

*A Message From Friends  
of Florham President*

Welcome to our first Newsletter! In 1990, a group of interested citizens and individuals connected with Fairleigh Dickinson decided to try to assist the University in preserving and restoring the magnificent Florham-Madison Campus and bringing to the attention of the larger community the gem that we have here in our midst. We have accomplished several of our initial objectives and would like to bring you, our "friends," up to date on our hopes and plans for the future. Do read on...

*Emma Joy Dana*

Emma Joy Dana

*Board of  
Friends of Florham*

Carol Bere  
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# FRIENDS OF

# Florham

Winter 1997

## Friends Begin Restoration of Italian Gardens

The Italian Gardens, a highlight of the Twombly estate since 1910, are back in the news. The Friends of Florham are spearheading efforts to restore the gardens, designed by Alfred Parsons, the British landscape artist and architect who succeeded the Frederick Law Olmsted-directed group at Florham.

Restoration of the pergola, the first phase of the Friends' ambitious project, has been completed. The initial step was made possible by an \$8,000 contribution from the committee, which included a \$1,000 grant from the Garden Club of Morristown. Over the years, the original cedar timbers supporting the pergola have suffered serious erosion. The recent restoration was supervised by Ted Ambrosiano, bi-campus buildings and grounds supervisor at the University. FDU alumnus Gregg Bruen, BS'90,

F-M, was the local contractor used for the installation of the scalloped-end timbers based on the original design of the pergola.

The overall project, which is being guided by committee members Ann Granbery, A.S.L.A., landscape architect of New Vernon, N.J., and Richard Simon of Morristown, N.J., also will include restoration of the parterre. The Friends plan to have the restoration celebrate not only the vision of the Twomblys and their landscape architects but also the creative labor of the anonymous Italian workmen employed by the founders of Florham. Well-known members of the Italian-American communities of Madison and Florham Park will join the Friends in a special commemorative ceremony when the restoration is completed.

## Mertz Praises Friends' Contributions

*A Message from the President*

The University appreciates and supports the work of Friends of Florham. This group brings a strong sense of commitment and welcome expertise to the Florham-Madison Campus.

The Florham-Madison Campus is a special place. It is a jewel that serves not only the University community, but the public at large.

Through the years, Friends of Florham have made substantial contributions to the campus. The restoration of the gardens surrounding the Vanderbilt-Twombly Mansion has been a major project that has, and will continue to have, an impact on the beauty and historical accuracy of the estate. In addition, Friends of Florham have sponsored outstanding forums — bringing internationally acclaimed experts in gardens and architecture to the campus.

These forums draw a wide audience, exposing hundreds of people to the importance of Florham and to the offerings of this University.

It is gratifying that many of our faculty and staff are active in this organization. I know that Carl Viola, Florham-Madison Campus executive and vice president of the University, works closely with Friends of Florham, keeping them apprised of new initiatives on the campus and entering into productive dialogue.

Working together, I know that we will continue to pursue excellence and enhance the campus for all to enjoy.

Francis J. Mertz  
President

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## Friends of Florham Set Goals

Founded in 1990, Friends of Florham are a group of local citizens interested in history, architecture, horticulture and the arts. For six years, the organization has been committed to advising and assisting the Board of Trustees and the administration of Fairleigh Dickinson University, as the Friends' mission statement declares, "in the care and maintenance and historic preservation of the Twombly Estate buildings designed by McKim, Mead, and White; the grounds designed by Frederick Law Olmsted; and the gardens at the Florham-Madison Campus of the University." The mission statement also identifies a

further commitment of the group: "... to bring to the attention of the public the outstanding asset the University is to the community in every way."

To fulfill their mission, they will launch a membership drive and continue to work to have Florham listed on the national Historic Register. Since their inception, the Friends have offered a series of informative, provocative programs that have attracted many area residents, and they are currently planning an exhibition of historic and artistic artifacts pertinent to Florham.

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## William D. Clowney Garden Dedicated

On June 4, 1995, the restored Mansion Gardens were dedicated to the memory of the late William D. Clowney, a member of the Friends board and a trustee of the University. The dedication marked the first stage of the Friends' long-term garden restoration program. More than 100 donors contributed approximately \$20,000 toward the restoration. Clowney's original contribution established the William D. Clowney Memorial Fund. Important contributions were made by the New Jersey Committee of the Garden Club of America and the New Vernon Garden Club.

