

FRIENDS OF Florham

Spring 2005

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Historic Documents to Be Archived

With support from a grant from The Morris County Heritage Commission, the Friends of Florham announce that Antonia Moser, PhD, is archiving the collection of historic documents that chronicles the Vanderbilt-Twombly family history. The collection, recently increased by a donation of records and ledgers from the Burden (Twombly-Vanderbilt) family, is stored in the library of Fairleigh Dickinson University's College at Florham. The information will enhance understanding of how the Twombly family and others in their social circle interacted in Morris County. The Friends have long recognized the need to preserve these historic documents and to organize the materials making them accessible to historians and students.

The grant for \$2,000 came from the Morris County Heritage Commission Re-Grant Program, which is funded by the New Jersey Historical Commission. The Morris County Heritage Commission encourages the preservation of historical information and "provides resources to increase awareness of the people, places and events that have given our area a special place in the history



The Morris County Heritage Commission awarded a check for \$2,000 to the Friends of Florham to help archive documents related to the historic "Florham." From left are commission chairman Tracy Kinsel; county Freeholder Margaret Nordstrom; Friends board members Barbara Keefauver and Allan Kushen; Friends president Emma Joy Dana, and Friends secretary/treasurer Linda Meister, who wrote the grant application. Photo by Gail Tramontano

of New Jersey and America." Tracy Kinsel, chairman of the Morris County Heritage Commission, noted that this is one of 10 grants awarded. The Friends of Florham are administering the grant and supervising Moser. "The Friends are very excited about the organization and preservation techniques that Dr. Moser is providing for the files and records," said Emma Joy Dana, Friends president.

Moser is a graduate student in museum professions at Seton Hall University. She previously

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Plan to Celebrate at the Friends' 8th Annual Gala

This year's "Evening at Florham" is planned for Saturday, May 21, at the Mansion, College at Florham. The Gala Committee is headed by co-chairs Barbara Keefauver, Dawn Dupak and Linda Meister.

This year in addition to cocktails on the terrace, an excellent menu from the Twombly's chef, Joseph Donan, and dancing to the music of the John John-

son Trio, the evening will feature entertainment by The Ten, a renowned all male a capella singing group from the University Glee Club of New York.

Plan to join the Friends at 7 p.m. on May 21 for a wonderful evening. Tickets are \$150 per person or \$250 for patrons. The proceeds will support the ongoing renovations for "Florham."



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President's Letter

It is March 22 today, and even though winter ended two days ago, I was thrilled to see daffodils poking through the ground. By the time you read this newsletter, spring will be in full bloom, I hope. Also hopefully, some of our current projects will be either finished or being worked on.

One of these projects is to replace the wooden fences on either side of the beginning of the Mansion Drive at the crossroads at the top of the hill, with a post and chain treatment. I would like to do the same thing connecting the three stone walls which set apart the Frederick Law Olmsted Cutleaf Maple Garden, as mentioned in the last newsletter. Another project that is in the works is the repair of the balustrades in front of the Mansion and around the Italian Garden. Dr. Filippone has made all of the missing balusters, and we are just waiting for warm weather to get them placed.

At the moment we are investigating the possibility of restoring the lanterns around the Mansion courtyard and replacing those that are no longer there. The architect, Peter Dorne, has been helping us. We are also discussing the brick walls at the Madison Avenue entrance to the University,

and the necessity of making improvements in the exits and signage. So you see, there is always more to do.

We are thrilled and grateful to have received a wonderful grant from the Morris County freeholders through the Morris County Heritage Commission. We applied for this in order to help pay for an archivist who we hired to organize the Friends' files of papers, pictures and other records. But even more importantly she will organize the exciting gift of ledgers and other materials relating to "Florham" while the Twomblys were in residence. These were given to us by Edward Burden, the great-grandson of the Twomblys and will be so valuable for researchers. They are a real treasure! Antonia Moser, our archivist, is already hard at work arranging these records.

The time of the annual Gala, our largest fundraising event, is coming soon, and we hope to see many of you there. I do want to thank all of you who responded so generously to my letter last winter. Of course, we will always welcome any gifts you would like to send to help with our restoration or preservation projects.

Emma Joy Dana

Grant, continued from page 1

interned at the South Street Seaport Museum where she worked extensively with the archival collection. Her efforts resulted in the development of a policy for the arrangement and description of the museum's manuscript collection.

