

# Views From The Veranda

## “2013 Preservation Awards”

Monday, May 20th at 6:00 pm

308 West 8th Street- Plainfield, NJ\*\*



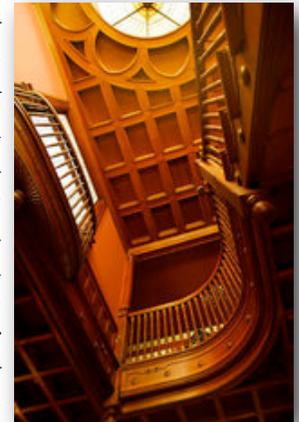
The Craig Marsh Mansion in the Van Wyck Brooks Historic District, Plainfield, NJ

The Victorian Society in America, Northern New Jersey Chapter is pleased to present its annual *Preservation, Restoration and Adaptive Reuse Awards Ceremony* at the Craig Marsh Mansion in Plainfield, 308 West 8th Street, at 6pm on Monday, May 20th, 2013. Annual awards for projects of outstanding merit in the preservation or conservation of Victorian material culture are given by the Victorian Society in America on a national and chapter level.

Plainfield is the home of some of the finest Victorian residences built in the state of New Jersey. It has a number of historic districts both residential and commercial, including Van Wyck Brooks, Hillside, Crescent and Putnam-Watchung.

One of the grandest of these homes is the Craig Marsh mansion, built in 1893 and designed by New York architect Charles H. Smith. Featured in the April 1893 issue of *Scientific American Building Magazine*, the mansion's exterior is adorned with towers, turrets, balconies, a sleepy eye window, a foundation of lintels of quarried Pennsylvania stone and four elaborate curved stained glass windows. This twenty room Queen Anne Victorian mansion was purchased in 2005 by John Stewart, his partner, lawyer Craig Bowman and friend Michelle Riley, Esq.

After years of carefully planned renovation, the soul of the home now shines due to having been restored to its original beauty. It boasts a large landscaped lot, coffered ceiling, wood paneled walls, grand staircase leading to the second floor music balcony, and many other amenities. The home has been updated for



modern living with a granite topped kitchen,, 2,000 bottle wine cellar and new bathrooms. Our chapter would like to thank Mr. Stewart, Mr. Bowman, and Ms. Riley for graciously hosting this year's award ceremony at their remarkable and inspiring home.

*continued on page 2*



### Please note time and location change for this month's meeting!!!

This Preservation Award meeting is free and open to the public.

Meetings are usually held the 3rd Monday of the month 8pm at the Montclair Women's Club-82 Union Street Montclair, NJ 07042. Our next meeting there will be in September, 2013. (No meetings during the summer) Yearly membership from September 2013 to June 2014 is only \$25/person! Send membership dues (payable to VSANNJ) to Catherine Sullivan 168 Vose Avenue South Orange, NJ 07079.

\*\* Carpools available leaving from the Montclair Women's Club at 5pm. Call Alice Gibson at 973-228-1293 if you would like a ride to the Preservation meeting.



## Message From The President

Dear Members,

*At our last meeting, Rhonda Florian gave a stirring live portrayal of the Southern women's life during the Civil War. Dressed in authentic 19th century attire, Ms. Florian recited poetry and diary excerpts by real women that revealed shocking accounts of their personal struggles.*

*Another year draws to a close...oh the things we've learned, the places we went, and the things we've done! Our outstanding lecture topics included historic Bloomfield Avenue, European diplomacy during Queen Victoria's time, Colonial Revival architecture, origins of Christmas customs, furniture worthy of museum acquisitions, evolution of the hearse, and Chinese food and culture in the Victorian Age. We had theatre trips to see "Mary Broome" and "Unsinkable Women", bus trips to Belvidere's Victorian Day, Newark Museum, Sacred Heart Basilica, and Grey Towers in Milford, PA. We received a grant from Essex County Division of Cultural and Historic Affairs. We digitized 30 years of board meeting minutes and purchased a public address system. All of this is possible by the contributions of the exceptional individuals on the board and our loyal members.*

*See you at the upcoming preservation meeting and June garden party and have a wonderful summer!*

