

# FRIENDS OF *Florham*

Fall 2006

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## *Friends' Accomplishments ... Drum Roll, Please*

Looking ahead while building on the past continues to be the successful formula of the Long Range Planning Committee of the Friends of Florham.

Since the Friends of Florham was formed in 1990 with the mission of assisting University officials in preserving the historic elements of the College at Florham campus, the total contribution of the Friends to a variety of significant preservation and restoration projects is impressive. The funds were raised at well-attended annual galas, from individual contributions and from foundations' grants. As the Committee looks to undertake new projects at Florham, we thought it was important to reflect briefly on the substantial progress made to date.



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The first project undertaken by the Friends was restoration of the lower fountain garden in 1994, which became known as the Clowney Garden, named after William Clowney, a former University  
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## *Florham Lily*



*These gorgeous lilies were planted in the forecourt of the Mansion, College at Florham, in May. Research by Richard Simon, a Board member of the Friends of Florham, showed that this is a grafting of the original Florham Lily and the closest remaining species to that lily developed at Florham by the Twomblys. The lily was found in a daylily farm in Vermont.*



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## President's Letter

In a previous newsletter I mentioned our exciting current project — the restoration and replacement of the lanterns/lamps in the Mansion courtyard. Board member Allan Kushen has worked hard on getting this accomplished, but this has been “easier said than done.” Many things were involved:

1. Rewiring the columns where they are installed.
2. Making replicas for those that are missing.
3. Removing and repairing the ones that were still there.
4. Replacing all of them and attaching the wires.
5. Coordinating all of the phases of the job.

We are almost there, and I just have to say that so many people and groups are involved — from the people at the University who were in the planning and organizing, the grounds department, the International Architectural Iron Works, the electricians and finally all of them working together to get the lights up and working.

I thank everyone who has worked so hard on this project, and of course, all of you who have supported and helped to make it work. The lanterns will be wonderful when it's all done, and we expect to have a “Lighting Ceremony” to celebrate the completion of the project.

I also mentioned in the last newsletter that we had found a hybrid lily that is one half a “Florham Lily” and which looks very much like the pictures of Mrs. Twombly's prize-winning lily. Ted Ambrosiano from the College at Florham grounds department ordered a number of these from the Vermont nursery where Board member Richard Simon discovered them. He had them planted in the small garden beds in the Mansion courtyard, and they made a spectacular showing when they bloomed this summer. For the first time we are including a color picture in this newsletter so that you can see how beautiful they were. Next summer you'll just have to come and see them in person.

Our wonderful archivist, Antonia Moser, has finished getting our records and history in order; she is now working full time at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. We were so fortunate to have had her with us before she was discovered by the Metropolitan, although we are thrilled that she now has this exciting position. We are so very grateful for the wonderful job she has done for us and for the support of the Morris County Heritage Commission for making it possible.

— Emma Joy Dana

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## Gala Guests Enjoy Rainbow Vista

During the cocktail hour at this year's gala, the view of the fountains and gardens was enhanced by the appearance of a double rainbow. One hundred and forty guests enjoyed a wonderful evening of dining and dancing on May 20 at the Friends of Florham ninth annual Spring Gala, “An Evening at Florham.” Ruth and Ed Hennessy served as honorary co-chairs for the Friends' premier fund-raising event, which raised more than \$35,000 toward the continued restoration of the Mansion, its furnishings, gardens and grounds. The 2006 co-chairs Phyllis Conway, Dawn Dupak and Barbara Keefauver and their commit-

tee extend heartfelt thanks to the Hennessys and to all those who supported this event.

Not content to rest on her laurels, Barbara Keefauver reports that the 10th annual Spring Gala will take place on May 19, 2007, and she has started the task of recruiting co-chairs and committee members. There is every reason to believe that the evening will again provide opportunities to sample the “Twombly Cuisine,” dance the night away and enjoy an excellent vocal presentation. So mark your calendars and join us again for another delightful Evening at Florham.



Enjoying the evening with Friends President Emma Joy Dana, right, are, Gala guests Don Dinsmore, left, and Congressman Rodney Freylinghuysen, center.



