



SPRING 2026

PANORAMA

info@vicsozny.org

WWW.VICSOCCNY.ORG

the new york metropolitan chapter of the victorian society in america

VSNY News & Features

The Search for Architect E. G.W. Dietrich	1-3
Indoor Eden: Victorian Jardinières	4-7
A New York Artist Returns to the Limelight	8-11
Update: Litchfield Villa	12-15
Reflections on the Founding of the VSA	16-24
Profiles in Preservation:	
Barbaralee Diamonstein-Spielvogel	25-27
An Appreciation: Barnett Shepherd	28-29
Photograph Album	30-31
Advertisements	32-34
Program Calendar	35
Acknowledgements	36



The Search for Architect E. G. W. Dietrich • Christopher Jend, Author

The first clue leading to my discovery of architect E. G. W. Dietrich (1857–1924), 16 years ago, was hiding in plain sight. I had just begun to research the c. 1893 Shingle-style summer house built for John and Doris Mollenhauer in Bay Shore, Long Island, for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. I was eager to identify the house's architect, but traditional research sources failed to reveal any information. My luck changed when I more carefully observed the neighboring house, another Shingle-style summer home built for William H. Wray and his wife Clara in 1887. I noticed that the Mollenhauer and Wray houses both

had the same window arrangement on the first floor of their north elevations: a long, narrow row high on the wall for the butler's pantry and a single, double-hung kitchen window. If the windows and presumably the layout of the rooms they served were the same, perhaps the houses were designed by the same architect? Refocusing my research on William H. Wray, I soon discovered that his house was designed by architect E. G. W. Dietrich, as were three others on the same street, including the Mollenhauer house. Since then, I have documented more than 500 of Dietrich's designs, visited his extant works in six states, and shared my research through multiple presentations including at the Victorian Society New York in October 2024.

Victorian Society New York
c/o Village Alliance
8 East 8th Street
New York, NY 10003

Image: Recently rediscovered watercolor rendering by architect E. G. W. Dietrich of his design for the Anchorage, the c. 1887 summer home of William H. and Clara Wray in Bay Shore, Long Island. Courtesy of Christopher Jend





Ernest George Washington Dietrich came to prominence for his work in the Shingle style and was an early proponent of the Colonial Revival and Arts and Crafts styles. While he designed a variety of building types, the focus of his work and his greatest architectural achievements were the design of large country and suburban houses for prominent clients. Dietrich is recognized for his design of the first Craftsman house, in cooperation with Gustav Stickley, published in *The Craftsman* magazine in May 1903.

Born in Pittsburgh, Dietrich rose from a modest upbringing. At age 18, he was already listed as an architect and draughtsman in the 1875 Pittsburgh city directory. He attended the Western University of Pennsylvania and Duff's Business College and trained under architects in both Pittsburgh and New York City before forming a partnership in Pittsburgh with Charles M. Bartberger in 1883. The partners designed churches,

schools, commercial buildings, and houses. Recent research shows that Bartberger and Dietrich also designed a baseball grandstand (no longer extant) accommodating 6,000 spectators at Allegheny's Union Park in 1884. For a total cost of \$6,000, the renamed Recreation Park hosted games for the 1885 and 1887 World Series.

In 1884, Dietrich designed side-by-side houses for cousins Louise Wisner and Clinton W. Wisner in the summer resort village of Warwick, New York. The positive response to the houses' picturesque design, combined with connections to prominent clients through the Wisner family, prompted Dietrich to move to New York City in the fall of 1886 where he continued to practice for nearly 40 years.

Several recent acquisitions and gifts have added to my archive of Dietrich original drawings and related materials and furthered my research. Jennifer Lattin Julier, the family historian and great-granddaughter of Frederic and Harriet Newcomb, who commissioned Dietrich to design their magnificent house in New London, Connecticut, generously entrusted me with a collection of historical photographs and floor plans of the Newcomb house. Constructed from 1896 to 1897, 31 Vauxhall Street stands majestically on a rise anchoring the Post Hill Historic District. The photographs, many taken shortly after the house's completion, reveal original exterior and interior details. Views of the double-height entry hall include an impressive plaster of Paris relief, a replica of Renaissance sculptor Lucca della Robbia's Cantoria. Family letters reveal that Dietrich remained in contact with the Newcomb family, advising on repairs and suggesting decorating updates for the house. In a 1909 letter,



Victorian Society New York
8 East 8th Street
c/o Village Alliance
New York, NY 10003

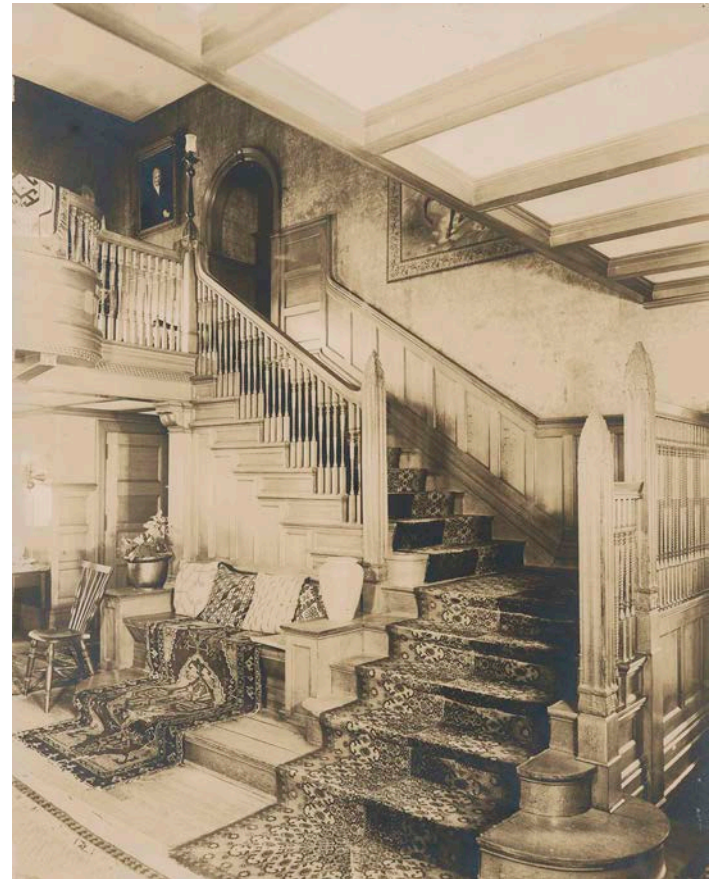


Images: top left: Recently rediscovered c. 1892 pen and ink rendering by architect E. G. W. Dietrich of an office building. • above, right: Recently rediscovered pen and ink rendering by Dietrich of his design for Hallhurst, the c. 1896 house of Frederick P. and Lucy Hall in Jamestown, New York. Courtesy of Christopher Jend



Mrs. Newcomb described new wallpaper samples provided by Dietrich as “two-toned, all yellows, and rather startling at first sight.” Despite the first impression, the Newcombs indeed papered over the original buff-colored walls with Dietrich’s suggestion of a German wallpaper with a deep yellow background.

My research continues to uncover Dietrich’s story, aided by the discovery of new sources and the generous contributions of others with knowledge of the architect and his designs. By sharing my research with architectural historians, homeowners, and local communities, I hope to promote understanding and appreciation of Dietrich’s impressive architectural legacy. Updates on my findings can be found at egwdietrich.org.



Victorian Society New York
8 East 8th Street
c/o Village Alliance
New York, NY 10003



Images: top left and right: Exterior photographs of the c. 1896 Frederic S. and Harriet Newcomb house in New London, Connecticut. • *above left and right:* Interior photographs of the entrance hall of the Newcomb house. These images are part of a larger collection of historical photographs and floor plans gifted to the author by the Newcombs’ great-granddaughter and family historian Jennifer Lattin Julier. Courtesy of Christopher Jend

Indoor Eden: Victorian Jardinières • Nicole Mullen, Curator in Charge of Exhibitions, SFO Museum & Brian Coleman, Author, Board of Directors, VSNY

“Nature is the goddess I adore; and if it should be granted to me to explore her secrets, I shall be the happiest of mankind.”¹

During the Victorian era (1837–1901) houseplants became more accessible to the masses. Plant enthusiasts adored hardy species such as parlor palms (*Chamaedorea elegans*) and the cast iron plant (*Aspidistra elatior*), given its common name for its ability to tolerate dismal conditions, such as low light and gas-lit homes. Simultaneously, a passion for ferns of all kinds, referred to as “pteridomania,” reached a fever pitch. Commonly referred to as jardinières from the French word for “female gardener,” ornamental pots and plant stands served as essential components of indoor décor. Larger potteries, like Minton in Staffordshire, as well as smaller art pottery studios, such as Bretby and Ault Pottery in Derbyshire, supplied the demand for wares.

Indoor Eden, an exhibition organized by SFO Museum, showcases an array of English jardinières, pedestals, and vases, while also exploring historical topics, from Wardian cases, or the first terrariums, to fern fever and floriography. These objects and stories combine to explain some of the origins of our love of houseplants, decorative planters, and the continued desire for green spaces today.



Drawing from the collection of Victorian Society New York Board member Brian Coleman, SFO Museum has mounted this fascinating display of 19th-century pots and pedestals, wall pockets, and garden stools illustrating the major potteries and design trends of the period. Displayed over eight cases, themes include pieces inspired by Thomas Fairchild (1667–1729), who, before the Victorian era, as a horticulturalist ahead of his time, established a successful nursery in the North London neighborhood of Hoxton in 1690. He published *The City Gardener* in 1722, which identified dozens of plants that could withstand the smoky, coal-burning air in London. Fairchild’s book grappled with issues we still face today, such as pollution and advocating

Victorian Society New York
8 East 8th Street
c/o Village Alliance
New York, NY 10003



Images: “Oceana” Jardinière and Pedestal, and detail, c. 1900, ceramic, glaze. Ault Pottery, Swadlincote, Derbyshire, England. Courtesy of SFO Museum

¹ Jane Loudon (author of *The Ladies Companion to the Flower Garden*, 1841), *The Mummy! A Tale of the Twenty-Second Century*, 1828.



for gardens and green spaces in dense urban areas. He also recommended suitable flora for city dwellers to grow in unused fireplaces and window boxes, on balconies, and even on the tops of dwellings amid chimneys.

A case in the exhibition explores British art pottery and how pottery output reflected the design styles popular throughout each era. The Arts and Crafts and Aesthetic movements flourished in England during the last several decades of the 19th century. The former emphasized that everyday objects should be both useful and beautiful; the latter championed “art for art’s sake,” with a focus on decorative arts. Both drew inspiration from the natural world and the arts of Japan. These styles permeate the ceramics on display, as does the influence of the famed British designer Christopher Dresser. Many art potteries set up workshops and manufactories during this period, such as Linthorpe Art Pottery, Bretby Art Pottery, and Ault Pottery, to fulfill the desire for “artistic” wares. Dresser created designs for Linthorpe Art Pottery from 1879 to 1883. English potter William

Ault (1842–1929) established Bretby Art Pottery in 1883, alongside Henry Tooth (1842–1918), an artist and the former manager at Linthorpe Art Pottery. In 1887, the partnership dissolved, and Ault founded Ault Pottery. Dresser designed some of Ault’s most striking wares; Ault also acquired some of Linthorpe’s molds in 1890 after the pottery closed. In addition to displaying botanical specimens, the vases and jardinières crafted at these potteries served as sophisticated display pieces, as noted by writer W. D. Prior in 1871 in an article for *The Floral World and Garden Guide*: “There are so many artistic contrivances as receptacles for plants in the present day . . . some of them being also works of art of the highest order.”

