe experience the terminal as a compelling example of how a landmark can be both a historic site and a vibrant and dynamic place. "Remember Penn Station" is still preservation's battle cry, but it is Grand Central Terminal that is preservation's living legacy of success.

*Anthony C. Wood is the founder and chair of the New York Preservation Archive Project and author of Preserving New York: Winning the Right to Protect a City's Landmarks (Routledge, 2007).*



# Anglo-Japanese in Brooklyn

During the last quarter of the 19th century, anything Japanese was considered the height of good taste. Anglo-Japanese design could be found everywhere from flatware to fashion to interior design, but very few houses were built in the exotic style. On September 29, 2012, 40 lucky members of the VSNY visited one such dwelling, “The Japanese House” in Brooklyn’s Prospect Park South. Designed in 1903 by Petit and Green, the pagoda-like structure is a unique mix of carved dragons, rich stained glass windows, and Victorian whimsy.

Participants toured the house with its owner, Gloria Fischer, who over the past 40 years has patiently restored her unique house, furnishing the interiors with historically appropriate East Asian art, antiques and textiles. Architectural historian Matthew Postal then led an enjoyable walking tour of the beautifully restored landmark neigh-

borhood with its blocks of grand, late 19th-century houses. When explaining the construction of the Japanese House, he placed it in the context of the economic boom of Gilded Age 19th-century Brooklyn.

The morning ended with lunch at Kumō’s, a nearby Japanese restaurant, where Barbara Veith, the Brooklyn Museum’s guest curator of *Aesthetic Ambitions: Edward Lycey and Brooklyn’s Faience Manufacturing Company*, treated the group to a talk on the Aesthetic Movement and Anglo-Japanese design. By the end of the tour, we all were firm believers in the Aesthetic Movement, “art for art’s sake,” and in particular, Anglo-Japanese design.

RIGHT: Interior, the Japanese House.  
Photograph courtesy of EdwardAddeo.com



# Spring 2013

## Tours and Lectures Page Redesigned

In recognition of the digital era in which we now operate—even as Victorians—the VSNY is posting detailed information about tours and lectures on our website, [www.vicsocny.org](http://www.vicsocny.org), as well as continuing the email blasts and traditional “snail mail” notices. *Panorama* will feature recent events and include brief listings of upcoming tours and lectures.

### LECTURES

TUESDAY, MARCH 12

#### THE LIFE, LOVES, AND SCANDALS OF ADAH ISAACS MENKEN

Hunter College professor Barbara Foster’s lecture is based on *A Dangerous Woman: The Life, Loves, and Scandals of Adah Isaacs Mencken 1835–1868, America’s Original Superstar* by Barbara and Michael Foster, a recently

published biography of one of the most famous actresses, poets, journalists and feminists of the mid-19th century.

TUESDAY, APRIL 9

#### NATIONALISM AND SCIENCE IN THE DECORATIVE ARTS AT 19TH-CENTURY WORLD’S FAIRS

Ethan Robey, assistant professor at Parsons The New School for Design and associate director of the Cooper-Hewitt / Parsons Masters Program in the History of Decorative Arts and Design, explores the connections between decorative arts and national identity in Europe and the United States.

TUESDAY, MAY 14

#### FREDERICK CROWNINSHIELD: A RENAISSANCE MAN IN THE GILDED AGE

Gertrude deG. Wilmers and Julie L. Sloan, authors of *Frederic Crowninshield: A Renaissance Man in the Gilded Age*, discuss the artist’s murals, watercolors and stained glass windows.

### TOUR

THURSDAY, MARCH 21

1:00 P.M.–5:00 P.M.

#### HOW TO CREATE A VICTORIAN INTERIOR: A GUIDED TOUR AT THE D&D

led by designers Iliana Moore and Andrew Van Styn and decorative arts author (and VSNY board member) Brian Coleman. The tour of New York’s best-known design center, the D&D Building, includes a visit to showrooms featuring historically inspired design. For details, please visit the VSNY website.

#### 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 because of 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 its tours at any time.

Special thanks to Lewis I. Haber for his generous sponsorship of the VSNY’s Fall 2012 and Spring 2013 lecture series.

