

Old Westbury Gardens



Clippings from the Gardens
Holiday 2013

President's Letter

As the 2013 season at Old Westbury Gardens winds its way toward an end, I find myself reflecting on all that has happened here since the previous year. And as is always the case, there is quite a lot to think about.

Our grounds look better than ever, which is quite a feat, given the storm-related conditions that existed here barely 12 months ago. Events and programs that have been added or expanded have been well received, helped at least in part by the cooperative weather we've experienced. Furniture and paintings have continued to be restored. Even the lobby tiger had a make-over and was debugged of tiny insects that were enjoying the climate within the glass display case.

Yet what stands out to me most this year is the fact that our visitors – everyone from casual tourists to long time members and other consistent supporters – have been very responsive. You have been responsive as evidenced by both meanings of the word. First, you have responded by being here. Attendance is up by over 15 percent from 2012. Seeing the crowds at the Picnic Pops, the Scottish Festival, and other longtime favorites along with the nearly overwhelming interest in the recently held Jack O'Lantern Exhibit, has been quite gratifying. Second, you have responded in the literal sense. You have communicated with us. You have spoken with me, our staff and volunteers, you have written letters, and you've sent e-mail, to applaud our efforts, ask questions, and make suggestions. We welcome and appreciate this feedback.

Among the comments of which we are most proud are the letters sent to our Environmental Education Coordinator, Lisa Reichenberger. Here are just a few snippets from the dozens of

e-mails she has received recently from Girl Scout leaders, and teachers and parents from local schools.

Thank you for such a wonderful program. The girls had a really great experience. As we were pulling up to the school this morning, my daughter said to me, "Wow, that is a really beautiful tree I never noticed before." It made me feel so happy that it gave her enthusiasm for trees.

I am so thankful that such programs are offered. It is vital that the public stay connected with the natural world around them, and your programs offer a great opportunity to do just that.

The sight of the mansion always takes my breath away – and I was noticing it had the same effect on everyone else in our group too. The fathers were even enjoying talking about all the fun they would have on such an expansive green lawn...except for having to mow it!

Close to a hundred years ago, the level of the success of something like a radio broadcast, for example, would likely have been evaluated by the amount of mail the producers received. Since then, we have Nielsen Ratings and market and audience surveys, not to mention Google Analytics and other high tech techniques. But I would suggest that especially here at Old Westbury Gardens, where we happily and intentionally always keep one foot in the past, the amount of mail and other communication we receive from our visitors is still very much a viable and welcome barometer in judging the success of this wonderful venue. So, by all means, keep those cards and letters coming in.



Handwritten signature of Lisa Reichenberger.

Lisa Reichenberger (yellow scarf) leads a local school group to a class at Westbury House

Remembering Irene Gachot

Earlier this year, with sadness, we noted the passing of Irene Gachot, one of the longest serving members of our Board of Trustees. A familiar presence, not least because of the regular walks she took on the Gardens' grounds, Irene came to know its flora and fauna intimately, observing, for example, the waxing and waning of the fox and pheasant populations and the return of the glossy ibis after a decades-long hiatus.

Before marrying Richard Gachot and moving to Old Westbury, Irene graduated from Vassar College, studied art at the Fontainebleau School in France, and worked at Doubleday with artists such as Edward Gorey and Andy Warhol. Irene began volunteering at the Gardens in 1960, helping to organize and run special events like Children's Day where she could be found inflating balloons, distributing trinkets, and watching over groups of tots at Bill Baird puppet shows.

Irene became a trustee in 1969 and served as chair of the House Committee, Art Show (1980-97), and Thatched Cottage, where each year she staged an inventive new scenario involving the Allertons Punch and Judy tea set, antique stuffed animals, and games. She served as well as co-chair of the Exhibitions Committee, a member of the Nominating Committee, editor of Publications, and Secretary to the Board of Trustees. An active member of the North Country Garden Club, Irene was recognized with an award from the Garden Club of America for her work documenting historic Long Island gardens for the Smithsonian Institution's archive. An artist with a lively, fluid line, she worked with the Manhasset Art Association for many years, organizing and participating in its workshops. She also served on the parish council, and as an assistant warden, at the Church of Our Lady of Kazan, which was designed, built, and largely hand carved by her father, architect Boris Riaboff.

Irene's half century of devotion to Old Westbury Gardens is memorialized with the characteristic down-to-earth grace by the trail, gradually trampled in the fields, that still runs between the Gardens and her home which Mary Phipps fittingly dubbed Irene's Path. She will be missed.