One of the most influential and important designers to emerge from Great Britain, Christopher Dresser (1834–1904) enjoyed a prolific career, designing ceramics, metalwork, furniture, textiles, and wallpaper. A trained botanist, Dresser drew inspiration from a variety of sources: from botanical forms to the arts of Japan, Peruvian pottery,

Victorian Society New York
c/o Village Alliance
8 East 8th Street
New York, NY 10003

Images: “Butterfly” Wall Pockets, c. 1900, ceramic, glaze. Christopher Dresser (1834–1904), Ault Pottery, Swadlincote, Derbyshire, England. Courtesy of SFO Museum





Ault Pottery produced mold-made wares with low-relief decoration, which was often highlighted in a contrasting color, as seen on the pieces at the top of this page with a brown ground and rich green accents. Their pottery won a gold medal at the Chicago World's Fair of 1893 for the "general richness and colour of the glazes, the artistic shape, and modeling of the pieces," as they exclaimed in an 1897 *Pottery Gazette* advertisement.

Another case in SFO Museum's show explores conservatories—elaborate public and private conservatories were constructed in the 19th century. Built from iron and glass on an unprecedented scale from 1844 to 1848, the Palm House at Kew Gardens in London continues to serve as a botanical and scientific study center. It houses the world's oldest potted plant (1775), an Eastern Cape giant cycad (*Encephalartos*



and historical European styles. Butterfly wall pockets and two anthropomorphic fish vases are a few examples designed by Dresser on view in the exhibition.

Americans also embraced indoor plants while establishing their own art potteries. Samuel A. Weller (1851–1925) set up a pottery in Ohio in 1872. By the late 19th century, Weller Art Pottery had become one of the country's most successful large-scale art potteries. An extensive network of artisans and potters produced wares reflecting the Aesthetic, Arts and Crafts, and Art Nouveau movements, as seen at right.



Victorian Society New York
c/o Village Alliance
8 East 8th Street
New York, NY 10003

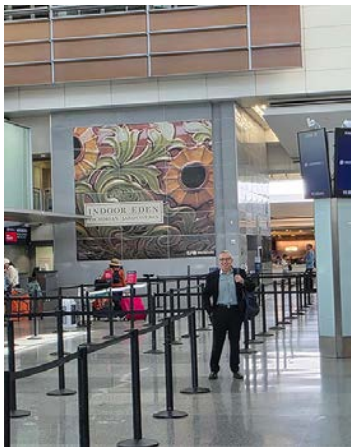


Images: top: Vases, c. 1893, ceramic, glaze. Christopher Dresser (1834–1904), Ault Pottery, Swadlincote, Derbyshire, England. Courtesy of SFO Museum • above left: "Owl" Vase, c. 1893, ceramic, glaze. Christopher Dresser (1834–1904), Ault Pottery, Swadlincote, Derbyshire, England. Courtesy of SFO Museum • above right: "Dragon" Jardinière, c. 1893, ceramic, glaze. Bretby Art Pottery, Woodville, Derbyshire, England. Courtesy of SFO Museum • at right: Jardinière and Pedestal, c. 1900, ceramic, glaze. Weller Art Pottery, Fultonham, Ohio. Courtesy of SFO Museum

altensteinii) collected from South Africa. An extraordinary example of a municipal conservatory constructed of wood and glass, the Conservatory of Flowers opened in 1879 in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park—the oldest of its kind in the nation. From its inception, the conservatory became one of the park's most popular attractions, allowing city dwellers to experience rare and unusual tropical plants. Today, it continues to epitomize the Victorian era's passion for plants.

Smaller conservatories or solariums attached to houses allowed gardening enthusiasts to create microclimates where they could cultivate tropical and flowering plants year-round. These sunrooms were often adorned with furniture and other décor for entertaining guests or for relaxing. For those living in urban environments with limited space, a bay window protruding outward from the wall could serve a similar function. The leading amateur gardening writer of his time, Shirley Hibberd, outlined many elaborate and modest options in the 1870 edition of *Rustic Adornments for Home and Taste*.

Conservatories were heated through a variety of means, from underfloor heating, steam heating, and hot air furnaces to portable methods, such as this one, which would have burned coal or coke. Far from ideal, they not only produced noxious fumes, but also unevenly distributed heat. This extremely rare and exemplary heater shown here with its sunflower pattern embodies the Aesthetic movement, which advocated for artistic interiors in the late 19th century.



[Indoor Eden](#) is on view in the Dianne Feinstein International Terminal, San Francisco International Airport, Departures, Level 3, Pre-Security, February 21, 2026–January 16, 2028



Victorian Society New York
c/o Village Alliance
8 East 8th Street
New York, NY 10003



Images: left: Collector and author Brian Coleman, outside the exhibition in San Francisco. Credit: Nicole Mullen • right: Conservatory Heater, c. 1885, stoneware, glaze. Royal Doulton, Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, England. Courtesy of SFO Museum

A New York Artist Returns to the Limelight • Jeffrey B. Chace, Author

In the 1880s, Harry Chase was one of the most famous artists in America. By 1885, he stood at the pinnacle of the New York art world, regaled with honors and prizes. Tragically, late that year Harry fell into a labyrinth of madness. Four years later, he was dead. Now, he is forgotten. For two decades, I have been chasing Harry, tracking down artworks and archival material, while writing a forthcoming comprehensive biography. This article is a foretaste, and explores the genesis and journeys of one of Harry's finest works, a maritime painting of New York City that represents a microcosm of his prodigious accomplishments within a lamentably short lifespan.

He was born Henry Seymour Chase Jr. in Woodstock, Vermont, on February 2, 1853, to Dr. Henry Seymour Chase and Sarah Denison Haskell. Harry's father was a physician and dentist. In the late 1850s, the Chases moved west to a farm in Iowa. By 1868, they were in St. Louis, Missouri, where Harry's artistic journey began in earnest.

He studied at the National Academy of Design in Manhattan (1870–71), the Royal Bavarian Academy of Fine Arts in Munich (1872–75), in Paris under Paul Constant Soyer (1878), and in The Hague under Hendrik Willem Mesdag (1879). Skillfully navigating the channels of success in Europe, Harry submitted works that were accepted to the *Salon de Paris* in 1878 and 1879. But his future lay in America.

After taking a studio in Manhattan in 1881, Harry confided to his wife Emma, "I feel very keenly the necessity of living here, of identifying myself as a New York artist." In the 1880s, as his fame spread, Harry was elected an Associate National Academician (ANA) of the National Academy of Design, and he joined the Boston Art Club, the American Watercolor Society, the Art Union, and the Salmagundi Club, among other institutions. His mother encouraged Harry to "paint a large picture," suggesting he might win a prize. While assuring her "there is no prize for me," he decided to do so anyway, "just to please her."

In 1884, the Hallgarten Prize was established to select "the best picture painted in the United States by an American

citizen under 35," at the National Academy Exhibition. First prize was \$300, a significant sum in that era. Harry typically spent summers in New Bedford, Massachusetts, sailing on his yacht *Bonnie*. But, that year, Harry remained in Manhattan, to prove himself a New York artist, while also fulfilling his promise to his mother.

Inspired to compete for the Hallgarten Prize, Harry captured scenes of New York City during his summer sketching. Scrutinizing the shoreline of the North River, also known as the Hudson, he sketched the nascent skyline of Lower



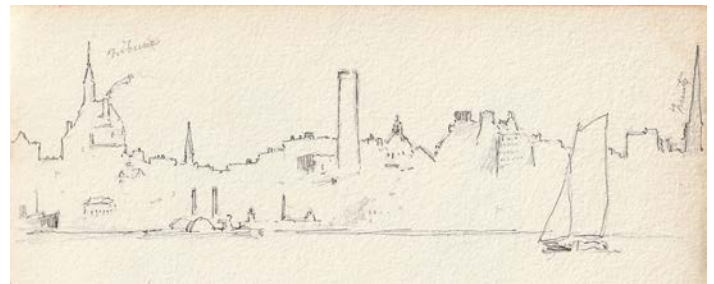
Image: Harry Chase, Holbein Studio, 1884. Courtesy of Jeffrey B. Chace



Manhattan. Trinity Church towered overhead, the newly built Brooklyn Bridge loomed on the other side of the island, while the Equitable Life Building, the General Post Office, and the New York Tribune tower also demanded their places. For the 1885 Annual Exhibition of the National Academy of Design, Harry incorporated his sketches into *New York Harbor, North River*, a Brobdingnagian work that immediately set him apart from his peers. His painting also sparked a major controversy, sensationalized by the newspapers.

Thomas Hovenden, a National Academician and member of the hanging committee, believed Harry's painting should be "on the line" with the best works of the exhibition. Others deemed the 40" × 72" painting too large for such a position. A melee ensued. Hovenden, disgusted, took his own paintings from the walls and departed for his home in Pennsylvania. When the exhibition opened, the public and art critics alike clamored to see what the fuss was about.

The New York Tribune called *New York Harbor, North River* "a picture of unusually ambitious purpose," showing the "imposing outlines" of the Tribune's own skyscraper. *The Brooklyn Eagle* declared, "It is one of the most important pictures in the exhibition, and shows the best work the artist has thus far exhibited at the Academy." A reporter for *The Churchman* was startled into remarking,



Victorian Society New York
c/o Village Alliance
8 East 8th Street
New York, NY 10003

Images: top: *New York Harbor, North River*, 1885 (40" × 72"). First Hallgarten Prize 1885. Courtesy of Jeffrey B. Chace • above: 1884 Sketch of Lower Manhattan skyline by Harry Chase. Used for *New York Harbor, North River* Courtesy of Jeffrey B. Chace



“The single steamer is literally under headway, and one steps aside involuntarily from the canvas, in dread of the swiftly approaching bow. Mr. Chase has stepped well ahead of the marine painters for versatility, brilliancy of color and execution, and for that unfailing freshness of interest that characterizes the growing artist.”

The critics had spoken loudly, but the Hallgarten vote was thunderous. Although Harry had once been convinced there was “no prize for me,” *New York Harbor, North River* took First Prize. While the money was welcome, the prestige was immeasurable. Suddenly, Harry was the darling of the New York art scene. But a few months later, disaster struck.

Harry returned from a summer sketching tour of Nova Scotia extremely ill. By October of 1885, he had stopped painting and rarely appeared at his studio. In December 1885, an abyss of insanity devoured him. On New Year’s Eve, “An Artist’s Sudden Mania” made the *Tribune’s* front page. Harry disappeared from New York City. For the next four years, he struggled with delusions, and fought for his life. In 1886, he was confined to the Hudson River State Hospital for the Insane in Poughkeepsie. And, then, hoping mountain air would help, Harry convalesced in Sewanee, Tennessee, under unconventional care.