"The Friends of Florham were a special interest for Bill," his wife, Mary, recently remarked. "How the restored gardens would please him." FDU President Francis J. Mertz noted Clowney's strong

commitment to the University, his ongoing wise counsel and unflinching good humor.

Committee member Ann Granbery, A.S.L.A., was instrumental in the design and research for the restoration. She worked with Ted Ambrosiano, bi-campus buildings and grounds supervisor of FDU, to implement the project. Today, the garden has been restored to its original state. Gravel paths leading to and surrounding the lower octagonal garden have been replaced, and mature yews and mugho pines once again frame the fountain.



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## Lecture Series

The lecture series, initiated in 1991 and funded by the New Jersey Council for the Humanities, continues under the leadership of committee member Barbara A. Keefauver of New Vernon, N.J. This spring's program is tentatively titled "The Twomblys and Vanderbilts at Home." Planned for Sunday, May 18, at 3 p.m., it will focus upon life at Florham in its prime: the Twombly-Vanderbilt family history, the furnishings and artifacts of the Mansion, and information concerning Florham's social events.

The twice-yearly programs have featured lectures and panel discussions with specialists in architecture, landscape design and social history. Participants have included Samuel Giltinan

White, architect and direct descendant of Stanford White of McKim, Mead, and White, architects of Florham; Dr. Nicholas Baldwin, director of Fairleigh Dickinson's Wroxton College, Oxfordshire, England; Paul Edwards, landscape architect and restorer of Warwick Castle Gardens and Wroxton Abbey Gardens in England; and Frank E. Sanchis, vice president, Department of Stewardship of Historical Properties, National Trust for Historic Preservation. In December 1995, Friends of Florham and the Arts Council of the Morris Area offered a well-received Christmas program, "Make a Joyful Noise: Music from a Country House," by Solid Brass.

# Florham Has *Storied Past*

*The furnace door to this day is embellished with the  
Edison-designed floriated initials,  
“FVT” and “HMCKT.”*

Friends of Florham prize the former Florence and Hamilton Twombly estate almost as much for its history as for its celebrated buildings and grounds. Widely and traditionally regarded as one of the nation's finest country houses, Florham deserves recognition also for the importance of the people and the events with which its history has been enriched.

A striking example concerns Cornelius Vanderbilt, the grandfather of Florence Adele Vanderbilt Twombly, who with Hamilton McK. Twombly created Florham. “The Commodore,” as one of the 19th-century's wealthiest individuals was known, played an important, if not carefully planned, role in the history of the federal government's relations with the states. He was hired as a rugged young sailor by the builder of Drew University's Mead Hall, Thomas Gibbons, an enterprising New Jersey entrepreneur. Gibbons sought to break a shipping monopoly granted by New York state to Robert Fulton and later to Aaron Ogden, at one time the governor of New Jersey. The young Vanderbilt captained Gibbons' “Bellona,” which he sailed defiantly from New Brunswick, N.J., to the Battery in New York under an oriflamme boldly declaring “New Jersey Must Be Free.” The resulting litigation led to a landmark Supreme Court ruling (*Gibbons vs. Ogden*, 1824) which established the government's control over interstate commerce.

Other individuals more directly connected with Florham whose names have claimed a prominent place in American history are — in addition to Frederick Law Olmsted and Stanford White —

Thomas Edison and William and Shirley Burden, the sons of Mrs. Twombly's daughter Florence and her husband, William A.M. Burden. A close friend of the Twomblys, Edison was not only a frequent visitor to their Madison estate but also the designer of its heating plant, part of which is still in use by the University. The furnace door to this day is embellished with the Edison-designed floriated initials, “FVT” and “HMCKT.” The Burden grandchildren, whose fond memories of their stays at Florham have been lovingly recorded by Shirley, were both distinguished figures in America's art world. Shirley achieved great recognition as a photographer and William, who played a large role in the growth of New York's Museum of Modern Art, achieved sufficient renown as a curator to be invited to mount a special exhibit at the Louvre in Paris, France.

The two Florham auctions — in May and June of 1955 — commanded a record sale total for the time and were a fitting farewell to the original phase of a great estate that was a bright page in history as well as the dwelling place of an extremely wealthy family and their large entourage of illustrious visitors.



*Florence Vanderbilt  
Twombly*



*Hamilton McK. Twombly*

*Photos from Shirley Burden,  
The Vanderbilts in my Life  
(New York, 1981), with the per-  
mission of the photographer.*



## Become a Friend

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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