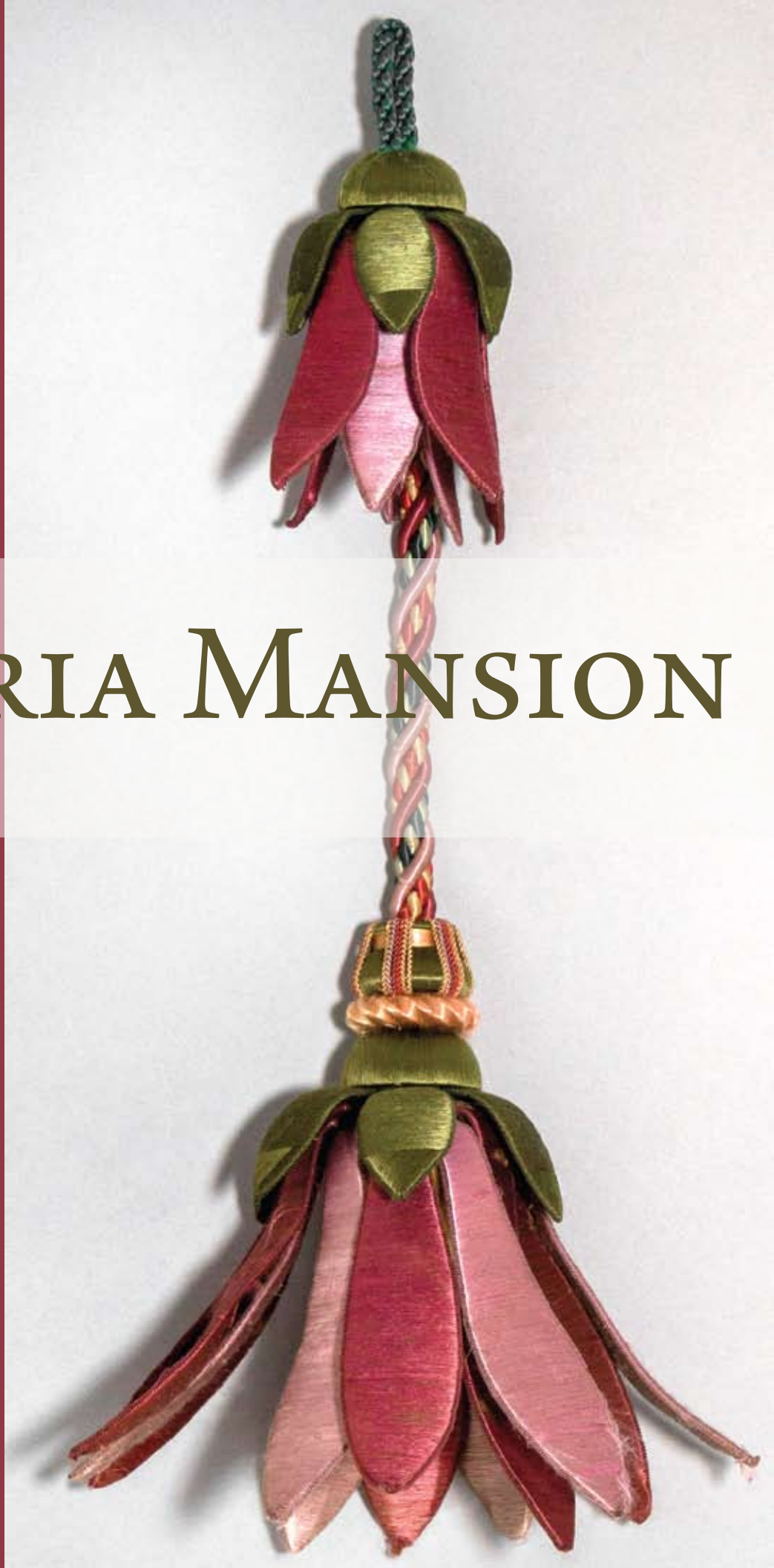


VICTORIA MANSION

Annual Report
2017-2018



A BIT OF BRAGGADOCIO

Victoria Mansion, to say the least, is outstanding in its neighborhood. Surrounded by fairly trim brick Federal and Greek Revival style buildings, it is an anomaly in its surroundings – a “Look at Me” statement in architecture. Its scale is larger, and it sits on a lot elevated by a raised granite retaining wall, an artistic plinth, if you will, that places it literally and figuratively above the life that goes on around it. Juxtaposed with the boxiness of the neighboring buildings, it is in many respects a piece of sculpture, even down to the solidity of the stone, varying wall planes, jutting cornices, shadowy porches, and varied window openings that distinguish it.

And the inside – do you remember the first time you walked through those great carved front doors? I certainly do. Visitors often describe their first encounter with the soaring spatial qualities, the riot of painted color and symbolism, and the richness of the decoration and huge mirrors that magnify the opulence as awe inspiring. And it’s no exaggeration to say that it is. And you know what? For me that feeling is there every time I enter; it does not diminish with time and familiarity.

In hindsight, Portland is the fortunate benefactor of an historical accident, although the nineteenth and early twentieth century town fathers, boosters, and businessmen would not have seen it that way. The value of the land in its early historic residential neighborhoods west of High Street never appreciated at the rapid rate as that of other east coast urban centers such as New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. where other houses fully the equal of Victoria Mansion stood. In those locations, and others, the inexorable rise in real estate values dictated their demolition for a higher return on the economic use of their locations. Because it was in Portland, and owned by appreciative families, the Mansion survived to ultimately be preserved. It’s the only one of its age and type in the nation to come down to us in a nearly-complete original state. As such, it is a singular cultural gem of national – and international – importance.

One might be forgiven for thinking that my last sentence is a somewhat pompous overstatement, but please hear me out. How can a house in a relatively small city in the far northern corner of the United States make a claim such as that? Isn’t it exaggerating its importance? My answer to that is an emphatic no. The historical evidence brought together here over the past few decades soundly and irrefutably supports that recognition. So let’s go there: we care for a National Historic Landmark that is the product of a major American architect, Henry Austin; a seminal figure in the history of American interior design, Gustave Herter; and an important Italian-born artist and ornamental painter, Giuseppe Guidicini. On the inside, some of the finest recognized examples of mid-nineteenth century gasolier lighting



technology from Britain, France, and America still hang in their original locations, three incredibly rare survivals of Scottish 1850s palace-quality chenille carpets survive in their original context, and the near-miraculous and almost complete survival of our original highest quality textiles and hand-crafted *passementerie* trim available for upholstery and window treatments between 1850 and 1860 led a prominent French textile manufacturer and fabric historian with a world view of such things to declare them to be some of the very finest examples he has seen anywhere. The Guidicini paintings on walls and ceilings are the only examples of this genre of his work to survive in America. In 2010, all of these embellishments combined served as a basis to have the Mansion’s Reception Room recognized as one of the fifty finest rooms in America by interior design historian Thomas Jayne. And since the 1970s, the Mansion has served as an important laboratory for the development of brownstone conservation and restoration techniques that are now in standard use.

