



PANORAMA

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THE NEW YORK METROPOLITAN CHAPTER OF THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY IN AMERICA

Preservation Efforts Recalled

On October 31, 2001, Hilda Regier interviewed **Margot Gayle (1908-2008)** about two key campaigns in which she was instrumental: founding the Victorian Society in America and saving the Jefferson Market Courthouse.



Mayor Robert Wagner and Margot Gayle, Undated photo, Collection of the VSA Metropolitan Chapter



The Victorian Society in America was founded in Margot Gayle's apartment at 44 West 9th Street in Greenwich Village. Photo by James Russiello

Hilda Regier: You helped set up the Victorian Society in America. Tell me about that.

Margot Gayle: *I was in England at Attingham-Park Summer School in 1965. Nikolaus Pevsner, who was president of the Victorian Society in England, was one of the lecturers. After his lecture, he took several of us Americans down to a tavern, and there he said, as I recall, "You folks need to save your Victorian 19th-century period items. You don't have all that much to save. You don't have Gothic cathedrals or Roman ruins." He enumerated a few things, so he got several of us kind of keyed up. Some six months later we got together in my front room at 44 West 9th Street. There were five of us. And we said, well, let's go for it. Let's see if we can start a group in this country. We had no idea whether it would succeed or not because Victorian things were strictly out of style. But it turned out that more people than you would have thought really found interest in this. So we said we would make a try at it, and Pevsner encouraged us.*

We didn't have any money to start with, but we all put in \$5 and started having occasional little meetings, and sure enough people came. Ada Louise Huxtable, the architectural critic for the New York Times, gave us a big boost. So the little organization grew and grew and grew. In fact, it grew so much that those of us

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

Jefferson Market Library, once an abandoned courthouse, on Sixth Avenue at 10th Street in Greenwich Village. Photo by James Russiello



Architecture and Technology: Terra Cotta in Victorian Era New York

“In regard to ornamental terra cotta, one has but to study the newer buildings of our large cities to note the remarkable adaptation of this material to a new use. It is taking the place of carved stone almost entirely.”¹

The year was 1909. Cast iron had waned and clay was king. Terra cotta (*baked earth* in Italian) describes a number of clay-based construction products including brick unit masonry, structural arches and hollow blocks, exterior wall cladding, roofing and paving tiles as well as ornamental facade elements. An ancient material whose use ebbed and flowed in Europe over the millennia, terra cotta experienced a renaissance in American cities in the late 1800s as a premier facade treatment, its popularity lasting for decades. New York City was on the bandwagon! Ushering in an era of taller, steel-framed buildings and inspiring smaller, vernacular structures to incorporate, at relatively low cost, elaborate surface decoration, terra cotta was celebrated for its functional versatility and naturally rich visual texture.

More than just a pretty face, terra cotta tiles and blocks were used in buildings, internally, to fireproof iron and steel framing members, while terra cotta arches spanned between beams as precursors to concrete floor slabs. Highly ornamental facades were made possible with sculptural terra cotta motifs formed in molds that could be re-used, the economy of mass production that cast iron offered a half-century

before. Modular terra cotta detailing could easily be integrated into brick facades and when anchored directly to a building’s steel beams, “could not be shaken off by an earthquake.”¹ The material was lauded for being lighter weight than stone, consistent and non-fading in color, easy to clean (particularly in glazed form), structurally stalwart and fireproof.