# New Victorian Landmarks and Historic Districts

Since our last newsletter, the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission has designated one new historic district composed mainly of Victorian buildings. Designated on October 9, 2012, the East Village / Lower East Side Historic District includes 330 buildings on and off Second Avenue between East 2nd and 7th Streets—row houses, tenements, houses of worship and theaters. Among the most notable structures: the New York Turn Verein, created in 1871 from two older buildings; pre-Landmarks Law tenements from c. 1861 on East 6th Street; a small neoclassical synagogue, Congregation Adas Yisroel Anshe Mezeritz, c. 1910, also on East 6th Street; the Gothic Revival First Hungarian Reformed Church (now St. Mary's American Orthodox Greek Catholic Church) on East 7th Street; and later tenements with Queen Anne, Romanesque Revival and Renaissance Revival ornamental details on East 4th and East 7th Streets.

The complete designation report can be found on the commission's website, [www.nyc.gov/html/lpc/home.html](http://www.nyc.gov/html/lpc/home.html). The website also currently lists half a dozen "pending historic districts" of interest to VSNY members: the proposed Bedford Historic District, the

New York Turn Verein (1871),  
66 East 4th Street, Manhattan.  
*Photograph by Christopher D. Brazee,  
NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission*



Bedford-Stuyvesant / Expanded Stuyvesant Heights Historic District, and Crown Heights North III Historic District, all in Brooklyn; the proposed West End-Collegiate Historic District Extension and Riverside-West End Avenue Historic District Extension II on Manhattan's Upper West Side; the proposed Central Ridgewood Historic District and Douglaston Historic District Extension, both in Queens; and the proposed Harrison Street Historic District in Staten Island. Most of these have had public hearings over the past several years. Public hearings on the proposed Harrison Street and Bedford historic districts were held on January 15, 2013. These hearings, originally set for October 30, 2012, were postponed because of Hurricane Sandy.

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## Passings

The Victorian Society New York notes with sadness the death of **LORENZO BURROWS** on August 18, 2012, in New York City. He was a devoted longtime member of the VSNY, familiar to many of our readers through his active involvement in our programs, preservation activities, and the national educational outreach of the Victorian Society in America.

Born in Saginaw, Michigan, in 1932, Burrows—known to his friends as Lorrie—graduated from the Cranbrook School and the University of Michigan. For more than 40 years he was a great supporter and committed member of our Chapter and the national VSA. After becoming an officer of the Metropolitan Chapter (as it was then known) in the early 1970s, Burrows, a banker, served as the Chapter's valued and reliable treasurer, and later as treasurer of the Alumni Association of the Victorian Society Summer Schools. Longtime friends Sibyl Groff and Bill Dane fondly remember his gentlemanly character and his great loyalty to the Victorian Society, which Groff called one of his "major loves."

Deeply interested in architectural and New York City history, Burrows spent his retirement working on development and membership for the Museum of the City of New York and led architectural tours of St. Thomas Church (Fifth Avenue at West 53rd Street; Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson, completed 1913), where he was a member and head usher. When the VSNY began holding its monthly talks at the Donnell Library, he arranged for lovely post-lecture receptions to be held at St. Thomas, just across the street. These welcoming gatherings introduced newcomers and brought many new members to our Chapter.

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## CORRECTION

In our Fall 2012 issue, a photograph of the nave of the Church of St. Francis Xavier was erroneously credited to Sara Durkacs. The correct name of the photographer is Whitney Cox; the photograph was provided courtesy of EverGreene Architectural Arts.



PHOTOGRAPH BY ETHAN FINKELSTEIN

## NEW BOARD MEMBER Chelcey Berryhill

The VSNY's newest board member, Chelcey Berryhill, has spent the last year planning galas and fundraising for the Brooklyn Historical Society. Her passion for Victorian-era architecture and culture began with the antebellum houses of her childhood in Georgia. Her dedication to the arts led her to Wesleyan College in Macon, Georgia, where she received her BA in art history and studio art. After college, Chelcey moved to New York City and attended Pratt Institute's MS program in Historic Preservation, where she nurtured a passion for preserving vernacular architecture.