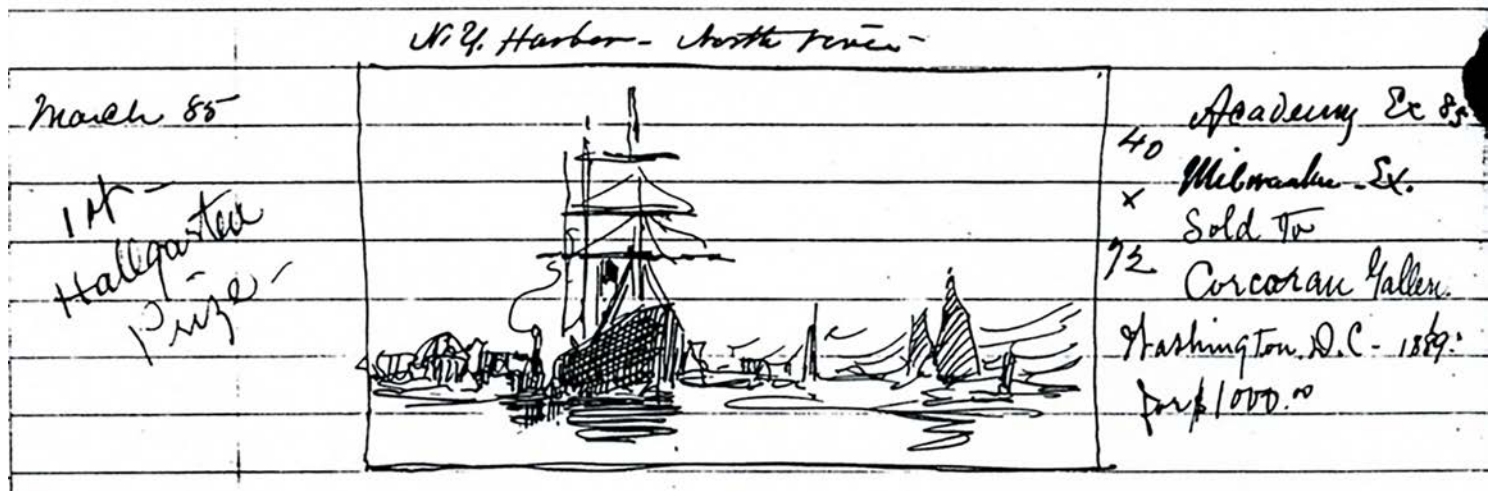
Harry’s wife Emma visited him often in Tennessee, witnessing his decline first-hand while raising their two small children, Rhoda and Irwin. Emma prepared for the inevitable and was accepted to the Dental School of the University of Iowa. On March 4, 1889, Emma received her Doctor of Dental Surgery degree. At the same time, a last-ditch effort to save Harry was being planned. He would undergo trephining surgery in St. Louis, which would require drilling into his skull to reveal the surface of his brain. The operation was risky and costly, and cash was scarce. But Emma still had a cache of Harry’s choicest works, including *New York Harbor, North River*.

John Lee Fitch, treasurer of the Artists’ Fund Society, approached the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C., on Emma’s behalf. He explained the Chases’ dire circumstances and persuaded the institution to buy *New York Harbor, North River* for \$1,000. Harry’s surgery was scheduled.



The operation did not have the desired effect. On October 1, 1889, Harry Chase died in Sewanee, Tennessee, age 36.

The Corcoran displayed *New York Harbor, North River* at times and then, in the 1960s, lent it to the American Embassy in Dublin, Ireland. In 1997, after the contemporary artist Ken Apter found the painting displayed at a private club in Washington, he included it in his *Talking to Pictures* exhibition at the Corcoran, drawn to the painting by his own brother’s struggles with mental illness. But, for such a magnificent and storied work, once the toast of Manhattan, the current circumstances of *New York Harbor, North River*, are disappointing. After the Corcoran went defunct in 2014, its collections were distributed among three museums. Now, *New York Harbor, North River* resides in storage at



the Corcoran Legacy Collection of the American University Museum, with no plans afoot for its exhibition. Will it find favor with the curators and claim a place in the galleries where its story can be told? Will it be deaccessioned? Or will it simply remain hidden where no one can appreciate its splendor?

Perhaps it is time to arrange for *New York Harbor, North River* to return to New York City, the metropolis that inspired it.

Anyone with further information about Harry Chase and his work can reach the author through info@vicsocny.org

Please visit <http://www.harrychase.org> for more information on the project.



Victorian Society New York
c/o Village Alliance
8 East 8th Street
New York, NY 10003



Images: top: Entry in Harry Chase's Paintings Logbook for *New York Harbor, North River*. "Sold to Corcoran Gallery, Washinton D.C. 1889 for \$1,000" written in Emma's hand. Courtesy of Jeffrey B. Chace • above right: Installation view of Harry Chase's *New York Harbor, North River*, above, and below it, *She Needed Help*, Chase's painting, as interpreted by Ken Aptekar in his 1997 exhibition *Talking to Pictures* at the Corcoran Gallery of Art. Courtesy of Jeffrey B. Chace

Update: Litchfield Villa • Jeremy Woodoff,
Preservationist, President, Board of Directors, VSNY

Edwin Clark Litchfield, grown wealthy through investments in railroads in New York and the Midwest, had an audacious idea. Around 1850 he decided to develop an entirely new neighborhood in Brooklyn. Litchfield purchased land along Gowanus Creek extending east through farmland to what is now Prospect Park. His Brooklyn Improvement Company turned the natural creek into a navigable canal, leased the office built by the Coignet Stone Co. at the corner of Third Avenue and Third Street, and, along with others, began building commercial and residential buildings to create the neighborhood now called Park Slope.

Litchfield and his wife decided to build their own house at the top of the hill, with views westward down the slope to New York Harbor. For their house they hired one of the most important architects of the day, Alexander Jackson Davis. Davis's early buildings, designed alone and in partnership with Ithiel Townsend, had been in the Greek Revival style. Extant examples include the U.S. Sub-Treasury, now Federal Hall, and Colonnade Row in lower Manhattan. In the 1830s Davis turned his attention to more Romantic styles, including Gothic Revival and Italianate.



A Tale of Two Houses

Lyndhurst in Tarrytown, New York, is Davis's masterpiece in the Gothic Revival style. It was built in 1838 for William Paulding, Jr., a former Congressman and Mayor of New York City. Litchfield Villa is Davis's masterpiece in the Italianate style. Originally called Grace Hill after Edwin's wife, Grace Hill Hubbard, it was built in 1854 to be the Litchfield family home. There the similarities in the stories of these two great houses end.

Lyndhurst was eventually donated in 1961 to the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The house and grounds, first opened to the public in 1965, are a nationally recognized public amenity. They are beautifully maintained, with recent restorations focused on replicating missing landscape features.

The story at Grace Hill is very different. In 1866 Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux were hired by the City of Brooklyn to revise the design for Prospect Park. The design had first been drawn up by engineer Egbert Viele. Viele may have been a good engineer, but he was a poor landscape designer. Earlier, he had also drawn the initial plan for Central Park. Olmsted and Vaux completely reworked it in their "Greensward Plan." One of the conditions the designers had to deal with in Central Park was the need for crosstown through streets. Their brilliant design for sunken transverse roads allowed the landscape to seemingly continue across

Victorian Society New York
c/o Village Alliance
8 East 8th Street
New York, NY 10003

Images: top right, A. J. Davis's watercolor rendering of Grace Hill. Here, the house retains its stucco façade, scored to imitate stone. • above left: An early view of one of the main rooms of the house. Credit: League for the Restoration and Preservation of Litchfield Villa; *Litchfield Villa*; Brooklyn, NY, 1980





these roads, but in reality, they limited the kinds of broad landscape effects Olmsted and Vaux desired.

The Coming of Prospect Park

Viele's plan for Prospect Park had Flatbush Avenue running straight through the middle of the park. Olmsted and Vaux didn't want a repeat of the Central Park problem of having major through streets in the park, so they persuaded the City of Brooklyn to set aside the parkland east of Flatbush Avenue. (This land became "Institute Park" and eventually was used for the public library, botanic garden, and Brooklyn Museum.) To compensate, the city purchased additional land for Prospect Park to the southwest. This land included Grace Hill, its outbuildings, and grounds. The house and land were

taken by eminent domain. The Litchfields, who were initially supporters of the park, were not happy but were allowed to lease the house from the city for the remainder of their lives. When first Grace and then Edwin died in 1885 the Brooklyn Parks Department moved into the house as its headquarters, and there it has remained ever since. The Prospect Park Alliance now also has offices there.

At first, it made sense for the Parks Department to be headquartered in what became known as "Litchfield's Castle" or "Litchfield Villa." After all, Prospect Park was by far the largest park in Brooklyn and in fact nearly the only park. But as the City of Brooklyn and then the Borough of Brooklyn grew, along with an extensive park system

Victorian Society New York
c/o Village Alliance
8 East 8th Street
New York, NY 10003

Image: West facade with the construction fence for the ramp project. Look closely to see the deterioration of the balustrades and historic windows. Credit: Jeremy Woodoff





including some much larger parks, the Parks Department headquarters along with the borough-wide repair shops, storerooms, and vehicles remained in Prospect Park.

It's been said that if it weren't for the Parks Department's occupancy, Litchfield Villa would likely have been demolished. That may be true, but the department hasn't been an especially good steward. All of the original outbuildings, including several designed by Davis, have been demolished. Part of the front porch was enclosed. In the 1940s, the stucco on the façade, which was scored to resemble stone blocks (a typical *faux* treatment of the time) was removed, exposing the common brick beneath. Sections of balustrades at the roofs have gone missing. And in general, the building has been inadequately maintained, resulting in rotting wood features and deteriorating historic stained glass windows. An especially sad result of the conditions of the building as well

as its occupancy for offices is that the public is excluded from the house, other than being able to enter the foyer to purchase permits for park activities. The rest of the house, which used to be occasionally available for tours, is off limits. It's filled with standard office furniture, and many of the original finishes, including decorative painting, are missing or covered. But the room configurations and most of the extraordinary architectural details remain.

Previous Restoration Efforts

There was a serious effort in the 1970s to address the deterioration of the building and to increase its appreciation and use by the public. The League for the Restoration and Preservation of Litchfield Villa was formed and included representatives of several civic groups: the Friends of Prospect Park, Prospect Park West Association, Inc., Third Street Playground Committee of the Park Slope Civic Council, and the Junior League. The group made some progress. As a first step, the Parks Department was persuaded to rehabilitate the unused Annex Building, a detached addition to the house designed in 1911 by Frank J. Helmle. Offices from the Villa were to be moved there, allowing for a restoration of the Villa for public use. Unfortunately, by the time the Annex was reopened in the early 1980s, the Prospect Park Alliance had a new staff. Between them and additional Parks Dept. staff appointed as the city's fiscal crisis of the 1970s ended, no space opened up in the Villa.

As part of its efforts, the League published two pamphlets about the history and architectural significance of Litchfield Villa. There is no evidence that the group survived the failure to restore and open the Villa to the public in the early 1980s.

In 1989 the Prospect Park Alliance proposed restuccoing the exterior to restore its historic appearance and obtained funding for it in 1990, but that work was not undertaken. Approximately 20 years ago a new roof was installed. The work included reconstruction of wood rooftop balustrades. Because of poor quality materials and lack of any maintenance since then, the wood balusters have become severely deteriorated. Until this year, no other notable work had been performed on the building, as historic features continued to deteriorate, including the original windows and the side porch with its magnificent fluted columns with "corn cob" capitals. In 2021, the Landmarks Preservation Commission approved a multi-million dollar Parks Department proposal

Victorian Society New York
c/o Village Alliance
8 East 8th Street
New York, NY 10003

Image: View through a window to one of the better maintained rooms. This is as close as the public can get.
Credit: Jeremy Woodoff

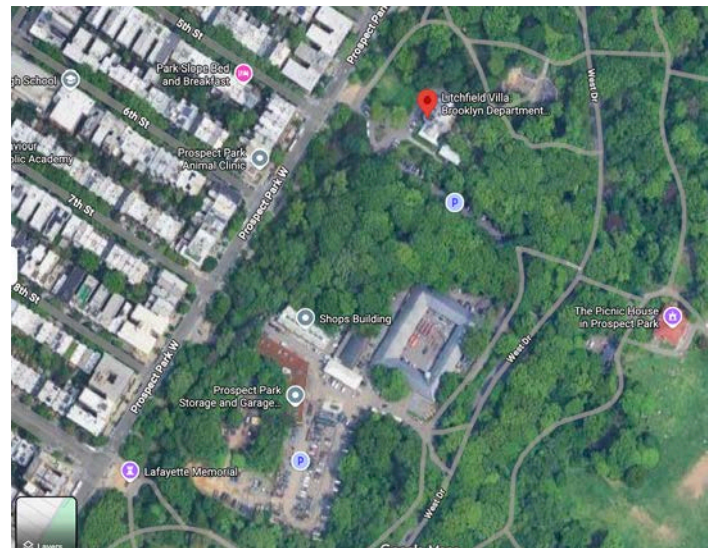


to construct a very large access ramp to the front door. This is the only significant investment in the building in recent years. The house was previously accessible through a side door. Little or no public debate occurred on whether this is the best use of public funds for a building whose historic features are missing or crumbling and is largely closed to the public. The ramp is now under construction. Apparently as a component of this project, the rotting porch columns have thankfully been repaired and painted.