Irene Gachot, above, in her garden, and at left, walking the Old Westbury Gardens' grounds with Peggie Phipps Boegner and Peggie's dog, Tilly

Friends of Old Westbury Gardens

The members of the Friends of Old Westbury Gardens have been very busy lately, with a trip, a boutique, and a series of book signings. On Thursday, October 17, Jorge Sanchez, an award winning landscape architect, arranged for a visit to a private estate in Scarsdale to tour 16 acres, some of which have features inspired by Old Westbury Gardens. The bus then traveled to Harvest on the Hudson Restaurant and on to the Untermyer Gardens, a recently restored public garden in Yonkers.

On October 22 in the West Porch, author Lea Carpenter presented a talk and signing of her book, "Eleven Days." This is the first novel for Ms. Carpenter who among many other things was the Founding Editor for Francis Ford Coppola's literary magazine Zoetrope and was Deputy Publisher of The Paris Review. The event included light refreshments and a garden stroll.



On November 4, the Friends hosted Champagne and Shopping: A Gift Boutique and Book Signing. Guests enjoyed a glass of bubbly and light hors d'oeuvres while shopping for jewelry, clothing, and other gifts created by over 20 local designers. The featured speaker was designer Mario Buatta, also known as the "Prince of Chintz," whose client list includes Barbara Walters, Malcolm Forbes, and Billy Joel. After charming the crowd with a fascinating and highly entertaining talk, Mr. Buatta signed copies of his new book, "Mario Buatta: Fifty Years of American Interior Decoration."

A few days later on the evening of November 7, the Friends presented the final book signing event for this year. Local best-selling author and Gardens' favorite, Nelson DeMille returned to Westbury House for an extensive question and answer session and a signing of his latest book, "The Quest."

Above left, Lea Carpenter gives her talk in the West Porch; above right, Mario Buatta signs his book for one of his fans, Richard DeVerna, at Orchard Hill

At right, Nelson DeMille is a familiar fixture in the Red Ballroom, having now hosted four book signings at Old Westbury Gardens, beginning with "The Gatehouse" in 2008



Gardeners' Fair

This year's Gardeners' Fair was historic. We honored the much admired Mary Phipps for her many years of philanthropy and leadership at the Gardens. The guests turned out in force with 500 people attending to show their affection for this inspirational woman. Lynda Anderson and Julie Rinaldini were virtuosi conductors for this affair. They marshaled a great committee, and designed a keepsake invitation and a tour de force journal featuring photos of Mary through the years. Auctioneer John Hays brought in a record \$148,000. A video was created to honor Mary which was narrated by George Woodard. From the Gardeners' Fair Committee, to Mary's husband Howard and her immediate family, to her long-time friends, and the staff of Old Westbury Gardens, the Gardeners' Fair was a wonderful tribute and stunning collaborative success which raised \$540,000 after expenses.



Front cover and Gardeners' Fair photos by Franklin Square Photographers

George A. Crawley Society

Jerry Dankel, a volunteer in our Rose Garden and loyal and generous supporter for the past 19 years, recently informed the Gardens that he has included us in his will. When asked what prompted him to make this decision, he indicated, "I just want to see the place preserved for people to enjoy, and not go the way of Inisfada and the other Gold Coast mansions fallen to ... development." Along with other individuals who have made Old Westbury Gardens part of their estate plans, Jerry is now a member of the George A. Crawley Society.

If you are interested in learning more about supporting the Gardens in a similar manner, please contact Doreen Banks, Director of Development. Whatever the amount that is bequeathed to the Gardens, all funds will help assure the future financial stability of this unique treasure. Additionally, you will have left a legacy and an imprint on our community for future generations to enjoy and appreciate.

December Dinner

Kay Maris and her husband Dr. Peter Maris are chairing the December Dinner which will be held in the Red Ballroom on December 6. This elegant affair raises operating funds for the Gardens as well as money for critically important preservation projects. Our honoree this year is Mrs. Douglas Auchincloss, a long-time friend of Mary Phipps and Old Westbury Gardens. Mrs. Auchincloss, who is best known for her incredible design talent, has been featured in countless

magazines in articles describing her impeccable taste and her friendship with Sister Parrish, the designer who consulted with Jackie Kennedy on the refurbishment of the White House.

KK, as she is known to her friends, has been busy restoring a chateau which was moved from France to Old Brookville. She was willing to be honored so that she could take this opportunity to emphasize the importance of preserving Westbury House, which she considers an unimpeachable example of good interior design.