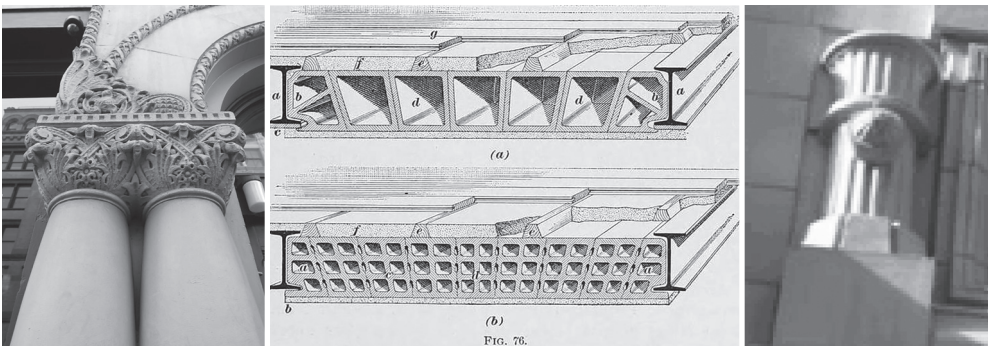
Manufacturing Victorian era terra cotta involved traditional craftsmanship as well as the latest technology of the day. To start the process, artisans sculpted clay models of the finish products such as lintels, column capitals and decorative pilaster sections. To compensate for shrinkage of the clay as it dried, the models were made about 8% over-sized. Plaster molds were cast from the clay models and a mixture of wet fire clay and a controlled percentage of finely ground dried clay—dried clay added to reduce shrinkage—was packed into the molds and left to dry. As it dried, the clay shrank away from the forms and was easy to remove. Some pieces were hand finished and others were glazed prior to firing. Similar to cast-iron building parts, most terra cotta elements were cast as hollow shapes. The hollows were sometimes filled, or partially filled, with grout, depending on the specifics of the installation and the anchors used to fasten the terra cotta to the base building structure.

The Brooklyn Historical Society (George P. Post, 1879) and the Potter Building (Norris B. Starkweather, 1884) were two frontrunners in the

use of terra cotta detailing on major buildings in New York. Growing enthusiasm for the medium prompted Orlando Potter to open his New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company in 1886, the first clay works of its kind in the city. Terra cotta exploded onto the New York scene with full force when world class architects designed iconic structures using the material. Custom terra cotta elements encrust the Bayard-Condict Building (Louis Sullivan, 1899), the Flatiron Building (Daniel Burnham, 1902) and the Woolworth Building (Cass Gilbert, 1913), and terra cotta tiles were used for the famed Guastavino vaults. Victorian era terra cotta facades can be found throughout the city, some highly ornate and hardly distinguishable from intricately carved stone while others sport a clean, modern glaze. Even many tenement buildings stand proudly with terra cotta trimmed windows and spandrel panels and—here’s something different—fire hydrants as facade decorations! Built as the Department of Water Supply, Gas and Electricity’s High Pressure Services Headquarters in 1912, the four-story building at 226 West Broadway in Tribeca features a neatly gridded facade adorned with relief sculptures of hoses, hydrants and valves, all made of pearly glazed terra cotta. Clearly, baked earth sparked the imaginations of many.

Alta Indelman

1. *The Clay-Worker*, Vols. 51-52, Jan.-Dec. 1909, published by T.A. Randall & Co., Indianapolis. *The Clay-Worker* was the official organ of the NBMA, National Brick Manufacturing Association.



THIS PAGE: Voluptuous pilasters with botanically inspired capitals flank the entrance to 139 Spring Street, a loft building completed in 1896 and designed by architects Cleverdon & Putzel. Photo by Alta Indelman. Terra cotta flat arches spanned between steel beams to form floor slabs. From *A Treatise on Architectural and Building Construction*, vol. 2 (1899), Colliery Engineer Co. Built for the NYC Department of Water Supply, 226 West Broadway sports fire hydrants and hose connections on its terra cotta façade, including this example. Photos by Alta Indelman.

NEXT PAGE (CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT): The People’s Trust Company Building on Montague Street in Brooklyn is an imposing branch of Citibank. Photo courtesy of the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission. Built as a tenement, 72-74 Thompson Street in the newly designated Sullivan-Thompson Historic District has a façade with strong terra cotta decorative elements. Photo by Alta Indelman. The Martin Erdmann residence on East 57th Street in a historic photo, circa 1910. It is now the home of the Friars Club. Photo by Wurtz Brothers, courtesy of The Museum of the City of New York.



New Designations of Victorian Landmarks

A number of designation efforts long underway at the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission have finally been concluded. A goodly number involve sites dating from 1837-1917, the period of particular interest to the Victorian Society New York.