Honorary Gala Co-chairs Ruth and Ed Hennessy, second from right and right, are joined by Bob and Marilyn McCormick. (Gala photos by Judi Whiting.)

## Book Review

# Consuelo and Alva Vanderbilt: The Story of a Daughter and Mother in the Gilded Age

By Amanda Mackenzie Stuart  
HarperCollins, 2005

The subtitle of this thoughtful, well-researched biography gives little initial hint of the sweep of history covered — legendary fortunes made, great homes built, two World Wars, the rise of the women’s suffrage movement and shifting social mores. The set piece of the study, however, is hardly progressive: the “arranged” marriage in 1895 of the 18-year-old Consuelo Vanderbilt, one of the wealthiest young heiresses in the U.S., to the ninth Duke of Marlborough, who was long on aristocratic lineage, well-placed connections and short on funds to support Blenheim Palace, his ancestral home.

Enter Alva Vanderbilt, wife of William K. Vanderbilt (brother of Florence Twombly of ‘Florham’), and mother of Consuelo. Strong willed, dominating and intelligent, Alva viewed Consuelo as her project, and over her daughter’s objections, demanded that she marry the 23-year-old Duke, who by most accounts was irascible, traditional and no intellectual heavyweight. Alva herself seemed to have assumed a somewhat pragmatic view of marriage when she married the Vanderbilt heir, presumably so that her own family could avoid a downward descent into genteel poverty. The Vanderbilt money also fueled Alva’s natural competitiveness, and she exerted great efforts into elevating her social position, building memorable homes in New York and Marble House in Newport, R.I., traveling back and forth to Europe.

If this was all there was to the story, we might discount Stuart’s biography as just another tale, albeit interesting, of the excesses of the Gilded Age. But Amanda Stuart skillfully intertwines the stories of Alva and Consuelo, moving between New York, Newport, London and Paris, commenting on their collapsed marriages and happy remarriages, documenting their responses to

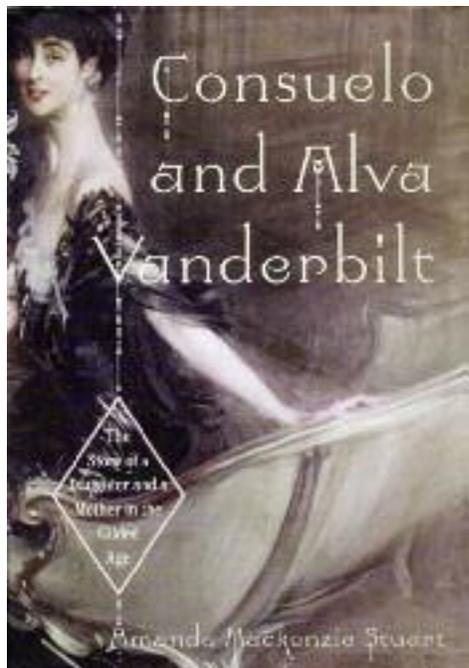
some of the critical issues of their time, building profiles of two relatively complex and influential women. Alva’s insistence on Consuelo’s marriage to the Duke of Marlborough could be viewed as a cruel act of a mother with major social aspirations. But Alva’s travels had persuaded her that in Europe — and not in America — Consuelo could have a position of real influence, with significant

responsibilities, that she would not be in Alva’s words, “a spectator in the theater of life.”

The irony was that it was not until Consuelo had left the Duke that her title and her share of the Vanderbilt wedding settlement could be translated into influence, particularly for child welfare and women’s causes. Alva’s “lessons” appeared to have been well learned by Consuelo who inherited much of her mother’s independence of thought. Alva also saw herself as a powerful mover in the suffrage movement, but here, too, much of her ability to effect change came from her position as the mother of a

duchess and as a wealthy society figure. Still, while mother and daughter may have disagreed about the strategies of the suffragettes, no one could doubt their convictions, and each in her own way did influence change. Finally, one might assume that by placing the daughter ahead of the mother in the title, Amanda Stuart ultimately favors Consuelo in the mother-daughter dynamics that ultimately are at the core of this biography — and she probably does. Consuelo was the more sympathetic, far less contentious, perhaps more “complete” figure who had a long, happy second marriage and loving relationships with her children and grandchildren. Yet it is difficult not to admire the fearless Alva, who late in life, still claimed, “the important thing is knowing how to live.”