The Friends collection falls into three groups: original material, photocopies of original documents to be used for research and papers relating to the institutional history of the Friends of Florham. Moser will treat each group of papers as a separate unit and will follow the archival practice of preserving wherever possible the creator's organization of the materials. A finding list will make the materials more accessible, and the acid-free folders and boxes will aid in the preservation of the materials.

Curators at the Vanderbilt National Historic Site in Hyde Park, N.Y., expressed an interest in the contents of the Friends of Florham archives. The Friends of Florham and the Morris County Heritage Commission feel that the archiving project reinforces the network of Vanderbilt research archives and contributes to Morris County's historic visibility.

— Linda Meister and Antonia Moser

Kushen Appointed Board Member

Friends of Florham announces the nomination of Allan S. Kushen as a new board member. He brings a long history of service and experience to the Friends of Florham.



Photo by Gail Tramontano

Allan S. Kushen

Kushen has held positions in several organizations, including the Arts Council of the Morris Area, where he served as president for four years, the Montclair Museum, the Newark Museum, the Morris Museum, Kean College and Elizabeth Medical Center.

Kushen, a long-time resident of New Vernon, N.J., spent his entire 39-year professional career at Schering-Plough Corporation. Starting as a staff attorney, he was named vice president and general counsel in 1975. He retired from the corporation in 1994 with the position of senior vice president for public affairs.

The Friends welcome Kushen to the Board and look forward to benefiting from his experience with arts organizations in Morris County as well as his strong corporate background.

Reconstructive Surgery for Aging Balustrade

For over a century, the several hundred yards of elegant balustrades framing the Mansion portico, its Terrace Garden, Italian Garden and the semi-circular area facing the great building's entryway, stood handsomely and, seemingly, in their timeless marmoreal stateliness, everlastingly. They were created, probably in 1895 or 1896, as one of the more appealing McKim, Mead & White architectural peripherals as well as an instant reminder of the classical forms to which the legendary architects were so consistently devoted.

Eventually, however, the ceaseless attacks of time and weather had their unfortunate effect upon a number of the balusters, which crumbled and tumbled away, leaving portions of the balustrade resembling, as one waggish observer put it, "a hockey player's smile." To the Friends of Florham, committed to preserving as much as possible of the spirit and appearance of "Florham" in its prime, the gaps were blemishes. The Friends resolved to seek replacements for the missing balusters as promptly as possible.

"As promptly as possible" turned out to be a considerable length of time. The two trustees asked by their board colleagues to find replacement balusters spent the better part of a day visiting several masonry supply centers in northern New Jersey. They returned from their trip with unhappy news: none of the centers could supply the balusters, and they agreed that finding a source would be virtually impossible. The normal wait is a minimum of six months and, currently, reportedly much, much longer.

Equally daunting was the discovery that, even if they were available, the balusters would be quite expensive, the mold itself required to cast them costing several thousand dollars. And then the Friends were the beneficiaries of serendipity and an example of extraordinary spontaneous generosity.

The serendipity was the chance meeting at the funeral of Granville Conway between two board members and Dr. Ames Filippone, sitting behind the trustees and hearing their whispered conversation about the balusters in the moments preceding the beginning of the obsequies. When one of the trustees confessed sadly to the other that replacing the lost balusters might not be at all possible, Filippone leaned forward, tapped the nearest trustee on the shoulder and said, "I can make balusters."

When they received news of Filippone's offer, the Friends were understandably at least mildly astonished. Filippone, after all is not your typical masonry laborer. A distinguished and widely

esteemed physician residing in Morris Township and now retired, he was from 1973 until recently chief of surgery at Morristown Memorial Hospital.

Astonished or not, the board promptly made arrangements to accept with profound gratitude Filippone's remarkable offer to create more than a dozen of the balusters. He donated his time and labor and charged the Friends only for the materials needed and the cost of the labor provided by two assistants. Since each of the balusters weighs about 80 pounds, Filippone had two assistants helping with the considerable effort to lift the molds and replicate the balusters.