~ Jane

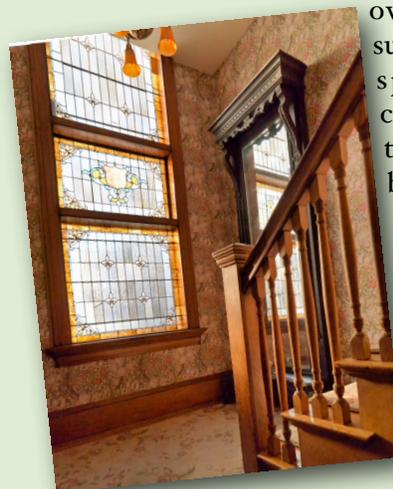
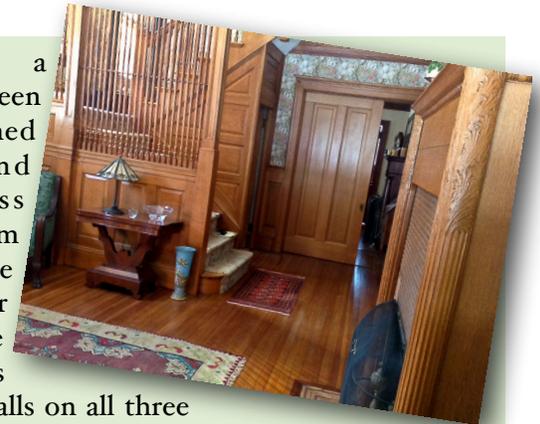
"2013 Preservation Awards" continued from page 1



The beautifully restored Raven House in Caldwell is the second recipient of the Chapter's award. The home of Bruce and Patricia White is located at 34 Crane Street, originally owned by Anton A. Raven, a prominent NYC businessman who reached the heights of the insurance and banking industries during the Gilded Age. Raven, a lifelong resident of Brooklyn, owned a large home at 864 President Street (which still exists) and summered in Caldwell. Raven purchased the parcel of land at 34 Crane Street in 1880 for \$800; he sold the property in 1905 for \$10,000.

This grand Victorian home has 5 bedrooms, 3 1/2 baths, stair hall with built-in bookcase, overmantle with carved acanthus leaves and egg and dart

moulding, a decorative screen of long, turned spindles, and leaded glass transoms windows. The tower corner of the house has rooms with round walls on all three floors; the third floor tower room has an 18 foot high plaster, domed ceiling, and a large round radiator. Other distinctive features of the home are original hardware and decorative radiators, 6 working fireplaces each with different, decorative firebacks and overmantles, three-season sun porch, call bells and a speaking tube that communicates with the third floor (still used today by the Whites)!



Please join us in Plainfield, NJ on May 20th as we give much-deserved recognition to these wonderfully restored 19th century historical gems!

## Spring Into Summer Events



*What is so rare as a day in June?...James Russell Lowell (1819-1891)*

**“Tesla-Inventor of the Electrical Age”** presentation and book-signing event-**May 7th, 7pm** at the Laboratory complex of the Thomas Edison National Historical Park, 211 Main Street, West Orange, NJ. Free event but call for reservations 973-736-0550 ext 89. Light refreshments after the program.

**The Metropolitan Museum of Art** in NYC has several exhibitions on the Civil War: **“The Civil War and American Art”**-May 27th to September 3rd. **“Photography and the American Civil War”** now until September 3rd. Gallery 690 has selected prints by Winslow Homer, Thomas Nast and others- May 20 to August 25th. The American Wing will also show works of art from their permanent collection pertaining to the Civil War-May 20th to August 25th. See [www.metmuseum.org](http://www.metmuseum.org) for more info.

**“The Histories and Mysteries of Montclair Heights”**-**May 19th 3pm** at the Israel Crane House, Montclair. Come hear about the northwest section of Montclair from Helen Fallon, who will share her many years of research about her neighborhood. \$5 suggested donation. Call the Montclair Historical Society at 973-744-1796.

**“Mother-Daughter Tea”** at Acorn Hall, Morristown-**May 12th 1 to 4pm**. Tea, desserts and special exhibits will be available. Call 973-267-3465 or [www.acornhall.org](http://www.acornhall.org) for more info. **“The Downton Abbey Experience: Tour and Tea”**- **June 9th 1-3pm**. Get an inside look into the dress, lifestyle, and customs so adored in the hit television show. Call the Cosy Cupboard at 973-998-6676 to reserve this joint venture with the Morris County Historical Society at Acorn Hall.

**“Ring for Service:the Role of Servants in a Country House”**- Liberty Hall Museum at Kean University, 1003 Morris Ave, Union, NJ. 10am to 4pm Mondays through Saturdays **now to August 24th**. \$10/person \$6/seniors Call 908-527-0400 or [www.kean.edu/libertyhall](http://www.kean.edu/libertyhall) for more info. Stay for **Afternoon Tea** in their glass-enclosed porch that overlooks the gardens - 2 to 4pm **the second Wednesday of every month**. Reservations required, \$40/person includes tour of the house.