That’s some pretty heady stuff.

And it’s what makes our work so important here. I am fortunate to work with a Board of Trustees, staff, and volunteers who are solidly behind our efforts to care for this treasure – and share it with an ever-widening community of interest – in the most exemplary manner possible. As a member, you are equally important in your interest and support of our ongoing work. I welcome your visit at any time (members always enjoy free admission), and if you have not been by lately, I hope you’ll take a moment to come in and reintroduce yourself to the many wonders of Victoria Mansion and its place in the greater world.

Tom Johnson



Victoria Mansion staff, left to right: Siobhan Lindsay, Patti Chase, Timothy Brosnihan, Arlene Palmer Schwind, Stacia Hanscom, Victoria Levesque & Thomas Johnson. Photo by Kolby Knight

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Cover image: Silk double bellflower drop, original to the Parlor window. France, 1859-1860 (2013. 272) photo by Gail Dodge.

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fig. 1

Tassel Mania

A Look at the Mansion's *Passementerie*

by Arlene Palmer, Curator

Victoria Mansion is renowned for many reasons, including its Italian Villa architecture, the wall and ceiling decorations by Giuseppe Guidicini, and the original Gustave Herter furnishings. It is also beginning to be known in both national and international circles for its incomparable collection of nearly 1,000 remnants of the original 1860 window treatments: curtains, valances, and the silk trimmings known as *passementerie*. Thanks to the IMLS-funded project to establish a special textiles storage room, these rare items can now be readily studied in a clean and safe environment.

Historic photographs document many of the window treatments which Herter provided for the Morses as part of his interior design services. When combined with the surviving fragments, these images provide a unique glimpse into the most opulent styles of window treatments that were available in the antebellum era. The photographs reveal that, surprisingly, the Libbys essentially retained these hangings as they had been installed in 1860. Because J.R. Libby was a dry goods merchant, he probably recognized the quality of the fabrics and trims and knew how costly they had been when new. In fact, the textiles for the windows and the upholstery probably comprised the greatest expense of the interior furnishings, even surpassing the cost of Herter's furniture. The most precious components of the window treatments were the tassels, festoons, tiebacks, fringe, drops, garlands, and other ornaments – the *passementerie*. Paris was the center of *passementerie* manufacture in the nineteenth century and undoubtedly filled Herter's orders for this commission. A complex taxonomy developed to describe the shapes and production techniques of the numberless forms and decorative details of *passementerie*, and a few of those French terms will be introduced here.

All of the curtain panels in the Mansion rooms had wide edging on three sides. Usually, a smaller-scale version of the same edging, in addition to fringe, trimmed the valances, and upholstery was finished with yet another variation of edging of the same colors. There are two basic types of edging seen in the Mansion: the *crête dans le pas*, an openwork pattern of hoops that could be simple or have intricate protruding “knots” (fig. 2); and *galon*, a flatter arrangement with tight, elongated loops, or supporting a pattern of interwoven diagonal threads in relief. Except in the Dining Room, where the chairs were covered in leather, the upholstery fabric was the same as that at the windows. This achieved a harmony of effect in each room that was essential to the mid-nineteenth-century aesthetic.



fig. 3

The décor of the second-floor Sitting Room was also keyed to one color, gold. The original silk damask, seen on a valance and on a Herter stool, has a pattern of a meandering vine that is much smaller in scale than the painted vegetation on the walls. The trims are of a copper-tinged golden color which, when applied to the damask, would have added considerable depth and richness to the overall effect. The only photographs of the Sitting Room do not show the windows, but some unusual ornaments suggest that the hangings in this private family room had a whimsical touch. Besides valance tassels of the same configuration as those in the bedrooms (fig. 4), there are silk-covered hexagonal drops (fig. 5). These may have been pendants on festoons of roping extending across the top of the triple window that defines the front wall.

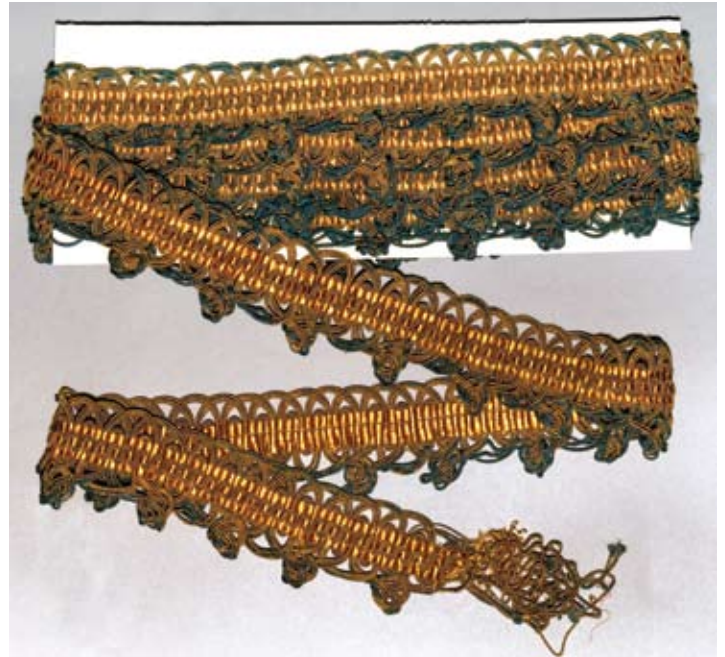


fig. 2



fig. 4



fig. 5

A unified presentation was especially important in the bedrooms, which are called the “Red” and “Green” Bedrooms on the 1894 inventory in acknowledgment of the dominant colors in each. Not only were the fabrics and *passementerie* in those colors, but also the wall panels painted by Guidicini in imitation of damask. The curtains and valances were of a single-color silk damask: a red floral pattern in the Red Bedroom and a green, tri-leaf motif in the Green Bedroom. The *crête dans le pas* that borders the curtain panels and valances continued the same, solid color. The style of the edging is the same in both bedrooms, and the tiebacks and tassels of the two rooms vary only in color (figs. 1 & 3). Valance tassels – a single tassel on a length of roping – hung from the bottom of the valances, or from festoons of roping as seen in the example from the Red Bedroom (fig. 1). Tassels or *glands* had upper sections composed of wood moulds of different sizes and shapes wrapped in silk threads. The tassel “skirt” or *jupe* often has wool threads inside with silk ones on the exterior; any movement caused a pleasing play of color and texture.