Preservation News

By Lorraine Gilligan

Last year the Bay and Paul Foundations awarded a \$5,000 grant to the Gardens to hire a conservator to examine the condition of the painting collection in Westbury House. Lucie Kinsolving, Chief Conservator of the National Academy Museum in Manhattan, finished her extensive assessment of 49 pieces and categorized the condition of the paintings as needing major, moderate and minor attention. The Portrait of Ben Phipps (ca.1907) in the White Drawing Room, by New York's own Lydia Emmet Field, was in the most fragile state, with the paint surface lifting off the canvas and creating horizontal "waves" throughout the composition. As the analysis of each painting was described, our Trustees and the Friends of Old Westbury Gardens rallied to conserve the collection. Dita Naylor-Leland, Peggie Phipps Boegner's daughter, offered to underwrite the conservation of the Ben Phipps portrait. Cathy Cavanaugh, a member of the Friends, has long admired the paintings in Westbury House and was fascinated by their stories and the effort to preserve them. A surprise birthday gift from her husband was to select paintings to be conserved in her honor. Cathy chose a signature work, "The Allegory of Design" by Sir Joshua Reynolds, so prominently featured above the marble mantelpiece in the White Drawing Room. The woman portraying "Design" is Lady Beauclerk, one of Dr. Samuel Johnson's inner circle of friends and a woman of great wit and charm. Mrs. Cavanaugh was also intrigued by a smaller painting by the Swiss artist, Angelica Kaufman. "Tancredi and Clorinda" portrays a doomed romance based on a mythological tale of the

crusades as imagined by the sixteenth century Italian poet, Torquato Tasso. This delicate work is composed of oil paint on copper. Trustee Arthur Levine has indicated his support of the program and will be making a selection. Our most renowned painting, John Singer Sargent's Portrait of Mrs. Henry Phipps and her Grandson, Winston Guest, is in excellent condition.

The Friends of Old Westbury Gardens have a long history of enthusiastically lending their support to a long list of projects throughout the Gardens. They have offered to fund the cleaning and stabilization of two genre scenes by George Morland displayed in the Entry Hall. Two scenic paintings of Roman ruins by Richard Wilson will also be treated from their gift. The majority of the paintings mentioned date from the mid to late eighteenth century. The care of the painting collection is an on-going program that offers opportunities to adopt a painting or to honor someone by preserving a work for future generations of visitors to enjoy.

Mr. Phipps's mahogany desk underwent extensive rehabilitation. He purchased the desk at auction in 1924 from the collection of H.H. Mulliner, one of the foremost English collectors of the early twentieth century, and gave it pride of place in his Study. Mulliner avidly amassed pieces of English furniture and craftsmanship from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries' period which evolved into his reference work, "The Decorative Arts in England during the late Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," published in 1923.

The great English cabinetmaker, Thomas Chippendale, designed such a desk – which he referred to as a pedestal writing table – in 1753. Each side of the desk resembles a three leaf clover and makes an impressive design on paper, but is difficult to construct. Only an accomplished craftsman like Chippendale knew how to select the right timber to achieve lasting results and could successfully create curved panels that wouldn't warp over time. Our furniture conservator, Philip Barker, who dated Mr. Phipps's writing table as being from the 1770s, was amazed that the original leather work table top remained intact. Imagine the correspondence, business transactions and leisurely reading that occurred and the care it took not to mar or damage the delicate stamped leather during 150 years of active use. The desk has been totally disassembled and its base, cabinet doors and hinges strengthened and plumbed, old discolored repairs corrected, loose decorative elements reattached and split mahogany planks repaired. The very last step, cleaning the wood and selecting the correct polish to highlight the grain and neutralize faded areas is the cherry on a rich sundae.



Golf Outing

On June 24 at the Meadowbrook Country Club, Old Westbury Gardens ran its sixth golf outing. Despite one intense cell of rain, players were very good natured and managed to finish all 18 holes. Jack Foley served as our Chairman of the Event and the Gardens welcomed a number of new foursomes.



Stringing Myself Along

By Vince Kish

One of the more enduring anecdotes about the earlier days at Westbury House is that Jay Phipps owned several priceless violins, at least one Stradivarius and one Guarnerius. Furthermore, proof that he kept them in Margarita's Study is suggested by the supposed discovery of a violin case on one of the shelves of the secret closet hidden in the corner. Unlike some of the other stories around here, this one is very much true.