Recent actions included a response to the Greater East Midtown Initiative for designation of five pre-World War I era individual landmarks in Manhattan:

- ❖ **The Minnie E. Young House** (1899-1900; architect, Hiss & Weekes), 19 East 54th Street.
- ❖ **The Martin Erdmann Residence** (1908-09; architect, Taylor & Levi), 57 East 57th Street, which is now famous as home of the Friars Club.
- ❖ **The 18 East 41st Street Building** (1912-14; architect, George & Edward Blum).
- ❖ **The Hampton Shops Building** (1915-16; architects, Rouse & Goldstone, with Joseph L. Steinam), 18-20 East 50th Street.
- ❖ **The Yale Club of New York** (1913-15; architect, James Gamble Rogers), 50 Vanderbilt Avenue.

One would be forgiven for believing that these remarkable structures had long been designated landmarks, but additional scrutiny following the ongoing rezoning of Greater East Midtown revealed these buildings to be otherwise unprotected.

In addition, the Backlog Initiative that considered 95 items that had long been calendared concluded with 27 sites designated within an 18-month period. Since last reported in *Panorama*, these included:

- ❖ **The 412 East 85th Street House**, built around 1860, is one of only six pre-Civil War wood frame houses to remain on Manhattan's Upper East Side.
- ❖ **183-195 Broadway Building** (1882-83; architects, Herman J. Schwarzmans and William B. Ditmars), one of Brooklyn's few cast-iron buildings.
- ❖ **The Excelsior Steam Power Company Building** (1882; 1887-89; architect, William C. Gunnell), 33-43 Gold Street, Manhattan, one of the world's oldest extant electrical generating stations. It is one of only two commercial electrical stations in Manhattan known to date from the 1880s, the pioneering decade for electric light and power in New York City and the United States.
- ❖ **The Protestant Reformed Dutch Church of Flushing—now Bowne Street Community**

Church (1891-92; attributed to architect George E. Potter, built by Edward Richardson), 143-11 Roosevelt Avenue, Queens. It was the family church of Agnes Northrop, a prominent stained glass window designer employed by Louis Comfort Tiffany.

- ❖ **St. Barbara's Roman Catholic Church** (1907-10, Helmle & Huberty), 138 Bleecker Street, Brooklyn, is one of the earliest churches in the Northeastern United States to incorporate the Spanish Colonial Revival style of architecture.

The Victorian Society New York welcomed these landmark recognitions and awaits a decision on The Interborough Rapid Transit Powerhouse (1904; architect, McKim, Mead & White), now



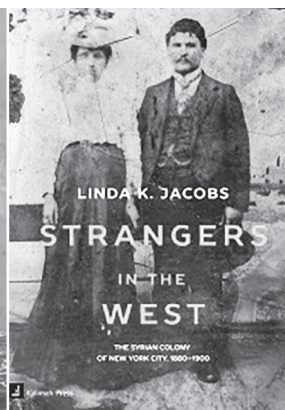
Consolidated Edison Powerhouse, which remains on the Commission's calendar. The Immaculate Conception Church in the Bronx (1887; architect, Henry Bruns) was removed from the calendar.

Other recent designations included:

- ❖ **The People's Trust Company Building** (1904-06; architects, Mowbray & Uffinger), 181 Montague Street, Brooklyn, one of Citibank's most imposing neo-classical branches.
- ❖ **Redesignation of The Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine** (design architects Heins and LaFarge from 1892-1909; Ralph Adams Cram after 1909) in Morningside Heights. Still unfinished, it is the largest Gothic cathedral in the world. Although the Landmarks Commission voted for its designation in 2002, the City Council, which must approve all designations, rejected it at that time. Designated along with the cathedral in the latest vote are six buildings on its close.
- ❖ **The Sullivan-Thompson Historic District** at the southwestern end of Greenwich Village and the west interface of the SoHo Cast-Iron Historic District. With 157 properties, the new district is rich in 19th-century institutional buildings, including the Church of St. Anthony of Padua and its school as well as many early 19th-century row houses and a substantial number of mid- to late-19th-century and early 20th-century tenements and lofts. Many date from the first great immigration wave to New York from Ireland, Germany and other Western European countries, including a major Italian presence.
- ❖ **The Morningside Heights Historic District**, contiguous with the northern border of The Riverside-West End Historic District. Most of the approximately 115 buildings in the new district are apartment buildings, reflecting the rapid residential development in the area during the early 20th century.