The valance there could also have accommodated large decorative rosettes known as *macarons* (fig. 6); similar, smaller *macarons* were applied to the valances of the Parlor (fig. 14). The Sitting Room tiebacks lacked traditional skirted tassels; instead, they had heavy, silk-wrapped drops of wide, cylindrical shape, each with a central band of tiny, silk-covered balls.

The tassels of the Dining Room tiebacks and valances are of the same style as those in the bedrooms and Sitting Room, but they have interweaving multiple colors to harmonize with the wool and silk curtain fabric. There were no valances in this room, but the illusion of valances was conveyed through elaborate festooning formed of two tiers of roping strung with geometric elements – hemispheres, balls, and rings – similar to those seen in figure 1. Large and small tassels,



fig. 6

seven to a window, dropped from the festoons on varying lengths of roping.

The Dining Room curtain fabric relates closely to that of the Turkish Room and was certainly woven in the same manufactory. Both feature the same stylized flowers, but the Dining Room panels have strong horizontal stripes and lack the intricate strapwork that gives the smoking room fabric its Islamic character. The *passementerie* of the Turkish Room further reinforces the oriental theme – just the sheer number of tassels, forty-four at the windows, conveys a sense of exoticism in this intimate space. Unlike tassels from other Mansion rooms, the Turkish Room examples have a wad of wool inside the skirt at the top (fig. 7) to create a particular, plump profile that mimics Middle Eastern tassels. The tiebacks (fig. 8) sport a gold crescent moon, a symbol of Islam, that echoes the gilded crescent finial of the window cornices. The replication of the original fabrics and trims in the Turkish Room proves that Herter's design concepts cannot be fully understood or appreciated without the fabrics and *passementerie* (fig. 9).



fig. 8



fig. 7



fig. 9

The Reception Suite will be similarly transformed, now that the painted decoration has been cleaned and the reproduction of the silk damask and trims can proceed. This Suite is the most richly painted space in the Mansion, and Herter provided window hangings that would not detract from the impact of that decoration. The silk damask for the windows and upholstery is of an aqua hue (fig. 10) that complements in color and design the astonishingly

realistic damask patterns that Guidicini painted on the ceiling and walls. Remarkably, a small piece of valance fabric is still attached to a length of *crête* (fig. 11). Herter deviated from his decorative scheme for the second-floor rooms and chose a contrasting color – a brilliant gold – for all the *passenterie* (figs. 2, 11, 12), making a visual connection with the heavily gilded window cornices and mirror frame. The Reception Suite tassels are also distinctive in

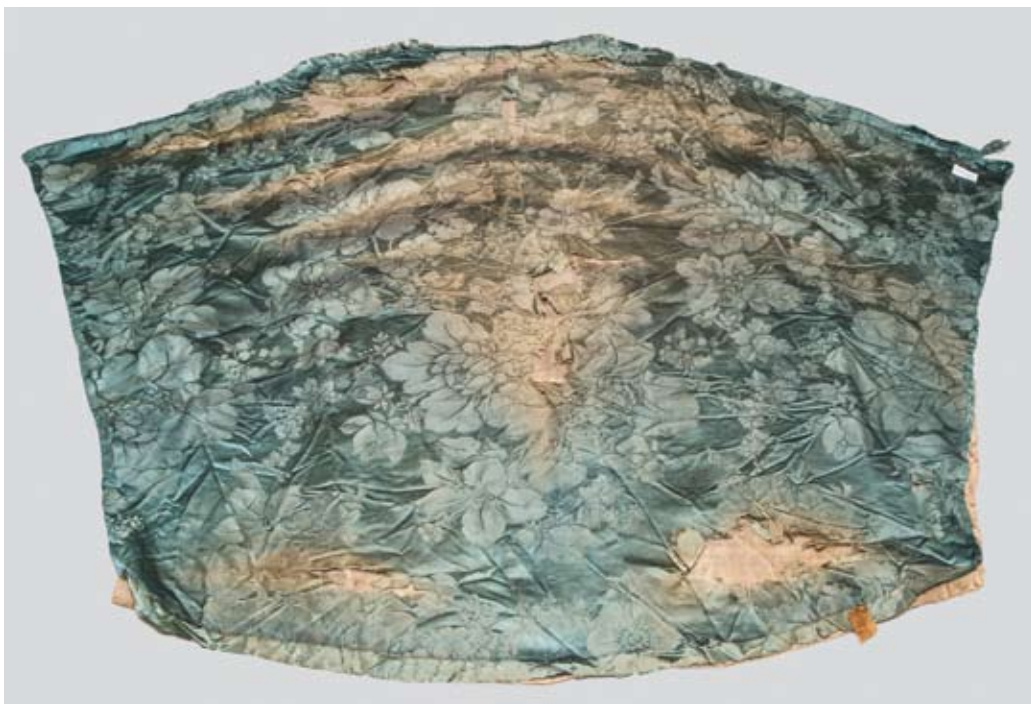


fig. 10

having a silk mesh element, a band of tiny spheres, and a skirt that incorporates fancy spiral drops.

Unquestionably, the most extraordinary *passementerie* in the Mansion was installed in the Parlor. Here the curtains and upholstery were fabricated of plain, dark gold-colored silk. This was a perfect foil for a sumptuous array of polychrome embellishments. The tiebacks have an intricate background of interwoven knot patterns that sets off an encrustation of lush flowers and leaves (fig. 13). As seen in the detail of a historic photograph that dates from the Morse occupancy (fig. 14), the tiebacks were just part of a veritable garden that bedecked the parlor windows. Suspended from multicolor festoons of roping on the valances were very large tassels with *jasmims* – drops of flowers and silk-covered wire loops that overlay the skirt threads (fig 15). One of these tassels hung down from the double bellflower that capped the center of each valance (see cover). Garlands of flowers ornamented each valance: three across the top and one hanging from each end. Of the thirty original such floral garlands, the Mansion is fortunate to count thirteen in its collection (fig. 16). The garland branches are of silk-covered wire; blossoms, buds, and leaves were made in a technique called *cartouchage*, where heavy paper similar to cardboard was cut to the desired shapes and covered with fine silk threads held around the edges within tiny wire loops. A variety of methods created realistic stamen and other flower parts.

As this brief survey suggests, the collection of original French *passementerie* at Victoria Mansion is a treasure of international significance. By utilizing the collection to re-create the window treatments as the Morses knew them in 1860, Victoria Mansion can reveal Herter's complete design plan and present a unique and colorful expression of mid-19th century grandeur.



fig. 11



fig. 12

Special thanks to Gail Dodge.