Violins, cellos, and anything else designed by the families of luthiers Antonio Stradivari (1644-1737) and Giuseppe Guarneri (1698-1744) are among the most highly prized instruments in the world. Those that have survived the last three hundred or so years are typically well accounted for, by date, serial number, and usually by a nickname (such as Red Mendelssohn, the 1721 Stradivarius that was the inspiration for the 1998 movie, *The Red Violin*). Despite the hopes of reality TV producers, they are not likely to show up at a pawn shop or in an unclaimed storage locker. The musicians who play them can't afford to own them. They are usually on loan from music foundations or benevolent collectors. (A notable exception is Itzak Perlman, whose instruments include a 1714 Stradivarius violin named Soil).

I located said violin case. It's a beautifully carved piece, although quite empty, and clearly labeled as being not from Italy but England, specifically Hart and Son, a stringed instrument maker from London. That case being closed, I tracked down the history of a 1717 Stradivarius named

Sasserno. This violin, owned by Mr. Phipps circa 1906, was eventually purchased by the Nippon Music Foundation in Japan, and has been played recently for a number of years by a German musician, Viviane Hagner, whose tours include concerts in New York. This was music to my ears. I excitedly tried to track down Ms. Hagner to invite her to Old Westbury Gardens, perhaps to play with Poetica Musica or during one of our Beech Tree performances, or if nothing else just to come visit the one-time home of her beloved Sasserno. But then further research and a sour note of a coincidence revealed that the Mr. Phipps who at one time owned this violin was an Englishman named Pickering Phipps. Sayonara Sasserno.

Undaunted, I burrowed back down the rabbit hole of instrument provenance to discover that a 1711 Stradivarius named Duport was definitely purchased by John S. (Jay) Phipps. The little twist on this tune is that Duport is a cello, not the type of thing that can fit on the shelf of a closet.

However I can verify, to a reasonable degree of certainty, that at one time or another Jay did own at least four violins. The two Guarnerius models were a number 589 (no nickname given), circa 1690 and thereby most likely designed by Giuseppe's father, Andrea Guarneri (1626-1698), and a 1740s model called Leduc. The former was purchased by the Rudolph Wurlitzer Company in the 1930s. Later day owners of Leduc included a collector of rare violins, Jacques Francais, whose shop was located, very appropriately, within a block of Carnegie Hall. The two Stradivarius violins, which both date to 1722, were a model called Emperor, and another called Jupiter, which would be purchased by the Nippon Music Foundation.

But the history of that cello, Duport, wherever Jay may have kept it, is perhaps the most interesting of all. It received its sobriquet from one time owner, cellist Jean-Louis Duport. While the musician was visiting Paris in 1812, his instrument caught the eye of the emperor himself, Napoleon Bonaparte, who removed his hand from inside his shirt long enough to grab the cello less



than delicately, leaving a dent in the piece that is reported to still be visible. Circa 1843, the son of Jean-Louis would sell Duport to musician/composer August-Joseph Franchomme for the then record setting price of 22,000 francs. Years later, the cello made sweet sounds for the Havemeyer family of sugar refining fame, before eventually falling into the very able hands of world-renown musician, Mstislav Rostropovich.

After that, the trail for Duport seems to end. There are unconfirmed claims, which I highly doubt, of it selling for 20 million dollars in 2009. In January of 2012, for example, a Stradivarius cello named Countess of Stainlein went for something like a mere 6 million, and it didn't

have any dents in it. But if Duport does show up again someday, I'd very much like to hear it played, preferable back here at Westbury House.

1812 Overture anyone?

Rostropovich playing Duport



Suzuki on the Island

Speaking of violins and cellos, there will soon be a large group of them here in the Red Ballroom, when Suzuki on the Island visits as part of our December Holiday Celebration at Westbury House.

Based on the teaching methods of Japanese violinist Shinichi Suzuki, this Long Island program was founded in Manhasset in 2000 by Ani Gregorian Resnick, a graduate of The Julliard School and an accomplished musician who has performed everywhere from concert halls in Europe to the orchestra pit at *The Lion King* on Broadway. According to Ani, playing at Old Westbury Gardens is not only a treat for her students, it has essentially become part of their curriculum:

“Performing at Old Westbury Gardens three times a year is an absolute pleasure and incredible opportunity for all of us at Suzuki on the Island. We can really appreciate the magnificent history of the Red Ballroom and Westbury House each and every time we are there. We also very much look forward to our group festival concerts outside the house in June when we can enjoy the beautiful grounds of the estate. At this point, it feels like part of being at Suzuki on the Island means performing at Old Westbury Gardens, and we hope to continue this special tradition for many years to come.”