In addition to its designation activities, the Commission recently opened the New York City Archaeological Repository: The Nan A. Rothschild Research Center, located at 114 West 47th Street in Manhattan, and re-launched a website of its artifacts: nyc.gov/archaeology. The repository is the first municipal archaeological repository in the nation to open to the public. Within its 1,439 square-foot climate-controlled space, it contains 1,518 boxes of archaeological artifacts from more than 30 sites in the five boroughs. Among them are a host of 19th-century artifacts, including passenger pigeon bones.

James Russiello



Lectures

The Victorian Society New York sponsors a series of lectures at The English Speaking Union, 144 E. 39th St., between Lexington and Third Avenues in Manhattan. No reservations are required for the free lectures that begin at 6:30 p.m. on Thursdays. Attendees are invited to meet the speakers at post-lecture receptions.

THURSDAY, APRIL 20 AT 6:30 P.M.

RACE FOR DISTINCTION: OCEAN LINERS OF THE EDWARDIAN AGE

The Industrial Age spawned growth, engineering wonders and a spirited race for size and distinction in many areas. As the sun set on the 19th century and then began to shine even more brightly in the early years of the 20th century, an era of greater structural wonders began. Bill Miller, the author of over 100 books on passenger liners and cruise ships as well as a frequent guest speaker about today's liners, will take us back to the end of the Victorian age when Britain and British passenger ships ruled the seas. Almost suddenly, in 1897, Imperial Germany emerges—with the biggest, fastest and most luxurious liners yet to cross the North Atlantic. It was the age of "the only way to cross." Miller will take us into the Edwardian Age and to that fateful summer of 1914 that cast Europe into war. Great liners like the *Mauretania*, *Imperator* and the immortal *Titanic* will appear—the ships themselves, their race for distinction, their passengers and of course their luxurious, upper-deck suites and salons. Come aboard: The whistle is sounding—a great liner is leaving New York for a weeklong passage to Europe.

THURSDAY, MAY 11 AT 6:30 P.M.

THE SYRIAN COLONY OF NEW YORK IN THE 19TH CENTURY AND THE "LOST" LOWER WEST SIDE

Immigrants from what was then called "Greater Syria" came to New York beginning in 1880. They settled on the Lower West Side of Manhattan, just steps away from the Battery. In 1890, the community numbered about 2,000 people—the largest Syrian community in the United States. It was also the economic, spiritual and intellectual center of the Syrian diaspora. Along Washington Street were men and women speaking Arabic, Syrian grocery stores and restaurants, four Christian chapels, wholesale and retail merchants and small manufacturing concerns. Six Arabic newspapers and a number of books were published in the colony in the 19th century. But until recently, the Washington Street colony was completely unknown. Linda K. Jacobs, PhD, will explore the confluence of events, including World War I, immigration restrictions that cut the number of Syrian immigrants to almost zero in the 1920s, and the physical destruction of the neighborhood that all contributed to this gap in New York's collective memory. This gap is finally now being filled with Dr. Jacobs' book, *Strangers in the West*.

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@vicsoc.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.

Tours

SATURDAY, APRIL 29, 2017, 8 AM– 6 PM

MARK TWAIN'S HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

Founded in 1635, Hartford, CT is one of the oldest cities in the country. Following the Civil War it was the richest city in the country, and author Mark Twain built a magnificent mansion there for his family and lived there from 1874–91. Built in the American High Gothic style, it was described as "part steamboat, part medieval forest and part cuckoo clock." It is where he wrote many of his most famous novels including *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. Restored and opened as a house museum in 1974, it has been named one of the Ten Best Historic Homes in the world by *National Geographic*. Join the Victorian Society New York for a tour of this wonderful home where our private tour will include a look at recent restoration work in the mansion's Mahogany Guest Bedroom Suite. We will be treated to a lecture on Mark Twain by Dr. James Golden, the house's director of education, during lunch at the mansion and then tour the 1854 Italianate Ishram Terry House for a glimpse into the genteel lifestyle of the late 19th century.