Arlene is presenting a lecture, "The Sumptuous Window Treatments of Victoria Mansion" at the conference, "The Properly Dressed Window: Curtain Design Over Time," May 15-16 at the Winterthur Museum.



fig. 13



fig. 14



fig. 15



fig. 16

Image Captions photos by Gail Dodge unless otherwise noted

fig. 1. Festoon with silk wrapped ornaments and pendant tassel. Red Bedroom. (2013.125)

fig. 2. *Crête dans le pas*, edging from the curtain panels of the Reception Suite. The core blue yarns were wrapped in gold silk, much of which has worn away. (2013.267)

fig. 3. Tieback. Green Bedroom. The trims are of a rich teal color, and the tassel skirt has threads of olive green. (2013.136)

fig. 4. Valance tassel. Sitting Room (2013.146)

fig. 5. Hexagonal drop. Sitting Room (2013.170)

fig. 6. Macaron. Sitting Room (2013.245)

fig. 7. Turkish Room tassel detail showing the wad of wool inside the skirt that gives it a “Turkish” profile. (2013.68)

fig. 8. Two original tiebacks flank a reproduction, Turkish Room. *Photo by J. David Bohl.*

fig. 9. Window with reproduction fabric made by Prelle of Lyon, France, and *passementerie* by Verrier et fils, Paris. Turkish Room. *Photo by J. David Bohl.*

fig. 10. Remnant of the original floral silk damask from the Reception Suite (1991.62)

fig. 11. *Crête dans le pas* from the valance, that retains a small piece of the original fabric and lining. Reception Suite (2013.257)

fig. 12. Tassels from the tiebacks, Reception Suite (2013.179). The blue threads seen here were originally covered in gold silk.

fig. 13. Tieback, Parlor (2013.209)

fig. 14. Detail of a historic photograph dating from the Morse occupancy, showing the original window treatments in the Parlor (1997.57)

fig. 15. Valance tassel with *jasmins*, original to the Parlor (2013.212)

fig. 16. Garland of silk flowers, one of the original thirty that embellished the Parlor valances (2013.299)

CAPITAL FUNDRAISING, UPS & DOWNS, & CHANGING THE GUARD

Production of one-hundred and ten yards of blue silk handwoven damask, based on fragments of the original fabric document, along with the accompanying passementerie trims. That is our next step in the ongoing work to completely conserve and restore the Reception Suite to its appearance of 1860. In 2017 development efforts focused on funding for paint conservation of the walls and ceiling, a phase of the project just completed with outstanding results. We hope to build on this momentum as we look forward to completing the work in that space, which will include conservation of major collections items and faithfully recreating the room's opulent upholstery, silk curtains, tiebacks, and tassels with the reproduced textiles.



That project is our current focused financial effort, but our development office also attended to the day-to-day efforts of recruiting and retaining members, hosting the two major fundraisers of the calendar year – the **Allagash Victoria Ale Premiere** in June and the **Christmas Gala** in December – and overseeing our end-of-year Annual Appeal. Working with the Development Committee of the Board of Trustees, planning has gone forward to increase the Mansion's public exposure and recognition while developing a sound financial base.

But we faced a stiff headwind, as it were, with the departure after eight years of Director of Development Sam Heck and a national search for his successor. Development and Communications Coordinator Victoria Levesque did an outstanding job of making sure crucial reports and membership mailings continued uninterrupted. It is gratifying to report that despite all the challenges that come with an important departmental transition, our membership revenues were down by only 1% from last year, as much of our effort necessarily continued to concentrate on grant prospecting and writing and soliciting capital funds. Yet with that slight drop, we more than compensated by witnessing event and

sponsorship revenues going up by 3.7% in comparison to last year. The focused efforts of our Education Committee to fund the **Victorian Fair** in September and the continued leadership of the Christmas Gala Committee figured greatly in our success on that line of income.



As already mentioned, the Development Office experienced a notable transition this year with the departure of Sam Heck. As Director of Development Sam oversaw a crucial period of growth in the Mansion's development efforts and helped institute programming and protocols to expand the department to what it is today. So we are very pleased to announce our new Director of Development, Audrey Wolfe, who assumed her duties in April 2018. Audrey has served as Assistant Director of Development at the Massachusetts Historical Society in Boston for the past 5 years and comes to us with notable experience in membership growth and retention, grant writing, fundraising and community outreach, and successful capital campaign experience. In addition to her development credentials, she also brings with her a background in museum education and has a Masters degree from the Coopersstown Graduate Program of the State University of New York, Oneonta.



ALLAGASH PREMIERE

UNIQUE, ENJOYABLE EVENTS

While the preservation of Victoria Mansion is primary in all of our aims, we also have the responsibility of sharing it with our members and the public in a way that celebrates its unique nature. In addition to daily house tours, in 2017 we offered a wide array of events and programs that brought people here to socialize in its historic spaces and grounds.

The **Allagash Victoria Ale Premiere** on June 9 returned as an annual favorite. Over 200 guests enjoyed a sampling of Allagash ales, including the eponymous Victoria Ale, created by Allagash for the Mansion in 2006. Mead from Maine Mead Works and craft beverages from Green Bee were also offered as guests delighted in the musical stylings of *The MisAdventures* and tours of the Mansion. With ticket sales combined with a generous check presented by Allagash Brewing President Rob Tod, the night raised over \$18,000 for the Mansion's education and restoration programs.

Opera at the Mansion took place on July 17 with a crowd of 70 attendees. The night included selections from operas *Samson et Dalila*, *Rusalka*, *Die tote stadt*, and *L'arlesiana* featuring Opera Maine's talented singers Eliza Bonet, Anna Bridgman, Andrew Paulson, and Mackenzie Whitney. Taking advantage of the spectacular weather that evening, hors d'ouerves and drinks were provided and served by Blue Elephant Events & Catering under a tent on the Mansion's private side lawn.

The Mansion's annual **Christmas Gala** on November 29 provided a wonderful start to the *Christmas at Victoria Mansion* holiday season, with just over 225 attendees. Guests admired and were inspired by dazzling decorations by area florists and designers for this year's theme of *Christmas in the City by the Sea*. Blue Elephant Events & Catering once again provided an excellent bar and service while attendees savored appetizers generously donated by the Cumberland Club. Valet 4 ME provided parking services while student volunteers from Waynelete School served as hosts and coat check attendants.

Be sure to check the Upcoming Events page of Victoria Mansion's website and subscribe to our monthly e-newsletter for an updated list of current events.

Interested in holding a corporate event or private celebration at the Mansion? Contact Events Coordinator Victoria Levesque at vlevesque@victoriamansion.org or 207.772.4841 ext. 111.



OPERA AT THE MANSION

Photos by Martha Middles



Anna Bridgman.



Nancy Marino & granddaughter.



Hayden & Ann Atwood flanking Opera Maine Managing Director Caroline Koelker.