Outbuildings and the Landscape

The original outbuildings to the south of the Villa are gone, but several major structures were built by the Parks Department to support its operations. These buildings are of varying quality. Some, built in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, are of architectural interest and in fact are similar in character to early Central and Prospect Park buildings designed by Calvert Vaux, Jacob Wrey Mould, and others. The buildings are all used to support borough-wide operations. The operations they house are highly disruptive to this historic park and provide little benefit to Prospect Park itself.

The original siting of the Litchfield outbuildings has always interrupted the park's pedestrian circulation. This can be seen in historic as well as current maps, as the major north-south pedestrian route on the west side of the park dies into a tangle of mixed pedestrian and vehicular pathways, resulting in a confusing and dangerous situation and a deteriorated landscape.



The Future of Litchfield Villa and Its Landscape

We suggest that forward-looking planning is needed for this grand house, its architecturally important outbuildings, and the associated historic landscape. A plan should include proposals for restoration and ongoing maintenance of the interior and exterior of the Villa, opening its important rooms to the public, repurposing the significant outbuildings for Prospect Park staff and public use, moving borough-wide operations out of the park, and redesigning the landscape to finally complete the pedestrian path system and restore the landscape to the picturesque, naturalistic style of the original design. Perhaps it's time for a new League for the Preservation and Restoration of Litchfield Villa to be formed, as neither the Parks Department nor the Prospect Park Alliance appears to have the vision or the resources to meet the challenge.

Litchfield Villa, an individual landmark, is one of the most historically and architecturally important houses in the city. Prospect Park, a scenic landmark, is an historic landscape of national significance. It's long past time for the house and its landscape to receive the attention and resources they deserve. A restored Villa, with its architecturally significant outbuildings and surrounding landscape, all put to appropriate public use, would be a major amenity for the Park Slope neighborhood, Brooklyn, and all of New York City.

Victorian Society New York
c/o Village Alliance
8 East 8th Street
New York, NY 10003



Images: top right: The tangle of vehicular, pedestrian, and combined circulation in the vicinity of the Villa (top center) and service yard (bottom center) create a broken, unpleasant, and even dangerous north-south pedestrian connection. Credit: Googlemaps • above left: With a spectacular, two-story, skylit interior, this late-19th-century building could be restored for any number of more appropriate Parks Department or public uses. The borough-wide shops currently in the building, which provide few services to Prospect Park, are a poor use of this architecturally significant park building. Credit: Jeremy Woodoff

Reflections on the Founding of the Victorian Society in America in its Diamond Jubilee Year • James Russiello, Landmarks Preservation Commission, Board of Directors, VSA

On May 8, 2019, I, as Chair of the Archives Committee of the Victorian Society New York, accompanied by **Mary Cope** (b. 1928), my predecessor and the chapter's steadfast archival guardian, delivered the first tranche of around forty archival boxes to their new institutional home at New York Historical.

The earliest materials donated in this tranche were from 1967, just months after formal incorporation of the society. Committee reports and meeting minutes reveal a young organization grappling with scaling issues, strategizing how to evolve from a New York-centered initiative to preserve and foster appreciation of 19th-century heritage into a national movement.

By the end of 1969, the Victorian Society in America was a national organization with over 800 members, now with half outside of the greater New York region. These were staggering figures to grow and maintain in an era before electronic communication, an effort achieved by an all-volunteer board gathered in the “sunny kitchen” in the West 9th Street apartment of **Margot Gayle** (1908–2008). A more permanent headquarters for the organization had been sought to arrange for easier deliveries and meeting locales. Throughout 1968, that site appeared to be the National Arts Club in New York, but at the annual members meeting on March 28, 1969, held at the Grolier Club, the move to a suite of rooms at the Philadelphia Athenaeum was announced. That venue's rental fee was \$500 annually, easily beating local alternatives (New York was always too expensive!).

To ease the transition for the gathered New Yorkers, a lecture with slides on the architecture of the Philadelphia Athenaeum by Robert C. Smith, Professor of Art History at the University of Pennsylvania, followed the meeting. A period of untangling the New York and national organizations began that July, with most records departing New York for Philadelphia, including 800+ index cards of early members in shoeboxes brought over by Cope in 1970. The remaining New York archive is heavily biased by donations from librarian and archivist **Jane E. Lowenthal**



(1918–2002), a member since April 1967 and the recording secretary from March 1968, and future chapter president **Bill Dane** (1923–2019), Keeper of the Prints at the Newark Free Public Library.

The British Precedent

The Victorian Society in America was founded in June of 1966 and formally incorporated in Bronx County, New York, on November 10, 1966, to foster public appreciation and understanding of the artistic expression of the 19th century, to prevent needless destruction of important examples of the period, and to protect and preserve such examples where possible, among other purposes. Undeclared but implicit in its name, the “in America” qualifier linked the new organization as an outgrowth, or chapter, of the British Victorian Society, founded in 1958 by architectural historian **Nikolaus Pevsner** (1902–1983), among others amid widespread concern over postwar redevelopment, the ascendancy of architectural Modernism, and popular indifference toward 19th-century design, art, and culture. Among the British founders in 1958 was preservation advocate **John Betjeman** (1906–1984), appointed Poet Laureate in 1972, and Pevsner, author of county-by-county historic building guides, *The Buildings of England* (the series' first publication appeared in 1951). Both were knighted in 1969 for their efforts.

Victorian Society New York
c/o Village Alliance
8 East 8th Street
New York, NY 10003



Image: May 8, 2019, L to R: Polly Cope, and the New-York Historical Society Patricia D. Klingenstein Library Collection Manager Luis Rodriguez, and Curator and Head of the Manuscript Department Ted O'Reilly, and James Russiello. Credit: Joe Russiello

Unsuccessful campaigns to prevent the 1962 demolition of the 1837 Euston Arch outside London's Euston railway station along with other significant losses helped move the cultural needle and raise public awareness of the Victorian Society. These efforts helped the public see the 19th century not as a period of "bad taste" but as one of Britain's most innovative and architecturally rich eras. The Society's influence grew to the point where it became a statutory consultee in the British planning system by 1968.

American Awakening

The U.S. counterpart to London's Euston Arch for raising the public awareness of preservation is often considered to be New York's Penn Station, for which demolition had been announced in the Fall of 1961, and despite protests and editorials, demolition had been completed by mid 1966. That pivotal year also began with the publication of *With Heritage So Rich*, in January of 1966, the seminal report authored by the Special Committee on Historic Preservation of the United States Conference of Mayors, and also the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA), signed into law on October 15, a week after the National Trust's conference.



During the summer of 1965, the frequently busy and highly opinionated Pevsner was again invited to lecture at the National Trust Summer School on the Great Houses of England (now known as the Attingham Summer School). That was the first year that the fourteen-year-old summer school was visiting Scotland during its third and final week, with the Earl of Wemyss and March, then the Chairman of The National Trust for Scotland, hosting a reception for the class and friends of the program at his own home at Gosford House. Alumni were allowed to join the class for the third week, and many eminently established American and British (among them Jane Fawcett of the Victorian Society) opted to do so to see countless private estates rarely opened. Per Gayle's recollection, Pevsner's stipulation in speaking to the class was to discuss the 19th century, which was extraneous to the course's 18th-century subject matter, and to be directed to some "people in [the] group that . . . might go home and help me [Gayle] start a branch of the Victorian Society in America,"* with a preference for New Yorkers as Pevsner intended to travel there at some point in the future. Also in his mind was the 1962 incorporation of The American Friends of Attingham in New York, which had stabilized some financial elements for the summer program by raising funds to support associated costs, scholarships, and arranging American events. Four Americans met for drinks with Pevsner after his talk in Glasgow. Quoting former chapter Vice President **Robert C. Kaufmann** (1937–2009), "Pevsner admonished them to save America's historic 19th-century art and architecture, as this young country had almost no other. They rose to the occasion and founded the Victorian Society in America."

The VSA Founders

Those four American classmates were the German-born **Christa C. Mayer** [later Thurman] (1934–2024), a textiles curator (1961–1967) at the Cooper Union Museum for the Arts of Decoration, the year before the collection was transferred to the Smithsonian Institution; **J. Stewart Johnson** (1925–2006), Curator of Decorative Arts at The Newark Museum (1964–1968); **Caroline C. Karpinski** (1931–2024), Curator of Prints at The Metropolitan Museum of Art specializing in "woodcuts printed in Italy from 1510 to 1750"; and preservation activist **Margot Gayle**. Following an unsuccessful bid for New York City Council, Gayle led efforts to save the abandoned Jefferson Market Courthouse in an era before preservation laws by

Victorian Society New York
c/o Village Alliance
8 East 8th Street
New York, NY 10003



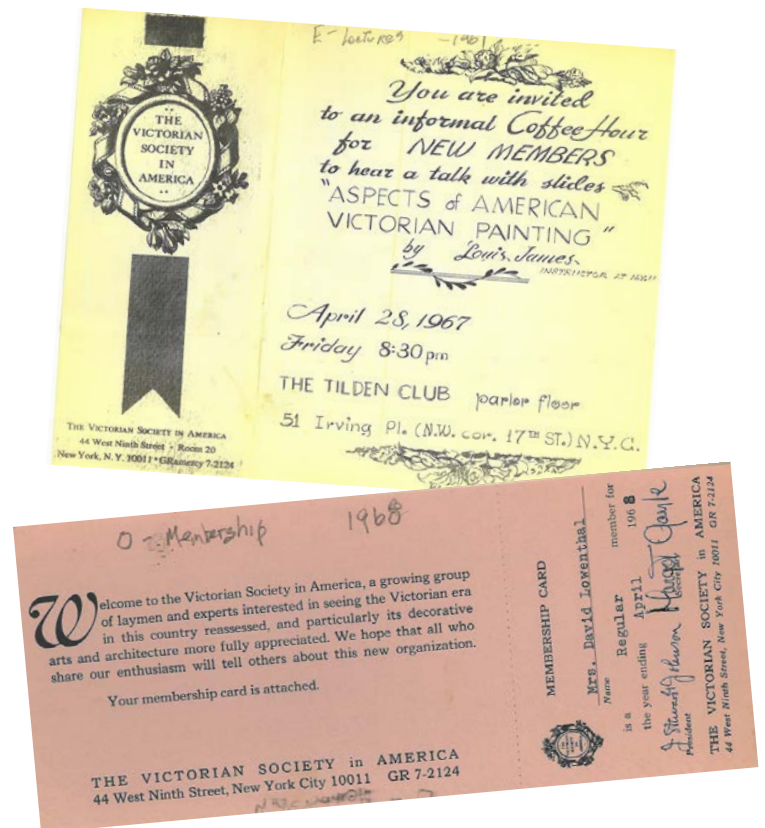
Image: Gayle, right, at the National Trust conference in Philadelphia, October 7, 1966. Courtesy of Carol Gayle

* Anthony C. Wood, "Individual Interview: The Reminiscences of Margot Gayle," New York Archive Project, April 26, 1984. We gratefully acknowledge Anthony C. Wood and NYPAP for gathering and publishing the Gayle interviews and making these available for this article.

founding in December 1957 the “Committee of Neighbors to Get the Clock on Jefferson Market Court House Started!”. She then went on to found Friends of the Alice Austen House, in 1968 the Friends of the Old Sun Clock, and in 1970 the Friends of Cast Iron Architecture. Gayle additionally worked in public relations at the New York City Planning Commission (eventually as deputy director), which put her in touch with future chapter president **James Marston Fitch** (1909–2000) and his student **John G. Waite**. Gayle, along with Fitch and Waite and **James Grote Van Derpool** (1903–1979), formerly associate dean at Columbia University’s School of Architecture, and most identified with Avery Architectural Library, helped to lobby for the passage of the New York City Landmarks Law (1965). Van Derpool became the first executive director of the Landmarks Preservation Commission from April 1962 to November 1965*. He and his family had made up a tenth of Attingham’s first class, and he recruited and shepherded Gayle’s application to the program; he served among the Society’s first board of advisors.