FEES: \$150 FOR VICTORIAN SOCIETY NEW YORK MEMBERS, \$175 FOR NONMEMBERS

SATURDAY, MAY 6, 10:30 AM

CLUBBING AT THE CENTURY ASSOCIATION

Jonathan Harding, curator of The Century Association, will lead a tour of one of New York City's most sophisticated clubhouses. Learn about this quintessentially conversational New York club. Its longtime home on West 43rd Street in Manhattan, built in 1897, was designed by Stanford White, who cheekily modeled it after the 1852 James Lockyer façade of White's, a London gentlemen's club on St. James Street. Founded in 1847 by, among others, William Cullen Bryant, to promote interest in literature and the fine arts, The Century Association grew out of an earlier organization, the Sketch Club, founded in 1829.



Detail from The Hamburg-Amerika Line Poster (c.1900) of the SS Deutschland, painted by Hans Bohrdt (1857–1945), image now in the public domain. *Strangers in the West* book cover published by Kalimah Press in 2016. Mark Twain's Hartford House in 1994, courtesy of the Mark Twain House. The Century Association in 1935. Photo courtesy of Museum of the City of New York. Media, PA bank constructed in 1900. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons. Students Samantha Zavala and Brooke Fernandez are surrounded by VSNY Board members after the March 20 fundraiser for the Margot Gayle Fund.

The original intention was to limit the number of members to 100, but by the time the Association moved into its 43rd Street home, it had about 800. Today the Association's members include over 2,000 authors, artists and amateurs in letters and fine arts.

FEES: \$25 FOR VICTORIAN SOCIETY NEW YORK MEMBERS, \$35 FOR NONMEMBERS

SATURDAY, JUNE 3, 9 A.M.-5:30 P.M.

EXPLORING THE MEDIA MIX

Media, PA was incorporated in 1850 at the same time it was named the county seat of Delaware County. Located 13 miles west of Philadelphia, Media retains numerous architectural treasures from the Victorian era. Our tour will explore the grounds of the Delaware County courthouse built in 1851–71. On a walking through the State Street Historic District and Legal Row we will stop and tour the Institute of Science building that dates from 1867. We will visit a Victorian home dating from the 1860s and The Media Presbyterian Church completed in 1855. The first church constructed in Media, it was designed in classic Greek Revival style by John McArthur, architect of the Philadelphia City Hall. Dr. Samuel Lemon, the author of *Go Stand upon This Rock* (2014), will give a talk on the Campbell AME Church (that came directly out of The Mother Bethel Church) and his Quaker/African American history of Media from the Civil War until the early 1920s. Our lunch will be at Lotus Farm to Table. Residents proudly call Media "Everybody's Hometown." This is much more than a slogan. It describes a real state of mind.

FEES: \$120 FOR VICTORIAN SOCIETY NEW YORK MEMBERS, \$150 FOR NONMEMBERS

FUNDRAISER

MONDAY, MARCH 20, 6:30 PM

To benefit the Chapter's Margot Gayle Fund for the Preservation of Victorian Heritage, VSNY sponsored an event at St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 346 W. 20th St., in Manhattan on Monday, March 20.

The evening began with a showing of *Our Vanishing Legacy*, following an introduction by the documentary's writer and producer, Gordon Hyatt. The Rev. Stephen Harding, interim rector of St. Peter's, shared problems and progress made in the restoration of the church. The roof of the structure, built in 1836–38, is now water-tight, but scaffolding continues to surround the building. The church received a grant from the Margot Gayle Fund in 2014 for a conditions survey of its stained glass windows. Two students involved in the cleanup of the Wyckoff-Sneidicker Family Cemetery in Woodhaven, Queens, Brooke Fernandez and Samantha Savala, who attend St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Academy, reported on research sparked by names on tombstones uncovered in the effort that garnered a Margot Gayle Fund grant last year. Sponsored by the Woodhaven Cultural & Historical Society, restoration of the cemetery has involved removal of weeds and debris accumulated over 80 years of neglect. A reception followed the program.

Established in 2003, the Margot Gayle Fund for the Preservation of Victorian Heritage makes monetary grants for preservation or conservation of Victorian era material culture in the New York metropolitan area. Each year 5% of the principal in the fund is available for grants. With bank rates being what they are, the need to replenish the fund has become an annual problem. Growing the fund is, of course, also an ambition of the fundraiser.



