

Florham

Italian Garden Dedicated

On a fine Sunday last May, Emma Joy Dana, President of Friends of Florham, welcomed hundreds of area residents gathered to celebrate the formal dedication of the Italian Garden, restored this past spring by the Friends. The restoration was the Friends' tribute to the hundreds of anonymous workmen – chiefly immigrant Italians – who supplied the labor that helped to make a spectacular reality the plans of the garden designer Alfred Parsons and the Twomblys' long-time gardener Arthur Herrington. The event was planned to coincide with the completion of the pergola and the parterre, the first \$27,000 - stage of the multi-stage restoration project for which the Friends have assumed fundraising and planning responsibility.

Special guests of the Friends for the occasion were relatives of Dr. and Mrs. Peter Sammartino, who together founded Fairleigh Dickinson University, and third-generation descendants of some of the hundreds of workmen employed by the Twomblys in the work of creating their extraordinary estate. Frances Mantone, a granddaughter of one of those workmen, Anthony Pico, expressed the gratitude of the area's Italian-American community for the Friends' and the University's recognition of "those hard-working people, diligent and conscientious, who came to America for a better life...with very little except their deep commitment to their families and their love of the earth..." It was they, Mrs. Mantone reminded her listeners, whose efforts maintained the creations of some of the leading architects and landscape designers of the time.

Particularly gratifying to the history-conscious Friends and their supporters was the fact that several of the planti-



Friends President Emma Joy Dana opens Italian Garden Dedication Ceremony.

ngs in the re-created parterre – some peonies, columbine, and irises, for instance – are survivors from the original garden designed by Parsons in 1907 and supervised by Herrington during his fourteen years at Florham from 1896 to 1910. Research conducted by Friends trustee Richard Simon and Ann Granbery, a former board member and prominent local landscape architect, had as its goal a restoration that would reproduce, as faithfully as possible, the original garden. One newspaper account announcing the Twomblys' plan to create "one of the finest gardens in the country" – ironically one year after the death of the Twomblys' only son – noted that its estimated cost was to be \$50,000, about what the Friends' and the University's efforts to restore its plantings and walks will cost ninety some years later.

When the final stages of the restoration are completed, appropriate commemorative signs or plaques will be put in place as permanent tributes to those the garden honors and to acknowledge the generosity of contributors.

Greetings From The President

The Friends of Florham have not been idle since our first Newsletter during the winter of 1997. Our most exciting ventures - the subject of articles elsewhere in this issue - have been the Dedication of the Italian Garden last May and the planning for the restoration of Lenfell Hall - a truly major project. As this issue goes to press, we are looking forward to the Holiday Ball in December, our big fundraising event for the restoration. Our summer schedule calls for us to share in the 100th Anniversary of Florham Park by having an "Ice Cream Social" similar to the one that was given by the Twomblys when they moved to "Florham."

Beyond all that, several of our members have been designated as guides to lead conducted tours for any of you who plan group visits to "Florham" and/or its gardens. Members of our Speakers' Bureau will also join you at your organization's meetings and give slideshow presentations and talk on "Florham's" history.

We urge all of you to take advantage of each or both of these new services we can now offer. We also urge you, of course, to continue to support our efforts by renewing your memberships or becoming new members.

Please read on and enjoy our third Newsletter.

Emma Joy Dana

Board of Friends of Florham

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Gala Holiday Ball Planned

The past and present come together on Saturday, December 12, when the Friends host a unique black-tie dinner dance in the elegant turn-of-the-century Mansion of "Florham," designed by renowned architects, McKim, Mead & White. The evening will begin with cocktails at 7:00 p.m. in the Great Hall. Dining and dancing, accompanied by the Louis Gordon Quintet, will begin at 8:00 p.m. in the former Twombly Great Drawing Room, the current Lenfell Hall of Fairleigh Dickinson University. All proceeds will be directed toward the restoration of Lenfell Hall, a major project of the Friends.

The Friends are pleased to announce that Mrs. William Y. Dear, Jr. has again agreed to be Honorary Chair of the Committee. The generous gift of Mrs. Dear's stepfather, the late Leonard Dreyfuss, made possible the extensive refurbishing of Lenfell Hall in 1958, and the Twombly Drawing Room was renamed in appreciation. The sixteen-member Benefit Committee will be headed by Mrs. William L. Keefauver and Mrs. Karl Meister.



Honorary Chair Mrs. William Y. Dear of New Vernon and Mr. Henry Parker of Madison at last year's Holiday Ball.

Over \$20,000 was raised in the memorable first "Holiday Ball" attended by over 110 people in December 1997. More support will be needed, however, before the Friends' restoration plan can be realized.

Ticket prices are \$150 per person, or \$250 for Patrons, including the usual tax-deductible portion. Since seating is relatively limited, the Friends recommend early responses to "Holiday Ball" invitations.

Exciting Restoration Plans For Lenfell Hall

In the summer of 1995, the Friends restored the lower north terrace area behind "Florham's" mansion as the Clowney Gardens. Just a few months ago, in May, they completed their Italian Garden project. Now they are undertaking their third and most considerable restoration venture, returning Lenfell Hall to the late-nineteenth-century grand state in which it existed as the Twomblys' "Great Drawing Room."