**“The League of Historical Societies of New Jersey-Spring Meeting”**-**Saturday, June 1st**

9am to 3pm, First Presbyterian Church 600 Rahway Avenue in Woodbridge, NJ. \$25/person registration includes continental breakfast, buffet lunch, a live performance on Dr. John Connor Barron directed by Verne Kreisel, and afternoon tours. Make check payable to:Woodbridge Twsp Historic Preservation Commission and mail to the payee, Baron Arts Center, 582 Rahway Avenue, Woodbridge, NJ 07095 along with your name, address, phone and affiliation (VSANNJ). Any questions, email [wthpci669@hotmail.com](mailto:wthpci669@hotmail.com) or contact our own Jane McNeill.

**“Tea For Three: Lady Bird, Pat and Betty”** **May 30 to June 29th** at the Theatre, 259 W 30th Street between 7th&8th Avenues, NYC. Emmy Award-winning actress, Elaine Bromka stars in this deeply moving and witty play that explores what it’s like for a woman when her husband becomes the President of the United States-*“the hardest unpaid job in the world.”* Special ticket prices before June 2nd; visit [www.TeaforThree.com](http://www.TeaforThree.com) or call 212-868-4444.



## In The Limelight~Lives from 19th Century Essex County



### Mary Mapes Dodge (1831~1905) Mother of Children's Literature

Life was comfortable for Mary Mapes and her siblings. Their father was a prominent scientist and advisor to Abraham Lincoln. Mary had private tutors, free reign of her father's vast library and assisted her father in editing his magazine *Working Farmer*. Despite his brilliance, Professor James Mapes could not make his discoveries profitable. In 1846, he purchased Mapleridge, a run down farm in Waverly, NJ to prove that chemical fertilizers could renew soil. From the porch of the mansion, one could smell the sea in the east and see endless fields in the west. From that spot today (now part of Newark), one can view Weequahic Park and the air traffic control tower of Newark Airport.

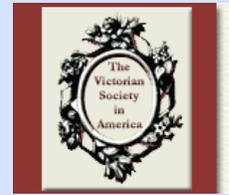
William Dodge, a lawyer from a prominent NY family, agreed to finance James Mapes' mortgages and fell in love with Mary. They married in 1851, had two sons, and lived contently in Union Square in NYC. In 1858, a shipment of gold sank, which caused a run on the banks, and ruined William Dodge financially. One afternoon, he just left home and never returned. Mary was not only heartbroken, but left with both her husband's and father's liens and mortgages.

For Mary, the day that her world collapsed was the first day of her future success. She moved back to New Jersey and took up the challenge of running the farm, supporting her family and paying off the huge debt of her husband and father. She worked as a writer and became associate editor of *Hearth and Home*. She spent every morning writing, and every afternoon with her sons, hiking, skating or fishing. It was at her sons' urging that she wrote *Hans Brinker, or The Silver Skates*. Having never been to Holland, she researched this book by interviewing many of her Dutch neighbors. Her personal experience of skating would have been on the Morris Canal, not far from her home. The book became an instant bestseller. Years later when her son was visiting Holland, he went into a book store and asked for a good book on Dutch life. Not knowing who his customer was, the proprietor gave him a copy of *Hans Brinker, or the Silver Skates!*

Mary Mapes Dodge is undoubtably the mother of children's literature. She became editor of *Nicholas Magazine*, whose mission for every issue was to make learning fun by stimulating the imagination, inspire an appreciation for art, instill respect for family, offer insight to the world, provide positive role models, and offer the best literary work available. Mark Twain, Louisa May Alcott, Laura Ingalls Wilder, Charles Dickens, Edna St. Vincent Millay and Rudyard Kipling were just some of her contributing writers.

Even though faced with life's hardships, Mary Mapes Dodge elevated children's literature to new heights, and is yet another exceptional Victorian woman from Essex County.

by Jane McNeill



#### THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY IN AMERICA

Northern NJ Chapter  
PO Box 717

Montclair, NJ 07042

[www.VictorianSociety.org](http://www.VictorianSociety.org)

The only national non-profit organization committed to historic preservation, protection, understanding, education, and enjoyment of our nineteenth century heritage.

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Limelights were a 19th century technology for producing bright lighting for stages and other venues. *In the Limelight* features remarkable lives of Essex County women in the Victorian age. If you would like to contribute an article for this column for next year, please contact Jane McNeill at 732-832-1878 or Rose Shaw at [rvalleyrose@gmail.com](mailto:rvalleyrose@gmail.com).