— Carol Bere





*The Italian Garden, to the right of the Mansion, is an excellent example of classic Italian style. New plant material was added and garden structures were restored or replaced.*

*Accomplishments,  
continued from page 1*

ty board member and member of the Friends board, who made the initial contribution for restoration. Much plant material was renewed, and the fountain was repaired. The garden had a “cameo performance” in the movie “A Beautiful Mind.”

This project was followed by the restoration of the Italian Garden to the right of the Mansion, which was in particularly poor condition in 1996. The garden, an excellent example of classic Italian style, was built for the Twomblys in the early part of the 20th century by Italian immigrants who then settled in Madison. After consultation with historic landscape architect, Ann Granbery, new plant material was added and garden structures were restored or replaced. The restoration was so authentic that the gardens are now



*Lenfell Hall, the former drawing room of the mansion, was refurbished in a style reflective of Florence Vanderbilt Twombly's residency.*

referred to in courses on the history of landscape architecture at Rutgers University.

Following the garden restorations, the University asked the Friends board to help with the renovation of Lenfell Hall, the former drawing room of the Mansion. With the impetus provided by initial grants from the F.M. Kirby Foundation, the Hyde and Watson Foundation and the Tomlinson Family Foundation, and with proceeds from galas, as well as matching funds from the University, the renovation was completed by 2001.

The room was refurbished in a style reflective of Florence Vanderbilt Twombly's residency, yet still appropriate for contemporary University functions, and is now in constant use. This project was followed by the renovation of the Great Hall in 2002, as well as the cleaning and restoration of the Mansion portrait collection. Parts of the second floor were repainted the following year.

Additional projects completed by the Friends were the demarcation of the Olmsted Cutleaf Maple area, the replacement of broken balusters in the courtyard and Italian garden and the installation of appropriate fencing for the Mansion Drive entrance. With the generous donation of one trustee, Hartman Lounge, the former billiards room in the Mansion, was refurbished with appropriate furniture and window treatments. The board continues to approve money for maintenance of both gardens and interiors.

One of the larger and most recent projects undertaken by the Friends has been the restoration, and in some instances, reproduction of the magnificent lanterns in the Courtyard. When installed, the light from these lanterns will enhance University evening functions and recall the splendor of Florham, this once renowned Gilded Age estate.

The history of Florham plays a significant role in the history of Morris County and the Gilded Age era in general. With the assistance of two generous grants from the Morris County Heritage Commission, and with support from the Friends, a valuable trove of Vanderbilt/Twombly/Burden papers, memorabilia and photographs was archived. These primary resources are available to university students as well as scholars of the era.

According to Long Range Planning Committee chairperson, Linda Meister, Friends of Florham feels it is both a challenge and a pleasure to help preserve Florham, referred to by noted architectural historian, Richard Guy Wilson, as the "most outstanding country home in America."

— Linda Meister



*The Friends of Florham dedicated the Frederick Law Olmsted Cutleaf Maple Garden during an afternoon ceremony on October 24, 2004. From left are Friends of Florham Trustee Richard Simon; Friends of Florham President Emma Joy Dana; Eleanor Friedl, reference librarian, College at Florham Library; and James Griffo, emeritus, biology; former College at Florham provost; and an invited guest and participant in the dedication ceremony. Griffo said the garden is "probably the most outstanding forest" of Japanese cut-leaf maples in the world. Preservation of the garden has been a significant, ongoing project of the Friends. The garden is located on Dreyfuss Road, next to the Rutherford Hall parking lot, across the road from the Student Center and near the railroad tracks. (Photo by Judi Whiting.)*



*The Great Hall in the Mansion was renovated and parts of the second floor were painted.*



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