After many weeks of work, Filippone made 17 replacement balusters. Fashioning the mold itself can take as long as a week. Doing so requires the construction of a solid box large enough to hold whatever artifact is being replicated. The box, tightly wrapped in sturdy belts is laid on its side, and partially filled with sand into which the artifact is placed. In this case the artifact was the sizable and weighty prototype baluster — rescued from its fallen state by trustee Richard Simon. Filippone next placed a thin layer of clay on top of the sand, covering the longitudinal bottom half of the baluster. A thick, resin-type liquid was then poured filling the top half of the box and allowed to harden for two to three days. This operation produces the top half of the mold. Turning the box 180 degrees and rearranging the sand and clay layers permits the creation of the second half of the mold. The last step in the process, which demands precise control of the level of sand and clay and careful application of a separator spray to allow the various components to be taken apart, is fitting the rubbery mold halves together, sealing all the joints with clay to prevent leakage and filling the negative with Aquacast. Adequately hardened and color-toned with pigments, the Aquacast becomes the replicated baluster. To assure the strength of the baluster-copy, Filippone puts a reinforcing rod dead center in each one, fashioning a jig to make certain that the rod is exactly straight in the Aquacast poured around it.

Sometime this spring, a mason will fix Filippone's balusters in the balustrade, and, thanks to the good doctor's skill and generosity, one more of the Friends restoration and preservation projects will be completed as testimony to the group's and the University's determination to maintain "Florham" as a place that Richard Guy Wilson has called one of "the finest country houses" in the United States.

— Walter Savage



The original baluster is placed in sand, liquid is poured, and a mold is made.



Ames Filippone works with the mold.

Book Review

The Green: A History of the Morristown Green

by Richard C. Simon, Published by The Trustees of the Morristown Green

About 70,000 people work, shop or dine in Morristown on a daily basis. Many of these people cross the Morristown Green, others pause to sit on the benches, while still others skirt the four borders of the Green during the course of a day. Relatively few are aware of the significant history of the Green. Friends Trustee Richard Simon's recently-published history, *The Green*, more than compensates for this gap in our collective knowledge.

Thoroughly researched, well illustrated and highly readable, *The Green* chronicles the history and evolution of the Green, located in the center of Morristown, from the early 18th century, through the period of the Revolution until today. A series of wonderful archival maps illustrate the shifting layout and uses of the Green, from the early days when the Green "housed" the courthouse, jail and pillory to the innovative landscape design of the early 20th century, which established the current elliptical Green paths and park ovals and selective historical monuments, to the major restoration in the 1980s, which included new plantings, Victorian-style lamp posts and a substantial number of new benches for visitors to the Green. Today, the Green has evolved to the point where, as Dick Simon correctly suggests, it can be viewed as "one of the finest central city parks in the Northeast."

What this valuable study makes clear is that the Green played a significant role in the local and national history of the country. The arrival of Gen. George Washington and his troops in 1777 established Morristown as the Military Capital of the Revolution. Washington lived and worked on the second floor of the Jacob Arnold Tavern (now 20 Park Place on the Green). Two years later, Washington returned to Morristown, set up headquarters in Ford Mansion, while the Continental Army camped at

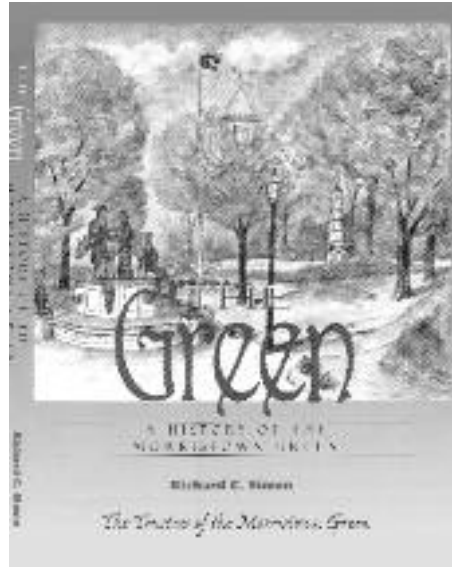


Illustration on book jacket from an original watercolor by Richard C. Simon.

Jockey Hollow, leaving in July 1780. Here, again, the importance of Morristown (and the Green) in the history of the American Revolution is reinforced by effective black-and-white illustrations of many of the major leaders who visited Morristown during this time such as Washington, Alexander Hamilton, Benedict Arnold, William Alexander (Lord Stirling), Henry Lee "Light-Horse Harry" Lee and the Marquis de Lafayette.