Singers Mackenzie Whitney, Anna Bridgman, Eliza Bonet, and Andrew Paulson with accompanist Tim Steele.



Michael Doyle with Sharon & Frank Reilly.



Julie Hurley, Dona D. Vaughn, Richard Gammon of Opera Maine.



Betsy Di Capua & Becky Bucci.



Tinker Newick & Lauren Webster.



Ruth Townsend Story, Jane Wellchan, & Elizabeth McLellan.



Greg & Judith Fergin.

CHRISTMAS GALA



Lauren Webster & Jeremy Sherman.



Drew Oestreicher & Tom Johnson.



Designer Gail Diamon with friends of the Mansion.





CHRISTMAS *in the* CITY *by the* Sea



PARTIES FOR A PURPOSE

With a number of new members and array of events, 2017 was another exciting year for the Gaslight League. Conceived as a social club to appeal to young (and young at heart) professionals, the League, now in its fifth year, boasts a tight-knit community of members ranging in age from early 20s to their 60s. Monthly happy hours are held at different venues in the greater Portland area and annual gatherings and parties held at Victoria Mansion include the **New Year's Eve Fete** and the ever-popular **Steampunk Halloween Masquerade Soiree**.

Membership dues, which benefit the Mansion's restoration and educational programming, are \$200 annually or \$20 a month. To learn more about the Gaslight League or to join, visit www.gaslightleague.com.

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Director of Education Staci Hanscom & husband Brad Hanscom.



Shawn Agren, Chris Massaro, & Sue Macarthur.



Sue Macarthur, Chris Massaro, Chris Haddad, & Chris Eissing.
Photo by Cortney Vamvakias

CHANGES OF NOTE



On entering the Mansion's Carriage House through a newly-installed front entrance, visitors in 2017 found a refreshed orientation exhibit, updated décor, and a refinement in museum shop offerings that included expanded books and jewelry sections. Museum Shop Manager Patti Chase has made a concerted effort to offer unique and beautiful Victorian-themed merchandise not available elsewhere. Curated selections of new lines of scented soaps and lotions based on nineteenth century recipes, beautiful traditionally-fashioned limited availability gift items in glass, porcelain, silk and metals, prints and cards elicited many comments on a memorable shopping experience.

Building on the success of her debut season in 2016, Ms. Chase was able to propel shop sales forward once again, ending the fiscal year with an all-time record of income. This is particularly important to the Mansion, as Museum Shop

sales meaningfully assist in the funding of our educational and restoration efforts.

On a more somber note, Victoria Mansion lost a long-time employee and dear colleague in the passing of former Museum Shop Manager and Buyer Alice Ross in June. Those who came into contact with Alice will remember her charm, irreverent sense of humor, and impeccable taste. She had a style and panache all her own which benefited the Mansion in numerous ways. Over thirteen years, Alice built the Museum Shop from a small operation offering postcards, souvenirs, and some luxury goods to an attraction in and of itself, in the process nearly quadrupling the space, offerings and sales.



Masterful Carving

Decorative Details in Victoria Mansion

Victoria Mansion's interior designer Gustave Herter's background as a carver is apparent in the sculptural-quality figural details that embellish many pieces of furniture he made for the Morses. This winged female supports the front of the Parlor console table, the only object in the Mansion that bears Herter's signature. It is also inscribed "Morse" on the underside of its top. Masterfully carved of Brazilian rosewood, the face has a long straight nose, long hair, and finely detailed wings. With her hair in braids, the mask on the other side of the table is similar but not identical.

Gustave Herter (1830-1898), Console Table, 1858-1860. (1984.86) J. David Bohl photo

VICTORIA MANSION'S STEWARDS OF DISTINCTION

Eponymous for Victoria Mansion's first owners Ruggles and Olive Morse, the Morse Associates are the Mansion's highest level donor group with annual gifts of \$1,000 or more. Each year, the Morse Associates enjoy planned events and gatherings, including an annual holiday celebration and late-summer outing offering exclusive tours of privately-owned historic homes and other special sites rarely open to the public. This year, the Gaslight League hosted the Morse Associates for a Christmas celebration at the Coolidge Family Farm. For more information on the Morse Associates or how you can join this elite group of Mansion supporters, visit the donate page of www.victoriamansion.org.

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Lauren Webster

The Male Presence

Decorative Details in Victoria Mansion

Female visages predominate in the decorative treatments of the Mansion. Male images are much less in evidence, but where they emerge, they are striking. A face of a bearded classical male wearing a laurel wreath is carefully painted in enamels on this French porcelain vase. The now-missing mate to this object would have had a different profile portrait facing to the right. While such classical heads are frequently generic, this example probably represents a Roman emperor, perhaps Antoninus Pius or Septimus Severus. The enthusiasm for historical eclecticism that characterized mid-19th century interiors and decorative arts and interiors extended to a revival of interest in antiquity. The maker of the vase is unknown, but its elegant shape, unusual matte black ground, and delicate gilded details indicate it was a sophisticated and expensive product, probably from one of the factories in Paris.

Vase, France, 1855-1860. Gift of Emma Willman and Deborah Willman Pierce, in memory of Alice Cutter Willman. (1998.9) J. David Bohl photo





Winged Creatures

Decorative Details in Victoria Mansion

Victoria Mansion abounds in images of winged creatures—Cupid-like children, adults, even serpents. Seen here are Biblical angels, in a detail from the marvelous painting in the Parlor by the American artist Luther Terry. Terry took his subject from Genesis 28: 11-12, which tells of a sleeping Jacob and his vivid dream of a “ladder set up on earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.” It is not clear whether the wingless figure in blue is a heavenly angel, but certainly his companions are. The angel on the right points to Jacob and admonishes the others not to awaken him. Terry first painted *Jacob's Dream* in 1847 and a number of his patrons ordered copies. This one, painted about 1850, was owned by James Robb and exhibited at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in 1852. It was then displayed in Robb's New Orleans home until Ruggles Morse purchased it in 1859 for installation in his Portland house.