**THE
VICTORIAN
SOCIETY
NEW YORK**

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 USA, 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.

A New Chapter in the History of The Victorian Society in America

In January 1970, 69 members in the New York metropolitan area petitioned the Victorian Society in America for permission to organize a New York chapter. It was an odd circumstance—petitioning to be a chapter of an organization of which it had been the entirety! Among the signers were professors and architectural historians: Marvin Schwartz, Adolph Placzek, George Collins, James Marston Fitch; writers: Louis Auchincloss, Clay Lancaster, Ada Louise Huxtable; architects: Giorgio Cavaglieri, Philip Johnson and preservation activists: Everett and Evelyn Ortner and Margot Gayle.

The Chapter was officially recognized on March 14, 1970, the first in the country. In June it opened its own bank account. It was quite a bit later before the words “Metropolitan Chapter” appeared on a letterhead. The first president of the Chapter’s board was William Dane, who was the principal librarian for the art and music collections at the Newark Public Library. The second was Giorgio Cavaglieri, who designed the library interiors for the former Jefferson Market Courthouse.

In 1972 membership in the Victorian Society in America totaled 391, of whom 271 lived in the New York area. At that time members joined the Victorian Society in America and part of their dues payment was rebated to the local chapter to which they affiliated. Now memberships in the local chapter and the parent society are separate and only officers of the board are required to also be members of the national organization.

The Chapter has always been active in preservation efforts in the city. Early campaigns focused on the SoHo Cast Iron Historic District (designated 1973) and Pier A, the last surviving municipal pier (designated 1977). Then there was the New York County (Tweed) Courthouse, the second oldest surviving city government building (designated 1984). The Chapter was instrumental in instigating and funding the first restoration of Saint-Gaudens’ General Sherman monument with a base designed by Charles McKim in Grand Army Plaza at Fifth Avenue and 59th Street in Manhattan. Recently (2015-16) board members responded



William Tecumseh Sherman Monument. Central Park Conservancy Photo

to the Landmarks Preservation Commission’s Backlog95 initiative by preparing testimony on 46 of 95 sites threatened with de-calendarizing and by appearing at all four hearings on these items. Members of the board also routinely attend and speak at the City Planning Commission and the City Council on issues important to our purpose.

Sponsorship of lectures on all aspects of Victorian life and culture has been a major way to fulfill the Society’s mission. At first some were held at the CUNY Graduate Center on 42nd street and then, for many years, at Donnell Library. After the library was demolished, lectures were held at New Church (Swedenborgian) on 35th Street for several years, then at the Dominican Academy on East 68th Street and currently take place at the English Speaking Union on East 39th Street. In addition the Chapter has sponsored events in collaboration with such other organizations as the Society of Architectural Historians, Friends of Cast Iron Architecture and Classical America.

The Chapter has no paid staff. All of the Chapter’s work done by the board and, occasionally, other member volunteers. It

has never maintained an office. Initially Margot Gayle’s home address was used; now the Chapter receives mail at the Neighborhood Preservation Center. In addition there is a phone number where messages can be recorded to be monitored periodically. At first board meetings were held in members’ homes, but for a number of years now they have been at St. Thomas Church Parish House. Committee meetings are held online or at members’ apartments. Despite its all-volunteer status, the board organizes eight lectures and seven or eight tours plus several special events each year. One of those events is a special lecture to raise money for the Margot Gayle Fund for the Preservation of Victorian Heritage. The fund was established in 2003 with the express purpose of providing grants for preservation projects and has since made monetary awards to neighborhood groups, churches and individuals.

The Chapter’s most recent achievement is a redesigned website. Come visit www.vicsocny.org.

Mary Cope

Acknowledgments

The Victorian Society New York gratefully acknowledges the generous support of members, individuals, firms and sponsors who help to further the Chapter's mission to preserve, protect and promote our Victorian heritage.

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

working on it as volunteers had to spend every weekend to reply to inquiries and set up a program for membership and goodness knows what. And it survived.

Who were the members of the founding committee? Brendan Gill?