Among the facts that you were probably unaware of was that the Presbyterian Church on the northeast corner of the Green owned a substantial amount of "church lands" in the area, and in 1816 the Trustees of the Church deeded the 2.5 acre Green to 13 private citizens, later known as the Trustees of the Green. The current group of Trustees, of which Dick Simon is a member, work to promote the history, beauty and accessibility of the Green, while honoring the original mandate of preserving and maintaining the Green "for the benefit of the public." One of the interesting appendices to the book is a list of all of the Trustees of the Green since inception, which, in essence, is a useful reference guide to the people in the Morris area who have contributed to the development of not only the Green, but to much of the meaningful progress in the town since the early 19th century. Yet it is finally the clips from old newspapers of meetings on the Green, and the black-and-white photographs taken over the years — horse-drawn carriages parked around the Green, the "cannon of the Green," the last hitching post, the first of the traditional Christmas trees on the Green in 1913, the plaque dedicated to Gold Star Mothers in 1946 or the illustration of a mulling cup found on an archaeological dig on the Green in the early 1980s — that continue to remind us of the importance of the Green in the history and daily life of Morristown.

— Carol Bere



Photo by Linda Carrington

Richard C. Simon

Frederick Law Olmsted's Chicago World's Columbian Exposition

Most readers have likely heard of the Chicago World's Fair. However, some may not know that Frederick Law Olmsted was the landscape architect for the fair. The fair's official title was the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, and its purpose was to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Columbus' discovery of America.

At first, there was little interest in America for a world's fair. However, in 1889 the Exposition Universelle opened in France. At the heart of the Paris exposition stood a 1,000-foot tower of iron that soared gracefully into the sky. The tower not only assured fame for its designer, Alexandre Gustave Eiffel, it offered graphic proof that France had edged out the United States in the realm of iron and steel — despite many undeniable accomplishments of American engineers.

American pride soon demanded that the nation needed a chance to “out-Eiffel Eiffel,” and suddenly the idea of hosting an exposition to commemorate Columbus' discovery of the New

*Frederick Law Olmsted
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architect for the fair.*

World was irresistible. Washington, New York, St. Louis and Chicago all wanted to host the fair.

A Congressional vote in 1890 awarded Chicago the fair, and preparations began. A formal corporation was established to finance and build the fair. Daniel Hudson Burnham and John Well-born Root, both Chicago architects, were hired as lead designers. The official opening was set for May 1, 1893.

Frederick Law Olmsted was approached to evaluate possible sites and perhaps design the landscaping. He declined, stating that he did not do fairs and doubted that enough time had been allocated to do the fair justice. Finally, after much consideration, Olmsted agreed to join the venture. He believed that the fair would provide him with an opportunity to give greater visibility to landscape architecture and thereby bring greater credibility to his discipline.

The site chosen for the fair was known as Jackson Park. It was literally one square mile of desolation filled with sand, prairie grass and stagnant pools. Olmsted knew the location had many flaws, but he realized its potential as it backed up

to Lake Michigan. He felt that with a lot of careful dredging and sculpting, that park could be transformed into a landscape unlike any other.

Olmsted was continually plagued by ill health during the construction of the fair. Endless delays

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and inordinate amounts of bureaucracy made it seem at times that the fair would never be ready for the opening ceremony. His workload was enormous combined with his other works in progress at the same time as the fair, including Biltmore, the estate of George Washington Vanderbilt in North Carolina.

His vision for the transformation of Jackson Park focused on a large central lagoon. An island was created in the center of the lagoon, which came to be called the Wooded Island. The main buildings of the fair were situated along the lagoon's outer banks. The central lagoon and Wooded Island were the centerpieces of the landscape architecture. Olmsted wanted the landscaping to create a “mysterious, poetic effect.” To this end, every flower, tree and shrub was planted with an eye as to how each would act upon the imagination. Olmsted had the canals and lagoon filled with waterfowl, and they were traversed by small electric boats.

The duration of the fair was quite short — May to October 1893. It was popularly known as the

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“White City,” and its singular standout exhibit was a giant revolving wheel designed by a young engineer named George Washington Gale Ferris. With 36 cars and the capacity to hold 2,000 passengers, this feat of engineering secured the fair's place in history.

Olmsted's role and association with the fair was unique and created one more chapter in a brilliant and historically significant career.

—Elaine Earlywine



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Join the Friends of Florham. Participate directly in our efforts to preserve the architectural history of Florham, and support our informative program series. Your support will make a difference.

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