Recounting to Charles B. Hosmer, Jr. in June of 1982 (University of Maryland at College Park, 1991) on the founding, Gayle reflected that upon returning from the British Isles, she and her classmates had hesitated, knowing that it would mean lots of time and unpaid work, and that all of her classmates already worked fulltime. After running into each other and past Attingham alumni at various events, they “decided that we’d take a flier at it, and we would announce it. . . . and of course, we always considered that we would be a branch of the English Society [but this was not possible as a tax-exempt non-profit organization]. . . . And I think that was kind of sad for the English people from their point of view, because I think they thought we would be an American branch that would help bring in some American money to them. So then there we were! And so we started that. Brendan [Gill] always says we started in my kitchen, because we used to sit around my kitchen table and address the notices and envelopes and so on.” Gayle and others attended the National Trust conference in Philadelphia in 1966 where she “did a homemade exhibit and ran a little table. . . . Everything was so homemade but we did get the Victorian Society started,” and she handed out the Society’s first descriptive leaflets on mauve paper (sometimes later referred to as the “purple brochures”), from a stockpile so enthusiastically printed that it was only exhausted in June 1968.

Documents in the archive report that at the time of incorporation, the initial directors were Gayle and **Charles Lauriston Livingston Jr, Esq.**, Park Slope resident and an attorney at his distinguished family’s law firm, Lott and Livingston. The third director was Gramercy resident **Ruth Emery** (1901–1996), a British-born Rutgers University history professor with a focus on the Gothic Revival and the intersection of social history with the built environment. She was also the first Executive Secretary (from 1951 to 1967) of the Conference on British Studies (now the North American Conference on British Studies). The other three original incorporators, including Karpinski, were Gramercy resident **Mary C. Karp**, a legal correspondent (and likely a “paper trustee” for the incorporation’s required six directors and she lived near Emery), and Yorkville resident **Marvin D. Schwartz** (1928–2011), Curator of Decorative Arts at the Brooklyn Museum (from 1954 to 1968) and who later originated the long-running “Antiques” column in the *New York Times* from 1966 to 1972.



Victorian Society New York
c/o Village Alliance
8 East 8th Street
New York, NY 10003



Images: An invitation to a new members event, and an early membership card, 1967. Courtesy of James Russiello

*A precursor to the Landmarks Preservation Commission was established in 1962 by City Planning, but had no legal authorization to designate landmarks.

The first annual business meeting on March 25, 1967, occurred during a daylong bus trip from New York to Philadelphia. The meeting continued at the Philadelphia Athenaeum with a slide lecture by Jane Fawcett on Victorian London, with Nikolaus Pevsner as the guest of honor. Subsequently stationery was ordered featuring the organization's name in a highly decorative, 19th-century-style display font known as Koster. The logo—which was used from at least 1967 through 2015—featured a floral swag wreath-and-ribbon oval cartouche with a simple serif “The Victorian Society in America”. The logo appeared on membership cards, along with the Johnson and Gayle’s signatures. Gayle’s official positions varied from Secretary to Treasurer to Vice President, but her name and address were always on the card.

On the initial stationery, Pevsner was listed as Chairman of the Victorian Society, **Henry-Russell Hitchcock** (1903–1987) as Honorary President, and Johnson as President, with **Thomas Scharman Buechner** (1926–2010) as Vice President, Gayle as Secretary, **Evelyn Ortner** (1924–2006) as Assistant Secretary, Karpinski as Treasurer, and Mayer as Assistant Treasurer, along with 33 exceptionally notable advisory committee members. Later, Gayle described the honorary roles as, “If [Pevsner] is the dean of British architectural historians, [Hitchcock] is the dean of American architectural historians,” and related her avoidance of paramount roles when describing earlier 1950s efforts with an honorary chairman: “In the old days, the way women were, they’d say, ‘I’ll do all the work but you be chairman’ to the man, you see.”

Spreading the Word

Success brought more work, and many early officers and directors did not make it through their terms. Mayer moved to Chicago when the Cooper Union Museum closed in 1967. Buechner was the founding director of the Corning Museum of Glass and director of the Brooklyn Museum (from 1960 to 1971) during a challenging financial period, but led efforts to save architectural terra cotta fragments from Louis Sullivan’s Bayard-Condict Building and sculpture by Daniel Chester French from the city’s redevelopment of the Manhattan Bridge, as well as receiving objects from Ivan Karp’s Anonymous Arts Recovery Society. Evelyn Ortner and her husband **Edward “Everett” Howard Ortner** (1919–2012) were key figures in the Brooklyn Brownstone Revival of Park Slope.



Press clippings in the archive files reveal that Gayle’s grassroots efforts undoubtedly contributed to a remarkable press push during the Winter of 1966/67, which resulted in Victorian reappraisal trend pieces and articles. Many citations quoted Gayle, such as in the *New York World Journal Tribune*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The Star Tribune* (Minneapolis), and the *Baltimore Sun*, which, in an article titled “New American Organization Works to Preserve Victoriana,” appears to relate the entire press statement, listing all names of the founders and planned trips in the northeast, including, “the group was formed at the urging of Nikolaus Pevsner, head of the 10-year-old British Victorian Society. . . . The new society is a constituent member of the National Trust of Historic Preservation . . .” In addition to Gayle’s outreach, Hitchcock invited future national Vice President **Brendan Gill** (1914–1997) for one of the early Victorian excursions to Tarrytown and Irvington, New York, and it was Gill’s subsequent write-up in his *New Yorker* column, published in the December 31, 1966 issue, that greatly raised the public’s awareness of the new Society.

Victorian Society New York
c/o Village Alliance
8 East 8th Street
New York, NY 10003

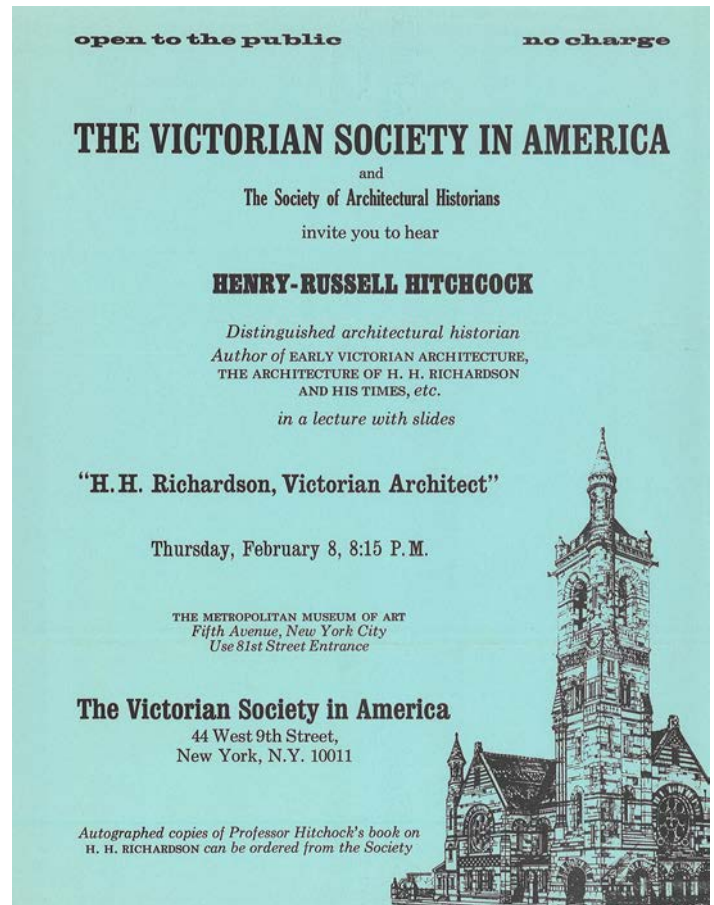


Image: Gayle with architect of the interior remodeling of the Jefferson Market Courthouse, Giorgio Cavaglieri. Cavaglieri was Metro Chapter president (1973–1976), 1967. Courtesy of Carol Gayle

Many of these early Society directors lived in or around Manhattan's Greenwich Village and Gramercy or Brooklyn's Park Slope. The initial newsletter items, preservation efforts, and walking tours, which frequently advertised visiting the interiors of private houses, were consequently organized around these neighborhoods throughout 1966 and 1967. Early four-page newsletters contained prominent features on a recent restoration, a book list of new titles for sale at a discount, topical exhibitions nationwide, classified-like notices by scholars seeking sources on subjects, solicitations to create a slide library, and news of upcoming lectures and tours, including the British summer school. Early on, the Donnell Library on West 53rd Street was a favorite site for lectures, though the popularity of these events soon forced the committee to search for larger venues. Initially a four-tiered membership level existed: \$5 for regular, \$10 for sustaining, \$25 for founding, and \$250 for life, which were raised and expanded to six tiers in 1969 to \$10 for regular, \$25 for contributing, \$100 for sustaining, \$250 for corporate, \$1,000 for life, and \$5,000+ for benefactor, which could then be partially rebated to local chapters.

Through the Preservation Committee's early special meetings on Manhattan cast-iron architecture in May 1968 at the Grolier Club, a series of walking tours and lectures were arranged, as well as the first pamphlet written by Michael Brooks and Gayle and sold as a benefit for the VSA. Through these efforts, the SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District was designated in 1973.

Taken together, these early records, now carefully preserved at New York Historical, trace more than the administrative beginnings of the Victorian Society in America and the New York chapter's refounding as the Metropolitan Chapter of the Victorian Society in America, known since 2008 as the Victorian Society New York. The records document the emergence of a new cultural sensibility in the United States: one that reexamined, revalued, and ultimately helped secure the survival of 19th-century architecture and design at a moment when such heritage was widely dismissed or endangered. From kitchen-table meetings in Margot Gayle's apartment to a national membership network, from sale orders written on onion-skin to landmark preservation victories, the Society's formative years reveal how individual initiative, transatlantic influence, and institutional ambition converged to reshape public understanding of the Victorian



era. The archives stand not only as a record of what was saved, but as evidence of how preservation itself became a movement, one still unfolding today.