Luther Terry (1813-1869). Jacob's Dream, c. 1850. Detail. Gift of Hattie Payson Brazier Libby. (1984.102) J. David Bohl photo



Above: Libby descendants in front of house, left to right: Dan Libby, Ellen Libby Hyde, Anne Libby Dontonville, and Katharine Libby Stuka

In Memorium

This year the Mansion lost some longtime friends and supporters:

Lucille Hatcher
Sally Rand
Betty Crane
Alice Dwyer Ross

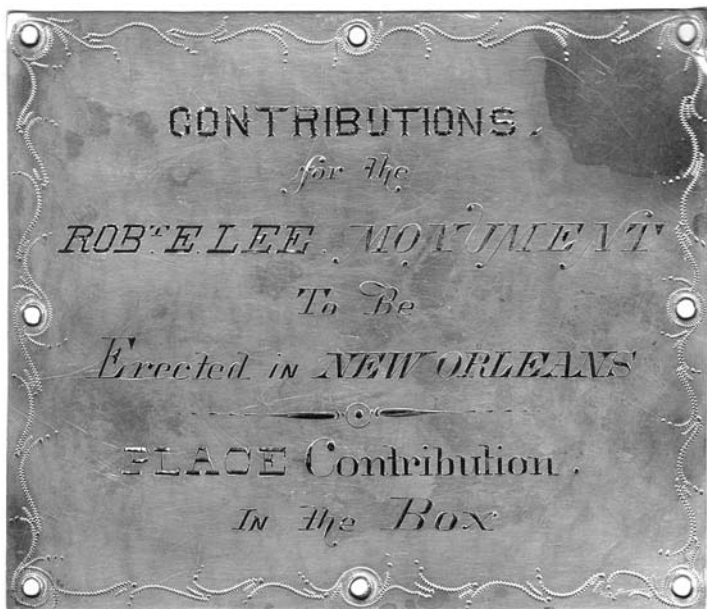
OUR COLLECTIONS WERE ENRICHED IN 2017

Generous donors and a small astute purchase drove the continuing refinement of our superb collections of pre-Civil War decorative and applied arts and associated documentary evidence related to the Mansion's history. Curator Arlene Palmer Schwind continues to search for and accession these artifacts and to integrate them into permanent and temporary displays. The past year witnessed curatorial visits to Morse and Libby descendants, some now living at a distance from Portland, to bring objects back to the house.

Longtime Mansion supporters and donors Deborah W. Pierce and Emma F. Willman have once again given fascinating objects descended in the Libby family which further extend our knowledge and understanding of the Libby and the Morse families. Outstanding among their gifts is a silver label that is a unique and remarkable survival: Ruggles Morse was an original director of the R.E. Lee Monumental Association, formed in 1870 to raise money to erect a statue in New Orleans honoring the Confederate general. Apparently this plaque was affixed to a donation box that Morse had in his City Hotel and remained in the Mansion after his death in 1893, passing to the Libbys with the other contents of the house in 1894. The historic photographs and documents further extend our important collection of Libby family photographs and ephemera.

- Silver label from donation box for Robert E. Lee monument, New Orleans, 1870s
- Nine photographs of members of the Edith Libby Cutter family
- Photograph of Edith Libby as a child
- Three photographs of members of the Larrabee family
- Photograph of Mr. and Mrs. J.R. Libby
- Edith Libby 1897 wedding invitation
- Court document regarding liquidation of J.R. Libby Co., 1935

Gifts of Deborah W. Pierce and Emma F. Willman in memory of Alice Cutter Willman.



Above: Silver label, New Orleans, 1870s. Engraved "CONTRIBUTIONS/for the/ROBT. E. LEE MONUMENT /To Be/ Erected in NEW ORLEANS/ PLACE Contribution/In the Box." Originally mounted on a donation box, presumably in Morse's City Hotel. The statue has recently been taken down.

Right: Photograph of Edith Libby Cutter and her two children, Philip Cutter and Alice Cutter. Alice was the stepmother of the donors, Deborah W. Pierce and Emma F. Willman.



In November, Arlene travelled to Kensington, Maryland to meet Ruggles Morse's great-great-grandnephew, Robert Lipsky. His generous gift of Morse family items included a gold-headed walking stick and camphor wood trunk that are extremely rare personal artifacts associated with the Morses. An accompanying clock may have been in Morse's hotel office. The additions to the Mansion's collection of red porcelain reinforce the idea that this service was intended for the presentation of tea, which in the nineteenth century was a substantial meal taken in the afternoon.

- Walking stick, gold head engraved as presentation from Ruggles Morse to his father Jonathan in 1856.
- China Trade camphorwood trunk with painted inscription, "Mrs. O.R. Morse/Portland/Me"
- "Lorelei" sculpture by Friedrich Wilhelm Engelhard, dated 1852. Bronze patinated spelter.
- Shelf alarm clock in oak case.
- Thirteen pieces of porcelain from the Morse red service: platter; four sauce dishes; plate; four teacups; two saucers; covered butter dish.

Gift of Robert H.L. Lipsky, Ph.D., in memory of Jean L. Lothrop Lipsky

A silver salt dish given by D. Eric Johnson is identical to the original Morse salt in the collection except that it lacks the engraved name of "Morse." There were originally at least four of these distinctive salts with their ram's head legs, so this is a significant addition to the exhibit in the dining room. We are grateful to Mr. Johnson for spying this in an auction and acquiring it for the Mansion.

- Tiffany sterling silver salt dish, Edward C. Moore for Tiffany & Co., 1855-1860.

Gift of D. Eric Johnson

Ruggles Morse's grandnephew, Rex E. Lothrop, was photographed when World War I broke out and he was a student at Tulane University. He enlisted in the summer of 1918 and earned the rank of Lieutenant before his discharge in 1919. Arlene had an enjoyable meeting with Mr. Lothrop's son at his home in Alexandria, Virginia, and learned a lot about this branch of the Lothrop family and its Morse connections.

- Photograph of Rex Elias Lothrop, New Orleans, 1918.

Gift of Rex F. Lothrop, in memory of Rex E. Lothrop

Once in a great while original Mansion objects turn up in the antiques market. Such was the case with some teaspoons offered to us this year. The Mansion's collection has over forty pieces of the original Morse silver flatware, but these are the first teaspoons from the original service which the Mansion has been able to acquire. Over the years we have purchased teaspoons in the same Hebbard "mask" pattern but with initials or names of other

owners. Longtime dealers in antique silverware, Robert Sears and Harold Tither III, recalled our interest in "Morse" silverware and secured these important spoons for us from a private collection.

- Six sterling silver teaspoons made by Henry Hebbard for Tiffany & Co., 1859. From the original Morse silver service, each spoon engraved "Morse."

Museum Purchase

Stewardship of Our Collections is Paramount

It is truly remarkable that we now possess over 90% of the Mansion's original furnishings and decorative objects. With that, though, comes the attendant responsibility to care for these pieces in the most professional and exemplary manner possible.

Although the focus of the past year has been on completing the conservation of the Reception Suite painted decoration, Conservator Siobhan Lindsay found time to apply BEVA consolidant to flaking areas of the painted cartouches on the walls of the grand stair hall. This has stabilized these art works and will prevent further paint loss. As part of the second phase of the Reception Suite project, Objects Conservator Ellen Promise from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum cleaned the marble bust of the Madonna as well as its pedestal. The steam-cleaning process has transformed the appearance of this statue from a surface dimmed by decades of grime to a beautiful, glowing white. A silver-plated coffeepot from the Libbys' wedding service underwent professional repair for a broken handle.