Well, Brendan came in a little later. There was Margot Gayle, Stewart Johnson—he was head of the Newark Museum, and Bill Dane who was then head of a part of the Newark Public Library. And a woman who worked at the Metropolitan Museum—can't think of her name just at the moment, and a woman who worked at the Cooper Union, but she soon moved to Chicago. So there was a handful of us. Then as time went on, yes, Brendan Gill came and helped us address envelopes on my big kitchen table.

You've told me that the effort to save the Jefferson Market Courthouse predated the founding of the Victorian Society in America. When was that?

1959. We formed a committee that rallied the neighborhood by using the clock as our selling point. Victorian architecture was still very out of style. People would say to me, "Why do you want to save that old pile?" But we said everybody needs to have that clock running. It had been stopped for a couple of

years, and the building was vacant, had a lot of dead pigeons in it and hanging wires inside. It was a mess. But we got the clock lighted and the kids who went to P.S. 41 used it; people taking the PATH train at 6th Avenue and 9th Street used it; people taking the 6th Avenue subway below 8th Street relied on it. The neighborhood had missed the clock. We said we have to really look upon this as a neighborhood resource, and in order to have the clock, we have to have a building under it to hold it up. All of that came together, and we got the building taken off the auction block

We didn't have a Victorian Society yet, and we didn't have a landmarks law yet. It was kind of tough going, to tell you the truth. But we ran the effort to save Old Jeff out of my apartment at 44 W. 9th St., and we succeeded.

What did you do to succeed?

Just before Christmas 1959 some neighbors were at a friend's house on 5th Avenue, and we said what can we do to save that building? And we decided to send a telegram to the mayor, saying what we want for Christmas is not our two front teeth. We want our courthouse saved. Nobody was thinking of it as a library yet. So that interested a lot of locals and that helped draw some of us together—a little touch of humor.

We got Mayor Wagner's attention. Had it not been for him and the chairman of the Planning Commission, Jack [James] Felt, we wouldn't have that building because it had been put on the auction block and was to be sold. It was to be torn down so that a man in neighborhood who wanted to buy the land could put up a tall apartment house.

Where did the idea come from to make the building into a library?

A member of our committee said we've needed a public library. The one we had near Jackson Square was very small so this seemed the obvious way to use this building. Save it, make it into a library, serve the community, save the building.

When the building was finally saved, Mayor Wagner said we're going to give this to the public library, and they said well, yes, and then we'll tear it down. He said, No, either you use this building or you don't get a new library building in the Village area. So everything came together. Giorgio Cavaglieri, a well known restoration architect, made a beautiful library in that ghostly interior. It's a very strange shaped building for a library.

ANNUAL MEETING



THE 50TH ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING OF THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY NEW YORK WILL BE HELD ON
MONDAY, MAY 22 AT 6:30 P.M. AT THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY, 318 E. 88TH ST. IN MANHATTAN.

ON THE AGENDA WILL BE REPORTS OF THE CHAPTER'S ACTIVITIES AND FINANCIAL STATUS. MONETARY GRANTS WILL BE MADE FROM THE MARGOT GAYLE FUND FOR THE PRESERVATION OF VICTORIAN HERITAGE, AND AWARDS WILL BE PRESENTED FOR A VARIETY OF ACHIEVEMENTS. A RECEPTION WILL FOLLOW. ADMISSION IS FREE TO VICTORIAN SOCIETY NEW YORK MEMBERS. GUEST TICKETS MAY BE PURCHASED.

THE MEETING WILL CONVEY IN THE SANCTUARY OF THE CHURCH WHERE ALL OF THE STAINED GLASS WINDOWS WERE DESIGNED BY HENRY HOLIDAY (1839-1927). THE CHURCH, COMPLETED IN 1899, WAS BUILT AS A MEMORIAL TO THE FATHER AND GRANDFATHER OF SERENA RHINELANDER ON LAND THAT SHE OWNED. WHILE SHE PAID FOR THE CONSTRUCTION, SHE DID NOT BECOME A PARISHIONER SINCE SHE CONTINUED TO LIVE ON FIFTH AVENUE NEAR WASHINGTON SQUARE.

THE CHURCH IS NEAR AN EXIT OF THE NEWLY OPENED SECOND AVENUE SUBWAY AT 86TH STREET.



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