Victorian Society New York
c/o Village Alliance
8 East 8th Street
New York, NY 10003



Images: above: An advertisement for a lecture, 1967. Courtesy of James Russiello • *following pages:* Vol. 1 No. 4 Winter issue of the VSA's newsletter. Courtesy of James Russiello

The Victorian Society in America

44 West Ninth Street, New York, N. Y. 10011 • GRamercy 7-2124

Vol. 1

Winter 1967

No. 4



Photo by Gil Amiaga

TWO MAJOR VICTORIAN LANDMARKS SAVED

This autumn has seen the public opening of two of New York City's Victorian monuments, abandoned and threatened with demolition, which have been restored and put to new uses. The old Jefferson Market Courthouse, alias "Old Jeff," is now the Greenwich Village branch of the New York Public Library, and the old building of the Astor Library, one of the organizations incorporated into the present Public Library system, has been purchased by the New York Shakespeare Festival as a theater building and headquarters.

In 1876, the year of its completion, the Jefferson Market Courthouse was a proud

municipal ornament, a conspicuous improvement on an area of land that had up until then been covered with wooden market buildings. Designed by two architects of English origin, Calvert Vaux and Frederick Withers, it was in that banded variety of mid-Victorian English Gothic, venetian-influenced, that was called either Ruskin Gothic or the "Lean Bacon Style" in its time. Highly elaborate, it had stained glass and carved stonework to an extent that crime and punishment have not seemed to require in our century, as well as that dead-smooth, absolutely unvariegated wall masonry dear to mid-Victorian sensibilities. Above mountainous roofs rose a tower, bearing a public clock, a lookout post for the adjacent fire station, and a bell that was rung to summon the firemen. For decades the building served as the municipal courthouse; by the mid-1940's it was so no longer. Dirty and uncared-for, it led a peculiar, checkered career as a shelter for various agencies of the city. In the 1950's it looked as if the old building would be auctioned off, and another dull apartment house erected on the site.

Greenwich Village, however, is no stranger to whimsy, and this piece of condensed Camelot, all roofs and chimneys, struck the fancy of some Villagers, shabby as it was. Sixth Avenue, down in the Village, is a dull and pushy place, with the visual qualities of an unhealed gash, and the Ruskinian fantasies of the Courthouse were - and are - like a mute reproach to the roaring banality of the street. Once the resolution was formed to save the building, a quiet beginning was made, in the form of a movement to set the out-of-service tower clock going again. Margot Gayle, a Villager (and the present Secretary of the Victorian Society

in America), joined with Harold Birns, a New York official, to found the Village Neighborhood Committee for the Clock on the Jefferson Market Courthouse. This was late in 1959; two years later, the clock was formally started again. The building was, in a sense, reanimated, but there was still the challenging problem of finding something for it to do. Around this time, however, the existing branch library for the Village was found inadequate, and this circumstance seemed to suggest a possible new role for Old Jeff. Accordingly, a Committee for a Library in the Jefferson Market Courthouse came into being, and by the next year had succeeded in getting one of its members, architect Giorgio Cavaglieri, commissioned to do a feasibility study on the matter for the city. He reported that the restoration of the building and its conversion into a library was possible - at a price. After further consultations, revisions of estimates, and hard pleading, Cavaglieri's plans were approved by the city's Board of Public Works, and the complicated work of repair and rebuilding begun.

Concepts of sound and safe building have changed since 1875, and the new concepts, written into law, complicated still further a tricky remodeling job. Here are a few of the things that had to be done. A new, straight main stair had to be installed by the old, winding one. Partitions and walls had to be taken out, and new spaces opened up. Two chimneys were reduced to dummy status when their supporting substructures were removed in the course of the interior alterations. Masonry had to be cleaned. Dead rats and pigeons had to be shoveled out of the belfrey, and the place disinfected. Most ceilings from the more ornate rooms had to be taken down and carefully reproduced. And the massy gable on the Sixth Avenue facade had to be tied back against an eventual plunge into the street.

As the building now appears, it is a mixture of the old, the apparently old, and the obviously new. Cavaglieri added no pseudo-Victorian detail to the building except for one modest dormer, added to house an air-conditioning intake. The minor interior spaces, the lighting fixtures, the new doorframes, and the book

cases are emphatically and starkly of the present. One interior making its public debut is the basement, now a reference room; its soft red exposed brickwork and exposed iron joists create a visual pleasure of a sort that we are more able to appreciate than the generation that built Old Jeff.

The other building, the old Astor Library, was built in three stages, beginning with a foursquare red brick and brownstone section, with "Venetian" tracery, that opened in 1854. To this, on either side, were added two nearly identical sections, the last in the late '70's, to create a symmetrical three-part composition. Once again, the building lost its original function, and was put to miscellaneous uses, latterly as an office for a Jewish charitable organization. In January 1966 Joseph Papp, Producer-Director of the New York Shakespeare Festival, decided with some misgiving to purchase the building for the use of the Festival, which until then had confined itself to temporary accommodations, tours, and summer performances in Central Park. Once again, the architect chose for the rehabilitation was - and remains - Giorgio Cavaglieri. Once again, too, the design approach has been one of a clean break between the restored old and the added new. The first of the auditoriums to open (this September), the Florence Sutro Anspacher Theater, illustrates this. The original hall was an oblong, two-story skylighted atrium, both stories having galleries with a white-and-gold Corinthian order that concealed the working structure of iron and timber. Cavaglieri added tasteful, obviously modern seating to this atrium space, and treated the adjacent spaces as plain access and service areas for actors and public. The atrium itself he restored meticulously to its pristine white and gold, except for the central bay on one side, flanking the stage. Here, the ornament was stripped away, and the underlying structure painted black as a support for a cantilevered lighting grid, also painted black.

In another theater of equal size - 300 seats - Cavaglieri is working with raw volume, with all partitions and structural members cleared away, but in the

work that remains, including the creation of a "coffeehouse theater," a children's theater, a puppet workshop, a chamber music recital hall, and a large rehearsal room, the approach will be more conservative, with the existing elaborate ornamentation restored.

Rehabilitation of an historic and ornate building, done with care and conscience, is not a cheap matter. While it is true that you have your walls up already, your ceilings may have to come down and go up again, expensively rejuvenated. You may learn that, to the Fire Department, your grand winding stair is not a stair because it does wind, or that lime mortar joints are no longer allowed by the building code. And common labor no longer gets \$2.00 a day, nor a plasterer \$5.50. In other words, you may have to go farther and spend more to get your working monument. But - to a greater or lesser extent, it can be done, and in pragmatic New York, thusfar cold to historic preservation, two organizations this year gave the public proof that sometimes someone is willing to pay the price.

ALL EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

Should be sent to the Editor, Walter C. Kidney, Apartment 4B, 20 Sidney Place, Brooklyn, N. Y. 11201.

A DEMONSTRATION BROWNSTONE REHAB

New York City is not only restoring monuments for cultural purposes. Brooklyn Union Gas Company has purchased a decrepit brownstone at 211 Berkeley Street, in Brooklyn's Park Slope area, as a demonstration of the ways in which such a house can be rehabilitated at a moderate expense by individuals. VSA's Assistant Secretary Evelyn Ortner was in charge of the rehabilitation. Persons interested in learning more may write to Alfred E. Jennings, 195 Montague Street, Brooklyn N. Y. 11201, either to arrange a visit to the house or to obtain the booklet, 211 Berkeley Place, Before and After. A film on the rehabilitation is being made.

WELCOME, SAVANNAH!

A local Victorian group is being established in Savannah, Georgia, by Mrs. Charlton Theus and Mrs. Howard Morrison. Mrs. Theus will be president. Persons interested in further information can write to Mrs. Theus at 15 Island Drive, Isle of Hope, Savannah, Ga. 31406. The annual meeting of the National Trust for Historic Preservation will be held at Savannah next fall, and the Savannah chapter hopes to have some event for Victorians attending that meeting.

TWO NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY SHOWS

Daguerrotypes and Their Makers, 1848-1875, opens January 12. Theatrical Posters of Bygone Days, into March.

ART NOUVEAU AT THE GROLIER CLUB

An exhibition of Art Nouveau books, glass, posters, drawings, and furnishings is being held at the Grolier Club, 47 E. 60th Street, New York, through February 10.

AS WE SAW OTHERS

Europe Seen Through American Eyes in the 19th Century is the title of a show being held at the Allentown Art Museum, Allentown, Pa., through January 23.

BEARDSLEY AT L. A.

An exhibition of the work of Aubrey Beardsley is being held at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, at Los Angeles, through February 4.

RODIN AT L. A.

An exhibition of the works of Auguste Rodin (1840-1917) is being held at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art through January 14.

THE TRIUMPH OF REALISM

is the name of a show of paintings by American, French, and German painters

of the 19th and early 20th centuries, organized by Axel von Saldern of the Dusseldorf Kunstmuseum and Donelson F. Hoopes of the Brooklyn Museum. It includes work by Eakins, Glackens, Harnett, Homer, Sargent, Courbet, Degas, Fantin-Latour, Gérôme, Manet, Meissonier, Millet, Corinth, painters of the Munich School, and others. It will be at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts through January 14, and at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor from February 17 through March 31.

EXHIBITION OF LAUGHLIN PHOTOS

Phoenix Re-Arises: An Unknown Victorian Chicago Newly Revealed, is the title of a show of photographs by Clarence John Laughlin, opening at the Mead Library of Ideas, Pan Am Building, New York, on January 9.

LECTURES, SHOWS, OR TOURS DEALING WITH VICTORIANA IN YOUR AREA?

We are interested in public events that propagate the appreciation of Victorian culture, wherever they happen. If you know of any such events in your neighborhood, we would like to have work of them for possible mention in the newsletter. Send information to Walter C. Kidney, Editor, 20 Sidney Place, Brooklyn, N. Y. 11201.

RENWICK QUERY FROM A VSA MEMBER

Jan Cantor, Chester Dale Fellow at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, is writing a book on James Renwick, Jr., (1818-95), architect of St. Patrick's Cathedral and of Grace Church, in New York. He would like to learn of any buildings with the local reputation of having been designed by Renwick, and is also anxious to learn of any material relating to the Renwick family. He can be reached at the Metropolitan's Department of American Painting and Sculpture, New York 10028.

DATES TO NOTE

February 8: "H. H. Richardson as a Victorian Architect," a public lecture by Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Honorary Pres-

ident of the VSA, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. An announcement will be sent to members.

February 18: "Fancies and Follies of Litchfield Villa in Romantic Architecture," a lecture by Clay Lancaster on behalf of the Friends of Prospect Park, at Finch College, New York City, at 3 P.M. VSA members are welcome.

March 15: A lecture on American Victorian architecture by George B. Tatum, member of the VSA Advisory Board and former President of the Society of Architectural Historians, at the Donnell Library, 20 West 53rd Street, New York City, at 8:00.

March 29: First VSA Annual Meeting, at the Grolier Club, 47 E. 60th Street, New York City. Refreshments will be served.

June 8-9: Weekend architectural tour of Cape May, New Jersey. More in the next newsletter.

June 24-July 4: Third annual English Victorian Society Tour, this year visiting the West Country, and basing itself in Bristol and Exeter. Full details will follow.



The Florence Sutro Anspacher Theater
Photo courtesy New York Times

Profiles in Preservation: Barbaralee Diamonstein-Spielvogel • Jeremy Woodoff, President, VSNY and Co-Chair, VSNY Preservation Committee

I first met Barbaralee Diamonstein-Spielvogel upon my arrival on the staff of the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission in May of 1980. By then, Diamonstein-Spielvogel had already been a commissioner on the 11-member board since 1972, when she was appointed by Mayor John Lindsay. She was to remain a commissioner until 1987, making her the longest-serving commissioner at that time and since.

I learned soon enough of Diamonstein-Spielvogel's profound interest in historic preservation, and not only at the rarified levels that might be inferred from her always regal bearing. If there is one theme that can be attached to her long career, it is to foster an awareness of our shared history and culture and to bring the pleasures and benefits of historic buildings and districts to the attention of the broadest possible audience.