Harper Batsford continues to keep the museum rooms in top-notch condition, even as record numbers of visitors tour the Mansion. During the open season he cleaned the rooms on a regular schedule and then he assisted the Christmas decorators with the always delicate installation of their decorations. After the holiday season, he undertook the annual "deep" cleaning of the rooms, not only cleaning every nook and cranny but also documenting any condition issues he found. Harper also cleaned a number of additional objects from the collection of historic textiles and passementerie.

Scholarship Continues Apace

Scholarly research is a hugely important aspect of work in the curatorial department that continues to inform us many aspects of our collections. On February 17, 2018, Arlene, the relentless Mansion sleuth, gave a presentation to the docents at their annual potluck lunch, titled "What You Didn't Know You Didn't Know." Over the past year she has unearthed more information about Giuseppe Guidicini that has been incorporated into the manuscript for her book on that subject. Footnotes are now being checked, and photographs for the publication are in hand or are in the process of being ordered. As soon as chapter three is finished, which the Conservator Gianfranco Pocobene is writing about the technical aspects of Guidicini's painting, the book will proceed to the next phase –preparation for publication.

TEACHING EVOLUTION

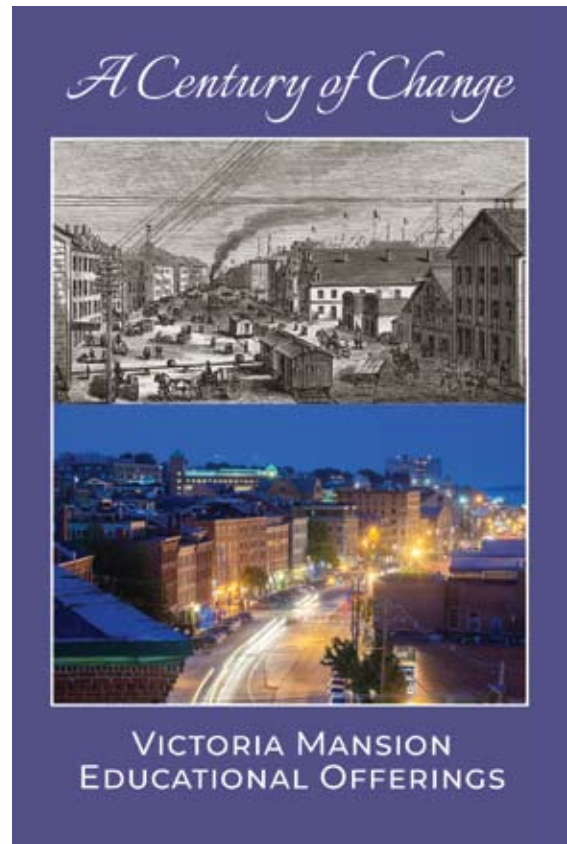
In December 2017, we said a sad farewell to Lucinda Hannington, our Director of Education and Visitor Services for over 4 years. She decided to move on to do some long-overdue writing and to explore other humanities prospects, and will be greatly missed at the Mansion. The new Director of Education, Stacia Hanscom, had worked with Lucinda as Curriculum Development Specialist on the *Century of Change* program, and served as a volunteer at the Mansion since 2012. She has worked in Education departments at the Albany Institute of History & Art in Albany, NY and the William Trent House in Trenton, NJ, and is excited to work even more closely with the Mansion.

Many of our successful programs continued throughout 2017 and into 2018. The *Century of Change* program saw over 750 students from 13 schools this year, including having reached new audiences in Freeport and Pownal, as well as a new elementary school, Riverton, here in Portland. Having received a grant to allow for further curriculum development, Stacia hopes to partner with a local high school to develop a variety of new lessons targeted at older students. The theme tours offered during the regular season were a hit, with full crowds for most of the evenings. The 3rd biennial **Victorian Fair** was a huge success, thanks in part to a beautiful September afternoon this year.



In March the Education Department, with the incredible assistance of the Education Committee, hosted our first Victorian food tasting event, titled **A Victorian Sampling**. Small bites of bread, appetizers, soups, and desserts were offered, as well as historical insight into the origins and food preferences of the time.

The Education Department received two wonderful boosts from the media this fall, first from MPBN, then from WGME. Maine



Public Broadcasting came to the Mansion and filmed Stacia asking a variety of questions for *The High School Quiz Show: Maine*. The show has been running since early February, and occasional glimpses of Stacia and the Mansion can be seen. The **Stories on the Staircase** program also received publicity through WGME in December. The program, offered on Wednesday mornings during the holiday season, was wildly successful, and we plan to offer it more days during the weeks before and after Christmas in 2018.

Partnerships continued throughout 2017 and into 2018. Portland Ballet once again brought dancers to **Mourning at the Mansion**, this time from the ballet *Giselle*. **The Night at the Nutcracker** performances sold out well in advance, as did our **Evening with Mr. Dickens**, featuring Andrew Harris, a true friend to the Mansion. This year we also partnered with Acorn Productions on a production of Shakespeare's *Garden of Verse*, where actors presented scenes and monologues as guests wandered from room to room. Our partnership with Maine Historical Society continued strong, with two *Foods of Our Forefathers* camps in April and June, and the *Adventures in History Camp* in July. We also partnered with MHS to offer an architectural walking tour in Portland, although Mother Nature was apparently not in favor of the idea.

As always, our fabulous docents and guides are the face of Victoria Mansion and allow us to do all of the programs we present. This year we have over 80 active docents and guides, and we already have more beginning to train, along with new volunteers coming to the Mansion from the *Portland History Docent* program (PHD.)

VICTORIAN FAIR



HISTORIC FABRIC

When preservationists speak of the “historic fabric” of a building, they refer to all of the materials that came together at the time of the building’s construction to make it what it is, as well as materials used in changes and repairs that have become historic in their own right. We value the historic fabric of a building because it represents the irreplaceable combination of human skill, technology, and materials in a given time and place. Every mix of these elements is unique, never to be perfectly replicated, no matter how hard we might try.

We care for Victoria Mansion’s historic fabric first and foremost by keeping our roofs in good repair and maintaining the thin protective barriers that seal out moisture and prevent decay and deterioration: paint, sealant, putty, and mortar. In 2017 painter Peter de Paolo made his way around the building, painting the deck of the side ell porch as well as conserving and painting basement-level window sash and adjacent woodwork. Restoration carpenters Bob and Sebastian Cariddi completely restored the sash and interior woodwork in two window openings on the west side of the ell. In this way we slow the march of time and hold on to the Mansion’s finely constructed nineteenth-century woodwork.