The concert on December 15 at 2:30pm will begin with Suzuki book pieces including Humoresque by Dvořák and Allegro from Handel's F Major Violin Sonata, and will continue with a medley of holiday favorites including The Little Drummer Boy, Silent Night, Sleigh Ride, and Chanukah. The concert is included with admission, but be sure to arrive early to ensure getting a seat.



The Great Gatsby

by Vince Kish

Some literature professors have suggested that most works by F. Scott Fitzgerald read well but don't necessarily translate to the screen. With that challenge in mind, one might think that movie producers would make particularly prudent choices in planning something like a remake of "The Great Gatsby." Granted, some of the amazing houses that likely inspired Fitzgerald when he lived here on the North Shore have since fallen to the wrecking ball, including Lands End in Sands Point, which is believed to be the model for Daisy Buchanan's house. But others, obviously including Westbury House, are very much still here, and are available for filming. Perennial Picnic Pops favorite, Vince Giordano and his Nighthawks, who have excelled in providing music for 1920s-era movies and television shows would have been a perfect choice for the soundtrack. Instead, director Baz Luhrmann chose his native Australia over Long Island, built ridiculously expensive sets, and had his soundtrack produced by a rapper. Following all the hype, including predictions that 2013 would see the return of flapper fashion and dancing The Charleston, the reviews of the movie, to be polite, were mixed.

The shame of it is that the movie's location scouts visited Old Westbury Gardens a few years ago, absolutely loved what they saw, and promised to come back with the director. If only they had, among other things, I would have informed Baz that there's an Outback Steakhouse on Old Country Road in case he got lonely while filming here.

However, looking back upon the now cooled Gatsby-fever, at least the movie did help generate a lot of buzz about the "real" Gatsby locations. Over 25 newspapers and magazines printed articles featuring descriptions of Westbury House, including Architectural Digest, The L.A. Times, Vogue Living (Australia), and Femina (France). There was even a segment filmed at various areas at Old Westbury Gardens for the Danish Public Television Network, with a reporter reading from the novel while dressed like Jay Gatsby.

During the summer, working with the MTA and other locations in a Gold Coast Mansions Group, Old Westbury Gardens participated in a Gatsby Mansions Tours Program. For months, hundreds of posters promoting the tours were displayed at Penn Station and at dozens of other stops in the LIRR system.



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Tour Date: Sunday August 3

Above, the ubiquitous LIRR poster; at left, no movies are needed to keep alive the spirit of 1920s jazz at the Gardens at Picnic Pops

Red Carpet

On October 1, the Children in Bloom Committee held their fourth event at Old Westbury Gardens, a Red Carpet Luncheon. Nancy DeMatteis, whose family foundation made a major gift for the restoration of the Barn at Orchard Hill, was the honoree. Chairman Joan MacNaughton and her committee pulled out all the stops to make a fashion statement. Guests were greeted with a red carpet and red velvet ropes leading to Westbury House, thanks to the assistance of Karen and Paul Bonheim. Many raffle prizes were provided by the Americana Manhasset and Rita Castagna. Deirdre Costa Major and Rebecca Hollander attended. Arlene Levine, wife of Trustee Arthur Levine, arranged to have a designer create table sized original designer dresses reflecting the designers Stella McCartney, Vera Wang, Lily Pulitzer, Chanel, Alexander McQueen, Pucci, Valentino and Tahari. When Nancy DeMatteis spoke, she compared her experience to winning an award at the Emmys, and congratulated Bunny Bennett the designer as her producer and Arlene Levine as her director. Finally, the author and film documentarian Lisa Immordino Vreeland gave a great presentation about the iconic style definer: Diana Vreeland. Lisa spoke about her book "The Eye has to Travel," and shared some amazing Harper's Bazaar layouts with clothing as fresh and interesting today as it was back in the 30s. The luncheon raised \$28,000 for children's programs.



Gift Memberships

In the true spirit of giving, why not show you care in a very special way and give the gift of membership to Old Westbury Gardens to a friend, loved one, or business associate? These memberships are completely tax-deductible and entitle the fortunate recipient to a variety of privileges while helping to protect and preserve the unparalleled combination of beauty and tranquility that encompass Old Westbury Gardens.

Some of the basic benefits include free admission to Westbury House and grounds for a full year (from date of membership), advance registration for programs, concerts, and special events, access to members-only events, discounts in the gift shop, and reciprocal membership benefits at similar organizations throughout the country.

To purchase a membership or for more information, please contact Jana Ryan at 516-333-0048 ext 309 jryan@oldwestburygardens.org.

Once we receive your request, your gift membership will be acknowledged with a lovely Old Westbury Gardens Holiday Gift Card for the recipient.

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