Both the length and breadth of Diamonstein-Spielvogel's commitment to preservation have been remarkable. Following her long tenure as a Landmarks Commissioner, Diamonstein-Spielvogel formed and was appointed chair of the [Landmarks Preservation Foundation](#), a not-for-profit organization that funded projects benefiting the Commission and historic preservation in New York. These included a program to replace standard street name signs in historic districts with terra-cotta color signs identifying the historic district. This simple step proved to be enormously useful as a way to inform property owners and the public of their presence within a district.

A related program installs enamel signs with maps and brief architectural descriptions of the district on existing lampposts. Both types of signs were designed by famed Italian designer Massimo Vignelli. While Diamonstein-Spielvogel's tenure as chair of the Foundation ended in 1995, both sign programs remain active today.

Recognizing that important historical events occurred in buildings that are not landmarks, and also that figures in the world of arts and culture lived in such undesignated buildings, Diamonstein-Spielvogel began another project



in 1995 under the auspices of her newly formed Historic Landmarks Preservation Center. The Cultural Medallions program installs on facades small enamel plaques, also designed by Vignelli and maintaining the terra-cotta, black, and white color scheme of the street signs. The plaques document notable occurrences, distinguished individuals, and other important aspects of New York City's cultural, economic, political, and social history.

Nearly 140 Cultural Medallions have been installed to date. Many of the installation ceremonies have been recorded and are available online through Duke University. One such ceremony exemplifies the care with which the program, under Diamonstein-Spielvogel's direction, selects the sites to be recognized and organizes the dedication ceremonies for maximum effectiveness. Introducing as many people as

Victorian Society New York
c/o Village Alliance
8 East 8th Street
New York, NY 10003

Image: Barbaralee Diamonstein-Spielvogel and former Landmarks Commission chair Gene Norman. Credit: Jeremy Woodoff



possible to aspects of the city's history with which they may not be familiar, these events serve to help those interested in preservation of our history bond together in a city that too often throws that history away.

On October 21, 2015, a group gathered at 190 New York Avenue in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, the former home of African American singer and actress Ethel Waters. Waters lived here towards the end of her career, in the 1950s. She was interviewed on site in a live [“Person to Person” television interview](#) conducted by famed CBS journalist Edward R. Murrow in 1954.

The ceremony was hosted by Diamonstein-Spielvogel, who described Waters's life, beginning in poverty in 1896 and marrying at age 13. Her career began with the vaudeville circuit in the early 20th century and continued as she sang in nightclubs and made her first recordings during the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s. Theater, movies, and television followed, with her career ending only with her

death in 1977. [At the ceremony](#) the late, former, beloved Landmarks Commission Chair Gene Norman, the last of the chairs under whom Diamonstein-Spielvogel served, read a letter from Leslie Uggams, who, as a child, had a role in “Beulah,” the groundbreaking weekly television show starring Waters. The late Rich Conaty, longtime host of WFUV’s “Big Broadcast” radio program, played Waters’s old recordings and provided a musical appreciation. The Medallion was unveiled and the text read aloud by Deborah Bershad, former executive director of the Art Commission of the City of New York (now called the Public Design Commission). All of this was watched over by the current owners of the house and family descendants of Waters, among others. All of the Medallions, like this one, provide brief, easy to read histories accessible to all New Yorkers as they pass by otherwise anonymous buildings throughout the city.

Diamonstein-Spielvogel’s other contributions to historic preservation include the book *The Landmarks of New*



Victorian Society New York
c/o Village Alliance
8 East 8th Street
New York, NY 10003

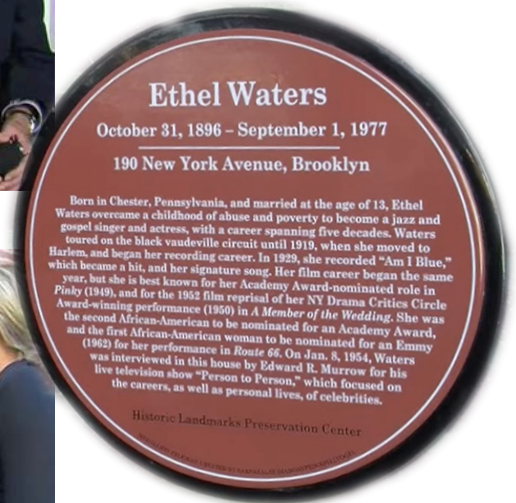


Images: Views today in Park Slope, showing samples of the Historic District Map/Marker Program, created in 1988, and the Historic District Street Name Signage Program, created in 1989. Credit: Jeremy Woodoff

York, first published in 1988 and now in its Sixth Edition, and serving as Chair of NYC Landmarks50 Alliance and Landmarks60 Alliance, both consortiums of organizations and individuals commemorating and celebrating the 50th and 60th anniversaries of the NYC landmarks law.

Diamonstein-Spielvogel’s contributions to related fields in the arts, culture, and education are extensive and include

appointments at the city, state, and federal levels, going all the way back to creation of the first and only White House Festival of the Arts in 1965 and extending into the 2020s. Having been involved in historic preservation in New York City almost since the beginning of the modern preservation movement in the city, Barbaralee Diamonstein-Spielvogel well deserves to be the subject of *Panorama*’s first Profiles in Preservation.



Victorian Society New York
c/o Village Alliance
8 East 8th Street
New York, NY 10003



Images: Screenshot from the video recording on October 21, 2015, of the installation of a Cultural Medallion honoring Ethel Waters at 190 New York Avenue, Brooklyn. The ceremony was led by Barbaralee Diamonstein-Spielvogel, who established the Cultural Medallion program for the Historic Landmarks Preservation Center. Pictured with Diamonstein-Spielvogel, on the left is Chris Pattishall and at right, Jeremy Woodoff. Source: Youtube

Remembering Pioneering Activist Barnett

Shepherd • Claire M. Regan, Advance/SILive.com

(adapted by VSNY board member Eve M. Kahn)

Barnett Shepherd couldn't move mountains, but he came close in 1987 when a developer planned to demolish a 19th-century farmhouse on Staten Island. Shepherd, then executive director of Historic Richmond Town, jumped into action and arranged to acquire the house for \$20,000 and move it to the historic village. Permits were secured, streets were closed, trees were trimmed, and utilities were disconnected for the 2.5-mile move of the Jacob Crocheron House to its current safe haven on Richmond Road.

Shepherd, who died August 6, 2025, at age 87, wielded that same conviction to save countless other historic sites. Staten Island's premiere preservationist and historian, he safeguarded the borough's history as development surged. "Barnett knew very well that fighting to preserve old buildings is often an uphill battle because funding and resources are never easy to come by, and time and nature are always taking their toll," said Sarah Clark, former curator at Historic Richmond Town. "He taught me that it's always worth it to keep trying, even when progress seems slow."

Shepherd had found his activist calling by a rather circuitous route. A native of Missouri, he spent his early childhood in Mississippi, where his father worked at the United States Gypsum Company and his mother ran a millinery shop. The family moved to New Jersey for his middle school years and then to Oregon for high school. He earned a bachelor's degree in English literature from Alma College in Michigan and a master of divinity degree from Union Theological Seminary in Manhattan, intending to serve as a Presbyterian minister and fight for civil rights. Ordained in 1964, he worked at congregations in Alabama and Indiana.

By the 1970s, armed with a master's degree in art history from Indiana University, he moved to New York City to "satisfy a greater love for art and culture," he later explained. He made ends meet as a legal typist and church janitor before landing a position at the Staten Island Museum, conducting an architectural survey of the borough. During the 1970s, he founded the Preservation League of Staten Island and spearheaded efforts to adapt Sailors' Snug Harbor, a former retirement home for seamen, into a cultural center. No



Victorian Society New York
c/o Village Alliance
8 East 8th Street
New York, NY 10003

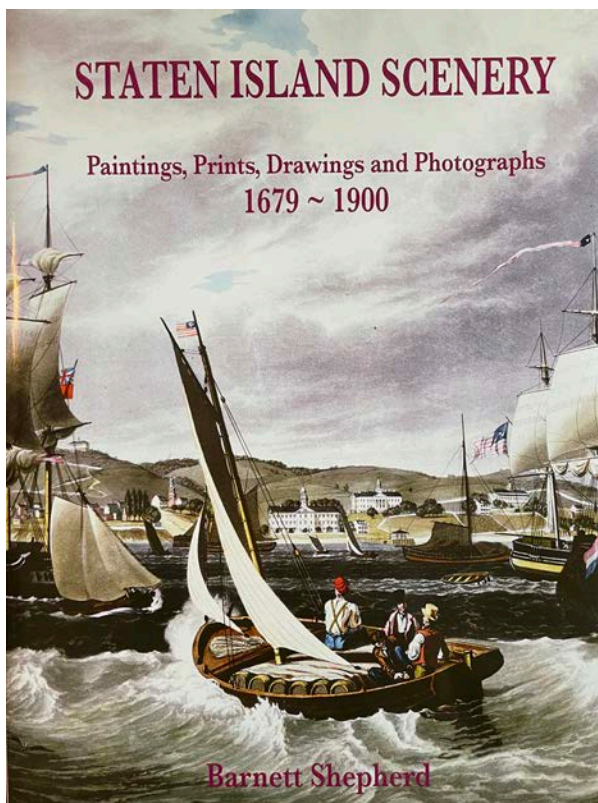
Image: Pioneering activist Barnett Shepherd, 2010. Credit: Bill Higgins



headwinds could deter him; as he noted in a 2012 interview with the New York Preservation Archive Project (NYPAP), he kept battling although “there was a great fear of the landmarks designation and no one wanted to support our efforts.”

He joined the Historic Richmond Town staff as registrar in 1979 and was named executive director and CEO in 1981. His theological training, gentle demeanor, unflappability, and strong mediating and listening skills came in handy as he multitasked; he considered the Richmond Town work “a continuation of my ministry.”

During his 19-year tenure at the 100-acre site, Shepherd oversaw the \$1 million renovation of the Historical Museum, restoration and reroofing for 18 buildings, and the design and construction of the Edna Hayes Collections Care building. The main administrative headquarters, the Stephens-Prier House (circa 1857–59), became part of the village under his leadership.



Over the years he documented and helped preserve structures and landscapes across the borough, whether lighthouses, cemeteries, civic and industrial buildings, farmhouses, or houses of worship. Among his favorite projects were Christ Church New Brighton, a Gothic Revival structure, and his own antiques-filled home, the Judge Jacob Tysen house, an 1830s Greek Revival building on Fillmore Street near Snug Harbor, which he shared with his husband Nick Downen. (The couple married in 2024 at Christ Church New Brighton.) Shepherd meanwhile found time to author and co-author meticulously researched books including *Sailors' Snug Harbor, 1801–1976* (1995), *Tottenville: The Town the Oyster Built* (2003), *The Staten Island Ferry: A History* (2008, with Patricia Salmon), and *Staten Island Scenery: Paintings, Prints, Drawings and Photographs* (2013).

“My publications will live on after I’m gone and I feel wonderful about that,” he told NYPAP.

His many accolades include a 2019 Lucy G. Moses Preservation Award from the New York Landmarks Conservancy. Peg Breen, the conservancy’s president, bestowed the prize while calling him “‘Mr. Preservation’ on Staten Island.”

As he told NYPAP, “The study of history broadens our horizons as individuals.” He added, “You can stand in the shoes of other people in times past and become more sensitive to people in your present environment.” He described feeling proud to help build the borough’s preservation community: “In spite of all the discouragement here about preservation, it brings together wonderful people.”