There are times, however, when the weather finally wins out and wood and stone must be carefully replaced with new material. When faced with such situations we recreate historic elements as faithfully as possible. Ideally we have a physical copy of the original element to work from; for this reason we retain and store virtually every item removed from the building.

In 2017 we replaced a number of the Mansion’s failing wooden elements. Most of these elements were themselves replacements, milled in the 1980s from pine that was far inferior to the dense, old growth material available at the time of the Mansion’s construction. Today we select rot-resistant tropical hardwoods to get the longest possible service life out of repairs. In July the Cariddis replaced the rotted lower portions of the wooden trim flanking the Carriage House doors with mahogany, sealing the lower ends to prevent the incursion of moisture. In the fall preservation carpenter Caleb Hemphill replaced the bases of the balusters on the Front Parlor Porch with sapele, a mahogany relative available in the thicknesses needed for the repair. Peter de Paolo completed both of these projects with painting that seamlessly blended the old work with the new.

Unlike wood, brownstone benefits little from coatings or sealants beyond the pointing of mortar joints. Last year we continued planning for a major project to replace most of the original stone

in the Reception Room Bay, which has deteriorated over the last 160 years to the point where it detracts from the Mansion’s most important façade. To the extent possible we will be using genuine Portland Connecticut brownstone in the bay’s restoration. Much of our 2017 planning for the bay has involved locating modern sources for this precious resource.

While no building element exposed to the weather can be made to last forever, with careful and well-thought-out maintenance deterioration can be dramatically slowed. The talented artisans that descend on the Mansion each spring direct their considerable skills towards keeping the building’s historic fabric in place for as long as possible and towards faithfully recreating it when maintenance is no longer possible.



Sebastian Cariddi fitting patch on Carriage House door.

TEN YEARS RUNNING: A SURPLUS

With the close of our fiscal year this March we marked something of a milestone: our tenth consecutive operating surplus. This successful run rests on several pieces of good fortune. Portland has undeniably changed over the last decade, with steadily increasing cruise ship and tourist traffic fueling a boom in restaurants, hotels, and boutiques. Our own visitation has doubled (!) in that time, from about 17,000 in 2009 to just shy of 34,000 this year. This, in turn, has boosted our financial fortunes, allowing us to grow the staff, take better and more proactive care of our historic building and collections, and expand our educational programming. We have also benefited over the last decade from a generous and growing group of supporters, who have helped us to pay for things as mundane as heating our buildings and as sublime as conserving delicate painted decoration in the Reception Room.

This past year was not without its financial challenges. Group tour traffic was down. The Christmas season of tours brought unseasonable cold and major snow and ice on what have traditionally been our busiest days of the year.

However, we have built up a fairly resilient system, with multiple streams of revenue allowing us to hedge against bad luck in one or two areas. This year the museum shop flowered under Patti Chase's management, setting an all-time sales record despite slightly diminished museum attendance. Membership continued to grow thanks to the addition of several new supporters at the Morse Associates level. Events revenue ticked up as well, due in large part to a sold-out **Christmas Gala**. So it seems that Victoria Mansion has again landed on its feet, with a comfortable surplus that will set us up well as we lean into the work of the coming season.

12:32 PM 04/02/18 Accrual Basis		VICTORIA MANSION Profit & Loss April 2017 through March 2018 April 2017 - March 2018	
Support and Revenue			
Admissions		340,420.09	
Contributions		58,557.19	
Endowment		45,648.50	
Grants		5,000.00	
Membership		50,465.28	
Programs		9,560.05	
Rentals		25.75	
Museum Shop Sales		131,157.20	
Special Events and Sponsorships		30,986.71	
Grants Covering Staff Time for Projects		9,693.00	
	Total Income	681,513.77	
Cost of Goods Sold		70,929.51	
	Gross Profit	610,584.26	
Expenses			
Administration		70,841.63	
Programs		53,179.87	
Development		18,212.20	
Salaries and Benefits		402,644.68	
Capital Purchases		39,945.90	
	Total Expense	584,824.28	
	Surplus (Deficit)	25,759.98	

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Chris Massaro & Bethany Willard. Photo by Cortney Vamvakias.

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Female Beauties

Decorative Details in Victoria Mansion

These enigmatic female masks, complete with beaded necklaces, adorn the counter-weights of the gilded brass gasolier in the Turkish Smoking Room. Although stylized, they provide a feminine touch in what was otherwise a male enclave. Known as a water slide gasolier, this gas fixture could be raised or lowered through a series of pulleys. Movement was possible because of an ingenious seal: a water-filled cup was placed between two telescoping rods to keep the gas from escaping. The water was thinly coated with oil so it would not evaporate. This is the only gasolier in the Mansion that bears the mark of its manufacturer, R.W. Winfield, and the model pictured is #2858 in a Winfield trade catalogue. Registration marks of 1851 and 1854 indicate the fixture was made after 1854.



R.W. Winfield, Birmingham, England. Gasolier, 1854-1860. (1986.56) J. David Bohl photos



Elizabeth Astor & Candice Lee. Photo by Martha Mickles.

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Royal Pretensions

Decorative Details in Victoria Mansion

A controversial king in full coronation regalia is the subject of this Nymphenburg porcelain vase displayed in the Parlor. Ludwig I (1786-1868) succeeded to the Bavarian throne in 1825; the exquisite painting of him on this vase was copied from the official court portrait by Joseph Stieler. He is perhaps best remembered for building the fairy-tale castle *Neuschwanstein* in the mountains of southwest Bavaria. Ludwig was renowned for his enthusiasm for the arts and for the porcelain factory. Under his patronage, and almost exclusively on royal commissions, Nymphenburg produced some of the best porcelains in Europe in this period. Ludwig was also noted for his interest in women. He created a "Gallery of Beauties" in his palace that featured thirty-six portraits of women he considered extremely beautiful, including his infamous mistress, Lola Montez. In 1848, as Europe was rocked with political unrest, Ludwig chose to abdicate rather than rule as a constitutional monarch. James Robb of New Orleans bought this vase when he was in Munich in 1850, probably at a bargain price since the king had abdicated by then. Ruggles Morse paid \$250 for it at the sale of Robb's collection in 1859.

Detail of Ornamental Vase, Nymphenburg Porcelain Factory, Bavaria, c. 1830. Gift of the John L. Carlée Family, in memory of John Lothrop Carlée and Kathleen C. Carlée. (2008.51) J. David Bohl photo



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***Note:** While we aspire to perfection, errors do happen. If any name was inadvertently omitted from this listing, we apologize, and ask that you contact our Development & Communications Coordinator Victoria Levesque at vlevesque@victoriamansion.org or (207)772-4841 ext. 111, so that we can correct our records.*





VICTORIA MANSION

A National Historic Landmark

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