After more than a year of research and planning, the Friends' Lenfell Hall Restoration Committee has submitted to the Board and to University officers an ambitious but historically sensitive set of plans for the redecorating, repairing, and general refurbishing of the Mansion's largest room. Included in the committee's proposal are recommendations for replacing not only the present door leading to the garden portico but the windows surrounding that door. Restored window treatments, floor refinishing, repainting of walls and woodwork, and removal of the stepped platform are other committee goals.

The project will be both challenging and expensive—running to a total cost of approximately \$190,000, committee chairman Barbara Keefauver recently reported to the Board. But, in the view of the Friends, the proposed restoration is essential to the group's fulfilling its commitment to reestablish "Florham's" most impressive space as it was at the peak of its Gilded Age glory, a room of quite rare magnificence regarded by many as one of the finest of its kind in the country. A McKim Mead & White creation with exceptional marble mantels and surrounds and elegant plaster work, it is 85 feet long,

32 feet wide, and 18 feet 6 inches high, large enough, trustee Richard Simon has pointed out, to accommodate the cubic footage of two average-sized homes of the present day.

The seven-member committee—in addition to Friends President Emma Joy Dana and Mrs. Keefauver, it is composed of Phyllis Conway, Dr. James Fraser, John H. Fritz, Gretchen Johnson, and Richard Simon—has received important help in its planning from local architect Peter Dorne, A.I.A. Mr. Dorne has generously provided technical and esthetic counsel. The committee has also visited historically significant buildings to seek possible creative ways to provide unintrusive and esthetically compatible air conditioning units. Professional decorator and Friends Board member Phyllis Conway has made several trips to New York City to consult with Schumacher and Scalandre in her search for appropriate fabrics. Richard Simon's investigation of possible alternatives to the existing fixed platform at the south end of the room has resulted in the Friends' recommendation to the University that readily movable stage modules be substituted for the present intrusive structure that cuts the focal fireplace in half, destroys the window length, and partially covers two air conditioning vents.

Ultimately, of course, the success of this major project will depend upon the same sort of generous and enthusiastic support the Friends have received in the past from foundations and private donors. Mrs. Keefauver, Mrs. Dana and their colleagues in the Friends are confident that they will receive it for an undertaking of unquestioned historic importance.

McKim, Mead & White
Renowned Architects of "Florham"

"It is virtually impossible to overstate the degree to which McKim, Mead & White dominated the business of American architecture at the turn of the century," writes Samuel G. White in his informative new book, *The Houses of McKim, Mead & White*. As the largest, most influential architectural office in the U.S. between 1887-1912, McKim, Mead & White's over 1,000 commissions included a wide range of significant institutions, government buildings, commercial enterprises, and grand late nineteenth century residences: the Boston Public Library, several commissions for Harvard University, designs for Columbia University, renovations to the White House, designs for Pennsylvania Station, Madison Square Garden, the Morgan Library, the Brooklyn Museum of Art, and elaborate residences such as "Florham," the Hamilton Twombly estate—the site of Fairleigh Dickinson University. These works suggest not only the shifting economic and social context, but the ways in which the distinctive blend of the firm's bold creativity and selective application of more traditional American colonial, Renaissance, and Georgian influences produced a major impact on the architectural landscape over a thirty-five year period.

Architectural critics agree that the achievements, reputation, and influence of McKim, Mead & White were the result of a genuine collaboration of three partners with disparate, although complementary personalities, talents, and practical skills. Charles Follen McKim (1847-1909) was a strong designer, with a background and appreciation of early American architecture; William Rutherford Mead (1846-1928) had an astute business sense, and managed the office; and Stanford White, clearly the flashiest, most high profile personality

of the partners, was recognized for his artistic ability, sense of detail, color, level of intensity and energy.

During the "high" McKim, Mead & White period, the partners designed over 300 private city and country residences for clients located primarily in New York, Boston, Newport, and Washington. Samuel White, great-grandson of Stanford White, and an architect himself, classifies the houses according to three principal phases—early, transitional, and mature—each marked by a clearly distinctive style. Briefly, the early houses, built for the most part in the 1880's, and reminiscent of early 18th century New England architecture, were generally large wood-framed shingle style country houses with bay windows and expansive porches.

The transitional period, from about 1883-1911, was represented by a more broad range of design, a search for a new approach. The work of a competitor, Richard Morris Hunt, who had begun to design elaborate homes for some members of the Vanderbilt family, influenced by residences of European nobility, may have jump-started McKim, Mead & White's new business strategy: designing for extremely wealthy clients Georgian-style opulent estates, such as "Florham," that essentially "expressed the differences between them and others." In the later phases, McKim, Mead & White's residential design was marked by less "flamboyance," correctness, and a more guarded use of color and detail.

Source: Samuel G. White, *The Houses of McKim, Mead & White* (Rizzoli: New York), 1998. Photography by Jonathan Wallen. The Friends of Florham thank Sam White, a partner in the New York firm of Buttrick, White & Burtis, for his interest in our projects.

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Friends Offer Tours of Mansion and Gardens

Have you ever wondered about the architecture of the Mansion, the design of the Italian Garden, or the siting of the pergola? As part of their ongoing efforts to inform the public about the history of "Florham," and the importance of the university to the area community, the Friends are providing guided tours to interested groups by appointment. For information, or the costs of tours, call 267-1408. All proceeds will be directed to the historic preservation projects of the Friends at the University.



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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