Jessica Phillips, executive director and CEO of Historic Richmond Town, eulogized Shepherd as “a visionary advocate for Staten Island’s history and one of the borough’s most dedicated stewards of its built environment.” She added, “His legacy will live on in every building saved, every story told, and every visitor inspired by this community he helped to shape.”

Shepherd’s last book, on the earliest generations of the Vanderbilts on Staten Island (the family arrived there in the 1650s), is forthcoming. And efforts are underway to co-name the Fillmore Street block adjoining the Tysen house after this influential activist.

Victorian Society New York
c/o Village Alliance
8 East 8th Street
New York, NY 10003

Image: The cover of Shepherd’s *Staten Island Scenery: Paintings, Prints, Drawings and Photographs* (2013).
Courtesy of Eve M. Kahn





Victorian Society New York
c/o Village Alliance
8 East 8th Street
New York, NY 10003



Images, from the Archive: clockwise from upper left: VSA Summer School Study Tour, Ireland, September 1997. Credit: Sibyl McC. Groff • Susan Tunick presenting on terra cotta at the Margot Gayle Fund Benefit at the Estonian House, 2018. Credit: James Russiello • Margot Gayle (second from left) and friends at Sotheby's, c. 1980. Credit: Steven Tucker, courtesy of Sibyl McC. Groff • Dan Allen, Jeremy Woodoff, and Christabel Gough, at right, at the 52nd Annual Meeting, May 2019. Credit: James Russiello • George Calderaro and revelers assembled at the 52nd Annual Meeting, May 2019. Credit: James Russiello • Jay Shockley, Sandra D'Andrea, Mary Anne Hunting, Sibyl Groff, Bill Dane, Pauline Metcalf, and others at the 25th Anniversary party for the Newport Summer School. Courtesy of Sibyl McC. Groff



Victorian Society New York
c/o Village Alliance
8 East 8th Street
New York, NY 10003



Images: clockwise from upper left: Author Elisabeth Paling Funk during book-signing following her lecture on “Washington Irving, the Dutch Santa Claus, and the American Santa Claus” on January 23rd • Board member Kate Culkin with author Geoff Wisner after his lecture on George Templeton Strong on February 9th • Our group, posing on the grand staircase at the end of their tour of Lockwood-Mathews Mansion on March 21st • Gathering around Tredwell’s kitchen table at the Merchant’s House Museum on April 12th • Hostess Clara Aich engaging the group in her home, once the historic National Fine Art Foundry, during the Margot Gayle Benefit Tour on April 17th • The first of two wonderful evenings with Emerging Scholars on April 28th. Images courtesy of VSNY



Richard Hampton Jenrette Foundation

Advancing education, innovation,
and stewardship in the fields of
historic preservation, decorative
arts, and historic landscapes.

Jenrette.org

JGWA ARCHITECTS

Over 30 years of providing industry leadership
in the preservation, restoration, and
adaptive use of significant historic sites.

Learn more at:
www.jgwaarchitects.com

384 Broadway
Albany, NY 12207

225 Broadway, Suite 1515
New York, NY 10007



BCA

BUILDING CONSERVATION ASSOCIATES INC

HISTORIC PRESERVATION • ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION

BCA Proudly Supports

The Victorian Society

Congratulations on 60 Years Preserving

19th and Early 20th Century Cultural Heritage

44 East 32nd Street, 12th Floor, New York, NY 10016
212.777.1300

info@bcausa.com • www.bcausa.com

Victorian Society New York
c/o Village Alliance
8 East 8th Street
New York, NY 10003





SPECIALIST STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING

We bring award-winning technical expertise to all aspects of historical and existing building projects.

We were happy to employ our passion for preserving New York's architectural heritage to the restoration of Gothic Bridge in Central Park.



90 Broad Street 15th Floor,
New York, NY 10004
information@oldstructures.nyc
oldstructures.nyc

Principals:

Mona Abdelfatah, Marie Ennis,
Donald Friedman, Tim Michiels



**THOMAS A. FENNIMAN
ARCHITECT**

ONE UNION SQUARE WEST
ROOM 501
NEW YORK, NY 10003

THOMAS@TAFARCHITECT.COM
212.414.0250

ST. FRANCIS XAVIER CHURCH, NYC



MARY OF NAZARETH PARISH - SACRED HEART CHURCH
2025 Victorian Society Preservation Award &
2026 NY Landmark Conservancy Lucy G. Moses Award

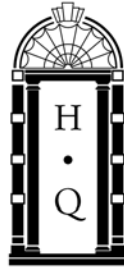


Zaskorski & Associates Architects, AIA, PC
247 West 35th St, Fl 16, New York, NY 10001
917.991.1097 | www.zaskorski.com

Renovation • Historic Preservation • Adaptive reuse • Sustainability

Victorian Society New York
c/o Village Alliance
8 East 8th Street
New York, NY 10003





HIGGINS QUASEBARTH & PARTNERS
CONSULTANTS IN THE PRESERVATION AND REHABILITATION OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

hqpreservation.com

**Congratulations to the
Victorian Society New York
for 60 years of dedication to
the city's historic heritage!**

LI/SALTZMAN ARCHITECTS PC
ARCHITECTURE AND PRESERVATION
50 BROADWAY NEW YORK NY 212.941.1838
INFO@LISALTZMAN.COM WWW.LISALTZMAN.COM

Victorian Society New York
c/o Village Alliance
8 East 8th Street
New York, NY 10003



2025–26: Past Programs

Emerging Scholars: Session II • May 5, 2026 @ 6:00–8:00 p.m.

Emerging Scholars: Session I • April 28, 2026 @ 6:00–8:00 p.m.

Margot Gayle Benefit Tour • April 17, 2026 @ 6:30–8:30 p.m.

“At the Tredwells’ Table” Culinary Tour • April 12, 2026 @ 11:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Museum Tour and Irish Heritage at Lockwood-Mathews Mansion • March 21, 2026 @ 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

Love and Loss After Wounded Knee: Two Star-Crossed Lovers and the Event that Changed Everything • February 26, 2026 @ 6:30–8:00 p.m.

Carving History • February 19, 2026 @ 6:30–8:00 p.m.

America’s Greatest Unknown Author: Rediscovering George Templeton Strong • February 9, 2026 @ 6:30–8:00 p.m.

Washington Irving, the Dutch Saint Nicholas, and the American Santa Claus • Friday, January 23, 2026 @ 6:30–8:00 p.m.

Early 1800s Music and Dance Extravaganza! • December 10, 2025 @ 6:30–8:00 p.m.

How Boss Tweed Killed New York’s First Subway! • November 13, 2025 @ 6:30–8:00 p.m.

Walking Tour: Finding Prospect Park • October 19, 2025 @ 11:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

The Queen of Bohemia Who Fought for the Poor • October 15, 2025 @ 6:30–7:30 p.m.

Queens: From Agricultural Hinterland to Vital Urban Corridor • October 14, 2025 @ 6:30–8:00 p.m.

Beyond Self-Reliance: Biography, Recovery, and Women’s Contributions to the American Renaissance • September 30, 2025 @ 6:30–8:00 p.m.

A (Nearly) Unknown 20th-Century Preservation Hero: Albert Sprague Bard, a Servant of Beauty • September 17, 2025 @ 6:30–8:00 p.m.

“Alexander Jackson Davis: Designer of Dreams” at Lyndhurst • September 6, 2025 @ 9:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.



Image: Ruth Orkin (American, Boston, Massachusetts 1921–1985 New York), *Ethel Waters, Carson McCullers, and Julie Harris at the Opening Night Party for “The Member of The Wedding,” New York City, 1950.* Gelatin silver, 15 5/8 × 19 1/2 in. Courtesy of Mary Engel/Ruth Orkin Photo Archive

2025–26: Upcoming Programs

Lightning Beneath the Sea: The Thrilling Race to Wire the World • Wednesday, June 10, 2026 @ 6:00–7:00 p.m. Join author James M. Tabor for the thrilling story of the 19th century’s Apollo moonshot, an Atlantic-spanning telegraph cable that changed the world. Co-sponsored with and taking place at the General Society of Mechanics & Tradesmen

Annual Meeting • Thursday, June 11, 2026 @ 7:00–9:00 p.m., [House of the Redeemer](#), 7 East 95th Street • Annual Business Meeting followed by Awards Ceremony and Reception

The New York Times “Morgue” Tour • Tuesday, June 23, 2026 @ 3:00–5:00 p.m. Join NYT archivist Jeff Roth for a special access tour through the newspaper’s historical clippings, photographic prints, microfilm records, periodicals library, and more!

New York’s Fabulous Fountains: A Walking Tour • Saturday, June 27, 2026 @ 1:00–3:00 p.m. Join the Victorian Society and author Stephanie Azzarone for an in-depth tour, starting at Bryant Park



Victorian Society New York
c/o Village Alliance
8 East 8th Street
New York, NY 10003



Panorama Contributors: Most sincere thanks to the following contributors to this issue of our quarterly newsletter: Chris Jend on architect E. G. W. Dietrich • Board member Brian Coleman and Curator Nicole Mullen on the Victorian Jardinières from Coleman's collection now on view at the SFO • Jeffrey Chace on artist Harry Chase • Jeremy Woodoff on Litchfield Villa in Brooklyn's Prospect Park • VSA Board member James Russiello for an architect's history of the VSA • Jeremy Woodoff for the inaugural *Profiles in Preservation* featuring Barbaralee Diamonstein-Spielvogel • Claire M. Regan with Eve M. Kahn for their remembrance of preservationist Barnett Shepherd.

Editorial Committee: Matthew J. Kennedy, Aleya Lehmann, and Jeremy Woodoff.

JOIN US! Please join us as a student, young professional, seasoned professional, patron, or in one of our business membership categories. You may access [membership information](#) or a [donation form](#) on our [website](#) or with the QR code below!



Contact Info:

Victorian Society New York
c/o Village Alliance
8 East 8th Street
New York, NY 10003
info@vicsocny.org
membership@vicsocny.org
vicsocny.org

Board of Directors:

Joie Anderson
Brian Coleman
Christina Britton Conroy
Kate Culkin
Charlotte Fiehn
John Graham
Alicia Jaramillo
Emily Kahn
Matthew J. Kennedy
Robert Khederian
Aleya Lehmann
Leonard Marcus
Alexis Mucha
Erin O'Connor
Rachel Ann Reading
Grace Stokan
Bethany Vickery
Bruce M. White
Margaret Wood
Jeremy Woodoff

Acknowledgements:

Daniel D. Badger Golden Circle members: Richard Hampton Jenrette Foundation and Thomas A. Fenniman Architect • Daniel D. Badger Cast-Iron members: Li/Saltzman Architects, P.C. and Zaskorski & Associates Architects, AIA, P.C. • Sustainer members: Mike Luke, Zeynep Turan • Patron members: Alexis Barr, Marie Bingham, Kevin Grose, Aleya Lehmann, Ellen Washburn Martin, Robert A. Ouimette, Bruce M. White, and Carlo Zaskorski • 60th Anniversary Sponsors: Building Conservation Associates, Inc., Higgins Quasebarth & Partners, Li/Saltzman Architects, P.C., Old Structures Engineering, JGWA Architects, and Zaskorski & Associates Architects, AIA, P.C. • Special thanks to The Diamonstein-Spielvogel Foundation, Inc. for major support of our programs and services.

Mission • 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.



**CELEBRATING 60 YEARS
1966–2026**

Victorian Society New York
c/o Village Alliance
8 East 8th Street
New York, NY 10003



Image: The original logo of the Victorian Society in America, in use until c. 2015. Courtesy of VSA