While at Pratt, she provided research assistance to the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, the Merchant's House Museum and the Dyckman Farmhouse, among others. After attending the VSA's Newport summer school in 2012, Chelcey discovered the VSNY, where she has found like-minded people as enthusiastic about all things Victorian as she is. Welcome, Chelcey!



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.

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Special thanks to Lewis I. Haber for his generous sponsorship of the VSNY's Fall 2012 and Spring 2013 lecture series.

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\*Lifetime memberships are no longer available.

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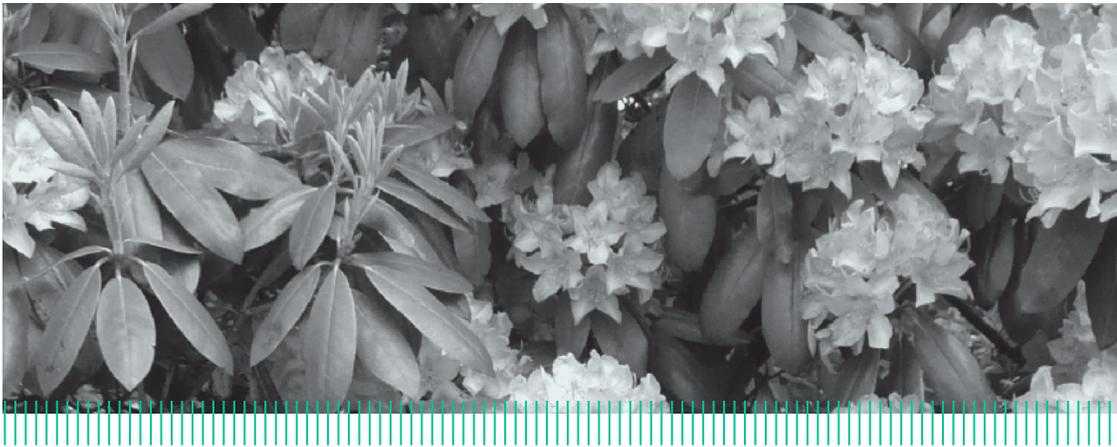
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## Report from the Summer Schools Scholars

This past year, the VSNY supported two participants in the VSA's summer programs. JARED GOLDSTEIN, a native New Yorker who works as a local tour guide, attended Newport, while LAUREL MCCUEN, a Texan in the Cooper-Hewitt / Parsons master's program in the History of Decorative Arts and Design, went to London. We asked them about their experiences—here's what they said:

### Why Newport? Why London?

JG: Newport is New York City's fellow city. There are so many connections in history, architecture, culture and personalities since colonial days.

LM: In addition to the Arts and Crafts movement, I was particularly interested in taking a closer look at the Industrial Revolution and its impact on the physical and cultural landscape of Victorian England.

### What did you find most meaningful?

JG: The people and the places. Professor [Richard Guy] Wilson is a national treasure. He provided great lectures and tours, and access to private homes. My cohorts were wonderful too—such smart and dedicated and passionate people.

LM: Seeing All Saints Margaret Street. The beautiful church designed by William Butterfield is nestled, almost hidden, between more modern, secular buildings in the heart of London, and while the red-yellow-and-black-patterned brick exterior draws you in, nothing can prepare you for the riot of color on the interior.

### Did you learn anything surprising?

JG: I was surprised to learn about the influence of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition on American monumental architecture.

LM: Having known relatively little about English history, I learned a vast amount in two weeks. The intensive visual survey helped put everything into context.

### What would you say to others interested in the program?

JG: Do it. Something special will happen.

LM: Do not hesitate to apply! The objects, interiors and architecture are fabulous, the instructors and guides are irreplaceable, and the experience is one of a kind.

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## SAVE THE DATE

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## ANNUAL MEETING AND AWARDS CEREMONY

Members are encouraged to set aside the evening of Wednesday, May 29, 2013, for the 46th annual meeting of the Victorian Society New York at 6:30 p.m. at the New York School of Interior Design, 170 East 70th Street, New York City.

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